PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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DECLARATION

This dissertation has been developed wholly by the author, Gustav Kojo Gaewu, in part fulfilment of Erasmus Mundus Masters in Special Education Needs, 2009/2010 at Roehampton University, London, the United Kingdom; Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Tilburg, the Netherlands, and Charles University in Prague, the Czech Republic.

I hereby declare that the dissertation is entirely my own work and that all references have been properly acknowledged. I further declare that this dissertation has not been submitted previously for any higher degree.

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ABSTRACT

The study aims at finding out the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools in the Czech Republic. Research has shown that teacher perceptions are important in determining the effectiveness of inclusive education, as teachers are the school personnel most responsible for implementing inclusive education. The research was specifically conducted in one special school for children with mental disability, autism and physical disability, Rakovník, and three mainstream schools in Prague.

Qualitative, interpretive research design was used, and the research instruments employed were focus group discussion and semi structured interview. Female teachers constituted the focus group whilst one male teacher, being the deputy head teacher of one mainstream school, was interviewed.

 The findings suggest that the participants from the special school did not have positive perception towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting because of the unavailability of the necessary resources and support services in the mainstream schools. The participants from the mainstream setting, although they expressed the importance of inclusive education, were of the view that the mainstream schools are not equipped with the material resources necessary to meet the needs of all children with special educational needs.

Suggestions for effective education of children with special educational needs, as provided by the participants include, equipping mainstream schools with resources that will cater for all children with diverse learning needs, educating mainstream teachers on the skills needed for the education of children with special educational needs, attitudinal change on the part of teachers towards educating special needs children, and the need for collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers. Implications for future research have been discussed.

Key words: perceptions, mainstream teachers, special teachers, collaboration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.1 Background to the Study: The aim of this study is to find out the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools in the Czech Republic. Research findings reveal that successful implementation of inclusive education, to a large extent, depends on the perceptions of teachers since they deal directly with the pupils in the classroom. According to (Cant, 1994; Haskell, 2000) teachers are seen as major agents in the implementation of inclusive education. Therefore their perceptions towards the inclusion of children with special education needs in the mainstream are very crucial because their perceptions will either promote or hinder the success of inclusive education.

Anotonak & Larrivee, (1995) contend that for inclusive practices to be successful, much depends upon the mainstream teachers' perceptions of special needs, and their preparedness to accept diversities. In a similar vein, Hammond and Ingalls (2003) suggest that teachers' perceptions are likely to influence their behaviour and their acceptance of children with special educational needs in the regular classroom.

Research has shown that teachers have varied perceptions towards inclusion of children with special education needs in the mainstream setting. Some teachers have negative perceptions whilst others have positive perceptions. Positive perceptions promote inclusion whist negative perceptions do not. A study by (Vaughn, Schümm, Jallad, Slusher, & Saumell, 1996) on mainstream and special education teachers' perceptions of inclusion revealed that many teachers not practising inclusion had strong negative perceptions about inclusion and they had the notion that the decision makers were unaware of situations in the classrooms. According to Scruggs & Mastropieri's (1996) meta-analysis through a period 1958-1995, while a great number of teachers were in favour of inclusion as a principle, only 40% viewed it as a concept which is realistic.

A study carried out by Villa, Thousand, Meyers & Nevin (1996) on the other hand, revealed that teachers who had experienced inclusion were more committed to including children with

special education needs in mainstream schools, and they appeared more confident after developing new skills through the challenges they encountered in inclusive education programme. Similar findings were reported by Le Roy and Simpson (1996), whose study lasted for three years in the State of Michigan that the more teachers had experiences with children with special needs the more they, developed the confidence to teach them. The implication of their study is that inclusive practices are likely to change for the better based on the teachers' experiences with the children with special education needs.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) in their review of attitudes of teachers from 1984-2000 revealed that teachers were less receptive to accepting children having learning difficulties than those with physical and sensory impairments. This was supported by Tait & Purdue (2000) as they also reported that teachers have not always responded positively towards inclusion of children with learning difficulties.

Although various researches were carried out on this topic it is not exhaustible; there is the need to carry out more research, especially in the Czech Republic, to find out the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special needs in mainstream schools.

1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to find out the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream in the Czech Republic. The role that teachers' perceptions play in the successful implementation of inclusion cannot be overemphasized. Teachers who have positive perceptions towards inclusion will definitely impact on its effective implementation whilst those with negative perceptions will hinder its progress.

The study will focus on three main themes as follows:

(i) The perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream in the Czech Republic.
(ii) The perceptions of teachers towards collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the mainstream.

(iii) Teachers' perceptions on the challenges of inclusive practices, and the possible solutions.

It is my expectation that the findings of the study will serve as guidelines for the school authorities in the selected schools of the study in the Czech Republic, to appreciate the relevance of effective inclusive practices and to further disseminate the information to the Ministry of Education so that measures will be put in place for effective inclusive education.

The findings will also guide me as an advocate for inclusion to help promote inclusive education in my own country, Ghana.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were thus formulated from the three themes outlined above:

(1) What are the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools in the Czech Republic?

(2) What are the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the academic performance of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools?

(3) What are the perceptions of teachers towards socialisation of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools?

(4) What are the perceptions of teachers towards collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in mainstream classrooms?

(5) What are some of the challenges that could arise in such collaborative work?

(6) What are some of the possible challenges that are likely to arise in the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms?

(7) How could the challenges be overcome?

(8) What is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Research, as well as practical experience, has shown that teacher perceptions are important in determining the effectiveness of inclusive education, as teachers are the school personnel most responsible for implementing inclusive service delivery models (Haider, 2008). A further support by (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000) states that inclusive education has implications for educators in the mainstream as they face challenges to perform a wider set of roles than previously; their perceptions may therefore have significant bearing on the success of inclusive practices (Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2001). Based upon the above premise, the study will find out the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools in the Czech Republic, the relationships among teacher perceptions, identify critical issues involved in the implementation of inclusion, and to present implications for further research and practice.

The findings will also contribute to adopting measures by stakeholders in inclusive education, especially teachers and the Ministry of Education for effective implementation of inclusion that has become a global phenomenon. This is in line with The Salamanca Statement of (1994), which states that:

> "Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (p. ix)".

On a personal note the study will broaden my horizon on the perceptions of teachers towards inclusion of children with special educational needs in the Czech Republic, and to transfer this knowledge for similar research in my own country, Ghana, in the future.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Perception: Perception may be defined from physical, psychological and physiological Perspectives. For the purpose of this study, it is limited to the way people judge or evaluate others or things (Allport, 1996).

Inclusion: The process by which a school attempts to respond to the needs of all types of pupils by reconsidering its curricular organisation and provision. By this process, the school builds its capacity to accommodate all pupils from the local community who wish to be in school thereby reducing exclusion (Sebba & Ainscow, 1996).

Special education: Is the education of children with special needs in a way that addresses the children's individual needs. It is a process which involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and teaching materials, accessible settings and other interventions designed to help learners with special needs achieve a high level of personal sufficiency and success in school or community (Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia).

Special education teacher: A teacher with additional training in the area of disability. He or she provides a specialised education for children with disabilities/ children with special education needs.

Special educational needs: Children with special educational needs are those children who encounter barriers to learning. The barriers include general learning disabilities, emotional and behavioural disturbances; language and communication difficulties; physical and sensory disabilities (Special Education Review Committee, 1993).

Mainstream teacher: A teacher who teaches in the regular school and does not have the requisite knowledge and skills in teaching children with disabilities/ children with special education needs.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

A study of this nature demands a lot of time in order to have a wide coverage of schools for gathering relevant data. However due to the limited period of time at my disposal to conduct the research and present the dissertation, I could not cover a lot of schools for the data. In addition, due to language barrier, most of the schools I have written to for the purpose of conducting the research declined; hence the study is limited in scope.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The study is divided into six chapters. Below is a brief summary of what each chapter entails.

Chapter One: Introduction

This is the introduction of the study and includes the background of the study, the aim of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study and definition of terms.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The second chapter discusses the earlier researches carried out on the topic. It involves the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards inclusion of children with special needs in the regular school system. It also discusses the perceptions of teachers towards collaboration between regular and special education teachers in service delivery in the classroom. Furthermore, challenges that inclusive education poses, and the possible solutions were discussed.

Chapter Three: Research Design/ Methodology

The third chapter of the study involves the research methods used in the collection of data, research questions, the sample for the study, data collection instruments, administration of research instruments, data analysis techniques, and the discussion of ethical issues in connection with the study.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis:

The fourth chapter involves the presentation and analysis of data collected in the context of the study.

Chapter Five: Evaluation:

The fifth chapter which is the evaluation of research findings is the discussion and interpretation of the findings in the context of review of literature.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations:

The sixth chapter presents the summary and conclusions of the whole study. It also discusses recommendations for future study and practice. It includes how the findings of the study within the European context will relate to my home country, Ghana.

 Bibliography and appendices complete the dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to carry out the study successfully, there is the need to find out from literature previous studies on the subject. The findings from previous researchers will guide me to focus on my study. The literature review is dealt with systematically as follows:

(i) Defining inclusive education;

(ii) Overview of the education of children with special educational needs in the Czech Republic;

(iii) Perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special needs in mainstream schools;

(iv) Perceptions of teachers towards collaboration between regular teachers and special education teachers in the mainstream;

(v) Some possible challenges which are likely to arise in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream;

(vi) How the challenges could be overcome.

2.2 Defining Inclusive Education:

Since the early part of the 1990s there have been International policies on inclusion of children with special educational needs in the regular education system. Notably among them were the 1993 UN Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for persons with Disabilities, Rule 6 which stipulates equal rights to education for all categories of people in the regular system irrespective of their disability Rieser (2008). One year after came the world Conference on Special Needs Education and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, 1994 which brought together government representatives and other stakeholders in special needs education to prioritise inclusive education and to formulate guidelines for its implementation (Puri & Abraham, 2004). The above policies were the road

8

maps for inclusive education. Different people ascribe different definitions to the concept of inclusion. According to Sebba &Ainscow (1992), inclusion is a process by which a school attempts to restructure its curricula and builds its capacity to accept all types of pupils within the local community, thereby reducing exclusion of pupils. The Education for All 2000 Bulletin, UNESCO, Number 32, 1998 also describes the concept of inclusive education as follows:

> "Inclusive education is concerned with removing barriers to learning, and with the participation of all learners vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization. It is a learning success for all children. It addresses the common goals of decreasing and overcoming all exclusion from the right to education, at least at the elementary level, and enhancing access, participation and learning success in quality basic education for all (Puri & Abraham, 2004, p. 25)".

In the light of the above, one can safely state that inclusive education provides participation of children with special education needs in the regular school setting in the local community, ensuring success in their educational endeavours, and eliminating all types of discrimination in the context of disability. Inclusive education has many advantages such as greater academic achievement, greater opportunities for interaction, peer role models, attainment of social and behavioural skills, respect for all people and increased staff collaboration (Walker & Logan, **2009).**

2.3 An overview of the education of children with special needs in the Czech Republic:

The Czech Republic has a long history of educating children with disabilities/ special needs. **The first** educational institutions were established as far back as the late 1700s. Thus, the first school for the deaf was established in 1786, the school for the blind in 1807, the school for the **'feeble-minded'** in 1871 and the first auxiliary school was in 1896.

In the year 1929, a law was enacted specifying the compulsory education for handicapped children for a period of eight years. Even before the enactment of that law, a celebrated scholar, Jan Amos Komensky-Comenius had advocated the education of 'backward' children in the seventeenth century (Cerna, 1999).

From 1948 to 1989, the Czechoslovakia was part of the Soviet block and was governed by a totalitarian regime. As a result the 'Socialist' principles of education were adopted. The

education then was based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology and was regarded as a means of economic development and ideological stability. Education for children with disabilities was the segregated type and it formed an integral part of the general education system which was free. After the 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989, a new concept involving the overall development of persons with disabilities gained greater emphasis, hence the focus was on meeting the individual needs of children with disabilities in the society (Cerna, 1999).

2.3.1 Development of Inclusion in the Czech Republic.

The first alternative for providing special needs education is to include children with special educational needs in the mainstream classes and when necessary, provide special needs education in small teaching groups. The general objective of educating children with special educational needs in both mainstream and segregated provision is to give them equal opportunities to successful and efficient education according to the their needs and ability. The systematic integration policy started in the Czech Republic in 1989 and has since changed towards broader social acceptance of inclusion of persons with disabilities, mainstreaming, and better educational and technological support for pupils with special educational needs in the mainstream settings. Inclusion of pupils into the mainstream at all levels of education is the centre of interest of the Ministry of Education in the Czech Republic (Ministry of Education, the Czech Republic, 2009).

Although the situation of inclusive education has been improving, there are still some difficult areas to be addressed such as limited resources for support teachers in the mainstream class, partly the architectural barriers/accessibility of school buildings, traditional thinking of teachers and parents and their resistance to change. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports gives grants to improve the conditions for pupils with special educational needs and for supporting their inclusion (Ministry of Education, the Czech Republic, 2009).

2.3.2 Special needs education within the éducation system in the Czech Republic:
The National Programme of Education Development in the Czech Republic (White Book) which was formulated by the Ministry of Education in 2001 brought about a new educational philosophy. The main changes involving the education of special needs children included:
   (i)   Mainstream schools opened for pupils with special needs;

(ii) Education was made available for pupils including the most serious complex needs;

(iii) Diverse forms of individualisation of education were established to meet the needs of pupils with special needs ;

(iv) A counselling system has been developed for pupils with special needs to support their integration and inclusion into the mainstream schools for pupils educated at home;

(v) A broad range of support provisions have been implemented to increase participation of pupils with special needs into the mainstream education;

(vi) Special schools have been developing into resource centres (Ministry of Education, 2009, the Czech Republic).

The above is the picture of the educational provision made by the Government of the Czech Republic for children with special education needs.

2.3.3 System of education of special educational needs children:

(i) Pupils with special educational needs are being educated preferably in the mainstream schools;

(ii) Special classes within mainstream schools;

(iii) Special schools for children with special needs, depending on the choice of parents. The number of special schools is however decreasing.

The special schools provide education for children with mental, sensory or physical disabilities, communication problems, learning and/or behavioural problems.

The aim of special education is to provide education designed to support the pupils' social inclusion. All pupils follow the national curriculum except pupils with mental problems who follow reduced school curricula.

The role of special schools has been changing in recent years. Apart from their educational role, they have also become resource centres developing new pedagogical methods geared towards the provision of advice and support services to pupils as well as their parents, teachers in the mainstream setting (Ministry of Education, 2009, the Czech Republic).

2.3.4 Current trend in the education of children with spécial needs in the Czech Republic:

From January 2004, children with any type of disability have been allowed by law to be mainstreamed through individual integration. Head teachers were given the mandate to admit

children with disabilities on the request of their parents. Although a lot of mainstream schools are free to integrate children with disabilities, at present children with disabilities and their families do not receive any substantial support. For inclusion to be successfully implemented mainstream schools need financial support; however, the funding is not legally guaranteed. It is incumbent upon schools to meet the costs involved in providing personal assistance to children with disabilities. Support is considered a necessary condition for integrating children with disabilities; hence there is often the pressure on parents to make provision for personal assistance (Siska & Novosad, 2010).

It is worthwhile noting that within the special education system in the Czech Republic, children with mild and moderate disabilities are in the special schools. The special schools are generally well resourced with personnel and financial support. In terms of education, the quality of education varies from one school to another (Siska & Novosad, 2010).

For effective inclusion of children with disabilities there is the need for the Government of the Czech Republic to provide such services as transportation to school, the right to assistant teacher, and to provide a higher per student normative for children with disabilities individually integrated in mainstream schools. Furthermore, the Czech Government should have goals and timeline for transferring segregated schools into resource centres to cater for children with special needs in the mainstream setting (Siska & Novosad, 2010).

The New Education Act (No. 561/2004) states that the head of school makes a decision on enrolling children with special educational needs into a mainstream primary school or secondary school. Children with special educational needs can be enrolled if conditions are in agreement with the school Act and meet the standards set by the school guidance facilities. As stipulated by law, children with special educational needs of compulsory school age should be educated in the community unless otherwise decided by the parents. The parents could however choose a school other than the one in the community. If the head of that particular school, for example, Zakladni skola (Elementary school) for any reason cannot admit a child with special educational needs, he/she notifies the relevant educational department of the regional authority for a solution. A child with special educational needs in inclusive setting has Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) and it is compiled based on professional

examination, and identification of the pupil's special educational needs of a school guidance facility. This is a binding document for ensuring that the needs of the special needs child are met (Siska & Novosad, 2010).

2.4 Perceptions of regular and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms:

The importance of teacher perceptions in the success of inclusive education cannot be overemphasized, because their perceptions will definitely impact on their interaction with the pupils, and the output of work in the classroom. Various researches have been carried out on this subject. The responses from teachers regarding the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the regular school system were varied. Whilst some of them expressed positive responses, others had negative perceptions, and yet some were apathetic to the whole concept. According to Haider, (2008), teachers' perceptions are very crucial in the effective implementation of inclusion since they form the school workforce, and are essentially responsible for implementing service delivery in inclusive education. The research further revealed that teachers with experience in working with children with special educational needs held more positive perception towards inclusion of children with special educational needs than their counterparts without relevant experience in special education.

A study carried out by McLeskey, Waldron, So, Swanson & Loveland (2001) suggest that teachers in inclusive settings had more positive perceptions towards inclusion than those in the general education setting.

The findings of Taylor, Richards, Goldstein & Schilit (1997), in examining special and regular teachers' perceptions of inclusion, came up with the findings that general educators were not in agreement with inclusion of children with mental, behavioural or emotional disturbances in the regular classrooms. In a similar vein, Koutsouki, Sotiriadi, Skodilis & Druka (2001), in their study of perceptions of practising teachers in Greece and Cyprus revealed that the teachers were not in agreement with the concept of inclusion. They argued that they were not well informed, and also adequately prepared to do such a tedious work.

A study by (Macmillan, Meyer, Edmunds & Edmunds, Felmate, 2002) involving Nova Scotia teachers' perceptions towards inclusion revealed that majority of the teachers were of the view that full time inclusion for all students is not appropriate because ability ranges in the classrooms are on the increase and teachers were having difficulty meeting the needs of all students.

The study by Kearney (2000), Lienert, Sherill, Myers (2001) suggested that regular teachers believed it was not their responsibility to educate children with special needs but rather they should be educated in special schools. Such teachers with negative perceptions about SEN children lacked the necessary knowledge and expertise in teaching SEN pupils.

A research undertaken by British Columbia Teachers' however revealed that some teachers were of the view that inclusion resulted in improved academic performance of students with special educational needs; inclusion encouraged special educational needs children to succeed both academically and socially. The findings further revealed that students with mild intellectual disabilities or physical disabilities benefited both socially and academically from inclusion. However, students with severe disabilities and/or severe behaviour problems can have serious effects on others without disabilities, with few benefits for students with disabilities. Students with hearing impairment, for example, whose academic potential was within the normal range benefited socially and intellectually from inclusive education. Although some teachers were however skeptical about academic benefits, others identified subject areas as Art, Music and Physical Education as the ones they believed were academically beneficial to students with special educational needs (Naylor, 2002).

The discoveries of (Heiman, 2002; Priestly & Rabiee, 2002) however stated that despite the apparent benefits of inclusive education, and regardless of teachers' commitment and positive attitude, they were concerned about the academic, social and behavioural adjustment of children with disabilities and for that matter, children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting. In their view, inclusion would not bring any benefit to children with disabilities; hence they questioned the merits of inclusion.

In the light of the above perceptions by regular and special education teachers, one can safely say that quite a number of regular teachers are not comfortable with the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular system. They are of the view that they do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to handle SEN children.

With regard to perceptions of head teachers towards inclusive education, a study carried in Northern Ireland revealed that mainstream head teachers showed wholehearted commitment to the concept of inclusive education and could critically examine what they have achieved. However they recognised varied constraints both within and beyond their schools. Head teachers in special schools, on the other hand, perceived their schools to have multiple roles in providing for pupils with greater need, reintegrating those on placement into their regular schools, and offering outreach support to mainstream colleagues (Abbott, 2006).

2.5 Perceptions of teachers on collaboration between regular and special education teachers:

 A number of researches have been carried out on the issue of collaboration by various people. The ensuing discourse unfolds some of the findings. Collaboration or co-teaching, according to Cook & Friend (1995) is defined as two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a group of students with diverse learning needs. This approach improves educational programmes, reduces stigmatization for students and provides support for the professionals involved in the process. This definition is buttressed by that of Avramidis *et al* (2000) as two professions working together so as to deliver knowledge to a particular group, normally children with diverse learning difficulties. According to Cook & Friend (1996), real collaboration is demonstrated where all members feel their contributions are valued and the goal is clear, where they share decisions, and when they feel they are all respected.

The importance of collaboration is echoed by Lee (2007) as he stated that it provides a forum for teachers and other professionals involved in the education of students especially in inclusive settings to share ideas and adopt effective strategies for the overall achievement of learners. The importance of collaboration between general and special teachers is further

reiterated by Avramidis *et al* (2000) that it provides opportunity for special education needs children to benefit from the general curriculum.

Increased regular classroom placements for students with disabilities/special education needs, to participate in general education curriculum have brought new changes for both special and regular educators (Schnoor, Black & Davern, 2000). The changes involve working as a team and respecting the views of one another.

Perceptions of Pakistani teachers regarding the collaborative efforts of mainstream and special education teachers suggest that ninety per cent of the respondents in the study were of the view that there is the need for collaboration between special and regular teachers for successful implementation of inclusive education (Haider, 2008).

For effective inclusive practices, mainstream and special education teachers have to work together. Collaboration is therefore crucial without which the concept of inclusion would be a mirage. According to research by (Schuum, Vaughn, Gordon & Rothlem, 1994) regular teachers are reluctant to teach students with special education needs, and special and regular education teachers do not possess the required skills to collaborate and teach students with special education needs in the regular schools. Since the success of inclusion cannot be ascertained by the effort of neither special education teachers alone nor the regular teachers, there is an absolute need for these two categories of teachers to work together.

Hammond & Ingalls (2003) contend that for the classroom teacher to attain success in inclusive education it is necessary that the special educator should also be available. The complementary role of the special education teacher and the general classroom teacher is essential. The essence of collaboration is also stressed by Reich, (1990) that "individual skills are integrated in the group over time, as group members work through various problems they learn about each other's abilities. They learn to help one another perform better, what each can contribute to a particular project and how they can best take advantage of one another's experiences" (p. 20).

From the researches above, it is evident that if special education teachers and regular teachers can work together as a team, sharing the knowledge and skills that they have in the education

of children with special education needs, it will go a long way to promote effective inclusive practices.

2.6 Some possible challenges likely to arise in the education of children with special needs in mainstream classrooms:

Despite the seeming gains that inclusion has in store there is no doubt whatsoever that there are some challenges for its effective implementation. In the view of (Florian, 1998a, 1998b) lack of clarity concerning funding to promote inclusion, and also identifying appropriate teaching methods and practices and actually implementing them are some obstacles to inclusive education.

Ainscow and Hart (1992), and Ainscow (1997) argue that one way to move from the current practice is to consider the classroom and the curriculum. They also state that an impediment to inclusion is the emphasis which the current education system places upon the difficulties presented by the child with special education needs rather than finding ways and means to ensuring a successful implementation. It presupposes therefore that restructuring the curriculum to meet the needs of the special child, and also focusing on the formulation of strategies to address the needs of the special needs child will go a long way to achieving success in the practice of inclusion.

Research by Bradshaw (1998) identifies the following as impediments to implementation of inclusion: that mainstream teachers are worried about meeting the specific needs of students with disabilities, the social stigma attached to students with disabilities in inclusive schools and the unavailability of resources to assist in the implementation of inclusive programmes. In a similar vein, Avramidis & Norwich (2002) were concerned about the need for the provision of appropriate resources to meet the needs of children with special educational needs if inclusive education should be a success.

Vaughn, Schümm, Jallad, Slusher & Samueli (1996) stated such factors as large classes, budget shortages, extra work on teachers, as mitigating factors against inclusion. Similarly, Macmillan *et al* (2002) in their study with NSTU stated that the teachers complained of large classes not reduced to accommodate students with special educational needs, negatively influenced their

ability to help children with special needs. Also, according to the findings of Wolery *et al* (1994), a major concern raised by teachers on successful inclusive practice was that of too many children in each teacher's classroom. Teachers in early childhood inclusive programmes strongly indicated that an adequate number of staff was important to a successful inclusive programme.

Idol, (1997) stated that some teachers expressed their concern that as more learners are included; teachers would need extra tools and expertise to cope with some social and emotional challenges that accompany inclusive education. In his view, it is a question of the technical know-how which is needed by teachers to address the problems of SEN. Similar findings were revealed by Kamens (2003) that the tremendous challenge for teachers with regard to successful inclusive practices is the lack of skills necessary to meet individual needs in the classroom.

The study of Mock & KaufTman (2002) revealed that while some teachers expressed inadequacies on their part in meeting the unique needs of children with special needs, others in inclusive school settings must work beyond their training and areas of specialisation. Scott et al (1998) expressed similar view on teacher inadequacies that inadequate teacher education and limited school support could be great challenges in the practice of inclusive education. In a similar vein, the study of Marshall et al (2002a) on PGCE students in the UK made it clear that the although the students had positive perceptions towards inclusion, they lacked the necessary expertise in dealing with special needs children. A study carried out involving Nova Scotia Teachers' Union (NSTU) revealed that the teachers did not have confidence in their skills and training to be able to meet the challenge of educating children with special educational needs. They acknowledged that additional preparation is required. Coupled with that, there was lack of resources and support to meet the needs of children with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom (Macmillan *et al* (2002).

2.7 Addressing the possible challenges of inclusive practices:

From the researchers carried out by various researchers, successful inclusive practices are saddled with quite a number of challenges including attitude of teachers towards inclusion,

teacher preparedness, curriculum modification, health and behavioural needs and inadequate logistical support. However, these challenges could be addressed by putting appropriate measures in place. The following are some of the strategies which could alleviate the challenges if not eradicate them:

Considerable study in examining the conditions which promote inclusive practices has been carried out by Giangrego (1997). He identified some particular characteristics of schools associated with success of inclusion. Examples of these are collaborative team work, clear role relationships among professionals and effective and general educator ownership. These characteristics according to Giangreco interrelate and therefore all should work in harmony for successful inclusive practices.

According to Bender, Vail & Scott (1985), the success of including children with special education needs in the regular classrooms depend, to a great extent, on the willingness, and the readiness on the part of teachers to accommodate children with special needs. The finding of Coots *et al* lends itself to that of Bender, Vail &Scott (1985). They suggested that attitudinal change in teachers and their commitment to success through experience with inclusive practices should be pre-requisites for the attainment of classroom environment for all learners. In their view, for inclusive practices to be successful, teachers should have the will-power to accept children with special education needs and provide the needed education. That calls for attitudinal change; a change from negative to positive attitude.

Leatherman & Niemeyer (2005) also add their voices to the issue of teachers' attitude; that teachers' positive attitudes produce congenial atmosphere for all children to learn better, and to be more productive within the classroom setting. To further buttress the point on attitude of teachers, Hegarty (1994) and Pumfrey (2000) pointed out that teachers' attitudes play significant role in the success or failure of inclusion of special education needs pupils in the regular schools since they can have effect on their peers in the classroom. From the foregoing, it is evident that teachers' positive attitudes towards SEN pupils will not only promote their academic achievement but also enhance their social acceptance by their regular peers.

The issue of teacher education is of paramount importance in the success of inclusion. Without teachers being schooled in special education needs, there is little contribution that they can provide as far as the children's education is concerned. Garner (1996) therefore suggests that there is the need to incorporate the concept of inclusion in the curriculum of teacher education. Provision must be made in the teacher training programme for teachers to critically discuss issues concerning inclusion, and the effectiveness of teaching. Additionally, teachers' observance of teaching children with special needs in inclusive education setting should be a necessary component of breaking down barriers to inclusion. Similar findings of Kamens (2003) suggest that teachers' knowledge about specific learning disabilities, and support from educational administrators for effective inclusive practices are crucial for the success of the concept of inclusion. Furthermore, for the success of inclusive education, Elhoweris & Alsheikh (2006) suggest that provision must be made in teacher education programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers to have the opportunity of interacting children with disabilities to make it possible for them to have experience with persons with disabilities.

Finally about teachers, Lloyd (2000) contends that for inclusion to be achieved, teachers should be aware of their responsibility as agents of change not only in education but in the society. In the domain of education, and the society at large, teachers should be aware that their knowledge and expertise in teaching place them in a position to effect change; a change to have positive impact not only on learners, but the society at large.

Another way of addressing the challenges of inclusive education is through collaboration or co-teaching. Fink (2004) and Jehlen (2002) contend that reducing the stress of regular teachers is through collaborative teaching. Since collaboration provides the opportunity for the regular teachers to tap the expertise of the special educator, it is necessary for this measure to be adopted.

There is also the need to design curriculum which should meet the needs of all pupils if inclusive education is to achieve the desired goals. Hart (1992) & Ainscow (1997) assert that providing a curriculum to meet individual needs in the classroom is crucial to a successful inclusive education. This calls for a paradigm shift from the traditional approach of following a national school curriculum which may not necessarily meet the needs of children with special

education needs. In a similar vein, (van Leeuwen (2008) cited in Thijs, van Leeuwen & Zandbergen (2009) suggest that there is the need for a tailor-made curriculum for children with special needs in the mainstream and this could be realised through the effort of schools and teachers. In designing such curriculum, care should be taken since special education needs children are not homogenous; provision should therefore be made to meet the unique needs of every learner.

In the view of (Carpenter, 1995 cited in Tilstone, Florian & Rose, 1993), "meeting the needs of individual pupils through the process of the curriculum holds the key to successful inclusion". In the light of the above, countries seeking successful inclusive education should re-structure their curriculum in such a way that it should cater for all learners.

2.8 Conclusion:

In the Literature Review, the subject of the study being perceptions of regular and special education teachers' perceptions towards the education of children with special needs in the mainstream education system have been critically discussed. Varying perceptions have been revealed through research carried out by previous researchers. Some were negative whilst others were positive; yet some were apathetic.

Evidence from the above literature review suggests that teachers' perceptions play a crucial role in the success of inclusive education. It should be noted however that other factors are equally important if inclusive education should yield the required results such as curriculum review to meet diversities, infrastructure that promotes accessibility to all, teacher education on inclusion, in- service training for regular teachers, reduction in large class sizes and parental support.

The positive perception of both regular and special education teachers towards inclusion, in my view, would go a long way to lay a strong foundation for the success of the concept of inclusion if other necessary factors are also addressed.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN/METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction and Overview:

The purpose of the study is to find out the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools in the Czech Republic. The study was carried out in one special school for children with mental disability, autism and physical disability in Rakovnik, and three mainstream schools in Prague, all in the Czech Republic. For a study of this nature to be accomplished successfully, it is imperative to use appropriate research design and techniques to achieve the desired goal.

The chapter is thus structured as follows: Firstly, the discussion of the general research designs, namely quantitative and qualitative. The others were as follows: research questions, the sample for the study, the issue of reliability and validity of data, the data collection instruments, administration of research instruments and the data analysis techniques. The rest were ethical considerations connected with the study, and the summary.

3.2 Research paradigm

There are two general methodological approaches in the social sciences namely, qualitative and quantitative. The combination of the two is what is referred to as the mixed method. The two approaches have been discussed below and the one which best fits into my study has been discussed into detail.

3.2.1 Quantitative

Quantitative approach, as the name suggests, 'is the numerical measurement of specific aspects of phenomena. It is a very structured approach; in it competing explanations must be formulated in terms of relationships between variables' (Miller & Brewer, 2003, p. 193). The first step is to condense what one is studying, into indicators or variables. Measurement is very important and must be as exact as possible in this approach. The variables should be representative of what they are proxy for, and should have numerical form. They then become

the building blocks of analysis. The researcher next elaborates a set of competing explanations and propositions bringing about differences between variables or finding relationships among the variables. Finally, statistical analysis is performed to find whether these differences or relationships can be identified. Generalisation is the ultimate goal of this type of approach (Miller & Brewer, 2003). As Ragin (1987) states, 'this kind of approach is well suited for testing theories, identifying general patterns and making predictions; it is therefore deductive in nature' (p. 193).

Creswell (2003) defines quantitative approach as:

> "the one in which the investigator primarily uses postpositivist claims for developing knowledge (that is, cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables and hypothesis and questions, use of measurement and observation, and test of theories), employs strategies such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data (p. 18)".

From the above definitions, it is evident that the quantitative approach basically involves the use of such approaches as performing experiments to test existing theories, conducting surveys, and presenting the data in a numerical rather than a narrative form.

3.2.2 Qualitative approach

The research design used for the study is the qualitative approach. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2000):

> "Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices turn the world into a series of representatives including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos. It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in the natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them (p. 3)".

Furthermore, according to (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman 1987, cited in Creswell, 1994 p. 161) **"the intent of** qualitative research is to understand a particular social situation, event, role, **group, or** interaction". Similarly (Miles & Huberman, 1984, Cited in Creswell, 1994, p. 161) **state that,** "qualitative research is largely an investigative process where the researcher **gradually makes** sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating,

cataloguing, and classifying the object of study". All the definitions above speak essentially about investigating a phenomenon in the social context of the people being studied.

 Strauss & Corbin (1998) explained qualitative research as 'any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification' (p. 11).

In addition, Robson (2002), states that qualitative research has other labels such as 'constructivist', ' naturalistic' or 'interpretive' and within this tradition, there is almost invariably a rejection that 'truths' about the social world can be established by the application of natural science methods. He further asserts that people, unlike the objects of the natural world are conscious and purposeful actors who have ideas about the world and therefore attach meaning to whatever is happening around them.

 From all the definitions above, qualitative approach enables the researcher to gather information by actually talking to the people and seeing them behave within their context. The researcher has face-to-face interaction with the participants and does not involve going to the laboratory for experiments. The meaning that the participants hold about the issue is noted by the researcher. It is upon this premise that I find the qualitative approach suitable for my study in order to actually go and have face-to-face interaction with my participants for data gathering within their context, and keep a focus on learning the meaning they have about the topic of my study.

Phenomenology: There are many aspects of qualitative research approach such as phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. According to Descombe (2007), phenomenology "is a direct contrast to positivism and it is an approach that emphasizes subjectivity rather than objectivity, description more than analysis and interpretation rather than measurement, and its credentials as an alternative to positivism are further reinforced by the fact that phenomenological research generally deals with people's perceptions or meanings, attitudes and beliefs, feelings and emotions" (p. 75). Since phenomenology deals with the perceptions or views people have on an issue, and these perceptions are descriptive, it is appropriate to use this approach based on the fact that my study is on teacher's perceptions towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream.

3.3 Research question:

The research is on the perceptions of mainstream and especial education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting in the Czech Republic. From this main topic are derived the sub questions as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

2. What are the perceptions of teachers towards the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

3. What are the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards socialisation of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

4. What are the perceptions of teachers towards collaboration of both mainstream and special educators in the education of children with special educational needs?

5. What are some of the challenges that could arise in such collaborative work?

6. What are some perceived challenges that are likely to arise in inclusive education practices?

7. How could such challenges be addressed?

8. What is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

3.4 Sample for the study:

The focus group discussion involves:

(i) Five special education teachers from a special school for children with mental disability, autism and physical disability in Rakovnik, the Czech Republic;

(ii) Five teachers from two mainstream schools in Prague, the Czech Republic; three from one school and two from another school.

The sample for the interview involves:

(iii)The deputy head teacher of one mainstream school in Prague, the Czech Republic.

The type of sampling chosen for the study was purposive sampling. According to Merriam (1998) the logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases, with the objective of yielding insight and understanding of phenomenon under investigation. This method is in contrast to the random sampling procedures that characterize quantitative research which is based on statistical probability theory. Since my intent is to get in-depth information about the topic under study, I have chosen this particular procedure in order to achieve that objective.

Furthermore, the small sample size of the focus group discussion was chosen due to language barrier. It should be noted that only a few teachers in the elementary schools in the Czech Republic, where the research was conducted, could communicate effectively in the English language, hence taking a small number as the participants who obviously could speak English language. According to Morgan (1998), some key issues worth considering during focus group discussion include group size. Too small group and intra-group dynamics exert a disproportionate effect, and too large group becomes unwieldy and hard to manage. The essential factor is to ensure that participants involved in the focus group have something to say and feel comfortable enough to say it. The in-depth information from the small number of the participants was to ensure validity and reliability of the findings.

With regard to interviewing some heads of schools, Salisbury & McGregor (2000) suggest that school principals or head teachers have essential role in improving the school environment and implementing educational policy. There is a complex relationship between the staff and the school climate, hence the emphasis on the importance of the head teacher's awareness of the role of the staff in the implementation of inclusive education. Furthermore, when school heads share in the decision-making process with staff, it facilitates educational accountability and responsibility.

3.5 Reliability and validity

Ritchie & Lewis (2000) stated that reliability and validity were developed in the natural sciences. Tests or measures of validity are usually used in mathematics or physical sciences

therefore their use in qualitative investigation is not wholly appropriate. However, in the broadest sense conception, reliability means 'sustainability' and 'validity' means 'well grounded' will have relevance to qualitative research since they help to define the strengths of data collected.

Reliability:

According to Ritchie & Lewis (2000), 'reliability is generally understood to concern the replicability of research findings and whether or not they would be repeated if another study using the same or similar methods, was undertaken' (p. 270).

There are concerns however that replication in qualitative research is naive given the likely complexity of phenomenon being studied and the inevitable impact of context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Some authors, for example, in discussing reliability and validity choose terms such as 'conformability' of findings. Robson (2002) uses 'consistency' while Lincoln & Guba (1985) use 'dependability' of the evidence. All the above features lie at the heart of reliability in the broadest sense and are very important to appraising the soundness of a study.

Ritchie & Lewis (2000) contend that it is an important requirement for data collected to be consistent, dependable or replicable as generated by the participants and the meaning attached to them that would be expected to repeat. This, in effect means, there should be certainty that the internal factors found within the original data would recur outside the study population. Therefore the reliability of the findings depends on the likely recurrence of the original data and the way they are interpreted.

Validity:

Traditionally, validity refers to the 'correctness' or 'precision' of a research finding. It has two distinct dimensions namely, internal and external validity. The internal validity is concerned with whether one is investigating what one is actually claiming to be investigating. The external validity, on the other hand, is concerned with the extent to which abstract constructs generated, refined and tested are applicable to the other groups within the population (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982) to the other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Although validity of 'measurement' is seen in the domain of quantitative research, it is widely recognised as having an equally significant issue in qualitative research. According to Hammersley (1992), 'an account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise'(p. 69).

In view of the above assertions, I have used triangulation in the methodology, that is, focus group discussion from three different schools as well as interview with a deputy school head to ascertain reliability and validity of the findings.

3.6 METHODOLOGY: In order to gather data on the study, 1 used the following instruments:

3.6**.1 Focus group:** According to Robson (2002), "a focus group (sometimes referred to as a *focus group interview)* which emphasizes the fact that this is a particular type of interview is a group interview on a specific topic; which is where the 'focus' comes from. It is an open-ended group discussion guided by a researcher, typically extending over at least an hour, possibly two or more; opinions vary on the optimum size of the group" (pp. 284-285). Based on the above definition, my focus was on teachers' perceptions on the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting and the group interview was done on that specific topic. It involved five special education teachers from one special school for children with mental disability, autism and physical disability in Rakovnik, and five mainstream teachers; three from one school and two from another school in Prague, the Czech Republic. Open ended questions were used for the focus group discussion. Open ended questions were used because responses to open ended questions are usually elaborate and information gathered is detailed. This is supported by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2005) as they assert that open ended questions are attractive device for small scale research which invites honest and personal comment from participants. It is the open ended responses that contain the 'gems' of the information.

Advantages of focus group discussion:

It should be noted that focus groups make use of group dynamics. They consist of small groups of people who are brought together by a researcher to find out the perceptions, feelings and ideas about a particular topic.

In the view of Descombe (2007), "during focus group sessions, participants are encouraged to discuss the topic among themselves. This interaction helps the researcher to understand the reasoning behind the views and opinions that are expressed by group members. It provides the researcher with a method of investigating the participants' reasoning and a means for exploring underlying factors that might explain why people hold the opinions and feelings about feelings they do" (p. 179).

Furthermore, Robson (2002) contends that focus group discussion is a highly efficient technique for qualitative data collection because the quantity and range of data increase by gathering the data from many people at a time. Also, participants could make comments in their own words, while being gingered by the ideas of others within the focus group.

Disadvantages of focus group session:

Despite the group dynamics of the focus group and the advantages in it, it is not without lapses. According to Wilkinson & Birmingham (2003), participants may respond in ways to please others or the moderator and thereby not honestly contributing to the discussion. Also, individual group members are likely to be unwilling to move away from what the group has decided on. Furthermore, participants may decide not to reveal pieces of information, especially sensitive ones in a group, and in that case vital information which would have been used by the researcher would certainly be hidden. That notwithstanding, it is a useful approach to data collection, especially in getting information on perceptions of people on a particular topic.

3.6.2 Interview: The choice of the semi-structured interview approach is based on the assertion of Robson (2002) that questions are predetermined but they can be modified by the interviewer according to what he deems fit or appropriate during the interview session. There is always flexibility in this approach since some questions which could be found as inappropriate for a particular interviewee could be discarded and new ones included.

To buttress the above statement, Wilkinson & Birmingham (2003) contend that "there is less flexibility with the semi-structured interview. The interviewer directs the interview more closely. More questions are predetermined than with the unstructured interview, though there is

sufficient flexibility to allow the interviewee an opportunity to shape the flow of information" (p. 45). A semi structured interview was organised involving the deputy head teacher of one mainstream school in Prague on the research topic to find out his perceptions on the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools in the Czech Republic.

Advantages of semi structured interview approach:

According to Descombe (2007) the advantage of the interview approach is the depth of information one gets into. Interviews are a good method for producing data based on participants' opinions and ideas. Informants have the opportunity to expand their ideas, explain their views and identify what they regard as crucial. Direct contact at the point of interview means that data can be checked to ensure accuracy and relevance as they are collected. In addition, Robson (2002) asserts that ' face-lace interviews offer the possibility of modifying one's line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives in a way that postal and other self-administered questionnaires cannot. Non- verbal cues may give messages which help in understanding the verbal response, possibly changing or even, in extreme cases, reversing its meaning' (pp. 272-273). In the light of the above, the use of interview approach could help me tap the necessary information directly from my participants.

Disadvantages of interviews:

The disadvantage however, according to Descombe (2007) "is analysis of data can be difficult and time-consuming. Data preparation and analysis is 'end-loaded' compared with, for instance, questionnaires which are pre- coded and where data are ready for analysis once they have been collected" (p. 203). The challenges associated with this method however could be catered for through careful planning and time management.

3.7 Administration of research instruments:

The instruments used for data collection during the study were focus group discussion and interview. The focus group discussions involved three schools in the Czech Republic: one special school for children with mental disability, autism and physical disability, and two mainstream schools. The deputy head teacher of one mainstream school was also interviewed.

The participants in the special school comprised five female teachers including the deputy head teacher. The discussion started with self introduction and the deputy head teacher introduced her colleagues. The purpose of the study was made known to the participants and confidentiality and anonymity were assured the participants. This was based on the assertion of Cohen *et al* (2005) that participants' informed consent should be sought before any study is carried out as a matter of ethics in research. Next, the research questions were systematically discussed among participants and they gave their views on each of the questions. The discussions were audio taped in order to avoid any omissions that might arise during the course of the discussion. This was later transcribed by the researcher. The discussion lasted for only thirty minutes due to time constraints as the participants were eager to get back to their classrooms to teach.

The next focus group discussion took place in a mainstream school in Prague. The participants were two female teachers. After introducing ourselves, I made known to the participants the purpose of the research. For ethical reasons, the participants were assured of confidentiality of every piece of information and their anonymity. I asked their consent to use the voice recorder during the discussion which they however declined. They preferred free discussion whilst I took notes. The research questions were subsequently discussed one after the other and the participants gave their views accordingly. Their responses were noted by the researcher. The discussion lasted for thirty- two minutes. The reasons for the limited number of participants were language barrier, and unavailability of teachers to partake in the discussion. The two teachers who participated were the ones who could communicate well with me using the English language. The other teachers were busy on their schedules in the school and could not have participated even if the services of an interpreter were provided.

The third focus group discussion was conducted in a mainstream school in Prague. It involved three female teachers including an educational psychologist. After self introduction, the purpose of the study was made known to the participants. I assured them of confidentiality of the information as well as their anonymity. The questions were discussed one after the other and the participants gave their views on each of them. The responses were audio recorded to

prevent the missing of any information. This was later transcribed for analysis. The focus group discussion lasted for sixty minutes.

An interview was conducted with the deputy head teacher of a mainstream school in Prague. After introducing ourselves, the purpose of the research was made known to him. Thereafter, I assured him of confidentiality of the information that would be gathered as well as his anonymity. I sought his consent to use the voice recorder during the discussion and he agreed. The questions were thereafter discussed and he gave his responses. The whole discussion was recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The discussion took thirty- one minutes.

3.8 Data analysis techniques:

Data collected in any research need to be analysed in order to get result of such research. Miles (1979) describes qualitative data as an 'attractive nuisance' and their attractiveness is undisputed. There are common features of qualitative data analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.9) provide a sequential list of what they describe as 'a set of analytic moves' as follows:

- Giving codes to the initial set of materials obtained from observation, interviews etc.;

- Adding comments, reflections, etc. (commonly referred to as 'memos');

- Going through the materials trying to identify similar phrases, relationships, sequences, differences between sub-groups:

- Gradually elaborating a small set of generalizations that cover the consistencies that are discerned in the data;

- Taking these generalizations to a formalized body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories.

The qualitative data analytic hierarchy, according to Ritchie & Lewis (2003) refers to 'the process through which qualitative findings are built from the original raw data. It is described as conceptual scaffolding within which the structure of the analysis is formed. The process is iterative and thus constant movement up and down the hierarchy is needed' (p. 217). The

process involves three forms of activity. The first is data management in which the raw data are reviewed, labelled and sorted. The second is the descriptive accounts, in which the researcher uses the ordered data to identifying key dimensions, map the range and diversity of each phenomenon and develop classifications. The third being the explanation accounts is the one in which the researcher develops explanations about the data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Finally, the technique, according to (Creswell, 1998 p.142) and (Dey, 1993 p. 53) involves "preparation of data, familiarity with the data, interpreting the data (developing codes, categories and concepts), verifying the data, and representing the data. The process of analysing qualitative data tends to be *iterative* with the stages being revisited".

From the above, it is evident that all the techniques have common procedures and are essentially leading towards the same goal. Thus, having gathered the data from the focus group discussions from the various schools as well as the interview, I displayed them and did some memoing. I then did the first coding based on the research questions using coloured markers. After that 1 did the second level coding using markers to group the initial codes into three main themes namely, teachers' perceptions towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream, collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers, and perceived challenges of inclusive practices and possible solutions. Finally, 1 developed concepts relating to the existing ones.

I chose the above technique because according to Robson **(2002),** data in raw stage **do** not speak; the messages are hidden and there is the need to unfold them. 1 was therefore able to get **the desired information from the data gathered.**

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Every research has a code of ethics which necessitates the researcher to abide by. The ethical issues involved in this study were as follows:

   i. Permission from the head of the institutions where the study was carried out, and the informed consent of the participants;

   ii. Participants having appropriate information on the objectives of the study;

iii. Ensuring anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the information to be gathered.

Cohen et al (2005) express the importance of participants' informed consent at the beginning of any research or study. Permission to have access to the institution where the research would be conducted as well as the acceptance of the participants to willingly partake in the project is very crucial.

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (1992) contend that "the obligation to protect anonymity of research participants and to keep research data confidential is all-inclusive. It should be fulfilled at all costs unless arrangements to the contrary are made with the participants in advance. The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity" (cited in Cohen et al, 2005, p.53).

In the light of the above, initial contact with the heads of the schools where the research was to be conducted was made by Prof. Jan Siska, my supervisor as well as the programme convener of the Erasmus Mundus MA/Mgr Special Education Needs, Charles University in Prague. Thereafter, I communicated with the deputy head teacher of the special school at Rakovnik through formal writing to seek permission to carry out the research, as well schedule the time for mç. Similarly, following an informal meeting with two head teachers of mainstream schools in Prague, I wrote to formally ask permission from them in order to carry out the research in their schools. Subsequently, one of them gave me an appointment for the conduction of the research whilst there was no response from the other. Alternative arrangements were made for me by my supervisor to carry out the research in two different mainstream schools in Prague, in addition to those already arranged.

Before proceeding to conduct the research, I sought the consent of my participants who were teachers, and a deputy head teacher of one mainstream school. Next, I made it clear to them the objective of the study that it is for academic purpose, and the dissertation is in partial fulfilment for the requirement for the award of the Masters degree. The information which they will provide will therefore be dealt with in educational circles. I further assured them that any information provided will be treated as confidential and their anonymity also guaranteed. I also

sought the consent of my participants before recording the focus group discussion and the interview with the deputy head teacher of one mainstream school. I assured the deputy head of the mainstream school and the teachers who partook in the focus group discussion that they would have access to the results of the study.

3.10 Summary:

Chapter three which presents the Methodology and Research approach discusses the various research designs in social science research and the rationale for the specific design chosen for the study, the research question, the sample for the study, the research instruments used and the justification of the various choices. It further discusses administration of research instruments, the data analysis techniques and finally ethical considerations and how they were dealt with.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION:

In any research, data collected need to be analysed. Robson (2002) states 'after data have been collected in enquiry, they have at some stage to be analysed and interpreted. The model traditional in fixed design research is for this to take place after all the data are safely gathered in. It is however, central to flexible design research that you start this analysis and interpretation when you are in the middle of the enquiry. Analysis, at whatever stage, is necessary because generally speaking, data in their raw form do not speak for themselves. The messages stay hidden and need careful teasing out. The process and products of analysis provide the bases for interpretation' (pp. 386 - 387)

Based upon the above, it is imperative for me to analyse the data collected from the focus group discussion and semi structured interview which were the instruments employed in the data collection. Patton (1990) states that qualitative researchers tend to use the inductive analysis of data in which the critical themes emerge out of the data. Since my research is qualitative, my analysis is descriptive, based on the data gathered from the instruments used namely focus group discussion and interview.

Miles & Huberman (1994) view data analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity namely: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. They further emphasize that during and after data collection, one has to reduce the mountain of data through the production of summaries, coding and writing memos. Thus, having gathered the data, and displaying it, I did some memoing followed by the first coding based on the research questions. Next, I did the second level coding by grouping the initial codes into three main themes and finally formed concepts relating to already existing ones.

4.1.1 Research Question:

The research was conducted to find out the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream

schools in the Czech Republic. The study was conducted in one special school for children with mental disability, autism and physical disability in Rakovnik, and three mainstream schools in Prague all in the Czech Republic. From this main topic were derived the following three sub topics:

(1)   What are the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools in the Czech Republic?

(2)   What are the perceptions of teachers towards collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers in the practice of inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

(3)   What are teachers' perceptions on the challenges of inclusive practices, and the possible solutions to the perceived challenges?

The focus group discussion questions and the interview schedule were formulated from the above three themes and were administered accordingly.

4.1.2 Participants in the research:

The participants involved in the research were 5 (five) special education teachers including the deputy head teacher (all females), 5 (five) mainstream teachers (females) and 1 (one) deputy head teacher (male).

The participants were from 4 (four) different schools; one special school and three mainstream schools. The special school is Zakladni Škola a Materska, Skola specialni, Rakovnik in the Czech Republic. It is a special school for children with mental disability, autism and physical disability. It provides education for pre-school and primary education in accordance with the Education Act of the Czech Republic. Emphasis is on the security of special educational care for pupils with special educational needs. The school cooperates with all partners who help to prepare the pupils for life in the society (http://www.zsrako.cz).

One of the mainstream schools where the study was conducted was Fakultini Zakladni Skola, Chodovická, situated in Praha 9. The school, Teaching Elementary School, Chodovická, is a school with a rich history and exciting educational programme that is designed for interested

children from all over the broad spectrum of interests. The elective subjects taught include German, English (second foreign language), Science, Technical Drawing, Literary & Linguistic Practice, Musical Art, Social Science and Conversation in English. Sports classes are also well organised (http://www.fzschodovicka.ez/y

The other mainstream school, Elementary School and Kindergarten in Prague ANGEL 12, is in Angelov 3183, Prague 4. It is specifically located in Modřany Kalmyk, and housed in the following buildings, Hasova, Mladenovova and Angelov. The school deals with children from age 3-15 years with regard to their individual needs. It is a school for all, and with a priority to be a good school for all students and foreigners (http://www.zsangel.cz/).

The third mainstream school, Zakladni Skola nam. Jiriho z Poděbrad is located at George of Poděbrady, 7, 8/1685, Praha 3, George of Poděbrady Square. It has a school curriculum for Basic education. It follows the general education objectives and core competencies which are life skills (http://www.skola.iirak.cz).

4.1.3 Research Instruments:

The research instruments employed were:

(1). Focus group discussion with special education teachers to find out their perceptions on the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream;

(2) Focus group discussion with mainstream teachers to find out their perceptions on the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream;

(3) Semi structured interview with the deputy head teacher of one mainstream school.

4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis: Below is the data from the various focus groups and the analysis:

4.2.1 Focus Group Discussion

Two focus group discussions were audio recorded and each audio record was transcribed within one week of the interview. Notes were however taken during the third focus group discussion as the participants declined the use of audio tape for personal reasons. In all the

three focus group discussions, the deputy head teachers served as interpreters; interpreting from English Language to Czech Language and vice versa to facilitate effective communication. Each transcript was proofread against the audio recording to ensure accuracy. Quotations were given verbatim without correction of grammatical errors occurring during the discussion. Below are the questions and responses of the focus group discussions from one special school and two mainstream schools respectively.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS/DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER OF A SPECIAL SCHOOL IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC - QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1)   What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs, for example, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties, and emotional and behavioural problems in the mainstream setting?

Response: I think it is not a good idea. We have children with mental handicap conditions and it is better to study here because we have individual programmes for them as well as individual care. Here we've got better support for each of the special needs child. In our school, we have three teachers for six or eight children and if you work with the child who is physically handicapped, you need help sometimes; you need two people more to get the child with physical handicap on to his wheel chair. If there are about three of such children in the mainstream, there will be problems.

Furthermore, children here get physiotherapy every day. Is it possible in the mainstream school? No. In my life, ten years ago, I saw twenty children with autism, and I know what they do. In the mainstream, the teacher saw only one, and that brings the difference. He teaches twenty normal children and I never taught healthy children. I see every day twenty to forty children with handicapping conditions and I see their problems; they are very different.

Children are happy here because they meet each other. Children themselves, if you ask them they are happy here because they feel normal. In the normal school, every day, you are

different, but here you feel normal because they have problems which are similar. The child does not have normal feeling in the mainstream. It happens often that children with autism are taken to the mainstream and after one year, they come back here and they are happy in our school. Parents see that their children are happy here, and if they knew it before, may be a year ago, they wouldn't have sent them to the normal school. Parents with children with handicapping conditions when they meet here they discuss about their children, but in the mainstream, they can't discuss issues with parents who have normal children.

Finally, we don 7 understand our heads in Government here because the special care which special needs children get from here is very high; it is not possible in the mainstream schools.

(2) What are your views about the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

Response: We have individual programmes for children with special educational needs here. Children with mental handicap, for example, one of them is best in drawing, and one of them is best Czech language; not the same in the mainstream. He can't be the first in the mainstream, never.

(3) Do you think educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream would improve their socialisation?

Response: It is important for children with special educational needs to socialise but socialisation starts from the family. If the family is not working it is difficult for the children with special educational needs to socialise. However, in the school, we are not a vacuum; the children often go to perform. Performances include singing of songs and dancing, or we make aerobic and very often we win. We cooperate with children in the mainstream. Children feel confident among their peers.

(4) What are your perceptions on collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

Response: It would be good working together; it would not be a problem working together in educating handicapped children. It'll be very good for each part to cooperate.

(5) Do you envisage any challenges that could arise in such collaborative work?

Response: No. No problem to cooperate with the teachers in the mainstream, however, for the mainstream teachers, it is a little hard to make programmes for children with special educational needs. It will be difficult for mainstream teachers to make Individualized Educational Programme (IEP) for special educational needs children, and to make programmes for the regular children.

(6) In your view, do you think there might be some challenges in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: There are challenges. One of the challenges is the number of children with special educational needs. For example, the number of handicapped children in our school here is one hundred and thirty (130). If the Government wants to get them in schools in our city, it will be about ten or twenty handicapped children in a mainstream, you can imagine it. . . . . If one child, it can be possible but large numbers, it is unbelievable. It is better for them to be here because we have a lot of programmes to meet their needs.

(7) What is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

Response: Children with special educational needs should be educated in the special schools because of the care that they get in special schools.

Analysis of findings from focus group discussion with special education teachers:

From the focus group discussion with special education teachers in a special school in the Czech Republic came the following:

SUB TOPIC 1

Perceptions of teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream: The perception of the participants towards the education of children with special needs in the mainstream was not positive because they stated that the facilities they

provide SEN children in the special schools as well as the support they give, for example, physiotherapy for children with autism and physically challenged are not available in the mainstream. In addition, the children themselves feel happy being in special school because they feel normal in that environment whereas in the mainstream they feel different.

With regard to their academic performance, the participants responded that SEN children perform well according to their abilities in specific disciplines like Drawing, Czech Language and since they prepare Individualised Educational Programmes for them, they work according to that.

With regard to socialisation, the participants stated that SEN children in their school often go out to undertake some performances like singing, dancing and aerobic with children in the mainstream and through that they socialise.

SUB TOPIC 2

Collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers in the practice of Inclusive Education:

The participants agreed on the need for collaboration between special education teachers and mainstream teachers in inclusive education delivery. The challenge they envisaged would be the preparation of IEP for SEN children by mainstream teachers. They claimed it would be a little difficult for them.

SUB TOPIC 3

Perceived challenges of inclusive education practices and possible solutions:

The participants were of the view that educating large numbers of children with special educational needs in mainstream would not be practicable because managing even one SEN child is not easy, let alone talking about ten or more in a mainstream classroom. Evidence of large numbers of SEN children was given, quoting the student population of their school as 130 (one hundred and thirty). They concluded that SEN children should be educated in special schools because that would benefit them.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS IN THE MAINSTREAM SETTING IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC- QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1)   What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs, for example, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems, in the mainstream?

Response: Children with learning difficulties and emotional problems could be educated in the mainstream but not other special needs children like the physically challenged, the hearing impaired and the visually impaired. Not possible in this school.

(2)   What are your views about the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

Response: Academic performance of children with special educational needs depends on the family, because some children are supported at home. Bad conditions pertain to some at home and if no support from the family, their academic performance would not be good.

(3)   Do you think educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream would improve their socialisation?

Response: Children with emotional problems find it difficult to socialise; they often find it difficult to find friends. Children with learning difficulties are able to socialise with others.

(4)   What are your perceptions on the collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: It works well to work with special educators because the work of the regular teacher is very demanding. The psychological problems of children with special needs would be addressed by special educators and that would be a great advantage. The psychologist would give advice if we work together. It is a good idea working together with special educators.

(5)   Do you envisage any challenges that could arise in such collaborative work?

Response: There might be some challenges, for example, if the special educator is not ready to work. The challenges could be addressed by discussing and getting mutual understanding.

(6)   In your view, do you think there might be some challenges in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: There are challenges involved in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream. Firstly, there is the need for financial support. Secondly, transportation for children with special educational needs is necessary. Thirdly, there are no facilities for children who are physically challenged. Family support is also crucial.

(7)   Could you state some ways of addressing the perceived challenges.

Response: Firstly, Government should improve school conditions; facilities should be provided to meet the needs of all children with special educational needs. Secondly, there should be education of mainstream teachers on special needs children. Thirdly, there should be good relations with the family of children with special educational needs.

(8)   What is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

Response: A good idea but the Government should make conditions favourable to meet the needs of children with special educational needs otherwise it is not possible.

Analysis of findings from focus group discussion with teachers in a mainstream in the Czech Republic:

SUB TOPIC 1

Perceptions of teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting:

The participants were of the view that children with learning difficulties could be educated in the mainstream but not special needs children like those with physical disabilities, hearing impairment and visual impairment because of lack of facilities to support them.

With regard to the academic performance of SEN children in the mainstream, the participants stated that their academic performance depends on the support they get at home. If the family is in the position to support them, they would do well.

Concerning the issue of socialisation, the participants stated that children with emotional problems find it difficult to socialise whilst those with learning difficulties do not have problems with socialisation.

SUB TOPIC 2

Collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the practice of inclusive education:

The participants expressed their willingness to work with special education teachers since collaboration would be a great advantage to them. For example, the psychological problems of SEN children would be addressed by the psychologist; therefore collaboration is a good idea. The challenge that might however arise is the occasion whereby the special educator might not be ready to work.

SUB TOPIC 3

Perceived challenges of inclusive education practices and possible solutions:

The participants mentioned such challenges as financial support, transportation for SEN children to school and accessibility for children with physical handicap. These facilities need to be provided by the Government. In addition, there is the need for family support.

Some ways of addressing the challenges include, provision of facilities to meet the needs of SEN children, and educating mainstream teachers on the skills to teach children with special educational needs. There is also the need for good relationship between families of SEN children and the schools.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS IN A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC - QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1)   What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs, for example, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems, in the mainstream?

Response: It is important but not appropriate for every child; for some children it is not the best solution because the school is not prepared with material resources for such children, particularly the physically handicapped. Some of the special needs children will become victims of bullying by their normal peers.

(2)   What are your views about the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: Special educational needs children progress rather in the special class. Their academic performance also depends on the motivation from good friends and teachers. Furthermore, the academic performance depends on the Individual Educational Plan.

(3) Do you think educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream
.   would improve their socialisation?

Response: Children with emotional problems or children with hyperactivity, in my opinion, have bigger problems in socialising than children with learning difficulties. Often the child behaves in a strange way. Those with emotional problems do not socialise well with the normal children. They want to contact others but the normal children run away from them. Societal attitude also affects their socialisation. Children with learning difficulties do not have problems with socialisation.

(4)   What are your perceptions on the collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: There is the need for collaboration. Mainstream teachers want education on children with special educational needs but we don't get it. We don 7 know the problem; whether it is money or what, we don 7 know.

 (5)   Do you envisage any challenges that could arise in such collaborative work?

Response: There might be some challenges; if some teachers do not want to respect the views of the others.

 (6)   In your view, do you think there might be some challenges in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: One of the challenges is SEN children would be unhappy because they would be victims of bullying in the mainstream school. Another one is lack of materials for teaching SEN children in the mainstream. Mainstream teachers lack knowledge about children with special needs. Furthermore, there are currently large classes, about twenty -five and with SEN children in addition, I can't focus on them.

(7)   Could you state some ways of addressing the perceived challenges.

Response: The Government should provide materials for teaching SEN children. Mainstream teachers need to have education on SEN children in order to be able to teach them. There should also be more teachers in one class. There should be fewer hours for teachers per week, so that we have time for meetings, discussions and evaluation of work. There is also the need for independent supervisors to be visiting the schools.

 (8)   What is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

Response: For inclusion to be possible, mainstream teachers need to be educated on teaching SEN children, there should be change of attitude on the part of teachers towards SEN children, and infrastructure needs to be improved in the mainstream schools.

Further, more money should be paid the teachers and also they need appreciation from the society and the parents. This would serve as motivation for the teachers.

Analysis of findings from focus group discussion with teachers in a mainstream setting in the Czech Republic:

SUB TOPIC 1

Perceptions of teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting:

The responses of the participants indicated that though inclusive education is important, it is not appropriate for every child; it is not the best solution because of lack of facilities to meet the needs of SEN children particularly children with physical handicap. Furthermore, SEN children would become victims of bullying in the mainstream schools.

With regard to the academic performance of SEN children in the mainstream setting, the participants were of the view that academic performance depends on the IEP for the child, and therefore they work along that line. Furthermore, much also depends on good friends and teachers who serve as motivation to the SEN children.

Concerning socialisation of SEN children in the mainstream, the participants stated that children with emotional problems have problem with socialisation unlike children with learning difficulties who do not have any difficulty with socialisation.

SUB TOPIC 2

Collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the practice of inclusive education:

The participants stated that there is the need for collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers for the success of inclusive education. A challenge which might however arise would be lack of respect for one another's views.

SUB TOPIC 3

Perceived challenges of inclusive practices and possible solutions:

The challenges as stated by the participants include lack of materials for teaching SEN children, lack of knowledge on special needs education on the part mainstream teachers, and large classes currently in mainstream schools which make it quite difficult to focus on the students. Another challenge, according to the participants is that the SEN children would become victims of bullying and therefore would not be happy.

Some of the suggested ways of addressing the challenges include provision of materials for teaching SEN children, educating mainstream teachers on special needs children, increasing the number of teachers in a class, and reduction of contact hours per week. Furthermore, there should be attitudinal change towards SEN children by mainstream teachers.

4.2.2 INTERVIEW:

The semi structured interview with the deputy head teacher was audio recorded and transcribed within one week of the interview. The transcript was proofread against the audio recording to ensure accuracy. Quotations were given verbatim without taking cognisance of any grammatical errors.

Below is the interview schedule for the deputy head teacher of a mainstream school in the Czech Republic with the responses.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE DEPUTY HEADTEACHER OF A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL THE CZECH REPUBLIC- QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1)   What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

Response: We have two groups of special needs, first group are children with reading and writing problems, and the second group are children with behaviour problems, that is, hyperactivity. There are about twenty children with behaviour problems and they go to psychologist and the psychologist interviews them, makes a few tests and writes reports. The reports go to the teachers who teach such children. That works. The smaller group is made up of children with reading and writing problems. Individualized Educational Programmes are drawn for them. The educational advisor writes that plan, and the psychologist and the student agree to work according to the plan. Every forty days such children go to the psychologist to make tasks. The psychologist comes back with the results and they are recorded. For children with special educational needs like hearing impairment, visual impairment, and mental

handicap, yes, I think it is good for them to be educated in the mainstream. Sometimes, it is good for the rest of the class. However, harder work for the teacher, but for them, it is good. But for those with wheel chair, no lifts for them to go upstairs.

(2)   What in your view are some advantages of educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

Response: It is good for them to be included in the mainstream school as part of the normal life, absolutely good for them. It is good for the rest of the students because they can understand the problem. They will come to terms with such conditions. It could also be a motivation for them; if special needs children can manage, and then I can manage too.

(3)   As the deputy head of a mainstream school, do you find the need for collaboration between special educators and mainstream teachers in educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: I feel it works. At the moment we have special education psychologists and they cooperate with us. A psychologist comes to our school every forty days. It is good for them to come to our school to hear our views. Also a teacher in the fourth grade who got education as a special educator assists children with individual plans once a week, so it works to cooperate with them.

(4)   What in your view are some advantages of such collaboration?

Response: The mainstream teacher needs to hear the views from the special educator about the special educational needs children and to understand the problems of those children in order to work with him or her.

(5)   In your view, do you envisage any challenges that are likely to arise in the collaborative work between special educators and mainstream teachers?

Response: Of course there could be a few challenges or problems. But problems can arise from personalities. If they don't understand each other, not friendly, don't like to cooperate, it will not work. A few teachers wouldn't like special teacher in their class because they do not understand the role of the special educator. The special educator is there not for control but to help.

(6)   How could the perceived challenges be addressed?

Response: There should be understanding between the two parties. The mainstream teacher should understand that the special educator is not there to control him but to help in the education of the special needs child. The only way to address personality problems is to explain.

(7)   What in your view is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

Response: Of course there are a few problems with prediction. Not every teacher can see those children with special educational needs in their schools. There are some who are afraid of hard work.

 (8)   What are some of the ways to address the challenges?

Response: Firstly, there is the need to change the thinking of some of the head teachers and teachers in the mainstream. Secondly, conditions should be made favourable for children with special educational needs to cope in the mainstream. In our school for example, there is the problem with children in wheel chair. There are no elevators to assist physically challenged pupils. Building elevators is expensive so money is needed. Thirdly, there should be Government support to fund inclusive education.

Analysis of findings from the semi structured interview with the deputy head teacher of a mainstream school in the Czech Republic

SUB TOPIC 1

Perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream:

The respondent was of the view that educating SEN children in the mainstream is a good idea, and it is good for the non-SEN children as well because they will come to terms with such conditions. Inclusion of children with special educational needs becomes part of the normal life. However, those with physical challenges, it would be difficult because of the unavailability of lifts. For the teachers, it calls for hard work.

SUB TOPIC 2

Collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the practice of inclusive education:

According to the respondent, it is a good idea for mainstream and special education teachers to work together. Sharing of one another's views would promote inclusive practices. Possible challenges in collaboration might be lack of understanding of one another's roles, and lack of cooperation between the two parties. This could however be resolved through mutual understanding of one another.

SUB TOPIC 3

Perceived challenges of inclusive education and possible solutions

According to the respondent, there could be some problems with prediction. It is not every teacher who can see SEN children in their classrooms. There are also some teachers who fear hard work.

There is therefore the need to change the thinking of teachers and some head teachers towards SEN children. There should be barrier free environment for wheel chair users in the mainstream. A successful inclusive education calls for Government support to put the necessary structures in place in order to meet the needs of SEN children.

4.3 SUMMARY

The fourth chapter focuses on data presentation and analysis from the research conducted, based on focus group discussion and semi structured interview as the instruments employed. The focus group discussions involved teachers in one special school and two mainstream schools, and an interview with the deputy head teacher of a mainstream school. The rationale behind the focus group discussion involving teachers in a special school and mainstream schools is that effective implementation of inclusive education depends on teachers in both special and mainstream setting, hence finding out the views of both parties. Furthermore, since heads of institutions have significant role in effecting policies in the schools such as policies on inclusive education, 1 found it expedient to find out the views of head teachers or their deputies on the subject of study.

The participants gave their responses to the research questions and the different perspectives have been analysed. The analysis would then be evaluated in the fifth chapter in relation to the context of literature.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The fifth chapter focuses on the evaluation of the data analysed in the fourth chapter using the research instruments namely focus group discussion and interview. This chapter relates to the findings in Chapter 2, that is, what is already known about the topic. The study was conducted to find out the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools in the Czech Republic. The research was carried out in one special for children with mental disability, autism and physical disability in Rakovnik, and three mainstream schools in Prague, all in the Czech Republic.

The participants from the special school comprised five female teachers including the deputy head teacher of the school, who constituted the focus group. Questions for the focus group were discussed among the participants and the responses were audio recorded and later on transcribed for analysis. Similarly, two focus group discussions were held in two mainstream schools in Prague. The participants in one of the schools were two female teachers, and in the other mainstream school were three female teachers including an educational psychologist. The focus group questions were discussed among the participants and their responses were noted in written form by the researcher as the two female teachers declined the use of audio tape. The responses from the three participants were however audio recorded and were transcribed later for analysis. The responses from the interview with the deputy head teacher of one mainstream school in Prague were also audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The study seeks to provide answers to the three main research questions formulated under the following sub topics:

1. What are the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

2. What are the perceptions of teachers towards collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the practice of inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

3. What are teachers' perceptions on the challenges of inclusive education, and possible solutions to the perceived challenges?

Research, as well as practical experience, has shown that teacher perceptions arc important in determining the effectiveness of inclusive education, as teachers are the school personnel most responsible for implementing inclusive service delivery models (Haider, 2008). Their perceptions will either promote or hinder the progress of inclusive education. It is upon this background that the study has been carried out to find out the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers in those selected schools as mentioned above, towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream in the Czech Republic.

5.2 Evaluation of sub topic one:

What are the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

From the data gathered from the focus group discussion with teachers in the special school for children with mental disability, autism and physical disability, Rakovnik, the participants did not express positive perception towards educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream because according to them, the resources and support that they offer are not available in the mainstream schools. In addition, special needs children feel different in the mainstream whilst they always feel normal in the special school. This is an issue of stigmatisation. The data gathered from the focus group discussion from the two mainstream schools in Prague showed that the participants, though they expressed the importance of inclusive education, were of the view that the mainstream schools are not yet ready with the material resources to meet the needs of all SEN children. This falls in line with the research findings of Bradshaw (1998) as mainstream teachers were worried about meeting the specific needs of students with disabilities, the social stigma attached to students with disabilities in inclusive schools, and the unavailability of resources to assist in the implementation of inclusive programmes.

With regard to their academic performance, the participants from the special school stated that SEN children perform according to the IEP that they follow and they excel in specific subjects

like Drawing and Czech Language in the special school. They cannot therefore excel in the mainstream. The responses from the focus group discussion from the two mainstream schools also suggest that academic performance of SEN children in the mainstream depends on the IEP that they follow, coupled with motivation from teachers and friends, and the support they get from their homes. This is however contrary to the findings of Naylor (2002) which suggest the academic performance of children with special educational needs improved in inclusive schools.

Concerning the socialisation of SEN children in the mainstream, the participants from the special school expressed the need for the SEN children to socialise and they do this by taking them out to meet other students in the mainstream for such activities as singing, dancing and aerobic. The participants from the two mainstream schools in Prague also expressed the importance of socialisation of SEN children in the mainstream; however children with emotional problems or hyperactivity have problems with socialisation with their non disabled peers in the mainstream as the non disabled try to shy away from them. This is similar to the findings of (Heiman, 2002; Priestly & Rabiee, 2002) that children with special educational needs have problem with social and behavioural adjustment and therefore doubted the benefits of inclusive education for SEN children.

5.3 Evaluation of sub topic two:

What are the perceptions of teachers towards collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers in the practice of inclusive education?

The responses from the focus group discussion held in the special school in Rakovnik suggest that there is the need for collaboration between special education teachers and mainstream teachers for the success of inclusive education. The participants from the focus group discussion from the two mainstream schools similarly expressed their support for collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers. Effective cooperation will promote the education of SEN children in the mainstream since each party will lend support to the other. This is in line with the findings of Haider (2008) that for inclusive education to be successful there is the need for collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers.

The essence of collaboration is also stressed by Reich, (1990) that "individual skills are integrated in the group over time, as group members work through various problems . . . . .they learn about each other's abilities. They learn to help one another perform better, what each can contribute to a particular project and how they can best take advantage of one another's experiences" (p. 20). Fink (2004) and Jehlen (2002) contend that reducing the stress of regular teachers is through collaborative teaching. Since collaboration provides the opportunity for the regular teachers to tap the expertise of the special educator, it is necessary for this measure to be adopted.

5.4 Evaluation of sub topic three:

What are teachers' perceptions on perceived challenges of inclusive education, and the possible solutions to the perceived challenges?

The participants from the focus group discussion from the special school in Rakovnik stated that the management of large numbers of children with special educational needs in the mainstream would be a big challenge. A similar view came up from the focus group discussion from one of the mainstream schools in Prague that currently there are large classes in the mainstream and if additional numbers are added comprising SEN children, it would compound their problems. This falls in line with the findings of Macmillan *et al* (2002) in their study with NSTU which stated that the teachers complained of failure to reduce large classes to accommodate students with special educational needs negatively influenced their ability to help SEN children. Also, according to the findings of Wolery *et al* (1994), a major concern raised by teachers on successful inclusive practice was that of too many children in each teacher's classroom. Teachers in early childhood inclusive programmes strongly indicated that an adequate number of staff was important to a successful inclusive programme.

The participants from the two mainstream schools reported lack of material resources to teach SEN children, lack of lifts for use by those with physical impairment, and lack of transportation to be used by children with special educational needs. The findings from the study carried out by Macmillan *et al* (2002) confirm that there was lack of resources and

support to meet the needs of children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms, and this was a big challenge in the implementation of inclusive education.

Furthermore, the mainstream teachers reported that lack of knowledge about the skills needed in the education of SEN children will pose a serious problem to them should the SEN children be included in the mainstream. The findings of Kamens (2003) ascertain the fact that tremendous challenge for teachers with regard to successful inclusive practices is the lack of skills necessary to meet individual needs in the classroom. Similarly, the findings of Idol, (1997) attest to the concern of teachers that as more learners are included; teachers will need extra tools and expertise to cope with some social and emotional challenges that accompany inclusive education. In his view, it is a question of the technical know-how which is needed by teachers to address the problems of SEN children.

Finally, the mainstream teachers stated bullying of SEN children by their non disabled peers as a challenge. According to them the SEN children would become victims of bullying in the mainstream classrooms.

5.5 Some of the ways by which the challenges would be addressed, as expressed by the participants from the focus group discussions from the mainstream schools were as follows:

1. The Czech government should improve the conditions of the mainstream schools by providing resources to meet the needs of all SEN children, and a barrier free environment for those with physical disability needs to be created. The findings of Avramidis & Norwich (2002) on the study of teachers' attitude towards integration/ inclusion, confirm the need for provision of appropriate resources to meet the needs of SEN children in the mainstream.

2. Mainstream teachers should be educated on how to manage and teach children with special educational needs. The findings of Gamer (1996) are in support of the above as he   suggests that there is the need to incorporate the concept of inclusion in the curriculum of teacher education. Provision must be made in the teacher training programme for teachers to critically discuss issues concerning inclusion, and the

effectiveness of teaching. Additionally, teachers' observance of teaching children with special needs in inclusive education setting should be a necessary component of breaking down barriers to inclusion.

3. More teachers need to be placed in an inclusive classroom to meet the challenge of large numbers of learners in the classrooms, and also there is the need for fewer contact hours per teacher. According to Wolery *et al* (1994) there is the need for adequate number of teachers to be placed in an inclusive classroom if inclusive programme should attain success. The issue of fewer contact hours is however contrary to the findings of Macmillan *et al* (2002) involving NSTU which rather calls for more contact hours to enable them prepare adequately to meet the needs of children with special educational needs in the mainstream.

4. There is also the need for attitudinal change on the part of both students and teachers in order to be ready to accommodate SEN children. This is in line with the findings of Bender, Vail & Scott (1985), that the success of including children with special education needs in the regular classrooms depend, to a great extent, on the willingness, and the readiness on the part of teachers to accommodate children with special needs. The finding of Coots et al lends itself to that of Bender, Vail &Scott (1985), as they suggested that attitudinal change in teachers and their commitment to success through experience with inclusive practices should be pre-requisites for the attainment of classroom environment for all learners.

5. Furthermore, for inclusive education to be successful, teachers' salaries need to be increased to serve as incentive to them, and also appreciation from the society at large would serve as motivation.

5.6 INTERVIEW

Below is the evaluation of the semi structured interview with the deputy head teacher of one mainstream school in Prague:

The data gathered from the interview suggest that the deputy head teacher is in support of inclusive education; however its success calls for hard work on the part of the teachers. There

is also the need to make the mainstream schools environmentally friendly for those using wheel chairs. This is in accordance with the study of Abbott (2006) on perceptions of Northern Ireland teachers on inclusive education which revealed that mainstream head teachers showed wholehearted commitment to the concept of inclusive education and could critically examine what they have achieved. However they recognised varied constraints both within and beyond their school.

On the issue of collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers, the response suggests that collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers is crucial for the exchange of ideas on how best to manage SEN children in the mainstream. This is in line with the findings of Avramidis *el al* (2000) that collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers provides opportunity for special education needs children to benefit from the general curriculum.

With regard to some challenges that might arise in the practice of inclusive education, the response from the deputy head teacher suggests that some teachers in the mainstream would find inclusive education tedious because not all teachers are ready to do hard work. Also, the physical conditions in the mainstream schools are not favourable for wheel chair users.

One of the ways of addressing the challenges of inclusive education as suggested by the deputy head teacher is changing the attitude of some head teachers and teachers in the mainstream not to shy away from hard work. This is in accordance with the findings of Leatherman & Niemeyer (2005) on the issue of teachers' attitude; that teachers' positive attitudes produce congenial atmosphere for all children to learn better, and to be more productive within the classroom setting. Similar, Hegarty (1994) and Pumfrey (2000) pointed out that teachers' attitudes play significant role in the success or failure of inclusion of special education needs pupils in the regular schools since they can have effect on their peers in the classroom.

In addition, favourable conditions in the mainstream schools should be created for all students by providing facilities to meet the needs of all learners, and creating environmentally friendly conditions for those in wheel chairs for easy mobility. The onus rests on the Government of the

Czech Republic to provide the necessary facilities for effective implementation of inclusive education.

5.7 Summary

The fifth chapter is the synthesis of the data analysed in chapter four and discussed in relation to the review of literature. The data was collected using focus group discussions from a special school for children with mental disability, autism and physical disability in Rakovnik, and two mainstream schools in Prague. Additional data was collected using semi structured interview with the deputy head teacher of one mainstream school in Prague.

The various participants gave their perceptions on the three themes of the study which were obviously their responses to the research questions. The responses were on:

1. The perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream.

2. The perceptions of teachers towards the collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the practice of inclusive education

3. Teachers' perceptions on perceived challenges of inclusive education, and possible solutions to the perceived challenges.

Whilst some of the responses cut across the various groups, some were varied. Based on the responses, suggestions and recommendations would be made in the sixth chapter which is the closing chapter of the dissertation.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION: The sixth chapter of the dissertation which is the final chapter sums up the whole work. The first chapter which is the Introduction of the dissertation stipulates the topic for the study, the aim of the study, its significance and the limitations. The second chapter focuses on the review of literature. Primarily, it discusses the previous researches undertaken on the subject of study. The third chapter is on the research design and methodology used to gather relevant data on the topic. The fourth chapter is on the presentation and critical analysis of data gathered whilst the fifth chapter is on the evaluation of the data analysed in the fourth chapter.

The purpose of the study was to find out the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream. **The** study was conducted in Rakovnik and Prague. In order to gather data on the topic, focus group discussions and interview were employed as research instruments and these were held in a special school for children with mental disability, autism and physical disability in Rakovnik, and three mainstream schools in Prague, the Czech Republic. The participants were all female teachers involved in the focus group discussion, and one male teacher being the deputy head teacher of a mainstream school who was interviewed using semi structured interview approach. **The** data was organised under three sub topics namely:

1. What are the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers towards collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers in the practice of inclusive education?
3. What are teachers' perceptions on perceived challenges of inclusive education, and possible solutions to the perceived challenges?

6.2 What are the perceptions of mainstream and special education teachers towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

The perceptions of the participants from the focus group discussion from the special school in Rakovnik were not positive towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream. According to them, the mainstream schools are not yet ready with the necessary facilities to meet the needs of SEN children. The responses of the two mainstream focus groups suggest that although they appreciate the importance of inclusive education, it would not be appropriate for all SEN children. They reported that there are no resources in the mainstream schools which would meet the needs of children with physical disability and visual impairment, for example. The response of the deputy head teacher from one mainstream school in Prague clearly shows that though he supports inclusive education, he has reservations on the grounds that it calls for hard work on the part of the teachers, and also there is the need for conditions to be improved to cater for the needs of all learners.

With regard to the academic performance of children with special educational needs when placed in the mainstream, the responses from both special education and mainstream teachers indicate that SEN children work according to the Individualised Educational Programme designed for them and they work according to that. Their performance also depends upon the support they are able to get at home. Therefore their placement in the mainstream is not necessarily a guarantee for their improved academic performance.

The question of whether educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream would improve their socialisation, the mainstream and special education teachers were affirmative on the need for their socialisation; however, on the part of children with emotional difficulties or hyperactivity, it is a big problem to them as the regular peers try to avoid their company.

6.3 What are the perceptions of teachers towards collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers in the practice of inclusive education?

The participants from both the special school and the mainstream schools in Rakovnik and Prague respectively affirm their stand on the need for collaboration between special educators and mainstream teachers if inclusive education is to achieve success. The exchange of ideas by

both groups of teachers on how best to educate SEN children would go a long way to improve their education in the mainstream classroom.

6.4 What are teachers' perceptions on perceived challenges of inclusive education, and possible solutions to the perceived challenges?

It is evident from the responses of my participants from both the special school and the mainstream schools that there are currently large class sizes in the mainstream schools in the Czech Republic, and including children with special educational needs would certainly compound their problems. In effect, management of both regular and special educational needs children would be difficult unless there is reduction in the class sizes.

The participants from the special school and the two mainstream schools, as well as and the deputy head teacher of the mainstream school were emphatic on the lack of resources to meet the needs of children with special educational needs in the mainstream schools. For example, without the necessary facilities and support services to meet the needs of children with autism, mental disability and physical disability, including them in the mainstream would not work.

Another challenge which was identified by the participants of the focus group discussion from the special school and the two mainstream schools is the lack of knowledge of the skills needed by mainstream teachers to educate children with special educational needs in inclusive classrooms. Without the acquisition of the requisite skills in teaching SEN children, the mainstream teachers would be found wanting in an inclusive classroom.

Furthermore, the participants from the mainstream schools identified negative attitude on the part of some teachers towards working with children with special educational needs because not all teachers are ready to see children with special educational needs in the mainstream. Without positive attitude on the part of teachers towards dealing with SEN children, educating them in the mainstream would not yield any good results. Similarly, the issue of negative attitude towards SEN children by their peers in the mainstream has been identified by participants from the special school. They reported that children with special educational needs are seen as different in the mainstream school system.

6.5 Some ways of addressing the perceived challenges

The participants from the special school and the mainstream schools suggested some ways of addressing the perceived challenges as follows:

There should be increase in the number of teachers in an inclusive classroom to match with the number of pupils in the classroom. This would go a long way to reduce the pressure on the teachers in an inclusive classroom.

Also, for the success of including children with special educational needs in the mainstream, the provision of the necessary resources to meet the individual needs of SEN children is crucial. The participants in the research are therefore calling on the Government of the Czech Republic to provide the necessary resources which will meet the needs of all learners in the mainstream schools. For example, lifts for wheel chair users, transportation for the movement of SEN children to and from school.

In addition to the above, there is the need for providing the necessary education to the mainstream teachers on how to teach and manage children with special educational needs. This could be done through in-service training programmes which should be organised on regular bases for teachers in the mainstream who do not have any knowledge on SEN children.

Furthermore, there is the need for awareness creation of mainstream teachers to have a change of attitude towards the education of children with special educational needs. Similarly, awareness creation should be extended to pupils in the mainstream schools on special educational needs children so that they do not see them as different when in the same classroom. This could be done by organising seminars in the mainstream schools.

6.6 Conclusion

It is evident from the research report that for effective implementation of inclusive education in the Czech Republic, there is the need for attitudinal change on the part of teachers and students towards children with special educational needs. There is also the need for providing the necessary resources in the mainstream schools to meet the needs of all types of learners. It is also crucial for equipping mainstream teachers with the skills needed for educating SEN

children in the mainstream classrooms. In addition, collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers in service delivery will promote inclusive education. Furthermore, there is the need for reducing large classes to manageable ones for effective teaching and class control. Closely linked to that is putting adequate number of teachers in an inclusive class in order lessen the work load of teachers.

Finally, for the success of inclusive education, some of the teachers called for increase in their salaries as incentive for extra work. They are of the view that it would be a morale booster to them to put in extra effort in an inclusive classroom.

6.7 Recommendations for future practice

The participants of the study provided their perceptions on the research questions discussed as well as gave suggestions on the necessary measures that need to be put in place before the implementation of inclusive education in the Czech Republic. Obviously, the study did not have a wide coverage due to time constraints on the part of the researcher, and language barrier which prevented my acceptance by a number of head teachers of mainstream schools in Prague to conduct the research; the findings, therefore, cannot be generalised as the representation of the whole of the Czech Republic. Nonetheless, in my opinion, a clear picture has been depicted by the small sample of the study, as the situation on the ground concerning inclusive education in Prague, the Czech Republic. This research can therefore serve as a source of information for future researchers who would like to undertake research in similar or related topic on a larger scale. Furthermore, the findings of this research will serve as guidelines for me to help promote inclusive education in my country, Ghana. Though Ghana has accepted the concept of inclusive education in principle, there is very little evidence of this practice.

Evidence from literature reveals that the National Programme of Education Development of the Czech Republic has made inclusion of pupils with special educational needs into the mainstream at all levels of education the centre of interest. The Government is therefore putting measures in place to provide better educational and technological support for pupils with special educational needs in the mainstream settings. With this knowledge acquired, I would be able to advise the Ministry of Education, Ghana, to learn from the example of the

Czech Republic. Furthermore, this particular study has given me an experience in research work which would enable me conduct similar researches in my own country, Ghana.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE
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V Praze dne 25.3.2010

Vážený pane řediteli,
Vážená paní ředitelko.

dovoluji si Vás požádat o přijetí našeho studenta pana Gustava Kojo Gaewu z Ghany ve vaší škole. Jmenovaný je zapsán do mezinárodního programu Erasmus/Mundus. který je hrazen z prostředků Evropské Unie a probíhá společně na třech univerzitách - Roehampton University London, Anglie, Fontys University Tilburg, Nizozemí a na pražské Univerzitě Karlově. Pedagogická fakulta je přijímající organizací. Studijní program je zaměřen na oblast speciální pedagogiky - týká se vzdělávání jedinců se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami a jejich integrace.

Pan Gustav Kojo Gaewu připravuje závěrečnou práci, kterou bude koncem srpna t.r. na naší fakultě obhajovat. Návštěva vaší školy, rozhovor s Vámi. příp. s vašimi učiteli, žáky či studenty, je součástí sběru dat, které by byly v práci použity a zpracovány podle stejných pravidel, jimiž se řídí i čeští studenti.

Budete-li požadovat podrobnější informace, ráda Vám je poskytnu. Předem děkuji za Vaši vstřícnost a spolupráci.

(%JLxJ

Mgr. Eva Vachudová, Ph.D.
vedoucí oddělení pro zahraniční vztahy

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS IN A SPECIAL SCHOOL IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC - QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1) What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs, for example, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties, and emotional and behavioural problems in the mainstream setting?

(2) What are your views about the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

(3) Do you think educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream would improve their socialization?

(4) What are your perceptions on collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

(5) Do you envisage any challenges that could arise in such collaborative work?

(6) In your view, do you think there might be some challenges in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

(7)   What is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

APPENDIX B. 2

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS IN A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC - QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1) What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs, for example, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems, in the mainstream?

(2) What are your views about the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

(3) Do you think educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream would improve their socialisation?

(4) What are your perceptions on the collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

(5) Do you envisage any challenges that could arise in such collaborative work?

(6) In your view, do you think there might be some challenges in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

(7) Could you state some ways of addressing the perceived challenges.

(8) What is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS IN THE MAINSTREAM SETTING IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1) What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs, for example, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems, in the mainstream?

  (2) What are your views about the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

  (3) Do you think educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream would improve their socialisation?

  (4) What are your perceptions on the collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

  (5) Do you envisage any challenges that could arise in such collaborative work?

  (6) In your view, do you think there might be some challenges in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

(7) Could you state some ways of addressing the perceived challenges.

(8) What is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

APPENDIX B. 4

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE DEPUTY HEADTEACHER OF A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL IN PRAGUE, THE CZECH REPUBLIC

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1) What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

(2) What in your view are some advantages of educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

(3) As the deputy head of a mainstream school, do you find the need for collaboration between special educators and mainstream teachers in educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

(4) What in your view are some advantages of such collaboration?

(5) In your view, do you envisage any challenges that are likely to arise in the collaborative work between special educators and mainstream teachers?

(6) How could the perceived challenges be addressed?

(7) What in your view is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

(8) What are some of the ways to address the challenges?

APPENDIX C. 1

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS IN A SPECIAL SCHOOL IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC - QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1) What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs, for example, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties, and emotional and behavioural problems in the mainstream setting?

Response: I think it is not a good idea. We have children with mental handicap conditions and it is better to study here because we have individual programmes for them as well as individual care. Here we've got belter support for each of the special needs child. In our school, we have three teachers for six or eight children and if you work with the child who is physically handicapped, you need help sometimes; you need two people more to get the child with physical handicap on to his wheel chair. If there are about three of such children in the mainstream, there will be problem.

Furthermore, children here get physiotherapy every day. Is it possible in the mainstream school? No. In my life, ten years ago, I saw twenty children with autism, and I know what they do. In the mainstream, the teacher saw only one, and that brings the difference. He teaches twenty 'normal' children and I never taught healthy children. I see every day twenty to forty children with handicapping conditions and I see their problems; they are very different. Children are happy here because they meet each other. Children themselves, if you ask them they are happy here because they feel normal. In the 'normal' school, every day, you are different, but here you feel normal because they have problems which are similar.

The child does not have normal feeling in the mainstream. It happens often that children with autism are taken to the mainstream and after one year, they come back here and they are happy in our school. Parents see that their children are happy here, and if they knew it before, may be a year ago, they wouldn't have sent them to the 'normal' school. Parents with children with handicapping conditions when they meet here they discuss about their children, but in the mainstream, they can't discuss issues with parents who have 'normal' children.

Finally, we don't understand our heads in Government here because the special care which special needs children get from here is very high; it is not possible in the mainstream schools

(2) What are your views about the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

Response: We have individual programmes for children with special educational needs here. Children with mental handicap, for example, one of them is best in drawing, and one of them is best Czech language; not the same in the mainstream. He can't be the first in the mainstream, never.

(3) Do you think educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream would improve their socialization?

Response: It is important for children with special educational needs to socialize but socialization starts from the family. If the family is not working it is difficult for the children with special educational needs to socialize. However, in the school, we are not a vacuum; the children often go to perform. Performances include singing of songs and dancing, or we make aerobic and very often we win. We cooperate with children in the mainstream. Children feel confident among their peers.

(4) What are your perceptions on collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

Response: It would be good working together; it would not be a problem working together in educating handicapped children. It 'II be very good for each part to cooperate.

(5) Do you envisage any challenges that could arise in such collaborative work?

Response: No. No problem to cooperate with the teachers in the mainstream, however, for the mainstream teachers, it is a little hard to make programmes for children with special educational needs. It will be difficult for mainstream teachers to make Individualized Educational Programme (IEP) for special educational needs children, and to make programmes for the regular children.

(6) In your view, do you think there might be some challenges in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: There are challenges. One of them is the number of children with special educational needs. For example, the number of handicapped children in our school here is one hundred and thirty (130). If the Government wants to get them in schools in our city, it will be about ten or twenty handicapped children in a mainstream, you can imagine it. . . . . If one child, it can be possible but large numbers, it is unbelievable. It is better for them to be here because we have a lot of programmes to meet their needs.

(7) What is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

Response: Children with special educational needs should be educated in the special schools because of the care that they get.

APPENDIX C. 1

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS IN THE MAINSTREAM SETTING IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1) What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs, for example, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems, in the mainstream?

> *Response: Children with learning difficulties and emotional problems could be educated in the mainstream but not other special needs children like the physically challenged\ the hearing impaired and the visually impaired. Not possible in this school.*

(2) What are your views about the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

> *Response: Academic performance of children with special educational needs depends on the family, because some children are supported at home. Bad conditions pertain to some at home and if no support from the family, their academic performance would not be good.*

(3) Do you think educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream would improve their socialisation?

> *Response: Children with emotional problems find it difficult to socialize; they often find it difficult to find friends. Children with learning difficulties are able to socialize with others.*

(4) What are your perceptions on the collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

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Response: It works well to work with special educators because the work of the regular teacher is very demanding. The psychological problems of children with special needs would be addressed by special educators and that would be a great advantage. The psychologist would give advice if we work together. It is a good idea working together with special educators.

(5) Do you envisage any challenges that could arise in such collaborative work?

Response: There might be some challenges, for example, if the special educator is not ready to work. The challenges could be addressed by discussing and getting mutual understanding.

(6) In your view, do you think there might be some challenges in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: There are challenges involved in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream. Firstly, there is the need for financial support. Secondly, transportation for children with special educational needs is necessary. Thirdly, there are no facilities for children who are physically challenged. Family support is also crucial.

(7) Could you state some ways of addressing the perceived challenges.

Response: Firstly, Government should improve school conditions; facilities should be provided to meet the needs of all children with special educational needs. Secondly, there should be education of mainstream teachers on special needs children. Thirdly, there should be good relations with the family of children with special educational needs.

(8) What is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

Response: A good idea but the Government should make conditions favourable to meet the needs of children with special educational needs.

APPENDIX C. 3

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS IN A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC - QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1) What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs, for example, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems, in the mainstream?

Response: It is important but not appropriate for every child; for some children it is not the best solution because the school is not prepared with material resources for such children, particularly the physically handicapped. Some of the special needs children will become victims of bullying by their 'normal' peers.

(2) What are your views about the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: Special educational needs children progress rather in the special class. It also depends on the motivation from good friends and teachers. Furthermore, the academic performance depends on the Individual Educational Plan.

(3) Do you think educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream would improve their socialisation?

Response: Children with emotional problems or children with hyperactivity, in my opinion, have bigger problems in socialising than children with learning difficulties. Often the child behaves in a strange way. Those with emotional problems do socialise well with the normal' children. They want to contact others but the normal children run away from them. Societal attitude also affects their socialisation. Children with learning difficulties do not have problems with socialisation.

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(4) What are your perceptions on the collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: There is the need for collaboration. Mainstream teachers want education on children with special educational needs but we don t get it. We don't know the problem; whether it is money or what, we don't know.

(5) Do you envisage any challenges that could arise in such collaborative work?

Response: There might be some challenges; if some teachers do not want to respect the views of the others.

(6) In your view, do you think there might be some challenges in the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: One of the challenges is SEN children would be unhappy because they would be victims of bullying in the mainstream school. Another one is lack of materials for teaching SEN children in the mainstream. Mainstream teachers lack knowledge about children with special needs. Furthermore, there are currently large classes, about twenty -five and with SEN children in addition, I can 7 focus on them.

(7) Could you state some ways of addressing the perceived challenges.

Response: The Government should provide materials for teaching SEN children. Mainstream teachers need to have education on SEN children in order to be able to teach them. ***There*** *should* ***also be more teachers*** *in one* ***class.*** ***There should*** *be fewer hours for teachers per week, so that we have time for meetings, discussions and evaluation of work. There is also the need for independent supervisors to be visiting the schools.*

(8) What is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

Response: For inclusion to be possible, mainstream teachers need to be educated on teaching ***SEN*** *children, there should be change of attitude on the part of teachers towards SEN children, and infrastructure needs to be improved in the mainstream schools.*

Further, more money should be paid the teachers and also they need appreciation from the society and the parents. This would serve as motivation for the teachers.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE DEPUTY HEADTEACHER OF A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL IN PRAGUE, THE CZECH REPUBLIC

TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(1) What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream

Response: We have two groups of special needs, first group are children with reading and writing problems, and the second group are children with behaviour problems, that is, hyperactivity. There are about twenty children with behaviour problems and they go to psychologist and the psychologist interviews them, makes a few tests and writes reports. The reports go to the teachers who teach such children. That works. The smaller group is made up of children with reading and writing problems. Individualized Educational Programmes are drawn for them. The educational advisor writes that plan, and the psychologist and the student agree to work according to the plan. Evety forty days such **children go to the psychologist to make tasks.** *The psychologist comes back with the* **results and they are recorded. For children with special educational needs like hearing** *impairment, visual impairment, and mental handicap, yes, I think it is good for them to be educated in the mainstream. Sometimes, it is good for the rest of the class. However, harder work for the teacher, but for them, it is good. But for those with wheel chair, no lifts for them to go upstairs.*

(2) What in your view are some advantages of educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?

Response: It is good for them to be included in the mainstream school as part of the normal life, absolutely good for them. It is good for the rest of the students because they can understand the problem. They will come to terms such conditions. It could also be a motivation for them; if special needs children can manage, and then I can manage too.

(3) As the deputy head of a mainstream school, do you find the need for collaboration between special educators and mainstream teachers in educating children with special educational needs in the mainstream?

Response: I feel it works. At the moment we have special education psychologists and they cooperate with us. A psychologist comes to our school every forty days. It is good for them to come to our school to hear our views. Also a teacher in the fourth grade who got education as a special educator assists children with individual plans once a week, so it works to cooperate with them.

(4) What in your view are some advantages of such collaboration?

Response: The mainstream teacher needs to hear the views from the special educator about the special educational needs children and to understand the problems of those children in order to work with him or her.

(5) In your view, do you envisage any challenges that are likely to arise in the collaborative work between special educators and mainstream teachers?

Response: Of course there could be a few challenges or problems. But problems can arise from personalities. If they don't understand each other, not friendly, don't like to cooperate, it will not work. A few teachers wouldn't like special teacher in their class because they do not understand the role of the special educator. The special educator is there not for control but to help.

(6) How could the perceived challenges be addressed?

Response: There should be understanding between the two parties. The mainstream teacher should understand that the special educator is not there to control him but to help in the education of the special needs child. The only way to address personality problems is to explain.

(7) What in your view is the way forward for inclusive education in the Czech Republic?

Response: Of course there are a few problems with prediction. Not every teacher can see those children with special educational needs in their schools. There are some who are afraid of hard work.

(8) What are some of the ways to address the challenges?

Response: Firstly, there is the need to change the thinking of some of the head teachers and teachers in the mainstream. Secondly, conditions should be made favourable for children with special educational needs to cope in the mainstream. In our school for example, there is the problem with children in wheel chair. There are no elevators to assist physically challenged pupils. Building elevators is expensive so money is needed. Thirdly, there should be Government support to fund inclusive education.