TOWARDS THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE INCLUSION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS/DISABILITIES (SEN/D) IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF AN INCLUSIVE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL IN LAGOS STATE.

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Abstract

This PhD study explores the inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs/Disability (SEN/D) in mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. Inclusive Education (IE) is a contested term across the Globe, including in countries in the Global South such as Nigeria. While the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) argued that all SEND students have the right to be educated alongside their peers in mainstream schools, some scholars view IE as meeting the needs of the young person with SEND within a Special School setting. This study explored the understanding and experiences of IE for young people with and without SEND, families and educational professionals as well as the challenges faced in inclusion for young people with SEND in two secondary schools in Lagos State Nigeria. A qualitative case study design was utilised along with elements of constructivist grounded theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2006) to analyse data from interviews with twenty participants. Analysis was conducted through the lens of decoloniality theory, exploring the epistemic hegemony of some Global North conceptualisations of inclusion on Global South scholarship, policy and practice.

Findings suggest that participants conceptualised IE in varied ways, although many see mainstream education as the most important factor, even in less resourced school. Emphasis was placed on the opportunities for social interaction and participation for SEND students as well as the need for adequate resourcing. Underlying most themes was the legacy of colonialism that has exacerbated inequality and a lack of state provision. However, indigenous concepts of Inclusion such as the role a community places on supporting each other were also highlighted. The study is timely and important because it provides an opportunity to advance the discussion on SEN/D students' inclusion in Lagos State and, by extension, Nigeria. Therefore, it can

influence the design and implementation of inclusion policy, as well as contribute to scholarly debate and discussion.

Author’s Declaration

I hereby declare that I, Adeola Ayisat Adeoye has done this research project, and no portion of the work contained in the thesis has been submitted in support of any application, other degree(s) or qualification in this or any other university or institution of learning.

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This thesis is a product of a strong support system. It would have been a lonely journey but for the support of super awesome family members, church community, and friends. My most profound appreciation goes to my supervisors, Professor Gerry Czerniawski (Director of Studies) and Dr. Janet Hoskin, who held my hands and helped me to navigate the research terrain. You both were awesome. I thank the research participants who voluntarily told their stories of the inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs/Disability. To my amiable children, Prince Adetayo Eromosele, Prince Adeola Osemudiame, Princess Ayomide, Prince Ayobami, and Prince Ayokunle, for putting up with Mum's long absence from home. You were my motivation when I did not feel like reaching the finishing line. You can have your mum back now. Most importantly, I am deeply grateful and indebted to my husband, Prince Akintoye Adeoye, for his immense confidence in me and his emotional and financial support throughout this journey. Dear, you were there for me when it mattered most. Lastly, I thank God Almighty, who empowered me with wisdom and sound health to progress through to the end of this PhD project.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my late mum, Alice Onolenbolu Aliu-Adebayo. Maami, I wish you were here to see the seed you nurtured in me. I also remember every child with Special Educational Needs/Disability in Nigeria who longs for support to access school, participate in school life, and achieve his/her/their potential.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This study explores the inclusion of students with special educational needs/disability (SEN/D) within two mainstream secondary schools (private and public) in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study's focus is to explore how some inclusive education (IE) stakeholders (two head teachers, six teachers who are involved in including SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools, four non-SEN/D students, four SEN/D students, and four parents of SEN/D students) at these schools conceptualise inclusion for SEN/D students, interpret their experiences of, and the challenges they are facing in including SEN/D students in their settings. This first chapter provides an overview of this thesis. Section 1.1 examines education as a possible tool for national (economic, social, and political) and individual growth. Section 1.2 introduces the concept of inclusive education (IE). Section 1.3 conducts a concise review of pre- and post-independence Nigerian educational policies. Section 1.4 presents the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Section 1.5 outlines the study's research questions. Section 1.6 provides a short summary of the methodology adopted for this study. Section 1.7 shares the motivation for embarking on this research. Section 1.8 briefly introduces the significance of the study in relation to SEN/D students' inclusion in Lagos State, Nigeria. Finally, section 1.9 presents the thesis structure.

1.1 Education: A Tool for Growth?

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2020), education is a process of human interaction that aims to facilitate learning. It can also be seen as a process of transferring socially significant experiences across generations (Naziev, 2017). Since education can lead to a change

in behaviour, it can be an outcome of an experience (Chazan, 2022; Curtis et al., 2013). For example, social interactions can engender empathy towards people living with disabilities. Education has generally been divided into formal and informal education (UNESCO, 2020; Familusi, 2020; Naziev, 2017; Singh, 2015; Curtis et al., 2013). Formal education has been seen as a training process within an educational institution (UNESCO, 2020; Naziev, 2017). Informal education, such as apprenticeship, is a more flexible way of learning within the community or workplace (Familusi, 2020; Singh, 2015). Nigeria's pre-colonial education, which predated the 1903 British colonisation, is an example of informal education. For example, during this period, education was primarily carried out within the family and community by elders and parents, teaching children cultural norms and practical skills (Ojo et al., 2023).

Education is often seen as a catalyst for national growth (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2021; Martins et al., 2021; World Bank, 2010). The Nigerian National Policies on Education (NPE) resonate with the view that education is a critical tool for national growth as they present education as an investment for economic, social, and political development to effectively develop human's full capacities and potentials (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016; 2015; 2013; 2008; 2004; Federal Government of Nigeria,1978). These policies affirm that education is an aggregate empowerment tool for the people vulnerable to marginalisation, including SEN/D students. Therefore, the policies align with the thought that it is essential to ensure that an education system is free from discrimination, exclusion, and inequality (Uchem, Ngwa, and Asogwa, 2014; UNESCO, 2008). According to Uchem, Ngwa, and Asogwa (2014), "the merits of education … can only be realised if the educational system is such that integrates and addresses the particular needs and aspirations of all citizens within the

mainstream educational system, irrespective of physical, socioeconomic, and political status or background, giving everybody a sense of belonging" (P. 48). Furthermore, noting the importance of an education system that recognises diversity and the need for equity, UNESCO (2008) has indicated that education systems characterised by inequality are a deviation from the path of equitable development and can contribute to existing social and economic discrepancies.

Based on the need to ensure equitable development and mitigate social and economic discrepancies, some agencies of the United Nations Organisations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (UNESCO,1994; 1990) and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (UNICEF, 2017) have put together some mechanisms that are expected to address discrimination, exclusion, and inequality in education around the world. An example of such mechanisms is UNICEF's 'Accessible Digital Textbooks' (ADT) (UNICEF, 2017). This initiative focuses on creating and delivering accessible digital learning content for children and young people with and without disabilities to learn in the same classroom. ADT is primarily concerned with making digital learning accessible to all, regardless of their location (UNICEF, 2017).

1.2 The Concept of Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education (IE) entails recognising differences among students in schools/classrooms and ensuring that all students access mainstream schools, participate in every school activity, including teaching-learning, and maximally achieve their potential (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Ainscow et al., 2006; Ainscow, 2005; Booth, 2000). This doctoral study defined mainstream schools as general education schools that are capable of enrolling both SEN/D and non-SEN/D students (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice, 2022). These schools can either be

government-controlled or owned privately as a business. IE emphasises the need for schools to make necessary adjustments to facilities, curriculum, and teaching methods to accommodate the different needs presented by learners (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Odunsi, 2018; Ajuwon, 2012). Therefore, IE is concerned with ensuring that every student participates fully and benefits from educational experience within mainstream schools regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

It is important not to assume that IE has successfully addressed discrimination, exclusion, and inequality across countries. According to Ainscow et al. (2019), implementing IE across countries and schools is difficult because its conceptualisation and implementation are decontextualised. For instance, implementing IE can be challenging because its conceptualisations and practices often do not take into consideration the specific cultural, social, and economic contexts of different countries. This lack of contextualisation makes it difficult to effectively apply IE principles in many Global South countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa (Walton, 2018). These countries are struggling with colonial legacies, which include social and educational systems imposed during colonial rule. These impositions often negatively impact social structures, foster deep-seated inequalities, and economic dependencies that continue to affect the development of many former colonies, even post-independence. Of central concern to Walton (2018) is that IE could be a tool for coloniality (continuing colonisation) as its conceptualisation and implementation are majorly influenced by some of Global North's ideologies and tenets. By implication, individual contexts' cultural underpinnings and educational practice can be undermined (Niholm, 2020). For example, unlike Nigeria's pre-colonial education, which was an informal education, IE, as presented by the Salamanca Statement, advocates educating all students within a formal school system (UNESCO, 1994). This may explain the gap in implementing

IE in Nigeria, where SEN/D students struggle for access to and within mainstream schools (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Pinnock, 2020; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Cornelius-Ukpepi and Opuwari, 2019; Odunsi, 2018; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016; Ajuwon, 2008; 2012).

Over the years, many studies on IE in Nigeria consistently highlight the need for conscious efforts to foster effective inclusion for SEN/D students. For example, like other studies, Angwaomaodoko's (2023) study sought to understand the challenges and opportunities of IE in Nigeria for students with SEN/D. The study revealed a need for higher levels of awareness regarding SEN/D conditions and how to include SEN/D students in mainstream schools in the country. Additionally, the study reinforces the notion that implementing inclusion for SEN/D students continues to face barriers such as infrastructure limitations (ramps and schools) and a shortage of qualified teachers. Angwaomaodoko (2023) also indicates that SEN/D students' inclusion is still in its early stages in terms of awareness of SEN/D and policy implementation.

The gap in implementing effective inclusion for SEN/D students in Nigeria is concerning, considering that the Nigeria National Policies on Education continue to recognise the need to include SEN/D students along with their non-SEN/D peers in the same school since 2004 (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016; 2015; 2013; 2008; 2004). Pinnock (2020) suggests that the gap in implementing effective inclusion for SEN/D students could be due to insufficient funding. Angwaomaodoko (2023) also highlights the need to enforce inclusion policies such as the 2019 Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act. The act imposes sanctions such as fines and prison sentences for individuals, including parents found guilty of violating the rights of individuals living with disability in Nigeria. Such rights include access to basic education. Hence, there is an emphasis on the need for the Nigerian government

to address funding issues to enhance SEN/D students' inclusion (Pinnock, 2020) and ensure the implementation of inclusion policies. Many scholars, including Cornelius-Ukpepi and Opuwari (2019), Ajuwon (2008; 2012), and Garuba (2003), have emphasised the importance of funding, adequate resources, and teacher competence to successful inclusion for SEN/D students within mainstream schools in Nigeria. The persistent gap in SEN/D students' inclusion, therefore, raises questions regarding the Nigerian government's commitment to ensuring effective inclusion for these students.

It is important to note that IE implementation continues to experience significant challenges in countries worldwide. For example, in Sweden, despite the provision of the 2020 education policy, there has been an increase in special school enrolments (Barow and Berhanu, 2021). Magnússon (2019) and Magnússon et al. (2019) highlight that social exclusion and bullying are major factors influencing parents' decision to enrol their SEN/D children in special schools in Sweden (Magnússon, 2019; Magnússon et al., 2019). Additionally, Gachago and Peart (2022) underscore the importance of teachers' competence in addressing the diverse needs of SEN/D students within mainstream schools to achieve inclusion success. They suggest that in Kenya, the effectiveness of inclusion is debatable as teachers often lack the necessary skill set to address the diverse needs of SEN/D students within mainstream schools.

The failure of IE to gain a secure foothold in education systems worldwide has led to a body of studies that catalogues barriers to implementing IE. Notable scholars like Schuelka et al. (2020) indicate that barriers such as a deficit mindset have continued to impact access and participation in education for students from historically marginalised groups, including SEN/D students. The authors argue that it is important to ensure meaningful participation and engagement for vulnerable students by

considering all learners' diverse needs and contexts. Genova's (2015) study, which explored the personal experiences of people with disability in Spain, Lithuania and Greece concerning national policies, highlights cultural and institutional barriers that strongly limit access to inclusive education. They identified persistent negative attitudes towards disability and insufficient resources and support for teachers and students to effectively implement inclusive education as critical challenges to IE in these countries. Sources such as General Comment 4 (United Nations, 2016) and the General Education Monitoring Report of 2020 (UNESCO, 2020) also gave insight into critical barriers. These barriers include persistent prejudices and discrimination of students with SEN/D, negative attitudes about inclusion, a lack of research and data to monitor progress, inadequate laws and policies, government will and financial provision, poor quality teacher education, and inaccessible schools and curricula (UNESCO, 2020). Addressing these barriers can help create the conditions for successful IE implementation. Primarily, IE is concerned with fostering access to an equitable and supportive learning environment for all students, notwithstanding their socioeconomic status, gender, and abilities (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Ainscow et al., 2019; Odunsi, 2018; Federal Ministry of Education, 2016; UNESCO, 1994). SEN/D students' inclusion is invariably embedded in IE. Therefore, IE and inclusion are used interchangeably in this thesis. SEN/D represents students who require significant support to participate in school activities due to concerns such as disabilities (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016; Department for Education, 2015; UNESCO, 1994). As such, throughout this thesis, the term SEN/D student is used synonymously with students with disabilities.

1.3 Education Policies in Nigeria

For the purposes of this thesis, Nigeria is seen to have passed through two significant phases: colonial (1903-1960) and post-independence eras (1960 till date). During the colonial era, education policy in Nigeria aimed to bring Nigerians to a higher level of civilisation and develop administrative skills (Ojo et al., 2023; Abraham, 2020; Nwokorie and Devllieger, 2019; Brydges and Mkandawire, 2018). Therefore, it prioritised instilling the coloniser's (Britain) ideals in Nigerians and emphasised administrative training over broader development needs. However, post-independence, Nigerian education policies have consistently underlined education as a crucial pathway to development for citizens (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016; 2015; 2013; 2008; 2004; Federal Government of Nigeria, 1977). For example, a significant focus of the 1977 National Policy on Education (NPE), Nigeria's first indigenous education policy post-independence, was developing individuals' capacity to contribute to the country's developmental needs (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1977).

Subsequent policy reviews of education policies in Nigeria have continued to prioritise citizens' empowerment to address the country's developmental and technological needs. For instance, the 2004 NPE emphasised science-based education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). The policy proposed that university admissions allocate sixty per cent of slots to science-based courses and forty per cent to humanities-based courses (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004:45). However, universities were unable to meet the prescribed science-humanities ratio (Okeke and Chukwudebelu, 2024). According to Okeke and Chukwudebelu (2024), while more candidates applied for humanity courses, those admitted into science-based courses are not equipped with the skills necessary for national development. This suggests that there is a skills gap in science-based courses in Nigeria.

Post-independence, Nigerian education policies emphasise education as a fundamental right to be accessed by all without discrimination (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016; 2015; 2013; 2008; 2004; Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999). The 1999 NPE prescribed a compulsory nine-year Universal Basic Education (UBE) for all children in the country (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1998). However, the policy failed to achieve its goals because it was not enforced. The Nigerian government has also instituted educational policies such as the 2023 and 2016 National Policies on Inclusive Education (NPIE) to address issues relating to educational inequalities (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016). However, issues such as lack of resources, scarcity of trained personnel, insufficient funding, and infrastructural deficit continue to challenge education in Nigeria (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Pinnock, 2020; ActionAid; 2020; Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari, 2019; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016). Consequently, SEN/D students in Nigeria continue to experience exclusion from education generally and particularly from mainstream schools (Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari, 2019; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016; Osuji-Alatilehin, 2016; Manuel and Adeleke, 2015; Adeniyi et al., 2015).

Persistent SEN/D students' exclusion from mainstream schools underlines the need to explore their inclusion within mainstream schools in Nigeria to understand the relationship between policy and practice. For example, Angwaomaodoko (2023), ActionAid (2020) and Pinnock (2020) emphasise the need to urgently evaluate inclusion policies in Nigeria. Additionally, it is often believed that epistemic hegemony exists between some Global North countries such as the United States of America (USA), England and many Global South countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa regarding IE conceptualisation and implementation (Abdulrahman et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018). This view necessitates exploring inclusion for SEN/D

students through the lens of local stakeholders (Moosavi, 2020; Nguyen, 2019; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). Such endeavour may foreground their understanding and experiences of including SEN/D students within their contexts. At the same time, it can challenge colonial legacies in educational approaches such as SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools (Abdulrahman et al., 2021).

Foregrounding local understanding and experiences of inclusion for these students can promote more effective inclusion for SEN/D students in Nigeria. While the terms 'Global South' and 'Global North' appear to refer solely to geographical locations, their meanings extend beyond that. Their meanings vary across contexts and time (Graml et al., 2021). These terms encompass economic development and shared experiences of domination, including economic and knowledge production. In this thesis, the division is based on economic status and development. Global North countries refer to countries such as the USA, England, Canada, Finland, and Sweden, which are known for their advanced technology and resources. The Global South refers to countries like Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, and Kenya, often characterised by fewer resources and less development (Ojo et al., 2023; Graml et al., 2021; Misalucha, 2015).

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The study explores SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State using a decolonial theoretical approach (Decoloniality theory), which critically engages with the legacy of colonialism and its impact on knowledge production (Ubisi, 2021; Moosavi, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). This approach enables an exploration of how epistemic hegemony from the Global North influences the conceptualisation and implementation of phenomena like IE and SEN/D students' inclusion. The fact that much of Decoloniality theory is

interested in destabilising the 'truth' propagated by some Global North countries and allowing alternative perspectives to be heard regarding issues relating to IE across contexts (Lemos, 2023; Moosavi, 2020; Garcia, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Mignolo, 2011) makes the theory relevant to this study.

Since the decolonial theoretical approach is concerned with interrogating the colonial matrix of power, it can address social justice and equity issues in education (Garcia, 2020). This theoretical approach allows for examining emerging literature on IE in Nigeria and its conceptualisation and implementation framework as presented in some Global North literature, such as the Salamanca Statement framework for special education (UNESCO, 1994) and Arcidiacono and Baucal (2020). Oppression and marginalisation of vulnerable groups such as SEN/D students still exist in society (Adam, 2020; Hart, 2019; United Nations, 2018). Harts (2019), for example, highlights ongoing injustice towards some learners, including SEN/D students, which has led to unequal possibilities for these learners to realise their educational aspirations. Since education under the right circumstances, can reduce inequalities (United Nations, 2018), interrogating SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools in Nigeria through a decolonial lens may contribute to social transformation as it can help to reconceptualise IE and its practice in Nigeria. Consequently, a study that is guided by a decolonial approach can enhance SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools in the country.

Understanding phenomena such as IE can create a community of learners with legitimate opportunities to learn and progress individually and collectively (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Odunsi, 2018; Ainscow et al., 2006; Ainscow, 2005; Booth, 2000). Although IE is about the learning experiences of all children within the school community, this study focuses on SEN/D students.

1.5 The Study Questions

Following the understanding that IE practice is challenged in Nigeria, I raised the following research questions:

- What are the participants' (teachers, headteachers, students without SEN/D, SEN/D students and parents of SEN/D students from an inclusive public and private secondary school in Lagos State) understanding of IE?
- How do the participants interpret their lived experience of the SEN/D students' inclusion in their settings?
- What are the challenges faced by the participants in including SEN/D students in their settings?

These questions guided my study methodology.

1.6 The Study Methodology

This study is qualitative, using a single-embedded case study design within the social constructivist paradigm (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Reiter, 2017; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This study approach helped to address the meaning of human encounters (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Creswell, 2013). Instead of relying solely on numbers and statistics, it allows me to embrace the nuanced perspectives of the participants regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State (Creswell, 2013). The approach is relevant to this study on contemporary issues like SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools within real-life contexts. Therefore, it can give a better understanding of SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools within my context. This understanding maintains the standpoint that reality or truth is socially constructed, and knowledge about the truth can be uncovered by making sense of the lived experiences of social actors (Berger and Luckmann, 1967;1991). I adopted semi-structured interviews for data collection

to elicit a rich understanding of individual participants' lived experiences of including SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State (Cohen et al., 2011; May 2011). I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with the participants online via Microsoft Teams.

The study participants consisted of twenty purposefully selected people from inclusive public and private secondary schools in Lagos State. These participants are two headteachers, six teachers involved in having SEN/D students in mainstream classrooms, four parents of SEN/D students, four SEN/D students and four non-SEN/D students. Data was analysed using elements taken from Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) by Charmaz (2006; 2014). Charmaz (2006; 2014) presents a distinct qualitative approach that encourages a detailed analysis of personal accounts before producing a general statement. This approach allows access to how participants make sense of their social world, analyse their accounts, and foreground their voices as stakeholders, including SEN/D students in private and public mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State.

1.7 Developing a Research Interest

This study stems from a blend of personal experience and intellectual curiosity. As a teacher and school director, spanning over two decades, I encountered many children. While some were able to meet learning expectations easily, others struggled. Witnessing frustration from parents, teachers, and children due to differences in learning abilities ignited my curiosity. This prompted me to explore how to help SEN/D students. My initial response to these frustrations was to embark on a Master's degree at the University of East London (UEL), where I could learn how the more developed countries have progressed in Special Education (SE). While studying at UEL, I was introduced to the concept of IE. I was interested in the phenomenon and wondered

why it was not popular in my setting (Nigeria). Therefore, as part of my Master's degree, I carried out a study that explored the awareness of Special Educational Needs (SEN) among secondary school teachers in urban and rural areas of the country. The study found that the teachers need more knowledge of SEN/D despite the provision for SE and IE in the NPE (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016; 2015; 2013). With the understanding acquired from my study on the level of awareness of SEN among secondary school teachers in Nigeria for my Master's degree in UEL, I took a leap to pursue a doctorate to explore the implementation of IE regarding SEN/D students in Nigeria.

This study is further motivated by the understanding from a decolonial theoretical approach that SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools in Lagos State can be enhanced if:

- The conceptualisation and practice of IE are decontextualised to reflect local lived realities (Abdulrahman et al., 2021; Walton, 2018).
- A broad range of critical stakeholders of IE in Lagos State are engaged in exploring their understanding of IE, how they interpret their experience of including SEN/D students in their settings and the challenges encountered in their settings (Howell et al., 2019).
- There are alternative narratives regarding phenomena like IE from Africans' perspectives to reflect their lived realities (Moosavi, 2022; Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018; Mbembe, 2017; 2016).

In essence, the decolonial theoretical approach allows for sensitivity to the conceptualisation of IE in Lagos State and the interpretation of the phenomenon as it has been subjected to various meanings across and within contexts (Niholm, 2020; Ainscow et al., 2019). As such, it highlights the importance of a more precise

awareness of how IE stakeholders interpret their experiences and the challenges they encounter in including SEN/D students in their settings (Howell et al., 2019; Cohen et al., 2002; Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Particularly, my position as a student in a Global North university, exposed to academic writings from the region, warrants that I consciously acknowledge participants' views as well as interrogate my own. Each of these positions acknowledges the need to examine social reality through different perspectives to understand how people shape their perceived realities (Cohen et al., 2002). To further sustain this point, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) argue that it may be difficult for an external person to fully understand people's lived experiences as it may be problematic to assume "that enough is known to recognise important concern…." (P. 7). These ideas align with my methodological position on engaging a broad IE stakeholder in my setting to address my research questions.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study explores SEN/D students' inclusion within two mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State to understand local interpretations, experiences, and challenges of inclusion for SEN/D students. I chose to embark on this study because it appears that the commitment to SEN/D students' education and inclusion into mainstream schools along with their non-SEN/D peers in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016) is more or less rhetoric. Despite several educational policies which encourage SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools, empirical evidence from the literature highlights the need to address the huge gap between policy and practice in the country (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Pinnock, 2020; Fajemilo et al, 2020; Cornelius-Ukpepi and Opuwari, 2019; Odunsi, 2018; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016; Ajuwon, 2008; 2012). These gaps include low levels of awareness regarding SEN/D conditions and how to include SEN/D students in mainstream

schools in the country, inadequate resources, infrastructure limitations, and a shortage of qualified teachers (see sections 1.2 and 1.3). The central argument of my study is that since IE advocates that no condition is good enough for anyone to be excluded from equal opportunity to quality education, it can reduce inequality by enhancing educational opportunities for SEN/D students in Nigeria.

A search of studies on education in Nigeria and Lagos State indicates methodological, contextual, theoretical, and participant gaps in educational studies, especially on inclusion for SEN/D students in Lagos State, Nigeria. For instance, most studies focus on public primary schools (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Odunsi, 2018; Okorosaye-Orubute and Maigida, 2018; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016) and specific inclusion stakeholders (Adigun (2021; Ajuwon, 201). Additionally, study approaches underscore a need for more qualitative study. This sentiment is embedded in Okhawere and Isibor (2021) and Abakpa et al. (2017). These scholars observe the tendency for a stereotypical restriction on approaches to conducting educational studies in Nigeria. Such restrictions on study approaches stifle the spirit of innovation, open-mindedness, and scholarly curiosity. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, no known study has explored SEN/D students' inclusion through a decoloniality theory lens in Lagos State and Nigeria.

Consequent to the perceived methodological, theoretical, and participant gaps in educational studies in Lagos State, Nigeria, this study, which focuses on many inclusion stakeholders across private and public secondary schools, is novel. Additionally, the study paradigm and methodology reflect its novelty. The study adopts the qualitative approach, using a single-embedded case study design within a constructivist paradigm. The study highlights participants' voices regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in Lagos State. This can increase the methodological arena of

research in IE education in the State, which is essential for educational policy, research, and practice. Similarly, this study's theoretical perspective and methodological approach, which focus on the lived experience of many stakeholders in IE, could extend the emerging literature in the SEN/D field in Nigeria and Africa.

1.9 The Study Structure

In exploring the inclusion of students with special educational needs/disability (SEN/D) within two mainstream secondary schools (private and public) in Lagos State, Nigeria, this study is arranged in nine chapters. This **first chapter** has presented the focus of the study and summarised its significance along with the theoretical framework and methodology that has been adopted. The **second chapter** focuses on the multifaceted aspects of IE within the global landscape. This will include the evolution of IE, its interpretations across contexts, and the contextual factors that can impact its interpretations and implementation. At the same time, the chapter reviews the literature on SEN/D (a crucial issue in the IE field), which will extend to disability conceptualisation in Africa and Nigeria. **Chapter three** reviews the literature on SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria, including an introduction to the Nigerian education system and a brief review of the development of IE in Nigeria. Moreover, the chapter explores policy provisions for including SEN/D students in the country to understand how they have impacted their inclusion, and the challenges encountered in including them in mainstream schools.

In **chapter four**, the study presents the theoretical framework. Decoloniality theory critically engages with the epistemic hegemony within the IE field. The chapter presents a brief introduction to the theory and the justification for applying it to the study to provide insight into its significance. In addition, the chapter focuses on the power dynamic between the Global North and South regarding the dominance of some

Global North scholarships in knowledge production in IE. Following this, the chapter features decoloniality as a tool for disrupting the Global North's hegemony in knowledge production. **Chapter five** outlines the study design and methods strategy, which includes a qualitative case study drawing from a constructivist grounded theory analysis approach and using interviews with many inclusion stakeholders with two mainstream secondary schools regarding their interpretations of inclusion, experiences, and challenges faced when including SEN/D students in their settings. **Chapters six and seven** present findings from the interviews with the study participants. Within **chapter eight**, the study discusses the findings considering the theoretical framework adopted in this study and existing assumptions in the literature about the importance of decolonising inclusion for SEND students. Following this, **chapter nine** summarises the study by presenting three domains of contributions to knowledge in inclusion for SEN/D students.

CHAPTER TWO: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION WITHIN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the multifaceted aspects of inclusive education (IE) within the global landscape. Over time, IE has gained prominence in educational policy development and practice across several countries, including Nigeria, Ghana, Estonia, Sweden, England, and Finland (Knight et al., 2022; Adigun, 2021; Leijen et al., 2021; Akogun et al., 2018). These countries have enacted legislation and policies addressing the inclusion of Special Education Needs/Disabled (SEN/D) students in mainstream schools. Consequently, it may be concluded that IE is a global agenda (Ehsaan and Shahid, 2016; Pijl, Meijer, and Hearty, 1997). IE recognises diversity and encourages equity and tolerance (Knight et al., 2022; Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Odunsi, 2018; Ainscow et al., 2006). However, adapting this concept to different contexts' lived realities to enhance SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools remains an unsolved challenge (Odunsi, 2018). At the same time, there are extensive debates regarding its achievability (Kauffman and Hornby, 2020; Warnock, 2005; Kaufmann and Hallahan, 2005). Critical issues include balancing individualised support with collective learning opportunities and addressing resource constraints within mainstream schools (Kauffman and Hornby, 2020; Kaufmann and Hallahan, 2005). Furthermore, it is important to identify and address potential colonial tendencies associated with IE (Walton, 2018; Armstrong et al., 2011).

To explore IE within the global landscape, first, the study explores relevant literature on the evolution of IE. Secondly, the study examines IE interpretations across contexts. Thirdly, the study looks at contextual factors that can impact inclusive education interpretations and implementation, focusing on the implications of socioeconomic status on inclusion for SEN/D students and cultural influence on IE.

Fourthly, the literature on SEN/D (a crucial issue in the IE field), extending to disability conceptualisation in Africa and Nigeria, is reviewed. Lastly, the review ends with the chapter's conclusion.

2.1 The Evolution of Inclusive Education

The concept of Inclusive education (IE) was initially developed in countries of the Global North and evolved from establishing general rights for SEN/D students (Ainscow et al., 2019; Artiles et al., 2007). The education of SEN/D students received a boost following campaigns led by parents of children with SEND in the USA (Shumaieva, Svitlana and Kovalenko, 2021) and England (Williams-Brown and Hodkinson, 2020). These parents called for their children's education to be recognised as a right. However, some children, especially those with severe intellectual disabilities, were not accommodated in schools. Consequently, there were further agitations from many advocacy groups, such as the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC), The National Society for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb (now known as the National Deaf Children's Society), and parents of SEN/D children in England and the USA (Shumaieva, Svitlana and Kovalenko, 2021; Gardiner, 2017).

Subsequently, developments across different countries have been geared towards addressing issues relating to the education of SEN/D students. For example, at the global level, attempts to address the educational needs of SEN/D students are reflected in the proclamations of international conventions like the 1990 World Conference on Education held in Jomtien, Thailand and the 1994 Salamanca Conference (UNESCO, 1990; 1994). The 1994 Salamanca Conference addressed excluding marginalised and vulnerable children from education worldwide. It establishes that all SEN/D students have a right to education alongside their non-

SEN/D peers (UNESCO, 1994). England has also witnessed different policies regarding SEN/D, ranging from the 1889 Egerton Report (Egerton, 1889), which was commissioned to address the educational needs of blind and deaf children to the 2015 Special Education Needs and Disability Code of Practice (SENCoP) (DfE, 2015). The SENCoP aims to ensure that SEN/D students have equitable access to mainstream schools, actively participate in school activities, and are empowered to achieve educationally (Gardiner, 2017; Department for Education, 2015). However, SEN/D students are marginalised in mainstream schools due to factors such as inadequate funding (Booth, 2023) and school marketisation (The Guardian, 2019; Norwich, 2013). Among other things, school marketisation fosters competition among schools (Norwich 2013). In a system that values high academic performance above meeting educational need, children with SEND can find themselves viewed as 'non-marketable commodities' (Blackmore, 2000; Bonell, 2012).

The United States of America (USA) has attempted to address SEN/D students' inclusion. From the 1975 Federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) (The United States Congress, 1975), which required public schools to guarantee a free, appropriate public education to SEN/D students, to the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) (The United States Congress, 2004), there has been a range of legislation aimed at ensuring IE. IDEA seeks to clarify the following concepts: access and appropriateness, proper interpretation, and consistent application. Although legislation has attempted to address SEN/D students' exclusion in the USA, there is a need to improve their inclusion in the country (USA Department of Education, 2020; Lipkin and Okamoto, 2015). For instance, based on the evaluation of each state's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of IDEA, the USA Department of Education (2020) notes

that states need substantial intervention in implementing the requirements of IDEA. The department observed that less than half of the states complied with the federal special education law for the 2018-2019 academic year.

Unlike England and the USA, Nigeria like other countries in the Global South, implemented provisions for the education of children with special needs at a later stage in 2004. The 2004 National Policy on Education officially embraced educating children and youth with disabilities alongside their peers without disabilities in regular schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). However, efforts have been made to address SEN/D students' education in Nigeria. Consequent to the promulgation of the 1951 Macpherson Constitution (L. P. M., 1953), which mandated that education should be prioritised in Nigeria, a series of policies have emerged in Nigeria to address SEN/D students' inclusion educationally (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016; 2015; 2013; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019). Table 2:1 presents a chronological table stating the key pieces of legislation relevant to SEN/D in an educational context in Nigeria. These policies include the following:

The 2013 National Policy on Education (NPE), which states that “education of children with special needs shall be free at all levels” and that “an inclusive approach to the education of children with special needs shall be adopted” (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 14).

The 2015 National Policy on Special Needs Education in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015). The policy provides a framework for identifying, assessing, placing, and delivering services for SEN/D learners. It encourages enrolling SEN/D students in mainstream schools in their neighbourhoods (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015).

The 2019 Disability Act protects and promotes the rights and welfare of SEN/D students, including their access to mainstream schools (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019). Like the 2013 NPE, the 2019 Disability Act also provides free education for SEN/D students and promotes their inclusion in mainstream schools at all levels, including post-secondary.

The 2023 National Policy on Inclusive Education (NPIE), which is the current policy on SEN/D students' educational inclusion in Nigeria, contains specific guidelines for action from a range of stakeholders, including private schools and civil society (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023).

The 2023 NPIE aims to create a unified education system, focusing primarily on including SEN/D students in mainstream schools. Even with its goal of ensuring equal educational opportunities for all learners in Nigeria by engaging stakeholders, raising awareness, building capacity, and monitoring implementation, a gap persists between policy intention and actual practice (Angwaomaodoko, 2023). This discrepancy implies that SEN/D students are prone to exclusion in the country. It has been argued that there are multiple interpretations and implementations of IE within different contexts (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Magnusson, 2019; Odunsi, 2018). Therefore, I will explore the global interpretations of IE in the following section.

Table 2:1 **A chronological table stating the key pieces of legislation relevant to SEND in an educational context in Nigeria**

Policy	Year	Source
National Policy on Education	2004	Federal Ministry of Education
National Policy on Education	2008	Federal Ministry of Education
National Policy on Education	2013	Federal Ministry of Education
National Policy on Special Educational Needs	2015	Federal Ministry of Education
National Policy on Inclusive Education in Nigeria	2016	Federal Ministry of Education

Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act	2019	Federal Government of Nigeria
National Policy on Inclusive Education in Nigeria	2023	Federal Ministry of Education

2.2 Interpretations of Inclusive Education Within a Global Context

Inclusive Education (IE) is a debatable phenomenon and does not have an agreed interpretation (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Magnusson, 2019; Odunsi, 2018; McLeskey, 2014; Ainscow et al., 2006). The 1990 World Conference on Education in Jomtien, Thailand, portrays IE as a response to excluding marginalised and vulnerable children from education systems worldwide (UNESCO, 1990). Therefore, IE reflects a commitment to Education for All (EFA). This perception of IE suggests automatic access to education for marginalised and vulnerable children. However, regardless of their presence in schools, children may be prone to exclusion from school life, including teaching-learning, as negative attitudes and sensory and physical barriers may inhibit access, participation, and potential maximisation (Odunsi, 2018; Omede, 2016).

In contrast to the key elements of the 1990 World Conference on Education in Thailand (UNESCO, 1990), the Salamanca Statement presents IE as a fundamental right. It reiterates the need to recognise diversity in designing and implementing education (UNESCO, 1994). Notably, the Salamanca Statement encourages necessary adjustments to ensure that SEN/D students have access to mainstream schools. This perspective indicates that adjustments would allow them to achieve their potential maximally. Aligning with the Salamanca Statement, Ainscow (2005) notes that adjustments should include eliminating social exclusion due to negative attitudes and improving responses to diversity due to disability. This position underlines the need for schools to address physical and non-physical barriers, which can hinder the accommodation of diversities among learners.

Based on the analysis of several studies of IE, Ainscow et al. (2006) reinforce that there are multiple stances on IE. They identify some views of IE, including the following:

- Meeting the needs of SEN/D students within mainstream schools.
- Developing a school for all.
- A focus on those vulnerable to exclusion.

IE is essential to all children, not just a few. It encourages all students to actively participate in school activities to enhance their capacity to achieve their potential optimally (Molina-Roldan et al., 2021; Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Ainscow, 2005). In a study that sought to identify the impact of IE on non-SEN/D students, Molina-Roldan et al. (2021) found that IE engenders acceptance, respect, participation, and a high sense of responsibility. Additionally, Elder and Migliarini (2020) and Odunsi (2018) highlighted its tendency to impact SEN/D students' mental health and confidence positively. Hence, it may be concluded that IE is mutually beneficial to all students, even beyond the school environment. Therefore, it is a process of promoting equity and quality in education to increase participation and a sense of belonging for all students through appropriate educational approaches that address and respond to a wide range of academic and behavioural needs (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Odunsi, 2018; Ajuwon, 2012; Ainscow et al., 2006; Ainscow, 2005; Booth, 2000).

While equality recognises the need to treat everyone the same way, equity is concerned with adequately addressing an individual's specific needs (Martha, 2021; Odunsi, 2018). In education, equity entails providing individualised accommodations for SEN/D students based on their needs (Odunsi, 2018). Furthermore, the IE process entails changing the culture and organisation of schools to ensure equitable access for SEN/D students (Booth, 2023; Chapman et al., 2011). Indeed, the nominal idea of

IE promotes that all students, including SEN/D students, should learn together in mainstream schools (UNESCO, 1994). However, the concept has been interpreted differently across countries, with different countries having different prerequisites for implementing it (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Leijen et al., 2021; Magnússon, 2019; Magnússon et al., 2019). The following sub-section explores the various interpretations of the phenomenon.

2.2.1 *Inclusive Education Interpretations and Implementation Across Countries*

Across and within countries such as Sweden, Estonia, Ghana, and South Africa, IE has been interpreted and implemented differently (Leijen et al., 2021; Magnússon, 2019). Including SEN/D students in the classroom alongside their non-SEN/D peers is often a popular interpretation of what IE means. For example, the Swedish 2020 education policy indicates that mainstream schools must make required adjustments to accommodate SEN/D students (Ministry of Education of Sweden, 2020). The policy provides that SEN/D students can attend special schools, if necessary, which implies that enrolment in special schools is an exception. However, there has been an increase in special school enrolments in Sweden despite the provision of the 2020 education policy (Barow and Berhanu, 2021). According to Barow and Berhanu (2021), since the last three decades of Swedish education policy and practice, there has been a tendency towards the marginalisation and segregation of SEN/D students. Additionally, Magnússon (2019) and Magnússon et al. (2019) emphasise the impact of social exclusion and bullying on parents' decision to enrol their SEN/D children in special schools. Similarly, in Estonia, since 2010, education legislation has provided for SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools along with their non-SEN/D peers (Leijen et al., 2021). According to Leijen et al. (2021), this legislative provision has significantly increased SEN/D students' enrolment in

mainstream schools. An increase in SEN/D students' enrolment in mainstream schools informs the emergence of special classes within mainstream schools (Leijen et al., 2021). This practice is referred to as partial inclusion (Tiernan, 2022).

Partial inclusion occurs when SEN/D students are enrolled in a mainstream school but learn in separate locations within the school. Nevertheless, the unavailability of support specialists such as speech therapists and psychologists has negatively impacted adequate support for SEN/D students in mainstream schools in Estonia (Leijen et al., 2021). Since the 2000s, IE orientation has involved enrolling SEN/D students in mainstream schools in Finland (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Helsinki International Schools, 2022). Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis (2024) and Helsinki International Schools (2022) highlight the country's commitment to inclusion. They note that since inclusion is the goal, the term 'special needs' does not appear in Finnish educational legislation, indicating that inclusion is shaped by individual needs in Finland. This approach aligns with the social model of disability, emphasising removing barriers and fostering equal opportunities within mainstream schools. The social model of disability recognises that impairments may not be disabling (Barnes, 2018; Barton, 2018). Instead, it encourages teachers/schools' reflection on practice and school ethos. This approach can positively impact how SEN/D students experience school. This inclusion orientation significantly reduced special schools in Finland (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024). Nonetheless, like Estonia, Finland practices partial inclusion.

Furthermore, in England, policies such as the 2010 Equality Act (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010) and the 2015 SEN/D Code of Practice (SENCoP) indicate that it is unlawful for any education provider to discriminate between students on grounds of differences, including disabilities. This expectation warrants that schools

change their culture and practice to be more inclusive and better at identifying and supporting needs (Department for Education, 2015). This implies that IE is interpreted as educating SEN/D students alongside their non-SEN/D peers in mainstream schools. It is important to note that, like other European countries, schools in England practice partial inclusion, and some SEN/D students are also segregated in special schools (Hodkinson, 2020).

A look at the interpretations of IE in some African countries also suggests that their policies provide for full and partial inclusion for SEN/D students. While some SEN/D students are enrolled in mainstream schools, some can be supported in a unit within mainstream schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015; Ghana Ministry of Education, 2015; Department of Education, 2001). For example, in Ghana, the 2015 IE policy postulates that "regular schools shall provide education for all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions" (Ghana Ministry of Education, 2015, p.14, section 5.1.1.2.1a). This implies that the policy encourages SEN/D students to access education in mainstream schools alongside their non-SEN/D peers. However, the policy also states that "… if it is proven through assessment that the child is incapable of benefiting from regular classroom attendance, or graduated classroom attendance, the child shall be placed in the special unit within the regular schools" (Ghana Ministry of Education, 2015, p.14, section 5.1.1.2.1c). The policy promotes partial inclusion for some SEN/D students. In South Africa, the 2001 Education White Paper constitution provides for the inclusion of SEN/D students in mainstream schools (Department of Education, 2001). The White Paper also provides that "learners who require low-intensive support will receive this in ordinary schools (Department of Education, 2001, p. 15). Like the Ghanaian inclusive policy, the document also promotes partial inclusion for some SEN/D

students. Nevertheless, most SEN/D students currently access learning in special schools in Africa (Opoku-NKoom and Achah-Jnr, 2023; Mpu and Adu, 2021).

Ghana and South Africa face similar challenges to SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools, including adequately trained teachers to support the needs of all learners in mainstream schools (Opoku-NKoom and Achah-Jnr, 2023). For example, Opoku-NKoom and Achah-Jnr (2023) identify the need for teachers' competency to include SEN/D students in Ghana. According to Opoku-NKoom and Achah- Jnr, 2023, p.17), "While classrooms had somewhat good ventilation and lighting, knowledge to adapt the curriculum and the flow of inclusive knowledge among teachers was limited." Similarly, Mpu and Adu (2021) reinforce the need to effectively enhance teacher competence to include SEN/D students in the classroom. Mpu and Adu (2021, p. 225) revealed that "insufficient training, lack of knowledge and skills of educators were the overarching themes that resulted in educators feeling a sense of inadequacy to teach in an inclusive education classroom.". The issue of teacher competence in including SEN/D students in mainstream schools appears to resonate across African countries. The study of Gachago and Peart (2022), which explores the challenges faced in creating inclusive environments for all children in Kenya, also underscores that teachers often lack the necessary skill set to address the diverse needs of SEN/D students within mainstream schools. This highlights the cruciality of comprehensive and continuous teacher training in African countries.

In contrast to other countries with clear policies regarding inclusion, Greece has yet to develop a written policy addressing SEN/D students' inclusion. Although education policy discussion in Greece appears to promote IE, an official policy framework still needs to be established (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024). Additionally, within the country, SEN/D students' support is seriously underpinned by

medical diagnosis and labelling. The prevailing approach in Greece aligns with the medical model of disability. Unlike the social model of disability, the medical model of disability views disability as a result of SEN/D condition(s) (Zaks, 2023). Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis (2024) observe that this practice has resulted in an increase in special schools and enrolment in them since 2010.

In reality, practice does not align with policy ideals. While most countries, including England, portray a social model of disability disposition to IE, the actual experiences of many SEN/D students reveal persistent challenges. SEN/D students still face exclusion from mainstream schools, and some of those enrolled in mainstream schools learn in separate locations within those schools (Hodkinson, 2020). Hodkinson (2020) aptly captures this view when he says, "It is also the case that the majority of children with Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are still educated in special schools" (P. 312). This observation shows that current inclusion practices in different countries deviate from the core ideology of IE, which recognises that all learners should have equal access to learning within the same school.

The preceding discussion on the interpretations and implementation of IE shows various understandings and practices across different countries. Nevertheless, a common thread is that IE is seen as a means to enhance SEN/D students' access to high-quality education. Despite this intention, implementation is challenged by different factors, ranging from social exclusion, bullying, shortage of trained teachers and support specialists, and a need for a written policy specifically addressing inclusion for SEN/D students. IE interpretations and implementation in some countries indicate a tension between policy aspirations and reality for SEN/D students. While policies often emphasise inclusion and accommodations, aligning with the social model of disability, the actual practice tends to lean towards the medical model.

Consequently, SEN/D students are often placed in special schools. This approach reflects a more medicalised approach rather than a fully inclusive one. Some countries' policies explicitly state that some SEN/D students should be placed in special schools (Ghana Ministry of Education, 2015; Department of Education, 2001). The gap between policy ideals and reality underscores the ongoing challenge of effective inclusion for all SEN/D students.

The various IE interpretations and implementation across countries are instructive. They highlight that the prerequisites for interpreting and implementing IE in many countries may be subjected to political priorities and economic considerations (Hodkinson, 2020; Magnússon et al., 2019). The practical realities of interpreting and implementing IE across countries aligns with the ongoing debates about inclusion versus special school. Therefore, the following sub-section presents a review of relevant literature on this debate.

2.2.2 The Inclusion Versus Special School Debate

The inclusion versus special school debate, which seems to be at the core of the inclusion debate, focuses on the best setting to educate SEN/D students (Kauffman et al., 2022; Leijen et al., 2021; Kauffman and Hornby, 2020; Warnock, 2005). While some scholars propose that they should be educated alongside their non-SEN/D peers in the same school, others argue that they should be segregated to special settings where their needs are best met (Kauffman et al., 2022; Leijen et al., 2021; Kauffman and Hornby, 2020; Warnock, 2005). Kauffman and Hornby's (2020) critique of IE ideology strongly supported the need to educate SEN/D children in special schools. According to Kauffman and Hornby (2020), “Appropriate instruction is by far the most important task of education for all students, including those with disabilities. Making appropriate instruction a reality for all students requires special

education, including teachers with special training rather than a generic ‘one size fits all’ or all-purpose preparation” (P.10). This argument suggests that adequate support for SEN/D students in mainstream classrooms may be challenging.

Similar viewpoints regarding being able to support SEN/D student within mainstream classrooms have also been presented by Kupper et al. (2020), who reported that many teachers in Estonia expressed concerns about their capacity to teach SEN/D and non-SEN/D students in the same classroom. Equally, some Master’s students in Estonia opine that including SEN/D students in mainstream classrooms can engender an increase in behavioural problems, drop-out rates and developmental delays as regular teachers may not have the required knowledge and skills to sufficiently support SEN/D students (Kupper et al., 2020).

Indeed, many parents of SEN/D students need to be more convinced about the capacity of mainstream schools to effectively teach their children (Satherly and Norwich, 2022; Brydges and Mkandawire, 2018; Runswick-Cole, 2008). In a study focusing on English parents' decisions related to special school placements, Satherly and Norwich (2022) found that many parents prefer special schools to mainstream schools because they perceive the environment more suitable for their children. Brydges and Mkandawire (2018) found that parental decisions on where to enrol their SEN/D children in Nigeria are based on the severity of their conditions and how effectively they think general teachers can teach them. Warnock (2005), in her critique of inclusion, identified the need to rethink and redefine IE to give SEN/D children access to educational settings that best meet their need. Warnock position aligns with the view that SEN/D students should be educated in settings that best meet their needs. Kauffman et al. (2022) argued that the emphasis should be on learning progress and outcome rather than the place of instruction. Furthermore, Cooper and

Jacobs (2011) presented a critical view regarding including SEN/D students in mainstream schools. Cooper and Jacobs (2011) submit that "ironically, the promotion of the delusion that being present in a school equates with being socially and educationally included is one of the most dishonest insidious forms of exclusion" (p. 6). This assertion presents IE as an illusion that can foster SEN/D students' exclusion.

The preceding critical stances about IE suggest that achieving the IE agenda may be challenging. To substantiate this notion, Gardiner (2017) observes that in the UK, SEN/D students experience exclusion despite the provision in the 2015 SEN Code of Practice (SENCoP) (DfE, 2015). Similarly, in Nigeria, Akogun et al., 2018 note that the 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education (NPIE) has minimal impact on SEN/D students' inclusion. Borson (2017) equally asserts that the concerns regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools stem from the fact that mainstream schools do not effectively support them. As a result, some SEN/D students end up being excluded from the mainstream schools they attend. Inclusion demands more than mere presence within schools. Therefore, it could be argued that including SEN/D students in mainstream schools is inappropriate when schools and teachers are unprepared. Restricting SEN/D students to separate settings may be detrimental to both them and their non-SEN/D peers. Inclusion can benefit all students because it promotes equity and quality education (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Odunsi, 2018; Ajuwon, 2012; Ainscow et al., 2006; Ainscow, 2005). Through appropriate educational approaches, IE can increase participation and a sense of belonging for all students, addressing various academic and behavioural needs.

In a study that sought to identify the impact of IE on non-SEN/D students in Spain, Molina-Roldan et al. (2021) found that IE engenders acceptance, respect for others, participation, and a high sense of responsibility among non-SEN/D students.

Inclusion is equally beneficial to SEN/D students in that it predisposes them to the opportunity to develop agency and competencies, enabling them to participate equally in the wider society (Leijen et al., 2021; Felder, 2019; Ainscow and César, 2006). Elder and Migliarini (2020) and Odunsi (2018) also highlight its tendency to positively impact SEN/D students' mental health and confidence. This suggests that inclusion allows them to develop beyond their inherent capacities and exposes them to shared social values, thereby enhancing their capacity to function within the wider society (Magnússon et al., 2019; Ainscow and César, 2006). Since inclusion can foster growth alongside other children in mainstream schools, inclusion can better prepare SEN/D students for real-life experiences because mainstream schools serve as a microcosm of wider society (Leijen et al., 2021). Given the beneficial tendency of inclusion to both SEN/D and non-SEN/D students, it may be concluded that segregating them into special schools may hinder their capacity to compete effectively in society. At the same time, such segregation may inhibit the development of empathy and tolerance, which are vital to a healthy society (Farrell, 2010).

Moreover, restricting SEN/D students to special schools can be limiting because practices and technologies are often adapted to their constraints instead of being designed to enhance their full participation in education and society (Farrell, 2010). Advocates of inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream schools, such as Arcidiacono and Baucal (2020), Leijen et al. (2021), Magnússon et al. (2019), and Farrell (2010) embrace the IE ideology as a fundamental right to equal opportunity and participation. They emphasise the importance of government's commitment to providing adequate resources and building capacities within schools to adapt to students' needs. They argue that the non-alignment of schools, teachers, and practices with the needs of SEN/D students is not an acceptable reason for their

exclusion from mainstream schools (Arcidiacono and Baucal, 2020; Magnússon et al., 2019; Farrell, 2010). In line with IE's focus on reducing segregating and excluding practices, they advocate for schools and teachers to adapt to SEN/D students' needs to enhance their learning and developmental needs. Hence, this discussion highlights the need for politicians to display the political will to be committed to interpreting and implementing IE policies such that SEN/D students can be effectively prepared to be functional community members even post-education (Arcidiacono and Baucal, 2020; Magnússon et al., 2019; Farrell, 2010).

Both arguments for and against SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools demonstrate the dilemmas around IE interpretations and implementation. These dilemmas include the dilemma of choice versus equity (Norwich, 2008; Derrida, 1992; Norwich, 2013). It can be challenging to strike the right balance between inclusion and equal opportunity for all learners. For example, based on the belief that specialised settings can foster access to personalised interventions, some parents and students may choose special schools to exercise their autonomy. However, this choice contradicts the IE tenet, which promotes social cohesion, empathy, and understanding because it may perpetuate segregation and limit exposure to diversity. Ultimately, the dilemma of choice versus equity in including SEN/D students in mainstream schools revolves around balancing individual preferences and ensuring equal opportunities for all learners.

Another established tension within IE has been described as 'the dilemma of difference (Norwich, 2013). This dilemma arises due to the challenge that may arise due to the need to identify and address differences among students based on SEN/D. Addressing the dilemma of difference may warrant that focus should be on learning for all children rather than identifying and treating children with SEN/D differently, as

this may lead to them being stigmatised or not valued like others (Florian, 2007). However, it is important to note that need identification can benefit students with SEN/D because it may foster curriculum and assessment adaptation (Norwich and Koutsouris, 2017). Besides, need identification is critical for effectively allocating school resources (Norwich, 2013).

The arguments regarding the location for SEN/D students' inclusion concern their development (Leijen et al., 2021; Magnússon, 2019). Nevertheless, these arguments position SEN/D students within two frames: short-term (meeting immediate learning needs) and long-term (developing the capacity to function in the broader society post-education) (Leijen et al., 2021). Consequently, they propose different outcomes and visions of SEN/D students functionality as citizens (Magnússon, 2019). The inclusion versus special school debate underscores the need for a clear understanding of what IE truly entails within a specific context. A well-defined understanding of IE may address SEN/D students' academic needs and enhance their social well-being. Hence, a thoughtful and context-specific understanding of IE can lead to positive student outcomes, fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment.

Although IE is gaining recognition as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners globally, the literature suggests that its implementation across contexts can be challenged due to factors including family socioeconomic disparities and cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2020). Therefore, the study examines the challenges to IE in the following section.

2.3 Factors that Can Impact Inclusive Education Interpretations and Implementation

Through a collective effort by policymakers and the entire school community to create a truly welcoming and equitable environment, inclusive education (IE) can

combat discrimination and create welcoming communities. However, several factors can influence its implementation, including political, socioeconomic, and cultural issues across contexts (UNESCO, 2020). The study chooses to focus on socioeconomic and cultural issues that affect the implementation of IE in more depth than other factors because these appeared to be more pressing in both the literature about Nigeria and the data collected. Moreover, since decolonial approaches recognise the need to acknowledge how cultural influence can shape inclusion conceptualisation, implementation, and experience (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018), cultural influence on IE is relevant to the theoretical framework (Decoloniality theory). The theory seeks to promote an alternative narrative to the Eurocentric knowledge hierarchy by foregrounding cultural values and indigenous knowledge to promote inclusion for SEN/D students (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). In the following sub-section, the study explores the literature on the first IE challenge the study chose to explore in this thesis, the impact of socioeconomic status on inclusion for SEN/D students.

2.3.1 *The Implications of Socioeconomic Status on Inclusion for SEN/D Students*

Socioeconomic status reflects an individual's position within a social structure. It relates to social background, education level, and access to economic resources (Tompsett and Knoester, 2023). It is undeniable that family socioeconomic status affects children's access to educational resources, the schools they attend and most likely their outcomes (Tompsett and Knoester, 2023; Sosu et al., 2021). While IE aims to integrate SEN/D students into mainstream classrooms, implementing it for SEN/D students is faced with challenges, including restrictions based on socioeconomic status, impacting access to high-quality education across countries (Azpitarte and Holt, 2024; ActionAid, 2021; UNESCO, 2020; Magnússon et al., 2019). For example, during a report briefing for school leaders in November 2015, it was observed that in

England, SEN/D children's socioeconomic status significantly impacts their performance at school and the choices they have later in life (DfE, 2015). According to the report, SEN/D pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds performed much lower in England than their non-SEN/D peers (Department for Education, 2015).

Riordan et al. (2021) also emphasise the impact of children's family socioeconomic status on their academic progress. According to Riordan et al. (2021), despite initiatives like the Pupil Premium, which aims to tackle socioeconomic disadvantage in schools, the educational progress of students from low-income families and children in care remains a challenge in most secondary schools in England. Hutchinson (2021) echoes this concern, referring to the 'postcode lottery' effect. In England, the level of support for SEN/D students is determined by the area they live. To illustrate this viewpoint, Hutchinson (2021) explained, "Families in poorer areas appear to have more limited support for their children and are likely to be subject to higher thresholds for accessing support" (P. 7). This underscores how living in a disadvantaged environment can significantly impact SEN/D students' access to adequate support.

Furthermore, Greece's IE implementation suggests that socioeconomic status can have a meaningful impact on SEN/D students' inclusion (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Scharenberg et al., 2019). For instance, a study by Scharenberg et al. (2019), which examined the impact of differences in classroom composition on the opportunities for educational outcomes and social participation of SEN/D students in inclusive primary school classes in the country revealed that "Students attending socioeconomically more privileged classes showed higher achievement levels" (P. 321). They observed that SEN/D students from advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds had higher learning attainment than their peers from disadvantaged

socioeconomic backgrounds. This study indicates a close link between SEN/D students' academic attainments and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, some parents may need to hire special assistants to provide personalised support to their SEN/D children to help them access learning and navigate school life effectively (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024). This implies that the responsibility and cost of education are transferred from the state to SEN/D students' families. As such, low-income families with SEN/D children may struggle with the cost of hiring an assistant for their children. This situation engenders a risk of exclusion for SEN/D students who may miss out on essential support. It can prevent their learning and social integration within mainstream schools.

In Nigeria, like other Global South countries that are still dealing with the many impacts of colonisation, effective implementation of IE may be negatively impacted by persistent historical inequality. For example, in Nigeria, many SEN/D students from low-income earning families may struggle to access quality education as there is a high dependency on private school (ActionAid, 2021; Pinnock, 2020). Families of SEN/D students, who may already face economic challenges, often struggle to afford private schools that can offer specialised supports that could better meet their children's needs. Inequalities regarding socioeconomic status and inclusion of children with SEN/D persist in other countries, including Sweden (Magnússon et al., 2019) and Nigeria (ActionAid, 2021). According to Magnússon et al. (2019), in Sweden, education is perceived as "a commodity to be purchased in a market rather than a public good" (P. 67). Therefore, children with SEN/D from low-income families may be unable to access appropriate support and high-quality education due to the service cost. This viewpoint suggests that while Nigeria faces significant challenges in providing IE for SEN/D students, those from low-income earning families are the most

disadvantaged. This viewpoint is premised on the 2021 research summary report by ActionAid. The report provides valuable insights into the state of education and disability inclusion in Nigeria. It states that notwithstanding the several national policies on inclusion in the country, SEN/D students are among the most educationally disadvantaged as schools are primarily privately owned and located in urban centres (ActionAid, 2021).

The prevalence of privately owned schools and the location of schools in urban centres in Nigeria has grave implications for SEN/D students from low-income families who may be unable to afford the cost of service in private schools. Sosu et al. (2021) also suggest that lower socioeconomic status is associated with higher levels of absenteeism in schools in Nigeria. Socioeconomic status can significantly impact parental involvement in their children's education and school attendance (Sosu et al., 2021; Iyoboyi, 2013). According to Sosu et al. (2021), while those in the upper classes may have the means and opportunities to get involved in their children's education, low socioeconomic families may struggle to be significantly involved in their children's education. This perspective relates to Iyoboyi's (2013) position that the poorer parents are, the more difficult it is for them to support their children's educational development. This has meant that across contexts, families from low socioeconomic status are unduly believed to be indifferent to their children's education (Usman et al., 2016).

The substantial impact of family socioeconomic status on SEN/D students' inclusion and educational outcomes signifies a deviation from IE ideology that promotes removing barriers to including SEN/D students along with their non-SEN/D peers in mainstream schools (UNESCO, 1994). These viewpoints highlight unequal opportunities for SEN/D students who are from low socioeconomic backgrounds across different countries. These unequal opportunities can significantly impact their

access to education, availability of adequate support, and the quality of teaching they receive (Hutchinson, 2021; ActionAid, 2021). Furthermore, they show that solely adducing the impact of socioeconomic status on SEND students' inclusion in Global South countries like Nigeria may be overly simplistic. Consequently, they underline the necessity for creating an equitable educational opportunity for all students, including SEN/D students across countries. The viewpoints also highlighted the need to understand the complex interplay between socioeconomic factors, educational opportunities, and inclusion. Notably, the viewpoints show a need for concerted efforts to ensure quality education for all children, regardless of socioeconomic background and ability. Next, the last IE challenge focused on this thesis is discussed.

2.3.2 *Cultural Influence on Inclusive Education*

Culture refers to the elements such as symbols, languages, beliefs, and practices which underpin human behaviour (Magidu, 2022; Hernandez and Gibb, 2020). Therefore, it shapes how people perceive the world and interact within it. Culture is a multifaceted concept that varies across contexts, time and regions. It is socially transmitted across generations (Hernandez and Gibb, 2020). While cultural diversity can be enriching, it can also be challenging for education (Ainscow, 2020). As such, efforts at promoting inclusion within education systems must consider cultural implications for its implementation. The study delves deeper into culture in the theoretical framework chapter (See chapter four). However, in this chapter, culture refers to the underlying principles, such as traditional beliefs, political, and economic factors guiding the interpretations and implementation of IE across contexts.

Arguably, the concept of inclusive education (IE) became globally popular following the 1994 Salamanca Conference's 'Framework for Action on Special Education Needs' (Knight et al., 2022; Magnússon, 2019). Consequently, it has been

argued that some of Global North's ideas very much underpin global views of IE. These ideas emphasise the need to create adequate and appropriate provision within mainstream schools to accommodate SEN/D students learning in the same schools as their non-SEN/D peers (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Walton, 2018; Armstrong et al., 2011). This argument assumes that IE conceptualisation and implementation framework can deviate from the cultural elements that underpin an individual country's IE interpretation and implementation of IE (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Magnússon, 2019). To illustrate this point, Magnússon (2019) suggests that by portraying IE as a political and economic ideal to be fulfilled by countries with vastly different settings, the Salamanca Statement may undermine contextual variations related to traditional beliefs, politics, educational structure, and resources allocation to including SEN/D students in education.

While the fundamental principle of IE is ensuring equality and equity for all students by removing barriers to learning and social participation regardless of SEN/D, it is crucial to recognise that various indigenous beliefs, policies, educational structure, and resource allocation can impact students' inclusion in schools (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Adigun, 2021; Magnússon, 2019; Adetoro (2014). For example, Adigun (2021) and Adetoro (2014) indicate that since the Salamanca Statement's framework was primarily based on resource-rich countries, many developing countries like Nigeria and Ghana may struggle to implement IE due to economic constraints. The Salamanca Statement portrays IE as a universal political and economic aspiration. However, Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis (2024) underline the need to connect IE understanding and practice with contextual conditions. These conditions include the political landscape, economic stability, and the existing educational

structure within each country. These factors represent the indicators of leadership disposition to include vulnerable children such as SEN/D children in education.

The preceding perspectives indicate that undermining significant variations in IE trajectories across countries can hinder effective IE implementation. Hence, they highlight the need to understand the cultural elements that shape an individual country's IE interpretation and implementation to avoid excluding SEN/D students from and within schools. Discussion about the understanding of the cultural elements that underpin IE interpretations and implementation across countries necessitates exploring its interpretations and implementation within the African context (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024). The study explores the conversation in the following sub-section.

2.3.4 *Situating Inclusive Education Within the Narratives of African Context*

As a process, IE aims to ensure that all students have access to quality education alongside their peers, irrespective of differences, including SEN/D (UNESCO, 1994). Debates surrounding IE underline the need to adapt the concept contextually for effective implementation (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Adigun, 2021; Magnússon, 2019; Walton, 2018). Inclusion is often depicted to be embedded in African traditional communities (Howell et al., 2019; Phasha et al., 2017; Fagunwa, 2017; Mahlo, 2017). In this context, 'traditional' refers to the customs, beliefs, and practices that preceded colonial interference in Africa. This is because many African philosophies, such as 'Ubuntu' a South African practice and 'Omoluabi' among the Yorubas in Nigeria, which encourage communal support for all, including people with disabilities, promote mutual responsibility, education without discrimination, and collaboration among stakeholders and communities (Howell et al., 2019; Phasha et al., 2017; Mahlo, 2017).

The sentiment expressed above is reflected in Mahlo's (2017) argument that "inclusive schooling cannot be detached from the African way of living" (P. 107). Phasha et al. (2017) also submit that African communities are inclusive because they promote the value of "belongingness and mutual interdependence"(P. 5). Some African languages, proverbs, and practices reflect inclusiveness (Howell et al., 2019; Fagunwa, 2017; Mpofu et al., 2007; Metz, 2007). For example, Mpofu et al. (2007) assert that the Ndebele language in Zimbabwe and the Shona culture reflect the notion that "inclusiveness is at the core of humanness" (P. 71); by implication, they promote "inclusive community practices", even in the pre-colonial African context. Fagunwa (2017) claims that inclusiveness is embedded in Yoruba (one of the major tribes in Nigeria) sayings such as 'a kií fi owó kan patéwó' (We cannot clap with one hand) and 'otún we osi, osi we otún lowó fi n mó (Both hands become thoroughly clean when both are involved). At the same time, Howell et al. (2019) observe that the African proverb, "Together, we can lift an elephant" (P. 1723), implies that every African community member is valued and is expected to participate, regardless of disabilities.

Furthermore, some African philosophies, such as 'Ubuntu' and 'Omoluabi', which emphasise interconnectedness, community, and the well-being of all individuals, promote a positive attitude towards disability (Adigun et al., 2021). These philosophies convey that "a person is a person through other persons" (Metz, 2007, p. 323). Hence, they can foster self-assurance because they are built on "humanness, interdependence, and communalism" (Phasha, 2016, pp. 16-18). Therefore, they may promote a sense of belonging within society (Phasha, 2016). Consequently, in line with Walton's (2018) position that African practices and philosophies align with the IE agenda, it may be concluded that IE is adaptable to traditional African settings.

The understanding that practice and philosophy, such as Ubuntu and Omoluabi, are inherently inclusive, suggests that they consistent with the IE agenda. IE agenda acknowledges and respects diversity, accommodating differences within schools and communities, ensuring fairness and justice for all, fostering mutual support and connectedness in relationships and providing "needs-responsive support services" (Phasha, 2016, p. 17). Given that inclusivity is deeply rooted in African traditional practice, it can be concluded that no reason is good enough to exclude SEN/D children from schools in African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa.

However, there are also concerns regarding the inclusiveness of African culture and philosophy. Scholars such as McKenzie and Ohajunwa 2017; Musengi, 2014; Ajuwon, 2012 have identified limitations to inclusion in Africa, such as beliefs, language, and the proverbial representation of disabilities. Musengi (2014) notes that some proverbs relating to disability in Shona culture negatively reflect disability. Additionally, in Nigeria, words like 'amúkunún' (an invalid) in the Yoruba language and 'Nkwani' (a dented person) in the Igbo language depict people with disabilities as helpless and worthless (McKenzie and Ohajunwa, 2017). Similarly, proverbs such as "Abere bo lowo adete, o di ete" (It is tasking for a leper to pick up a needle when it drops), "Adete ko ki i fun wara, sugbon o le daanu" (While it is difficult for a leper to milk cow, he does not struggle to spill it) present disabled persons negatively (Ebenso et al., 2012). As a result of these traditional beliefs and expressions, disabled people may be stigmatised and marginalised in Africa.

A negative perception of disabilities in Africa is antithetical to the IE underpinning principles, including removing barriers to ensure that SEN/D students have equal opportunities as their non-SEN/D peers in mainstream schools. Besides, it has been argued that the philosophy guiding African inclusiveness is mostly rhetoric,

as practices are oppressive because they are exploitative and exclusionary (Enslin and Horsthemke, 2016, cited in Walton, 2018). In effect, the view that African traditional beliefs and expressions may foster stigmatisation and marginalisation for people living with disabilities indicates that African practices and philosophy, such as Ubuntu and Omoluabi, may be limited in ensuring SEN/D students' inclusion.

Ubuntu and Omoluabi emphasise equity and support. Both concepts are expressed through proverbs, folktales, and practices reinforcing ethical behaviour and the importance of building more equitable and compassionate communities. These philosophical concepts are shaped by specific historical, social, and political contexts of the communities from which they originate. These differences can influence how they are enacted and experienced. Consequently, there may be differentiated experiences, particularly regarding equity and support for students with SEN/D. Ubuntu is rooted in the communal lifestyle of Southern African societies such as the Zulu in South Africa, emphasising interdependence and collective well-being (Eke and Onwuatuegwu, 2021; Phasha et al., 2017; Mahlo, 2017). On the other hand, Omoluabi reflects the Yoruba value system, focusing on personal character, moral integrity, and social responsibility (Azenabor, 2022).

Although these philosophical concepts promote equity and support, there appears to be tension between their ideals and practical implementation. For example, in reality, Ubuntu practice can be negatively impacted by gender dynamics. As an illustration, traditional gender roles in some Southern African societies like South Africa and Zimbabwe have historically limited women's participation in decision-making processes (Eke and Onwuatuegwu, 2021). Additionally, despite Ubuntu's emphasis on mutual support, practice can create inequities as women often bear the brunt of

communal labour in this region. Similarly, the Omoluabi concept can also be problematic in practice as it can be influenced by individuals' socioeconomic status, which can foster differentiated experiences. For instance, Yoruba society historically had a hierarchical structure, with distinctions between royalty, commoners, and slaves (Azenabor, 2020; Eke and Onwuatuegwu, 2021). These hierarchies could influence how the philosophy was enacted, as individuals of higher status often had more opportunities to demonstrate their moral character.

Like Ubuntu, traditional Yoruba society often assigned specific roles to men and women. Women were expected to embody virtues like humility and nurturing, while men were usually associated with leadership and protection. These roles could limit how women could fully express their agency within the framework of Omoluabi. Furthermore, both philosophies may be idealistic in a modern and highly differentiated society like Nigeria (Matolino, 2015; Matolino and Kwindingwi, 2013). This is due to a significant shift from the circumstances that enabled such practice, and everyone may be unwilling to comply (Matolino and Kwindingwi, 2013). Therefore, the pursuit of collective identity may undermine individual differences and choices. This concern is particularly relevant to IE," where the values of Ubuntu among teachers and communities may be more imagined than actual, and where an overreach of certain notions of Ubuntu may diminish the right to an individually relevant, inclusive education." (Walton, 2018, p. 39). This analysis highlights the need to recognise individual students' rights to personalised support. Often, notions about Ubuntu mean that children with SEN/D lose out on a relevant, up-to-date curriculum because Ubuntu is used as an excuse to say they are having their needs met when they are not. Therefore, it is crucial that schools strike a balance between presence in school and receiving appropriate assistance tailored to specific needs.

While these philosophies remain cultural ideals, their practice can be challenging in a rapidly changing society. Nevertheless, they remain powerful sources of cultural identity and resilience, inspiring movements for social justice, ethical leadership, and community development. Therefore, it is important to appreciate the complexities of these philosophies and their relevance to contemporary African societies as both philosophies can inspire efforts to build more equitable and compassionate communities by adapting to the challenges of the modern world. At the same time, they highlight an increasing need for educational research which values and focuses on local culture and knowledge (Abdulrahman et al., 2021; Mbembe, 2016, 2017). This entails involving all stakeholders in educational research, such as SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools, to foreground contextual realities and foster a comprehensive understanding regarding inclusion for SEN/D students. According to Mbembe (2016), foregrounding contextual realities, which include the voices and experiences of all stakeholders, is necessary for educational research to check "epistemic coloniality"(Mbembe, 2016, p. 37). That is, to ensure that knowledge about the educational inclusion of children with additional needs is not just based on the experiences and perspectives of the coloniser but uses local knowledge to foster "a new way of thinking" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 37). Undermining contextual factors that can impact IE interpretation and implementation may be potentially detrimental to SEN/D students (Abdulrahman et al., 2021). This position signposts that IE should be contextualised. Nonetheless, Walton (2018) highlights the need to consider the tendency for African cultural beliefs and practices to stigmatise and marginalise SEN/D students when attempting to contextualise IE.

Indeed, the decontextualised notion of IE may inhibit effective IE practice across settings (Abdulrahman et al., 2021). However, granted that some African

practices and philosophies might increase the stigmatisation and marginalisation of SEN/D students, African countries may need to consider a broader view of IE. This implies that IE should not be restricted to African ideologies and tenets. This position is sustained by Mbembe (2016) when he argued that Africans should engage with other "epistemic traditions for broader relevance" as "we cannot afford to fight battles of the present with outdated tools" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 37). Therefore, Mbembe (2016) notes that African countries may need to adopt a "post-national or partially denationalised education space that would help to increase the availability and compatibility of a skilled labour force that would foster the transferability of its skills across boundaries…" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 39) to maintain global relevance. Consequently, Mbembe (2016) calls for what he refers to as 'universal inclusion', which requires Africans to recentre knowledge to accommodate thoughts worldwide. According to Mbembe (2016), Africans need to think of "our own situatedness in the world and stop thinking in an African-centric way" as the "new rule" to maintain relevance globally is "staying ahead of the game" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 37). This thought suggests a need for a broader view of IE.

Given that IE seeks to ensure that vulnerable children, including SEN/D children, access education along with their non-SEN/D peers, it becomes crucial to examine the discussion regarding SEN/D. In this regard, the study explores the literature on SEN/D in the subsequent section. For this study, SEN/D children are viewed as disabled, as the phrase describes disabled children in schools. Therefore, the study uses the two terms (SEN/D and disabled) interchangeably.

2.4 The Concept of Special Educational Needs/Disability

The term Special Educational Needs/Disabilities (SEN/D) is debatable because it refers to a diverse range of learning differences, disabilities, or challenges that affect

an individual's ability to learn or participate fully in education (Nation Council for Special Education, 2019). Examples of SEN/D include dyslexia, autism, physical disabilities, sensory impairments, and emotional difficulties. This viewpoint highlights the importance of individualised support for SEN/D students, as their requirements may vary significantly. Across countries, SEN/D identification often centres around a child's inability to learn similarly to their peers (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2015; 2004; Wood and Bates, 2020; Department for Education, 2015). This recognition fosters tailored support for SEN/D students. In England, as well as in the USA and Australia, a child is considered to have SEN/D if s/he needs additional support due to specific difficulties or evidential impairment(s) that impacts learning (Hodkinson, 2020; Department for Education, 2015). In England, SEN/D is classified within four broad areas of need: communication and interaction, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health difficulties, and sensory and/or physical needs (Department for Education, 2015). However, in Nigeria, SEN/D has a broader scope. It is classified into three categories: children with cognitive and physical impairments, disadvantaged children (including those from migrant fishing and farming backgrounds), and gifted and talented (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). Learning difficulties can be due to biological, psychological, and social problems (Matthew et al., 2019; Conkbayir and Pascal, 2018). This implies that SEN/D may arise due to impairments, family adversity, socioeconomic status, and poor pedagogical practice (Porter, 2020; William, 2017; Bourne, 2015).

For centuries, children with disabilities were considered uneducable. The frequent practice was keeping them in special settings, away from other children (Okorosaye-Orubite and Maigida, 2018; Odunsi, 2018; Borsay, 2012). For instance, in England, before the Royal Commission of 1889, disabled children were "… deemed

to have an intellectual deficit because of the learning restrictions imposed by their sensory or physical impairments." (Borsay, 2012, p. 1). Similarly, there is a low expectation from disabled children in Nigeria due to the often erroneous belief that they are uneducable (Okorosaye-Orubite and Maigida, 2018).

Subsequently, in England (from 1944) and Nigeria (from 2004), efforts were made to ensure that SEN/D students were educated, and SEN/D replaced previously negative categorisations like a handicap, educational sub-normal and less negative words like moderate learning difficulties (Odunsi, 2018; Norwich, 2013). In Europe and the United States of America (USA) in the 1970s and 1980s, laws emerged regarding SEN/D students' education. Such laws focused on their access to free and suitable public education. For example, in response to the 1978 Warnock Committee recommendation that there was a need to focus on providing appropriate learning opportunities for SEN/D students, the 1981 Education Act introduced SEN/D in England (Norwich, 2013; Warnock, 1978).

Much later, Nigeria also made provisions for SEN/D children in its 2004 National Policy on Education (NPE). For instance, the 2004 NPE adopted SEN/D and declared free education for SEN/D children (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). However, unlike in Nigeria, issues regarding SEN/D in England have a clear direction and guidelines for practice, and the Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) was introduced to make parties accountable (DfE, 2015). Equally, there is a regular review of policies and guidelines in England. This view is reflected in the various approaches to SEN/D identification, individual educational needs, and provision at different times (DfE, 2015; Ofsted, 2010; DfES, 2001;1981). Consequently, in England, SEN/D students' support has evolved from 'school action' to the current practice: EHCP. Nonetheless, EHCP

implementation is often problematic due to factors such as high bureaucracy levels and budget cuts (Henshaw, 2021; Palikara et al., 2019).

Despite the attention given to SEN/D students' education, there has been tension regarding the terminology SEN/D, as the term suggests that some people are different (Thomas, 2013; Norwich, 2013). Additionally, associating students with SEN/D could lead to stigmatisation, marginalisation, and poverty (Ioannidis and Malafantis, 2022; Lauchlan and Boyle, 2020; Borgne and Tisdall, 2017). Following the call to educate all students in the same school, IE was promoted by governments worldwide, including the Nigerian government (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Odunsi, 2018). For example, the Nigerian 2004 National Policy on Education (NPE) states that all students, including those with physical impairment(s)/learning difficulties, should be educated in mainstream schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). Due to this development, different policies have emerged regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools in Nigeria (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2019; Federal Ministry of Education, 2013; 2015; 2016).

Nevertheless, SEN/D students' inclusion remains a cause for concern (Akogun et al., 2018; Price, 2018; Ajuwon, 2012; Garuba, 2003). Identified concerns in relation to SEN/D students' inclusion include an insufficient understanding of SEN/D, a lack of facilities, and no data on SEN/D children (Akogun et al., 2018). Teachers' confidence is another issue identified as a huge challenge of IE in Nigeria (Price, 2018; Ajuwon, 2012). The identified concerns regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria appear to have a negative impact on SEN/D students' inclusion in the country, as they continue to be excluded from and within schools, despite efforts at including them in mainstream schools (Akogun et al., 2018). For example, many studies including

Angwaomaodoko (2023) and Odunsi (2018) have consistently highlighted the need for effective inclusion for these students in Nigeria.

In some areas, cultural perceptions and practices regarding SEN/D as a punishment for sins and spiritual attacks can account for SEN/D students' exclusion from schools (McKenzie and Ohajunwa, 2017; Etiyebo and Omiegbe, 2016; Obiakor and Eleweke, 2014; Eleweke, 2013). Furthermore, practice based on some Global North's perception of disability, which homogenises disability as helpless and dependent in African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa, can impact the experience of SEN/D students (Shakespeare et al., 2019; Howell et al., 2019; Grech, 2014; Meekosha, 2011). Grech (2014) gives a clear illustration of this thought when he says that "such homogenisation… account for the promotion of minority worldview and promotes the narrative of "dependence and pity" (p. 49) which objectifies disabled Africans. In the following sub-section, the study explores the conceptualisation of disability and its impact on SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools.

2.4.1 *Disability Conceptualisation*

Disability is a worldwide phenomenon; it does not have boundaries as it cuts across countries, sex, age, religion, race, and social statuses (Disability Right Fund, 2018; Haruna, 2017; Omede, 2016; Mallet and Runswick-Cole, 2014). The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2011) report on disability presents disability as "the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual with a health condition and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)" (WHO, 2011, p. 4). This view demonstrates that knowledge and attitudes, which are critical environmental factors, can impact the functionality of a disabled person.

Disabled students are considered to have "sensory, communication, motor and learning disabilities, and behaviour disorders" (WHO, 2011, p. 4).

Indeed, disability is not peculiar to race, gender, or creed. However, discussions on disability in Africa are dominated by some of Global North's conceptualisations of disability in the continent (Howell et al., 2019; Grech, 2014; Meekosha, 2011). This position aligns with the concept of "scholarship colonialism" (Meekosha, 2011, p. 667). This concept hints that disability in Africa is constructed from some Global North's perspectives (Grech, 2014). The Global North's dominance in disability literature in Africa can undermine theoretical contributions from Africa and the lived experiences of disabled people in African countries (Howell et al., 2019). This has had several consequences for disabled people in Africa, which the study explores in the next sub-section.

2.4.2 *Concerns Regarding Disability Conceptualisation Based on the Global North's Perspective*

Global North domination in disability discussion has engendered concerns regarding disability conceptualisation in African contexts (Howell et al., 2019; Grech, 2014; Meekosha, 2011). For example, Howell et al. (2019) underline the implication of Global North domination in disability discussion. According to these scholars, since “the lives of disabled people in the Global South are primarily considered through a Northern lens” (Howell et al., 2019, p. 1720), their personal and collective experiences can be distorted. Grech (2014) argues that such distortions are due to the “omission and ignorance about those contexts in which the majority of the world’s disabled people live” (Grech, 2014, p. 63). These concerns emanate from the underpinning assumptions of some Global North's perception of disability in Africa. These assumptions equate disability with being inherently vulnerable and dependent (Shakespeare et al., 2019; Meekosha, 2011). Therefore, they could lead to many

disabled people and families of disabled children in Africa, as well as those supporting them, to lack expectations and aspirations.

However, some of Global North's narratives of disability in Africa, which associate impairment with being vulnerable and dependent, ignore how social, political, and economic conditions can encourage oppression and exclusion for disabled people in the continent (Howell et al., 2019; Meekosha, 2011). These perceptions of disability align with the medical model of disability. The model assumes that disability is a 'deficit', promoting the idea that having a disability is a personal tragedy (Zacks, 2023; Goodley, 2011; Croft, 2010). Consequently, individuals often bear the weight of this perception. The medical model is problematic because it focuses on the within-person factors without considering the impact of environmental factors such as social, political, and economic conditions on disabled people (Lindsay, 2003). Conversely, the social model of disability addresses the oppressive tendencies toward disabled persons as it presents disability as the impact of a disabling environment on people with impairments (Barnes, 2018; Eleweke and Ebenso, 2016; Mallet and Runswick-Cole, 2014; Oliver, 2004). Therefore, the model focuses on individual dignity and inclusion in society. As such, the inclusion framework and practice should recognise the necessity of creating a conducive environment for SEN/D students (Strogilos and Ward, 2024; Thompson and Thompson, 2018).

Another concern about the Global North's domination of disability discussion in Africa is that the Global North's perception of disability in Africa can distort the lived experiences of disabled people on the continent (Shakespeare et al., 2019; Meekosha, 2011). For instance, Shakespeare et al. (2019) found that against the narratives that stress helplessness and dependency, some disabled Africans have surmounted barriers and achieved success on an equal basis with non-disabled others. This finding

negates the dominant images and perception of disability in Africa as entrenched by some of the Global North's literature on disability. A further concern is that understanding based on some Global North's conceptualisation of disability in Africa can be problematic as it can homogenise the experience of disabled Africans (Howell et al., 2019; Grech, 2014).

Homogenising disability experience in Africa undermines the point that disability experienced by Africans is shaped by complex social, political, and economic factors (Howell et al., 2019; Meekosha, 2011), and "the experience of disability and the disabling barriers that people with impairments are subjected to are strongly influenced by the nature of the contexts of which they are part, and the particular social, economic and political forces shaping them." (Howell et al., 2019, p. 1727). Therefore, it may be concluded that the underpinning assumptions of some Global North's perception of disability in Africa undermine "critical issues related to context, culture … community and relationship of power" (Grech, 2014, p. 88). Reiterating the contextual impact on disabled persons, Odunsi (2018) asserts that the education of children living with disability is culture dependent. Odunsi (2018) argues that while the right to education of some children living disability is compromised in certain cultures, all children, regardless of disabilities, have a right to access education in some other cultures.

It is important to note the implication of disregarding contextual condition(s) on individuals living with disability. This includes objectifying them as vulnerable and needing help (Meekosha, 2011). According to Meekosha (2011), people living with disability in Africa are ubiquitously objectified as dependent and pitiable. Meekosha (2011) refers to this as the "… posterchild narratives … which are represented in the picture of the disabled beggar" (P. 674). This position suggests that these people may be negatively represented, which can lead to minimal expectations from them.

Besides, it indicates an intersection between disability and being a disabled African living in African countries like Nigeria and Ghana (Howell et al., 2019; Chouinard, 2015). This stance is further illustrated by Chouinard's (2015) assertion that disability predisposes African-disabled individuals to "particularly severe deprivation and exclusion" (Chouinard, 2015, p. 2). This viewpoint emphasises the importance of understanding disability within the context of individual experience(s). Furthermore, it underscores the need for access to services such as education and health care to empower Africans with disabilities to contribute as valuable members of their communities actively.

The attendant implications of conceptualising disability based on some Global North's perspective of disabled individuals within the African context underscore the need to project Africa's notion of disability as an alternative. This endeavour offers disabled individuals in Africa the opportunity to express their unique interpretations of their disability experiences within their specific contexts. This thought aligns with decoloniality theory, which believes that disability can be better understood and effectively addressed through contextual lived experiences (Lemos, 2023; Mignolo and Walter, 2011). According to Lemos (2023), decoloniality can disrupt the distorted narratives regarding disability in Africa by some Global North literature. Drawing from Lemos (2023), it can be inferred that the theory allows for a contextual understanding of disability and enables delinking from the 'colonial matrix of power' that shapes the global system.

As indicated in section 2.4.3, Ubuntu and Omoluabi contribute to a more inclusive understanding of disability. These African practices are beneficial to establishing the African notion of disability as they counter some Global North's conceptualisation of disability, which presents disability as a sure path to being

vulnerable and dependent (Adigun et al., 2021; Howell et al., 2019; Walton, 2018). However, examining the experience of disability in some Global South within simple binary terms, Global North's representation of disability and some local practices such as 'Ubuntu' and ‘Omoluabi’ may be simplistic. Both perceptions of disability, Global North's and some local beliefs and associated practices around disability, are central to devaluing and stigmatising disabled people (Howell et al., 2019; Ndlovu, 2013). For instance, in some areas of Africa, there seems to be ambivalence regarding disability due to some African beliefs and practices (Ndlovu, 2013). According to Ndlovu (2013), some African beliefs "depict disability and person with impairments both negatively and positively." (p. 1729). Therefore, promoting Ubuntu and other related African practices may be challenging as alternatives to the Global North's conceptualisation of disability.

Notwithstanding the tendency for some indigenous African beliefs to generate ambivalence regarding disability, it remains crucial to foreground contextual realities and generate broader views of disabilities (Howell et al., 2019; Shakespeare et al., 2019; Waldschmidt, 2018). Howell et al. (2019) emphasise the importance of acknowledging the challenges of living in the Global South particularly for those within the low socioeconomic status. According to Howell et al. (2019), there is a need for more critical engagement with disability experience in Africa to emphasise the much-needed voices from the continent in the disability field. Howell et al. (2019) note that this quest can facilitate "a new way of understanding and making meaning of disability on the African continent…."(P. 1721). In addition, engaging with disability experience in Africa can promote SEN/D students' inclusion in Africa as it can challenge the narrative of failure (Shakespeare et al., 2019). Besides, moving beyond discouraging conceptual imposition can foster a broader perspective on disabilities, which "can

enrich disability studies" (Waldschmidt, 2018, p. 1) and further address the exclusion faced by disabled individuals. Admittedly, the experiences of people living with disability in Nigeria are good reasons for concern (World Bank, 2020; Haruna, 2017). Therefore, the study chooses to explore disability in Nigeria, the context of this study, in the subsequent subsection.

2.4.3 *Experiencing Disability in Nigeria*

Disabled people face multiple problems, such as stigmatisation and educational and social exclusion in Nigeria (World Bank, 2020; Haruna, 2017). In Nigeria, there are indications of negative attitudes towards disabled people from the government and most community members in which they live (Haruna, 2017). Attitude refers to people's perspectives of a phenomenon (Freer and Kaefer, 2021). Negative attitudes are barriers that could hinder disabled people from full, equal, and effective social participation (World Bank, 2020). These barriers include beliefs, location, religion, gender, and socioeconomic status, which can cause intersectionality with disabilities and inclusion for SEN/D students in Nigeria (Rios et al., 2021; Ajufo, 2019; British Council, 2014).

To some extent, disability construction in Nigeria is impacted by many superstitions about the causes of disability (McKenzie and Obajana, 2017; Etiyebo and Omiegbe, 2016; Obiakor and Eleweke, 2014; Eleweke, 2013). For example, disabilities are seen as punishment by the gods for wrongdoing, transmittable, and taboo (Etiyebo and Omiegbe, 2016). Odunsi (2018) wrapped this thought when she argues that unscientific explanations for disabilities promote myths about disability in Nigeria. Consequently, interactions with people with disability are impacted negatively. This viewpoint is embedded in Odunsi (2018), who notes that parents and family members of disabled children are often ashamed and feel that their disabled children

may 'tarnish' their image. This view indicates that families with disabled members are at risk of stigmatisation in Nigeria. Additionally, Uba and Nwoga's (2016) study on the effects of stigma on parents' choice of school for their SEN/D children in Nigeria underlines the implication of parental fear of stigma on SEN/D children's exclusion from schools. These positions agree with the observation of the United Nations Committee on the Child's Rights that discrimination against disabled children is prevalent within families and societies in many African countries (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2005).

Another factor that can impact how disability is experienced in Nigeria is family socioeconomic status. In Nigeria, education commercialisation can be a good reason to exclude children from low-income families from education (Pinnock, 2020; Birchall, 2019; Eleweke and Ebenso, 2016; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015). This is because their families may need help to afford high school fees being charged by schools that can cater to their needs. This point is also sustained by Eleweke and Ebenso (2016) in their article, which examined the experiences of disabled people in Nigeria and the barriers they encounter in accessing various services in the country. They revealed that "people with disabilities in the country encounter a plethora of barriers in accessing various important services" such as education (Eleweke and Ebenso (2016, p. 113). Similarly, Birchall (2019), in his review of the current situation regarding social exclusion in Nigeria, observes that many disabled people in Nigeria are restricted due to discriminatory attitudes, poverty, and lack of access to services such as education. Therefore, he suggests that many people become excluded from the system and can be forced to beg as they have been deprived of access to services that would enhance their potential development. Their

capacity to productively contribute to the broader society has been inhibited by their impairment and environmental barriers, such as their socioeconomic status.

A further point to consider regarding disability experience in Nigeria how location impact the lived experiences of people living with disabilities (Rios et al., 2021; British Council, 2014). Location can impact SEN/D students' inclusion experience in Nigeria because those in the Northern States may experience more exclusion from education than their peers in the Southern States (Rios et al., 2021; British Council, 2014). To illustrate this position, Rios et al. (2021) cite the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and data from the West African Examination Council (WAEC), which identify more SEN/D students' enrolment in the Southern states than the Northern states of the country. This reveals that SEN/D students in the Northern States of Nigeria are more likely to be excluded from education than their peers in the Southern part of the country. Hence, beyond SEN/D, location can foster SEN/D students' exclusion from school.

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter looks at IE within the global context. While there are various understandings of IE, there is consensus that it seeks to address educational inequalities and advocates that no reason is good enough for anyone to be excluded from equal opportunity to quality education (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Magnusson, 2019; Odunsi, 2018; McLeskey, 2014; Ainscow et al., 2006). However, its implementation is different across countries due to varying interpretations. Therefore, there have been calls for contextualising IE conceptualisation and implementation. IE contextualisation is necessary because it will engender an informed understanding of the phenomenon within specific contexts. When conceptualisation and practice are bereft of people's lived realities, it can indirectly contribute to SEN/D students'

exclusion in developing countries (Odunsi, 2018). Based on this point, engaging some IE stakeholders in this study can give insight into what SEN/D students' inclusion is to them and their lived reality (their experiences and challenges of including SEN/D students within their settings). Embedded in such insights are the implications of contextual culture on inclusion practice. This understanding can mitigate excluding SEN/D students from mainstream schools. Additionally, such understanding can present alternative narratives to some of Global North's inclusion ideas.

Furthermore, the chapter underscores the complexities of IE, which can account for how inclusion is interpreted and implemented within contexts. It underscores the need to move beyond theoretical ideals and create meaningful pathways for SEN/D students to thrive in inclusive educational environments. Therefore, it encourages a synergy between the Global North and South to bridge the gap between both contexts. A synergy can address knowledge hegemony between the Global North and South regarding IE (Moosavi, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Importantly, since practice in many Global North countries is based on evidence and technology, a synergy may address the myth surrounding disability in Nigeria. At the same time, a synergy between the two regions can promote knowledge from the Global South. Thereby fostering global visibility for Africans and enhancing their opportunity to transfer their skills across countries.

Considering that implementing IE based on individual contexts' lived realities may limit struggle in its implementation, the study explores the literature on IE in Nigerian in the following chapter to understand the Nigerian education system, SEN/D students' inclusion, how they are experiencing inclusion, and the challenges faced in implementing IE in the country.

CHAPTER THREE: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

3.0 Introduction

This chapter follows the previous chapter, where the study explored global inclusive education (IE) practices for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEN/D). In light of contextualising IE practices to suit different contexts' lived realities and provide African narratives (Abdulrahman et al., 2021; Walton, 2018), the study explores the Nigerian context in this chapter. Firstly, the chapter introduces the reader to the Nigerian education system. Secondly, the chapter briefly reviews secondary education in Nigeria. Thirdly, the chapter presents a brief review of the development of IE in Nigeria to explore how it has evolved in the country. Fourthly, the chapter examines the 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education (NPIE) (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016). Following this, the chapter reviews concerns regarding the implementation of IE in Nigeria. Finally, the chapter wraps up with the conclusion section.

3.1 The Nigerian Education System

Nigeria is located in West Africa; it comprises thirty-six states and the Federal Capital Territory. The country is made up of multiple ethnic groups; as such, it is culturally diverse (Tete and Mathew, 2020). Nigeria has an estimated population of 227,800,861 as of April 2, 2024 (World Population Review, 2024). Its human capital index ranked 150 out of 157 in the 2020 World Bank's Human Capital Index (World Bank, 2021). This statistic highlights the country's economic vulnerability due to any decline in oil prices. This is reflected in the World Bank (2021) report that over 40% of Nigerians live below the poverty line of $2 per day, while another 25% are vulnerable (World Bank, 2021).

The World Bank (2021) further projects an increase in the number of Nigerians living below the international poverty line by 12 million out of a population of over 220 million in 2023. Nigeria's human capital development is low, and it is considered a developing country (World Bank, 2021). The country needs to make a conscious effort to ensure massive development and high equality in terms of income and access to education for all (Tete and Mathew, 2020). Equality in income and access to education for all can address concerns about education commercialisation in Nigeria. Many SEN/D students' families are not able to afford high school fees being charged by schools that can cater to their needs (Pinnock, 2020; Birchall, 2019; Eleweke and Ebenso, 2016; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015).

Since 2004, Nigerian national education policies have underscored the country's commitment to promoting high-quality education for all, including SEN/D students (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016; 2015; 2013, 2004). However, education in Nigeria is faced with inexhaustible problems, and sometimes, old issues remain new since they still need to be solved (Birabil and Ogeh, 2020). For example, school availability, teachers' competence, and insufficient infrastructure such as ramps and schools have consistently impacted access to education in Nigeria (Birabil and Ogeh, 2020; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Odunsi, 2018). Therefore, regardless of the provision of national education policies, education continues to experience significant setbacks in the country (Akogun et al., 2021; Pinnock, 2020). Post-independence, various Nigerian Governments have since formulated, adjusted and, in some cases, reformed policies and developed locally relevant programs to ensure that the UNESCO Education for All (EFA) agenda is achieved. The UNESCO EFA, an international initiative, was launched in 1990 to promote access to education for every citizen in every society (UNESCO, 1990).

Nigerian education objectives appear consistent with the UNESCO EFA (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013; Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999). These objectives focus on fostering unity, effective citizenship, and ensuring equal access to education for all. For instance, through the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, the Obasanjo-led government promoted the 9-3-4 education system (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999) to ensure general education for all. This education system provides nine years of basic education for every child in Nigeria, including SEN/D students. This is followed by three years of senior secondary school and an optional minimum of four years of university education leading to a bachelor's degree (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999).

Notwithstanding the Nigerian government's effort to ensure access to education for all, much is yet to be achieved due to factors such as inconsistent policy implementation, quality assurance, insufficient enforcement of sanctions, and insufficient funding (Okeke and Chukwudebelu, 2024; Pinnock, 2020; Fasugba, 2019; Oriaku et al., 2019). Notably, Okeke and Chukwudebelu (2024) observed that in Nigeria, "the linkages between education objectives and key indicators of national development such as human capital development, social cohesion, and democratic governance are debatable" (Okeke and Chukwudebelu, 2024:270). This situation indicates that the country is at serious risk of failing to achieve its educational goal, which aspires to foster equality, justice, and building a united nation where everyone has an excellent opportunity (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013).

Although education administration and management in Nigeria are vested with the three tiers of government (Federal, State, and Local governments) (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013), there has been a quantum leap in the country's private proprietorship of educational institutions in the past two decades (Fasugba, 2019). For

example, Fasugba (2019) suggests an imbalance in the number of public and private schools. He observes that while Delta and Edo States have 374 and 487 public secondary schools, respectively, privately-owned secondary schools in the states are 438 and 515. This imbalance is further reinforced by Oriaku et al. (2019), Emesiobi (2018) and Chukwu and Ezepue (2018) when they suggest that more children are registered in private schools than public schools. It is important to note that education commercialisation can challenge Nigerian education objectives, which aim to ensure equality and justice for all learners, foster effective citizenship, and nurture national consciousness and unity (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013; Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999). Education commercialisation can be detrimental to achieving these objectives because school fees can hinder access to education for students, including those with SEN/D from low-income families. Education commercialisation is the process that conceptualises learners as consumers and education as a consumer good (Oriaku et al., 2019). This process involves the active participation of private investors in the education sector (Ma, 2022; Geo-Jaja, 2004). The preceding thought shows that enrolment is subject to fee payment in commercialised schools.

It seems that education commercialisation in Nigeria is a response to Nigeria's dwindling economy (Chukwu and Ezepue, 2018; Adeyemi and Subhan, 2017). Nigeria's economy is currently facing significant challenges, including an inflation surge (World Bank, 2024). The country's annual inflation has reached nearly 30%, the highest rate in almost three decades. In addition, the World Bank (2024) notes that limited service delivery persists due to Nigeria's low economic capacity. Education requires substantial resources such as human, financial, and material to function effectively. These resources are essential for maintaining infrastructure, hiring qualified teachers, and providing necessary learning materials. Therefore, the

dwindling economy makes it increasingly difficult for the Nigerian government to adequately meet the financial obligation of all critical sectors like education. In response to gaps in public education, private investors, individuals, and organisations have stepped in by establishing private schools across the country (Chukwu and Ezepue, 2018; Adeyemi and Subhan, 2017).

Nigerian Government recognise the importance of funding to education quality and functionality; it encourages private schools to bridge the gap created by long years of government involvement in education management (Oriaku et al., 2019; Emesiobi, 2018). This position resonates with Babalola and Adedeji's (2007) assertion that education was less effective and efficient under the control of the government as "the past three decades witnessed a crisis of poor trainees, poor teachers, poor textbooks, poor teaching, poor technology, and poor funding" (Babalola and Adedeji, 2007: 3). According to Babalola and Adedeji (2007), the gap in education provision created "the veritable ground for private education to strive. In fact, private schools (primary and secondary) did go all-out to prove their worth to Nigerians at this period" (Babalola and Adedeji, 2007: 3). The previous discussion suggests that privately owned schools are prevalent in Nigeria.

It appears that private school prevalence in Nigeria has positively impacted education for a minority of children therefore, continuing a marked difference in life outcomes for those who have the ability to pay for education and those who do not (Fasugba, 2019; Oriaku et al., 2019; Emesiobi, 2018; Adelabu and Rose, 2004). Additionally, it allows many children in the country access to school (Emesiobi, 2018; Adelabu and Rose, 2004). According to Adelabu and Rose (2004), private schools are "… providing schooling opportunities to a significant number of children, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas" (P. 64). Another positive impact of education

commercialisation is that it addresses employment by providing jobs for university and National Certificate in Education (NCE) graduates who would have otherwise remained jobless (Oriaku et al., 2019). It appears that private schools' prevalence in Nigeria provides two sides of a coin, producing both negative and positive results for many students, including those with SEN/D (Ma, 2022; Oriaku et al., 2019; Fasugba, 2019).

Firstly, education commercialisation can gradually exclude some students, especially SEN/D students, from education. Education commercialisation intends to provide greater efficiency. However, a bid to improve education efficiency increases expenses, thereby increasing fees payable in commercialised schools. High fees raise concern regarding affordability for most of the populace as the country is adjudged as one of the poorest countries in the world in terms of per capita income (Ma, 2022). Illustrating this viewpoint, Ma (2022) argues that the involvement of private investors in education might deepen inequality by promoting elitism, where only certain segments of society have access to quality education. Although there is a shortage of data on the percentage of children from low-income families with access to education in Nigeria, the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (2015) had stated that 90% of disabled children in Nigeria are out of school due to low family socio-economic status. This statistic suggests that children from wealthier families are likely to take advantage of and benefit from private schools. While offering opportunities for some, education commercialisation can deepen equity concerns by widening the gap between privileged and disadvantaged students.

Secondly, education commercialisation can lead to varied quality of education, which can impact the social development of a country if it is not duly regulated and monitored (Fasugba, 2019; Oriaku et al., 2019; Emesiobi, 2018). Commercialised

schools are stratified as low and high fees due to the difference in fees they charge (Fasugba, 2019). Since education is capital intensive, fees may determine the quality of education a private school can offer. To illustrate this point, Fasugba (2019) observes that the quality of education provided by many of the low-fee-paying schools is doubtful as it may be challenging for them to meet required obligations, including human, financial, and material resources. This stance underlines the relationship between family economic capacity and access to high-quality education. Low economic capacity may reduce the opportunity for less privileged students, including SEN/D students, to access high-quality education. Implicitly, SEN/D students from low-income families may struggle to maximise their potential (ActionAid, 2021; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015). The arguments above suggest that the Nigerian Government should encourage due regulation and monitoring of public and private schools to ensure that in line with provision in the national education policies, SEN/D students' right to education is not violated (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016; 2015; 2013).

Some Nigerian educational policies, including 2023, 2016, 2015, 2013, and 2004 education policies (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016; 2015; 2013; 2004) recognise that students population may differ due to physical or specific learning needs, socio-economic status, culture, and religion. For example, it is clearly stated in the 2013 National Policy on Education (NPE) that "education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian, irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges" (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 1). Nevertheless, Nigeria has a persistent link between SEN/D students and poor educational attainment (Ihunwo, 2020). SEN/D students in Nigeria cannot compete favourably with their typical peers due to factors like societal prejudices

(Ihunwo, 2020), a lack of trained personnel, inadequate funding, and facilities (ActionAid, 2021; Fajemilo et al., 2020). Such prejudices include stigmatisation and discrimination among family and community members (World Bank, 2020).

The Jonathan and Buhari governments have attempted to address these educational inequalities by instituting educational policies such as the 2015 National Policy on Special Need Education (NPSNE) and the 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education (NPIE). Nevertheless, there is a growing problem with implementing IE in the country (ActionAid, 2021; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari, 2019). For example, ActionAid (2021) notes that SEN/D children are found mostly in special schools, many privately owned and located in urban centres. In addition, ActionAid (2021) and Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari (2019) identified a need for more trained personnel, funding, and adequate facilities. Furthermore, Fajemilo et al. (2020) indicate that schools do selective enrolment as they can only cater to some categories of SEN/D because they need more resources to accommodate them.

3.2 Secondary School Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria, secondary education bridges the gap between primary and higher education (Ogunode and Samuel, 2020; Federal Ministry of Education, 2013). Therefore, it serves as the recruitment grounds for higher education institutions in the country. Secondary education is divided into Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS). The SSS level of education aims to provide equal access to higher-level education for all students. At the same time, it is deemed as a means of training manpower for the labour market (Ogunode and Samuel, 2020; Bolarinwa, 2019b). According to Ogunode and Samuel (2020), "secondary education plays a fundamental role in preparing young people for the labour market, especially for people who leave secondary education for a job" (P.6). This assertion

indicates that this level of education lays the foundations for lifelong learning and human development (Bolarinwa, 2019b).

However, the effectiveness of secondary education in Nigeria is debatable due to many challenges in implementing educational policies in Nigeria (Ogunode and Samuel, 2020; Bolarinwa, 2019a). For instance, findings from Ogunode and Samuel (2020) highlight some of the difficulties, which include:

- Inadequate funding.
- Inadequate infrastructural facilities.
- Inadequate professional teachers.
- Lack of continuity in commitment to policy implementation.
- Poor relationship between policy designer and policy implementer.

Bolarinwa (2019a) highlights one of the significant difficulties facing secondary school education in Nigeria (overpopulation). Bolarinwa (2019a) links shortage of public secondary schools to overpopulation in the few existing ones. Bolarinwa (2019a) identifies ineffective teaching and learning, behaviour concerns, and street roaming during school hours as consequences of overpopulation. The challenges of educational policy implementation in Nigeria may pose a concern for SEN/D students' inclusion in an ever-growing cosmopolitan state like Lagos State.

3.2.1 The Population of Secondary Schools in Lagos State

After a long search for specific recent articles on secondary schools in Lagos State, the study got some insights based on available data. The 2018 - 2019 Lagos State Ministry of Education school census report, which is the most current report, reveals that there are 564,758 secondary school students in 670 public secondary schools in the State (Lagos State Ministry of Education, 2019). However, only thirteen of those secondary schools admit SEN/D students (Festus et al., 2020). While the

World Atlas recorded 358 registered private secondary schools in Lagos State as of 2007, there is no verifiable recent number of private secondary schools in the State. However, in its report on the Lagos State Commissioner for Education's contribution at the 2021 Ministerial press briefing, the Premium Times noted that there are more than 20,000 private schools (primary and secondary) in Lagos State (The Premium Times, 2021). The 2020 Population Stat sustains this position when it reported that private schools are significant players in Lagos State's educational scene as over 1. 4 million children are in such schools. Therefore, it may be safe to conclude that there are more private secondary schools than public secondary schools in the State.

The public secondary school was selected based on its categorisation by the Lagos State government as inclusive. On the other hand, the study selected the private secondary school based on recommendations from family and friends. At the same time, the school website states that it is an inclusive school. However, during the data collection process, the study found a significant difference in the participants' experience of SEN/D students' inclusion in their settings, and these schools' inclusivity can be queried. Both schools engage in selective enrolment of SEN/D students. For example, none of the schools enrol students with conditions such as total visual impairment or cerebral palsy. Furthermore, while public secondary school emphasises deaf and hard-of-hearing students, private secondary school has milder to moderate SEN/D cases. Consequently, the intention to collect data from participants across SEN/D conditions has been hampered. This may pose a limitation for the study in that the findings will be restricted. Nevertheless, qualitative research is not primarily concerned with representation but provides new and richly textured in-depth explanations for understanding the phenomenon under study (Vasileoiu et al., 2018). Therefore, the findings can apply to other settings and situations. Moreover, given the

methodological approach (qualitative) and theoretical positioning (decoloniality theory), my study can extend the emerging literature on SEN/D in the Nigerian context and, by extension, Africa. Studies on SEN/D students' inclusion in Lagos State and Nigeria are mainly done using a quantitative approach (Okhawere and Isibor, 2021; Abakpa et al., 2017). Finally, the study can be an alternative narrative to the established literature in the IE field, which has been dominated by studies from some Global North contexts (Abdurahman et al., 2021; Walton, 2018).

3.3 Inclusive Education Practices in Pre-colonial Nigeria

Inclusive education (IE) is entrenched in Nigeria's pre-colonial education system (Abraham, 2020; Fagunwa, 2017; Obiakor and Offor, 2011). This education system refers to Nigeria's education, which has existed since the people existed before their 1903 colonisation by Britain (Ojo et al., 2023; Eskay et al., 2012; Obiakor & Offor, 2011). The pre-colonial education system is informal, community leaders and family heads organised it, and its contents include essential skills and cultural values (Ojo et al., 2023; Eskay et al., 2012; Obiakor and Offor, 2011). The education is committed to lifelong learning, from cradle to grave (Ojo et al., 2023). Long before colonisation, the teaching approach adopted fostered learning from one generation to the next (Ojo et al., 2023; Eskay et al., 2012; Obiakor and Offor, 2011). This teaching approach included the methodology and the language of communication during teaching.

The Nigeria pre-colonial education system is considered to have always been inclusive because it encouraged the development of individual community members (Ojo et al., 2023; Fagunwa, 2017; Obiakor and Offor, 2011). To illustrate the inclusivity of the Nigerian pre-colonial education system, which predated the 1903 colonisation by Britain, Fagunwa (2017) argues that the Yorubas (one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria) traditional education recognised and addressed the heterogeneous nature

of the society. Fagunwa (2017) emphasised the involvement of every community member in learning from home to the wider society. In addition, Ojo et al. (2023) signifies the inclusivity of this education system. They opine that the education system helped individuals across various aspects of their needs, physically, socially, mentally, spiritually and morally. At the same time, they argue that using the mother tongue and a wide range of symbols and motifs for communicating ideas during teaching was beneficial to all learners, including those with disabilities.

As opposed to colonial education, in which the main agenda was to raise low-skilled staff (Abraham, 2020), the Nigeria pre-colonial education system engendered high expectations of disabled children as its methodology, which included observation, participation, and practising, accommodated diverse needs and interests (Ojo et al., 2023; Fagunwa, 2017). This position indicates that the Nigerian pre-colonial education system was holistic and involved everyone in the community. However, the Nigerian pre-colonial education system is problematic because, in some societies, those who do not respond to the different education strategies were excluded as their productivity was in doubt (Eskay et al., 2012). For instance, Kenneth Kaunda's statement in 1966 that "no able-bodied person in traditional African society was unemployed" suggests the exclusion of disabled people in African societies (Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2003: 236). Another limitation of the Nigerian pre-colonial education system is its sustainability because it relied on oral instruction (Ojo et al., 2023; Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2003). This position is further reinforced by Adeyemi and Adeyinka's (2003) observation that many wise Africans have died with salient information without documenting such for future generations. On this account, the pre-colonial education system, organised by community leaders and family heads, needed to encourage record-keeping.

Notwithstanding the concerns regarding the Nigeria pre-colonial education system, its tradition of oral instruction offered valuable first-hand knowledge from historical reference points because the instructors are familiar with the people's culture, social, political, and thought structure (Ojo et al., 2023; Ugwukah, 2015). Additionally, the instruction system allows practitioners to own their histories and transfer them to future generations (Ojo et al., 2023; Powell, 2014). Hence, it could be argued that the Nigerian pre-colonial educational system was adaptable to the local contexts (Ojo et al., 2023). This education system's cardinal goals encouraged development across all domains of life (physical, spiritual, and intellectual) and practice was based on community norms and values such as equity, fairness, hard work, and honesty (Abraham, 2020; Fagunwa, 2017; Obiakor and Offor, 2011). Therefore, it was beneficial to all in that it successfully ensured social inclusion and sustained livelihoods as practical skills ensured survival (Achi,2021; Kaya and Seleti, 2013). Achi (2021) and Kaya and Seleti (2013) sustain this point on the Nigerian pre-colonial education system when they indicate that it encourages acquiring knowledge and attitudes that enable individuals, including persons with disabilities, to live and function effectively in their communities.

Furthermore, the Nigeria pre-colonial education system was helpful to all because it insists that all community children engage in vocational skills like blacksmithing, fishing, and home management (Achi, 2021). Considering the highlighted benefits of this education system above, it is reasonable to conclude that it was relevant to communities' immediate needs and concerns. Therefore, it can be a tool for societal development because it encouraged participation for all, including persons with disabilities within the wider community system. The perspective about the Nigerian pre-colonial education system discussed in this section resonates with

decoloniality theory, which encourages a critical engagement with Nigerian inclusion practice to understand the assumptions and power structure that underlie the dominant model of including SEN/D students in Nigeria and foregrounds contextual realities of SEN/D students' inclusion (Lemos, 2023; Garcia, 2020). According to Garcia (2020), decoloniality promotes that we recognise coloniality's tendency to produce distorted knowledge. Therefore, Lemos (2023) highlights the necessity for a critical engagement with the Nigerian context to situate SEN/D students' inclusion and 'delink' it from the colonial matrix of power. Consequently, a study from a decoloniality theory lens can enhance SEN/D students' inclusion in the country as it encourages a better understanding of inclusion conceptualisation and implementation in Nigeria.

During the British colonial rule in Nigeria (1903-1960), the Nigerian pre-colonial education system was replaced with the colonial rulers' education (Abraham, 2020; Nwokorie and Devllieger, 2019; Brydges and Mkandawire, 2018). This education, also known as formal education/Western education (Abraham, 2020), aimed to expose the colonised to a 'superior culture', which was expected to bring them to a higher level of civilisation (Abraham, 2020; Nwokorie and Devllieger, 2019; Brydges and Mkandawire, 2018). Consequently, teaching and learning were bereft of the colonised history and customs as the emphasis was on the colonisers' ideals (Abraham, 2020). The education system emphasised literacy, numeracy, and Christian teachings. Exposure to colonial education left the colonised with a limited sense of their past because their history and customs slowly slipped away. This sentiment underscores the complex dynamics of power, culture, and social transformation during the colonial period. Therefore, this highlights the need to decolonise education in Nigeria.

Post-independence, African elites continue to entrench colonial dominance across every aspect of life, including the education system (Ilori, 2020; Akogun et al.,

2018). As such, colonial power patterns continue to reflect in policy formulation and engender various challenges, including SEN/D students' exclusion from and within schools (Ilori, 2020). For example, Abraham (2020) suggests that based on the need to develop administrative capacity in Nigeria, the elites formulated educational policies that focused on the non-SEN/D population in the country. This position aligns with Akogun et al. (2018), who observed that before the Salamanca Statement, the prevalent educational practice in Nigeria until 2004 was to separate SEN/D students from their typical peers. This practice encouraged SEN/D students' exclusion to special schools, as mainstream schools did not adjust to accommodate them as promoted by the social model of disability (Barnes, 2018; Barton, 2018; Eleweke and Ebenso, 2016; Mallet and Runswick-Cole, 2014).

Excluding SEN/D students to special schools undermined the need to accommodate SEN/D students in mainstream schools and the wider society (Akogun et al., 2018). It also suggests that issues relating to SEN/D were addressed based on the medical model of disability, which sees disability as a problem for individuals with a disability to handle (Zack, 2023; Goodley, 2011; Croft, 2010). However, the 2004 NPE marked a shift to the social model of disability. The policy provides that SEN/D students should be educated along with non-SEN/D students in the same school. The 2004 NPE further displays agreement with the social model of disability by replacing some terms, such as 'handicapped children' with 'disabled children' (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). 'Disabled' in this thesis refers to physical and sensory impairments that may inhibit learning in the mainstream classroom (Akinbola, 2010).

Consequent to the Nigerian Government's ratification of the Salamanca Declaration on IE, which encouraged including SEN/D children in mainstream schools in 1994 (Charema, 2010), different governments in Nigeria have demonstrated their

commitment to IE and made efforts to address its implementation in the country. For example, based on the 2013 review of the 2004 NPE, the government of Goodluck Jonathan introduced the first National Policy on Special Needs Education (NPSNE) in 2015 (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015). This policy document encourages equal opportunities for SEN/D children in the country. It provides guidelines to ensure that SEN/D children access the support required to achieve their full potential. Later, the Buhari-led government set up the 2015 committee on IE (Akogun et al., 2018). The committee produced the 2016 NPIE (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016) to ensure that all school-age children, especially SEN/D children, access education in mainstream educational settings. In 2023, the Tinubu-led government produced the revised National Policy on Inclusive Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023). The policy reinforced Nigeria commitment to “fostering an inclusive and equitable education system that leaves no learner behind, in line with the global education 2030 agenda” (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 1).

Regrettably, there is constant concern regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools in Nigeria as many SEN/D children in the country are continuously denied access to school generally, with those in schools excluded from teaching and learning (Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari, 2019; Odunsi, 2018; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016; Sambo and Bwoi, 2015). It appears that the 2016 NPIE, which seeks to ensure that all children as a right have access to non-discriminatory education irrespective of their ethnicity, religion, gender, economic status, or physical or mental status (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016), is a response to addressing SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria. In the next section, the study reviews the 2016 NPIE to explore its perception of IE and its tendency to impact SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria. This review is important because it can inform an evaluation of the policy,

positively impacting IE practice and experience in Nigeria. The study focuses on the 2016 NPIE because, at the time of writing this thesis, the 2023 NPIE has not yet been implemented.

3.4 The 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education

The 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education (NPIE) seeks to ensure that every child has access to quality education in line with global educational goals (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016). The policy identifies the need for SEN/D children in the country to be educated in mainstream schools. Based on its provision, the 2016 NPIE is consistent with IE perception. It focuses on barrier identification and removal to ensure that SEN/D students are accommodated in mainstream schools. The 2016 NPIE aligns with the notion that access to non-discriminatory education, irrespective of physical or mental status, ethnicity, religion, gender, and economic status, is the right of all children (UNESCO, 1994). The policy suggests that all schools would accommodate all categories of learners and ensure access and participation by recognising IE as the "process of addressing all barriers and providing access to quality education to meet the diverse needs of all learners in the same learning environment" (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 9). Therefore, the 2016 NPIE aligns with the social model of disability, which recognises that impairment may not necessarily lead to disability. The policy can particularly address concerns about SEN/D students in Nigeria. At the same time, it can benefit all out-of-school children since it is designed to attract and retain children from marginalised and excluded groups, such as SEN/D students.

However, the 2016 NPIE faces many challenges. These challenges include the fact that it was inspired by ‘Western education’. The 2016 NPIE draws inspiration from ‘Western education’. It often places emphasis on academic achievement measured

through exams, grades, and certifications (Ojo et al., 2023; Ugwukah, 2015). However, Nigerian pre-colonial education was deeply rooted in community needs and immediate concerns (Ojo et al., 2023; Ugwukah, 2015). According to Ojo et al. (2023) and Ugwukah (2015), since Nigerian pre-colonial education can encourage inclusivity for all, it can enhance every community member's ability to fully achieve their potential and contribute economically and socially to society. This is possible because the traditional education system acknowledges community norms and values such as equity, fairness, hard work, and honesty in knowledge acquisition and practice (Abraham, 2020; Fagunwa, 2017; Obiakor and Offor, 2011).

Many Nigerian SEN/D students may not be able to fully achieve their potential as they are being excluded during teaching-learning in mainstream schools (Fajemilo et al., 2020). Fajemilo et al. (2020) assessed the implementation of inclusion in 44 inclusive primary and secondary schools in Lagos State. Their key observations include an excessive focus on academic achievement (Fajemilo et al.,2020). They argue that over-emphasising academic achievement can inadvertently lead many SEN/D students to leave school without worthwhile development. This position aligns with Ainscow (2020), who, in his study on ensuring effective inclusion for all children in schools worldwide, contends that while millions of SEN/D and non-SEN/D children from economically disadvantaged countries lack access to formal education, “in wealthier nations, some young people leave school without meaningful qualifications and some even choose to drop out due to perceived irrelevance of lessons” (Ainscow, 2020, p.7). This viewpoint implies that effective inclusion for SEN/D students is significantly challenged across countries. Fajemilo et al. (2020) also highlight the implication of teacher competence to effective inclusion for SEN/D students. They emphasise the need to train teachers to mitigate SEN/D students’ exclusion from and

within mainstream schools in Lagos State. Their perspective signifies a need for good pedagogical practice in the classroom. Hence, Fajemilo et al. (2020) recommended that trained personnel be deployed to support IE implementation in the State.

The concern regarding the 2016 NPIE over-emphasis on academic achievement underscores the need for a fusion of Nigeria's pre-colonial and Western education approaches (Iheanacho, 2021). Such fusion is necessary because Western education, introduced by the British colonisers, often overlooks the unique needs and cultural context of Nigerian students (Ojo et al., 2023). Unlike Western education, which emphasises formal schooling, academic achievement, and standardised curricula, Nigerian pre-colonial education recognised that beyond formal schooling, learning encompasses various aspects of life, including cultural practices, ethics, and vocational skills. Therefore, a fusion of Western education and Nigerian pre-colonial education can foster deviation from rigid definitions of achievement and recognise and value individual students' unique abilities and contributions. This fusion can enhance inclusion experience for SEN/D students (Iheanacho, 2021). It is beneficial to SEN/D students because it can motivate them to participate in school activities beyond the classroom. Additionally, the approach can promote an inclusive classroom environment by enhancing teachers' capacity to address SEN/D students' needs by drawing from both educational systems.

Another challenge is that the 2016 NPIE assumes that segregation may only occur when SEN/D children are placed in a separate school from their typical peers. On the contrary, in practice, segregation still occurs when all children are in the same educational setting (Irokoba, 2015; Olufosoye and Oladimeji, 2014; Stubbs, 2008). For example, while looking at the concept of inclusion and Nigeria's perception of IE for learners with special needs Irokoba (2015) argues that despite the aspiration for

inclusion, removing barriers and making provision for appropriate and adequate resources to ensure that SEN/D students benefit from inclusion, issues like poor funding and school scarcity impact its implementation in Nigeria. Stubbs (2008), in their study of IE in countries with few resources, suggests that children may still be excluded from learning irrespective of physical presence in the school due to pedagogical and environmental factors in developing countries such as Nigeria. For example, a lack of individualised instruction can hinder effective learning for some SEN/D students. Moreover, sensory issues such as sound, colour, and smell can affect a learner's classroom experience. For instance, a noisy environment may overwhelm some students, making it difficult for them to concentrate or participate actively. Meanwhile, Olufosoye and Oladimeji (2014) observe that many students with hidden disabilities, such as dyslexia, who may struggle with reading, writing, or processing information, often face exclusion from learning and are sometimes unfairly labelled as lazy.

Considering the two challenges identified above, it is reasonable to conclude that SEN/D students' continuing exclusion from mainstream schools and education in Nigeria implicates the Salamanca Statement, which undermines Nigeria's pre-colonial education system, economic, and political realities before 'imposing' the framework on the country (Adigun, 2021). Agreeing with this position, Akogun et al. (2018) recommend a critical interrogation of the country's education inclusion policies to address SEN/D students' inclusion effectively. Given the issues concerning the 2016 NPIE, it is crucial to examine the difference between policy and practice in Nigeria to understand the challenges facing IE implementation in the country. Accordingly, in the following section, the study explores some IE challenges in Nigeria despite several

efforts regarding SEN/D students' inclusion to understand the likely impact of the 2016 NPIE on practice in the country.

3.5 Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education in Nigeria

Challenges regarding IE implementation in Nigeria have been identified around various issues, which include the continuing influence of colonial ideologies and legacies (Abdulrahman et al., 2021; Ilori, 2020), lack of access, working statistics regarding disabled persons in Nigeria, resources, and research (Pinnock, 2020; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015; Olufosoye and Oladimeji, 2014). In addition to the challenges already identified, scholars, such as (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Ma, 2022; Fajemilo et al.,2020; Odunsi, 2018; Akogun et al., 2018; Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari, 2019; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016) have highlighted several other barriers to IE in the country. These include difficulties in early identification of SEN/D conditions like dyslexia, low-level of awareness about SEN/D and IE, rigid curriculum, high student-teacher ratio, non-prioritising IE by the government, prohibitive fees (especially in private schools), insufficient funding at all educational levels, inadequate monitoring and evaluation of learning outcomes, and poor motivation among teachers (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Ma, 2022; Fajemilo et al.,2020; Odunsi, 2018; Akogun et al., 2018; Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari, 2019; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016). Furthermore, the literature calls attention to the tendency for male students with SEN/D to have different experiences in school due to the importance placed on male children over female children in Nigeria (UNESCO, 2023; (Agbakuribe and Agbakuribe, 2021; Ossai, 2021; Enyioko, 2021). However, in this study, concerns such as the impact of colonial legacies on the understanding and implementation of IE in Nigeria, access to education, pedagogical approaches, the implication of gender disparities on female SEN/D children's education experiences,

and awareness are the most important. Hence, focuses will be on reviewing them in the following subsections.

3.5.1 Coloniality and IE Implementation in Nigeria

Coloniality focuses on the continued control of former colonisers, including Britain, over their former colonies despite independence (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Like other former colonies like Ghana and Kenya, IE policies and implementation in Nigeria draw inspiration from resource-rich Global North countries, particularly England, Finland, and the USA. These countries have become the reference points in the field of IE across various contexts (Walton, 2018; Armstrong et al., 2011). Such reliance on Global North ideals signifies a form of Global North epistemic hegemony in IE conceptualisation and implementation in Nigeria. Epistemic hegemony refers to the dominance of knowledge from some Global North countries, such as Finland, the USA, and England, in shaping local discussions and policy formulation regarding IE in Nigeria. This influence is reflected in Nigerian education policies, including the 2013 National Policy on Education and 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education, which undermine culturally relevant curriculum materials such as local stories, history, and cultures while emphasising academic achievement (Ojo et al., 2023; Ugwukah, 2015).

Reliance on knowledge from some Global North countries relates to the concept of coloniality of knowledge, power and being (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Walton, 2018). Coloniality of knowledge problematises the epistemic exclusion and marginalisation of indigenous knowledge regarding phenomena such as IE in Nigeria due to continued dominations of some Global North knowledge systems on inclusion in schools in the country (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Mbembe, 2016). For example, despite formal independence from Britain, inclusion ideals from England and other Global North countries, such as Finland and the USA, continue to shape the

knowledge and implementation of IE in Nigeria (Ojo et al., 2023; Ugwukah, 2015). As indicated earlier, education policies emphasise formal education to the detriment of contextually relevant approaches rooted in Nigeria's pre-colonial education. This domination is central to the functioning of the coloniality of power.

Coloniality of power addresses the continuing legacies of colonialism within Nigerian systems, including the educational system, even post-independence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Mbembe, 2016). Both the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of power contribute to what is known as the coloniality of being. These concepts refer to the impact of colonial legacies on individuals' self-perception and lived experiences (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). In the context of IE in Nigeria, this colonial influence shapes its interpretations and implementation. Consequently, a reliance on ideals from resource-rich Global North countries such as England, Finland, and the USA can significantly influence the lived experiences of SEN/D students in Nigeria, including their access to quality education and potential maximisation.

An implication of heavy reliance on ideals from resource-rich global North countries is that since the Salamanca Statement was introduced without recourse to the economic status of Nigeria, it may be difficult to effectively implement IE in Nigeria due to the countries' limited financial capacity (Pinnock, 2020; Adetoro, 2014; Artiles et al., 2007). This opinion aligns with Niholm's (2020) argument that a universal approach to IE may be problematic since it can deviate from local realities, such as individual countries' economic capability, to ensure effective inclusion for SEN/D students. According to Niholm (2020), theories that emerged without consideration for contextual peculiarities may not give significant guidance concerning how effective practices can be developed across all contexts.

Even with the impact of some Global North ideals on the implementation of IE in Nigeria, there is a need for transparency regarding the utilisation strategy for the allocated funding for IE in the country (ActionAid, 2021). ActionAid (2021) notes that getting information on how much is spent on IE in Nigeria is difficult. In addition to transparency regarding the utilisation strategy for the allocated funding for IE in Nigeria, ActionAid (2021) identifies the need for credible costings. The ActionAid (2021) report also expresses concern about difficulties in monitoring IE implementation in Nigeria. It states that the Nigerian IE target is "impossible target to implement or monitor as there is no information on the extent to which it is expected to meet actual needs, or who is responsible for making it happen" (ActionAid, 2021:3). The need to address SEN/D children's needs adequately and appropriately in Nigeria should prompt political leaders' commitment to transparency in utilising the allocated funding for IE. In addition, it underlines the need for a more comprehensive IE strategy that designates responsible officers for different stages. Such strategic planning will aid the achievement of the vision outlined in the 2016 NPIE, which is to meet the needs of all SEN/D children in Nigeria.

Another implication of relying on inclusion ideals from some Global North countries indicates a strong dependence on methodologies and materials from there in IE practice in Nigeria. On this account, IE practice in the country may deviate from the country's contextual realities (Walton, 2018). According to Walton (2108), continuous dependence on methodologies and materials from the global North in IE practice in African countries may negatively impact its implementation. Therefore, it may be safe to say that the gap in IE provision in Nigeria can be due to the lingering influence of Global North's perspectives through writings from some Global North countries and international conventions like the Salamanca Statement, which do not

account for emerging local realities such as economic capacity and cultural practices (Abdulrahman et al., 2021; Ilori, 2020; Walton, 2018). Over-reliance on Global North ideals indicates that the impact of the 2016 NPIE may be limited since it is based on the ideals of some Global North countries. It is essential to note that Western education ideology has been centred on shaping “the colonised into colonial subjects, in the process, shedding them of their humanity and full potential” (Ojo et al., 2023: 5). Absolute reliance on Global North’s ideals, methodologies, and materials to implement IE in Nigeria can be counterproductive.

An additional implication of the domination of some of the Global North’s ideals on IE is the potential lack of guidance in its development and implementation in Nigeria. These ideals may not fully reflect the contextual uniqueness and realities of the Nigerian landscape (Niholm, 2020; Kamenopolous, 2020; Olufosoye and Oladimeji, 2014; Artiles et al., 2007). Consequently, an IE policy based on the prescriptions from some Global North countries could perpetuate marginalisation and inequality within the education system in the country. This sentiment calls attention to the need to address the ongoing exclusion of SEN/D students from education in Nigeria because it can be potentially detrimental to their development and participation in the wider society (Elder and Foley, 2015). Addressing SEN/D children's exclusion from education in Nigeria may require going beyond international models and adopting approaches that can provide a locally effective methodology, such as the use of local language for teaching and storytelling. This view encourages projecting the voices of IE stakeholders regarding their conceptualisation of IE, their experiences, and the challenges of including SEN/D students in their settings (Abdulrahman et al., 2021; Niholm, 2020; Magnússon, 2019; Olufosoye and Oladimeji, 2104).

The discussion regarding the implications of the domination of some Global North ideals on SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria underscore the need to critically examine educational policies, including the 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education (NPIE). This examination may enhance their impact as it may warrant that they are contextualised to suit Nigeria's reality. Such contextualisation may include incorporating local knowledge, languages, and cultural perspectives into the curriculum to counter colonial influences (Ojo et al., 2023).

Contextualised educational policies may address the colonial legacy of power play between England and the USA and Nigeria, a former colony (Abdulrahman et al., 2021; Magnússon, 2019). As a matter of urgency, Nigeria needs to contextualise its educational policies to present an alternative to some of Global North's narratives and, therefore, debunk the 'civilising mission' (the justification of the invasion of the former colonies by the colonial master (West, 2020; Pekanan, 2016). According to Abdulrahman et al. (2021) and Magnússon (2019), the Salamanca statement constitutes an overarching salvation theme and deems education as the tool to achieve it. Contextualising IE policy in Nigeria requires policymakers to critically evaluate inclusion conceptualisation and implementation across the thirty-six states in the country. The evaluation process should include both private and public schools. Situation analysis of inclusion conceptualisation and practice can give a deep understanding of the prevailing understanding of IE in the country. A good understanding of the contextual conceptualisation and practice of inclusion portends that policies will reflect the voices and needs of Nigerians. This thought coheres with Lemos (2023), who argues that decoloniality theory sets the foundation for understanding phenomena like IE from the local population's perspective.

However, decoloniality theory goes beyond engaging with contextual perspectives of phenomena like IE to generate an alternative narrative (Kaneva et al., 2020); instead, it encourages a practice that can significantly address SEN/D students' exclusion from and within schools (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). This position implies that Nigeria's elites (political leaders) should formulate inclusive policies and be committed to implementing these policies to foster SEN/D students' inclusion in the country. Nevertheless, while ensuring that policies align with local needs, it may be necessary to draw ideas from global expertise. This sentiment is important because many countries, Finland, Canada, England, and the USA from the Global North, have invested in research and technology on concepts such as SEN/D and how to support diverse needs adequately.

3.5.2 Access as a Concern for Inclusive Education Implementation in Nigeria

Access refers to the ability of all students, regardless of condition(s), gender, and socio-economic status, to enter and actively participate in schools (Schwab et al., 2022; UNESCO, 1994). It involves the school's availability, proximity to homes, and students' ability to gain physical entry to school facilities (Kelly, 2019; Akinpelu and Sadri, 2017). Access also entails ensuring that students have a sense of belonging and feel like valued school members (Schwab et al., 2022; Allen et al., 2018; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016). Access is critical to IE, a concept that recognises the need to provide quality learning opportunities for all children, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or needs (UNESCO, 1994). Access within the IE context highlights the importance of removing barriers (physical, social, or cultural) to engender school attendance and engagement in learning for every student (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; Frederickson, 2016; Department for Education and Skills, 2015). Therefore, access involves that learners are able to attain learning objectives

(Frederickson, 2016; Department for Education, 2015) and have both physical and psychological connections to school (Kelly, 2019; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016). However, access remains a critical concern for the successful implementation of IE in Nigeria (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Ajuwon et al., 2020; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016).

The need for learners to attain learning objectives requires that teachers thoroughly plan lessons before actual teaching (Frederickson, 2016; Florian, 2015). Lesson planning involves a deliberate process of organising content, activities, and assessments to achieve specific learning objectives. During this process, teachers are expected to consider the different needs of their students. Such consideration includes recognising different abilities and backgrounds and identifying suitable teaching methods that can address individual student needs. Additionally, the need to ensure that all learners access learning may require that teachers adapt the curriculum to the unique needs of each student (Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021; Stentiford and Koutsairis, 2020; Florian, 2015). Furthermore, teachers may adjust content depth, complexity, and pace of delivery based on student's progress and feedback. This approach can engender an inclusive learning environment where every student can achieve their learning objectives.

However, studies have revealed that teachers need more confidence to oversee a heterogeneous class in Nigeria (Ajuwon et al., 2020; Pinnock, 2016; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015). For example, a study that focused on teacher preparation in IE in Nigeria by Omede and Danladi (2016) emphasised the need for teacher trainers to provide teachers with adequate confidence to oversee diversity in the class. This confidence is crucial because adequate teacher preparation is critical to successful inclusion for SEN/D students.

Therefore, it underlines the need to prepare teachers at both pre- and in-service levels in Nigeria to enhance their capacity to support the diverse needs and aspirations of students in the classroom.

Still, on teachers' confidence regarding their competence to function effectively within an inclusive classroom, the Ajuwon et al. (2020) study, which investigated the attitude of secondary school teachers toward visually impaired students and partial sight in selected states in Nigeria, found that participants lacked confidence and low capacity. Low professional capacity among teachers implies that while children are physically present in the classroom, they may remain unattended to and excluded from teaching-learning due to teachers' lack of capacity to oversee a heterogeneous class. Much like the reports on IE in England (William-Brown and Hodkinson, 2020; Gardiner, 2017), these findings also indicate that barriers to IE exist across all contexts. For example, Gardiner (2017) observes that regardless of policy and guidelines on IE, in England, IE implementation still needs to be improved. Additionally, William-Brown and Hodkinson (2020), in their analysis of IE development in England and its impact on SEN/D children, conclude that there is no significant progress with inclusion in England because it has not been possible to accommodate it within competing political agenda in England education system. This highlights the need for initial and on-the-job training for existing teachers.

Similar to most developing countries such as Ghana (Opoku-NKoom and Achah-Jnr, 2023) and South Africa (Mpu and Adu, 2021), Education-Aids et al. (2021) in a study that explored the state of investment in the education workforce for disability-inclusive-education in Nigeria, found school access as a critical challenge to SEN/D students. In addition, findings from Adeleke and Oyundoyin (2016), which surveyed educational services for all categories of pupils with special needs in three states in

Nigeria, indicate that SEN/D children face significant challenges in accessing schools physically due to the limited number of schools, rejection by available schools and attitudinal barriers in schools. Although the 2016 NPIE presents the provision of facilities as a priority as reflected in one of its strategies: "Construction, equipping and rehabilitation of new and existing classrooms, learning centres, hostels, labs, workshops, offices, toilets, etc. to make them accessible to all" (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 18), scholars such as (Pinnock. 2020; ActionAids, 2020; Fajemilo et al, 2020) have identified schools scarcity, especially in the rural parts of Nigeria as a critical challenge to IE in the country.

While lending their voices to the issue of school access to SEN/D students, Akinpelu and Sadri (2017) highlight a critical issue. They observe that most public buildings, including schools, are inaccessible to disabled people in Nigeria due to improper planning and a lack of coordinated data. This accessibility gap is also reflected in Ahmed et al.'s (2014) study, which investigated accessibility to relevant buildings by disabled people in higher institutions in developing countries. Ahmed et al. (2014) found that despite the provisions in the 2013 Federal Ministry of Works and Housing policy on building codes in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, 2013), many students with disabilities struggle to access schools due to non-adherence to building regulations and standard requirements. The 2013 building policy mandates that all public and private buildings must incorporate provisions for vulnerable citizens during the planning phase. These provisions include features like ramps and lifts to accommodate wheelchair users. Recently, the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (2023) emphasised the need to urgently improve accessibility for people with disabilities in Nigeria. The commission expressed concern about the difficulties experienced by individuals with a disability when accessing most

government buildings in the country. Challenges of access to schools/classrooms and teaching-learning faced by SEN/D students underscores the need to consciously address the access needs of SEN/D students in mainstream schools, as they are likely to function more effectively if schools/classrooms are accessible both physically and otherwise.

3.5.3 Pedagogical Concerns Regarding Inclusive Education Implementation in Nigeria

The term pedagogy has different meanings across contexts. For example, pedagogy is seen as a social practice (Edwards-Groves, 2018). This perspective focuses on the interactions between teachers and learners, the role of language in shaping the learning experience, and how educational practices become interwoven into the fabric of educational settings. Another perspective presents pedagogy as practice (Magnússon, 2019; Edwards-Groves, 2018). This perspective relates to how pedagogy unfolds in reality, considering the prevailing norms, beliefs, economic factors, and institutional policies on teaching-learning in the classroom. For example, specific contexts such as class size, available resources, and student engagement levels can influence teachers' pedagogical approaches. Nevertheless, pedagogy generally refers to the approaches teachers adopt to impart knowledge in the classroom (Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021; Stentiford and Koutsairis,2020; Magnússon, 2019).

Along with selecting appropriate teaching methods and instructional materials to address diverse learning needs in the classroom to ensure no one is left behind, pedagogy also shapes teachers' actions, judgments, and teaching strategies (Pinnock, 2020; Ajuwon, 2012). Given the necessity of appropriate and quality pedagogy and successful inclusion in the classroom, all teachers must have the required skill set to address the various learning needs in the classroom. This

expectation underlines the importance of inclusive pedagogy. Inclusive pedagogy is an educational approach that focuses on enhancing the educational attainment of all learners regardless of differences (Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021; Stentiford and Koutsairis, 2020; Florian, 2015). This approach can foster equal access to all learners, particularly, those with SEN/D within mainstream classrooms. For instance, when teachers identify the need to accommodate students with dyslexic condition by providing recorded lesson. Additionally, a bold font size may aid learning for student with a certain visual impairment. Furthermore, encouraging flexible learning environment may enhance learning for some SEN/D students who may struggle to learn within the conventional classroom setting. The 2016 NPIE provides for inclusive pedagogy. The policy encourages teachers to recognise individuals' interests and learning styles and adopt flexible and differentiated teaching methods and strategies to address them in the classroom. (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016).

Above discussion regarding inclusive pedagogy highlights the cruciality of teachers competence to the successful implementation of inclusion for SEN/D students (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Pinnock, 2020; Ajuwon, 2012). Notwithstanding the crucial role of teachers' competence in achieving successful inclusion, existing literature suggests a gap in teachers' capacity to adopt appropriate pedagogy to accommodate the various needs that may be present in mainstream classrooms in Nigeria (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Pinnock, 2020; Ajuwon, 2012). For instance, Angwaomaodoko (2023) emphasises the importance of teachers' competence to effective inclusion for SEN/D students. According to this scholar, teachers' competence to attend to SEN/D students effectively calls for urgent attention among the several issues concerning inclusion in Nigeria. Pinnock (2020) states that a large number of teachers in Nigeria are without "a strong grounding in pupil-centred

pedagogy" (Pinnock, 2020: 9). According to Pinnock (2020), it is difficult for teachers "to include a child with special needs" (P. 9). Ajuwon (2012) also reported that teachers expressed less confidence in attending to SEN/D students. The view regarding teachers' capacity to adopt effective pedagogy that cuts across all the learning needs in the classroom implies that many SEN/D students may be excluded from learning, even when physically present in the classroom. Besides, it depicts a deviation from the provision of the 2016 NPIE.

One of the objectives of the 2016 NPIE is "Continuous training of Teachers/facilitators on classroom management, pedagogic skills on addressing the educational needs of individual learners." (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016:14, Strategy 3 (iv)). Considering the provision in the 2016 NPIE, it may be concluded that it is mindful of the need to make the education system more responsive to the diverse needs of learners. Nonetheless, the literature underlines the need for targeted teacher training to enhance teachers' capacity to function effectively in a heterogeneous classroom. Essentially, the literature underlines the importance of focusing on policy implementation, monitoring and continuous review of policies to ensure that practice aligns with policy ideas in Nigeria.

3.5.4 Citizens' awareness of Special Educational Needs and Disability and Inclusive Education Practices in Nigeria

SEN/D awareness refers to the ability to understand, value, and accommodate all learners within mainstream school/classrooms regardless of differences that they may present (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; Okoye and Ifi, 2021). People's level of awareness about SEN/D is often influenced by available information and personal experiences. For example, public enlightenment program that focus on SEN/D and inclusion can encourage support and advocacy for equal opportunity for SEN/D students. Additionally, specialised trainings such as learning to support learning needs

through differentiated instruction can empower teachers to adequately support different learning needs within mainstream classrooms. In essence, being aware of SEN/D and inclusion can positively impact inclusion for SEN/D students as it can foster effective collaboration among inclusion stakeholders.

While recognising the debates regarding SEN/D students' inclusion within mainstream schools across different contexts, limited knowledge of SEN/D and inclusion are significantly challenging for the implementation of IE in Nigeria (Okoye and Ifi, 2021; Odunsi, 2018). Negative cultural attitudes towards disabilities may account for the level of awareness regarding SEN/D in Nigeria (Odunsi, 2018; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015). Nwaogu (1988), cited by Eskay et al. (2012), suggests that cultural beliefs about disability inform Nigerians' disposition towards people living with disability in the country. Eskay et al. (2012) points attention to the implication of the cultural beliefs about disability in Nigeria. They note that some administrators mistreat SEN/D students and overlooked them in educational provisions (Eskay et al., 2012). This allegation implies that cultural views regarding SEN/D students are problematic, and this can sustain continuous exclusion for these students. This underlines the need for accurate information regarding SEN/D and inclusion in Nigeria.

The 2016 NPIE attempts to mitigate inaccurate information regarding SEN/D and inclusion in Nigeria. For example, its strategies include a commitment to "high-level sensitisation and advocacy to enhance political will, acceptance and buy-in on inclusive education by all ", "effective stakeholders' engagement and community mobilisation at Local, State, National and International levels," and "regular capacity-building for all stakeholders" (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016:16-19). However, despite the potential benefits of these strategies for inclusion in Nigeria, it is surprising

that the government has yet to embark on creating SEN/D awareness. Therefore, factors such as ignorance among IE stakeholders in Nigeria have been consistently identified as a bane of IE implementation in the country (Ajuwon et al., 2020; Aghamelu, 2015; Ajuwon, 2012).

Evidence in support of a high level of ignorance regarding SEN/D among IE stakeholders in Nigeria is found in Aghamelu (2015), Manuel and Adeleke (2015), Ajuwon et al. (2020) and Ajuwon (2012). For example, 23% of Aghamelu's (2015) Nigerian participants in her study, which aimed to examine the perception of teachers in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo regarding teaching learners with disability and their attitudes towards IE, are not aware of the existence of non-visible impairment in their pupils. Furthermore, Aghamelu found that teachers in both countries believe that SEN/D students are not their responsibility. A study by Manuel and Adeleke (2015), which assessed inclusion in early childhood classrooms of Lagos State reveals that most practitioners in the study think that SEN/D children should be excluded from a mainstream setting, while some believe that IE is impossible. Another study by Ajuwon et al. (2020) that investigated the attitudes of secondary school teachers towards students with blindness or partial sight in selected states in Nigeria found that teachers needed to gain a greater knowledge of policy and legislation in relation to inclusion for SEN/D students. This study underscored the need for Nigerian teachers to be more aware of SEN/D. For example, 56% of the 141 participants reported needing more confidence in managing SEN/D in inclusive classrooms (P.39). However, Ajuwon's (2012) study indicated that professional training could positively impact teachers' perspectives on including SEN/D students in the mainstream classroom.

It is convenient to assume that since SEN/D students' inclusion policies were enacted earlier in some Global North countries like England and Finland than in Nigeria, there would be a higher level of SEN/D awareness among educational stakeholders in those countries than in Nigeria. However, the Department for Education (2022) report from England on special educational needs indicates a need for more awareness among teachers and school staff. The report points out a need for enhanced training for teachers to effectively accommodate the diverse needs of SEN/D students in their classrooms. The discussion regarding the level of IE and SEN/D awareness highlights the impact that SEN/D awareness can have on SEN/D students' inclusion. Therefore, Jerry et al.'s (2014) study which emphasise the critical role of communities in ensuring inclusion for people living with disabilities, underscores a compelling need for awareness creation regarding disabilities and IE in Nigeria. This highlights the importance of debriefing teachers and Ministry officials of damaging beliefs that keep influencing practice. The emphasis on teachers and Ministry officials is because they are crucial to the implementation of IE policy (Odunsi, 2018).

While it high level of awareness is critical to ensuring that no students is excluded from and within schools due to SEN/D condition(s), it is important to understand and address the implication of placing more importance on male children than female children in Nigeria.

3.5.5 The Impact of Gender Disparities on the Education of female Students with SEN/D in Nigeria

Gender is a complex and evolving concept beyond just male and female. It includes socially constructed roles, traits, attitudes, behaviours, and values that society assigns differently to the two sexes (UNESCO, 2023; Agbakuribe and Agbakuribe 2021; Enyioko, 2021). In Nigeria, gender influences people's experiences,

such as education, because society views men as breadwinners and women as caregivers (Agbakuribe and Agbakuribe, 2021; Enyioko, 2021). Cultural norms shape how children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEN/D) are treated. Boys are often seen as future breadwinners, leading to families prioritising their education and support over girls. This can exclude female children with SEN/D from schools and support services.

Patriarchal preference can cause female children with SEN/D to face discrimination and marginalisation due to their gender and disabilities. Research shows women with disabilities are less likely to receive formal education than those without (Agbakuribe and Agbakuribe, 2021; Global Citizens, 2018). Male children with disabilities are often identified for education more than their female counterparts. This societal bias can stress male children with SEN/D to succeed and support the family, while negatively impacting female children with SEN/D. Addressing this requires gender-responsive policies to ensure equal access to education, healthcare, and support for all children, and raising community awareness about the importance of educating and supporting all children, regardless of gender and disability.

Having reviewed the challenges of IE in Nigeria, the following section presents a brief review of IE practice in Lagos, which is the primary context of this study.

3.6 Inclusive Education Practice in Lagos State

Lagos State is one of the thirty-six states in Nigeria. The State is in the southwestern part of the country. It has a population of about 20 million (Population Stat, 2022), and it is deemed the wealthiest of all the states in Nigeria (Nomishan, 2014). The State has a remarkably diverse population because it accommodates immigrants from other parts of the country and across the globe (Oludare, 2016). Hence, it is the most cosmopolitan State in Nigeria. The State's cosmopolitan status

makes it a microcosm of the country (Nomishan, 2014). Therefore, the participants in this study reflect Nigeria's diversity, as any secondary school classroom in Lagos State may have teachers and children from different ethnic groups and religions.

A recent report from a study by a group of independent charity organisations, Festus Fajemilo Foundation, JONAWPD and Daughter of Charity (Fajemilo et al., 2020) indicates that IE has come a long way in Lagos state since 2003. They observed that the State has adopted legal and policy frameworks to encourage IE implementation in the State. There are thirteen inclusive' public secondary schools in Lagos State out of six hundred and seventy secondary schools (Lagos State Ministry of Education, 2019). These schools are deemed inclusive because they enrol both SEN/D and non-SEN/D students (Lagos State Ministry of Education, 2015). Practice in these schools involves keeping SEN/D students in units attached to mainstream schools. The classes, though large, are staffed by one SEN/D specialist teacher and sometimes one carer for more than forty (40) students (Odunsi, 2018). The students are supposed to attend classes with their typical peers in mainstream classes. However, this is often impossible due to the need for more staff. This practice reflects the Lagos State public secondary school interpretation of access to mainstream schools for SEN/D students. Staff shortage indicates a high student-teacher ratio, inhibiting learning (Odunsi, 2018; Komolafe, 2018).

SEN/D students' inclusion faces challenges, including inaccessible distance to most inclusive schools in Lagos State (Fajemilo et al., 2020). Fajemilo et al. (2020) call attention to the need for more schools that can effectively accommodate SEN/D students. According to Fajemilo et al. (2020), despite existing policy frameworks aimed at promoting inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream schools in Lagos State, school scarcity contributes significantly to gaps in policy implementation. This shortage

may be a good reason for increasing population of out-of-school children with disabilities in the State (Fajemilo et al., 2020; Banjo, 2018). Komolafe (2018) and Olufemi et al. (2015), highlight the need to address material shortages, infrastructure decay, insufficient trained personnel and staff welfare in Lagos State. For example, Komolafe's (2018) study investigating the practice of IE in Lagos State identified challenges such as poor teachers' welfare and inadequacy of trained teachers as crucial factors hindering the effectiveness of IE in the State. Additionally, Olufemi et al. (2015) underscore the need for schools to be empowered to be able to support SEN/D students in Lagos State.

3.7 Chapter Conclusion

The study explored inclusive education (IE) in Nigeria in this chapter. The study reviewed the Nigerian education system, IE in pre-colonial Nigeria, and the 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education. Nigeria is considered a developing country because many of its population live under the international poverty line. Like many other countries, Nigeria has formulated ambitious education policies with the goal of providing quality education for all (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2015; 2015; 2013). These policies suggest an acceptance of IE as a tool to ensuring access to quality education for all children. Nevertheless, equal access to education for all, especially for SEN/D students, is still an issue. Educational inequality in Nigeria has been linked to factors such as education commercialisation, teachers' competence to effectively address learners' needs, and level of awareness of SEN/D (Fajemilo et al., 2020; Ajuwon et al., 2020). Additionally, it has been argued that the continuing influence of colonial legacies on formulating Nigerian educational policies engenders various challenges for including SEN/D students in and within schools. Such influence may be through epistemological dominance (Walton, 2018). Furthermore, SEN/D

students' inclusion in the mainstream in Nigeria can be challenged because the conceptualisation of the Nigerian policies on IE is influenced majorly by some Global North's ideals (Ojo et al., 2023; Abdulrahman et al., 2021). Therefore, regardless of its commitment to promoting high-quality education for all students, including SEN/D students, the reality in Nigeria suggests that SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria is majorly theoretical, as there is a gulf between policies and practice (Pinnock, 2020; Odunsi, 2018).

The sentiments expressed in this chapter embody the view that there is a need for equitable distribution of education services, adequate resources, and improved funding to foster high-quality education for all students in Nigeria. Moreover, they underline the need to review the Nigerian IE policies and guidelines to capture the Nigerian context's lived realities, which include its economic capacity to provide adequate and appropriate resources for SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools (ActionAids, 2021; Pinnock, 2020). In addition, such a review should recognise the need to counter colonial influences by incorporating local knowledge, languages, and cultural perspectives into the Nigerian education curriculum (Ojo et al., 2023). However, educational reforms in Nigeria should take advantage of research and technological advancement in some Global North countries. At the same time, Nigerian political leaders need to commit to SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools nationwide. The next chapter explores the theoretical framework to provide background on the foundational assumptions underpinning this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: DECOLONIALITY THEORY AND INCLUSION

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework I adopted to explore the inclusion of Special Educational Needs/Disabled (SEN/D) students within two mainstream secondary schools (private and public) in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study used decoloniality theory approach, which critically engages with the legacy of colonialism and its impact on knowledge production (Moosavi, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Decoloniality theory concerns the enduring impact of colonialism on knowledge production (Moosavi, 2020; Gu, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). Therefore, the theory allows exploring the influence of some Global North epistemologies in spaces with colonial legacies. Decoloniality theory assumes that since the dominance of some Global North ideals shapes the understanding and practice of inclusive education (IE), it can ultimately impact inclusion experience for SEN/D students in mainstream schools (Lemos, 2023; Gu, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). In this study, I intend to question this hegemony and consider alternative perspectives. The study is influenced by the belief that the 1994 Salamanca Statement, specifically the 'Framework for Action on Special Educational Needs', which was based on Global North's inclusion ideologies and strategies (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Armstrong et al., 2009) shapes the understanding of IE across diverse contexts (Knight et al., 2022; Magnússon, 2019). The Statement encourages SEN/D

students to be educated alongside their non-SEN/D peers in the mainstream schools within their neighbourhood (UNESCO, 1994).

Based on the assumption that some Global North ideals shape the understanding and practice of IE and the inclusion experience for SEN/D students in the former colonies, I chose to analyse the relationship between IE conceptualisation(s) and the experiences of some IE stakeholders in my context in relation to the Salamanca Statement to interrogate how IE conception and implementation in this context are implicated in the colonial matrix of power (knowledge production) (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Qiujano, 2007; 2000). Therefore, I have outlined the chapter as follows: The chapter starts with a brief introduction to decoloniality theory and then presents the justification for applying decoloniality theory to this study to provide insight into its significance. Following this, I will review the power dynamic between the Global North and South regarding the dominance of some Global North countries (Finland, England, and the USA) in knowledge production in IE. Next, I will discuss decoloniality as a tool for disrupting the Global North's hegemony in knowledge production. Finally, I will present the chapter's conclusion.

4.1 Introducing Decoloniality Theory

Decoloniality theory is concerned with the contestation of knowledge hegemony between some Global North countries (England, Finland, and the USA) and former colonies like Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya regarding subjects such as IE (Lemos, 2023; Moosavi, 2020; Gu, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Mignolo, 2011). As such, there is high tendency for the theory to successfully present alternative forms of knowledge to some Global North narratives regarding IE. Over the years, many scholars have adopted decoloniality theory to studies in many fields, including IE (Walton, 2018) and Political Science (Banerjee, 2022). For example, in Walton (2018), the theory gave

insight to the intersection of decoloniality and IE in the context of South Africa. On his part, Banerjee (2022) applied decoloniality theory as a basis for decolonising 'deliberative democracy' to enhances the understanding regarding the impact of colonialism on some delegitimised knowledge and practice in the former colonies, including Africa, India, and Latin America. Deliberative democracy aims to create more inclusive and just societies by emphasising authentic dialogue as the foundation for legitimate decision-making (Banerjee, 2022).

Decoloniality theories are based on many core principles, including:

- The understanding that decolonisation does not necessarily imply an end to colonisation. Instead, it concerns dismantling power relations and knowledge conception entrenched by coloniality.
- The need to challenge colonialism because it frames all aspects of thinking, organisation, and existence.
- Recovering and valuing the suppressed or erased indigenous knowledge and practices by colonisation (Moosavi, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

Decoloniality theory encourages a critical examination of inclusion practice to gain insight into the power dynamics between Global North and South ideals regarding the conceptualisation and implementation of inclusion for SEN/D students in Nigeria, a former British colony (Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018). In the following subsection, the study briefly reviews the theory and cultural context.

4.1.1 *Decoloniality and Cultural Context*

Considering that Decoloniality focuses on contextual understanding of subjects such as IE, the theory encourages the need to understand specific cultures and their impact on SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria (Moosavi, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh,

2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). The concept of culture is highly contested within the social sciences (Magidu, 2022; Hernandez and Gibb, 2020; Patterson, 2014). A people's culture could relate to how they interact with themselves and others (Magidu, 2022). A typical example can be seen among the Japanese who often adopt non-verbal symbols to pass information (Magidu, 2022). While it is popular to bow when exchanging pleasantry with others within the South Korean context, the usual practice when exchanging pleasantry in England and Canada is to engage in a handshake with each other (Magidu, 2022). Another perspective about culture is that it can also reflect the artistic expressions of some people's journeys across different generations (Hernandez and Gibb, 2020; Patterson, 2014). This is demonstrated by the Acholi people of Uganda, who have cultural models for understanding and responding to disease outbreaks (Hernandez and Gibb, 2020). This practice was considered to curtail infection during the 2000 Ebola outbreak (Hernandez and Gibb, 2020).

As a concept, culture has informed different areas of study (McChesney and Cross, 2023; Hernandez and Gibb, 2020; Tierney and Lanford, 2020; Patterson, 2014). These study areas include sociology (Patterson, 2014), health (Hernandez and Gibb, 2020), and education (McChesney and Cross, 2023; Tierney and Lanford, 2020). In their work, which delved into the connection between culture and health, Hernandez and Gibb (2020) highlight the need to recognise individuals' cultures to provide better patient care. Similarly, McChesney and Cross (2023) and Tierney and Lanford, 2020) emphasise the impact of culture on school practices, student experiences, and organisational dynamics. These studies highlight the dynamics between school culture and school experience for SEN/D students. School culture often informs school leaders' and policymakers' decisions and, in effect, teachers' and learners' experience of school. However, Patterson (2014) cautioned against extreme

contextualism. In his article titled 'Making Sense of Culture', Patterson (2014) points attention to the heterogeneity of contemporary society and its impact on people's behaviour. This position indicates that even among a group of people, there may exist different cultures. For example, certain cultures of respect, such as prostrating (boys) and kneeling (girls) when greeting adults among the Yorubas in Nigeria, are gradually slipping away since many young people perceive them as obsolete ideas (Ojo et al., 2023; Patterson, 2014). This signifies that culture changes with time (Magidu, 2022; Hernandez and Gibb, 2020).

Understanding the transience nature of culture and the fact that culture can significantly impact inclusion practice in schools highlights the need for schools to consider and value individual students' cultures (Anyichie et al., 2023). This is important because IE encourages participation and holistic development for SEN/D students within mainstream schools (Elder and Migliarini, 2020). In a study which examined how culturally diverse learners were engaged within classroom contexts, Anyichie et al. (2023) reinforced the assumption that students' school experience is correlated with the understanding of their culture (McChesney and Cross, 2023; Tierney and Lanford, 2020; Angelides and Antoniou, 2012). Anyichie et al. (2023) found that students' engagement in the classroom improved when teaching and activities within the classrooms aligned with their individual cultures. In another study, which delved into the role of culture in developing inclusive schools, Angelides and Antoniou (2012) confirm that students' experience of school can be linked with school/teacher alignment with their culture. The discussion regarding culture and school experience underscores culture's importance in effectively decolonising IE in Nigeria. The study now explores the rationale for applying decoloniality theory.

4.2 Justification for Applying Decoloniality Theory to this Study

On several grounds, the decoloniality theory applies to studying SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria. Firstly, decoloniality theory has been largely absent in IE research despite scholars' efforts at interrogating IE in Nigeria. For example, Adigun (2021) examined Nigerian and South African pre-service teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of IE by using Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory (BST) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 2005) to explore the interaction between humans and the environment as it relates to the inclusive school environment. Additionally, the critical realist philosophical position (Easton, 2010; Bhaskar, 1978) informed Odunsi's (2018) exploration of the knowledge and attitude of the people around a young person with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in mainstream schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. However, theoretical frameworks adopted by Adeleke and Oyundoyin (2016), ‘a survey of the available public primary schools for educational placement for all categories of pupils with special needs in three Southwestern States in Nigeria’ and Okorosaye-Orubute and Maigida (2018) 'an assessment of IE practice in Nigeria and the USA' is not clear. The analysis of the theoretical frameworks adopted in IE studies in Nigeria indicates that using a decoloniality theory lens to explore SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria is necessary. This approach can give insights into the power relations between some Global North ideas regarding the inclusion of SEN/D students and how it should be practised in Nigeria (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). In essence, the approach can foster a contextual understanding of the interpretations and implementation of IE.

Secondly, since decoloniality theory seeks to disrupt the Global North's totalising claim to knowledge of phenomena such as IE (Gu, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018), the theory can help to generate alternative knowledge regarding SEN/D students' inclusion based on my participants' conceptualisations of inclusion for SEN/D

students in mainstream secondary schools, their interpretations of their experiences of SEN/D students' inclusion, and their understanding of the challenges to including them in their settings. Like other theories of colonialism, including Postcolonial Theory (PCT), decoloniality theories emphasise the implication of colonialism on the lived reality of the former colonies and the need to challenge its enduring impact on them (Lemos, 2023; Gu, 2020). The continued influence of colonialism on these colonies portends that they can experience inequality and domination even in discussions of issues like inclusion for SEN/D students (Lemos, 2023). It is often believed that the independence of the former colonies did not automatically imply an end to the power dynamics between the colonisers and the colonised (Lemos, 2023). For example, Lemos (2023), Gu (2020), and Mignolo and Walsh (2018) suggest that there is lingering epistemic hegemony between the colonisers and the former colonies. Therefore, both fields (PCT and decoloniality theory) are relevant to addressing continuing colonisation in the former colonies.

Decoloniality theory and PCT can address the legacies of colonialism in the former colonies. However, each theory presents different perspective about this subject. For example, while PCT attaches importance to the past (colonisation), decoloniality's main focus is the present experience (Lemos, 2023). However, PCT is not restricted to the past experiences of colonisation; the theory has been applied to contemporary issues such as climate change (Chakrabarty, 2017) and geography (Sidawaya, 2017). Additionally, the theory is applicable to the lingering effect of power relations between the former colonies and the more developed countries such England, France, and Germany (Boehmer and Morton, 2010). Boehmer and Morton succinctly capture this sentiment when they said that there is widespread "effective continuation of the authority structures of the colony in the post-imperial nation despite

flag independence" (P. 7). This viewpoint emphasises the persistent hegemony of the more developed countries in the former colonies. At the same time, it indicates that PCT can be adopted to address issues regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools since colonial legacies persist. It may then be concluded that decoloniality theory and PCT are the same. Nonetheless, since the decoloniality theory's main focus is the epistemic hegemony by some Global North countries (Finland, England, the USA) on subjects such as IE production (Lemos, 2023; Garcia, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Mignolo, 2011), the theory is more relevant to this study.

Decoloniality theory is relevant to this study because its primary focus is the source(s) of knowledge of phenomena like IE (Garcia, 2020). The theory encourages a critical engagement with Global North's hierarchy of knowledge in IE discussion (Moosavi, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Mignolo, 2011). This thought is sustained by Mignolo and Walsh (2018) and Mignolo (2011), who present the theory as an epistemic project that can disrupt Global North's dominance in IE discussions. The theory is also relevant to this study because it can address the colonial matrix of power between the emerging literature on IE in Nigeria and the Global North since it can challenge its dominance in IE discussion (Garcia, 2020). This assumption implies that decoloniality theory poses an epistemic dimension to addressing the colonial matrix of power because it seeks to deconstruct the colonial instrumentation of reasoning Garcia (2020). Therefore, decoloniality theory gives the study a refined lens to address SEN/D students' inclusion in this context, as it sets the foundation for understanding inclusion from the perspectives of the local population and offers the opportunity to interrogate the impact of ideals from Global North sources on including SEN/D students in mainstream schools in Nigeria.

Notwithstanding the tendency for decoloniality theory to deconstruct the colonial instrumentation of reasoning and address the colonial matrix of power, it is crucial to avoid compromising the importance of difference (Moosavi, 2020). This stance can be considered essentialist (Lebrón-Cruz and Orvell, 2023; Kurzwelly et al., 2020). The concept of essentialism highlights the need to recognise the distinctive nature of countries within the Global South space and the implication on SEN/D students' inclusion (Moosavi, 2023; 2020). As such, essentialism promotes understanding specific principles guiding inclusion practice in various contexts. Essentialism can be used to overcome oppressive structures like the Global North's domination of inclusion discussion. Nevertheless, the phenomenon can be problematic because it may homogenise the inclusion knowledge from the Global South and North space, presenting such knowledge as fixed and unchangeable (Kurzwelly et al., 2020). Hence, it can hinder cross-cultural understanding of inclusion for SEN/D students.

Essentialising knowledge from the Global South can amount to "constructing the Global South as if it has an innate essence that can be known and captured" (Moosavi, 2020:343). This assertion suggests that decoloniality theory opposes essentialism. For example, Grousfoguel (2007), a known decolonial scholar, while objecting to essentialising knowledge, points attention to the fact that decoloniality is against such practice. He submits that decoloniality theory is critical of the notion that "there is only one sole epistemic tradition from which to achieve truth and universality" (Grousfoguel, 2007: 231). Another prominent decolonial scholar also believes that the essentialism claim against decoloniality is not tenable (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015), the claim of essentialism needs to be more generalisable since decolonial scholars belong to different theoretical schools.

However, it is pertinent to note that all decolonial scholars are connected by the view that coloniality is a fundamental problem in the former colonies (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

Based on the argument on decoloniality theory as a tool to disrupt Global North epistemic hegemony on IE, the theory offers the framework to examine how the Salamanca Statement as IE standard narrative agrees with or deviates from inclusion conceptualisation and practice in this study context. The Statement has impacted the discussion of inclusion in Nigeria (Odunsi, 2018; Federal Ministry of Education, 2016). For example, it has increased SEN/D awareness as more parents are willing to enrol their SEN/D children in schools. At different times, the Nigerian government have enacted several policies regarding inclusion for SEN/D students (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016; 2015, 2013), and more schools are becoming inclusive. Nevertheless, more SEN/D students are outrightly excluded from education. Those in schools are excluded from school life due to factors such as inadequate funding, lack of competent personnel and concerns about access to school and teaching-learning (ActionAids, 2021; Pinnock, 2020; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015).

Finally, this study's choice of decoloniality theory is informed by the point that the theory can be used to interrogate issues of social justice and equity in education such as SEN/D students' exclusion from education generally and mainstream schools, particularly since oppression and marginalisation of vulnerable groups such as SEN/D students still exist in society (Adam, 2020; Hart, 2019). This assumption indicates the importance of empowering SEN/D students to achieve their educational goals by ensuring equal access to education despite any condition that can lead to excluding them from/within schools (Harts, 2019). This sentiment aligns with Hart's (2019)

statement, which identifies education as a leveller that can foster opportunities for individuals, including those with SEN/D, to compete locally and globally. Even with the tendency for education to enhance SEN/D students' capacity to compete, there is a need to address their continued exclusion from education and mainstream schools in Nigeria (Abdulrahman et al., 2021; Ilori, 2020; Odunsi, 2018). The continued exclusion of these students from and within school despite several inclusion policies in Nigeria raises the critical question of the readiness of the country's political leaders to ensure educational equality for SEN/D students. This concern makes decolonising IE in Nigeria necessary as it can mitigate SEN/D students' exclusion from and within schools.

It is important to address social justice and equity issues related to SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools in Nigeria. Currently, non-SEN/D students are likely to receive more attention than their SEN/D peers. Since decoloniality theory shines a light on epistemic injustice (Gu, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018), it applies to how to ensure effective inclusion for SEN/D children in Nigeria. Decolonising IE can positively impact SEN/D students' inclusion because it can address entrenched colonial ideologies, which continue to impact former colonies, including Nigerians' institutions and collective mindset (Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Moosavi, 2020). However, it is important to note that outright decolonising may be challenging (Moosavi, 2023; 2020).

Decolonisation can be more approachable when viewed as both a practice and an attitude (Moosavi, 2020). Hence, it underscores the necessity for consistent and dedicated efforts to offer alternative forms of knowledge regarding subjects such as IE (Moosavi, 2020). In the context of IE and the inclusion of SEN/D students in Nigeria, decolonisation would entail actively challenging and transforming existing educational

paradigms. Such engagement can create a more inclusive environment that respects and integrates diverse cultural and educational perspectives, which can ultimately benefit SEN/D students. Decolonisation is also a telling reminder that to avoid knowledge hierarchies, decoloniality should be seen as a joint responsibility (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Mignolo, 2011). Reflexivity is a key factor in the successful decolonisation of inclusion (Moosavi, 2023). Moosavi (2023) promotes reflexivity to avoid reducing decolonial interventions to restrictive knowledge, as decoloniality is an ongoing journey and not a destination. The implication of such action can be far-reaching for SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria as it may engender a better understanding and improved practice.

The view on the need to reflect and assume decoloniality as joint responsibility highlights the need to avoid what Moosavi (2020) refers to as "an exaggerated romanticisation or unwarranted flattery of that from the Global South" (P. 347) in decolonial discussion. Therefore, the view suggests the need for synthesised knowledge in addressing SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria (Moosavi, 2020). The perspective regarding synthesising knowledge to address SEN/D students' inclusion in the country assumes that due to advancements in research into the causes of SEN/D, availability of vital resources, and improved technological knowledge in some Global North countries like Finland, the UK and USA, cooperation between Global North and Nigeria can potentially impact SEN/D students' inclusion experience positively (Walton, 2018; Mbembe, 2016). However, the view on the need for knowledge synthesis in addressing SEN/D students' inclusion underscores the need to subject all knowledge to the same "epistemological vigilance" (Matthews, 2018:57). "Epistemological vigilance" emphasises the importance of critically engaging with the assumptions underlying stances on subjects such as SEN/D students' inclusion. As

such, "Epistemological vigilance" can mitigate information, beliefs, and practices that can jeopardise the right of SEN/D students to quality education and the opportunity to be empowered to function optimally in broader society in their adult lives.

Decoloniality theory primarily uncovers how Global North ideals have shaped knowledge production regarding phenomena such as IE and, consequently, inclusion practice and experience in Nigeria, a former British colony (Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018). Therefore, I will explore the dominant position of some Global North ideologies in knowledge production in the IE field as a type of power dynamics between the Global North and South.

4.3 The Global North's Dominance in Knowledge Production in Inclusive Education: A Power Dynamic between the Global North and South

The concept of knowledge production is the process of generating information (Steup and Neta, 2020; Zagzebski, 2017). Discussions regarding knowledge production concern significant elements that underlie what is seen as knowledge, the language of disseminating ideas, the sources of knowledge, and the power dynamics regarding the forces that engender knowledge (Steup and Neta, 2020; Zagzebski, 2017). It is often believed that there exists epistemic hegemony between Global North and South across different realms of life, including IE (Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018; Barrio et al., 2018), disability studies (Howell et al., 2019), and teacher education (Viruru and Persky, 2019). In the word of Mbembe (2016), this domination is tantamount to ‘epistemic coloniality'. Epistemic coloniality points to the privilege enjoyed by Global North's knowledge over other forms of knowledge (Mbembe, 2016b). This assertion signifies that some of Global North's ideals have shaped knowledge production regarding phenomena such as IE and have marginalised other knowledge regarding IE in many Global South countries.

Castro Torresa and Alburez-Gutierrez (2022) also highlight unbalanced epistemological relations between the Global North and South and the impact on knowledge production. According to these scholars, “Evidence produced in and about the Global North is assumed to be more universal” (CastroTorresa and Alburez-Gutierrez, 2022:1). They reiterate the power dynamics between the North and South scholars when they explain that “the degree to which the regional focus of a study is declared in the title follows a power-based logic between centres of academic production and the periphery” (CastroTorresa and Alburez-Gutierrez, 2022:5). CastroTorresa and Alburez-Gutierrez (2022) stress the power relation between the North and South regarding what constitutes knowledge in IE and the implementation framework (Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018; Barrio et al., 2018). This power dynamics is problematic because it undermines the need for a holistic view of inclusion.

It is often believed that the implementation of SEN/D students’ inclusion is significantly influenced by scholarly works from some Global North countries. For example, Walton (2018) identified the prevalence of workshops, books, and articles from some Global North countries like England and the USA on implementing inclusion for SEN/D students across different regions. Nguyen (2019) also highlights the dominance of academic writings from the context of the Global North in the IE field. According to Nguyen (2019), "the discursive and material practices in shaping intellectual projects on inclusive education have been within the context of the Global North's scholarship"(P. 31). This assertion reinforces the assumption regarding the domination of some Global North’s ideas in the IE field (Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018; Barrio et al., 2018). The assumed domination of some Global North’s ideas in this field suggests that other forms of ideas from other spaces including Global South countries such as Nigeria and Kenya are silenced. This assumption underscores the need to

recognise and value IE ideas from the Global South space. Such act can potentially offer deep insight into local realities about IE and inclusion for SEN/D students. Additionally, it may broaden the body of knowledge in the field. Notably, Moosavi (2020) emphasises the need to avoid “silencing advance and insightful body of literature which can assist us in the pursuit of intellectual decolonisation” (Moosavi, 2020: 333). Moosavi (2020) highlights the need to recognise and value inclusion ideas regarding SEN/D students from the Global South.

The power dynamics regarding IE between the Global North and South also extends to teacher development (Viruru and Persky, 2019; Barrio et al., 2018). Viruru and Persky (2019) and Barrio et al. (2018) problematise the fact that teachers’ development are based on resources developed in Global North countries such as England, Finland, and the USA. Barrio et al. (2018) note that training Global South teachers using Global North framework may be inadequate in addressing SEN/D students' inclusion. These positions indicate that using resources from Global North to train Global South teachers can ingrain Global North's inclusion mindset in Global South teachers (Viriru & Persky 2019). Additionally, reliance on resources originating from some Global North countries may inhibit teachers’ capacity to transfer the values gained from training as training materials will often be based on culture and language from the North. For example, Global South teachers may struggle to implement training that is based on individualism and competition due to the prevailing collectivist cultures in many parts of the Global South.

The concerns about reliance on training originating from Global North to train Global South teachers draw attention to the need to contextualise training materials to reflect specific settings (Viruru and Persky, 2019; Barrio et al., 2018). For instance, empowering teachers to adopt local counting system during teaching may enhance

learning. Teacher can also take advantage of familiarity by using objects (foodstuff) and practices (dressing and ceremonies) within learners' immediate environment during teaching to foster learning. However, a collaboration between teachers from different contexts may engender a broader approach, which can aid the inclusion of SEN/D students within schools/classrooms.

The power dynamic between some Global North and South scholars in the IE field also reflect in the more advantaged position accorded some Global North scholars' work over their counterparts from the South (Groenewald and Teise, 2024; Nguyen, 2019; Musila, 2019; Walton, 2018). This sentiment indicates that there is a gap between some Global North and South scholars in IE research. A typical example of such an advantage is "From them to us" by Booth and Ainscow (1998). The work only looks at the USA, European countries, Australia, and New Zealand. It is important to note that this power dynamics lingers despite continuous calls for equitable opportunities for all scholars to contribute to knowledge across different academic fields and locations (Moosavi, 2023; 2020; Nguyen, 2019). The research gap between Global North and South scholars in the IE field can also be attributed to infrastructure and resource biases. For example, many Global North countries such as Finland, Canada, England, and the USA often have better research infrastructure, including libraries, laboratories, and advanced technology (Musila, 2019). Consequently, scholars like Mel Ainscow and Booth from this space may be ahead of their counterparts from the South.

Moreover, publishing costs associated with publishing work in journals can hinder research from many Global South regions from being featured in high-impact journals, predominantly in the Global North (Groenewald and Teise, 2024). Another major reason for the research gap between Global North and South scholars in the IE

field is editorial gatekeeping (Groenewald and Teise, 2024; Walton, 2018). Here, editorial gatekeeping refers to identifying the contents of academic journals. It becomes a concern when some contents are more privileged than others. Groenewald and Teise (2024) and (Walton, 2018) underline the need to address editorial gatekeeping in some academic journals located in some Global North countries like England and the USA. They observe the prevalence of Global North members as editorial advisors of most high-impact journals.

The prevalence of Global North members as editorial advisors of most high-impact journals suggests the tendency for many Global South scholars to be discouraged from embarking on IE research (Groenewald and Teise, 2024; Walton, 2018). This highlights the need to consider diversity within journal's editorial advisors to encourage the Global South scholars who may be interested in such position. A diverse editorial advisors membership may encourage more Global South scholars to publish their work in journal beyond their countries. The dominance of knowledge production by some Global North scholars undermines Global South's capacity to create knowledge in the field (Ndlovu, 2018; Quijano, 2000). Consequently, it can repress African forms of knowledge production regarding issues such as SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools.

Illustrating the dominance of knowledge production by some Global North scholars, Ndlovu (2018) argues that Africans remain "trapped by the enduring colonial domination in their ways of knowing, seeing and imagining" as the Global North has implanted foreign ways of knowing and remembering in their minds through knowledge production (Ndlovu, 2018:95). Therefore, to avoid what Meekosha (2011) termed "scholarly colonialism"(P.667), Global South scholars must embark on extensive studies on inclusion for SEN/D students within their context to project the inclusion

story from that space. This will provide narratives of their lived realities, including those of SEN/D students. Extensive studies on including SEN/D students can foreground African voices and their conceptualisation of inclusion for SEN/D students and address 'epistemic coloniality' (Mbembe, 2016). However, Global South scholars may have to collaborate with institutions and grassroots organisations who often have valuable insights and experience working with SEN/D students. They can also engage with local communities, educators, and policymakers to understand the unique challenges faced by SEN/D students in specific regions. Additionally, they may need to prioritise qualitative research to capture lived experiences and perspectives. Nonetheless, sensitivity to cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic variations within the Global South context is crucial.

The 1994 Salamanca framework for inclusion practice (UNESCO, 1994) is a pivotal document for IE across different countries. While well-intentioned, the framework drew heavily from some Global North countries' perspectives and experiences (Adigun, 2021; Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018). Since the Salamanca Statement drew from some Global North ideals, it can sideline local knowledge and practices regarding SEN/D students' inclusion. It may then be concluded that the 1994 Salamanca framework for inclusion practice sustains the power dynamics that existed during colonial rule over many Global South countries, which are majorly African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa even post-independence using IE as tool (Goncalves, 2021; Viruru and Persky, 2019; Walton, 2018; Mbembe, 2016; 2015). The preceding discussion regarding power dynamic between some Global North and South countries regarding SEN/D students' inclusion highlights the need to recognise and value voices from the South in discussions about SEN/D students' inclusion. This entails questioning and disrupting inclusion knowledge and frameworks predominantly

presented by Global North scholars (Moosavi, 2020; Mbembe, 2016). This disruption is necessary for a more equitable and contextually relevant approach to IE. Therefore, this study examines the need to disrupt 'epistemic coloniality' in IE in the following sub-section.

4.3.1 *Disrupting Epistemic Coloniality in Inclusive Education*

Epistemic coloniality disruption involves recognising and valuing diverse perspectives on subjects such as inclusion for SEN/D students (Nguyen, 2019; Mbembe, 2016). It is principally concerned with interrupting the dominance of some Global North ideas regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools. This makes what Lemos (2023) calls "epistemic reconstitution" (P.19) of phenomena such as IE imperative. "Epistemic reconstitution" assumes that coloniality can produce a distorted epistemological framework for IE and negatively impact SEN/D students' inclusion in the former colonies (Garcia, 2020). Garcia (2020) posits that coloniality produces a distorted epistemological framework for phenomena, including IE and that this can impact every aspect of life for the former colonies. Lockward (2017) agrees with the need to disrupt the domination of some Global North ideas concerning IE in Nigeria, a former colony. Lockward (2017) believe that some Global North scholars intentionally engaged in "politics of confusion…" (Lockward, 2017:108). This thought emphasises the need to address unequal power dynamic between the North and the South, which can foster conceptual impositions on the South. Lockward's (2017) stresses the importance of recognising and valuing inclusion ideas form different contexts. Additionally, his thought reiterates the need for practice based on specific context. Importantly, this thought calls attention to the cruciality of genuine collaboration among scholars to ensuring meaningful progress in IE globally.

A comparison of Global North and South perspectives of IE reinforces the need to disrupt some Global North inclusion ideas. For instance, there is a significant variation between inclusivity identified in Nigeria's pre-colonial education system, which existed long before the 1930 colonisation by Britain and as presented by some Global North literature such as the 1994 Salamanca Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994). The Statement presents inclusion as formal education, having all children together in schools within their neighbourhood regardless of their difficulties or differences. Hence, it expects schools across different countries to adjust to accommodate all students' needs. However, long before the colonisation of Nigeria in 1903 and subsequent imposition of formal education on the country, education was primarily informal (not about reading, writing, numeracy, and formal classroom) (Ojo et al., 2023; Achi, 2021; Fagunwa, 2017).

Although the Nigeria's pre-colonial education system did not adhere to the IE concept as understood today, it was considered inclusive (Ojo et al., 2023; Achi, 2021; Fagunwa, 2017). Ojo et al. (2023), Achi (2021), and Fagunwa (2017) highlight the inclusivity of the Nigeria pre-colonial education system. According to these scholars, the education system was holistic, focusing on the whole development of an individual, including cognitive skills, character, social responsibility, and practical abilities. The Nigerian pre-colonial education system considered the unique needs of each community member, thereby tailoring education to individuals' abilities. Practical skills were the focus as they are essential for survival. The scholars also suggest that the teaching methodology was inclusive because it involves families and other community members in teaching survival skills to individuals. It can be concluded that some African philosophies, such as Ubuntu and Omoluabi, informed the pre-colonial education system. These philosophies promote valuing and encouraging active

participation for every community member (Adigun et al., 2021; Howell et al., 2019; Walton, 2018).

The teaching strategies employed by the Nigerian pre-colonial education system reinforce its inclusivity (Ojo et al., 2023; Achi, 2021). According to Ojo et al. (2023), the teaching strategies involve making use of “a wide range of symbols and motifs, words and gestures to convey messages to the learners” (P. 3). In addition, Achi (2021) believes that using storytelling, music, dance, and drama to instruct all children about their culture, history, and values encouraged inclusivity. These viewpoints imply that all community members, including those with disabilities, were integrated into the fabric of community life. Therefore, they suggest that pre-colonisation, the Nigerian education system was considerate of every community member and was based on what is relevant for community development. However, the Nigerian pre-colonial education system can be challenged due to ambivalence regarding disability among Africans (See section 2.5.2).

Within the pre-colonial education systems, some SEN/D learners may face exclusion due to the prevailing belief that they need to be economically productive for society (Eskay et al., 2012; Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2003). As indicated in section 3.3, there are concerns regarding the sustainability of the pre-colonial education system because it was based on oral instruction (Ojo et al., 2023; Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2003). Nonetheless, the education system offered a good opportunity to access first-hand knowledge from instructors who are familiar with the culture, social, political, and thought structure of the people (Ojo et al., 2023; Ugwukah, 2015). Considering the inclusive nature of the Nigerian pre-colonial education system and its relevance to the immediate community, it may be necessary to integrate it to discussions about IE. This position assumes that integrating the pre-colonial education system with Global North

ideals on inclusion for SEN/D students in Global South countries can mitigate SEN/D students' exclusion from and within schools. Additionally, such integration can give them equal opportunities to compete beyond their immediate environment.

The literature on IE suggests that SEN/D students experience high exclusion from and within schools in some Global South countries such as Ghana and Nigeria (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2022; Good Governance Africa, 2020; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari, 2019; Odunsi, 2018; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015). In their 2020 final research report titled "Strengthening inclusive education in Ghana", Good Governance Africa suggests high exclusion for SEN/D students in Ghana. The report revealed that while Ghana's education system is widely regarded as one of the most progressive in Africa, many SEN/D students urgently require access to quality education. The report revealed a gap in school attendance for SEN/D students and their non-SEN/D peers. According to the report, 64% of SEN/D children attend school, whereas 81% of those without SEN/D do. In contrast to 14% of non-SEN/D children who have never attended school, 28% of SEN/D children have not been to school. This suggests a high exclusion from school for SEN/D students in Ghana. On the other hand, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund's (UNICEF) (2022) Country Office Annual Report on Nigeria indicates a significant increase in out-of-school SEN/D children.

Although the report did not expressly state the number of SEN/D children that are excluded from schools, it highlights the overall challenges Nigerian children face in accessing education. According to the report, approximately 18.5 million children in Nigeria are currently out of school. The Joint National Association of People with Disability (2015) had earlier observed that 90% of disabled children in Nigeria are out

of school due to low family socioeconomic status. The significant number out of SEN/D students that are excluded from schools in Nigeria, a Global South country encourages reconsidering absolute reliance on the Salamanca IE framework (Nguyen, 2019). Nguyen (2019) emphasises that such reliance can negatively impact practice in some Global South countries due to an ongoing struggle over social justice for SEN/D students in developing countries, who have been marginalised and excluded from education and mainstream schools is the implication of adopting the Global North's inclusion ideals (Nguyen, 2019). The Global North's inclusion ideals necessitate a commitment to effective education for all students, including those with SEN/D within formal education settings (Dannecker, 2022; Ainscow, 2020; Nguyen, 2019; UNESCO, 1994).

Arguably, based on the inclusion practices in some Global North countries, such as the USA, Finland, and England some SEN/D students have been empowered to engage in a broader international context (Ainscow, 2020). However, the situation in Nigeria, a Global South country, presents challenges. The country grapples with potential disparities in quality education and future employment opportunities for SEN/D students (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015). The influence of Global North ideals on Nigerian education policy complicates matters. For instance, the use of English as the lingua franca (Ojo et al., 2023) and the belief that formal education is a right for all children (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023) reflects these external influences. Funding constraints contribute to the gap between Global North practices and Nigeria’s context (Umeh, 2023; Pinnock, 2020). Umeh (2023) highlights the importance of sufficient funding for education. Unfortunately, Nigeria allocates a smaller percentage of its Gross Domestic Product

(GDP) to education. This limited budget allocation affects millions of children, including those with SEN/D.

While IE understanding in some Global North countries like Finland, England, and Switzerland involves free basic education for all students, including SEN/D students, a significant number of SEN/D students in Nigeria and other African countries such as Ghana and South Africa are experiencing exclusion from schools, and the few that have access to schools are struggling to participate in school life, including teaching and learning (Opoku-NKoom and Achah- Jnr, 2023; Mpu and Adu, 2021; Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari, 2019; Odunsi, 2018). The 2015 SEN/D Code of Practice (Department for Education, 2015) and the recent Green Paper addressing SEN/D in England (Department for Education, 2022) show continued commitment to ensuring access to appropriate resources and quality support for SEN/D students in schools. Whereas situations in many Global South countries, including Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa, indicate a need for access to essential resources and support for SEN/D students (Opoku-NKoom and Achah- Jnr, 2023; Gachago and Peart, 2022; Mpu and Adu, 2021; ActionAid, 2021; Fajemilo et al., 2020). As an illustration, scholars such as Opoku-NKoom and Achah-Jnr (2023), Gachago and Peart (2022), Mpu and Adu (2021) and Fajemilo et al. (2020) have highlighted the need for comprehensive and continuous teachers' training to significantly increase their competence to effectively include SEN/D students in these countries. For instance, in Ghana, "While classrooms had somewhat good ventilation and lighting, knowledge to adapt the curriculum and the flow of inclusive knowledge among teachers was limited." (Opoku-NKoom and Achah-Jnr, (2023:17). Additionally, within the South African context, Mpu and Adu (2021) identified several challenges regarding IE implementation. These challenges include overcrowded classrooms and insufficient training for teachers.

Furthermore, in Nigeria, access to schools and navigating school environments can significantly inhibit the successful implementation of inclusion for SEN/D students (ActionAid, 2021; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Pinnock, 2020). ActionAid (2021) identified the prevalence of privately owned schools as a significant factor inhibiting access to schools for some SEN/D students. The scarcity of government-funded schools is a bane for successful SEN/D student inclusion in the country, particularly in rural Nigeria (ActionAid, 2021; Pinnock, 2020). This is because most rural dwellers are among the country's low-income group (ActionAid,2021). Therefore, they cannot afford to enrol their children in private schools.

The previous discussion regarding inclusion experiences in some African countries implies that implementing the Salamanca Statement in some Global South countries may be daunting due to unequal funding compared to resource-rich Global North countries (Odunsi, 2018). For example, while statistics indicate progress in the inclusion of SEN/D students in England (Office for National Statistics, 2024) and Northern Island (Department for Education, 2022), their counterparts in Nigeria are increasingly experiencing exclusion both from and within schools (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Umeh, 2023). In England, as of June 2024, the percentage of pupils with an Education Health Care plan has increased to 4.8% from 4.3% in 2023. This increase indicates progress in SEN/D students' inclusion in the country. Additionally, in 2022, Northern Island education Minister Michelle McIlveen announced an allocation of £6.1million to improve outcomes for SEN/D children in the country (Department for Education, 2022). This gesture suggests a positive change for SEN/D students' inclusion in Northern Island. However, as indicated in section 3.2, while Nigeria is committed to promoting high-quality education for all, including SEN/D students (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; 2016; 2015; 2013), the country's economic

development may be a barrier to effective implementation of inclusion policies. This is because the Salamanca Framework for Action on Special Needs Education did not consider the financial capability of the former colonies but expected these countries to fund a model of inclusion developed based on the resource-rich Global North (Walton, 2018).

The preceding discussion regarding the inclusion reality in some Global South countries indicates a tension between the Salamanca Framework ideal and local implementations of IE. The economic disparity between Nigeria and England shapes how IE is perceived and practised in Nigeria. While IE aims to make education accessible for all learners, regardless of their backgrounds and needs, economic realities in Nigeria, such as low income, can hinder its implementation (Adigun, 2021; Adetoro, 2014). Since the Salamanca Framework design process did not consider Nigeria's economic context, it can encourage SEN/D students' exclusion from and within schools (Nguyen, 2019). Nigeria faces challenges like inadequate funding, inaccessible facilities, and a shortage of trained teachers (Umeh, 2023; Pinnock, 2020; Fajemilo et al., 2020).

Furthermore, fear of stigmatisation due to an unscientific understanding of SEN/D and SEN/D students can lead to exclusion for SEN/D students from and within schools (Odunsi, 2018; Nwoga, 2016). This explains why the Salamanca Statement is considered an unwelcome imposition on Africans, as it was based on ideals from the resource-rich Global North. Hence, it may be challenging to balance global ideals regarding inclusion with local needs and ideals. This can negatively impact the implementation of inclusion for SEN/D students in some Global South countries. However, it is important to note that even in England, often considered part of the Global North, some SEN/D students still face exclusion within the country's

mainstream schools (Webster, 2022; Hodkinson,2020). For example, Webster (2022) and Hodkinson (2020) note that despite established policies such as the 2015 SEN/D Code of Practice and guidelines for including SEN/D students in England schools, attending a mainstream school does not guarantee inclusion in school activities.

Understandably, IE is a dynamic journey. However, collaboration across countries can enhance its implementation and SEN/D students' experiences in schools (Kamenopoulou, 2018). Collaboration can facilitate a collective understanding of inclusive practices. This can be achieved when countries share their experiences and research findings. For instance, insights from countries with higher technological advancement, such as the USA, Finland and Switzerland, can address myths about disability, which often influence interactions with people with disabilities in some Global South countries, including Nigeria and South Africa (Odunsi, 2018; McKenzie and Obajana, 2017; Etiyebo and Omiegbe, 2016). Hence, collaboration across contexts can foster an inclusive mindset, emphasising valuing diversity, challenging stereotypes, and recognising the contributions of all learners, including those with SEN/D.

Collaboration between countries can also facilitate best practices and policy decisions, as diverse knowledge from different contexts can facilitate broader views regarding SEN/D and inclusion. For instance, drawing on data from multiple contexts, comparing policies and practices across countries can help decision-makers identify effective practices and innovative approaches. Nonetheless, while collaboration can foster a rich exchange of ideas, evidence, and experiences, which can ultimately lead to informed policies and improved practices, countries must invest in teacher training programmes that emphasise inclusive pedagogy and equip teachers with skills to address diverse learning needs. Equally important is the need to foster a positive

attitude towards inclusion. This involves raising awareness about disability and valuing diversity. Due to the potential tension between the ideal outlined in the Salamanca Framework and the practical implementation of IE in the former colonies, it is important to decolonise IE.

4.3.2 *Decolonising Inclusion in the Former Colonies*

Decolonising inclusion in the former colonies means that its conceptualisation and practice would reflect the local understanding of inclusion and the contextual realities (Moosavi, 2020; 2023; Ubisi, 2021; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). Consequently, it underscores the need to explore how various IE stakeholders conceptualise inclusion for SEN/D students, their interpretations of their experiences and their perspectives on the challenges associated with including SEN/D students in their settings. An insight into these (local interpretations of inclusion, experiences and challenges) can enhance the understanding of what works in the former colonies.

It is important to note that decolonising inclusion for SEN/D students in Nigeria does not entail absolute reliance on the pre-colonial education system and local inclusion ideas (Moosavi, 2020; 2023; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). This view is premised on the belief that the effectiveness of SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria may be challenged by some factors, such as the oral method deployed in the pre-colonial era to educate community members (Ojo et al., 2023; Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2003) and the ambivalence regarding disability in some former colonies (Howell et al., 2019; Ndlovu, 2013). This thought is important because, in many Global South countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa, there exist unscientific explanations that perpetuate myths about disability (Odunsi, 2018; McKenzie and Obajana, 2017; Etiyebo and Omiegbe, 2016). For example, disability is perceived as

transferable and a punishment for wrongdoing in some African countries (Odunsi, 2018; McKenzie and Obajana, 2017).

Ambivalence regarding disability in some Global South countries makes absolute reliance on the pre-colonial education system in this contemporary context problematic. This viewpoint presents tension as complete dependence on inclusion ideas from the Global North and South may not be ideal for SEN/D students' inclusion. This position is informed by the fact that while some Global North ideas can foster inequities because they may undermine the realities in many Global South countries, ambivalence regarding disability in some former colonies (Howell et al., 2019; Ndlovu, 2013) may engender SEN/D students' exclusion as it may have meaningful influence inclusion interpretations and practice within the region.

Decolonising inclusion for SEN/D students in the former colonies entails challenging the power dynamics between the Global North and South regarding the perceived epistemic hegemony of some Global North ideologies on the understanding of inclusion and the framework for including SEN/D students in some Global South countries (Ubisi, 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Many African countries' inclusion policies and practices are influenced by the Salamanca Statement (Abdurahman et al., 2021; Engelbrecht, 2020; Akogun, 2018). For example, Abdurahman et al. (2021) and Akogun (2018) have argued that Nigeria's educational practices and policies, including the 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education (NPIE), are significantly influenced by the Salamanca Statement. Similarly, Engelbrecht (2020) suggests that the Statement strongly impact South Africa's educational policies. According to Engelbrecht (2020), the 1996 South African Schools Act, which emphasised inclusive practices and the right to education for all and the 2001 White Paper six (6) on

Inclusive Education in South Africa that outlined strategies for integrating learners with diverse needs into mainstream schools are consistent with Salamanca's principles.

Aligning with the need to decolonise SEN/D students' inclusion in the Global South, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) noted that "shifting of the geography of reason from the West as the epistemic locale … to the ex-colonised epistemic site as a legitimate point of departure in describing the construction of the modern world" (P. 489). This thought pushes for epistemic liberation concerning SEN/D students' inclusion in the Global South. It reiterates the need to entrench Global South scholars' voices in issues about SEN/D students' inclusion in their contexts (Ojo et al., 2023; Abdurahman et al., 2021).

Essentially, Decoloniality theory emphasises the need to value other forms of knowledge, including those from the Global North (Thambinathan and Kinsella, 2021; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Mignolo, 2011). The theory advocates a nuanced approach to including SEN/D students across different contexts rather than an entire replacement of Global North ideas regarding the subject. It then appears that Decoloniality theory promotes a balanced approach to knowledge production regarding inclusion for SEN/D students in Nigeria. This viewpoint implies that the theory does not recommend absolute deviation from Global North's ideologies about SEN/D and inclusion for SEN/D students. Some elements of Global North ideals regarding IE may apply to effective inclusion for SEN/D students in the South. Drawing from empirical studies and practical insights, these elements highlight IE as a human rights issue, promoting the need to support differences beyond disability (Thambinathan and Kinsella, 2021; Walton, 2018). This sentiment cautions Africans against 'de-linking' absolutely from IE ideas and framework for practice from Global North. This caution is necessary because 'de-linking' absolutely from IE ideas and

framework for practice from Global North can be detrimental to SEN/D students' inclusion in many Global South countries.

A balanced approach to knowledge production in the IE field is important because inclusion practice in less developed countries like Nigeria and Ghana can benefit from empirical studies and technological advancement, which can enhance support for SEN/D students. For example, access to emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence can positively impact support for SEN/D students within mainstream schools in Nigeria (Chiu and Li, 2023; Chng and Tan, 2023). Technological advancement offers learning flexibility, which can foster curriculum access and active participation in classroom activities for SEN/D students (Reid, 2016). Therefore, it can enhance accommodation for SEN/D students who may need additional time or customised approaches. This discussion concerning a balanced approach to including SEN/D students underscores the importance of synergy between IE ideas from Global North and South. Such synergy can foster cross-contextual understanding and practice of IE, which can lead to a better school experience for SEN/D students in mainstream schools across different contexts.

The above standpoint, which advocates a synergy between Global North and South ideas about SEN/D students' inclusion, highlights the need for constructive collaboration between knowledge from both contexts, Global North and South (Moosavi, 2020; Walton, 2018; Mbembe, 2016). Recognising the need to engage with knowledge from different sources, Mbembe (2016) counsels that Africans should engage with other "epistemic traditions for broader relevance" to maintain global relevance as "we cannot afford to fight battles of the present with outdated tools" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 37). This position promotes synthesised knowledge about IE (Mbembe, 2016). Synthesised knowledge about IE refers to generating new insights

and knowledge about inclusion through a critical engagement with findings from studies based on multiple contexts. This implies that decoloniality theory can generate a broad understanding and practice of IE, which can positively impact the understanding and practice of IE because such knowledge emanates from multiple contexts.

The discussion regarding the need for a synergy between the Global South and North regarding SEN/D students' inclusion, which can engender synthesised knowledge about IE suggests that regardless of their origin, technological development can positively impact SEN/D students' inclusion (Moosavi, 2020). This is because technological development can influence IE understanding and implementation (Chng and Tan, 2023). This perspective projects synthesised knowledge on such topics as SEN/D students' inclusion to be beneficial across different contexts. The notion of synthesised knowledge overrules the absolute decolonisation of knowledge concerning SEN/D students' inclusion in the Global South. Still, it encourages taking concrete steps towards addressing the ongoing power dynamics between the North and South regarding knowledge for SEN/D students' inclusion in the former colonies. Steps to address the ongoing power dynamics between the Global North and South regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in the former colonies include:

- Engaging diverse stakeholders to understand their understanding and implementation of inclusion.
- Allocating research funding based on needs to encourage research and scholarship from the South.
- Ensuring collaborations between Global North and South scholars are not perpetuating existing power imbalances.

- Empowering scholars from the Global South to lead research projects that bridge knowledge gaps.

By so doing, the root causes of inequity and entrenched power imbalances in inclusion scholarships would be addressed. Consequently, a synergy between the Global South and North regarding SEN/D students' inclusion can lead to creating inclusive knowledge and frameworks that genuinely serve the needs of SEN/D students in former colonies (Moosavi, 2020; Walton, 2018; Mbembe, 2016).

The preceding arguments suggest that decoloniality theory is an open conversation regarding how we come to know about IE and how it is experienced by people living and working in a former colony (Thambinathan and Kinsella, 2021; Nguyen, 2019; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). They also imply that the theory encourages more engagement with local understanding and practice of issues like SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools than some Global North scholars imposed conceptualisation and framework for practice (Moosavi, 2020). For instance, engaging with people's lived reality in the former colonies can account for cultural sensitivity and resource and adaptation constraints. Such engagement can provide a context for re-conceptualising opportunities and challenges for including SEN/D students in mainstream schools in Nigeria. Additionally, the arguments present decoloniality theory as a tool that can impact intellectual thought and engender institutional changes regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in schools, as bringing different ideas together can bring about positive changes for SEND students (Ubisi, 2021; Moosavi, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018).

Decoloniality theory encourages the need to rethink SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools through a more inclusive and equitable lens by promoting diverse voices and questioning assumptions (Thambinathan and Kinsella, 2021;

Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). Therefore, the theory can disrupt Global North's knowledge hegemony concerning SEND students' inclusion as it can project African voices in IE discussion and accommodate their lived realities of inclusion (Viruru and Persky, 2019; Walton, 2018; Ndlovu-Getsheni, 2015). The theory can also entrench localised practices such as community achievement promoted by Ubuntu and Omoluabi, which can promote SEN/D students' inclusion instead of individualised achievement. This implies that decoloniality theory can allow alternative perspectives on IE to be heard and allows for rewriting Global North's narratives on the phenomenon. At the same time, it can enhance SEN/D students' inclusion in schools.

The idea that decoloniality theory can disrupt Global North narratives concerning IE and give room for alternative perspectives on IE is sustained by many scholars such as (Mbembe, 2017; Andreotti, 2016 Ndlovu-Getsheni, 2015), who identified decoloniality as a means to project Global South knowledge on fields like IE. For example, Andreotti (2016) admits that decoloniality theory can disrupt the dominance of Global North knowledge in IE discussions because the theory recognises the impact of the "coercive and repressive nature of commonly held belief systems that defies traditional conceptualisations of history, teleology, and emancipation" (Andreotti, 2016:17). Similarly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2018; 2015) position on decoloniality theory as a tool for projecting Global South knowledge on subjects such as SEN/D students' inclusion shows that the theory can discourage imposition by Global North scholars in the IE field.

For instance, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) argues that Global South can contribute to the discussion of inclusion. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), “Africa always had their own valid, legitimate, and useful knowledge systems and educational systems" (P. 2). At the same time, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) reiterates the notion that

decoloniality theory focuses on dismantling the enduring structures of colonialism in the former colonies when he notes that the theory "speaks to the deepening and widening of decolonisation movements in those spaces that experienced … colonialism, neocolonialism and underdevelopment…" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015:485). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018; 2015) position decoloniality as a tool for challenging epistemic hegemony through Global North's writings regarding SEN/D students' inclusion and also advocates for a more inclusive and autonomous approach to understanding and shaping their inclusion in the Global South space.

The views on decoloniality theory strongly emphasise that the former colonies should generate alternative narratives to Global North's on phenomena such as IE. To uphold the argument on the need to create alternative narratives to Global North's regarding phenomena such as IE, Mbembe (2017) submits that "Africans' future lies in their ability to eliminate exclusionary thinking that hunts them by engaging literature to restore lost humanity…" (P. 32). Mbembe (2017) identifies the need for former colonies like Nigeria to project their voice on issues like IE. These submissions stress the need for more studies on IE from the Global South perspective to generate alternative narratives to Global North's on SEN/D students' inclusion. More importantly, they underline the need for scholars from the Global North to reckon with thoughts on IE emerging from the Global South (Moosavi, 2020).

Based on the preceding discussion, decoloniality can be a means to re-learn marginalised knowledge, such as cultural norms, historical legacies, and local practices. These include prioritising collective well-being over individual achievement. In addition, adopting storytelling rooted in cultural norms promoted by Ubuntu and Omoluabi can address student behaviour concerns and enhance learning experiences for SEN/D students. Therefore, the theory can challenge the power relations between

the former colonies and the colonial powers like the UK and the USA (Garcia, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Mignolo, 2011). In summary, decoloniality theory seeks a balanced approach, acknowledging the importance of diverse knowledge sources while recognising the need for critical engagement and adaptation to local contexts. The theory is about finding a middle ground that respects global perspectives and local realities.

The discussion above indicates that a world after colonialism is yet to emerge, and some Global North countries continue to shape the understanding of inclusion for SEN/D students even post-independence through domination in knowledge production (Fasakin, 2021; Elam, 2019; Nair, 2017; Young, 2016). To address the lingering effects of Global North domination in knowledge production on the former colonies, Quayson (2000) advocates for formulating "non-Western modes of discourse as a viable means of challenging the West" (P. 2). The "non-Western modes of discourse" relate to localised conceptualisation of inclusion for SEN/D students and perspective on how to include them in education. This assertion aligns with the position that decoloniality theory offers the opportunity to address continuous colonial domination over the affairs of the former colonies, including education (Lemos, 2023; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Mbembe, 2017). Therefore, decoloniality can address Global North's hegemony in knowledge production in our understanding of phenomena such as IE and, by extension, how it is practised and experienced in different contexts.

4.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter sets the stage for examining SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria, considering both local perspectives and the impact of some Global North ideas. Here, I present decoloniality theory as the theoretical framework guiding my study on

inclusion for SEN/D students within two mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The focus of decoloniality theories is unambiguous: deconstructing the superiority and universality claim of some Global North scholars on discussions such as IE. This dominance is problematic because their conceptualisations of inclusion for SEN/D students and recommended framework for practice are inconsistent with the Nigerian pre-colonial education system, which did not emphasise reading, writing, and numeracy but was primarily concerned with skill acquisition for all community members and transferring culture across generations and enhance the economic capabilities of the community members. However, decolonisation does not imply an outright deviation from every inclusion idea from the Global North. At the same time, it does not project Global South inclusion ideals as sacrosanct. Instead, it encourages a constructive synergy between scholars from Global North and South spaces to foster a broader view regarding IE.

This chapter lays the foundation for this study: exploring SEN/D students' inclusion in a mainstream private and public secondary school in Lagos State, Nigeria (a former British colony). While the Nigerian government has established many educational policies to address the challenge of SEN/D students' exclusion from mainstream schools, SEN/D students generally struggle to access and participate in education, particularly in mainstream schools in the country (Fajemilo et al., 2020). This suggests a need to reconsider the approach in addressing SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria. A new approach to addressing SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria may involve analysing the effects of some Global North ideas on the former British colony's educational practice, especially the conceptualisation and implementation of SEN/D students' inclusion. Hence, this study adopts a decoloniality theory to explore SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools in

Lagos State, focusing on how some Global North ideals influence SEN/D inclusion in this context. Drawing on Mignolo and Walsh's (2018) concept of the 'colonial matrix of power,' which has outlasted colonisation, the study explores the participants' interpretations of inclusion for SEN/D students, their experiences and the challenges of implementing inclusion for SEN/D students in their settings. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) encourage the exploration of diverse epistemologies regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in schools, acknowledging that knowledge is contextual.

Moosavi's (2020) work, which cautions against oversimplifying decolonisation and reducing diverse perspectives to mere stereotypes, is crucial to this study. In addition, Moosavi's (2023) encouragement regarding self-reflection as a student at Global North University, which might affect the perspective of what constitutes inclusion, further informs the research approach. The chapter sets the stage for the study's qualitative methodology, which is designed to amplify diverse voices and question dominant narratives and thesis structure.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's methodological framework. This covers the approach applied to address the study's objectives, which include the study design, the participants' selection process, and the means of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Based on the study's questions:

- What are the participants' (teachers, headteachers, students without SEN/D, SEN/D students and parents of SEN/D students from an inclusive public and private secondary school in Lagos State) understanding of IE?
- How do the participants interpret their lived experience of the SEN/D students' inclusion in their settings?
- What are the challenges faced by the participants in including SEN/D students in their settings?

In this study, I adopted a qualitative approach to explore SEN/D students' inclusion in a public and a private mainstream secondary school in Lagos State, Nigeria, a Global South country. The study was informed by a decoloniality theory, which encourages critically engaging participants' lived reality to gain insights into how a phenomenon such as SEN/D students' inclusion is conceptualised and implemented within specific settings (Ubisi, 2021; Moosavi, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Such engagements offer insights into their perspectives and experiences regarding SEN/D students' inclusion. This approach can generate multiple perspectives and shed light on the impact of colonial legacies on inclusion practices. It can also offer the opportunity to project local knowledge about SEN/D students'

inclusion in mainstream schools. Consequently, alternative narratives are provided to the universality of some Global North viewpoints regarding SEN/D students' inclusion. The study used a single embedded case study design (Yin, 2003; 2009) drawing on some elements from the constructivist grounded theory (CGT) analysis framework (Charmaz, 2014; 2006). It explored how inclusion stakeholders perceive inclusion and address the challenges of including SEN/D students in these two types of schools. By doing so, the study can give insight into the interplay between inclusion conceptualisation(s) and how it is experienced in these schools, as well as its conceptualisation and recommendations for practice by the Salamanca Statement. Therefore, it is a means of projecting the knowledge regarding inclusion for SEN/D students from the Nigerian context.

The chapter is structured as follows: First, the chapter discusses the study's methodology, detailing the approach, design, data collection, and philosophical assumptions guiding the study. Second, the chapter presents the data analysis process. Following this, it explains how the study maintained trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Next, it reflects on positionality and its importance within the study's methodology. Lastly, it concludes with a conclusion.

5.1 The Study Methodology

A study methodology is the plan and the procedure that decide the overall process of a study (Grover, 2015; Harrison et al., 2017). However, the term has been conflated with study methods. Although the terms methodology and methods are related, both have different meanings (Tight, 2013). Methodology is guided by a study's theoretical framework and philosophical assumptions (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Wellington, 2015; Cohen et al., 2011).

Researchers make critical decisions regarding study designs, means of data collection, analysis tools, and ethical considerations within a methodological framework. According to Wellington (2015), study methodology is "the activity or business of choosing, reflecting upon, evaluating and justifying the methods to use when conducting research"(P. 33). Cohen et al. (2011) also present methodology as the overarching perspective of a study. It involves the researcher's decision on and justification of adopted philosophical assumptions and the approaches employed for their study. These assertions imply that methods are the practical techniques used within the broader methodological framework to solve a problem or answer a research question (Clough and Nutbrown, 2007). The assertions also indicate that an appropriate methodological approach is germane to a successful study outcome as it provides the framework that guides the entire study process (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The conflation of methodology with method suggests that researchers are responsible for identifying the appropriate methods suitable for their study and justifying their use (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

5.1.1 *Qualitative Study Approach*

A qualitative approach to enquiry addresses the meaning ascribed to human encounters (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Creswell, 2013). Rather than relying solely on numbers and statistics, it embraces the intricate perspectives of individuals and groups (Creswell, 2013). This approach values the viewpoints of research participants and acknowledges the researcher's subjectivity (Creswell, 2013). By treating participants as active actors, the approach encourages the need to explore the different meanings they assign to their daily experiences (Reiter, 2017). Unlike the restrictive quantitative methods, the qualitative study allows participants to "tell it as it is" (Robson, 2005:63). This viewpoint underscores the need to examine SEN/D students' inclusion within

specific contexts to gain deep insights (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Consequently, in line with decoloniality theory, the approach can generate insights that can drive meaningful change in the IE field.

There is strong advocacy for the involvement of people directly affected or involved when exploring social phenomena, such as SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools (Sætra, 2019; Dudovskiy, 2018; Creswell and Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009). Involving them draws attention to different aspects of their lives, which can provide valuable insights into their lived experiences and challenges (Sætra, 2019; Dudovskiy, 2018; Dhunpath, 2001). An example of such advocacy is Sætra's (2019) emphasis on the importance of gaining insights into stakeholders' lived experiences of social phenomena, such as SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools within a broader context. Educational studies are often based on stakeholders' lived experiences (Dhunpath, 2001). According to Dhunpath (2001), involving stakeholders in educational studies helps to achieve the required results.

Unlike quantitative studies, which rely on statistical instruments like questionnaires, qualitative studies delve into human experiences, and cultural contexts. It acknowledges the subjectivity of individual perceptions. The approach emphasises that understanding people's interactions and experiences cannot be fully captured through numbers. Creswell and Poth (2018) highlight the implication of representing participants' viewpoints with numbers, percentages and averages. According to them, "to level all individuals to a statistical mean overlooks the uniqueness of individuals in our studies" (P. 46). Creswell and Poth (2018) underline the need to recognise and value individuals' perspectives regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools. Emphasis on personal perspective to understand inclusion for SEN/D students offers the opportunity to "hear silenced

voices" (Creswell and Poth, 2018:45). This viewpoint indicates that qualitative studies afford the opportunity to project individuals' voice regarding issues concerning them. This approach positions researchers as explorers, allowing probing the research topic at varying depths (Dudovskiy, 2018). Consequently, qualitative study can significantly advance knowledge (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009).

The preceding discussion about qualitative study approach highlights its tendency to advance knowledge in the IE field and inclusion experience for SEN/D students. Nevertheless, the study approach faces challenges and limitations (Creswell and Poth, 2018). In the first instance, it may be challenging to maintain study consistency because the approach relies heavily on the environment. A second concern relates to study integrity, given that qualitative study can be susceptible to bias since it relies on human interpretations. However, transparency and reflexivity allow researchers to uphold study integrity (Staiti, 2012). Another concern is that novice researchers may struggle to demonstrate rigour, as no established standards exist for assessing validity and reliability in qualitative research. Finally, it is assumed that qualitative study can be negatively impacted by data analysis complexity as it can be intricate and time-consuming.

Concerns about the qualitative study approach centre around its validity, reliability, and generalisability (Sikes, 2010; Atkinson, 2010; Dhunpath, 2000; Harmmersley,1992). Dhunpath (2000) believes that the ongoing debate is due to the generation of data specific to individual experiences. Despite concerns about the study approach, its primary purpose is learning. The qualitative study approach prioritises active participant involvement over representativeness (Thomas, 2011; Stake, 2005). Thomas (2011) argues that findings from such studies can benefit others in similar situations. However, it is important that researchers maintain rigour navigating

complex context specific data (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The qualitative study approach engages various designs such as case study, narrative, phenomenology, and grounded theory (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Bryman, 2008; Hancock and Algozzine, 2006). This study adopts the case study design.

Several factors informed this study choice of the qualitative study approach. Firstly, the approach is consistent with my study's theoretical underpinning, the decoloniality theory. The theory encourages the need to foreground and respect the voices of inclusion stakeholders (Moosavi, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Foregrounding their perspectives underlines the point that beyond formulating policies, inclusion should concern honouring stakeholders' lived experiences and questioning existing structures. The study adopted a single embedded case study to explore the lived experiences of twenty inclusion stakeholders within two mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State. A single embedded case study involves examining more than one sub-unit of analysis within a single case study (Yin, 2003; 2009). Secondly, the qualitative study approach is relatively innovative within the context of SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria, specifically Lagos State. Prior studies on this subject reveal that few researchers such as Osuji-Alatilehin (2019), Odunsi (2018), and Taiwo (2015) have adopted this approach. It is intriguing that these studies were conducted by Nigeria scholars studying in Global North universities (The University of Edinburgh, UK, the Flinders University, South Australia, and the University of Northampton, UK). Indeed, Okhawere and Isibor (2021) and Abakpa et al. (2017) acknowledge a stereotypical restriction on educational research approaches in Nigeria. This restriction on approaches can stifles the spirit of innovation, open-mindedness, and scholarly curiosity.

The third reason for choosing the qualitative approach is because it allows close partnership with my study participants. This partnership helps to explore individuals' interpretations of inclusion for SEN/D students, their experiences of SEN/D students' inclusion, and the challenges in including them (Crabtree and Miller, 1999). Lastly, my philosophical assumption (social constructivism) aligns with the qualitative approach. Philosophical beliefs shape research processes, addressing questions about reality, knowledge, values, and research justification. Philosophical assumptions play a crucial role in shaping the research process as they deal with the "nature of reality, what counts as knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified, the role of values in research and the process of research" (Creswell, 2007:20). Consequently, it is crucial that researchers critically examine their philosophical assumptions. Therefore, the following subsection explains the study's philosophical assumption.

5.1.2 *The Philosophical Assumption*

This study is within the social constructivist perspective (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Reiter, 2017; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This perspective emphasises the impact of social interactions and shared meanings on knowledge and understanding (Reiter, 2017; Charmaz, 2014; 2006). Therefore, it allows probing participants' diverse experiences and the meanings they attach to their daily experiences in SEN/D students' inclusion. Embedded in this stance is the assumption that people tell their stories better than external observers (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Therefore, the social constructivist perspective positions participants and researchers as co-creators of meanings (Charmaz, 2014; 2006). According to Charmaz (2006), researchers' "interpretation of the studied phenomenon is itself a construction" (P.187). Therefore, the social constructivist perspective permits me to co-construct SEN/D students' inclusion within mainstream secondary schools with the study participants. This study

positions the participants as active actors in SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools.

This study's ontological, epistemological, and axiological position informs the choice of social constructivist perspective (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Bryman, 2008). Ontology refers to what people see as reality and their interpretations of everyday experiences of phenomena such as inclusion (Cohen et al., 2011; Bryman, 2008). In contrast, epistemology entails the underlying assumptions about what counts as knowledge (Walliman, 2006). On the other hand, axiology focuses on the value and ethics of a study, addressing what ought to be and the researcher's value (Killam, 2013). These standpoints are about knowledge subjectivity and objectivity (Creswell and Porth, 2018; Cohen et al., 2011; Vrasida, 2007), encouraging interrogation of whether reality is independent of interactions with social factors like beliefs and practices. I believe that knowledge is subjective, context-dependent, and fluid (Creswell and Porth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This philosophical positioning agrees with my study's theoretical framework and methodological approach (decoloniality theory and qualitative approach).

My study's philosophical positioning deviates from the objective stances regarding knowledge production (Creswell and Porth, 2018; Cohen et al., 2011; Vrasida, 2007). The objective stance undermines how social factors impact individuals' reality and does not recognise people as social actors (Blaikie, 2010; Bryman, 2008). Conversely, the subjective position recognises that reality is about peoples' belief systems and how they affect their interpretations of what they see or experience (Blaikie, 2010; Bryman, 2008). The subjective position of this study aligns with the social constructivist perspective, which promotes participants as social actors

and emphasises the need to understand their perception of their lived realities to understand the phenomenon being explored (Reiter, 2017).

Two assumptions underpin my perspective:

- Experience is personal (Cohen et al., 2007; Searle, 2006).
- Knowledge is constructed by individuals based on personal engagements with the environment in which they live (Vrasida, 2007).

Therefore, I assume that the participants may construct unique notions of inclusion for SEN/D students, interpret their experiences of inclusion differently, and they can present varying understandings of the challenges inherent in including SEN/D students in their settings. Based on this perspective, I collected in-depth qualitative data through semi-structured interviews from twenty inclusion stakeholders (two headteachers, six teachers involved in including SEN/D students in mainstream classrooms, four parents of SEN/D students, four SEN/D students, and four non-SEN/D students) in two mainstream secondary schools (public and private) in Lagos state, Nigeria regarding their conceptualisation of SEN/D students' inclusion, their interpretations of inclusion experiences, and the challenges they encounter in their settings. See Table 5.1 below for the inclusion stakeholders involved in this study.

Table 5:1 **My study participants**

No	Participants	Role	Qualification	Years in education
1	Titi	School A Headteacher	Master Degree	20
2	Bukola	School B Headteacher	Bachelor Degree	25

3	Ronke	School A English Teacher	Bachelor Degree/ PGDE	13
4	Shola	School A Mathematics Teacher	Bachelor Degree	15
5	Bisi	School A specialist Teacher	Bachelor Degree	10
6	Fatima	School B computer science Teacher	Bachelor Degree	16
7	Mr Paul	School B Christian Religious Knowledge Teacher	Bachelor Degree	8
8	Nicole	School B specialist Teacher	Bachelor Degree	6
9	Mrs O	School A SEN/D students' parent	Business Administrator	N/A
10	Mrs B	School A SEN/D students' parent	Medical Doctor	N/A
11	Mrs Jay	School B SEN/D students' parent	Trader	N/A
12	Mrs D	School B SEN/D student's parent	Clerical staff	N/A
13	David	School A SEN/D student	Year 9	N/A

14	Diamond	School A SEN/D student	Year 9	N/A
15	Taye	School B SEN/D student	Year 9	N/A
16	Tope	School B SEN/D student	Year 9	N/A
17	Tade	School A Non-SEN/D student	Year 12	N/A
18	Eri	School A Non-SEN/D student	Year 10	N/A
19	Felicia	School B Non-SEN/D student	Year 11	N/A
20	Funke	School B Non-SEN/D student	Year 11	N/A

Source: Author's compilation using participants' recruitment criteria.

5.1.3 *The Case Study as a Research Design*

A case study is a research design that can be used to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon such as SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools in a former colony. The case study is appropriate for an in-depth interrogation of a contemporary subject like SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools within its real-life context, "especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2014:18) or when the researcher has restricted control over the phenomenon and context (Robson, 2011; Yin, 2002:13). Inclusion for SEN/D students presents a complex and multifaceted educational endeavour. Indeed, the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including

family, school, and SEN/D students, fosters a blurred distinction between their inclusion and context because contexts are different across and within schools. However, by employing the case study method, which allows for navigating the complexity inherent in a study, researchers can systematically frame and analyse research inquiries within a specific context (Hayes, 2022). Therefore, the case study provides a systematic structure for exploring, collecting and analysing data and reporting the results about inclusion for SEN/D students within mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State (Bass et al., 2018). The case study provides the opportunity for a better understanding of the reason for an event outcome and points to what should be investigated in future studies (Verner et al., 2009). The case in this thesis is SEN/D students' inclusion within mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State. However, the study explored this case using two units of analysis (a public and a private mainstream secondary school in Lagos State) (Yin, 2009).

A case is "a specific … complex, functioning thing" (Stake, 2003:2), such as a school, individuals, or an educational event like SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools discussed in this thesis. This study understands case boundaries as they are typically presented in qualitative case studies. This understanding allows me to respond to participants' understanding of inquiry, which sometimes involved varying events outside the school unrelated to SEN/D students' inclusion within the schools. By doing so, I have demonstrated an openness to unexpected perspectives arising during data collection. Qualitative case study research is a rigorous and comprehensive engagement with a specific, well-defined phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) defines it as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (P. xiii). According to Stake (1995), it is a "study

of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (P. xi). These definitions offer a valuable opportunity to delimit this study and establish clear boundaries around SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools (Yazan, 2015). They imply that an understanding of the study context can enhance researchers' choice of relevant methods, fostering rigorous study exploration. This can positively impact the study's relevance. However, Merriam's (1998) definition encourages flexibility within the qualitative research approach (Yazan, 2015).

A case study thoroughly analyses a specific instance or situation (Yin, 2003, 2009). However, the case can be considered whole or studied within its broader context. Yin (2009) identified four types of case study designs:

- Single holistic design.
- Single embedded design.
- Multiple holistic design.
- Multiple embedded design.

In this study, I adopted the single-embedded case study design. The single-embedded case study allows using multiple two units of analysis to gain a holistic view of the studied case (Yin, 2009). In this thesis, I chose two units of analysis (a private and a public mainstream secondary school) for my case: SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State. These units of analysis were deemed most appropriate for providing the opportunity to study this case within a broader context. The approach can generate robust and deep data to understand the nature of SEN/D students' inclusion in my study context and answer my research questions from different perspectives (Creswell, 2014). Since the case study design can engender a deep insight into SEN/D students' inclusion within a specific context

through participants' lived realities, it is suitable to address the ongoing debate regarding the dominance of some Global North knowledge in discussions regarding SEN/D students' inclusion across different countries (Abdurahman et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018). It offers me the opportunity to explore participants' interpretations of SEN/D students' inclusion, their experiences, and the potential barriers to its implementation within mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State. This can give insight into the relationship between their interpretations of and experiences of the phenomenon with respect to the Salamanca Statement's conceptualisation and recommendation for practice. At the same time, it can also allow for identifying likely tensions of different epistemological traditions from the Salamanca Statement and Nigeria regarding inclusion for SEN/D students and interrogate how IE conception and practice in this context are implicated in the colonial matrix of power (knowledge production) (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Qiujano, 2007; 2000).

5.1.3.1 *Strengths and Limitations of a Case Study*

While the case study design can afford a nuanced exploration of SEN/D students' inclusion within a specific context, it can also pose some challenges. For example, there can be a loss of intrinsic characteristics of individual cases in studies that involve multiple cases (Stoecker, 1991). Creswell (2013) addressed this concern by arguing that a maximum of four cases is suitable for an in-depth exploration of any topic of interest. I applied this principle by selecting only two units of analysis within a single case study. The study could not accommodate more than two units because of the scarcity of inclusive mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State and time constraints.

Interestingly, Bass et al. (2018) indicate the suitability of single embedded case studies for exploratory study on people's interpretations, experiences and challenges

of a subject such as SEN/D students' inclusion. This qualitative study explored different categories of inclusion stakeholders' interpretations of inclusion for SEN/D students, their experiences and the barriers to including them in mainstream secondary schools from different contexts. This allows me to capture common and distinct perspectives about this study focus (SEN/D students' inclusion) from two different contexts (private and public). The selected units of analysis within the mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State play a crucial role in ensuring that the findings are relevant to SEN/D students' inclusion in the State.

Still on likely challenges of using case study design in a study. There is a tendency for data overload due to exposure to a substantial amount of data (Leonard-Barton, 1990). This exposure portends inefficiency in data analysis (Leonard-Barton, 1990). Besides, case study design is the risk of researchers' biases. Furthermore, pattern recognition often becomes exceedingly intricate and precise in analysing highly context-specific data. Therefore, context-specific analysis demands attention to detail. Nevertheless, a study that focuses on an unresearched subject like SEN/D students' inclusion in private and public mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State offers a unique opportunity to delve deep into nuances specific to the case. At the same time, it can establish cause-and-effect relationships. Therefore, this single embedded case focusing on a common (unresearched) case (SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State) offers a deeper understanding of the subject matter and provides a basis for gaining new insights into the topic. To maximise the strength of this single embedded case study, I engaged participants from a private and a public secondary school. During the study, I engaged optimal reflexivity and constant critical reflection of the research process. This engagement positively impacted the robustness of the data collected. It allowed for

exploring the phenomenon from two embedded cases (private and public secondary schools) within the main case (mainstream secondary school). In addition, it gave insight into varying factors like socioeconomic status that can impact SEN/D students' experience of school.

5.1.4 *The Sampling Process*

Within the qualitative study approach, sampling is the process of selecting relevant individuals or objects among a larger population to address research questions (Mocanasu, 2020; Taherdoost, 2016). I gathered data from twenty participants from two mainstream secondary schools that were identified as inclusive. The participants were deemed most appropriate for providing robust and deep data to understand SEN/D students' inclusion in this study context because they are core actors in including SEN/D students within their contexts.

Case Recruitment Selection

The study case recruitment process involved making a list of mainstream private and public secondary schools in Lagos State that identify as inclusive through information from family, friends, and voluntary organisations that support SEN/D children and their parents. The primary difference between the two schools lies in their student enrolment. While the private secondary school (School A) admits students from high-income families, the public school (School B) caters to those who lack the financial means to attend a private secondary school due to their families' low-income status. Before recruitment, ethical approval was obtained from the University of East London Ethics Committee (UREC) in August 2021 (See Appendix 1 a and b). Then, following the need to gain local access permission and obtain informed consent from participants while planning qualitative research (BERA, 2018; Creswell, 2016), I sought permission to research the identified schools through a request letter to the

gatekeepers (Headteachers) of selected schools (See Appendix 2). As a result, two Headteachers (one private and one public) gave consent for me to conduct my research in their schools. Considering that this study adopts the qualitative inquiry approach, the study only needed to have some of the inclusive secondary schools in Lagos State (Vasileious et al., 2018).

Consequently, I adopted the purposive sampling technique (Mocanasu, 2020) to identify three public secondary schools among thirteen public secondary schools identified as inclusive secondary schools by the Lagos State government and three private secondary schools out of eight that enrol SEN/D and non-SEN/D students. Purposive sampling is a non-statistical or non-probability technique commonly used in qualitative research (Mocanasu, 2020; Taherdoost, 2016; Cohen et al., 2011). This technique engages participants with a certain level of knowledge and experience about the phenomena being studied (Mocanasu, 2020). Hence, it can enhance the richness and depth of data collected.

Participants' Recruitment

Like the case recruitment process, there was no need for full representation of all head teachers in Lagos State and the population of teachers, parents of SEN/D students, non-SEN/D and SEN/D secondary school students in the two schools. Therefore, the participants who agreed to participate in the study and could give relevant information regarding SEN/D students' inclusion were carefully selected (Mocanasu, 2020). The study inclusion criteria are outlined below:

- Headteachers of the two inclusive secondary schools (private and public).
- Teachers who are involved in including SEN/D students in mainstream classrooms.
- Parents of SEN/D students included in mainstream secondary schools.

- 13-16year-old SEN/D students enrolled in mainstream secondary schools.
- 13-16year-old Non-SEN/D students enrolled in the same secondary schools as SEN/D students.
- The student participants were 13-16year-old SEN/D and non-students. These groups of students were preferred because it is assumed that they have spent significant time in their schools and would have had meaningful experiences in their schools concerning SEN/D students' inclusion.

(See Table 5.2 for the participants' recruitment details).

Table 5:2 **Recruitment Criteria, Case Type and Participant Category**

Participants Category	Unit of Analysis	Age	Criteria
Headteachers	Private and public mainstream secondary schools that enrol both SEN/D and Non-SEN/D students.	Not applicable (NA)	Stakeholders involved in designing, planning, delivering and monitoring the process of including SEN/D students in mainstream schools.
Teachers	Private and public mainstream secondary schools that enrol both SEN/D and Non-SEN/D students.	NA	Stakeholders involved in co-designing, planning, delivering inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream classrooms.
SEN/D students' parents.	Private and public mainstream secondary schools that enrol both	NA	Stakeholders with children in mainstream secondary schools.

	SEN/D and Non-SEN/D students.		
SEN/D students	Private and public mainstream secondary schools that enrol both SEN/D and Non-SEN/D students.	13-16year-old	Stakeholders directly impacted by inclusion in mainstream secondary schools/classrooms.
Non-SEN/D students	Private and public mainstream secondary schools that enrol both SEN/D and Non-SEN/D students.	13-16year-old	Stakeholders in the same school/classrooms as SEN/D students.

Source: Author's compilation using participants' recruitment criteria.

First, the study crafted fliers (See Appendix 3) based on these qualifying criteria. These fliers were then sent through the headteachers of the participating schools to reach potential participants. Next, informed consent from the adults interested in the study was obtained by forwarding information sheets and consent letters to them. Regarding the student participants, the study took an extra step and sent requests for consent to their parents, and the students themselves received assent forms seeking consent and approval to interview them. See Appendix 4 (i-v) and 5 for consent and assent forms.

5.1.5 *Data Collection Process*

Data collection refers to the process of gathering information to answer stated research questions and evaluate outcomes (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Cohen et al., 2011). There are different data collection methods in qualitative study. These include

observation, document analysis, and interviews (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Cohen et al., 2011). In line with the social constructivist perspective, a semi-structured interview method for data collection was adopted to capture participants' voices with respect to SEN/D students' inclusion in their settings (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). However, the COVID-19 restrictions restricted interviews to an online platform (Microsoft Teams). A semi-structured interview is a data collection method which often "involves a two-way exchange of views" (Wellington, 2015, p. 138). This interview type can be informal and formal (Kvale, 1996). Informal semi-structured interviews are like everyday conversations, such as small talk, news exchange, and even deep personal exchanges. In contrast, formal semi-structured interviews require an interviewer who actively structures and directs conversations. Within this interview approach, the researcher can gain deep insight into the participants' world (Kvale, 1996).

The study sought to collect a similar variety of information about the study objectives from participants by developing a guideline at the beginning of the study (Yin, 2003). However, the guidelines were applied flexibly during the conversation, taking into cognisance individual participants' unique potential lines of inquiry as they emerged. Additionally, during interviews, ethical issues such as power imbalance and participants' emotional well-being were addressed (BERA, 2024; 2018). Ethical practice is essential in maintaining trust and respect for participants when conducting qualitative research (BERA, 2024; 2018). I developed rapport with some participants by meeting all student participants individually via Microsoft Team to get to know them personally before starting the actual data collection.

Part of the ethical consideration was to assure participants of their confidentiality and that they could withdraw without giving any reason for their decision at the beginning and during interviews. I ensured that participants were comfortable

during interviews (O'Reilly and Dogra, 2017). For example, I ensured that interview times and places were convenient for participants. I also interviewed some participants in the local language (Yoruba) when they informed me, they were more comfortable communicating that way. This ethical practice is consistent with my social constructivist stance; it allows me to understand the worlds in which they live from their lens. Additionally, it resonates with decoloniality principle that seeks to account for indigenous language, which has been marginalised by colonial hegemony Ojo et al., 2023; Menon et al. (2021). Menon et al. (2021) have identified the importance of using indigenous languages in studies such as SEN/D students' inclusion in schools. They posit that it can provide unique insights into individuals' perspectives.

Furthermore, the study engaged with student participants, especially SEN/D students, based on their ages and abilities and ensured that questions about their experiences did not cause the participants any psychological harm. I was sensitive to participants' emotions, especially SEN/D students and their parents. Furthermore, I positioned myself as a graduate student seeking to understand inclusion for SEN/D students in Nigeria better. This realisation helped to minimise the power relationships between the participants and myself (Thambinathan and Kinsella, 2021). Interview data collection occurred between February 2021 and January 2023. Tables 5.3 and 5.4 below detail each participant's type, number of interviews, amount and time spent transcribing and processing data. During interviews, I maintained observation notes to capture subtle, unspoken cues (Creswell and Poth, 2018). (See Appendix 6).

Table 5:3 **Participant's type, number of interviews, amount and time spent transcribing and processing data (School A)**

Participants type	Number of interviews	Hours of transcription
Titi (Headteacher)	2	15
Mrs O (SEN/D students' parent)	1	10
Mrs. B (SEN/D students' parent)	1	8
Eri (Non-SEN/D student)	2	10
Tade (Non-SEN/D student)	2	15
David (SEN/D student)	2	6
Diamond (SEN/D student)	1	3
Shola (Teacher)	2	12
Ronke (Teacher)	1	8
Bisi (Teacher)	1	8
Total	15	95

Source: Author's School A's transcription note.

Table 5.4: Participant's type, number of interviews, amount and time spent transcribing and processing data (School B)

Table 5:4 ***Participant's type, number of interviews, amount and time spent transcribing and processing data (School B)***

Participants type	Number of interviews	Hours of transcription
Bukola (Headteacher)	3	18
Mrs D (SEN/D students' parent)	1	10
Mrs. Jay (SEN/D students' parent)	1	12
Taye (Non-SEN/D student	2	6
Tope (Non-SEN/D student	2	6

Funke (SEN/D student)	2	12
Felicia (SEN/D student)	1	2
Fatima (Teacher)	2	10
Nicole (Teacher)	2	15
Paul (Teacher)	2	18
Total	19	109

Source: Author's School B's transcription note.

Development of Interview Guides

As indicated in the recruitment criteria, the study developed five interview guides tailored to the specific participant categories critical for the study (See Appendices 7). These interview guides were checked and refined in collaboration with my supervisors. I tested the interview guides using a pilot test with some SEN/D students' inclusion stakeholders. Although the process helped test the appropriateness and soundness of the topic guides, the pilot interview data did not inform the content of this thesis. The pilot interview sensitised me about the complexity of the boundaries between different stakeholders' inclusion interpretations and experiences. As a result, I carefully sequenced the interview questions, organised the collected data, and began formulating initial thoughts for analysis. During interviews, I was mindful of the need for flexibility and reflexivity to co-construct knowledge and interpretations with the interviewees when conducting interviews from a social constructivist standpoint (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Mills et al., 2006). Interviews offer the best opportunity to access research participants' knowledge, values, preferences, attitudes, and beliefs regarding a subject matter (Cohen et al., 2007). According to Charmaz (2006), "the in-depth nature of intensive interviews fosters eliciting each participant's interpretation of his or her experience" (P. 25). Charmaz (2006) points

attention to the fact that interviews allow access to individuals' interpretations of their lived experiences.

Data Management

Considering the need for confidentiality through data management, interviews were recorded and saved digitally on a passworded device (BERA, 2024). Mindful of the need for accuracy and fair representation of participants, especially the vulnerable groups such as SEN/D students, interviews were meticulously transcribed (BERA, 2024; McMullin, 2021). Quirkos was deployed for data management, memoing, and visualisation (Quirkos, 2021). Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were upheld by assigning pseudonyms to the schools and all participants throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. This action stems from the understanding that sensitive and implicating information may be elicited during interviews.

5.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process through which researchers seek to increase the understanding of a phenomenon by systematically searching and arranging information they have decided as data (Lester et al., 2020). The process requires that researchers integrate evidence and information into a specific framework. This study engages some elements of the constructivist grounded theory (CGT) approach by Charmaz (2000; 2006; 2014) to the data analysis. The CGT approach is founded on the social construction of reality by Berger and Luckmann (1967). The concept of the social construction of reality acknowledges that participants and researchers collaboratively shape meanings and experiences. This position warrants that researchers seek implicit meaning about values and beliefs regarding the study subject through immersion in the data (Charmaz and Bryant, 2011). At the same time, it highlights the need for collaboration between participants and researchers to

generate candid accounts of events and experiences about phenomena (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell and Miller, 2000).

In this study about SEN/D students' inclusion, this collaborative approach permits interactions between some participants and me. I shared the themes with the two participating headteachers, two SEN/D students' parents, and three teachers (See Appendix 8). This informs a comprehensive understanding of the conceptions of inclusion for SEN/D students, interpretations of individual experiences and barriers to including SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools. The CGT's scientific procedure for conceptualising data (Charmaz, 2006; 2014) has impacted my data analysis. Charmaz (2006) confirms that researchers can use CGT as an analysis method within different qualitative traditions to enable insightful and systematic data questioning and a deep understanding of a study subject. Lester et al. (2020) observed the prevalence of the CGT for analysis among qualitative researchers. They also noted that the theory as an approach to qualitative data analysis can strengthen the analysis process while maintaining the participant's voice.

Charmaz and Bryant (2010) emphasise the importance of CGT to educational researchers. They argue that complementing varied forms of qualitative data collection, it can expedite the works of educational researchers. Following this standpoint; some elements of the CGT were used to analyse the data collected using a single embedded case study to facilitate deep insight into emerging subjects such as SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools in Lagos State. Following the qualitative case study method (Stake, 1995; 2005), the study identified relevant issues related to the studied cases. Based on the CGT data analysis procedure, preliminary data analysis occurred during data collection (Charmaz, 2006; 2014). By doing that, I developed and discussed the preliminary case summaries and reflections on the

research questions with my supervisors. This initial data analysis built upon such issues during data collection, which then informed further data collection. After data collection, I conducted an independent, in-depth description and analysis of each case.

In this single embedded case study, I focused on the descriptions of the two units of analysis (a private and a public mainstream secondary school). By analysing and writing each unit separately, I provided a contextual description and interpretation of each unit. The following stages of CGT analysis (Charmaz, 2006) informed the analysis of data gathered from each unit: line-by-line open coding, focused coding, memo-writing, theoretical coding, and development of core categories. I present the outline of each unit's coding and analysis processes below.

Line-By-Line/Open Coding

The study deployed line-by-line coding to analyse the initial stakeholder interviews from each unit of analysis. These interviews included conversations with two SEN/D students' parents, one teacher, one SEN/D student from the public mainstream secondary school (School B), two teachers and one non-SEN/D student from the private mainstream secondary school (School A). Early in the coding process, this approach revealed multiple perspectives. Following Charmaz's (2006) guidance, the study remained sensitive to implicit assumptions illuminating actions and underlying meanings. Additionally, the study engaged in data-to-data comparisons, identifying gaps in the data. Both the initial coding and the remaining line-by-line coding were done using Quirkos (2021). Emerging from the initial coding were "codes of participants' special terms" (Charmaz, 2006:55). These coding techniques allowed immersion into participants' views and behaviour during the coding process (Charmaz,

2006; Gioia et al., 2013). According to Gioia et al. (2013), these codes are also first order.

During supervision meetings, I shared the initial coding findings with my supervisors. We then continue to discuss the emerging concepts that influenced the subsequent analysis at our supervision meetings. This informal analyst triangulation encouraged reflexivity and enhanced data exploration. While data analysis progressed, I compared across all cases. This iterative process fostered meaningful insights. The large number of codes (over four hundred) generated during open coding was overwhelming, and it was not easy to make sense of the large code. Nevertheless, the initial coding process allowed familiarity with the data. The process also underscores the complexity of data coding and interpretation. Gioia's (2004) perspective, which suggests that feeling overwhelmed was a necessary part of the process, comforted me at this study stage. While some codes remained isolated due to containing a single data segment, others were more relatable, spanning multiple segments. These variations in code density did not necessarily correlate with the study objectives. However, they reflected frequently occurring ideas, actions or emotions in the data. See examples of initial codes in Appendix 9.

Focused Coding

Focused coding is re-coding to classify the most significant and frequent codes from the initial coding stage (Charmaz, 2006). Some focused codes helped to organise inclusion practice and experience (contextual codes), while others demonstrated the interpretations of inclusion for SEN/D students (conceptual codes). Some examples of contextual codes included "inadequate resources", "feeling comfortable", and "adequate training". Conceptual codes are illustrated by groupings such as "being in the same setting", "included in mainstream classroom", "all students in the same

school”, “getting everyone involved regardless of condition”, and “giving opportunity”. These codes were further divided into major topics or sub-codes that captured perceptions and experience, using the gerund form for labelling. Gerunds are verb forms that end in ‘-ing’ and function as nouns. When coding, gerund forms are recommended to "help to define what is happening in a fragment of data" and to "see implicit processes, to make connections between codes and to keep their analyses active and emergent" (Charmaz, 2006:164). For example, “giving opportunity” was broken down into ‘interpreting inclusion’ and ‘experiencing inclusion’ showing how inclusion conceptualisation informs practice and stakeholders’ experience of inclusion.

Theoretical Coding

The theoretical coding stage follows focus coding. It concerns the relationship between emerging codes during focused coding (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978). At this stage, the emphasis is on providing the framework for constructing a coherent narrative about the subject being studied based on the main themes that emerged during data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). This process contributes to a deeper understanding of the underlying patterns and relationships within the data. It was challenging navigating this process because I sought to create broad and solid concepts that can be synthesised into a framework that reflects the interpretations of SEN/D students’ inclusion, how it is experienced and the barriers to effective inclusion for SEN/D students. Nevertheless, I actively compared and contrasted various categories during the coding process. This process helped me to streamline identified categories to a sizeable number of core categories. Although these core categories are based on my perspective, they are essential in illuminating the nature of the investigated subject. Interestingly, researchers often experience moments of insight

into emergent theories, theoretical constructions and ideas about data (Alzaanin, 2020).

I developed some categories to explore the understanding and implementation of inclusion for SEN/D students within mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State. For instance, one striking observation was the urgent need for effective inclusion for SEN/D students. Participants consistently emphasised its importance. Hence, I named a core category ‘ensuring equitable access for SEN/D students within mainstream secondary school’. This overarching category encompassed other categories, including ‘providing adequate infrastructure for SEN/D students’ inclusion’, ‘accessing mainstream secondary schools’, and ‘stakeholders’ collaboration’. As I assigned labels to these categories, I remained attentive to participants’ terminologies. Following Gioia’s et al. (2013) approach, I interrogated the data for deeper meaning. In this role, as a knowledgeable co-constructor, I simultaneously considered multiple levels, the informant terms (first-order codes) and an abstract theoretical level that included broader narrative dimensions and codes (second-order codes). Essentially, I sought a theoretical perspective on the emerging information from the data (Gioia et al., 2013). To achieve this, I engaged in gestalt analysis (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). This allowed me to see how the pieces fit together, the whole being greater than its parts. Based on the insight during data interrogation, I developed more questions, which guided subsequent interviews. This iterative process is consistent with the theoretical sampling method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967

Development of Core Categories

To facilitate a single embedded case study analysis regarding SEN/D students’ inclusion within mainstream secondary schools, I explored certain perspectives and practices related to inclusion for SEN/D students. These include viewpoints regarding

the physical location for inclusion, how schools implement inclusion for SEN/D students, and potential barriers to successful implementation. The focus was to allow the study participants to express their understanding of inclusion, reflect on the practice in their schools and express their perspectives regarding practice and concerns regarding inclusion in their settings. Despite analysing each case separately, insights from previous cases prompted further questions, inevitably shaping subsequent data analysis. I critically examined and clarified concepts throughout the writing process based on ongoing discussions with my supervisors and colleagues.

Memo-writing

Memo writing enables a researcher to "capture ideas in process and in progress" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). Within the context of grounded theory, memo writing is a crucial tool for researchers. During the research process writing (data collection, transcribing and data analysis stages), I actively engaged in memo writing. Post-interview, these memos helped me summarise key ideas and identify potential follow-ups (Charmaz, 2006). For example, I explored emerging issues like non-SEN/D students' perception regarding being in the same school as their SEN/D peers, parents' involvement in SEN/D students' inclusion, and SEN/D students' experience of school. Memo writing facilitated a dynamic comparison of emerging codes and categories (Charmaz, 2006: 80-81). This process allowed me to explore connections in new ways. During the analysis stage, I dug deeper by asking how categories are similar or different from others and what connections I can make between them. (Browne, 2003). By comparing concepts within and between key categories, I uncovered potential relationships between contexts, actions and consequences within cases. These insights contribute to the evolving theory. Fundamentally, memo writing

involves comparing codes and categories, helping to refine researchers' understanding (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Gioia et al., 2013).

5.3 Trustworthiness

The validity and reliability of qualitative research are essential for determining the trustworthiness of the findings. Certain criteria serve as a quality control checklist of the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Bryman, 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1986) introduced four criteria for evaluating the quality of qualitative research, which include credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity/generalisability), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). Following this, I discuss how I addressed these criteria in this thesis.

5.3.1 *Credibility*

A study's credibility is about how a study finding accurately represents participants' perspectives about the subject being studied (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). Therefore, credibility pertains to alignment between study questions and reality (Merriam, 1998). To ensure credibility in my qualitative single embedded case study design, I interviewed different inclusion stakeholders from two school types (a private and a public mainstream secondary school) in Lagos State to collect comprehensive data from these stakeholders about their understanding, experience and the barriers to including SEN/D students in their schools. By doing so, I was able to gather robust data from various sources. Because credibility is crucial to my qualitative study, I reviewed and coded excerpts from two interview transcripts with a colleague. This action deepened the initial codes. I also sent transcribed data to some participants to seek their opinions about how I have represented their views on SEN/D students' inclusion in their schools. Memos writing and semi-structured interviews equally

reinforced the credibility of my findings because they aided data and method triangulation.

5.3.2 *Transferability*

The concept of transferability refers to the extent to which research findings is applicable to other contexts (Merriam, 1998; Lincoln and Guba, 1986). The adoption of open-ended questions, which help in generating rich and detailed descriptions can increase the transferability of this qualitative study. This process can foster comprehensive and contextually intricate responses. As such, readers can evaluate how closely their circumstances align with the research findings and whether they can apply them to their local context. In this thesis, I prioritise transferability by offering readers enough information to draw insights that resonate with the study contexts and their situations (Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Firestone, 1993).

5.3.3 *Dependability*

Like quantitative study, dependability in qualitative study applies to reliability and potential for consistency over time (Shenton, 2004). Dependability is closely linked to credibility; achieving one may lead to the other (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). I rigorously followed uniform data collection and analysis procedures to ensure dependability across both cases. To ensure the dependability of this study, I addressed core research questions and deployed consistent interview prompts. I also provide a comprehensive account of the data collection and analysis approaches so that fellow researchers can replicate them in similar contexts with comparable participants. In addition, memo writing, containing non-verbal cues, my reactions, and decisions during data analysis helped to maintain reflexivity. Furthermore, this study's dependability is enhanced by creating an audit trail of the research process. I meticulously documented each data collection and analysis stage through memos.

5.3.4 *Confirmability*

Confirmability is the extent to which others can verify and validate the study findings (Shenton, 2004). It demands that the conclusions of a study be firmly rooted in participants' experiences and the data they provide and not in the researcher's intuition, biases, preconceptions, or agenda. To enhance confirmability in this study, I engaged in several rigorous practices, including member checking. This process involved seeking feedback from participants (Shenton, 2004). I also maintained confirmability by maintaining reflexive memo recording, which minimises personal biases. Equally, maintaining a meticulous audit trail of processes, including data collection, derivation, analysis, and transparency in decision-making, provided the ground for maintaining conformity in this study. Furthermore, supervisory scrutiny ensured that findings remained firmly rooted in participant data, and careful data management enhanced my study's confirmability. Applying technology such as Quirkos (2021) in data storage, coding, and analysis allows data traceability to the sources through codes and categories.

5.4 The Study Positionality and its Importance Within the Methodology

During this study, I constantly reflected on how my background, including my position as an educator in the study context and as a student at Global North University, can foster biases in the research process (Mason, 2017). My knowledge and experiences of inclusion for SEN/D students in Nigeria as a practitioner and student in a Global North university may have caused bias in my worldview of their inclusion in mainstream secondary schools. Therefore, I needed to practise reflexivity regarding how my thinking, feelings, and beliefs may impact data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I ensure transparency through reflective and analytical memos (Mills et al., 2006). This helped me to document my assumptions and ensure that the

findings were devoid of my perspectives. I also recognise my position as a data collector and analyst (Creswell, 2014).

Furthermore, my role as a practitioner (teacher and school director for well over two decades) gave me an insider perspective during the research process. This insider perspective enhanced my views and made my choice of contexts and participants worthwhile and positive (Creswell, 2014). Through my insider status, I gained prolonged exposure and intimate knowledge of the context, further extending my engagement with research participants. This extended engagement facilitated a deeper understanding and more nuanced representation of the various influences at play. It also increased my attentiveness, knowledge, and sensitivity to participants' challenges and issues. I consciously tried to maintain researcher credibility without compromising positive relationships with the participants.

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter described the theoretical underpinning of this study, decoloniality theory. It also identified a qualitative, single-embedded case study design within a constructivist paradigm as a suitable design for a study informed by decoloniality theory. This chapter gave detailed information regarding the data collection questions. By so doing, the study demonstrated how it provided a framework for generating topical data. The data analysis was deeply affected by emerging controversial issues arising from the conversations with participants. These issues further guided subsequent interviews. In this chapter, the processes of case recruitment and data collection methods were presented, summarising information from multiple sources. The study conducted a total of thirty-four (34) semi-structured interviews.

Furthermore, the chapter demonstrated the employment of some elements of CGT for the data analysis. While maintaining participants' voices and contextual

relevance, I applied constant comparison, memo writing, and memo sorting to deepen the analysis process. This chapter includes the methods that enhanced the study's trustworthiness and establishes the lens through which the data will be analysed, emphasising critical perspectives and challenging dominant narratives. Identifying the study design also sets the foundation for addressing the study questions based on decoloniality theory. The study also demonstrated commitment to diverse perspectives by engaging various inclusion stakeholders and conducting thirty-four interviews. Additionally, by describing the case recruitment, data collection processes, and the CGT elements in data analysis, the chapter has displayed methodology transparency and the rigorous process of conducting this study, enhancing this study's trustworthiness. In the following two chapters, I present my data analysis. It aims to identify how participants' insights reveal hidden power dynamics between some Global North ideologies and the context concerning inclusion for SEN/D students. In addition, the study explores whether their perspectives challenge dominant narratives.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS 1- INCLUSION AS PLACE

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents participants' perspectives regarding inclusion for students with Special Educational Needs/Disability (SEN/D), which emerged from the analysis of interviews with twenty participants from two mainstream secondary schools (one private and one public) in Lagos State, Nigeria. These participants are the two headteachers of the two participating mainstream secondary schools, six teachers, and four SEN/D students' parents who have children in the schools. Four non-SEN/D and four SEN/D students enrolled in these mainstream secondary schools were among my participants. These participants represent a range of inclusive education (IE) stakeholders directly involved in SEN/D students' inclusion in these schools. The chapter will focus on two themes: "Geographical location for including SEN/D students" and "Ensuring equitable access for SEN/D students". These themes explain how my participants expressed their understanding and experience of SEN/D students' inclusion in their settings. I will turn to the first theme in the following section.

6.1 Geographical Location for Including SEN/D Students

The discussion on the geographical location for SEN/D students' inclusion centres on issues about the specific place(s) to educate them. The inclusion setting has generated age-old ethical, social, and educational arguments among some Global North scholars about where to educate SEN/D students (Oberti, 2021; Kauffman and Hornby, 2020; Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Warnock, 2005). While some argue that the experiences of mainstream schools are essential for developing required skills for adult life (Oberti, 2021; Elder and Migliarini, 2020), some also challenge the notion that inclusion in mainstream schools is ideal for all SEN/D students because mainstream settings may not be barrier-free, supportive, and lack specialist resources

to meet some needs (Kauffman and Horby,2020; Warnock, 2005). This thought assumes that being present in mainstream school does not imply inclusion for SEN/D students, who may struggle to participate in school life due to a lack of the ability to conform to mainstream school situations (Fajemilo et al., 2020; Banjo, 2018).

The ongoing debate surrounding the specific location for educating SEN/D students resonates among my study participants. Across the dataset, many participants expressed their perspectives on where SEN/D students should be educated. Some participants believe they should be educated in mainstream schools and classrooms along with their non-SEN/D peers. However, one of my participants preferred that SEN/D students should be educated in special schools. While mainstream schools refer to educational settings catering to non-SEN/D students, special schools, on the other hand, are organised settings that make special educational provisions for SEN/D students (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice, 2023b).

During my data analysis, I have categorised participants' perspectives on geographical location for SEN/D students' inclusion as three subthemes, which will be my focus in this section: "*Being in the same setting*", "*Encouraging inclusive participation",* and "*Fostering social interaction among students".*

6.1.1 *Being in the Same Setting*

This first sub-theme represents my participant's ideas around inclusion as geographical location (Leijen et al., 2021; Magnússon, 2019; Schuelka, 2018). Many participants voiced the sub-theme in different ways. Inclusion for some meant "having regular and disabled students in the same school," "learning together," "all-inclusive", and "including students with disabilities in the class where we have students without disabilities." In different ways, they articulated what including SEN/D students in

mainstream schools/classrooms meant to them, as illustrated by the following quote from Nicole, a specialist teacher who has been at School B (a public secondary school) for two years:

> *What I will consider as inclusion for them (SEN/D students) is that schools should have regular students and those that may be termed as students with disabilities in the school.* (Nicole)

This statement emphasises the need to integrate SEN/D students deliberately within mainstream secondary schools. However, using the term “regular students” presents SEN/D students as ‘irregular’. ‘Regular students’ refers to the typical students who may not have specific conditions. The use of this term undermines the uniqueness of individual students. Students have different strengths, challenges, and ways of processing information. The statement indicates a dichotomy between “regular students” and “students with disabilities”. This dichotomy oversimplifies the idea that inclusion is not about having two separate groups but about creating an environment where all students can learn, grow, and thrive together. Additionally, the term "regular students" applies to the concept of normalisation (Hoskin, 2022). Normalisation highlights the importance of an inclusive educational environment where all students, including SEN/D students, are empowered to participate actively in the classroom and the general school community (Hoskin, 2022; Orit and Michael, 2021; Tyson and Fein, 2013). Primarily, normalisation challenges the assumption that some students are different and seeks to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and promote acceptance for all students. The dichotomy between SEN/D and non-SEN/D students also reflects some beliefs represented by some words and proverbs in Nigeria, which present SEN/D students as ‘others’ (McKenzie and Ohajunwa, 2017; Musengi, 2014;

Ajuwon, 2012) (See section 2.4.3). Othering SEN/D students can foster exclusion for SEN/D students as it can make them 'invisible to others' (Hoskin, 2022).

Another participant, Mrs B, a School A SEN/D student's parent, represented some participants' beliefs about inclusion for SEN/D students in the quote below:

> *What comes to your mind when talking about what inclusion should be is a school or an education in which children who read and learn the way we learn study side by side with students with different ways of learning. For example, a school that I will think is inclusive should be a school that will have children who are reading normally, learning normally and children like my daughter who need some extra support.* (Mrs B)

This quote emphasises that all students can learn together, notwithstanding their unique characteristics. However, it raises questions about normalisation in education. The expressions "reading normally" and "learning normally" undermine the uniqueness of individual students. These expressions create a single standard for every student to fit in. On the contrary, learners can present differences across various dimensions, including physical impairments, cognitive abilities, learning styles, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Both quotes are important because they emphasise the importance of an inclusive educational environment where all students are valued and given equal opportunity to develop and actively participate in the wider community. Therefore, they underline the need for teachers to accommodate and adapt teaching methods to individual learners' needs.

Other participants also talked about SEN/D students' inclusion. For example, Mrs O (a SEN/D student's parent from School A) explained:

> *I would prefer they are in the same environment because I believe these children (SEN/D students) can cope in regular schools. But schools should*

have a plan that carries everybody along and provide facilities that can carry everybody along according to their capacities and needs. (Mrs O)

Mrs O's statement reinforces the belief that SEN/D students should share the same educational space as their non-SEN/D peers and that schools must actively recognise, value, and embrace diversity among learners. However, it places the responsibility of developing and implementing strategies that can enhance participation for SEN/D students in all school activities in mainstream schools. The statement is consistent with the notion that schools are crucial to effective inclusion for SEN/D students (Webster, 2022; Odunsi, 2018). Odunsi (2018) asserts that schools are the foundation for promoting equity, quality in education, increased participation, and a sense of belonging for all students. Equity relates to providing individualised supports for SEN/D students to function in schools. On the other hand, accessibility is about allowing SEN/D students to access school, curriculum, and social interaction within schools. While the preceding statements attempt to foreground inclusion principles such as equity and accessibility for SEN/D students, they can create an artificial barrier between what is considered 'normal' and what is not due to the dichotomy between SEN/D and non-SEN/D students.

The following quotes from Paul (a Christian Religion teacher at School B) encapsulate most participants' understanding of inclusion for SEN/D students. He expressed that "Sending children to special schools is not ideal." Paul asked, "If you have a special needs child, won't you train that child with other siblings at home?" Here, this teacher associates SEN/D students growing up at home with his/her siblings and being in the same school as his/her non-SEN/D local peers. These quotes challenge the assumption that special schools are the ideal placement for SEN/D students. They strongly believe that SEN/D students should be included in the same

school as their non-SEN/D peers. These statements illustrate a key belief in the literature that all learners should be accommodated in mainstream schools (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Odunsi, 2018). According to Elder and Migliarini (2020), the conversation about inclusion should move from "Can we include this student?" to “How can we include this student?” (P. 1860).

However, the belief that SEN/D students should be included in the same school as their non-SEN/D peers did not emerge across all of my participants as one of my participants, Fatima (a computer teacher at School B), strongly expressed the belief that SEN/D students should be separated in a special school. She explained:

> *I do not believe in it* (having SEN/D and non-SEN/D students in the same setting) *because it will not help them in any way. I said earlier that the government should have a special school for them if they really want these students to learn very well.* (Fatima)

Fatima further explained:

> *I believe they will learn more and better if they have their own special school. They will be the only ones there. But when they mix up with these people* (Non-SEN/D students), *I don't think they can learn because their learning ability is low – they don't go at the same rate as the normal students.* (Fatima)

This statement assumes that there are learning differences between SEN/D students and their non-SEN/D peers. It resonates with the view that SEN/D students’ learning potential can be enhanced in special schools than in mainstream schools. Equally, the statement reveals that the notion of normality is powerfully embedded in both school types and in Nigeria generally. Therefore, the statement underscores the need to challenge assumptions of normalcy among students (Florian, 2009). Additionally, the statement contrasts the inclusive education (IE) model, which encourages SEN/D

students to attend neighbourhood schools with their non-SEN/D peers (UNESCO,1994). Therefore, it refers to the inclusion vs. special school debate (Anderson and Boyle, 2022; Leijen et al., 2021; Shaw, 2017; Ainscow and César, 2006; UNESCO, 1994). I discuss this in the discussion chapter of this thesis. Findings in this subsection show that many participants value including SEN/D students in mainstream schools and classrooms and expect schools to make necessary arrangements to include them successfully. I present the second sub-theme in the following subsection.

6.1.2 *Encouraging Inclusive Participation*

This second sub-theme reflects my participants' perspectives concerning SEN/D students' inclusion as a means of enabling participation for SEN/D students within a mainstream school context. Most of my participants strongly articulated the sub-theme as they believed schools need to empower SEN/D students to participate in all school activities regardless of their condition(s). They communicated this differently with expressions such as "*not discriminating*", "*getting everybody involved*", and "*treating every student the same*". The following quotation from Tade, a non-SEN/D student from School A, clearly demonstrates this position:

> *I feel like it is basically getting every student in the school involved, no matter what differences they might have, maybe disabilities or they have special needs. There is really not much of a difference when you understand that they are actually people like you. So, I believe that everybody should be included in activities going on in the school. (Tade)*

This statement presents a sharp contrast to the normalisation comments earlier. It emphasises individual uniqueness and the need to break barriers to effective inclusion for SEN/D students. The statement reflects the understanding that inclusion requires

that SEN/D students actively participate in school activities. Another participant, Titi (School A Headteacher), said:

> *So, inclusion should be about not discriminating against students in terms of their cognitive ability or any challenges they may have. We have been seeing improvement in many of them* (SEN/D students) *over time. So, what I mean is that they should be in the same school as normal students. But schools should help them to be part of activities going on there.* (Titi)

Both quotes capture the essence of creating equal opportunity for all students within mainstream schools, notwithstanding individual unique conditions. Therefore, they emphasise the need for schools to support SEN/D students' needs and empower them to participate in school activities.

Mrs B (a SEN/D student's parent from School A) explained inclusive participation for SEN/D students:

> *So, my idea of including these children* (SEN/D students) *is that schools will take care of them. They will have ramps for those who are using wheelchairs. I mean, think ahead and make their laboratory somewhere they can easily reach. Make the bathroom easy to use for them.* (Mrs B)

Here, Mrs B suggests that 'access' is to effective inclusion for SEN/D students. Accessing school facilities like laboratories is critical to ensuring SEN/D students' participation in learning. The quotes in this sub-section highlight the importance of creating an inclusive school environment where all students' ability to participate in school activities is enhanced regardless of SEN/D condition(s). Next, I look at the last sub-theme under this first theme, inclusion as place.

6.1.3 *Fostering Social Interaction Among Students*

This last sub-theme revealed that the majority of my participants see inclusion as a process of promoting social interaction among students. Social interaction among students includes communication, collaboration, and engagement. This encompasses verbal communication, shared activities, and relationship-building among students. However, they expressed this view in different ways. The following comment from Titi gave insight into their perspectives:

> *Inclusion also means creating opportunities for children with special needs to interact with other children without special needs in the class because communication is one of their key needs.* (Titi)

This statement suggests that SEN/D students can develop communication skills by interacting with non-SEN/D peers. Many participants also believe that inclusion would mean that non-SEN/D students are empowered to engage with their SEN/D peers. Shola, a teacher at School A, echoes their views in the following statement:

> *So, I think, to an extent, inclusion would also mean enabling students without special needs to relate with those with special needs*. (Shola)

Shola's view indicates that inclusion should be an intentional process of ensuring that non-SEN/D students are actively engaged with their SEN/D peers, notwithstanding their condition(s). She underscore the need to encourage interaction between SEN/D and non-SEN/D students. This suggests that beyond accommodating SEN/D students in the mainstream, inclusion extends to promoting active engagement among students regardless of their abilities and differences (Webster, 2022). The statement is important because it stresses the need to foster connections between all students (SEN/D and Non-SEN/D).

Titi and Shola indicate that inclusion can benefit SEN/D students because it brings them in contact with other students. This view was established in the following quote by Mrs D (a school B SEN/D student's parent):

> *So, at least bringing her to this place, I see some little changes in her as she mingles with other children. Because before, she couldn't even talk very well. But now I can see a little improvement in her. At least now, she can talk. She is improving gradually.* (Mrs D)

The above quote shows gradual progress in a SEN/D student's communication after enrolment in a mainstream secondary school. Therefore, it underlines the importance of interaction between those with SEND and those without it. Participants expressed the view that student interaction can significantly impact non-SEN/D students. They emphasised this position in different ways: "*developing a sense of responsibility*", "*seeing through other people's perspectives"*, "*tolerating others"*, "*feeling for others*", and "*treating others better"*. However, a look at the following quotation from (Tade a School A non-SEN/D student) reflects the position of most participants:

> *Being in this school with them has helped me understand that no matter the disabilities of a person, they are still human, and the only difference between me and that person is just what happened to them at birth or like injuries or anything.* (Tade)

This student's reflection revealed a dramatic shift from the earlier perspectives that present SEN/D students as a deviation from the ideal student. It foregrounds the need to identify an individual's inherent dignity and worth. Therefore, it suggests the need to value SEN/D students' humanity regardless of their condition(s). This quote shows

that social interactions among students can promote empathy, perspective shift, and acceptance of all individuals irrespective of condition(s).

A number of the practitioners among my participants gave insight into schools' efforts at ensuring interaction among students. For example, Titi explained:

> *To form inclusion experiences for them, we bring them* (all students) *together when it comes to activities like assembly time, lunch, and recess.* (Titi)

Another practitioner, Shola, also discussed other ways schools encourage student interaction:

> *Part of the inclusive experience of the students (SEN/D students) is also presentation; for example, at Christmas shows, we try to include all students in the presentations.* (Shola)

These statements present the structured daily processes and calendar events within schools. However, it is essential to consider the subtle intricacies of daily interactions within schools. These subtle moments unfold in the hallways and playgrounds. These moments are particularly critical to school experience for SEN/D students who may be prone to social exclusion in schools (Schwab et al., 2021). Participants' reflections concerning how these schools promote student interaction signify the interpretation of inclusion as a tool to provide opportunities for social integration. While this is important, conducting on-site studies to understand the subtle intricacies of daily interactions within schools may be necessary.

The findings about inclusion as a place provide valuable insights into my participants' lived experiences and perspectives on the concept of inclusion for SEN/D students. Although the majority of my participants, including SEN/D and non-SEN/D students, interpret inclusion as educating all categories of students in the same

school/classroom, the belief that special schools can be more beneficial to them also emerged from my data. These findings show that, like in many countries, including Finland, the USA and England, there are different ideas about inclusion settings for SEN/D students in Nigeria. Also emerging from most of my participants is the belief that inclusion necessitates that all students be supported to participate actively in school activities regardless of their condition(s). This perspective on ensuring active participation for all students aligns with Webster (2022). Webster (2022) posits that schools should ensure that SEN/D students' school experience aligns closely with their non-SEN/D peers through strategies that can promote participation for them. Participants' perspectives regarding the need to encourage participation for SEN/D students encapsulate the notion that participation can lead to a more effective and enriching educational experience for SEN/D students.

Furthermore, while reflecting on what inclusion is for SEN/D students, most of my participants connected inclusion with creating social interaction among students. This emphasises the importance of social integration as a critical factor in fostering connectivity, a sense of belonging, and, ultimately, students' well-being and academic growth (Haug, 2017; Odunsi, 2018). Most importantly, the findings underscore that mainstream secondary schools must make necessary arrangements to include SEN/D students successfully. Such arrangements may consist of deliberate activities such as presentations at school programs and sporting activities since they can promote social interaction between SEN/D students and their non-SEN/D peers. However, beyond these, schools need to pay attention to happenings that may jeopardise SEN/D students' experience within schools. The perspectives expressed by most of the inclusion stakeholders I have spoken to emphasise that disability should not be a barrier to including SEN/D students in mainstream schools. Looking through a

decolonial lens, these findings present a deviation from the narratives that disabilities are good reasons for exclusion in Nigeria (McKenzie and Obajana, 2017; Etiyebo and Omiegbe, 2016; Uba and Nwoga, 2016; Obiakor and Eleweke, 2014). Therefore, I look at the second theme in this chapter in the subsequent section.

6.2 Ensuring Equitable Access for SEN/D Students in a Mainstream Secondary School

This section presents participants' perspectives on ensuring fair and unbiased opportunities for SEN/D students to access resources and support in mainstream secondary schools. Including SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools can be marred by cultural biases about normality. These biases can present SEN/D students as 'others'. Additional factors such as insufficient resources and accessibility difficulties can negatively impact SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools. While reflecting on their lived experiences, participants offered different perspectives about issues that can negatively impact SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools. I categorised their views into three sub-themes, which will be my focus in this section: "resources provision as a tool for equitable access for SEN/D students' inclusion", "The ease of accessing mainstream secondary schools for SEN/D students", and "Stakeholders' collaboration as a tool for equitable access for SEN/D students". I want to turn to the first sub-theme in the following subsection.

6.2.1 *Resources Provision as a Tool for Equitable Access for SEN/D Students' Inclusion*

This first sub-theme reflects my participants' perspectives regarding the resources provision in their schools. The sub-theme was articulated in multiple ways, including "*we do not have enough classes for students to learn*", "*The classes are too full*", "*computers in the computer lab are not okay*", and "*difficult getting a school*".

Although participants did not necessarily use the same words, their concerns were illustrated by the following quote from Tope (a non-SEN/D student at School B, a public mainstream secondary school) who says:

> *The challenges in our school are that we do not have enough classes for students to learn, there are no fans, and we don't have sports facilities. Even all the computers in the computer lab are not okay.* (Tope)

This statement shows inadequate physical and technological facilities for effective teaching and learning in a public mainstream secondary school. Specifically, the participant identified insufficient classrooms, a lack of sports equipment and fans, and non-functional computers in the school. The statement implies the absence of ventilation due to a lack of fans, which can affect students' comfort, concentration, and overall well-being. Additionally, it suggests that the opportunity for students to engage in physical activities, which can positively impact their holistic development, has been undermined due to a lack of recreation and sports facilities. Furthermore, the statement signifies that their access to digital literacy and educational resources can be hindered due to non-functional computers.

Although the statement suggests that a lack of resources in a public secondary school is a challenge for all students, including SEN/D students who need additional resources would be almost impossible. Other participants talked about resource challenges to SEN/D students' inclusion in School B in a slightly different way. For example, Taye, a non-SEN/D student at the school, mentioned these words:

> *So, whenever we are supposed to be doing science practicals, our teachers will tell us that we are supposed to be doing practicals, but we don't have equipment. We will be very sad.* (Taye)

The above quote signifies that SEN/D students who may benefit from practical rather than just theoretical learning can be excluded from learning due to insufficient equipment for conducting practical activities. The quote also indicates that teachers are restricted to teaching practical concepts without proper tools. This quote is important because it highlights the need for adequate provision of necessary equipment required for creating engaging and effective learning environments.

A parent participant from School B, Mrs Jay, a SEN/D student's parent, illustrates other participants' perspectives regarding the implications of inadequate resources provision for SEN/D students' inclusion. Reflecting on her experience with her daughter, she said:

> *Sometimes, she would not want to go to school. If I asked her to go, she would say I keep standing during class. There are too many students, and there are no chairs and tables.* (Mrs Jay)

The above statement reflects the tendency for perceived inadequacies in the physical environment, such as a lack of chairs and tables, to impact school attendance negatively. This participant links adequate facilities such as "*chairs and tables*" to SEN/D students' inclusion experience. The statement reinforces the need for adequate provision in mainstream secondary schools to enhance the educational experience for students, especially SEN/D students.

Most participants from School A, a private mainstream secondary school, indicated that the school's resources were adequate. For instance, Mrs O, a parent of a SEN/D student at the school, encapsulates the thoughts of most of School A's participants:

> *They have enough resources, and it serves me. This school thinks through. I tell you, these kids are super engaged. For example, he has access to the*

computer! You know, he was struggling in his former schools because they were expecting him to use pen and paper. (Mrs O)

Unlike School B, this statement suggests that School A provides essential equipment and materials, such as computers, that can directly benefit SEN/D students' learning and school experience. Since adequate resources exist, it also implies that SEN/D students are actively engaged during the learning process. The participant was excited that the school provides her son with a computer because she believes it enhances his learning experience.

Inclusion in both schools was affected by the issue of who is enrolled and who is not welcome. Even the private school struggled to offer places to children with some disabilities. The following quotation from Titi (School A Headteacher) succinctly explains other participants' views regarding SEN/D students' enrolment in both school types:

So, there really is no point admitting a child when we're not able to support the child. For example, we do not have existing facilities to support the visually impaired. (Titi)

This statement implies that schools engage in selective enrolment due to insufficient resources to support them. The statement implies that some students may be excluded from schools as schools may not be able to support them. Other studies on SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria have also found that a lack of resources affects some SEN/D students' enrolment in mainstream schools (Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari, 2019; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016). For example, Adeleke and Oyundoyin (2016) found that many schools do not enrol some SEN/D students because they need more resources to accommodate them.

The revelation regarding the provision of resources in both school types and its implications for SEN/D students' inclusion, particularly in School B, is disturbing because it signifies an outright deviation from the provision in the 2017 NPIE. The policy commits to "rehabilitate and upgrade schools in every state annually to effectively provide inclusive learning environments and promote suitable learning experience" for SEN/D students (Federal Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 15). Specifically, the policy provides for "construction, equipping and rehabilitation of new and existing classrooms" (Federal Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 32). The next subsection looks at the second sub-theme.

6.2.2 *The Ease of Accessing Mainstream Secondary Schools for SEN/D Students*

This second sub-theme refers to the difficulties and obstacles faced by SEN/D students' parents while trying to locate mainstream secondary schools that can accommodate their SEN/D children. All my parent participants and the two participating Headteachers presented varying perspectives about the lack of mainstream secondary schools to accommodate SEN/D students. Although they used different words, the following comment from Mrs B, a SEN/D student's parent from School A, illustrates their perceptions:

> *Going into secondary school was the challenge that such children faced. Number one, there are no schools, no inclusive secondary schools in Lagos, around our house.* (Mrs B)

This statement indicates that SEN/D students' access to secondary school may be restricted due to the scarcity of suitable secondary schools that cater to the diverse needs of SEN/D children in Lagos State. Reflecting on her experience, Mrs B explained the implications of the scarcity of suitable secondary schools that cater to SEN/D children's needs. She said, "*My daughter had to stay in primary school for two*

extra years." This experience confirms that it can be challenging for SEN/D students to transition from primary to secondary school due to the scarcity of mainstream schools that can accommodate them.

Bukola (School B Headteacher) articulated the perception that mainstream secondary schools are scarce in Lagos State:

The school began about three years ago, and there have been inclusive primary schools in Lagos state for over ten years. So, *most of the students I have now stayed home for over two years because the transition was not on the ground.* (Bukola)

The above statement reflects an ineffective transition within the educational journey for SEN/D students in Lagos State. The statement implies that some SEN/D children within this participant's environment may experience exclusion from secondary education. Mrs D's (School B SEN/D student's parent) experience further illustrated another issue concerning locating mainstream secondary schools for SEN/D students. Narrating her experience in getting a school for her SEN/D child after relocating to a new environment, she said:

It was very difficult getting a school for her. We relocated from 'XYZ' (Removed for confidential reasons) *to this area. I did not know that there is an inclusive secondary school in this area.* (Mrs D)

Mrs D's experience reflects parents' difficulties searching for suitable schools for their SEN/D children. It also signifies that in Lagos State, inclusive secondary schools are not visible to the public. This parent's experiences uphold Banjo's (2018) finding that many of the inclusive schools in Lagos State were unknown to the State's residents when he investigated accessibility to inclusive schools in the State.

Mrs Jay also gave insight into the challenges of the lack of mainstream secondary schools that can include SEN/D students. She said:

My joy was cut short when I heard that the school could not accommodate them at the senior secondary school arm of the school. I really pray that they will start with my child's set. So that these children can further their education. (Mrs Jay)

This statement indicates a lack of mainstream senior secondary schools that include SEN/D students. It also reveals the impact of a lack of mainstream secondary schools for SEN/D students on their parents' emotions and the desire for their children to be included in education. The statement also signifies an infringement on SEN/D students' right to equal educational opportunities as they may be restricted to the junior secondary level of education.

The quotes about the lack of mainstream secondary schools to include SEN/D students are instructive because they demonstrate that participants attach significant importance to ensuring equitable access for SEN/D students across all education levels. At the same time, they underline the need to implement a robust transition program to ensure smoother educational journeys for SEN/D students in Nigeria. Next, I look at the final sub-theme in this section.

6.2.3 *Stakeholders' Collaboration as a Tool for Equitable Access for SEN/D Students*

This third sub-theme highlights the importance of stakeholder collaboration to inclusion for SEN/D students. Within the SEN/D students' inclusion context, stakeholder collaboration involves cooperation by relevant stakeholders to ensure effective decision-making, planning, and implementation of SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools. Stakeholders entail a range of people who are involved in the inclusion journey of SEN/D students in mainstream schools. They include parents, school leadership, teachers, the board of governors, and local politicians. Throughout the dataset, participants revealed various views regarding collaboration among stakeholders in their setting. For example, many School A participants indicate

collaboration across several divisions in the school. They stated this in various ways through expressions such as "IEP meetings", "giving feedback", and "parent conference" to convey this thought. The following statement by Mrs O, a SEN/D student's parent from School A, embodies most of School A participants' views regarding the involvement of stakeholders in the school about SEN/D students' inclusion:

> *So, what have I said? We are collaborating, and it's real. They are putting us into everything concerning this child.* (Mrs O)

This quote depicts parental involvement in decisions concerning SEN/D students in School A. It suggests that SEN/D students' parents feel included and valued. Titi also contributed to the view regarding stakeholders' collaboration in School A when she commented:

> *There are IEP meetings where the parents and the IEP teams of the school meet to review the progress and also discuss the way forward in different areas.* (Titi)

This participant signifies a relationship between professionals and SEN/D students' parents to discuss their children's educational development. This is particularly interesting because it can foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for SEN/D students' parent. The phrase "in different areas" indicates a multidisciplinary approach to SEN/D students' inclusion in School A. This shows that the school's focus encompasses holistic development for SEN/D students, including academic and social development.

While all School A SEN/D students' parents suggest that they are fully included in their children's education, both parents from School B indicate the need to foster an

effective interaction between the school and SEN/D students' families. This sentiment was illustrated by Mrs D, a School B SEN/D student's parents:

> *There is a PTA* (Parent-Teacher Association) *meeting every term. At the meeting, their principal always tells us about the things that are happening in the school. But there is not any form of engagement between me and the school about her personally. The school does not involve me in anything*. But sometimes, when I have any problem, I used to go to her teacher. (Mrs D)

In contrast to School A, the quote suggests that parents of SEN/D students at School B are not actively involved in decision-making regarding their children. This quote underlines the importance of active parental involvement in their children's education. This engagement can foster collaborative problem-solving, ultimately promoting a more inclusive experience.

The perception regarding parental involvement in decisions concerning the inclusion of SEN/D students in School A only emerged from some of the school participants. The following comment by Ronke, one of the teacher participants from School A, encapsulates the views of some participants from both schools on parental involvement in their children's educational development:

> *For me, I just believe that some of the parents, our parents, should be more involved in the learning of these children (*SEN/D students*). For some of them, they just feel they've paid for learning support; they've done everything, so the teacher should just take charge of everything.* (Ronke)

This comment suggests the need for more commitment from SEN/D students' parents to their children's educational journey. It highlights the criticality of parents' role in supporting their children's learning. Parental roles regarding children's learning encompass various dimensions beyond the conventional classroom settings. These

dimensions include homework support and regular interactions with school and teachers.

Fatima, a School B teacher, recalled an experience with a SEN/D student's parent:

> *I can remember a physically challenged boy who was not coming to school, so their teacher called on the parents. If the parents will come, maybe tomorrow.* (Fatima)

The expression "*If the parents will come, maybe tomorrow*" reflects the subtle art of Nigerian sarcasm. Here, the teacher's statement meant that the school tried to involve a SEN/D student's parent to address a case of absenteeism, but the parent did not respond. The comment upholds the view that since parental involvement can positively impact the overall educational outcomes of their children, SEN/D students' parents need to be offered more opportunities to actively engage with school.

Many participants emphasised the need to support parents in enhancing their capacity to support their SEN/D children's education across the dataset. Echoing other participants' views, Fatima said:

> *They* (SEN/D students' parents) *need orientation – to tell them the importance of education. When their parents have the knowledge that education is good, they will be able to inculcate that knowledge into their children at home. It will also help them to ensure their children are educated even if they are not.* (Fatima)

This statement embodies the view that SEN/D students' parents need to understand the importance of education to their children's development. Such understanding can inform their children's responses in school. Therefore, the statement stresses that high

parental awareness of the benefits of education for SEN/D students is critical to promoting their inclusion in mainstream secondary schools (Peprah, 2020).

Regarding collaboration among practitioners in schools, all of my participants from both schools believe practitioners should work together to facilitate effective inclusion for SEN/D students. Shola, a teacher at School A, articulated this perception:

> *I've also had the opportunity to work together with mainstream teachers, you know, give them tips and strategies to work with the special needs students in the mainstream, and we've been getting feedback from them regarding how the strategies have been working for them.* (Shola)

This quote underlines the active collaboration between specialists and regular teachers in both schools. It also underscores the need to enhance support and inclusion for SEN/D students within the mainstream classroom through knowledge sharing and teamwork. The expression "getting feedback" depicts that teaching has been adjusted and improved due to shared strategies. My participants' perceptions regarding collaboration among stakeholders demonstrate their recognition of the positive impact of collaborative efforts on SEN/D students' educational outcomes. They agree that effective inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream secondary is a multiagency endeavour (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016; Department for Education, 2015).

The findings regarding ensuring equitable access for SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools show that the Nigerian policy around SEN/D is yet to be implemented effectively. For example, the 2016 NPIE provides for school upgrades to ensure equitable access to mainstream schools for all learners, including SEN/D students, because it recognises the need to remove "all barriers and provide access to quality education to meet the diverse needs of all learners in the same learning

environment" (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 9). This provision implies that the Nigerian government understands the need to ensure SEN/D students' right to education, irrespective of their locations and conditions. Therefore, it emphasises that the Nigerian government empowers all secondary schools to create conducive learning environments for all learners and engender equal educational opportunities for SEN/D students.

6.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter explores the perspectives of the inclusion stakeholders engaged in my study. While nineteen out of twenty participants believe that SEN/D and non-SEN/D students should learn together in the same school, one participant expressed support for enrolling SEN/D students in special schools as she believes that special schools are more beneficial to them than mainstream schools. These findings suggest that participants' inclusion conceptualisation is consistent with the different ideas about inclusion settings for SEN/D students across countries such as England, the USA, Greece, and Estonia. (See Chapter Two, section 2.2.1).

Many participants understood that presence in school does not translate to inclusion. Therefore, they highlight the need for schools to engender participation for SEN/D students and social interaction among all students within mainstream secondary schools. In relation to stakeholders' collaboration, my participants indicate that there is a positive collaboration among practitioners in both schools. However, they suggest that some SEN/D students' parents need to be more involved in their children's education. Consequently, they underline the importance of empowering SEN/D students' parents to participate actively in their children's education. This empowerment may involve educating them about SEN/D, its challenges, and the need to support their children in acquiring education and enhancing their potential to

function actively in the wider society in their adult lives. Parents need to understand the need to cooperate with their children's schools and other professionals to foster positive inclusion experiences for their children.

Furthermore, inclusion experience may vary between the two school types; participants from the public mainstream secondary school reported a deficit of infrastructure, while those from School A expressed satisfaction with the available infrastructure in the school. Nevertheless, participants from both schools imply a need for more mainstream secondary schools that can accommodate SEN/D students in Lagos State to ease the difficulties encountered by SEN/D students' parent when trying to enrol their children in mainstream secondary schools.

The findings in this chapter represent a contextual understanding of inclusion for SEN/D students. Participants emphasised the need to ensure effective inclusion for SEN/D students. Therefore, they disrupt some Global North narratives that often portray people with disabilities in African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya as vulnerable. As such, they can inform a decolonial approach to SEN/D students' inclusion within mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State. Additionally, they depict a shift from the initial belief that inclusion is about putting students together in one place. Instead, contemporary perspectives necessitate creating an educational environment where all students can fully participate in school activities and form meaningful social connections within the school community despite their differences.

This contemporary perspective on inclusion entails removing barriers such as the tendency to create a dichotomy between SEN/D and non-SEND students, infrastructural deficits, insufficient schools, and socioeconomic limitations to accessing high-quality education. In essence, the findings highlight the need for more government commitments to IE as there is a significant deviation from the provision of

the 2017 NPIE. The government should ensure that public schools are well-equipped to give SEN/D students equal access to high-quality education as their peers in private mainstream secondary schools. Equitable access to high-quality education requires a school culture that promotes an environment where all members feel welcome, accepted, and respected for who they are despite their differences. Therefore, in the following chapter, I explore my participants' understanding and experience of inclusion for SEN/D students in their schools.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS 2 - INCLUSION AS CULTURE

7.0 Introduction

This chapter presents participants' understanding of their school's culture and their perspectives regarding the inclusion of students with Special Educational Need/Disability (SEN/D) within their schools. As indicated in Chapter Four (section 4.1.1) of this thesis, culture has multiple interpretations. Nonetheless, in this context, culture refers to the underpinning factors that contribute to creating an atmosphere where all school community members feel welcome, accepted, and respected for who they are despite their differences. These factors include aspects such as school environment and strategies for including SEN/D students in schools. The chapter focuses on two themes, “School environment and SEN/D students’ inclusion” and “Strategies for including SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools”. I will now look at the first theme in the next section.

7.1 School Environment and SEN/D Students’ Inclusion

This first theme refers to my participants’ perceptions of the dynamic interplay between the school environment and their experience of inclusion for SEN/D students. School environment refers to the overall atmosphere and interactions within a school setting that foster well-being, learning, and growth for all stakeholders, including SEN/D and non-SEN/D students, teachers, and parents. Issues around the school environment were a standard discussion by my participants during the interviews. This was not surprising since including SEN/D students in mainstream schools requires that schools create a safe and enabling environment for them to enhance their ability to access quality education and conveniently participate in school life (Strogilos and Ward, 2024; Onodugo et al., 2020; Thompson and Thompson, 2018). I categorised

the various perspectives regarding the school environment that emerged during my data analysis as “Supporting well-being" and "Policies for SEN/D students’ inclusion”.

7.1.1 *Supporting Well-Being*

This first sub-theme refers to my participants' perceptions of the impact of their school environments on their well-being. Several perspectives regarding how the schools impact their well-being emerged during my data analysis. These were expressed differently as “feel comfortable”, “teachers are very encouraging", "creating awareness", and "encouraging students' voice" to express their perceptions of their school environments and their implications for SEN/D students' inclusion.

The following statement by David, a SEN/D student at School A, illustrates the experiences of some of my SEN/D student participants:

> *I feel comfortable in this school. I feel comfortable in school with all my friends and all the people I stay with. I don't get bullied*. (David)

This comment relates to the emotional states, social interactions, and safety of SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools. It indicates that SEN/D students can attach importance to social connections with other school members and being comfortable. Notably, the comment linked the absence of bullying experience to a sense of comfort within the school. The comment emphasises the interplay between emotional well-being, social dynamics, and positive school climate.

Eri, a non-SEN/D student at School A, exemplified the perceptions of many non-SEN/D students in both schools regarding their school environments and well-being. He explained:

My school is a very fantastic school. They encourage all students to do their best. Most teachers are very encouraging, and they treat everyone the same. (Eri)

This statement shows that participants acknowledge the need for schools to treat all students fairly and respectfully regardless of abilities or background. At the same time, it underscores the interconnection between school ethos, teacher-student dynamics and students' well-being. Taye, a non-SEN/D student at School B emphasises the importance of positive teacher-students interactions to school experience for all students, including those with SEN/D. She said:

My school is a very interesting place to come to. During the lessons, we enjoyed ourselves. The teachers joke with us, and they teach us so well. (Taye)

Titi (School A Headteacher) exemplified School As' efforts at fostering an inclusive climate in the school to enhance SEN/D students' well-being:

We get them to understand that people are different in different ways. The people process information differently. People respond to these things differently. And so, we try to build this by helping them understand others in order to help the entire climate of the school. (Titi)

This quote shows a school that understands and recognises that individuals have varying cognitive capacities and respond to emotions differently. This Headteacher from School A implies the need for schools to deliberately promote mutual understanding, reduce stereotypes, and enhance interpersonal connections among students. She goes on to explain how her school implements these values in practice:

We help children understand that we are all different in different ways. So, we have awareness days. We have autism awareness days, we have Rock Your

> *Socks Day, that's Down Syndrome Day, and it's the entire school community. So, if it's autism day, and we're wearing a particular colour to indicate, everybody's aware*. (Titi)

This quote shows a deliberate school-wide initiative focusing on nurturing understanding and empathy and celebrating diversity, characterised by school community engagement and awareness creation about different conditions through various activities. The statement implies that a positive school environment can be enhanced when members of the school community are aware of human differences and can appreciate the same.

Furthermore, Titi shares the importance her school places on student voice, saying:

> *We encourage students' voices – to speak up. Keep speaking. Tell an adult. If you don't get the response, tell another adult. Keep talking until you get an intervention.* (Titi)

This quote implies a proactive approach within the school to empower students to voice their concerns, seek assistance, and persistently communicate until effective interventions are implemented. Student voice is crucial to effective inclusion for SEN/D students (Messiou et al., 2024; Matthews and Dollinger, M, 2023). Encouraging students' voices can foster representation, empowerment, and a sense of belonging (Kidd and Czerniawski, 2013). Moreover, actively engaging students' voices can help identify systemic barriers, allowing working toward dismantling them. The quote's significance lies in its tendency to engender a positive school environment through student actively engaging students' voices.

All of my participants emphasised the issue of school security. They described how their schools are addressing security concerns in multiple ways, such as "there is a checkmate", “thorough security", "intentional", and "attention to detail”. Indeed, participants have different views about how safety and security are addressed in their schools. Yet, Mrs B, a School A SEN/D student's parent's statement as seen below gave a clear understanding of most of the School A participants' thoughts regarding security in the school:

> *The school has that attention to detail. They are intentional and very, very proactive. They don't give room for inappropriateness. The school has absolutely no tolerance for bullying.* (Mrs B)

Mrs B's quote above shows a deliberate and detail-oriented approach to nurturing a positive school experience for all students by mitigating inappropriate behaviour. Therefore, the statement underlines the importance of prioritising physical safety and inclusivity for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. Reflecting on her experience in her son's school, Mrs O (School A SEN/D students' parent) expressed another view by some participants regarding school safety:

> *So, what I'm telling you is that there is a checkmate everywhere. There is thorough security. Everywhere there is a structure. I couldn't have asked for more. You're seeing three floors with thorough security.* (Mrs O).

The quote reiterates the importance of school safety in nurturing a positive school experience for all students. This issue was equally important to families whose children attended the public school despite greater financial constraints than School A. For example, Mrs D, a SEN/D student’s parent at School B, also reflected on her experience regarding school security and safety:

Before, when she was to start that school, I was afraid. I was concerned with her capacity to care for herself and cope with other children. But she has been safe and doing fine. The school takes security and safety seriously. They have people at the school gate to protect them from leaving the school compound. (Mrs D)

This quote encapsulates the parent's emotional journey from initial apprehension concerning her SEN/D child's capacity to cope in a mainstream secondary to subsequent relief. SEN/D students themselves were very aware of safety issues. For example, David, a SEN/D student at School A, said:

Yeah, the school environment is also very secure and it's very friendly. Everybody understands the school policy. So, it's very safe. And it makes me feel comfortable as well. (David)

David's comment above demonstrates a connection between school security and students' well-being and comfort. This student perceives School A as secure, friendly, and comfortable. My participants' emphasis on school security and inclusion stress, the interconnectedness of security and SEN/D students' well-being within mainstream secondary schools (Strogilosis and Ward, 2024; Ekuigbo, 2023; Onodugo et al., 2020).

Unsurprisingly, it appears that more deliberate efforts at promoting understanding of SEN/D and empathy for SEN/D students are happening in schools that are better resourced. Nevertheless, it is important to note that many participants perceive both schools' environments as positive and fostering learning and well-being for all students across the dataset. This finding highlights the inclusivity of African philosophies such as 'Ubuntu' and 'Omoluabi', which are considered to embrace diversity, promote empathy, celebrate individual differences and encourage

accommodation for every community member (Adigun et al., 2021; Phasha, 2016; Metz, 2007). I will look at the final sub-theme in the subsequent sub-section.

7.1.2 Policy for SEN/D Students' Inclusion

This second theme refers to my participants' views regarding the guidelines on how their schools ensure SEN/D students' inclusion within their school systems. During conversations, participants reflected on the policy instructing inclusion practice in their schools. For example, Titi (School A Headteacher) gave insight into the policy guidelines in School A:

> *We* (School A) *have drafted our own handbook that guides us. For example, we have a policy on behaviour. At the beginning of every school year, we build the team. We talk about our rules; we talk about our expectations. We also rely on parents and encourage the students' voices. We also ensure the parents get the document and sign it*. (Titi)

This statement symbolises a collective commitment to a respectful school environment through comprehensive documents that can guide its operations, expectations, and community interactions. The statement underlines the need to involve many stakeholders in developing school policies. Titi further revealed that School A's behaviour policy recognises students who need extra support for positive behaviour. According to her, the policy provides the services of a "*behaviour therapist*" to support students "*who tend again to have a little bit more*". She also reported that the policy encourages seeking to understand the underlying causes of behavioural concerns. She explained that questions like "*Why are we having this behaviour? and what kind of intervention can be provided?*" are asked when behaviour issues arise in the school. This practice aligns with current thinking in the Global North, where behaviour is seen as symptomatic of some underlying issues. For example, in England, the 2015 SEN/D

Code of Practice no longer talks about behaviour but Social, Emotional, and Mental Health difficulties (Department for Education, 2015). This thinking shows a broader approach to behaviour issues among learners. It aligns with the social model of disability, which encourages schools to recognise environmental consequences on students' behaviour (Barnes, 2018; Barton, 2018). Therefore, it may enable schools to reflect on their practice and make necessary adjustments to enhance SEN/D students' behaviour. The practice accentuates a need for a holistic approach to supporting behaviour (William, 2017; Porter, 2020), which aligns with inclusivity offering.

Contrary to practice in relation to a broader approach to addressing behaviour issues in School A, Bukola, School B Headteacher, said:

> *We* (School B) *don't have internal guidelines for managing behaviour. But we are trying to make the children behave themselves*. (Bukola)

Here, Bukola shows that School B does not rely on rigid internal guidelines regarding behaviour concerns. She indicates flexibility, implying that teachers adapt their approaches based on individual student's needs and situational context. However, School B teacher participants' perceptions regarding students' behaviour can be unsettling. For example, echoing all of the teacher participants from School B, Fatima reckoned that SEN/D students exhibit concerning behaviour because of disrespect for authority. She retorted:

> *Most of them sometimes feel too big and arrogant to listen to the teachers. So, that is the number one challenge there. They don't want correction*. (Fatima)

Unlike School A, which sees behaviour as symptomatic of underlying need, Fatima's statement implies students themselves cause unacceptable behaviour. This position is reflected in Paul's (a School B teacher) understanding of the response to students' behaviour. He reported:

I told my students that I am Mr. No nonsense. I don't take nonsense. I will beat you, and if your parents come to complain, I will tell them to take you away. (Paul)

This quote suggests that the perspectives held by some of the teachers in School B about behaviour are influenced by the medical model of disability, which blames SEN/D students for behaviour concerns (Zaks, 2023). Furthermore, as they see behaviour as a choice made by the student, they use behaviourist methods such as corporal punishment to make students conform to the image of an ideal student. Implicitly, these comments exonerate schools from being part of the solution for students' behaviour, as they hold students solely accountable for their unacceptable behaviour. School B's disposition to behaviour management undermines the notion that behaviours are ways of communication and can be influenced by environmental factors (William, 2017; Porter, 2020).

My participants' perspectives regarding the school environment are instructive in that they emphasise the need for mainstream schools, including secondary schools, to create a thriving educational environment that benefits both SEN/D and non-SEN/D students. Most participants emphasise the need to ensure safety and social integration, which can enhance SEN/D students' well-being and academic progress. They also underscore the importance of effective school governance in supporting SEN/D students' inclusion. Schools play a crucial role in supporting all students, regardless of difficulties/conditions.

However, some perspectives underscore the need for some schools/teachers to understand that behaviour is functional, and it may indicate that a student has unmet needs, such as academic, social, emotional, or sensory needs (William, 2017; Porter, 2020). These perspectives highlight the importance of reflection to understanding the

causes and purposes of behaviour and offer positive and preventive measures that enable SEN/D students to self-regulate and participate in school life (Pang, 2022; Porter, 2020). While the better-resourced School A prioritised understanding and empathy for SEN/D students, both school types foster positive environments for learning and well-being. It appears that African philosophies like 'Ubuntu' and 'Omoluabi' contribute to inclusivity in less-resourced schools. I will present the second theme in the following section.

7.2 Strategies for Including SEN/D Students in Mainstream Secondary Schools

This second theme concerns participants' views about the strategies guiding SEN/D students' inclusion in their schools. During conversations, they expressed varying perspectives regarding these strategies. Strategies for SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools refer to the plans adopted to enhance their capacity to participate and maximally benefit from school life (Magnússon, 2019; Schuelka, 2018). During coding, I categorised their perspectives into three sub-themes: "SEN/D students' placement within mainstream secondary schools", "Pedagogical strategies for including SEN/D students in the mainstream classroom", and "Balancing academics and practical skills: Diversifying educational experiences for SEN/D Students in mainstream schools". I will now look at the first sub-theme in the following subsection.

7.2.1 *SEN/D Students' Placement within Mainstream Secondary Schools*

This first sub-theme relates to the location for including SEN/D students within mainstream secondary schools. In the context of SEN/D students' inclusion, placement involves thoughtful decision-making concerning where SEN/D students can receive instruction and support. A significant part of my conversation with participants revealed that schools adopt 'partial inclusion'. Partial inclusion occurs when SEN/D students are enrolled in a mainstream school but learn in separate locations within the

school (Tiernan, 2022). This was expressed differently by participants as “separate space”, “inclusive unit”, and “learning support department” to describe practice in their schools. Although participants did not necessarily use the same words, the following quote from Mrs D, a SEN/D student's parent from School B, illustrates the placement strategies for including SEN/D students in both schools:

> *The practice is that some children with special needs are kept in a separate space within the school. The Inclusive Unit* (Mrs D)

This quote centres around inclusion practice in schools. It revealed that some SEN/D students are educated in a distinct physical area within the school premises, "The Inclusive Unit." This implies that some SEN/D students are fully engaged in mainstream classrooms with non-SEN/D students, while others are separated in the Inclusive Unit because they cannot learn in the mainstream classroom. This, therefore, challenges the ideas of many scholars who view teaching and learning of those with SEND in the classroom alongside their non-disabled peers as a key tenet of IE (Arcidiacono and Baucal, 2020; Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Magnússon et al., 2019; Odunsi, 2018; Ainscow et al., 2006). Shola, a teacher from School A, reports:

> *There is a department for those who have core needs, those who are not able to function, you know, at the same level as their mainstream counterparts. We call it the Learning Support department*. (Shola)

The above statement by Shola shows that both schools have a specialised "Learning Support" department where some SEN/D students access additional support. Shola's use of the word “core need” suggests that schools categorise students according to their cognitive ability and offers support outside of the classroom for those with additional needs. This approach to IE is often found in some Global North countries,

such as England and the USA, especially where constraints to budgets can affect the number of support staff available to help students individually in lessons (Hodkinson, 2020; 2010).

Some non-SEND students echoed these ideas about internal separation and partial inclusion. For example, David, a SEN/D student at School A, comments:

> *I think they* (SEN/D students) *should be in the same school but in different areas so that they can learn the same thing but then at their own pace. I'm saying in the same school, but then they should be put, like, in a completely different building. They can be taught what their peers are being taught but at their own pace so that they understand it better*. (David)

David's statement indicates that separation can provide a tailored learning environment for SEN/D students, which can enhance their capacity to succeed academically. The statement underscores the need to balance inclusion with specialised support. Tade, a non-SEN/D student, illustrates the position of my non-SEN/D student participants from both schools. He mentioned:

> *There is a section that is made specifically for them (SEN/D students) to aid them. Obviously, there will be some challenges when trying to learn with other people who may not have special needs, which is why they are not sectioned off but then they are given more training to help them and give them an advantage to learn*. (Tade)

The comment indicates that partial inclusion benefits SEN/D students as it allows them to have a more inclusive educational experience. These responses show that the goal of placement for SEN/D students in both school types is to ensure their access to appropriate support, rather than their location within mainstream classes, to develop their capacity to participate fully in the school community. This strategy is consistent

with Norwich (2010) and Warnock (2005), who emphasise that SEN/D students in England should be educated in settings that best meet their learning needs instead of being forced under the same roof as their non-SEN/D peers. Next, I examine the second inclusion strategy for SEN/D students identified by my participants.

7.2.2 Pedagogical Strategies for Including SEN/D Students in Mainstream Classrooms

This second inclusion strategy concerns methods and classroom practices employed by teachers to facilitate learning for SEN/D students within mainstream classrooms. As indicated in my literature review (See section 3.5.3), pedagogy relates to the totality of factors that inform teachers' actions within the classrooms (Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021; Stentiford and Koutsairis,2020; Magnússon, 2019). For example, factors such as students' learning differences, interests, and specific needs shape teachers' approaches to ensuring effective content delivery and fostering positive learning experience for SEN/D students. Conversation with my participants suggests that teachers in both schools adopt different strategies to enhance SEN/D students' learning experience. This was expressed variously as "one-on-one teaching", "pairing", "pullout", "reinforce", and "peer tutoring". A School A teacher, Ronke's statement portrays this:

> *So, individuals' needs determine how we deal with them. Based on each student's needs, sometimes, we do one-on-one…. Then, at times, we do peer tutoring*. (Ronke)

This statement describes two approaches (one-on-one teaching and peer tutoring) teachers adopt to support SEN/D students in mainstream schools. Both of these are individualised supports to help SEN/D students access the curriculum and participate in teaching-learning (Schuelka, 2018). The statement suggests that teachers take

cognisance of different needs in the classroom and deploy strategies to accommodate these needs. This practice is consistent with the 2016 NPIE, which identified the need for multiple approaches in addressing SEN/D in classrooms (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016). The policy encourages teachers to recognise individuals' interests and learning styles and adopt flexible and differentiated teaching methods and strategies to address them in the classroom.

Some teachers described what transpired during lesson planning before teaching in the classroom. For example, Paul (Christian religious study teacher at School B) explained:

> *Anytime I sit down to draw my lesson plan, all those differences are taken into consideration, and I diligently follow it up so that what happens in the classroom will not amount to a mere waste of time at the end of the day*. (Paul)

This statement describes teachers' approach to lesson planning. It indicates that teachers are conscious of and consider differences such as learning styles, abilities, and interests among students. The statement emphasises that effective inclusion within classrooms depends on teacher time for planning (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021; Merritt, 2017). Many participants indicated that SEN/D students are accommodated in their settings during examinations. They express this differently as "differentiation", "extra time", and "prompt". Although they voiced this theme in different ways, it was evident that it was important to them, as illustrated by Titi (School A Headteacher):

> *So, just the same way we differentiate in teaching. We also do differentiation when it comes to assessment, depending on the needs of the child. The questions are set to meet the child's target*. (Titi)

Titi went on to explain some specific strategies adopted by school A to enhance SEN/D students' participation and performance during examinations:

> *Sometimes, they [SEN/D students] get extra time. Sometimes, they get a prompt. Sometimes, they get a modified language carrier paper. It depends on the needs of the child*. (Titi)

This statement aided the understanding of the extent of support accessed by SEN/D students in school A. Expressions such as "differentiation," "extra timing," and "getting a prompt" reveal the strategies deployed by the school to support SEN/D students during examinations.

Similar to practice in School A, special examination arrangements were identified as an important aspect of IE, especially for those students who do not communicate normatively in School B. Fatima (computer teacher at School B) explained:

> *Since I know that they cannot talk or hear, I always put them on practical work. So, at least, they must be able to do something when it comes to practical work*. (Fatima)

This teacher responds to these SEN/D students' needs by giving them "practical work" to test learning. This statement emphasises practical work as an alternative way for SEN/D students to demonstrate understanding even if verbal communication is challenging.

The approaches adopted by both schools to include SEN/D students demonstrate the understanding of pedagogy as a fundamental factor in addressing differences among students to create an overarching learning environment in which SEN/D students feel welcomed and equally included (Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers,

2021; Magnússon, 2019). Consequently, they are consistent with IE tenets, which promote equity and fairness, encouraging that all students are supported to maximise their potential and achieve their goals (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Odunsi, 2028).

Finally, I examine the last sub-theme identified by my participants regarding the inclusion strategies adopted in their schools for SEN/D students' inclusion.

7.2.3 *Balancing Academics and Practical Skills: Diversifying Educational Experiences for SEN/D Students in Mainstream Schools*

This final sub-theme encompasses my participant's perspectives on schools/teachers' efforts at diversifying educational experiences for SEN/D students through different curricula to offer alternative pathways for SEN/D students' growth and development. The view of David, a SEN/D student at School A, resonates with those of some participants' view regarding the sub-theme:

> *I am engaged in other things like sports. I do orchestra, I play tennis. I do a lot of things.* (David)

This quote underlines the need to create opportunities for students to explore multiple interests and activities. In this context, this is exemplified by the student's engagement in sports, music, and tennis. This highlights how different experiences can contribute to holistic development for SEN/D students. However, these activities appear limited to a private school with plentiful resources. Musical instruments and sports coaching do not appear to be available to any students in the public school. Nevertheless, School B does appear to offer some extracurricular activities, as Felicia, a SEND student, explains:

> *We sew and do practical cooking at our school. We do other vocational things like soap making and fruit juice*. (Felicia)

Felicia's comment shows the difference between both school types; one offers self-development and sports, and the other offers practical life skills.

Another participant, Mrs O, a School A SEN/D student's parent, also expressed other participants' opinions regarding School A's attempts to diversify the educational experience beyond teaching-learning for SEN/D students' growth and development. She explained:

> *The school also gives him what he wants – the weight on academics and extracurriculars falls on the same scale. Academic is not competitive. They told me he could become a good footballer*. (Mrs O)

This statement underscores the school's intentional approach to balancing academic pursuits and extracurricular activities. It also suggests that the school values and nurtures an individual's interests and talents. Therefore, it may be concluded that the school is looking beyond purely academic achievements.

Fatima, a science teacher who has been in School B for over ten years, also explained:

> *There are different kinds of jobs they can do; if they cannot gain something in the classroom, at least they can lay their hand on practical work like tailoring and shoe making*. (Fatima)

This quote emphasises the importance of providing diverse educational experiences for SEN/D students, particularly through practical skills training. It acknowledges the need to cater to different strengths and abilities among SEN/D students who may not thrive in conventional classroom environments.

Participants' responses concerning the efforts to diversify educational experiences beyond teaching-learning for SEN/D students' growth and development emphasise the need for a deliberate approach to empowering individuals with a more

holistic education that includes practical skills essential for adulthood. Focusing on practical skills can better prepare SEN/D students for real-world challenges and enhance their independence and ability to navigate adult life. However, avoiding low expectations from SEN/D students is important, as it can limit their opportunities and hinder their development.

The findings in this section regarding strategies for including SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools encapsulate participants' perceptions of the strategies adopted by both school types to enhance inclusion for SEN/D students. Participants highlight the need to encourage and support SEN/D students to maximise their potential and achieve their goals through personalised teaching and assessment (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Schuelka, 2018; Odunsi, 2018). The placement strategy (partial inclusion) reflects the ongoing debate about IE and targeted interventions (Oberti, 2021; Leijen et al., 2021; Kauffman and Hornby, 2020; Norwich, 2010; Warnock, 2005). This debate focuses on balancing inclusivity with individualised support. Participants also underline the importance of inclusive teaching. This aligns with Nigeria's 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education (NPIE). This policy advocates for equity and fairness through diverse teaching and assessment methods.

Participants' perspectives regarding diversifying educational experiences for SEN/D students in mainstream schools stress the importance of empowering SEN/D students through diverse educational experiences by intentionally nurturing individual interests and talents to prepare them for a successful adult life (Fajemilo et al., 2020; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015). Furthermore, they underline the role of resources in the implementation of IE. There are significant differences in practices between both schools. Notably, resource availability significantly affects the inclusion of SEN/D students in the public secondary school.

Nonetheless, notwithstanding the resources gap, participants reflect a positive attitude towards SEN/D and SEN/D students. This is consistent with the principles of African traditional philosophies like 'Ubuntu' and 'Omoluabi', which foster acceptance and support (Adigun et al., 2021; Howell et al., 2019; Phasha et al., 2017; Mahlo, 2017).

7.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter explores the inclusion culture in my participants' school, a private and a public mainstream secondary school in Lagos State. The findings suggest that both school types have some elements of positive school culture. Both schools' approach to SEN/D student's placement and pedagogical strategies were geared towards enriching SEN/D students' school experience and supporting their needs. For example, some SEN/D students access support in a separate unit within the schools to give them individualised support to enhance their capacity to develop their potential maximally. Additionally, it seems that practitioners in both schools adopted inclusive approaches. Some participants' responses suggest that teachers consider SEN/D students' needs during lesson planning, teaching, and assessment. Moreover, school practice recognises the need to develop SEN/D students' innate abilities and interests to prepare them for life after school. A further attestation to positive school culture in both schools is that all the participants reported that they are comfortable with the school practice regarding safety and security within the schools. However, the use of corporal punishment in School B suggests that, in some ways, student safety is compromised.

Overall, the findings in this chapter show that participants attach importance to meaningful inclusion for SEN/D students within mainstream secondary schools. They stress the importance of SEN/D students' well-being within mainstream secondary schools and their inclusion experiences. They identified social connectivity, safety and

security, and developing SEN/D students' innate abilities and interests as essential to including SEN/D students in mainstream schools. Despite the disparity in available resources in school B across the dataset, many participants suggest that both schools have a positive school culture, which is reflected in their practice. Nevertheless, it is important to empower schools to support behaviour regardless of socioeconomic status effectively. Furthermore, they underscore the multifaceted approach needed to enhance inclusion for SEN/D students. Hence, the findings regarding inclusion as a culture are relevant to educational policy reform. I will discuss my findings in the following chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

8.0 Introduction

In this qualitative study, I explore the inclusion of students with Special Educational Need/Disability (SEN/D) in two mainstream secondary schools (one private and one public) in Lagos State (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Odunsi, 2018; Federal Ministry of Education, 2016; Ainscow et al., 2006; UNESCO, 1994) through a decoloniality theory lens (Moosavi, 2023; 2020; Mignlolo and Walsh, 2018). To my knowledge, this is the first study that explored SEN/D students' inclusion in public and private mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State through decoloniality theory. I used elements of a constructivist grounded theory approach by Charmaz (2014; 2006) to analyse the data from interviews with some inclusion stakeholders to make sense of their perspectives on what inclusion is for SEN/D students, how schools work, and how schools are trying to embed inclusion in my context. Qualitative studies are limited to education studies in Nigeria. Therefore, this study contributes to the research on the lived experiences of some inclusion stakeholders, demonstrating their construction of inclusion, their interpretation of their inclusion experiences and the challenges to SEN/D students' inclusion.

In this study, I identified nine findings representing participants' conceptualisations and experiences of inclusion for SEN/D students. Participants conceptualised SEN/D students' inclusion as the geographical locations for including SEN/D students and the culture that can foster effective inclusion for them. They presented three interpretations of SEN/D students' inclusion, consistent with existing literature. These interpretations are educating SEN/D students in mainstream schools/classrooms, creating separate units within mainstream schools for some (partial inclusion), and enrolling SEN/D students in special schools. As is the case in

some countries, for example, the USA, England, Ghana, and South Africa, both from the Global North and South, reality does not align with inclusion policy provisions due to certain challenges. The richness of the data obtained from twenty inclusion stakeholders (two head teachers, six teachers, four SEN/D students' parents, four non-SEN/D and four SEN/D students) representing the participating schools evidenced an understanding, appreciation and acceptance of inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream secondary school. Therefore, this study disrupts the narrative that disability is often a good reason for exclusion and discrimination in Nigeria (Odunsi, 2018; McKenzie and Obajana, 2017; Haruna, 2017; Etiyebo and Omiegbe, 2016; Uba and Nwoga, 2016; Obiakor and Eleweke, 2014).

The study also highlights the influence of African philosophies such as 'Ubuntu' and 'Omoluabi' on SEN/D students' inclusion in less-resourced schools. In addition, the findings underscore the importance of some elements of Nigerian pre-colonial education in the holistic development of SEN/D students. I structured the chapter as follows: First, I will position this discussion in relation to the study's theoretical framework (decoloniality theory). Next, I will discuss my nine findings. Following this, I will present the chapter's conclusion.

8.1 Exploring SEN/D Students' Inclusion in a Global South Country Through Decoloniality Theory Lens

As discussed in chapter four of this thesis, Decoloniality theory aims to enable other forms of knowledge production by challenging Global North epistemic hegemony within academic fields like Inclusive Education (IE) (Lemos, 2023; Moosavi, 2020; Gu, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Mignolo, 2011). Arguably, some of Global North's ideologies, such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which is often seen as an IE standard narrative, have continued to shape knowledge production and

implementation of IE globally (Knight et al., 2022; Adigun, 2021; Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018).

However, since the statement drew heavily from some Global North countries' perspectives and experiences (including SEN/D students within the formal education system), it may not accurately reflect the reality of many Global South countries, including Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana (Adigun, 2021; Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018). For example, the Salamanca framework for inclusion expects these countries to implement its inclusion framework without consideration for their economic capacity (Odunsi, 2018). Additionally, its conceptualisation of inclusion is significantly different from Nigeria's pre-colonial education system (Ojo et al., 2023; Achi, 2021; Fagunwa, 2017). Unlike the Salamanca Statement Framework, which presents inclusion as having all children together in schools within their neighbourhood regardless of their difficulties or differences, Nigeria's pre-colonial education system, which existed before its colonisation by Britain in 1903, was primarily informal (Ojo et al., 2023; Achi, 2021; Fagunwa, 2017). Nigeria's pre-colonial education system was, however, considered inclusive because it aimed to develop an individual, including cognitive skills, character, social responsibility, and practical abilities. Scholars also regarded the teaching methodology as inclusive because it involves families and other community members in teaching individuals survival skills (Ojo et al., 2023; Achi, 2021; Fagunwa, 2017).

The variation between the Salamanca Statement Framework for inclusion and the Nigerian economic reality underscores the need to address the epistemic hegemony regarding IE by some Global North academic writings (Garcia, 2020; Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018) and seek an understanding of inclusion from the perspectives of the local population (Moosavi, 2020). At the same time, it highlights

the need to interrogate the impact of some Global North academic ideas on including SEN/D students in mainstream schools in countries like Nigeria.

Understanding SEN/D students' inclusion based on the local population can positively impact their inclusion experience in Nigeria. Therefore, I found the decoloniality theory, which concerns the epistemic hegemony by some Global North scholars on inclusion across contexts (Lemos, 2023; Moosavi, 2020; Gu, 2020; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Mignolo, 2011) useful in exploring SEN/D students' inclusion within my context. I will now present a detailed analysis of my findings in the next section.

8.2 Detailed Analysis of Findings

In this section, I will delve into the core results of my study, examining the findings in depth to uncover significant patterns and implications for inclusion for SEN/D students in Lagos State/Nigeria. By this analysis, I aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's outcomes and their relevance to the broader field. I will present the first finding in the next sub-section.

8.2.1 *Geographical Location for Including SEN/D Students: Mainstream Versus Special School*

The first finding from this study focused on the geographical location to educate SEN/D students. My data revealed three conceptualisations of the geographical location to educate SEN/D students: educating them in mainstream schools along with their non-SEN/D peers, educating them in special schools, and creating separate units within mainstream schools for some (partial inclusion) (Tiernan, 2022). In both schools, some SEN/D students are educated in a distinct physical area within their premises. School A refers to this location as the "Learning Support Centre", in School B, it is known as the "Inclusive Unit". This practice indicates that while some SEN/D students are fully engaged in mainstream classrooms with their non-SEN/D peers, others are

separated in a different area within the schools because they assume they cannot learn in mainstream classrooms. The practice is an indication that SEN/D students' conditions can influence their access to mainstream classrooms.

Among my twenty participants, only one preferred educating SEN/D students in special schools. The special school is an educational setting specifically designed to cater to SEN/D students. However, many of the participants used some terms like “regular students” that suggest a dichotomy between “regular students” and “students with disabilities”. Using these terms implies that participants believe there are two separate groups in schools. It also indicates that the notion of normality is powerfully embedded in both school types and in Nigeria generally. This assumption calls attention to the need to challenge notion of normalcy among students within my study context. Equally, it underlines the need to foster an inclusive educational environment where all students can actively participate and maximally achieve their potential regardless of their conditions (Florian, 2009).

Although just one participant believe that SEN/D students should be educated in special schools, the view holds significance because it aligns with existing literature on inclusion for SEN/D students. It is widely acknowledged that there exist diverse perspectives regarding where to educate SEN/D students (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Magnusson, 2019; Felder, 2019; Magnússon et al., 2019; Odunsi, 2018). As has been stated in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and by many Global North scholars (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Arcidiacono and Baucal, 2020; Felder, 2019; Odunsi, 2018), SEN/D students should learn in the same schools and classrooms as their non-SEN/D peers. Conversely, some scholars believe that IE is a misplaced ideology and that some SEN/D students should receive education in settings that best meet their learning needs instead of being compelled to share the

same learning environment as their non-SEN/D peers (see Kauffman and Hornby, 2020; Cooper and Jacobs, 2011; Norwich, 2010; Warnock, 2005 in section 2.2.2). These scholars believe that separating SEN/D students from their non-SEN/D peers would allow them to access appropriate support to enhance their capacity to participate fully in school communities. Their views are based on the assumption that presence in mainstream schools does not equate to being included in school life (Webster, 2022; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Odunsi, 2018). These viewpoints underscore the complexities involved in including SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools. Nevertheless, it is important to note that at the heart of all the perspectives about inclusion for SEN/D students is ensuring that they fully achieve their potential and function in their communities.

The complexities involved in SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools determine their school experiences. These complexities include teacher competency to support SEN/D students within mainstream classrooms (Ajuwon et al., 2020; Odunsi, 2018). Teachers' competency in relation to SEN/D students' inclusion entails the capacity to understand diverse needs and being able to adapt teaching and support to SEN/D students' unique needs. Many parents have suggested that ineffective inclusion for SEN/D students within mainstream secondary schools exists (Satherly and Norwich, 2022; Brydges and Mkandawire, 2018; Runswick-Cole, 2008). They expressed concerns about mainstream schoolteachers' competence to teach their children effectively. Ineffective SEN/D student inclusion can foster SEN/D students' exclusion within mainstream schools and increase behavioural problems, dropout rates and developmental delays (Kupper et al., 2020).

Another complexity regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools is social dynamics within a school (Schwab et al., 2022; Allen et

al., 2018). Social dynamics within a school community can significantly impact SEN/D students' school experience because inclusion extends beyond academics. Instead, it hinges strongly on relationships among students. An additional complexity of inclusion is accessibility of school environments for SEN/D students (Pinnock, 2020; Onodugo et al., 2020). Access to school environment and facilities is crucial to the inclusion of SEN/D students who may require provisions such as ramps and appropriate spaces to navigate school effectively. Furthermore, there may be a need for an attitudinal shift among school community members to mitigate the exclusion of SEN/D students in schools (Booth, 2023; Odunsi, 2018). A positive attitude towards SEN/D students can challenge stereotypical beliefs regarding SEN/D and students with SEN/D and promote empathy.

Complexities regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools highlight the need for commitment to ensuring successful inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream schools. This commitment requires that schools adapt their practices to accommodate SEN/D students and train teachers to cultivate inclusive competence. For example, while investigating teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in Nigeria, Ajuwon (2012) observed that exposure to training positively impacted teachers' attitudes to including SEN/D students in the classroom. In another instance, Arcidiacono and Baucal (2020) and Magnússon et al. (2019) emphasised the need for schools to adapt to the unique needs of SEN/D students. This adaptation, which includes flexible teaching methods and accessible learning materials, is crucial because it can mitigate SEN/D students' exclusion from mainstream schools.

The sentiments against including SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools undermine the idea that inclusion can benefit all students. These benefits include the opportunity for social interaction, which can enhance social skills and

promote a positive view of SEN/D and SEN/D students. Additionally, including SEN/D students in mainstream schools can enhance their development beyond their inherent capacities, thereby improving their capacity to function within the wider society (Leijen et al., 2021; Felder, 2019; Magnússon et al., 2019; Ainscow and César, 2006). In effect, inclusion may address segregation and exclusion practices. Therefore, it may be concluded that the practice of partial inclusion in both schools stems from the recognition of the potential benefits of inclusion to all students. Rather than outright exclusion, schools view partial inclusion as an alternative for SEN/D students. In a way, it appears that the practice in both school types is a response to Kauffman and Hornby (2020), Norwich (2010), and Warnock (2005), who emphasise that SEN/D students should be educated in settings that best meet their learning needs. This viewpoint indicates that partial inclusion can lead to a more inclusive educational experience for SEN/D students while accessing appropriate and individualised support.

Partial inclusion can foster access to individualised support within an inclusive school. Nevertheless, it is important to create an inclusive learning environment for all learners within mainstream classrooms. This position demands that schools and teachers make the necessary adjustments to support SEN/D students' needs to address their learning and developmental needs. Therefore, it implies that there are no acceptable reasons for SEN/D students' exclusion from and within mainstream schools/classrooms. Contrary to this position, my study suggests that SEN/D students' inclusion in Lagos State resonates with practices of partial inclusion in other countries. For example, in Estonia (Leijen et al., 2021), Finland (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024), England (Hodkinson, 2020), and Ghana (Ghana Ministry of Education, 2015), many SEN/D students access learning/support in a separate unit within mainstream

schools. This shows that universal inclusion conceptualisation/approach may not exist. At the same time, it raises question regarding the practicability of IE as prescribed by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). The Statement signifies that all students should be educated in the same classrooms within mainstream schools in their neighbourhood.

Most of my study participants, irrespective of their school type, preferred to include SEN/D students in mainstream schools alongside their non-SEN/D peers. Their preference aligns with the existing literature, which emphasises that enrolment in mainstream schools is a fundamental right, which gives SEN/D students access to high-quality education (Department for Education, 2022; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Federal Ministry of Education, 2016; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015; UNESCO, 1994). However, in most countries, this right does not automatically translate to effective inclusion for these students in and within mainstream schools (Booth, 2023; Opoku-NKoom and Achah-Jnr, 2023; Webster, 2022; Gachago and Peart, 2022; Mpu and Adu, 2021; Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari, 2019). These scholars highlight the exclusion of SEN/D students from and within mainstream schools. For instance, Webster (2022) highlights the exclusion of SEN/D students within schools in England due to classroom composition. On their part, Opoku-NKoom and Achah-Jnr (2023), Gachago and Peart (2022), and Mpu and Adu (2021) imply that SEN/D students can be excluded from teaching-learning due to a lack of teachers' competency in Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa respectively.

Different countries, including Nigeria and England, have formulated policies on inclusion for SEN/D students. In Nigeria, the 2016 NPIE encourages the establishment of mainstream schools to cater to all learners by providing a gradual end to special schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016). Therefore, it can be concluded that the

2016 NPIE envisions inclusion as having all learners in the same school, regardless of their differences (See section 3.4). The need to ensure SEN/D students' inclusion in England has led to different policies. Notably, the 2015 SEN/D Code of Practice outlines essential guidelines for including SEN/D students in mainstream schools (Department for Education, 2015). Furthermore, in the ongoing effort to uphold SEN/D students' inclusion rights within mainstream schools, the 2022 SEND and alternative provision green paper aims to create a more equitable, efficient, and supportive system for SEN/D students across England (Department for Education, 2022). The green paper outlines a comprehensive vision for enhancing the support provided to SEN/D students.

Educating SEN/D and non-SEN/D students in the same schools promotes diversity within the school community because it allows a blend of unique perspectives within schools/classrooms. Often, due to their diverse abilities, SEN/D students present varied worldviews. Exposure to this diversity can benefit all school community members. It can foster empathy, mitigate stereotypical tendencies, encourage school reflexivity, and ultimately break down barriers (Leijen et al., 2021; Molina-Roldan et al., 2021; Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Arcidiacono and Baucal, 2020; Odunsi, 2018; UNESCO, 1994). Nevertheless, as shown in section 2.2.1, similar to other countries, including England (Ofsted, 2021), several special schools exist in Nigeria (Fajemilo et al., 2020; Odunsi, 2018).

My participants' conceptualisations of SEN/D students' inclusion agree with the ongoing inclusion versus special school debate. While nineteen participants aligned with the assumption that promoting and supporting diversity within mainstream schools can benefit all, one believes that segregation in special schools is ideal. The inclusion versus special school debate is about the best setting to educate SEN/D

students (Leijen et al., 2021). For example, one of my participants highlighted a practice where some SEN/D students with "core needs" are placed in separate units within their schools to receive personalised support. While this approach aims to address specific needs, it can unintentionally result in discrimination and stigmatisation of SEN/D students. Consequently, the need for an effective approach to SEN/D students' inclusion presents a complex dilemma (See 2.2.2). The dilemmas surrounding IE highlight the need to establish a clear understanding of what IE entails within a specific context. Scholars such as Leijen et al. (2021) and Göransson and Nilholm (2014) emphasise the necessity for a well-defined understanding of IE. According to Leijen et al. (2021), IE implementation faces several challenges due to a lack of clear understanding of the phenomenon.

The emergence of two-pronged approaches to including SEN/D students in my study suggests that within my study context, SEN/D students' inclusion is understood as educating them in the setting that best meets their individual needs. However, considering that mainstream schools serve as a microcosm of wider society, including SEN/D students there, can prepare them for real-life experiences (Leijen et al., 2021). Segregating SEN/D students into special schools may hinder their capacity to compete within the wider society post-school and in adulthood. Additionally, restricting SEN/D students to special schools may hinder the development of empathy and tolerance, which are vital to a healthy society (Arcidiacono and Baucal, 2020; Magnússon et al., 2019; Farrell, 2010). This study thereby highlights the need for mainstream schools to adapt practices to SEN/D students' needs to ensure that they are effectively supported within mainstream schools (Arcidiacono and Baucal, 2020). Importantly, my study underlines the need for politicians' commitment to ensuring that schools can successfully accommodate and support diversity. Factors such as clear inclusion

policy and guidelines, adequate funding, and sufficient and competent personnel are crucial to successful inclusion for SEN/D students regardless of their conditions (Pinnock, 2020; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Magnússon et al., 2019).

The finding regarding the geographical location to educate SEN/D students highlights the varying degrees of SEN/D and their tendency to impact students' learning abilities differently. It also corroborates the concerns about teachers' capacity to effectively support SEN/D students in mainstream classrooms. At the same time, it highlights the need for understanding diversity among SEN/D students and flexibility in addressing their needs because one size does not fit all. Furthermore, the finding addresses my first study objectives. It sought to understand my participants' interpretations of inclusion for SEN/D students. Clarity regarding local understanding of SEN/D students' inclusion may positively impact policy formulation, guidelines design, policy implementation, and evaluation (Hodkinson, 2020; Magnússon et al., 2019).

My participants interpret inclusion as partial inclusion, educating SEN/D students in mainstream schools alongside their non-SEN/D peers and educating them in special schools. These interpretations affirm the dynamic nature of SEN/D students' inclusion. There are different opinions on the most appropriate location to successfully include these students in education. For example, while some may be educated in mainstream schools as their non-SEN/D peers, others who may need additional support are encouraged to access learning in special schools or separate locations within mainstream schools (Kauffman and Hornby, 2020; Cooper and Jacobs, 2011; Warnock, 2005). This perspective assumes that special settings allow SEN/D students access to personalised support (Kauffman and Hornby, 2020; Warnock, 2005). Nonetheless, my data revealed that most of my participants' views align with the 2016

NPIE, which is based on ideas from some Global North policies, such as the Salamanca Statement. The policy provides for including SEN/D students in mainstream schools.

Traditionally, inclusion is physically placing children together in the same environment. However, there is a growing emphasis on various factors, including positive relationships and active participation in school activities, which are considered essential to successfully implementing inclusion. These factors go beyond mere physical coexistence within mainstream schools, it requires creating a supportive environment for SEN/D students to ensure that they are truly included in mainstream schools. In the following sub-section, I will discuss my participants' perspectives on ensuring participation and social connection for SEN/D students.

8.2.2 *Beyond Physical Presence in School: Ensuring Participation and Social Interactions for SEN/D Students*

The second finding from this study relates to the need to make inclusion worthwhile for SEN/D students. It addresses my first study objective, which concerns participants' interpretations of SEN/D students' inclusion. This finding suggests that most of my participants believe that inclusion for SEN/D students entails ensuring their presence in school guarantees effective inclusion for them. This sentiment was consistent among most participants from both types of schools. Particularly, they expected schools to consciously ensure that SEN/D students receive adequate support to participate actively in school activities. Additionally, they emphasise the need to encourage social interactions among students in general. Social interactions, which relate to peer acceptance and friendships, significantly influence students' school experience (Schwab et al., 2021). Participants emphasise the need for an inclusive school environment where SEN/D students can actively participate and feel socially connected. A study by Allen et al. (2018) provides valuable insights into social

participation, interactions, and students' sense of belonging within the school environment. This study indicates that peer acceptance and support can significantly influence social participation and connections within mainstream schools. Recognising the importance of social participation and interaction to SEN/D students, Schwab et al. (2022) emphasise the need for teachers to develop the capacity to foster social interactions in the classroom. According to Schwab et al. (2022), "For teachers, it is of high importance that they should be able to identify students' social situations because students might need support, and teachers can intervene" (P. 846).

Participants' expectations concerning social participation and connections within mainstream schools underscore the need for an inclusive learning environment where all students are valued and respected. Implicitly, participants' perspectives regarding the need to encourage participation and social interaction for SEN/D students encapsulate the assumption that they can lead to a more enriching educational experience for SEN/D students within mainstream secondary school. For example, conversations with some participants from both schools suggest that interaction with other school members, including non-SEN/D students, positively impacts SEN/D students' school experience. For instance, one SEN/D student expressed contentment regarding interacting with other school members when he said, "I feel comfortable in this school. I feel comfortable in school with all my friends and all the people I stay with. I don't get bullied." This sentiment regarding the implication of social interactions on a SEN/D students' school experience aligns with the results of recent literature reviews indicating an association between social interactions with other school members and SEN/D students' school experience (Van der Meulen et al., 2021; Vyrastekova, 2021). Van der Meulen et al. (2021) systematic

review that sought to identify interventions of emotional peer support in schools for students with SEND highlights the importance of social interactions and social acceptance to SEN/D students' school experience.

The prevailing perspectives among my participants regarding the need to ensure social interaction and participation for SEN/D students within mainstream schools cohere with the revelation from Van der Meulen et al. (2021). Schwab et al. (2021) underline the need to consciously encourage interaction between them and their non-SEN/D peers because they are at a higher risk of being socially excluded. The result of Schwab et al.'s (2021) study, which assessed the impact of the social behaviour of students diagnosed with SEN/D, indicated limited interaction between SEN/D students and their non-SEN/D classmates. Their study validated the concern expressed by some parents regarding enrolling their SEN/D children in mainstream schools. The study revealed that parents are concerned about their children's potential social exclusion within mainstream schools. School is crucial in providing opportunities for SEN/D students to nurture friendships. This sentiment was established by Vyrastekova's (2021) study, which focused on how SEN/D students' participation in mainstream schools affects their social inclusion. The study revealed that SEN/D students form most friendships at school. This revelation underlines the need for schools to promote meaningful social interactions among students to create a nurturing environment where SEN/D students can flourish emotionally and academically. Social interactions can occur when students spend time together during breaks or while working on a project.

Interestingly, both school types employ joint assembly and recess practices to promote social interactions among students. Periodic presentations such as Christmas Carol were another means of promoting social interactions and

participation among students in both schools' settings. Beyond these, schools need to consider the subtle complexities of daily interactions within schools. These subtle complexities are particularly critical to school experience for SEN/D students who are prone to being socially excluded in schools (Schwab et al., 2021). It can be inferred from this viewpoint concerning participation and social interaction for SEN/D students that inclusion for them is beyond geographical location. Instead, it entails a commitment to equity and social justice. In recent years, studies on inclusion in mainstream schools have indicated that SEN/D students continue to experience exclusion within schools. For example, Webster's (2022) study, which sought to explore the reality in schools regarding the inclusion of SEN/D students with severe conditions in England observed that these students need to be truly included in schools. According to Webster (2022), SEN/D students with severe conditions are experiencing "structural exclusion" (Webster, 2022, p.15) in mainstream primary and secondary schools in England. This implies the existence of systemic barriers that can hinder true inclusion within schools. He notes that the quality of education accessed by SEN/D students with severe conditions in mainstream secondary and primary schools is negatively affected by schools' organisation and how classrooms are composed. Similarly, focusing on a young person with autism in a mainstream primary school in Lagos State, Nigeria, Odunsi (2018) suggests that SEN/D students may experience exclusion within mainstream schools due to teachers' competency, low level of awareness of SEN/D, and a lack of support mechanisms to enhance inclusive practices.

Furthermore, Elder and Migliarini (2020) explore inclusive practices for elementary education in postcolonial countries. Their study indicates that SEN/D students are being excluded from and within schools in some Global South countries.

This exclusion can be due to the uncritical transfer of the inclusion model from some Global North to Global South countries. My study aligns with these scholars as it emphasises the need to make physical presence in mainstream schools worthwhile for SEN/D students. By doing so, schools ensure a holistic development for SEN/D students, including social, emotional, and educational aspects of life. My study's second and third objectives are to explore participants' interpretations of their experiences of SEN/D students' inclusion and the challenges of including them in their settings, respectively. Inclusion for SEN/D students is primarily about ensuring fair and unbiased opportunities for SEN/D students to access support in mainstream schools. However, SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools can be marred by factors such as insufficient resources, accessibility difficulties, and a lack of stakeholder collaboration. One striking finding in this study is the disparity in the resource provisions in both school types.

8.2.3 *Resources Provision as a Tool for Equitable Access for SEN/D Students' Inclusion*

The third finding from this study concerns the availability of resources to support SEN/D students within the participating schools. The term resources broadly refers to the supporting systems and services that aid the smooth function of organisations like schools. These include technological appliances and personnel. In the context of this thesis, resources refer to elements crucial for creating an inclusive school environment, especially for SEN/D students. They include computers, classrooms, sports equipment, and fans. Notably, my study indicates that schools may need more resources to enrol and support some SEN/D students. Both schools do not offer places for children with some conditions. Majorly, School B enrols students with speech disability and those who are deaf. School A would not enrol these students because they do not have a sign language specialist. Both schools do not enrol wheelchair

users due to the unavailability of ramps. Also, they do not enrol students with visual impairment because of the lack of specialist teachers who can support them. There are indications in the literature that across countries, many schools may not enrol some SEN/D students due to the need for resources to meet their needs (Booth, 2023; Cornelius-Ukpopi and Opuwari, 2019; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016). For example, while investigating the inclusivity of schools in the UK, Booth (2023) found that many schools subtly declined to enrol some SEN/D students due to a lack of space and skills to meet their needs. This revelation underlines the extent of schools' inclusiveness despite policy provisions regarding inclusion for all students, irrespective of their conditions (Department of Education, 2015).

While assessing the availability of educational services for various categories of pupils with special needs in three states in Nigeria, Adeleke and Oyundoyin (2016) found that mainstream schools, as well as special schools, only enrol some categories of SEN/D students. These categories were those with visual impairment, speech disability and deaf. Pinnock (2020) confirms that restrictions on inclusion for some SEN/D students in mainstream schools persist in Nigeria. In a recent Global Education Monitoring Report highlighting the challenges related to financing and policy implementation in IE in Nigeria, Pinnock (2020) indicates that schools, especially those in rural areas, may only enrol some SEN/D students. According to the report, some schools need basic resources such as ramps, chairs, tables, and classrooms to support SEN/D students adequately. This discussion on resource provision indicates that limited resources may cause the exclusion of some SEN/D students from schools in different countries. It then appear that IE implementation is still challenged across countries. Considering the implications of a lack of adequate resources on SEN/D students' inclusion, a possible conclusion is that the government needs to be more

committed to SEN/D students' inclusion regardless of their conditions by ensuring that all schools are adequately equipped to accommodate and support SEN/D students.

Evidence exists that resource provision is crucial to creating an inclusive educational environment for all students, including those with SEN/D (Pinnock, 2020; Angwaomaodoko, 2023). As indicated in Chapter One (section 1.2) Angwaomaodoko, 2023 highlights the need for adequate resources, such as classrooms and trained teachers, in public secondary schools in Nigeria. Angwaomaodoko (2023) found that inadequate resources in these schools significantly impact students' school experience and academic achievement. Similarly, my School B participants perceived limited classrooms, chairs and tables, non-availability of laboratory equipment, a lack of fans and sports equipment, and non-functional computers as challenging to effective SEN/D students' inclusion in their school.

Aligning with the findings of the literature, some of my participants connected a need for more resources to their experience of inclusion for SEN/D students. A SEN/D student's parent from the school recounted that she had to appeal to her child to go to school. According to this parent, her child is sometimes reluctant to go to school due to a lack of chairs and tables. It is also important to note that a lack of sports equipment and non-functional computers can significantly impede the holistic development of SEN/D students. Physical activities are limited without access to functional equipment, and their ability to engage with digital literacy and educational resources can be compromised. Additionally, teachers may be restricted in teaching practical concepts due to inadequate equipment.

While inadequate provision in School B is consequential for all students, it is particularly concerning for SEN/D students who may need additional resources to be effectively included in school activities, including learning. They may also need help

achieving holistic development due to resource limitations. This finding strongly suggests that some SEN/D students are experiencing exclusion in less-resourced schools like School B. The revelation regarding the resource provision in School B and its implications for SEN/D students' inclusion is disturbing because it signifies an outright deviation from the provision in the 2016 NPIE. The policy commits to "rehabilitate and upgrade schools in every state annually to effectively provide inclusive learning environments and promote suitable learning experience" for SEN/D students (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 15). Equally, it provides for the "construction, equipping and rehabilitation of new and existing classrooms" (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 32). This suggests a gap between the policy provision for inclusion in Nigeria and the reality in schools.

Participants from School A expressed satisfaction with the provision in the school and their experience of SEN/D students' inclusion. A SEN/D student's parent from the school succinctly illustrates the level of provision in School A. She said, "They have enough resources". She also mentioned that the students are "super-engaged with computers and internet". This implies that students have access to digital literacy and educational resources. Reflecting on the previous experience, when her son struggled in his former school because he could not access a computer, the parent said, "You know, he was struggling in his former schools because they were expecting him to use pen and paper". This signifies a positive school experience for SEN/D students, engendered by adequate provision. My study reveals that parents are willing to adhere to the Universal Basic Education policy (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999), which mandates nine years of compulsory education for all children, including those with Special Educational Needs/Disabilities (SEN/D). However, many children with SEN/D continue to face exclusion from and within schools due to a lack of

adequate resources. It also confirms the assumption that inclusion experiences vary across different contexts. This variation is largely influenced by the availability of resources, which significantly differ between the school types in this context. It appears that being a private secondary school, School A can fund SEN/D students' inclusion appropriately because the school gets money from parents. Therefore, it may be concluded that parents and school socioeconomic status significantly informs the resources provision for including SEN/D students in my participating schools (private and public mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State).

8.2.4 Socioeconomic Status and SEN/D Students' Inclusion in Mainstream Secondary Schools

This is the fourth finding from this study. It addresses the impact of socioeconomic status on SEN/D students' inclusion. Although the effects of socioeconomic status on SEN/D students' inclusion was not part of my study objectives, it appears to be a key factor in my participants' inclusion experience. I believe it is worth mentioning in this discussion chapter. Socioeconomic status reflects an individual's position within a social structure. It relates to social background, education level, and access to economic resources (Tompsett and Knoester, 2023). As indicated earlier (section 2.3.1), socioeconomic status can significantly impact SEN/D students' inclusion experience across different countries. For example, in England, several literatures indicate that SEN/D students' socioeconomic status significantly impacts access to adequate support, their performance at school, and the choices they have later in life (Riordan et al., 2021; Hutchinson, 2021; Department for Education, 2015). For example, Riordan et al. (2021) observed that children's family socioeconomic status significantly impacts their academic progress.

Hutchinson (2021) also underlines the 'postcode lottery' implication on access to adequate support for SEN/D. According to Hutchinson (2021), "Families in poorer

areas appear to have more limited support for their children and are likely to be subject to higher thresholds for accessing support" (P. 7). Similarly, in Greece, SEN/D students from low-income families may experience exclusion within mainstream schools as they may need help with the cost of hiring special assistants to provide personalised support (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024). Equally, in Nigeria, many SEN/D students from low-income families and those living in rural areas are prone to exclusion from school due to the prevalence of privately owned schools and the location of schools in urban centres (ActionAid, 2021).

My study finding about socioeconomic status and SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools revealed the tendency for family socioeconomic status to impact SEN/D students' inclusion experience. It revealed a huge gap in resource provision between the school types. This revelation is consistent with the situation in Sweden, as aptly captured by Magnússon et al. (2019), who note that education is perceived as "a commodity to be purchased in a market rather than a public good" (Magnússon et al., 2019, p. 67). This perspective implies that SEN/D students from low-socioeconomic families may not have access to high-quality education as their peers from high-socioeconomic families. Additionally, the finding highlights absenteeism as an implication of socioeconomic status for SEN/D students' inclusion. This is established in the words of a School B parent when reflecting on her experience with her daughter, "Sometimes, she would not want to go to school". This finding corroborates other studies on SEN/D students' inclusion (Sosu et al., 2021; Iyoboyi, 2013). Sosu et al. (2021) and Iyoboyi (2013) underline the implication of students' socioeconomic status on school attendance. This finding is antithetical to the view that IE is a process of removing barriers to accommodate SEN/D students and their non-SEN/D peers in mainstream schools (UNESCO,1994).

Fundamentally, the finding regarding socioeconomic status and SEN/D students' inclusion experience indicates that Global North domination in the discussions regarding IE may not solely account for the gap between inclusion policy and practice in Lagos State. Therefore, it highlights the need to understand the complex relationship between socioeconomic status, educational opportunities, and inclusion experiences for SEN/D students across different contexts. This sentiment is premised on the similarity between inclusion conceptualisation in some Global North literature and my study participants' understanding of the phenomenon. Across different countries, SEN/D students' inclusion is seen as being in a mainstream school/classroom and special school. Therefore, the finding reinforces the need for concerted efforts to ensure quality education for all children, regardless of socioeconomic background and ability.

The finding calls on the Nigerian government to create an equitable educational opportunity for all students, including SEN/D students, as the national educational objectives proposed. For example, the availability of free access to therapists, such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and other specialists who provide targeted support, can mitigate exclusion due to socio-economic status. Additionally, free social and emotional support programs and resources can help SEN/D children from low-income families navigate social interactions and emotional challenges. However, in reality, there is need to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for SEN/D children in public secondary schools as these children face significant barriers to education. These barriers include lack of resources, inadequate infrastructure, and policy gaps (Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Pinnock, 2020). The Nigerian educational objectives emphasise equal access to education across all levels to promote inclusivity and citizenship development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013).

8.2.5 *The Ease of Accessing Mainstream Secondary Schools for SEN/D Students*

Here, I present my study's fifth finding. It focuses on the accessibility of suitable schools for SEN/D students. Access to mainstream secondary schools for SEN/D students is critical to IE. In this context, the focus is on the availability of mainstream secondary schools that can accommodate SEN/D students.

Firstly, I found that it may be challenging for SEN/D students to transition from primary school to mainstream secondary school in Lagos State. All the SEN/D students' parents expressed frustration in seeking a suitable mainstream secondary school for their children. For instance, a parent explained that her child had an extended stay in primary school because there was no mainstream secondary school to accommodate her. This finding implies that some SEN/D students in Lagos State may experience exclusion from secondary education. It also signifies a need for more mainstream secondary schools that can accommodate SEN/D students in Lagos State to ease the difficulties SEN/D students' parents encounter when trying to enrol their children in mainstream secondary schools. The finding resonates with other studies on SEND students' inclusion (Booth, 2023; The Children's Commissioner, 2023; ActionAids, 2021; Pinnock, 2020; Fajemilo et al., 2020). For instance, Fajemilo et al. (2020) suggest that mainstream schools that can accommodate SEN/D students are generally scarce in Lagos State. According to Fajemilo et al. (2020), a limited number of inclusive schools, including secondary school, is one of the major challenges to SEN/D students in the State.

Again, ActionAids (2021) and Pinnock (2020) suggest that SEN/D students in rural Nigeria may struggle to access inclusive mainstream secondary schools due to the scarcity of schools generally. Similarly, in the UK, some schools often face challenges in enrolling SEN/D students because they require more space to

accommodate them (Booth, 2023). This observation suggests a need for additional schools or creating more spaces within the existing schools to enhance their capacity to enrol more SEN/D students. Dame Rachel de Souza, the Children's Commissioner for England, echoes these concerns and emphasises the need to urgently improve the SEND system to ensure that SEN/D students access support to achieve their potential (The Children's Commissioner, 2023).

Secondly, I found that some SEN/D students may not go beyond the Junior Secondary Education level as there are no resources to accommodate them at the Senior Secondary Schools. In the words of a SEN/D student's parent who expressed a serious concern about the opportunity for her child's educational progress, "My joy was cut short when I heard that the school could not accommodate them at the Senior Secondary School arm of the school." This quote indicates an infringement of SEN/D students' right to equal educational opportunities as they may be restricted to the Junior Secondary Education level. At the same time, it underlines the need to implement a robust transition program to ensure smoother educational journeys for SEN/D students in Lagos State. A search in the literature did not give any information about the transition from Junior Secondary School to Senior Secondary School in Lagos State/Nigeria. Nevertheless, Fajemilo et al. (2020) and Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (2015) indicated that Nigeria faces challenges regarding continuing education for SEN/D students. Both organisations note that it has been challenging for SEN/D students to move from one educational level to another. Tete and Wizoma-Mathew (2020) also imply that some SEN/D students may need help progressing in education in Nigeria. According to Tete and Wizoma-Mathew (2020), some factors, such as differences in political leaders' ideologies and an exponential increase in the student population, have negatively impacted most attempts at

educational reforms. Therefore, some SEN/D students who manage to finish secondary school cannot further their education to higher education.

Lastly, my data raise questions about identifying inclusive schools, including secondary schools in Lagos State. They suggest that existing mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State need to be more visible to parents seeking to enrol their SEN/D children. SEN/D students' parents expressed difficulties in identifying mainstream secondary schools that can accommodate their children. This finding is consistent with Banjo (2018). Banjo (2018) investigated the accessibility of inclusive schools in Lagos State. He found that many of the inclusive schools in Lagos State remained unknown to the State's residents. The findings regarding the ease of accessing mainstream schools underline the need to recognise SEN/D students' legal right to access mainstream secondary schools. Consequently, it emphasises the importance of ensuring the availability of suitable mainstream secondary schools for SEN/D students in urban and rural areas. Given that ensuring effective inclusion for these students requires a concerted effort from a broad range of stakeholders (Fajemilo et al., 2020; Odunsi, 2018; Federal Ministry of Education, 2016; Department for Education, 2015), I will explore stakeholders' collaboration as a tool for equitable access for SEN/D students in the following sub-section.

8.2.6 *Stakeholders' Collaboration as a Tool for Effective Inclusion for SEN/D Students*

The sixth finding of this study concerns stakeholders' collaboration for the effective inclusion of SEN/D students. In the context of SEN/D students' inclusion, stakeholders include parents, school leadership, teachers, other professionals, and the board of governors. Throughout the dataset, participants revealed various views regarding collaboration among stakeholders in their settings. My study indicates that practitioners in both schools collaborate to include SEN/D students. In School A,

practitioners involve a broader range of professionals like language and speech therapists, educational psychologists, and teachers, while in School B, practitioners are just regular and specialist teachers. Inclusion is a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders such as schools/teachers, health and social service providers, students, parents, and other professionals. The literature suggests that including SEN/D students in mainstream schools is not a solitary effort (Fajemilo et al., 2020; Odunsi, 2018; Federal Ministry of Education, 2016; Department for Education, 2015, 2015). Instead, it requires coordinated efforts among a wide range of stakeholders. The practices in the schools participating in my study align with IE policies in many countries. For example, in England, the Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), one of the prerequisites for accessing support for SEN/D students, involves input from various professionals during its production (Department for Education, 2015).

Collaboration among practitioners can benefit all students, especially SEN/D students, because it can foster a supportive school environment. The literature signifies that collaboration among practitioners can enhance SEN/D students' inclusion as it can positively impact the development, implementation, and evaluation of instructional and support services rendered to them (David and Claes, 2023; McDaniel, 2022; Odunsi, 2018). After a review of qualitative research on interprofessional cooperation between regular teachers and special educators published from 2005 to 2019, David and Claes (2023) emphasise the positive impact of collaboration on SEN/D students' outcomes.

Interestingly, my study indicates a collaboration among practitioners in both school types. However, more resourced schools, such as School A, appear to engage more professionals to support SEN/D students. While this implies holistic support for SEN/D students, it also indicates that they are subjected to a 'professional gaze'. A

Professional gaze refers to professionals' (educational psychologists, medical practitioners, therapists, etc.) perception of SEN/D students (Borgne and Tisdall, 2017; Tisdall, 2013). This aligns with the medical model of disability, which focuses on making SEN/D students conform as closely as possible to the idea of a 'normal' student (Zaks, 2023). Subjecting SEN/D students to a 'professional gaze' can be detrimental in that it can lead to labelling, which can impact how people relate with them in schools/classrooms and the wider society (Ioannidis and Malafantis, 2022; Lauchlan and Boyle, 2020). This practice is antithetical to the principles of the social model of disability, which, in the context of SEN/D students' inclusion, advocates for removing barriers to provide opportunities for SEN/D students to participate in mainstream school/classroom regardless of their condition(s) (Zaks, 2023; Barnes, 2018). It is crucial to take into account that labelling can enhance SEN/D students' participation and experience of school life generally (Ioannidis and Malafantis, 2022; Lauchlan and Boyle, 2020). This is because it can foster access to facilities, specialised services, and improved support. Moreover, labelling can encourage advocacy efforts and make them visible to policymakers and the wider public (Ioannidis and Malafantis, 2022; Lauchlan and Boyle, 2020).

Given the benefits of collaboration among practitioners, McDaniel (2022) suggests that there is a need for collaborative efforts among school-based practitioners. According to McDaniel (2022), collaboration among practitioners can enhance the support for SEN/D students' academic, behavioural, emotional, and social needs. However, factors such as time constraints, impromptu planning, and limited professional development opportunities can be challenging to collaboration among practitioners (Mulholland and O'Connor, 2016). Mulholland and O'Connor's (2016) study that sought to establish the nature and extent of cooperation between

regular teachers and special educators and to identify the benefits and barriers to implementation observed that while there is increasing awareness of the value of collaboration among practitioners, implementation can be stalled by the factors mentioned above. A possible explanation for a positive collaboration among practitioners in both schools might be that the schools understand that joint planning, ongoing communication, and creating an inclusive classroom environment are essential for supporting SEN/D students.

Contrary to the findings regarding practitioners' collaboration in both schools, my data analysis indicates that empowering SEN/D students' parents may be necessary to participate actively in their children's education. Parents can be empowered through awareness creation and involvement in decision-making regarding their children's education and inclusion in mainstream schools. Parents must be able to actively participate in their SEN/D children's education because they play a crucial role in their education. For instance, they understand their children's unique needs, strengths, and difficulties (Lamb, 2022). The Nigerian 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education (NPIE) recognises parents as critical in ensuring effective inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016). Additionally, in recognition of the importance of parents to SEN/D students' education, the English 2015 SEN/D Code of Practice encourages collaboration between parents and schools. The policy expects parents to provide insights into their children's needs and advocate for appropriate accommodation. Furthermore, enforcing sanctions such as fines stipulated in the 2019 Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2019) could encourage parental active participation in their children’s education.

Consistently, education literature has highlighted a strong relationship between parental involvement and children's educational outcomes (Alkanchi et al., 2022; Lamb, 2022; Osezua, 2016). For example, in this study, which sought to provide insight into how Nigeria can enhance the chance of achieving equitable and quality education and life-long learning for all learners, Osezua (2016) found that limited parental involvement significantly affects students' education quality and performance. He also discovered that less parental involvement can impact students' behaviour. Findings from Alkanchi et al. (2022) in a study that examined the impact of parenting style on primary pupils in Sokoto State, Nigeria, align with Osezua (2016). The study revealed that strong collaboration between parents and teachers promotes positive behaviour and academic performance among pupils. Drawing from the findings and recommendations of previous research and reports in England, such as the 2009 Lamb inquiry and the 2015 SEN/D Code of Practice, Lamb (2022) also emphasise the importance of parental involvement for SEN/D students' inclusion and educational progress. The importance of parental participation to their children's educational success necessitates dedicated commitment from parents, government, and schools to enhance parental involvement. Essentially, the preceding discussion regarding stakeholders' collaboration as a tool for effective inclusion for SEN/D students underlines the importance of collective efforts and coordination in creating an inclusive environment for SEN/D students where they can thrive. The finding regarding stakeholder collaboration is instructive because it demonstrates that participants attach significant importance to stakeholder cooperation. Therefore, it reinforces the need for stakeholders to work together to foster a supportive ecosystem for SEN/D students in their educational journey.

The school environment plays a crucial role in shaping the overall experience of inclusion for SEN/D students. School environment refers to the atmosphere, interactions, and dynamics within the school setting. The school environment significantly impacts all stakeholders' well-being, learning, and growth, including SEN/D and non-SEN/D students. Hence, schools are expected to create a safe and enabling environment that facilitates SEN/D students' access to quality education. This environment should empower them to actively participate in school life, both academically and socially (Strogilos and Ward, 2024; Onodugo et al., 2020; Thompson and Thompson, 2018). Expectedly, most of my participants strongly suggest the need for schools to create an inclusive school environment where SEN/D students can thrive. Conversations highlighted the need to support students' self-regulation. In the next section, I will examine my study participants' perceptions about how their schools are supporting students to self-regulate.

8.2.7 Supporting Students' Self- Regulation within Mainstream Secondary Schools

This seventh finding in this study delves into how SEN/D students are supported to self-regulate within both school types. Participants' responses present varying understanding and practices surrounding how to address behaviour concerns. Some participants from School A suggest a collective commitment to developing comprehensive strategies that guide how to address behavioural issues among students within the school community. Participants from the school perceive the process of developing the school behaviour strategy as inclusive of critical stakeholders, including SEN/D students and their parents. Additionally, they suggest that the school recognises the need to understand the factors underpinning students' behaviour and support those who need additional support for self-regulation (Sassen, 2023; Thyne, 2021; Porter, 2020; William, 2017).

In contrast to School A, some School B participants revealed that the school lacks written guidelines on behaviour issues. This implies that the school encourages teachers to adopt a flexible approach to addressing SEN/D students' needs. However, unlike School A, School B teachers displayed a restrictive approach to addressing SEN/D students' behaviour needs. School B practice undermines the need for a deeper understanding of students' behaviour. This approach aligns with the medical model of disability, which expects SEN/D students to adapt to the school environment (Zaks, 2023). The approach is contrary to the notion that behaviour is symptomatic of some underlying issues, such as environmental influences (Thyne, 2021; Porter, 2020; William, 2017). Additionally, School B approach to addressing SEN/D students' behaviour needs conveys a lack of agency to learners and implicitly communicates a lack of recognition of diversity within mainstream schools. This approach is problematic because it may not encourage schools to reflect on their practice.

School B teachers' perspective on SEN/D students' behaviour impacts their response to concerning behaviour in the school. The teachers use corporal punishment to make students conform to their expectations of an ideal student. This perspective is problematic as it can negatively impact SEN/D students' academic outcomes. Moreover, it can worsen behaviour concerns in schools. Practice in School B raises questions regarding how well teachers meet SEN/D students' needs. Certain behaviours perceived as challenging may be a marker of unmet needs, such as academic, social, emotional, or sensory needs (Thyne, 2021; Porter, 2020; William, 2017). Unlike School B, School A's practice aligns with current thinking in the Global North regarding the need to understand the functionality of behaviour and adopt a holistic approach to support students' behaviour (Sassen, 2023; Thyne, 2021; Porter, 2020; William, 2017). For example, in England, the 2015 SEN/D Code of Practice does

not talk about behaviour anymore but Social, Emotional, and Mental Health difficulties (Department for Education, 2015). This thinking aligns with the social model of disability, which encourages schools to recognise environmental influences on students' behaviour (Barnes, 2018; Barton, 2018). It also highlights a need for a broader approach to behaviour issues among learners. Therefore, it encourages schools to reflect on their practice, make necessary adjustments, and adopt a holistic approach to supporting SEN/D students to self-regulate.

A holistic approach to supporting behaviour recognises the complex nature of human experiences. It emphasises the need to address behavioural issues by looking at the whole individual and the broader context (Sassen, 2023; Thyne, 2021; Porter, 2020; William, 2017). Sassen (2023) underlines this point when he argue that SEN/D students are more than the difficulties posed by their conditions. Aligning with the call for a holistic approach to addressing behavioural issues, Porter (2020) recommends a collaborative effort to address behavioural issues. These perspectives underscores the need for a holistic view of SEN/D students' behaviour. Additionally, they emphasise the importance of prioritising their needs over their conditions. Furthermore, they show that a non-holistic approach to behavioural issues within mainstream schools can lead to inadequate support for SEN/D students, especially those with multiple SEN/D conditions. Inadequate support for SEN/D students may lead to their exclusion within school regardless of their physical presence. Consequently, the findings regarding how both school types support SEN/D in self-regulation may help us understand the disparity in inclusion experience due to factors such as socioeconomic status. For example, School A, a more resourced school, adopts a social model approach, which encourages schools to recognise that environmental factors can impact SEN/D students' behaviour (Barnes, 2018; Barton, 2018). Therefore, the finding emphasises

the need for an inclusive strategy to support behaviour and foster effective inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream schools regardless of their conditions and socioeconomic status.

Fundamentally, my seventh finding highlights the need for awareness regarding environmental influence on behaviour. Therefore, the finding suggests that schools/teachers need to reflect on practice because it can help them comprehend the causes and purposes of behaviour and offer positive and preventive measures that enable SEN/D students to manage, control, and participate in school life (Thyne, 2021; Pang, 2022; Porter, 2020). Next, I will discuss the pedagogical strategies for including SEN/D students in mainstream classrooms.

8.2.8 Pedagogical Strategies for Including SEN/D Students in Mainstream Classrooms.

The eighth finding relates to my participants' perspectives regarding their schools' pedagogical approach to ensuring inclusion for SEN/D students. As indicated in chapter three (section 3.5.3), Pedagogy is a dynamic concept encompassing multidimensional approaches to teaching-learning (Stentiford and Koutsairis, 2020; Edwards-Groves, 2018; Florian, 2015). It is based on methods, theories, and practices (Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021; Florian, 2015). Pedagogy extends beyond the formal education system to workplace training. In this context, it refers to the methods of teaching and assessment adopted by teachers to ensure that all students, including those with SEN/D, are accommodated and supported to enhance their educational attainment (Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021; Stentiford and Koutsairis,2020; Magnússon, 2019).

The data across both types of schools suggest that many teachers take cognisance of different needs in the classroom and deploy strategies to accommodate these needs during teaching and examination. For example, some teachers

mentioned strategies adopted to foster inclusion for SEN/D students during teaching-learning and examination. They identified strategies such as: "one-on-one teaching", "pairing", "reinforce", "peer tutoring," "differentiation", "extra time", and "prompt", and engaging in "practical work" to test learning. Some teachers from both schools highlight lesson planning as crucial to ensuring inclusion for SEN/D students. In one of the teacher's words, "Anytime I sit down to draw my lesson plan, all those differences are taken into consideration …." The lesson planning process involves considering every student's unique identity and ensuring that each lesson resonates with their uniqueness (Florian, 2015). This process is crucial to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for SEN/D students, who may require that materials and activities be tailored to their specific needs. Teacher's awareness of the importance of lesson planning in managing classroom diversity is evident as teachers from both schools recognise the need to address students' needs during lesson planning. The revelation that teachers from both schools recognise the need to address students' needs during lesson planning, teaching and examination demonstrates their understanding of pedagogy as a fundamental factor in creating an overarching learning environment in which SEN/D students feel welcomed and equally included (Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021; Magnússon, 2019). Fundamentally, teachers' pedagogical practices in these schools underline the importance of inclusive pedagogy.

Inclusive pedagogy is an educational approach that focuses on enhancing the educational attainment of all learners regardless of differences (Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021; Stentiford and Koutsairis, 2020; Florian, 2015). Inclusive pedagogy aims to ensure that all learners have equal access to learning by fostering an equitable and socially just learning environment. This sentiment is consistent with

the 2016 NPIE, which encourages teachers to recognise individuals' interests and learning styles and adopt flexible and differentiated teaching methods and strategies to address them in the classroom. (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016). Additionally, it agrees with IE tenets, which promote equity and fairness, encouraging all students to be supported to maximise their potential and achieve their goals (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Odunsi, 2028; UNESCO,1994).

My study suggests an alignment between practice in both schools. Conversations with some teachers in the public mainstream secondary school, a less-resourced school, indicate that they recognise the need to address diversity among learners during lesson planning, teaching, and examination. Therefore, it implies that SEN/D students may be effectively included in both schools. However, the finding regarding pedagogical practices in my participating schools must be interpreted with caution because it is contrary to previous studies, which have suggested a gap in teachers' capacity to appropriately support the various needs that may be present in mainstream classrooms across different countries. For instance, in a study that explores inclusive pedagogy through the lens of primary teachers and teaching assistants in England, Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers (2021) found that while practitioners understood inclusive pedagogy, comprehensive implementation was a challenge as teachers struggled to attend to the various needs in the classroom. Similarly, Angwaomaodoko (2023), Pinnock (2020) and Ajuwon (2012) identified teachers' competence as a concern for the effective inclusion of SEN/D students in Nigeria. Equally, Stentiford and Koutsairis (2020) submit that the complex nature and diverse needs encountered in mainstream classrooms can limit teachers' capacity to include SEN/D students in mainstream classrooms effectively.

The sentiments regarding the gap in addressing the diverse needs encountered in mainstream classrooms necessitate acknowledging the complexity of pedagogic issues, especially in the context of increased student diversity. They are also instructive because they imply that notwithstanding their presence in the classroom, many SEN/D students can be excluded from learning. Consequently, further study may be needed on how my teacher participants translate their knowledge of inclusive pedagogy into practice in the classroom and its impact on SEN/D students' inclusion. Understanding how teachers' pedagogical approaches translate to inclusion for SEN/D students can inform teachers' training, general adjustments within mainstream schools, and inclusion policy. Pedagogical strategies can engender an inclusive educational environment that benefits all learners, including SEN/D students in mainstream classrooms. Fostering an inclusive educational environment may require that schools go beyond the conventional academic skills of reading, writing, and numeracy and expose SEN/D students to different spheres, such as sports, music, and vocational skills. Subsequently, I will discuss my last finding.

8.2.9 *Giving SEN/D Students Diverse Experiences*

Here, I present my ninth finding. The finding concerns participants' perception regarding the practice of exposing SEN/D students to learning beyond academic skills in their schools. IE recognises that SEN/D students benefit from a broader range of experiences such as music, sport, vocational skills, and exposure to local cultures beyond reading, writing and numeracy (Office for National Statistics, 2022; Fajemilo et al., 2020). The data from both school types suggest that students actively engage in sports, music, and vocational training. This practice is consistent with expectations of schools (Office for National Statistics, 2022; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015). Schools are expected to expose

students to more than academic skills. They are encouraged to equip these students with life skills to enhance their independence and self-advocate capacity. These skills are necessary for survival in the wider society post-school. Nonetheless, it is important to consider individual SEN/D students' interests and abilities when choosing non-academic skills for them.

The practice of actively involving SEN/D students in activities other than reading, writing and numeracy in both school types relates to the existing assumption that SEN/D students have innate abilities that must be developed to aid their functionality post-education (Reid, 2016; Frederickson and Cline, 2016; Chapman et al., 2011). Norah Frederickson and Tony Cline, two notable scholars in special educational needs, emphasise the importance of recognising and nurturing SEN/D students' abilities through appropriate support (Frederickson and Cline, 2016). Similarly, Reid's work, which significantly contributes to understanding and assisting individuals with dyslexia and other learning differences, underscores the necessity of maintaining positive perspectives to nurturing SEN/D students' inherent abilities (Reid, 2016). Cultivating positive perspectives towards these students can lead to high expectations, thereby motivating the creation of an inclusive and supportive educational environment that can empower all learners to reach their full potential. Aligning with this perspective, Chapman et al. (2011) advocate for school leadership to promote SEN/D students' achievement through an inclusive culture and practices.

My study indicates that both school types engage in inclusive practices despite differences in resource availability. Many participants from both schools reported that SEN/D and non-SEN/D students were engaged in activities other than reading and writing. For example, a SEN/D student from School B identified vocational training in the school. She said, "We sew and do practical cooking at our school. We do other

things like soap making and fruit juice". A SEN/D student's parent from School A also explained that School A engages students in extracurricular activities. According to this parent, "… the weight on academics and extracurricular falls on the same scale" in School A. This practice implies that an inclusive culture exists in both types of schools.

A possible explanation for the engagement of SEN/D students in more than academic skills in both school types, despite differences in resource availability, might be that practice in the less-resourced school is influenced by the principles of African traditional philosophies like 'Ubuntu' and 'Omoluabi' (Adigun et al., 2021; Howell et al., 2019; Phasha et al., 2017; Mahlo, 2017). These philosophies are considered to foster acceptance and support for SEN/D students to function in their communities because they promote a positive attitude towards disability since they emphasise interconnectedness and the well-being of all individuals (Adigun et al., 2021). The influence of African traditional philosophies like "Ubuntu" and "Omoluabi" on educational practices in less-resourced schools is significant because it challenges the narrative that disability is often a good reason for exclusion and discrimination in Nigeria (Odunsi, 2018; McKenzie and Obajana, 2017; Haruna, 2017; Etiyebo and Omiegbe, 2016; Uba and Nwoga, 2016; Obiakor and Eleweke, 2014). Therefore, my study presents an alternative narrative regarding the vulnerability of people living with disability in Nigeria.

Another possible explanation regarding the practice of engaging SEN/D students in activities other than academics is that the principles of the Nigeria pre-colonial education system inform the practice in less-resourced schools. This education system is considered holistic and involves everyone, including disabled members of the community (Ojo and Babalola, 2023; Fagunwa, 2017). As indicated in section 3.3, some elements of the Nigeria pre-colonial education system (using the

mother tongue and a wide range of symbols and motifs for communicating ideas during teaching) can positively impact inclusion for SEN/D students (Ojo et al., 2023; Fagunwa, 2017; Obiakor and Offor, 2011). Considering the tendency of this education system to positively impact SEN/D students' inclusion in less-resourced schools, it may be necessary to adopt its principles within the existing Nigerian curriculum.

Adopting the pre-colonial Nigerian education system principles is necessary to develop a curriculum that suits Nigerian SEN/D students' need for potential maximisation and functionality post-school. This view underscores the need for a constructive synergy between 'Western education' and the Nigerian pre-colonial education system. Such synergy can address the limitations associated with the oral-centric nature of the pre-colonial Nigerian education system. To achieve this, it becomes important to incorporate local knowledge, languages, cultural perspectives, and vocational skills into the Nigerian curriculum. Such synergy can create a more holistic and inclusive educational experience that prepares students for the complexities of our interconnected global world. This study reinforces the importance of constructive synergy between ideas of IE from the Global North and South (Thambinathan and Kinsella, 2021; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Mignolo, 2011). See section 4.3.2. Such synergy can foster cross-contextual understanding and practice of IE, which can lead to a better school experience for SEN/D students in mainstream schools across different contexts.

Prior studies regarding education in Nigeria have highlighted the tendency for a constructive collaboration between 'Western education' and Nigerian pre-colonial education to develop an education system that can address contemporary needs globally (Ojo et al., 2023; Ibe-Moses and Okafor, 2021; Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, 2015). Ibe-Moses and Okafor (2021) underscore the need

for reflective objectivity in Nigeria's education approach across all levels, from primary to higher education. According to Moses and Okafor (2021:112), such reflection "will produce a better-cultured adult who will comfortably fit in the framework of current developments in society." Moses and Okafor (2021) suggest that constructive collaboration can foster holistic development for SEN/D students. Additionally, the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (2015) suggests that a constructive collaboration between 'Western education' and Nigerian pre-colonial education can address inadequate resources in public secondary schools in Lagos State. Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (2015) advocates for research on how to develop local teaching and learning aids which special and regular teachers can use to teach in mainstream classrooms. This stance assumes that locally developed teaching and learning aids will be less expensive than imported ones.

Furthermore, Ojo et al. (2023) suggest that a constructive collaboration between 'Western education' and Nigerian pre-colonial education could serve as a strategy for decolonising IE in Nigeria. According to Ojo et al. (2023), "The penetration of Western education systems served to re-direct development in Nigeria's education system by emphasising its making in the image of Europe and North America" (P. 6). This assertion indicates that the underpinning purpose of 'Western education' is the continuous domination of the former colonies. Therefore, it reinforces the need to decolonise education at all levels in Nigeria to reflect the Nigerian contextual reality as a way for holistic development for SEN/D students. This finding, which suggests that schools involve SEN/D students in non-academic activities, highlights the need to enhance SEN/D students' access to high-quality education that can promote participation in wider society beyond their immediate environment.

8.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter highlighted and discussed varying interpretations of inclusion for SEN/D students, the lived experiences of some inclusion stakeholders, and the challenges of including them in mainstream secondary schools. My study revealed a similarity between the conceptualisations and implementation of SEN/D students' inclusion across different countries and my study context. Like in other contexts, some SEN/D students may not access mainstream schools due to inadequate resources and schools. SEN/D students also receive support in separate units within the school based on their needs. The study sustained the ongoing debate regarding the best location to include SEN/D students. At the same time, it aligns with the position that physical presence in school does not culminate in inclusion. Surprisingly, the perspectives expressed by most of the inclusion stakeholders I spoke to emphasise that disability should not be a barrier to access for SEN/D students in mainstream schools. They attach significant importance to ensuring effective inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools by removing barriers and ensuring participation and social connection within school communities. These expectations are surprising because it is often thought that disability is a good reason for exclusion and discrimination in Nigeria.

In line with the inclusive ethos in some African philosophies, participants exhibited positive attitudes towards including SEN/D students in mainstream schools. Despite inadequate resources, participants from less-resourced schools perceive their school as a setting that fosters social interaction and holistic development for SEN/D students. School practices involved exposing SEN/D students to different skills, such as sports, music, and vocational skills beyond the typical academic skills of reading, writing, and numeracy. This approach aligns with the Nigerian pre-colonial education system, which is considered to be holistic and inclusive. Nevertheless, this study

highlights the need to address the notion of normality in my context. Many participants from both school types used words that suggest a dichotomy between SEN/D and non-SEN/D students. Addressing this notion may break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and promote acceptance for SEN/D students within mainstream schools. Some participants' perspectives on how to address behaviour concerns underscored the need for increased awareness regarding behaviour functionality and training to support SEN/D students within the school/classroom.

One of the key highlights from this study is the need to encourage cross-contextual understanding of IE through a constructive synergy between IE ideas from the Global North and South. Such understanding may lead to a better school experience for SEN/D students in mainstream schools across different contexts. Considering that decoloniality theory extends beyond challenging colonial legacies and re-imagining power dynamics regarding knowledge production in academic fields like IE, my study underscores the importance of constructive collaboration between Global North and South academic writings. Such collaboration can foster a more detailed educational system, which can give SEN/D students access to technology that can impact their overall school experience. It is important to note that collaboration between Global North and South scholars can enhance SEN/D students' capacity to compete across different contexts.

My study also reinforces the belief that some Global North scholars may present distorted information regarding how disability is experienced in Nigeria, a Global South country. The study suggests a wide acceptance of SEN/D and SEN/D students. Participants' perspectives regarding SEN/D students' inclusion indicate that the conversation concerning SEN/D students' inclusion should be about how to include them in mainstream schools successfully. However, there is a gap between ideals and

realities. Practices significantly deviated from the provision outlined in inclusion policies across different countries and the Salamanca Statement. Consequently, the study underlines the need for increased government commitments to IE, which should translate into sufficient facilities and training for practitioners, especially within public schools.

Although the findings of this study are specific to Lagos State, they encapsulate issues that resonate across many states in Nigeria and other countries worldwide. Therefore, my study can meaningfully influence the understanding of SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria. Additionally, the study presented a contextual narrative regarding disability experience in an African country. Hence, based on the perspectives and experiences of local inclusion stakeholders, it has disrupted the general assumptions that disability automatically leads to being disadvantaged in Africa. I will present the conclusion of this thesis in the next chapter.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

9.0 Introduction

In this closing chapter, I will discuss how my research questions have been answered, present my contributions to knowledge, and reflect on my research process. My study explored the inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs/Disability (SEN/D) in two mainstream secondary schools (one public and one private) in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study shows that my participants' interpretations of inclusion for SEN/D students align with its understanding in many countries and the Salamanca Statement.

Generally, it is desirable that SEN/D students learn in the same schools as their non-SEN/D peers. However, it is essential that mainstream schools successfully accommodate and support them. Ensuring that they have easy access to school, participate in school life, including teaching-learning, and are empowered to attain their potential maximally. Additionally, the study highlights the inclusiveness of the African philosophies and their influence on SEN/D students' inclusion in less-resourced schools. Therefore, the study emphasised the need for a constructive synergy between local inclusion knowledge and the international understanding of inclusion to the extent that it can enhance SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria.

I outlined the chapter as follows: First, I described the extent to which my research questions have been answered. Second, I explained my study's contributions to the field of Inclusive Education (IE) (SEN/D students' inclusion). Third, I looked at the implications of my study for Inclusion for SEN/D students in my context. Next, I examined the limitations of my study. Following this, I presented some recommendations for future studies. Finally, I presented the chapter's conclusion.

9.1 The Extent to Which my Study's Key Questions Have Been Answered

My study sets out to answer the following questions:

- What are my participants' (teachers, headteachers, students without SEN/D, SEN/D students and parents of SEN/D students from an inclusive public and private secondary school in Lagos State) understanding of IE?
- How do my participants interpret their lived experience of SEN/D students' inclusion in their settings?
- What are the challenges faced by my participants in including SEN/D students in their settings?

Pertaining to my first study question (What are my participants' understanding of IE?), my study indicates that SEN/D students' inclusion entails enrolling them in mainstream schools, provided their needs can be met there. It also suggests that schools interpret inclusion for SEN/D students as partial inclusion. Both school types practice partial inclusion by separating some SEN/D students in a separate location within the schools. Additionally, the belief that special schools are ideal for SEN/D students emerged from my study. Therefore, the study reinforces the assumption that SEN/D students' inclusion is multifaceted (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Leijen et al., 2021; Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Magnusson, 2019; Ainscow et al., 2006). Across different countries and among scholars, inclusion for SEN/D students has been conceptualised differently. The concept often has different interpretations, even in schools within the same country (Magnusson, 2019).

Concerning my second study question (How do my participants interpret their lived experience of the SEN/D students' inclusion in their settings?), I found that there is acceptance for SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools as most inclusion stakeholders I spoke with display a positive attitude towards including them in

mainstream schools. For instance, the public secondary school, a less-resourced school, deployed inclusive strategies despite inadequate resources. This reflects Africans' inclusive nature towards community members living with disabilities. The perception of a positive attitude towards including SEN/D students in mainstream schools, regardless of the level of available resources, is meaningful to my study because it questions the dominant narratives about how disabilities are experienced in Nigeria, a Global South country. It is often believed that disability encourages exclusion in Nigeria.

My study indicates a disparity regarding resource availability between private and public secondary schools. While participants from the private secondary school imply that there are adequate resources for the effective inclusion of SEN/D students in the school, those from the public school underscore a need for more resources in their school. The public secondary school may need more resources, including classrooms, chairs and tables, to facilitate meaningful participation for SEN/D students. This disparity underlines the implication of socioeconomic status on inclusion experience for SEN/D students. However, this study highlights access to mainstream secondary schools that can meet SEN/D students' needs as a common challenge for SEN/D students regardless of their socioeconomic status. As such, my study emphasises the need for more government commitment to SEN/D students' inclusion by addressing the challenges of including them in mainstream schools, especially in public mainstream secondary schools. There is an urgent need for more secondary schools with adequate resources and competence to support SEN/D students' needs. This finding relates to my third study question (What are the challenges my participants face in including SEN/D students in their settings?).

9.2 My Contributions to the Field of Inclusive Education: SEN/D Students' Inclusion

My thesis's original contributions to SEN/D students' inclusion include three domains. These are the contributions to knowledge concerning the conceptualisation of inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools in a state within a Global South country, the discussion regarding knowledge hegemony between Global North and South ideas regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in Global South countries, and methodological approaches for SEN/D students' inclusion in education research. The following sections describe and analyse my contributions in these three domains.

9.2.1 *Contribution to Knowledge Concerning the Conceptualisation of Inclusion for SEN/D Students*

Although there are previous studies on inclusion in Nigeria, their focuses and participants differ from mine. These studies include pre-service teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of IE in Nigerian and South Africa (Adigun, 2021), the knowledge and attitude of people regarding autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in mainstream schools in Lagos State, Nigeria (Odunsi, 2018), the availability of public primary schools for educational placement for all categories of SEN/D pupils in three Southwestern states in Nigeria (Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016), and an assessment of IE practice in Nigeria and the USA (Okorosaye-Orubute and Maigida, 2018). Other studies focus on the determinants of effective implementation of inclusive education at the Basic Education level in Nigeria (Cornelius-Ukpepi and Opuwari, 2019), the voice of parents and educators of primary school children with and without disabilities (Osuji-Alatilehin, 2016), Teachers' attitudes and curriculum for inclusive education in early childhood education classroom in Lagos State (Manuel and Adeleke, 2015), and the determinants of effective implementation of inclusive education at the Basic Education level in Nigeria (Adeniyi et al., 2015).

While Adigun (2021) participants were restricted to pre-service teachers from two Global South countries (South Africa and Nigeria), my study participants cut across some inclusion stakeholders. Additionally, both studies are different based on their contexts. My primary focus is Nigeria, while Adigun (2021) was based on dual contexts: South Africa and Nigeria. Like my study, Odunsi (2018) engaged a range of inclusion stakeholders in Lagos State: general teacher, specialist teacher, headteacher, SEN/D student's parent, therapist (speech and language therapist), and one NGO staff. However, her study was restricted to people's knowledge and attitudes towards a SEN/D condition (ASD). Again, the study context, a public primary school, differs from mine. While Adeleke and Oyundoyin (2016) addressed all categories of SEN/D, like my study, its context was public primary schools; my study considered SEN/D students in a private and a public mainstream secondary school. It appears that more studies are concerned with inclusion within the primary and early childhood education system. As an illustration, Adeleke and Oyundoyin (2016), Cornelius-Ukpepi and Opuwari (2019), Cornelius-Ukpepi and Opuwari (2019), Adeniyi et al. (2015), and Osuji-Alatilehin (2016) had their studies within the primary schools across Nigeria. Furthermore, Manuel and Adeleke's (2015) study was based on early childhood education. Focusing on early childhood and primary education makes research on SEN/D students' inclusion in secondary school scant.

My study engaged a range of inclusion stakeholders to explore their interpretations, experiences, and challenges of SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State. Through interviews with various stakeholders, my study revealed the need to enhance the inclusion of SEN/D students in secondary schools in the State. An understanding of these inclusion stakeholders' conceptualisation of inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools and their

interpretations of their experiences and challenges of including SEN/D students can improve equality and equity for SEN/D students by reducing their exclusion in mainstream secondary schools (Ainscow et al., 2019; Magnússon, 2019).

To the best of my knowledge, there is no study on IE involving private and public secondary schools in Lagos State, as known studies are conducted with public schools. Therefore, my study provides specific context and nuances of how inclusion for SEN/D students is understood in Lagos State by extending the understanding of SEN/D students' inclusion beyond the primary education system. It contributes to understanding SEN/D students' inclusion within the private and public secondary education system. Therefore, my study shows how people from different socioeconomic statuses interpret inclusion for SEN/D students and how they experience it despite the various inclusion policies in the country. Finally, my study contributes to conceptualising SEN/D students' inclusion in Lagos State based on various inclusion stakeholders' perspectives. It offers a robust account of different inclusion stakeholders' interpretations of SEN/D students' inclusion within the Lagos State context.

9.2.2 *Contributions to the Discussion on Knowledge Hegemony Between Some Global North and South Ideas Regarding SEN/D Students' Inclusion in Global South Countries*

Broadly speaking, IE can be defined as a recognition of diversity and a call to remove barriers to all learners prone to exclusion to foster equality and equity in education. Predisposition to exclusion include disabilities, gender, and family socioeconomic status (UNESCO, 1994). This position aligns with the principle of decoloniality theory, which encourages recognising and respecting diverse perspectives from scholars across regions, including the Global South, in the

discussions of phenomena such as SEN/D and inclusion for SEN/D students (Moosavi, 2020; Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018).

Inclusion for SEN/D students has been guided by perspectives from some Global North scholars and documents, which have shaped knowledge production regarding IE across contexts, including some Global South countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa (Nguyen, 2019; Walton, 2018). Since some Global North's perspectives on IE can undermine the economic capacity and pre-colonial education system in some Global South countries (See section 4.4), they can negatively impact SEN/D students' inclusion in those countries (Adigun, 2021; Walton, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to foreground knowledge from Global South countries to foster a more inclusive and balanced scholarly landscape within the IE field (Moosavi, 2020; Mbembe, 2016). Inclusion ideas from many Global South countries can present valuable insights into SEN/D students' inclusion within the region, thereby mitigating continuing dependence on Global North knowledge regarding inclusion for SEN/D students.

My study affirms that inclusion is universal (Ainscow, 2020; European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018). Participants produced inclusion interpretations that are consistent with the understanding of the phenomenon across countries (educating all learners in mainstream schools provided they can adequately meet their needs) (Honkasahta and Koutsoklenis, 2024; Leijen et al., 2021; Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Magnusson, 2019; Ainscow et al., 2006). Additionally, like in other countries, practice aligns with the need to enrich SEN/D students' learning beyond the basics to empower them to function post-education (Webster, 2022; Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Magnússon, 2019; Schuelka, 2018). Nevertheless, my study shows that despite the provision in inclusion policies such as the 2016 NPIE, inclusion

implementation has been significantly impacted by challenges such as school scarcity and inadequate resources. Notably, socioeconomic status influenced the inclusion experience of some SEN/D students in Lagos State. Therefore, the study underscores the need for the Nigerian government to consciously promote inclusion for SEN/D students, regardless of their unique requirements and socioeconomic status. Drawing from the discussion concerning inclusion interpretations and practice in Lagos State, my study maintains that promoting equality and equity for SEN/D students requires a context-specific approach. In this case, Lagos State. This viewpoint emphasises the importance of considering the dynamic interplay between local nuances and some Global North narratives regarding disability and inclusion in many Global South countries (Ainscow, 2020; Walton, 2018; Mbembe, 2016).

My study offers a contextual account of how SEN/D students' inclusion is interpreted, practised, and experienced within a state in a Global South country. It demonstrates how the voices of inclusion stakeholders can be encouraged regarding SEN/D students' inclusion. Doing so contributes to understanding SEN/D students' inclusion within my context. The study sustains the need to challenge the dominance of some Global North ideas regarding discussion on inclusion for SEN/D students within Global South countries. This may foster the development of a more effective inclusion framework that can transform SEN/D students' inclusion. Nevertheless, a synergy among inclusion ideas across different countries may be necessary for a broader understanding and implementation of inclusion for SEN/D students. Fundamentally, my study serves as an alternative perspective to some of the prevailing perspectives from some Global North scholars regarding SEN/D students' inclusion in a state within a Global South country.

9.2.3 *Methodological Contributions*

My qualitative study employs Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) elements to analyse my data. The qualitative methodological approach enabled me to analyse robust data while interrogating emerging social phenomena such as SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools. It also helped me understand from the participant's own words and experiences the meanings they attribute to SEN/D students' inclusion, their experiences, and the challenges of including SEN/D students in their settings. Therefore, combining the qualitative research approach and the CGT helped me understand and explore participants' interpretations and experiences of inclusion for SEN/D students. As inclusion recognises the values of every community member, qualitative and CGT present a robust process to empower the voices of previously unheard people through interviews and increase the richness of the findings from the data. This is a significant contribution to inclusion study as previous inclusion studies in Nigeria have focused on quantitative measures (Cornelius-Ukpepi and Opuwari, 2019; Okorosaye-Orubute and Maigida, 2018; Abakpa et al., 2017; Adeleke and Oyundoyin, 2016; Manuel and Adeleke, 2015). Hence, it provides a baseline for evaluating the conceptualisation and practice of inclusion for SEN/D students in Nigeria (Yin, 2009).

Another original methodological contribution this thesis has made to SEN/D students' inclusion is employing the decoloniality theory lens. The theory served as an analytical and philosophical framework for my study. It helped me address power issues relating to whose voice counts during my data analysis (Thambinathan and Kinsella, 2021). While perceiving my participants as co-creators, during my data analysis, I centre my concerns regarding inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools on my participants', including SEN/D students' worldview, to understand their interpretations and experiences of the subject. Hence, the

decoloniality theory lens enabled me to break hierarchical barriers between participants and researchers and access the subjective interpretations and experiences of inclusion stakeholders in Lagos State. Existing studies indicate a need for inclusion studies specifically analysed using a decoloniality theory lens. Consequently, my study extends inclusion discussion by demonstrating how the theory can effectively address power dynamics between participants and the researcher.

A further original methodological contribution to SEN/D students' inclusion study in my thesis was using a single embedded case study. The method enabled me to examine how participants experience SEN/D students' inclusion within two distinct units of analysis (a private and a public mainstream secondary school). Framing my study within these two units of analysis is ground-breaking for inclusion study in that it highlights the implications of socioeconomic status on SEN/D students' inclusion experiences in mainstream secondary schools within the context of Lagos State.

Furthermore, adopting a robust analysis method gave insight into the contextual issues that inform SEN/D students' inclusion experience in a private and a public mainstream secondary school. This pioneering approach, using a single embedded case study, enabled an effective and systematic analysis of two units of analysis. Ultimately, this methodological rigour is fundamental to the credibility of my findings (Hayes, 2022). The two units of analysis gave opposing insights regarding school environments, as illustrated in section 6.2.1. For example, unlike the private mainstream secondary school, participants from the public mainstream secondary school depict a negative inclusion experience for SEN/D students due to inadequate resource provision. I understood and constructed the effect of family socioeconomic status on SEN/D students' experience of mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State. Therefore, the two units of analysis reinforce the existence of power dynamics

related to socioeconomic status and its impact on inclusion for SEN/D students across various contexts. To the best of my knowledge, existing studies on inclusion in Lagos State have yet to adopt a single embedded case study using private and public mainstream secondary schools as units of analysis. To that end, my study has contributed to knowledge on how units of analysis can be optimised to compare SEN/D students' inclusion experience in mainstream secondary schools in the State.

My final methodological contribution is the application of the social constructivist paradigm to my study. Having considered a wide range of qualitative research methodologies, I chose the social constructivist paradigm as the most appropriate approach to explore inclusion interpretations and experiences in mainstream secondary schools in my context. My decision is informed by the tendency for the approach to capture the richness and diversity of the multiple realities of different inclusion stakeholders. This approach allowed me to view knowledge as a human construction and acknowledge the multiple realities of each participant to co-construct the meanings they assigned to SEN/D students' inclusion and their experiences of the phenomenon (Creswell and Porth, 2018; Creswell, 2013). Collaborating with the participants enabled me to generate accounts to inform a comprehensive understanding of the influencing contextual factors informing the various inclusion interpretations and experiences within the two mainstream secondary schools (Creswell and Porth, 2018).

A case study design helped me to promote the social constructivist perspective (Yin, 2014; 2009) and employed some elements of the CGT approach to analyse my data (Charmaz, 2014; 2006). I used a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding and experiences of the phenomenon (SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State) and the meaning for those involved in

including them in mainstream secondary schools in the State (Yin, 2014; 2009; Merriam, 2009). This effort enabled me to describe accounts from twenty data sources representing my participants' perspectives and experiences. The combination of case study and CGT gave additional power of precision and credibility in capturing and reporting the accounts of multiple inclusion stakeholders within mainstream secondary schools in Lagos State and corroborating data within and across the two units of analysis that reflect their interpretations and experience of inclusion for SEN/D students. This is a significant contribution to the discussion of research methods that can be used to examine SEN/D students' inclusion, particularly within a former colony like Nigeria, to deliver an improved inclusion experience for SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools.

9.3 Implications of the Findings

My findings can significantly affect how SEN/D students' inclusion is conceptualised, designed, and implemented in Nigeria. The perspectives expressed by most of the inclusion stakeholders I spoke to emphasised that disability should not be a barrier to equitable access for SEN/D students in mainstream schools. However, including SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools is subject to certain factors, such as easy access to and within mainstream secondary schools, conducive school/classroom environment, competent teachers and availability of resources that can facilitate meaningful participation by SEN/D students in school life. While the discussion about the need to reduce inequalities and promote equity for SEN/D students is rife, the gaps toward equality and equity for SEN/D students remain across different contexts (Fajemilo et al., 2020; Ainscow et al., 2019). In Nigeria, like other countries, schools still need to address the needs of SEN/D students effectively. Effective inclusion for SEN/D students would require adequate funding for more

studies to improve inclusion practices. These studies should involve all relevant inclusion stakeholders: SEN/D students and their non-SEN/D peers, parents of both groups, specialist and general teachers, school leaders, policymakers, medical practitioners, educational psychologists, and therapists like Speech and Language therapists and physiotherapists.

Studies on improving SEN/D students' inclusion are vital because they can generate an in-depth understanding of a broad range of inclusion stakeholders' thoughts regarding inclusion for SEN/D students. Equally, it will allow accessing different inclusion stakeholders' lived realities concerning SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream settings. For example, Non-SEN/D students will be able to express their perspectives on the presence of SEN/D students in the same settings. SEN/D students' parents will also express their perception of having non-SEN/D students in the same school with their children. The perspectives of a broad range of inclusion stakeholders can immensely contribute to developing contextual materials to create awareness about SEN/D, train practitioners, and support SEN/D students. This position indicates that inclusion design and implementation that respond directly to local realities and the voice of inclusion stakeholders can be immensely beneficial to the inclusion process in that it can generate comprehensive data about SEN/D students' inclusion, thereby mitigating their exclusion from and within schools, as well as within the broader community.

My findings also disrupt certain narratives regarding disability and living with disability in Nigeria. Participants evidenced that African traditional philosophies like Ubuntu and Omoluabi portray inclusiveness. They also demonstrate the holistic nature of the Nigeria pre-colonial education system. A less-resourced school displayed positive attitudes towards including SEN/D students in mainstream schools despite a

need for adequate resources. They consciously tried to enhance SEN/D students' capacity to participate in school and function in adult life by extending support beyond academic development. For example, they encourage SEN/D students to acquire sewing skills and the production of liquid soap. These findings sustain the need to project alternative narratives on inclusion. This is important because it allows countering the dominant narratives regarding SEN/D and inclusion from some Global North scholars. Besides, alternative narratives allow for diverse perspectives of scholars across regions at the heart of discussions on SEN/D and inclusion. Therefore, it will enable engaging with Global South scholars' narratives of inclusion and exclusion in their context. This can mitigate the distorted narrative regarding disability in many Global South countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa.

In addition to disrupting certain narratives regarding disability and living with disability in some Global South countries and offering an alternative narrative regarding inclusion, the findings also emphasise the need to blend elements of pre-colonial education, such as languages and cultural perspectives of the immediate environment and vocational skills, into Nigerian education. Such integration can create a more holistic and inclusive educational experience that prepares students for the complexities of our interconnected global world (Ojo et al., 2023; Fajemilo et al., 2020). Moreover, this integration is crucial because inclusive practices for SEND students are more advanced in the Global North, exemplified by countries like England (Elder and Migliarini, 2020). This viewpoint implies that, unlike other countries such as Nigeria, which are at the start of their inclusion journey, the inclusion process for SEN/D students in England has arguably tangibly addressed the full range of practical challenges regarding SEN/D students' inclusion, including underlying conceptual arguments, attitudinal and behavioural change. Moreover, since many Global North

ideas are based on an extensive scientific study for an extended period, an understanding of SEN/D and inclusion for SEN/D students based on these ideas can dispel some beliefs regarding SEN/D and mitigate their tendency to affect SEN/D students' inclusion in my context negatively. Engaging Global North's ideas on SEN/D and SEN/D students' inclusion is equally important because it can engender awareness about assistive technology, significantly enhancing support for SEN/D students. Enhanced support for these students can be advantageous in an era where hypermobility is prevalent among a growing segment of the global population.

A common thread in my data shows that socioeconomic status informs how SEN/D students are experiencing inclusion in their schools. This indicates that positive attitudes by the school community towards including SEN/D students in mainstream schools are insufficient in sustaining effective inclusion for SEN/D students. An example is the implication of insufficient facilities (chairs and tables) on SEN/D students' experience in School B, as observed in section 6.2.1. To address the persistent inequality between SEN/D students and non-SEN/D students' access to mainstream school, political leaders must note the need to address deep-rooted inequalities between SEN/D students from high and low socioeconomic status in accessing quality education. Therefore, political leaders should seek to adopt and develop interventions that mitigate the constraints confronting the opportunity for SEN/D students from low-income families to access quality education like their peers from high-income families. Unless these constraints are addressed, huge inequalities will continue to accelerate despite increasing debates on inclusion for SEN/D students.

9.4 Limitations of the Study

Regarding my study limitations, considering a larger number of participants, including community leaders, policymakers, and other professionals like medical

doctors, could have enhanced the applicability of my findings to a wider range of contexts (Creswell and Poth, 2018). However, I chose depth of research over breadth. Selecting twenty participants covering a range of inclusion stakeholders (SEN/D and non-SEN/D students, SEN/D students' parents, teachers, and mainstream schools' leaders) from two mainstream secondary schools (a public and a private) enabled me to conduct a more in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of SEN/D students' inclusion in the schools. Collecting data from two sources (one private and one public secondary school) was advantageous and beneficial in adding context to the participants' experiences.

Additionally, the use of elements of constructivist grounded theory by Charmaz (2006) strengthened my analysis of the data, prioritising the voices of the selected inclusion stakeholders and enabling me to develop a theoretical framework for understanding their interpretations of inclusion for SEN/D students, experiences, and the challenges of including them in mainstream secondary schools. As a qualitative study, my understanding of the unique cultural and social factors, such as respect and extensive exchange of pleasantries that shape conversation within the local context, guide my approach when seeking participants' consent and discussion with participants. My ability to engage some participants in the local language (Yoruba) also enabled me to communicate with the participants effectively. This, in turn, helped me build trust and rapport and experience the breadth of variation among participants. It also helped me interpret the findings and overcome misrepresentations of participants' meanings.

Another limitation of this study is that I could not interact face-to-face with participants due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Face-to-face interaction would have fostered trust and rapport between my participants. However, this was addressed by

adopting a video conversation system on Microsoft Team. This allows me to capture the nuances of human interaction, including subtle tone and body language shifts, for a more accurate understanding of participants' perspectives and experiences. Additionally, I organised initial meetings with some participants to familiarise myself with them. In addition, I ensured that participants' convenience was respected while scheduling meetings. However, my plan to strengthen trustworthiness by sharing my initial analysis of the study data with all participants was partially affected because some participants had restricted access to the internet. Therefore, some participants could not comment on my initial data as intended. Nevertheless, some participants were sent copies of the transcript and analysis for comments.

An additional limitation relates to communicating with SEN/D students who struggle with communication, particularly those who cannot hear and talk. This difficulty warranted that I engage an interpreter after obtaining informed consent from the participants. Hence, I could not have a direct conversation with the students. Nonetheless, the interpreter helped to build rapport and made the participants feel more at ease during interviews. Being aware that an interpreter's presence can shape the interview dynamics as the participant's willingness to share openly and express themselves fully can be impacted, I encouraged them to email me if they have more information. In addition, to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretations, I asked them to confirm my understanding of what they told me at the end of interviews.

9.5 Recommendations for Future Research

There has been an extensive acceptance of inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream schools across different countries, including Nigeria, and anecdotal evidence of its benefit to all students has given strong currency that SEN/D students can be accommodated and actively participate in mainstream schools. Yet, they are

increasingly excluded from and within mainstream schools in the country. This underscores the urgent need for qualitative studies on SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria because it seems that the quantitative approach is dominant in educational research in Nigeria (Okhawere and Isibor, 2021; Abakpa et al., 2017). Abakpa et al. (2017) acknowledge that there appears to be a stereotypical restriction on approaches to conducting educational research in Nigeria. According to Abakpa et al. (2017), more qualitative research on education in Nigeria needs to be undertaken. Additionally, there is a need for studies involving every IE stakeholder in Nigeria. A qualitative approach to research on SEN/D students' inclusion, particularly exploring how all inclusion stakeholders interpret inclusion for SEN/D students, their experience, and the challenges of including SEN/D students, can generate robust and in-depth data, which can, in turn, inform inclusion policy and practice in Nigeria.

Considering the implication of SEN/D on SEN/D students and their families, future research on SEN/D students' inclusion must consider a robust evaluation of SEN/D students and their parents' well-being. Furthermore, more recent studies indicate that with the increasing exclusion of SEN/D students from school in Nigeria, there is a need for rigorous engagement with the country's national policy of education, including the 2016 NPIE. This engagement is necessitated by the view that Nigerian curriculum content needs to enhance SEN/D students' holistic development to attain their full potential fully (Abdulrahman et al., 2021; Fajemilo et al., 2020; Manuel and Adeleke, 2015). A lack of inclusive curriculum content can negatively impact SEN/D students' ability to access learning and participate in the classroom (William-Brown and Hodkinson, 2019).

My findings demonstrate that while people are not opposed to including SEN/D students in mainstream schools, they demand that their inclusion be worthwhile. This

is consistent with the argument in the literature across contexts (Elder and Migliarini, 2020; Magnússon, 2019; Odunsi, 2018). Therefore, future research should focus on how to make SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream schools worthwhile by evaluating the effectiveness of their inclusion across the country, both in the private and public schools, engaging all IE stakeholders to realise the desired outcome of the Nigerian education policy, particularly the 2016 NPIE.

9.6 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I present the concluding thoughts of my thesis, which focuses on participants' understanding of IE, how they interpret their lived experience of SEN/D students' inclusion in their settings and the challenges faced in including SEN/D students in their settings. The chapter also highlights my study contributions to inclusion for SEN/D students in mainstream secondary school and IE research and practice. My study indicates that inclusion is a universal phenomenon that seeks to promote social justice, equality, and equity for every community member, including SEN/D students. This assertion is reflected in my participants' interpretations of inclusion for SEN/D students and their attitudes towards including SEN/D students in mainstream secondary school. I believe that the stakeholders' experiences of SEN/D students' inclusion in mainstream secondary schools in Nigeria lie with the Nigerian political leaders, who need to make significant and sustained changes to the education system to foster effective inclusion for SEN/D students regardless of their conditions and socioeconomic status.

While I acknowledge the enduring impact of Global North's ideas on inclusion conceptualisation and practice in former colonies like Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa, I firmly believe that the responsibility for decolonising SEN/D students' inclusion lies with Nigeria's political leadership at both the subnational and federal levels. I agree

that the Global South must decolonise inclusion practices for SEN/D students. Decolonising inclusion in the Global South implies adopting a new approach(es) to address SEN/D students' inclusion in Nigeria. This calls for analysing the effects of Global North's ideas on the former British colony's IE practice, especially the implementation of inclusion for SEN/D students. It also means that its interpretations and practice should reflect the local understanding of the phenomenon and the contextual realities. Therefore, the need for the Nigerian government to provide adequate funding for more studies on improving inclusion for SEN/D students is underscored. Studies on enhancing SEN/D students should cut across all inclusion stakeholders, including NGOs and community members.

Considering the increasing debates on inclusion for SEN/D students, Nigerian leadership must address the disparities in inclusion experiences across socioeconomic lines. Addressing SEN/D students' inclusion across socioeconomic lines implies that the county's leadership makes conscious efforts towards curtailing the constraints confronting the opportunity for SEN/D students from low-income families to access quality education like their peers from high-income families. Such efforts would include adopting and developing interventions to enhance SEN/D students from low-income families access to mainstream schools and adequate support based on their individual needs. Efforts should also include ensuring the implementation of the various inclusion policies in Nigeria and providing funding for the required facilities, personnel training, and awareness creation. It is equally essential to blend elements of pre-colonial education, such as languages and cultural perspectives of the immediate environment and vocational skills, into Nigerian education. This can mitigate SEN/D students' exclusion from mainstream secondary school and equip them for adult life. My conviction is based on the fundamental

principles of the pre-colonial education system, which promotes empowering and encouraging every community member, including persons with disabilities, to achieve independence and actively participate in the community.

Nevertheless, recognising the ambivalent nature of African traditions regarding being disabled is important. Consequently, integrating both Global North and South's knowledge regarding SEN/D and SEN/D students' inclusion is imperative. Many Global South countries can significantly benefit from some of Global North's academic writings. This is because practices in most parts of the region are often informed by extensive scientific study over an extended period, coupled with the deployment of assistive technology. These factors have arguably engendered an improved inclusion experience for SEN/D students.

In summary, this thesis strongly advocates that IE is the hallmark of service provision for all students, particularly SEN/D students. As a result, it can potentially drive efforts to evaluate Nigeria's education system, identify barriers to SEN/D students' inclusion, and foster a collaborative approach to including SEN/D students in mainstream schools. Ultimately, the thesis can enhance SEN/D students' inclusion, thereby improving their overall inclusion experience within Nigeria's mainstream secondary schools.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval letters & Research integrity certificate

University of East London

Pioneering Futures Since 1898

Dear Adeola Ayisat

Application ID: ETH1920-0271

Project title: Towards the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of an inclusive public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Lead researcher: Mrs Adeola Ayisat Adeoye

Your application to Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee was considered on the 9th of August 2021.

The decision is: **Approved**

The Committee's response is based on the protocol described in the application form and supporting documentation.

Your project has received ethical approval for 4 years from the approval date.

If you have any questions regarding this application please contact your supervisor or the secretary for the Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee.

Approval has been given for the submitted application only and the research must be conducted accordingly.

Should you wish to make any changes in connection with this research project you must complete 'An application for approval of an amendment to an existing application'.

The approval of the proposed research applies to the following research site.

Research site: The research will take place online (Microsoft Teams) and will not involve face to face interaction.

Principal Investigator / Local Collaborator: Mrs Adeola Ayisat Adeoye

Approval is given on the understanding that the UEL Code of Practice for Research and the Code of Practice for Research Ethics is adhered to.

Any adverse events or reactions that occur in connection with this research project should be reported using the University's form for Reporting an Adverse/Serious Adverse Event/Reaction.

The University will periodically audit a random sample of approved applications for ethical approval, to ensure that the research projects are conducted in compliance with the consent given by the Research Ethics Committee and to the highest standards of rigour and integrity.

Please note, it is your responsibility to retain this letter for your records.

With the Committee's best wishes for the success of the project

Yours sincerely

Fernanda Silva

Administrative Officer for Research Governance

Docklands Campus
University Way
London E16 2RD

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the embassy of good science

VIRT2UE

This certifies that

Adeola Ayisat Adeoye, University of East London

Has successfully completed the VIRT²UE blended learning program on research integrity. The program takes a virtue ethics approach, fostering reflection on what it means to be a good researcher in current practice conditions.

The participant has participated in sessions aimed at reflection and dialogue on concrete cases, experienced in research practice

Date
29-09-2021

Hosted by
Catherine Hitchens, Ethics, Integrity and Compliance Manager
University of East London

For more information on the VIRT²UE program please visit **embassy.science**

VIRT²UE has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research program under the grant agreement N 787580

Appendix 2: Letter to gatekeeper

University of East London

Pioneering Futures Since 1898

Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

21-09-2020

The principal,

XXXXXX

Lagos State,

Nigeria.

Dear Sir/Ma,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT REASEARCH

My name is Adeola Ayisat Adeoye. I am currently enrolled as a PhD. student in the School of Education and Communities at the University of East London. I am in the process of writing my thesis. The study is entitled "Towards the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of a mainstream public and private secondary school in Lagos State." The project will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Gerry Garby-Czeniawski and Doctor Janet Hoskin.

I hope that the school administration will allow me to recruit 13-16-year-old students with and without special educational need and or disabilities (SEN/D) (two each), three teachers that are involved in the inclusion of students with SEN/D, two parents of students with SEN/D and the Headteacher from the school to participate in individual interview.

Interested participants will need to sign and return consent form to the researcher (copy enclosed). However, students who volunteer to participate will be given a consent form to be signed by their parents or guardian (copy enclosed). The consent form will be returned to the researcher.

The interview process should take no longer that thirty minutes. The data generated from interviews will be analysed in line with the research questions and remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. No cost will be incurred by either your school or the individual participants. I can assure you that the pupils will be safe while working with me during the research.

The findings from the research are expected to highlight the challenges faced in the inclusion of secondary school students with SEN/D in Nigeria and explore how the understanding of such challenges can be deployed to improve the inclusion of students with SEN/D in Nigeria. The outcome may lead to the improvement in policy concerning the inclusion of students with SEN /D in Nigeria.

You can contact me through u1822565@uel.ac.uk if there is anything that is not clear or if you want more information.

If you agree, kindly sign and return the attached copy to the researcher.

Thank you for your anticipated consideration.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Adeola A. Adeoye (Mrs.)

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may contact me at my email address:

_____.

Appendix 3: Fliers

(i)

(ii)

DO YOU WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS/DISABILITY (SEN/D) IN NIGERIA?
CALLING ALL TEACHERS
My name is Adeola. I am a PhD student at the University of East London. I am looking for enthusiastic participants for my research on what school is like for students with Special Educational Needs/Disability (SEN/D) in Nigeria.
Contact me using this email address: u1822565@uel.ac.uk

(iii)

DO YOU WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS/DISABILITY (SEN/D) IN NIGERIA?
CALLING ALL STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS/DISABILITY AGED 13-16 YEARS AND THEIR FAMILIES.
My name is Adeola. I am a PhD student at the University of East London. I am looking for enthusiastic participants for my research on what school is like for students with Special Educational Needs/Disability (SEN/D) in Nigeria.
Contact me using this email address: u1822565@uel.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Letter for interview

University of East London

Pioneering Futures Since 1898

Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

Date: xxx

The Principal Investigator/Director of Studies

Professor Gerry Czerniawski

g.czerniawski@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Dr. Janet Hoskin

j.hoskin@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Student researcher

Adeola Ayisat Adeoye

Close42, H81, Victoria Garden City, Ajah, Lagos.

u1822565@uel.ac.uk ID: U1822565

Student researcher

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u1822565@uel.ac.uk ID: U1822565

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Project Title

Towards the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of a mainstream public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Dear intending participant,

I am hereby seeking your consent to engage you as participants in this exercise. Data will be collected through individual interview which I intend to conduct with willing Head teachers, teachers, students with and without special educational needs/disabilities, and parents of students with special educational needs/disabilities.

This work will help me to get a degree at my university in England. I am hoping that you will participate in the study as a volunteer. This means that you have the right to decide not to take part at any time, without giving a reason. If you are happy to take part, I will like you to talk with me about your personal experience.

The findings from the research are expected to highlight the challenges faced in the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities in Lagos State and how to improve their inclusion. The outcome may lead to the improvement in policy concerning the inclusion of students with special educational needs/disabilities in Lagos State and Nigeria generally.

Attached to this information letter is the consent form about my research. Kindly send the consent form back to me within two weeks through the enclosed self-addressed envelope to confirm to me that you have agreed to take part in the study.

I will engage you in an individual interview about the challenges encountered in the inclusion of students with special educational needs and or disabilities in your school. I plan to work with you for 30 minutes. I will use my tape recorder and research notebook to record the information. I will ask you if you agree for me to record and use your data. If you seem unhappy with my questions during interview and you are sad as a result, I will change the topic to another one.

I will keep all the information you give me safely and use it for the purpose for which you have agreed to give the information. I will give back written copies of the information in paper form to you. You will read and check the information on the paper to ensure that I have recorded your information correctly. However, you will not be

able to withdraw consent after I have transcribed the audio information. Audio recorded information will be transcribed within twenty hours of interview.

Please also note the following:

- You will take part as a volunteer.
- If you do take part, you can change your mind and stop being part of the research·
- You do not have to answer my questions if you do not want to.

Finally, I will write the data in my doctorate degree thesis. Your real names and the school name will be written in nicknames in my degree thesis. Indicating that your interest and safety is assured.

Please read the consent form attached to this letter. If you agree to take part, initial, and sign the forms. Please send the form to me through the self-addressed envelope to confirm to me that you have agreed to participate in the research.

You can contact me on 08099343053 if there is anything that is not clear or if you want more information. I am assuring you that you will be safe as I work with you during the study.

[redacted]

Adeola A. Adeoye

Appendix 5: Information sheets/Consent/Assent forms

Information sheet for parent of student without SEN/D

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Research Integrity

The University adheres to its responsibility to promote and support the highest standard of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research, observing the appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks.

The University is committed to preserving your dignity, rights, safety and well¬being and as such it is a mandatory requirement of the University that formal ethical approval, from the appropriate Research Ethics Committee, is granted before research with human participants, human data human material, personal and/or sensitive data, or non-human animal commences.

The purpose of this Participant Information Sheet is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this research project.

The Principal Investigator/Director of Studies

Professor Gerry Czerniawski

g.czerniawski@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Dr. Janet Hoskin

j.hoskin@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Student researcher

Adeola Ayisat Adeoye

University of East London

Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

U1822565@uel.ac.uk

Project Title

[MPhil/PhD]

Toward the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of an inclusive public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Project Description

This is a small scale study that aims to explore the challenges of including students with SEN/D in secondary schools in Nigeria and how to improve their experiences. The objectives of the study are, (1) to identify the challenges faced in the inclusion of students with SEN/D in Nigeria and (2) to explore how the understanding of the identified challenges can be used to improve the inclusion of students with SEN/D in Nigeria.

I am hoping that your child will participate in the study as a volunteer. This means that s/he has the right to decide not to take part at any time, without giving a reason. As parents, you also have the right to decide that your child should not take part in the project at any time without giving a reason.

I will engage your child in an individual interview for up to thirty five minutes, about his/her experience in his/her school. S/he will be engaged in individual interview online through Microsoft Teams. I will record our conversation on password protected UEL Microsoft Teams.

Please note that your child's identity and the identity of your child's school will not be disclosed, and his/her contribution will remain anonymous in my thesis and any dissemination material that are produced from this project.

If s/he is not able to answer my questions, I will ask him/her to represent his/her response with pictures or in writing. Whatever information your child is willing to give me will be appreciated, and it indicates that s/he has been able to add his/her voice to the discussion on the inclusion of students with SEN/D in Nigeria.

I have obtained the Disclosure and Barring Service certificate in line with my university requirement to determine that I am fit to work with children and vulnerable person.

Confidentiality of the Data

This study is a small-scale study. Data will be collected through individual interviews with two Headteachers, six teachers, eight students with and without SEN/D, and four parents of students with SEN/D. All interviews and data collection will be stored on a password protected computer and as separate folders in password protected UEL Microsoft One Drive. Data generated during the research will be protected in accordance with the University of East London Data Protection Act, 2018. However, if your child discloses that s/he or someone they know is at risk of harm, I will be obliged to report to the relevant authority.

Once the program has been completed, video and transcribed data will be destroyed after five years. Video and transcribed data will be deleted from my laptop and the external hard drive using file shredder. In line with UEL's Research Data Management Policy, data are to be reviewed at the end of the project and every 5 years thereafter until data are transferred or destroyed.

Please read the consent form attached to this letter. If you are happy for your child to take part, and s/he is willing to take part (there is a child-friendly assent form for your child to sign), initial and sign the form. Please send the form to me through my email address (u1822565@uel.ac.uk) to confirm to me that you have agreed that your child can participate, and your child is also willing to take part in the research.

Location

All interviews will take place online via Microsoft Teams. Your choice on time and date will be respected.

Remuneration

There is no plan to give remuneration to participants.

Disclaimer

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time during the research. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without an obligation to give a reason. Please note that your data can be withdrawn up to the point of data analysis – after this point it may not be possible if your data is anonymised.

Ethical Approval for the research project has been granted by University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (URES).

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:

Catherine Hitchens, Ethics, Integrity and Compliance Manager, Office for Postgraduates, Research and Engagement, University of East London, Docklands Campus, London, E16 2RD. Telephone: [redacted]. Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk

For general enquiries about the research please contact the Principal Investigator on the contact details at the top of this sheet.

Consent form for parent of students without SEN/D.

Information sheet for parent of student with SEN/D

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The purpose of this Participant Information Sheet is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this research project.

The Principal Investigator/Director of Studies

Professor Gerry Czerniawski

g.czerniawski@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Dr. Janet Hoskin

j.hoskin@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Student researcher

Adeola Ayisat Adeoye

University of East London

Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

U1822565@uel.ac.uk

Project Title

[MPhil/PhD]

Toward the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of an inclusive public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Project Description

This is a small scale study that aims to explore the challenges of including students with SEN/D in secondary schools in Nigeria and how to improve their experiences. The objectives of the study are, (1) to identify the challenges faced in the inclusion of students with SEN/D in Nigeria and (2) to explore how the understanding of the identified challenges can be used to improve the inclusion of students with SEN/D in Nigeria.

I am hoping that your child will participate in the study as a volunteer. This means that s/he has the right to decide not to take part at any time, without giving a reason. As parents, you also have the right to decide that your child should not take part in the project at any time without giving a reason.

I will engage your child in an individual interview for up to thirty five minutes, about his/her experience in his/her school. S/he will be engaged in individual interview online through Microsoft Teams. I will record our conversation on password protected UEL Microsoft Teams.

Please note that your child's identity and the identity of your child's school will not be disclosed, and his/her contribution will remain anonymous in my thesis and any dissemination material that are produced from this project.

If s/he is not able to answer my questions, I will ask him/her to represent his/her response with pictures or in writing. Whatever information your child is willing to give me will be appreciated, and it indicates that s/he has been able to add his/her voice to the discussion on the inclusion of students with SEN/D in Nigeria.

I have obtained the Disclosure and Barring Service certificate in line with my university requirement to determine that I am fit to work with children and vulnerable person.

Confidentiality of the Data

This study is a small-scale study. Data will be collected through individual interviews with two Headteachers, six teachers, eight students with and without SEN/D, and four parents of students with SEN/D. All interviews and data collection will be stored on a password protected computer and as separate folders in password protected UEL Microsoft One Drive. Data generated during the research will be protected in accordance with the University of East London Data Protection Act, 2018. However, if your child discloses that s/he or someone they know is at risk of harm, I will be obliged to report to the relevant authority.

Once the program has been completed, video and transcribed data will be destroyed after five years. Video and transcribed data will be deleted from my laptop and the external hard drive using file shredder. In line with UEL's Research Data Management Policy, data are to be reviewed at the end of the project and every 5 years thereafter until data are transferred or destroyed.

Please read the consent form attached to this letter. If you are happy for your child to take part, and s/he is willing to take part (there is a child-friendly assent form for your child to sign), initial and sign the form. Please send the form to me through my email address (u1822565@uel.ac.uk) to confirm to me that you have agreed that your child can participate, and your child is also willing to take part in the research.

Location

All interviews will take place online via the Microsoft Teams. Your choice on time and date will be respected.

Remuneration

There is no plan to give remuneration to participants.

Disclaimer

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time during the research. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without an obligation to give a reason. Please note that your data can be withdrawn up to the point of data analysis – after this point it may not be possible if your data is anonymised.

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Catherine Hitchens, Ethics, Integrity and Compliance Manager, Office for Postgraduates, Research and Engagement, University of East London, Docklands Campus, London, E16 2RD. Telephone: [redacted]. Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk

For general enquiries about the research please contact the Principal Investigator on the contact details at the top of this sheet.

University of East London

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Consent to Participate in a Program Involving the Use of Human Participants.

MPhil/PhD

Adeola Ayisat Adeola

Please tick as appropriate:

	YES	NO
I have read the information leaflet relating to the above program of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.		
I confirm that I have met with my child regarding the above study and, together, we have had the opportunity to discuss and consider the information, asked questions, and had these answered satisfactorily.		
I can confirm that my child has agreed to participate in the study.		
I understand that my child's participation in the study is voluntary and that s/he is free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.		
I understand that the interview will be audio taped.		
I understand that my child's involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential as far as possible. Only the researchers involved in the study, and her supervisors will have access to the data.		
I understand that maintaining strict confidentiality may be affected by the fact that the sample size is small.		
I understand that if during the interview my child disclose that s/he is in danger, or s/he is capable of endangering someone else. Such disclosures may be reported to the relevant authority.		

I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in the researcher's thesis.		
I agree that any data collected may be passed to the researcher's' supervisors and the University of East London Repository in accordance with the policy on data protection of the University of East London.		
I understand that the data supplied in the interview will be included in the researcher's thesis.		
It has been explained to me what will happen once the program has been completed.		
I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time during the research without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I understand that my data can be withdrawn up to the point of data transcription and that after this point it may not be possible.		
I hereby freely and fully consent to participating in the study which has been fully explained to me and for the information obtained to be used in relevant research publications.		

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)
…….

Participant's Signature
……
Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

ADEOLA A. ADEOYE
Investigator's Signature

Date: …….

Adult information sheet/consent form

Parent personal information sheet

University of East London

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Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

Date xxx

The Principal Investigator/Director of Studies

Professor Gerry Czerniawski

g.czerniawski@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Dr. Janet Hoskin

j.hoskin@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Student researcher

Adeola Ayisat Adeoye

Close42, H81, Victoria Garden City, Ajah, Lagos.

u1822565@uel.ac.uk ID: U1822565

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Project Title

Towards the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of a mainstream public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Dear XXXXX,

My name is Adeola Ayisat Adeoye. I am currently enrolled as a PhD student in the School of Education and Communities at the University of East London. I am in the process of writing my thesis

I am hoping that you will participate in the study as a volunteer. This means that you have the right to decide not to take part at any time, without giving a reason.

The findings from the research are expected to highlight the challenges faced in the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities in Lagos State and how to improve their inclusion. The outcome may lead to the improvement in policy concerning the inclusion of students with special educational needs/disabilities in Lagos State and Nigeria generally.

I am hereby seeking your consent to engage you as participants in this exercise. Data will be collected through individual interview which I intend to conduct with willing Head teachers, teachers, students with and without special educational needs/disabilities, and parents of students with special educational needs/disabilities.

The school Headteacher has agreed that I should do this research in your child's school. Your child has been chosen to take part in the research. Now, I need your permission for you to take part in the study as well. Attached to this information letter is the consent form about my research.

I will engage you in an individual interview about the challenges encountered in the inclusion of students with special educational needs in your child's school. I plan to work with you for 30 minutes. I will use my tape recorder and research notebook to record the information. I will ask you if you agree for me to record and use your data. If you seem unhappy with my questions during interview and you are sad as a result, I will change the topic to another one.

I will keep all the information you give me safely and use it for the purpose for which you have agreed to give the information. I will give back written copies of the information in paper form to you. You will read and check the information on the paper to ensure that I have recorded your information correctly. However, you will not be able to withdraw consent after I have transcribed the audio information. Audio recorded information will be transcribed within twenty hours of interview.

Please also note the following:

- You will take part as a volunteer.
- If you do take part, you can change your mind and stop being part of the research·
- You do not have to answer my questions if you do not want to.

Finally, I will write the data in my doctorate degree thesis. Your real names and the school name will be written in nicknames in my degree thesis. Indicating that your interest and safety is assured.

Please read the consent form attached to this letter. If you agree to take part, initial, and sign the form. Please send the form to me through your child or the teacher to confirm to me that you have agreed that you have agreed to participate in the research.

You can contact me on 08099343053 if there is anything that is not clear or if you want more information. I am assuring you that you and your child will be safe as I work with you during the study.

Thank you for your anticipated consideration.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Adeola A. Adeoye (Mrs.)

Teachers' information sheet

University of East London

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The purpose of this Participant Information Sheet is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this research project.

The Principal Investigator/Director of Studies

Professor Gerry Czerniawski

g.czerniawski@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Dr. Janet Hoskin

j.hoskin@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Student researcher

Adeola Ayisat Adeoye

University of East London

Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

U1822565@uel.ac.uk

Project Title

[MPhil/PhD]

Toward the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of an inclusive public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Project Description

This is a small scale study that aims to explore the challenges of including students with SEN/D in secondary schools in Nigeria and how to improve their experiences. The objectives of the study are, (1) to identify the challenges faced in the inclusion of students with SEN/D in Nigeria and (2) to explore how the understanding of the identified challenges can be used to improve the inclusion of students with SEN/D in Nigeria.

You will be taking part in an online interview via Microsoft Teams about your personal experience in relation to the inclusion of students with SEN/D in your school and how practice can be improved.

Please note that your identity and the identity of your school will not be disclosed and your contribution will remain anonymous in my thesis and any dissemination material that are produced from this project. I plan to work with you for 60 minutes. The interview will be recorded on Microsoft Teams.

Confidentiality of the Data

This study is a small-scale study. Data will be collected through individual interview with two Headteachers, six teachers, eight students with and without SEN/D, and four parents of students with SEN/D. All interviews and data collection will be stored on a password protected computer and as separate folders in password protected UEL Microsoft One Drive. Data generated during the research will be protected in accordance with the University of East London Data Protection Act, 2018. However, if disclosure indicates that you or someone else is at serious risk of harm, I will be obliged to report to the relevant authority.

Once the program has been completed, all data will be kept in password protected folder in my laptop for five years. After five years, video and transcribed data will be destroyed. Video and transcribed data will be deleted from my laptop and the external hard drive using file shredder. In line with UEL's Research Data Management Policy, data are to be reviewed at the end of the project and every 5 years thereafter until data are transferred or destroyed.

Location

All interviews will take place online via Microsoft Teams.

Remuneration

There is no plan to give remuneration to participants.

Disclaimer

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time during the research. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without an obligation to give a reason. Please note that your data can be withdrawn up to the point of data analysis – after this point it may not be possible if your data is anonymised.

Ethical Approval for the research project has been granted by University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (URES).

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:

Catherine Hitchens, Ethics, Integrity and Compliance Manager, Office for Postgraduates, Research and Engagement, University of East London, Docklands Campus, London, E16 2RD. Telephone: 020 8223 6683. Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk

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University of East London

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Consent to Participate in a Program Involving the Use of Human Participants.

MPhil/PhD

Adeola Ayisat Adeola

Please tick as appropriate:

	YES	NO
I have read the information leaflet relating to the above program of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purpose of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.		
I understand that the interview will be audio taped.		
I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential as far as possible. Only the researchers involved in the study, and her supervisors will have access to the data.		
I understand that maintaining strict confidentiality may be affected by the fact that the sample size is small.		
I understand that if during the interview I disclose that I am in danger or I am capable of endangering someone else. Such disclosures may be reported to the relevant authority.		
I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in the researcher's thesis.		
I agree that any data collected may be passed to the researcher's' supervisors and the University of East London Repository in accordance with the policy on data protection of the University of East London.		

I understand that the data supplied in the interview will be included in the researcher's thesis.		
It has been explained to me what will happen once the program has been completed.		
I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time during the research without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I understand that my data can be withdrawn up to the point of data transcription and that after this point it may not be possible.		
I hereby freely and fully consent to participating in the study which has been fully explained to me and for the information obtained to be used in relevant research publications.		

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…….

Participant's Signature

……

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

ADEOLA A. ADEOYE

Investigator's Signature

[redacted]

Date: …….

Students without SEND information sheet and Assent form

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The Principal Investigator/Director of Studies

Professor Gerry Czerniawski

g.czerniawski@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Dr. Janet Hoskin

j.hoskin@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Student researcher

Adeola Ayisat Adeoye

University of East London

Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

U1822565@uel.ac.uk

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider whether to participate in this study.

Project Title

[MPhil/PhD]

Toward the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of an inclusive public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Project Description

This is a small scale study that aims to explore the challenges of including students with SEN/D in secondary schools in Nigeria and how to improve their experiences. The objectives of the study are, (1) to identify the challenges faced in the inclusion of students with SEN/D in Nigeria and (2) to explore how the understanding of the identified challenges can be used to improve the inclusion of students with SEN/D in Nigeria.

You will be taking part in an online interview via Microsoft Teams. Your participation in this study will require you to talk to me about how you feel about the inclusion of your peers with special educational needs and or disabilities in your school.

When I write about what you say, I will change your name and your school so no one will know it is you. I plan to work with you for thirty five minutes, but if you think that you need a break, I will be willing to give you a break. I am also ready to move the interview to another time or day, if that will make you happy.

You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do take part, you can change your mind and stop being part of the research. If you stop taking part, no one will be unhappy with you, and it will not affect your schoolwork in any way.

You do not have to answer my questions if you do not want to. I will give you the option of answering my questions by drawing your answers and explaining what it means or write your answers on a piece of paper.

You may choose an adult you are comfortable with to stay with you during the interview.

I will record our conversation on password protected UEL Microsoft Teams. When you do tell me things, I will check with you that I have noted the information correctly.

The findings from the research are expected to show the challenges children with special needs are facing in school and how to improve their experiences. Your

contribution may help students with SEN/D in Nigeria have better experience in schools.

I am assuring you that you will be safe as I work with you during the study as I have obtained the Disclosure and Barring Service certificate in accordance with my university requirement to ascertain that I am fit to work with children and vulnerable persons.

I will give you time to think about my request. Please read this information sheet carefully and let me know if you like to take part in the study.

Confidentiality of the Data

This study is a small-scale study. Data will be collected through individual interview from twenty willing participants including, two Headteachers, six teachers, eight students with and without SEN/D, and four parents of students with SEN/D. All interviews and data collection will be stored on a password protected computer and as separate folders in password protected UEL Microsoft One Drive. Data generated during the research will be protected in accordance with The University of East London Data Protection Act, 2018. No one will know about what you tell me, unless I think that you or anyone else is in danger.

Once the program has been completed, video and transcribed data will be destroyed. Video and transcribed data will be deleted from my laptop and the external hard drive using file shredder. In line with UEL's Research Data Management Policy, data are to be reviewed at the end of the project and every 5 years thereafter until data are transferred or destroyed.

Location

The individual interview will be online via Microsoft Team. Your choice of time and date will be respected.

Remuneration

I will not give you money for you to take part in this research.

Disclaimer

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time during the research. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without an obligation to give a reason. Please note that your data can be withdrawn up to the point of data analysis - after this point it may not be possible if your data is anonymised.

Ethical Approval for the research project has been granted by University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (URES).

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Catherine Hitchens, Ethics, Integrity and Compliance Manager, Office for Postgraduates, Research and Engagement, University of East London, Docklands Campus, London, E16 2RD. Telephone: [redacted]. Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk

For general enquiries about the research please contact the Principal Investigator on the contact details at the top of this sheet.

Assent form for student without SEN/D

University of East London

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UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

Consent to Participate in a Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants.

Full title of the programme

[MPhil/PhD]

Adeola Ayisat Adeoye

Dear Student,

My name is Adeola Adeoye, and the reason for this letter is to ask if you want to be in a research study I am doing. By "research" I mean that I am trying to find out more about something. In this study I am trying to find out about the experiences of students with special educational needs and or disabilities of schooling with other students without special educational needs and or disabilities in the same school.

I am now going to describe what you will do if you agree to be in this study. Please read the information below carefully and ask any questions you have before you decide whether to be in the study or not.

WHAT I WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO

" You will speak with me on the internet (Microsoft Teams) on your experiences and feelings when you are in school, what you want to change and how you think they can be changed.

" I will speak with you for about thirty five minutes. The interview may continue if you still want to continue talking to me.

" You will answer my questions from your house or school.

" You may choose an adult you are comfortable with to stay with you during the interview.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

" Your parents have given permission for you to talk to me. But it is still your choice to make.

" Your parents have contact details of my university if you want to ask me or my lecturers any questions about this study.

" We can stop our conversation at any time, just let me know.

" Nothing bad will happen to you if you do not want to be in the study, no one will be unhappy with you, and it will not hurt your grade in the class.

" I will make a recording of what you say during the meeting so that I can keep it and write what you told me in a written form.

" When I write about what you say, I will change your name and your school so no one will know it is you.

" I will give you the option of answering my questions by drawing your answers and explaining what it means or write your answers on a piece of paper.

" When you do tell me things, I will check with you that I have noted the information correctly.

" After the interview, you can tell me you don't want to be part of the study anymore and that is fine.

" No one else will know about what you say unless you tell me about someone who might hurt you or anyone else. Then, I will have to tell someone.

" You will not receive any special rewards or extra credit points for agreeing to be in this study. You can feel good about helping me to make things better for other students with special educational needs and or disability students who might have problems at their school.

" I am assuring you that you will be safe as I work with you during the study as I have obtained a Disclosure and Barring Service certificate in accordance with the University of East London requirement, to ascertain that I am fit to work with children and vulnerable persons.

" I will give you time to think about my request and to discuss with your parents whether you can be part of the study.

" Everything you tell me will be protected in accordance with the University of East London Data Protection Act, 2018 and once I am done with the programme, I will destroy everything you tell me from my computer after five years.

" The names of my supervisors are Professor Gerry Czerniawski (g.czerniawski@uel.ac.uk) and Dr. Janet Hoskin (j.hoskin@uel.ac.uk).

Please tick to say you are happy to take part in this study:

YES

NO

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information on this form or that I have read the information on this form aloud to you, and that all your questions about this research study have been answered.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

Participant's Signature

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

ADEOLA A. ADEOYE

[redacted]

Investigator's Signature

Date:

Thank you very much.

Students with SEND information sheet and Assent form.

University of East London

Pioneering Futures Since 1898

University of East London

Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

Research Integrity

The University adheres to its responsibility to promote and support the highest standard of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research, observing the appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks.

The University is committed to preserving your dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing and as such it is a mandatory requirement of the University that formal ethical approval, from the appropriate Research Ethics Committee, is granted before research with human participants, human data human material, personal and/or sensitive data, or non-human animal commences.

The purpose of this Participant Information Sheet is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this research project.

The Principal Investigator/Director of Studies

Professor Gerry Czerniawski

g.czerniawski@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Dr. Janet Hoskin

j.hoskin@uel.ac.uk

[redacted]

Student researcher

Adeola Ayisat Adeoye

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University of East London

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University of East London

Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider whether to participate in this study.

University of East London

Water Lane, London E15 4LZ

Project Title

[MPhil/PhD]

Toward the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of an inclusive public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

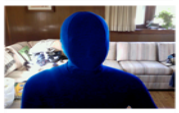
WHO I AM AND WHAT I AM DOING

My name is Adeola Adeoye	
I am going to ask you what is going on in your school.	

WHAT I WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO

You will speak with me on the internet through Microsoft Teams from your home or school.	
You can have your parent or support worker with you to help you answer the questions.	

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Your parents have given permission for you to talk to me.	
We can stop our conversation at any time – just let me know.	
No one will know about what you tell me, unless I think that you or anyone else is in danger.	
After the interview, you can tell me you don't want to be part of the study anymore and that is fine.	
No one else will know about what you say unless I think you or anyone else is in danger.	

Assent form for student with SEN/D

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to Participate in a Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants.

Full title of the programme
[MPhil/PhD]

Adeola Ayisat Adeoye

Dear Student, please tick to say you are happy to take part in this study:

YES

NO

Name Date

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

ADEOLA A. ADEOYE

Investigator's Signature

Date:

Appendix 6: Observation Note Guide

Aim: To guide specific observations of non-verbal cues during conversations with participants. Also, how can what I observe during conversations help shape interview questions and when to stop interviews if necessary.

To be observed	Questions to ask	What to do during and after interviews
What are the non-verbal expressions (facial expressions/body language) given by participants during conversations?	• What triggers these non-verbal cues? • What are the possible messages being communicated through the non-verbal cues? • How do non-verbal expressions relate to the ongoing conversation?	• Ask questions differently. • Reassure participants. • Stop/reschedule interview. • Ask to change interview location. • Give a break. • Give vulnerable participants (SEN/D students, Non-SEN/D students, SEN/D students' Parents) options of sending their responses through other means (email, pictorial representations of their thought, etc).

Appendix 7: Interview guides

(i)

Interview schedule (Headteacher)

Opening

Thank you for willing to share your experiences and understandings of the challenges students with special education needs and or disability (SEN/D) face in this school with me.

I am very enthusiastic about this research and feel particularly honoured to be interacting with you.

Together, we will be talking about your perception of the challenges faced in the inclusion of students with SEN/D in this school. Additionally, we will be discussing how their inclusion can be improved. Your stories may help researchers and other stakeholders appreciate the experiences of students with SEN and consequently, further study on how to improve their experience can be carried out. Similarly, policy and funding may be deployed to address such challenges.

I will be asking you several questions that will help us to discover that. I will use my tape recorder and notebook to record the discussions. Feel free to stop me at any time as we work together.

Title: Towards the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of a mainstream public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Duration: This interview is estimated to last for 30minutes. I will be willing to extend the time if you feel you need more time to fully express your view.

Remember that you are not under obligation to answer any question you are not comfortable with.

The body

1. Talk to me about yourself and what you do here.
2. Can you walk me through the experience of students with SEN/D in this school?
3. To what extent does the school plan for the students with SEN/D?
4. I would like to understand the enrolment process of your school.
5. What are the process and procedure in place to help all stakeholders (teachers, other staff, parents, and students) to support students with SEN/D in the school?
6. What provisions are available to the pupils with SEN/D in your school?
7. Does the school have the copy of documents that address inclusive education at state/national level?
8. Tell me how is the school monitored for effective inclusive practice?
9. I would like to know about the level of collaboration between your school and other professionals/agencies.
10. Tell me about the changes you would like to see.

The closing

Summary

How was this interviewing experience?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Appreciation: I sincerely appreciate your time and responses to the questions.

(ii)

Interview schedule (Parents of students with SEN/D)

Opening

Thank you for willing to share your experiences and understandings of the challenges students with special education needs and or disability (SEN/D) face in this school with me.

I am very enthusiastic about this research and feel particularly honoured to be interacting with you.

Together, we will be talking about your perception of the challenges faced in the inclusion of students with SEN/D in this school. Additionally, we will be discussing how their inclusion can be improved. Your stories may help researchers and other stakeholders appreciate the experiences of students with SEN and consequently, further study on how to improve their experience can be carried out. Similarly, policy and funding may be deployed to address such challenges.

I will be asking you several questions that will help us to discover that. I will use my tape recorder and notebook to record the discussions. Feel free to stop me at any time as we work together.

Title: Towards the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of a mainstream public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Duration: This interview is estimated to last for 30minutes. I will be willing to extend the time if you feel you need more time to fully express your view.

Remember that you are not under obligation to answer any question you are not comfortable with.

The body

1. Talk to me about yourself and how long your child has been in this school.
2. Can you walk me through your experience as a parent in this school?
3. Tell me your experience in getting a school for your child.

4. Can you walk me through the process of enrolment and subsequent integration into the school environment?
5. Tell me how you feel about the support your child is receiving in the school.
6. How involved are you with the school in the education of your child?
7. What provisions are available to the pupils with SEN/D in this school?
8. Tell me about the changes you would like to see.

The closing

Summary

How was this interviewing experience?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Appreciation: I sincerely appreciate your time and responses to the questions.

(iii)

Interview schedule (Student with SEN/D)

Opening

Thank you for willing to share your experiences and understandings of the challenges students with special education needs and or disability (SEN/D) face in this school with me.

I am very enthusiastic about this research and feel particularly honoured to be interacting with you.

Together, we will be talking about your perception of the challenges you face in this school. Additionally, we will be discussing how your experience can can be improved. Your stories may help researchers and other stakeholders appreciate the experiences of students with SEN and consequently, further study on how to improve their experience can be carried out. Similarly, policy and funding may be deployed to address such challenges.

I will be asking you several questions that will help us to discover that. I will use my tape recorder and notebook to record the discussions. Feel free to stop me at any time as we work together.

Besides, you have the option of writing or drawing your response to my questions if that will make you comfortable.

Title: Towards the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of a mainstream public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Duration: This interview is estimated to last for 30minutes. I will be willing to extend the time if you feel you need more time to fully express your view.

Remember that you are not under obligation to answer any question you are not comfortable with.

The body

1. Tell me about yourself
2. How long have you been in this school?

3. What is your experience of this school?
4. Would you walk me through your experience in the classroom?
5. Do you think that your learning needs are being met by your teachers?
6. What provisions are available to the pupils with SEN/D in your school?
7. Tell me about how actively involved you are in extracurricular activities in the school.
8. Tell me about the changes you would like to see.

The closing

Summary

How was this interviewing experience?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Appreciation: I sincerely appreciate your time and responses to the questions.

(iv)

Interview schedule (Teacher)

Opening

Thank you for willing to share your experiences and understandings of the challenges students with special education needs and or disability (SEN/D) face in this school with me.

I am very enthusiastic about this research and feel particularly honoured to be interacting with you.

Together, we will be talking about your perception of the challenges faced in the inclusion of students with SEN/D in this school. Additionally, we will be discussing how their inclusion can be improved. Your stories may help researchers and other stakeholders appreciate the experiences of students with SEN and consequently, further study on how to improve their experience can be carried out. Similarly, policy and funding may be deployed to address such challenges.

I will be asking you several questions that will help us to discover that. I will use my tape recorder and notebook to record the discussions. Feel free to stop me at any time as we work together.

Title: Towards the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of a mainstream public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Duration: This interview is estimated to last for 30minutes. I will be willing to extend the time if you feel you need more time to fully express your view.

Remember that you are not under obligation to answer any question you are not comfortable with.

The body

1. Talk to me about yourself and what you do here.
2. Can you walk me through your experience as a teacher in this school?
3. Tell me how you feel having students with differences in your class
4. What in your opinion are responsible for differences in students?

5. How do you adapt daily schedule to meet the needs of students with SEN/D?
6. Would you give insight into how you plan your lesson?
7. Tell me how you attend to diversity in the classroom during teaching learning.
8. How do you assess students?
9. What provisions are available to the pupils with SEN/D in your school?
10. Tell me about the changes you would like to see.

The closing

Summary

How was this interviewing experience?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Appreciation: I sincerely appreciate your time and responses to the questions.

(V)

Interview schedule (Students without SEN/D)

Opening

Thank you for willing to share your experiences and understandings of the challenges students with special education needs and or disability (SEN/D) face in this school with me.

I am very enthusiastic about this research and feel particularly honoured to be interacting with you.

Together, we will be talking about your perception of the challenges faced by your peers with SEN/D in this school. Additionally, we will be discussing how their experience can be improved. Your stories may help researchers and other stakeholders appreciate the experiences of students with SEN/D and consequently, further study on how to improve their experience can be carried out. Similarly, policy and funding may be deployed to address such challenges.

I will be asking you several questions that will help us to discover that. I will use my tape recorder and notebook to record the discussions. Feel free to stop me at any time as we work together.

Title: Towards the improvement of the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs/disabilities (SEN/D) in Nigeria: A case study of a mainstream public and private secondary school in Lagos State.

Duration: This interview is estimated to last for 30minutes. I will be willing to extend the time if you feel you need more time to fully express your view.

Remember that you are not under obligation to answer any question you are not comfortable with.

The body

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. How long you have been in this school?
3. Talk to me about your experience in this school.
4. Would you like to walk me through the experience of students with SEN/D in this school?

5. Has there been effort to improve the experience of students with SEN/D in this school?
6. What provisions are available to the pupils with SEN/D in your school?
7. Tell me about the changes you would like to see.

The closing

Summary

How was this interviewing experience?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

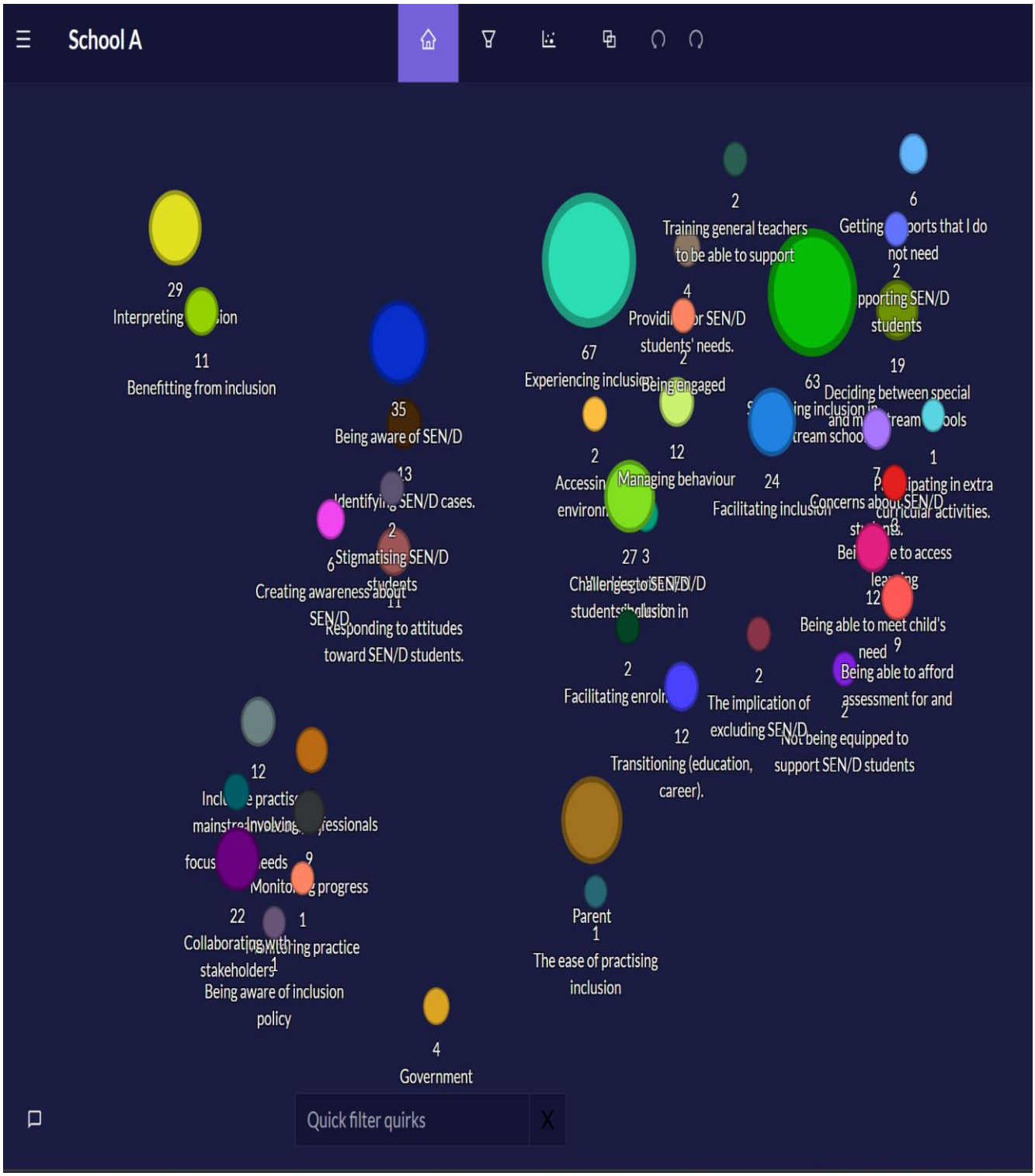
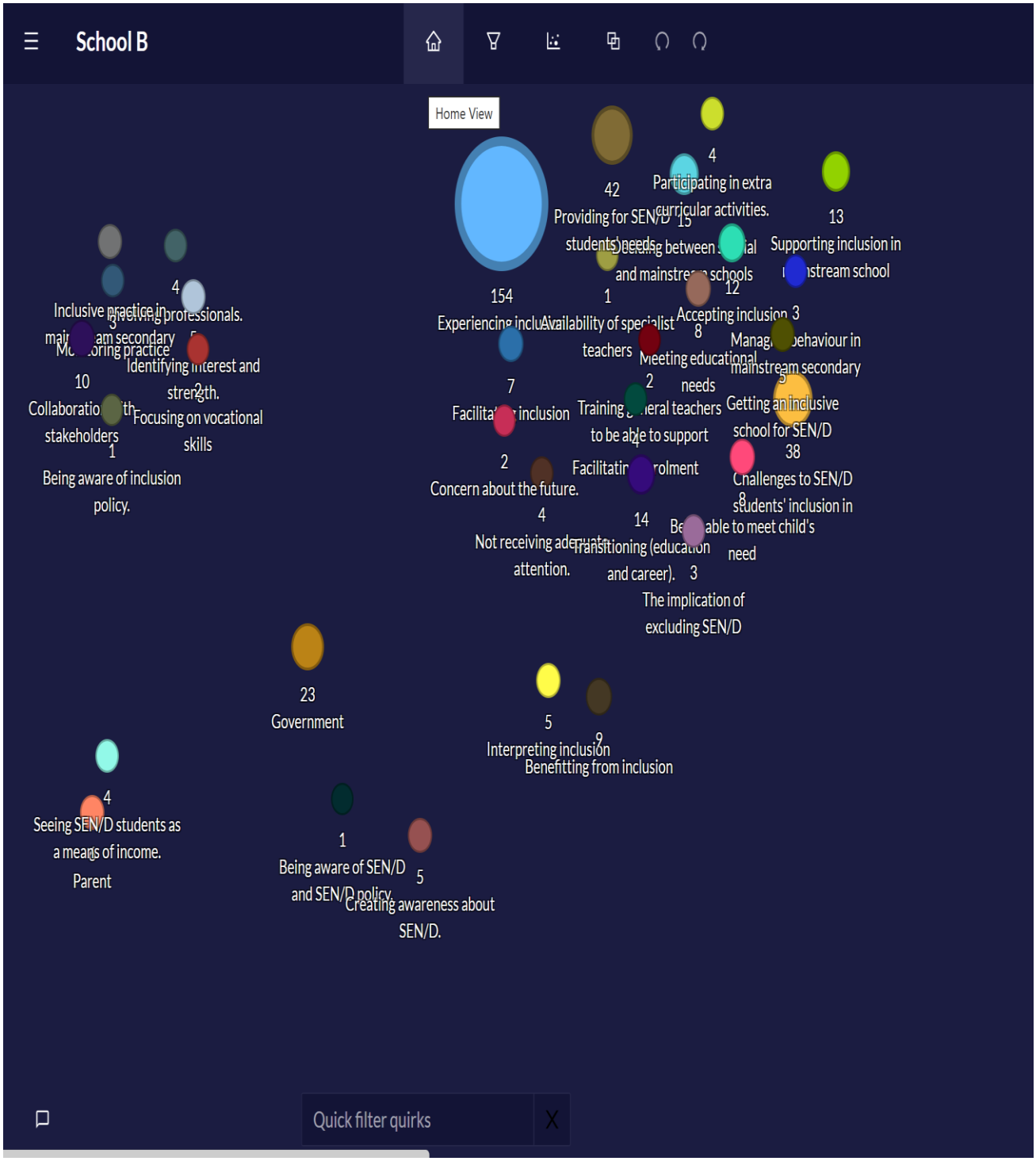
Appreciation: I sincerely appreciate your time and responses to the questions.

Appendix 8 : Themes and sub-themes

Main theme	**Sub-theme**
Inclusion as Place	Geographical location for including SEN/D students • Being in the same setting • Encouraging participation • Fostering social interaction among students Ensuring equitable access for SEN/D Students in a mainstream Secondary School • Resources provision as a tool for equitable access for SEN/D students' inclusion • The Ease of Accessing Mainstream Secondary Schools for SEN/D Students • Stakeholders' collaboration as a tool for equitable access for SEN/D students
Inclusion as culture	School environment and SEN/D Students' inclusion • Supporting well-being • Policy for SEN/D students' inclusion Strategies for including SEN/D students in mainstream secondary schools • SEN/D students' placement within mainstream secondary schools • Pedagogical strategies for including SEN/D students in mainstream classrooms

	• Balancing academics and practical skills: Diversifying educational experiences for SEN/D students in mainstream schools

Appendix 9: Quirkos initial data analysis screenshot- Examples (School A)



Quirkos initial data analysis screenshot- Examples (School B)