



Challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities; a case study of three schools in Warren Park District, Harare.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to find out about problems besetting the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities in local schools. The study was undertaken to establish the problems affecting the implementation of inclusive education in Warren Park District, Zimbabwe. The study was necessitated by the fact that inclusive education has become a topical issue in the provision of non-discriminatory education for learners with disabilities. Inclusive education has been found to provide appropriate education for all students despite their level of disabilities in their local schools. In the context of Zimbabwe, even though there is no comprehensive policy of inclusion, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education enacted a number of Acts and Circulars that are meant to promote inclusive education as they emphasize on schools not to discriminate on children due to their disabilities. In an effort to implement the concept of inclusive education, many problems have been encountered that act as barriers to the practice of inclusive education prompting the researcher to carry out research to identify the problems that beset the provision of inclusive education in Zimbabwe with in Warren Park District. A case study was carried out determine

the implementation of inclusive education. The research results reveals that there are a number of challenges hindering the implementation of inclusive practice in Warren Park District in Harare. Three schools that participated in the study are Kuwadzana 1 High School, Kuwadzana 2 Primary School and Dzivaresekwa 6 Primary School.

Key words: inclusive education, impairment, disability and curriculum

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

According to Chimedza & Peters, (1999) inclusive education in Zimbabwe involves the identification and minimization or elimination of barriers to students' participation in traditional settings (i.e., schools, homes, communities, and workplaces) and the maximization of resources to support learning and participation. This has been drawn from the Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action (1994) which have been very influential in promoting inclusive education, although it mainly uses the language of 'special needs education'. It emphasizes that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or other conditions (Salamanca Statement 1994). Inclusive schools 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. (Introduction to Framework for Action (1994), paragraph 3).

According to SIDA (2012), Zimbabwe's record of 93 percent literacy among school, going age children has ranked among the best in the

continent, but a sizeable proportion of 200,000 children living with disabilities of school going age do not attend school at all. Yet according to the Disability Living Conditions Survey (2008), in Zimbabwe, 28 percent of children with disabilities never attended school compared to 10 percent of non disabled children. 34 percent of girls with disability and 22 percent of the boys never attended school compared with 12 and 8 percent of non disabled. The National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH) (2012) further notes 67 percent of children with disabilities have no access to any form of schooling at all. This has further undermined the effort by the effort of by the Ministry of Education to spearhead the inclusive education agenda.

The situation towards the provision of inclusive education has not been encouraging in Warren Park District. The practice of inclusive education for learners with disabilities is not being effectively implemented in Warren Park District. There are a number of factors that militate against the effective implementation of inclusive education, hence it warranted the researcher to establish the challenges militating against the implementation of inclusive education.

The Problem Statement

Implementation of the concept of inclusive education for learners with disabilities is not being effectively implemented in Warren Park District. Many schools in the district are not implementing the programme only few schools are making an effort and this has seen a number of learners with disabilities being out of school. The non effective practice is occurring despite the presence of the department of Special Needs in the district and a number of circulars by Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education providing guidelines on inclusive education for learners with disabilities.

The Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following questions;

- What initiatives have been undertaken by the Special Education Department to promote inclusive education in Warren Park district?
- What are the problems faced in the implementation of inclusive education in Primary and Secondary School in Warren Park District. What are the barriers to participation and learning experienced by students?
- What practices can be done to help overcome these challenges related to inclusive education in Warren Park District barriers?

Purpose of the Study

The study is important for all stakeholders involved in the provision of inclusive education. Inclusive schools are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. The study is warranted as it will help to examine the capacity of the education system to accommodate children living with disabilities in an inclusive setting. The study will explore best practices that can be done to help to redress structural problems besetting inclusive education. Findings from the study will inform policy makers in the education sector on the issues they should focus on and the research will point out gaps in available literature on the implementation of inclusive education. The study will also enable the researcher to apply the knowledge acquired during the course of the study and during interaction with stakeholders in the education sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Origins of the concept of Inclusive Education

The concept of inclusive education has developed over time. This concept has been triggered by the social definition of disability. According to Oliver (1996) the development of social definitions of disability by people with disability and non disabled activist influenced the critique of the general education and special education in particular as reproducing the exclusion of and oppression of people with disabilities. Armstrong (2009) concurs that the Social Model acknowledges that a person's impairment is not the cause of disability but rather disability is the result of the way society is organized which disadvantages and excludes persons with disability.

According to the social model, the nature of disability is essentially about barriers which prevent persons with disabilities from participating in social, cultural and economic life. These barriers can be related to society's attitudes towards persons with disabilities for example, seeing them as objects of pity (Morris, 1991). The social model that brought about the concept of inclusive education refutes the notion that disability lies within the child. Hence, the social model of disability provides an understanding that is substantially different from the traditional view that disability is essentially about physical or mental deficit or abnormality (Abberley 1987, Drake 1999 & Oliver 1987). Killen (2004) further points out that impairment are seen as normal for any population. What disadvantages and disables people with impairments is a complex web of discrimination made up of negative social attitudes and cultural assumptions as well as environmental barriers, including policies, laws, structures and services, which result in economic marginalization and social exclusion. Societal views and environmental factors trap people with disability to fail to achieve their fullest potential life (Killen, 2004, Peters, 2001)

Core values of Inclusive Education

According to Samkange and Ndamba (2013) inclusive education can be viewed as an empowerment strategy. By creating and providing resources to all regardless of ability, the governments are making attempts to harness all potential and skill in their countries for the development of the countries. It is premised on the understanding that the state has obligation to create conditions and opportunities for citizens to fully develop their skills without hindrance, emanating from different forms of discrimination. Chimedza and Peters(2001) say inclusive education inculcate in parents realistic expectations about their children that inclusion prepares individuals for life and enhances learning from peers while exclusion infringes on the human rights of children with disabilities.

Context of Inclusive Education in Zimbabwe

In an effort to embrace, inclusive education Zimbabwe has provided a number of platforms that creates a conducive atmosphere for inclusion although no specific legislation has been enacted to deal with inclusive education. Samkange (2013) notes that within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education there is a department that is responsible for working with schools to support children with disabilities. Zimbabwe Psychological Services and Special Education which is found at every Education District in Zimbabwe with the mandate to promote and facilitate the provision of high quality, inclusive and relevant Early Childhood Development (ECD), Primary and Secondary Education, Special Education, Life Long and Continuing Education, Sport, Arts and Culture.

In tandem with the core principles of inclusive education, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe issued a number of circulars such as the Director's Circular No. 3 of 2001: Guidelines of Providing Equal Access to Education For learners with

Disabilities. Another circular issued was the Director's Circular No. 7 of 2005 'Guidelines for Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in All School Competition'. One other Circular of note is the Secretary's Circular No. 2 of 2000 "Inclusion of Learners with Albinism" (Leonard Cheshire Zimbabwe Trust 2011). Mutepfa, Mpofu Chataika (2007) further point out that the Secretary for Education's directive for inclusive education requires schools to provide equal access to education for learners with disabilities, routinely screen for any form of disability, and admit any school-age child, regardless of ability. Any school that refuses to enroll a child on grounds of disability is in violation of the Disabled Persons Act (1996) and faces disciplinary action from the District Education Office.

Problems impeding the implementation of Inclusive Education

Tafirei et al (2013) points out that there are many factors that impede the smooth running of inclusive education policy. Inclusive education approaches neglect to acknowledge the fact that most students with significant special needs require individualized instruction or highly controlled environments. Thus, general education classroom teachers often are teaching a curriculum while the special education teacher is remediating instruction at the same time. In the same vein Patton (2011) notes a learner with serious inattention problems may be unable to focus in a classroom that contains twenty or more active children.

Zindi (2004) acknowledges that in Zimbabwe, the government has not been able to provide special facilities for children with special needs in mainstream schools. If regular schools cannot have access to state funds to make their schools effective for all, then it becomes impossible to implement inclusive education properly. Such a

view has been echoed by Oliver (1992) who contends that while special needs education is a human rights issue, it is not so much the right to be in the same school, but rather a right to education that values all as 'individuals'. For example, a deaf child who can only lip-read or use sign language cannot fully benefit from a normal class if the teacher turns his/her back to the class or does not use sign language.

Abosi (1996) points out that while many governments talk of integrating children with disabilities into mainstream schools, the infrastructure is not yet user-friendly to children with disabilities and the approach is not holistic. It has been argued that an inclusive education programme in which students with special needs are educated alongside their non disabled counterparts has made it easier for most African governments to refrain from allocating funds specifically for accommodating students with disabilities. According to Zimbabwe Parents of Children with disabilities Association (ZPCDA) (2007) inclusive education policy is not workable, given the present setup in Zimbabwean schools. Almost all the general schools lack facilities, such as toilets that accommodate wheelchairs. Most school heads are insensitive to the needs of pupils with disabilities because they did not receive special training, while teachers allocated to special needs pupils are discriminated against and ostracized by their colleagues who seem not to understand them.

According to the National Disability Policy (2012) the current education system for example, in Zimbabwe is syllabi based. Testing and examinations are based on the assumption that the syllabi are completed for the duration they are designed. This militates against attempts to have any principled and sensible inclusion of all disability categories in the

education system. This view has been shared by Forlin (1997) who observes that the increasing implementation of national standards in many countries, increased emphasis on examination results, increased bureaucratic demands on school administrators and increasing litigation make a commitment to inclusive education very difficult. Hence the level of competition in school in terms of percentage pass rate makes regular schools unwilling to accept children with learning difficulties as this reduces their percentage pass rate.

According to Mafa (2012) the classroom size of the regular schools is a major problem. In his study of inclusive education in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), teachers highlighted that in public schools the average class size was 45. They argued that this, coupled with special education needs of some pupils was bound to present teachers with headaches. They stated that it was difficult to give each pupil individual attention. Howarth (1987) points out that class size impacts on inclusion implementation due to the difficulties that teachers have in attending to individual needs, class management dynamics and the marking load they exert on teachers.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on case study and the researcher employed qualitative and quantitative methodology. It uses semi-structured interviews and questionnaires as instruments for data collection. The choice of such an approach was made on the basis of the nature of this study. According to Bryman (2011), case study research provides an opportunity for the researcher to access documents, events and perceptions through the eyes of the teachers under study, as they are able to interpret their own worldview of the practice of inclusive education in Warren Park District.

The Sample

In this study the sample comprised of 20 teachers (10 male and 10 female) and 3 heads from 3 schools in Warren Park District. Since the population is relatively small, the sampling procedure found suitable was the purposive. A purposive sample is a type of probability sampling. It is a technique in which a researcher uses his own judgement in the selection of sample members (Pearn, 2003). This method is important as it assists the researcher to select respondents with the knowledge on the phenomenon under study and the respondents will be able to provide detailed and in-depth information on the state of inclusive education in Warren Park District.

Instrumentation

Key Informant interviews

Semi- structured interviews are meant to solicit evidence from persons that have the knowledge about the issues being studied based on professional training or their role in the organization (Kitchin and Tate 2000). Central as key informants are the teachers and headmasters in the 3 selected schools were interviewed. Personal spoken accounts are seen as having central importance in social research because of their power to illuminate meaning (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Individual, personal accounts display the language that people use, the emphasis they give, and allow people to give explicit explanations for their actions and decisions. In this regard the interviews generated information on how on the implementation of inclusive learning for children with disabilities has been done in Warren Park district.

Questionnaires Tuckman(1982) notes that a questionnaire is a document containing questions designed to solicit information appropriate for analysis. It is a data collecting instrument with set of question items for respondents to give information about. Cohen and Manion(1994) observe that since

participation in a survey is voluntary, a questionnaire helps to solicit their interest, encouraging their cooperation and attracting answers as close to the truth as possible as they complete the task at their own pace. Chikoko and Mhloyi (1995) note that a questionnaire has a high level of anonymity and confidentiality based on the fact that respondents remain anonymous with codes being used in place of names. The questionnaires were administered to Headmasters and some teachers.

Procedure

The researcher obtained a written clearance from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to conduct the study. A letter to introduce the researcher to the schools was sent from the District Education Offices. The researcher distributed questionnaires and collected them. The researcher conducted key informant interviews with the teachers at 3 schools namely Kuwadzana High 1, Kuwadzana 2 Primary and Dziwaresekwa 6 Primary.

Data Analysis

Data analysis serves to synthesize the amount of data gathered during the collection process. The data collected was coded, entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences 12 (SPSS 12). The researcher applied content analysis on data collected from Key informants' interviews. After working on the coding system the researcher prepared report through a summary of prevalence on the coded data. The researcher then presented the data in form of charts, graphs and tables using Ms-Excel.

RESULTS

Findings from the questionnaires and interviews are discussed below:

The role of Zimbabwe Special Education Department (SED) in promoting Inclusive Education in Warren Park

100% of the respondents from the key informant interviews indicated that they were aware of the role of the SED in the provision of inclusive education. This is in line with the mandate the department is supposed to serve. This department is visible in all the districts in the country. Mpofu & Nyanungo (1998) note that in Zimbabwe the Special Education department represented at various district offices has the mandate to do Psycho-educational assessment and diagnosis of specific learning and behavioral disabilities, case study evaluation, recommendations for remediation or placement, and periodic reevaluation of such children. In this vein it can be noted that at every district in Zimbabwe there is a Remedial tutor who is tasked to coordinate the assessments and report on the on going in the district about the education of children with disabilities. The district Remedial tutor works together with schools in the district through regular visits to assess the situation on the education of learners with disabilities.

Importance of Inclusive Education (IE)

From the key informants interviews various reasons were noted on the importance of inclusive education. 5% of the respondents indicated that the most important contribution of IE is on language development for the learners with disabilities. 10% of the respondents indicated that IE is useful in the modification of behavior. The other 10% of the respondents group indicated that it is useful in the removal of stigma. 14% of the respondents indicated that inclusive education is important as it provides the platform for socialization among students with disabilities and those without disabilities.

18% of the respondents outline that inclusive education provides learners with exposure to a wider curriculum. 40% of the respondents indicated inclusive education is multifaceted hence it involves the removal of stigma, exposing students to a wider curriculum, socialization and it provides opportunities for behavior modification. The reasons are in tandem with what has been outlined by some scholars on the subject. According to Miles (2009) inclusive education seeks to enable communities, systems and structures in all cultures and contexts to combat discrimination, celebrate diversity, promote participation and overcome barriers to learning and participation for all people. It promotes the goal of creating a world where there is peace, tolerance, and sustainable use of resources, social justice, and where the basic needs and rights of all are met. In this regard it can be noted that inclusive education is an enabling and empowering strategy that accepts diversity in a society. Much of the attitudes that cause stereotypes on persons with disabilities have been compounded by segregation that is done to persons with disabilities. If those children with disabilities are included in the regular school system it will help in creating future adults in children who appreciate other people who are different as full members of the society.

Initiatives taken to promote Inclusive Education in Warren Park District

There are various initiatives taken by schools to provide inclusive education to learners with disabilities in Warren Park District. 20% of the respondents indicated that the provision of teaching and learning material is done to enhance inclusive education. 20% of respondents also indicated that schools have modified the environment through the provision of ramps for accessibility in some buildings such as toilets and classrooms. 30% of the respondents indicated that specialist teachers

have been provided in the schools to deal with children with disabilities. The other 30% of the respondents acknowledged that measures that have been employed are multiple that include provision of specialist teachers, modification of school environment and the provision of learning material.

Capacity of schools in the provision of Inclusive Education

The capacity of the schools in the provision of inclusive education has been investigated in this research. 30% of the respondents indicated that some schools have the capacity to provide inclusive education. 70% of the respondents indicated that schools lack the capacity to provide inclusion to learners with disabilities. Responses of the key informants indicated that the concept of inclusive education has a lot of limitations in terms of implementation as the majority of the respondents indicated that it is difficult to effectively implement the concept of inclusion. In line with the study, most school systems in the district are confronting two types of barriers, external and internal. Children face external barriers before coming to and getting enrolled in schools. The natures of such barriers are physical location of schools, non-availability of school and the location of the school is in an area that cannot be accessed.

Problems that militates against the provision of inclusive education in Primary and Secondary Schools in Warren Park District.

Issue on accessibility

35% of the respondents in the study indicated that children with disability are able to access some form of education while the other 65% indicated that children are not able to access education. The problems of accessibility have been outlined by the Save the Children (2000) that notes inclusive education for children with disabilities is often hampered by attitudes of

discrimination as some teachers view the child as a problem and cannot learn with normative students as the student requires special equipment and special teachers. This limitation is further compounded by the education system which continues to employ rigid methods of teaching, rigid curriculum and inaccessible environment. Such a negation has led to the alienation of children with disabilities to achieve their full potential in education and the life skills acquired at school.

Institutional Attitudes towards learners with disabilities

25% of the respondents indicated that schools have managed to create a welcoming community for learners with disabilities. While 75% of the respondents indicated that the school environment has not been conducive in welcoming learners with disabilities. According to Parents of Children with Disabilities Association (ZPCDA) (2007) inclusive education policy is not workable, given the present setup. Almost all the general schools lack facilities. Most school heads are insensitive to the needs of pupils with disabilities because they did not receive special training, while mainstream teachers have a negative attitude towards learners with disabilities more often special needs pupils are discriminated against and ostracized by other learners who colleagues who seem not to understand them. In this regard it can be commented that inclusive education as a concept calls for the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular classes in totality regardless of the severity of the children's disabilities. This has been found to attract a lot of resistance from headmasters and teachers who feel that there a lot of challenges which are caused by this ideological philosophy hence the resistance to accommodate learners with disabilities.

What can be done to enhance Inclusive Education effectiveness?

Respondents from the key informant interviews identified various measures that can be employed to enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education. 5% of the respondents indicated that awareness campaigns are effective in enhancing inclusive education, 10% of the respondents outlined that the provision of legislation that emphasis on inclusive education is important. 20% of the respondents went further to identify that the provision of skilled manpower is a panacea for effective inclusive education system.

25% of the respondents outlined that curriculum review is a positive step towards the provision of inclusive education while the other 35% of the respondents observed that there are a lot of changes that are required to effectively promote inclusion. These measures include legislation, awareness campaigns, training of manpower and a curriculum review.

The strategies to enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education is also shared by Mpofu (2000) who points out that the curriculum content should not be altered but methods and activities as well as models of instructions should be changed to suit the demands of the special learners. In these cases, Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) should be prepared for each child with severe intellectual disability. Mpofu(2000) further advances that teachers should give more emphasis on functional life skills designed to help students learn to work, do domestic activities or leisure skills needed for independent living. If possible the ordinary regular teacher should try to change the classroom environment to suit the needs of these particular students. In light of the above it can be commented that there is need to revisit the rigid curriculum, promote skills development and emphasis should be put in individual educational plans for the benefit of learners with disabilities.

DISCUSSION

There are various factors that limit the promotion of inclusive education. Teachers play a key role in the implementation of inclusive education. However, in the study it was reviewed that schools lack the capacity to deal with children with disabilities as most of the teachers who are supposed to handle children with disabilities in the regular classrooms lacks requisite skills in special needs education.

The situation in schools is not encouraging in terms of the provision of inclusive education. There are many issues that have been noted during the research that are hampering the effective implementation of inclusive education. For inclusive education to be effective there is need to provide resources that include teaching and learning material, provision of infrastructure that can be used to allow learners with disabilities to succeed in an inclusive school setup. During the research it was observed that the rigid curriculum used in schools is failing to accommodate the needs of learners with disabilities as the orientation of the curriculum is mainly academic based thereby alienating learners with disabilities who fail to adjust the demands of the curriculum.

Inclusive education implies the designing and development of education systems that caters for the needs of all learners. It calls for all stakeholders to commit themselves towards providing conducive environment where learners with disabilities are able to fully realize their potential in life. At school level the implication of inclusive education requires that teachers should be equipped with the requisite skills so that they are able to handle learners with special needs. These special skills entail the modification of instruction and collaborative approach among teachers as they are the pillars of in the provision of inclusive education that is

effective and beneficial to all the learners in an inclusive setting.

Inclusive Education implies the consideration of socio-political factors in implementation of the policy. Implementers' decisions about whose needs to be served, how they will be served, and which outcomes will be valued are determined in part by social and political factors. In this regard it can be noted that there are various considerations that should be taken about. In policy implementation the social and political factors should be considered as they can make or break the policy. For example, the provision of inclusive education for children with disabilities should be assessed in terms of the prevailing social and political circumstances in order for the results to be attained as in most instances different players have different interest hence a compromise should be reached to that effect.

CONCLUSIONS

Lack of resources

The study concluded that if inclusive education is to become a reality, a number of adjustments need to be taken into consideration. There is need to address the issue of resource constrain which is the major factor that affects the provision of inclusive education. 70% of the respondents in the survey indicated that most schools lack teaching and learning material to provide learners with disabilities to effectively benefit from education system. Another grey area that needs attention is the provision of specialist teachers. Teachers are important in the provision of inclusive education. The problem affecting regular schools is that most of the teachers are not trained in special education hence they face some challenges in handling learners with diverse needs. This has resulted in most of the teachers showing negative attitudes towards learners with disabilities in the mainstream classes. There is need for enactment of a inclusive education policy. At the moment

there are several circulars and directives which are indirectly touching on the inclusion of the learners with disabilities. If a specific policy on inclusion is designed it can help in decision makers in the allocation of resources and investment in the training of teachers with skills in special education. While in 2016 the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education unveiled a new curriculum, little has been done to address the plight of special needs learners. The current curriculum being implemented in schools is not user friendly to learners with disabilities. The curriculum should be redesigned to suit the interest of all children so that quality education can be achieved by all students. The Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) is expected to design a curriculum that works towards maximizing the potential of the learners with disabilities. This means that teachers will be address the needs of the child by designing Individual Educational Plan for a child who might be facing some problems in grasping whatever might be deliberated in the classroom. The curriculum should be designed to allow a holistic approach that addresses the diverse needs of learners that include cognitive, emotional and social development. There is also need to address the issue of teacher-pupil ratio. The current class size is too big to cater for inclusivity. Teacher overload may result in them neglecting pupils with disabilities. For example in government schools the pupil-teacher ratio is too high in many of the schools, with a single teacher often having to teach 50 children. With that number of children in class, it becomes difficult for the teacher to give children the individual attention required.

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