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Teachers' experiences in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes in Umzingwane District, Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

The current study explored teachers' experiences in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes in Umzingwane District. Entrenched in the inclusive pedagogy , the present interpretive qualitative case study executed semi-structured face-to-face individual interviews with 30 participants (12 males and 18 females) with experiences in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes, document analysis and non-participant observations to collect data. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was used to analyse data. Teachers used various teaching strategies that include use of teacher assistant to support the classroom teacher, use of verbalisation approach, use of concretisation method, group work and the use of audio materials to facilitate learning. Teachers experienced various challenges including frustration by the students due to disability, inadequate teaching and learning resources, technical ability to use the Braille, challenges of mobility and orientation and the class sizes are too big for effective teaching.Teachers experienced successes including meaningful participation and cooperation learning, use of pre and post vocabulary teaching, and high level tolerance by children who are sighted to those who are blind .This study is a baseline for future studies on teachers' experiences in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes.

Key concepts

Inclusive education, disabilities, differentiated curriculum, visual impairment,

Background of study

The world adopted inclusive education in June 1994. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNESCO, 1996) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(United Nations, 2006) and the Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO, 1960) enshrine inclusive education. A number of Africa region human rights instruments inform inclusive education. These include the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Organization of African Union, 1990), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) (African Union, 2006). Inclusion discourages any form of discrimination on persons with disabilities and children with blindness. Thus, inclusive education promotes a non-discriminatory environment for both children with or without blindness (Salamanca Statement, 1994). Successful inclusion would entail the involvement of collaborative partnerships (Ainscow, 1999). Thus, educators provide direct instruction to the learners with blindness, they rely on the referral system that encourages the provision of maximum support from a pool of professionals such as psychologists, social workers; thereby assisting the teachers to help the child (UNESCO (2009). When students with disabilities are educated in the neighbourhood schools, as opposed to special classes., they become part of their local community (Konza, 2008). Hence, both children with or without blindness learn together and it promote positive interactions among the learners. Inclusive education goes beyond academic achievement, it creates social capital in children with blindness.

Children are more likely to acquire social capital that facilitates their employment, since school gives them the chance to forge lasting bonds of friendship on which they can build social relations that will be particularly useful in their professional and social life (OECD, 1999). For children who are not blind, inclusive education provides the students with the chance to understand diversity in abilities. At the same time, this will forge tolerance and much appreciation that disability does not mean inability as they interact in the regular classes with learners with disabilities (Konza, 2008). A principle that values the well-being of all students, respects their inherent dignity and autonomy, acknowledges individual requirements and ability to effectively be included in and contribute to society (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019).

Implementation of inclusive education has met with a number of challenges. One of the challenges is poor teacher training have hampered progress in the provision of inclusive education. Most of the teachers do not have adequate training on handling both the disabled and non-disabled learners in one class (Schmitt and Priestley, 2011). These demands include teachers not being in a position to read and write Braille when teaching students who are blind. Most children who are blind faces barriers such as social stigmatization and exclusion. Sometimes non-availability of schools in their locality to accommodate them makes it

difficult for children who are blind to access education (Jha, 2002). These facilities in most areas are built without the exceptional students in mind (Mutasa, Goronga & Tafangombe, 2013). Thus, this study focused on teachers' experiences in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes in Umzingwane District.

Main research questions

The study sought to address the following main research question:

What are teachers' experiences in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes in Umzingwane District?

Sub-research questions

- How do teachers understand the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes in Umzingwane District?
- What are teachers 'successes in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes in Umzingwane District?
- What are teachers' difficulties in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes in Umzingwane District?
- How can teachers' experiences in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes be improved?

Literature review

Teachers experiences in inclusion of learners with blindness in regular classes

Inclusive education, entails that a teacher should be flexible, responsive, committed to each pupil, and using a variety of teaching approaches creates an opening to effectively educate a diverse group of pupils according to their resources and funds of knowledge (Gillies, 2004). Furthermore, teachers who develop a deep personal knowledge of each pupil can obtain the necessary discretion to differentiate learning among pupils. Hence, inclusive practice is distinct in the ways that teachers respond to diversity, how they make decisions about group work and employ specialist knowledge (Florian, 2010).

Important elements of teaching approaches that provide an opportunity for all pupils to succeed include comprehensive and systematic ways to gather information about pupils, connections between learning and pupils' lives, and a focus on flexibility and open-endedness

of the curricula (Rouse, 2008). A flexible curriculum with alternatives gives teachers a chance to respond to the differences in each class. Then the classroom and the teaching are structured in a way that offers mixed-ability teaching with alternative ways of learning and working and multiple opportunities for success. This is not always easy, but teachers who believe in inclusion need to constantly question their decisions and actions as they strive for improvement (Guðjónsdóttir, 2003). For teachers who want to respond to diverse learners in effective ways, this is a never-ending pathway, but each step taken towards inclusion is progress. As a curriculum is created for the whole group of learners that is responsive to each pupil, the critical element is openness to children and young people and a recognition that their resources contribute to the richness of the learning environment (Guðjónsdóttir, 2000).

Responsiveness, coupled with pedagogical skills, enables teachers to use pupil differences, contextual issues, cultural and community events, subject matter, and problems and challenges as opportunities for effective teaching and learning (Kristinsdóttir, & Óskarsdóttir, 2007). Subsequently, responsive teachers go beyond acknowledging and respecting differences as they create the curricula. They focus on pupils and what they bring into the classroom in the shape of their resources (ability, attitude, background, experience, interest, knowledge, and skills), and respond by designing a universal learning environment that supports all pupils in expanding their learning. (Guðjónsdóttir, 2000). In addition, responsive teachers are skilled in creating a curriculum of learning activities and environments in which all pupils have the opportunity to succeed. This means that the responsive teachers' preparations are solidly grounded in major theoretical perspectives on child development and their practical applications, in an understanding of the social and moral issues inherent in individual differences, as well as in a strong professional commitment to the education of pupils (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011).

 In a qualitative study on 27 teachers in Botswana, using focus group discussions, observation and document analysis, Mukhopadhyay, Nenty and Abosi (2012) found out that these teachers preferred to include learners with mild disabling conditions compared with learners with severe to profound disabling conditions. At the same time, school-heads raised concerns over inadequate training in special education, lack of resources, and high student–teacher ratio as barriers to successful implementation of inclusive education.

 Employing qualitative approach on 4 visually impaired individuals who had previously gone through inclusive education in their secondary schools in Malaysia, using semi-structured

interviews, Eulmor (2020) found out that the few individual teachers had positive experiences. Majority of these teachers were reported to show positive attitudes towards the participants, there were rare occurrences of teachers being unaware of the appropriate approaches of including the visually impaired students while teaching.

In a qualitative study in Zimbabwe, Dakwa(2014) to establish if ordinary schools are sufficiently equipped to promote inclusion, teachers in the regular classes indicated that although inclusion was of benefit to the children, challenges were faced by the teachers and these issues necessitated rectification to enable the learners to benefit from inclusion more effectively. Teachers indicated that there was little participation by children with visual impairments in sport. They confessed that they concentrated on sighted children for the sake of progress. Teachers also revealed that they could not cope with large numbers of children within the classroom situation. Attending to the child with visual impairments actually became an extra burden. Consequently, these children tended to be ignored as the teacher focused on the faster, sighted children.

In a qualitative study on 25 teachers in Zimbabwe using interviews, lesson observation and participant observations on both teachers and students Madungwe (2013) found that visually impaired students learn the same curriculum as their sighted colleagues in ordinary schools. Only primary school teachers have had some training in Special Needs Education while the secondary teachers learn on the job. There is an acute shortage of special equipment for the students due to lack of funding since students do not pay school levies. Both the students and the teachers displayed very low motivation. The students lament the lack of models whom they can emulate, as only one blind student passed mathematics with A grade in the last ten years.

Challenges of inclusive education for learners with blindness in regular classes

In a qualitative study on 30 teachers and 40 pupils in Zimbabwe, using semi structured interviews and observations, Dakwa (2014) found out that inclusion was not successful due to lack of material and human resources. Classroom teachers in the regular classes lacked training in handling children with visual impairments. The learning needs of children who were blind and those with low vision were not met, hence, these children failed to participate in sport and other school activities. Assistive devices to support inclusion of both blind children and those with low vision were inadequate.in addition, children who are blind, face mobility and orientation problems. They experience difficulties in moving around, understanding and locating their environments. Children also revealed that the classroom

teachers ignored their needs when they continually used the lecture methods and ignored the presence of children with visual impairments (Dakwa, 2014). In addition, children in certain poorly resourced centres, they lack Brailled books and other learning materials and how this hampered their learning progress. As was the case in the teachers' responses, children with low vision responded that they strained their eyes as they attempted to read the teacher's print on the board (Dakwa, 2014).

Poor teacher training has hampered progress in the provision of inclusive education. Most of the teachers do not have adequate training on handling both the disabled and non-disabled learners in one class (Schmitt and Priestley, 2011). These demands include teachers not being in a position to read and write Braille when teaching students who are blind.

Most children who are blind face barriers such as social stigmatization and exclusion. Sometimes non-availability of schools in their locality to accommodate them makes it difficult for children who are blind to access education (Jha, 2002).

Lack of suitable facilities and adequate resources, hampers the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular classes. Teachers need resources to produce teaching aids and to differentiate instruction. At the same time, students who are blind require assistive technology, for example, computers and braille equipment to cater for their special education (Hunter & Johnson, 2014).

The classroom size of the regular schools is a major problem and in Zimbabwean public schools, the average size is 45 pupils (Mafa, 2012). Thus, the 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.

In a quantitative research on 50 blind pupils in Zimbabwe, using Likert-type questionnaire (brallied) Mushoriwa (2001) found out that the majority of blind pupils (63%) were against inclusive education. Many fell that apart from social and academic rejection, they would not be able to acquire useful skills and knowledge in inclusive settings.

Similarly, in a qualitative study on 25 teachers in Zimbabwe using interviews, lesson observation and participant observations on both teachers and students Madungwe (2013) found that visually impaired students learn the same curriculum as their sighted colleagues in ordinary schools. Only primary school teachers have had some training in Special Needs

Education while the secondary teachers learn on the job. There is an acute shortage of special equipment for the students due to lack of funding since students do not pay school levies. Both the students and the teachers displayed very low motivation. The students lament the lack of models whom they can emulate, as only one blind student passed mathematics with A grade in the last ten years.

According to Choruma (2007), problems of access to education by most learners with disabilities start right at the family level. Learners with disabilities are faced with negative attitudes from family members. These attitudes are mainly reflected in the view that sending children with disabilities to school is a 'waste of time'. While educational policies in Zimbabwe do not openly discriminate against people with disabilities, there is a general feeling that school authorities do not understand disability issues and are perceived as unwilling to make any efforts to ensure that these issues are effectively addressed.

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 (Save the Children, 2000). 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 (Lindsay, 2003).

The classroom size of the regular schools is a major problem. In a qualitative study of inclusive education in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), Mafa (2012) 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. The 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 (Howarth, 1987). Faced with large classes, teachers may end up assigning work that is easy to mark, for example short answer questions and multiple choice assignments (Hunter & Johnson, 2014).

Strategies to enhance success of inclusive education for learners with blindness in regular classes

In a qualitative study on 30 teachers and 40 pupils in Zimbabwe, using semi structured interviews and observations, Dakwa (2014) found out that inclusion was not successful due to lack of material and human resources. Hence, there is need for resources and assistive technology to support inclusion. Exciting technological advances open up a new world for people with severe visual disabilities. In the process of inclusion, assistive technology gives children with visual impairments greater participation and independence. Technology can be applied by both the specialist teacher and the child to promote effective inclusion (Kirk et al., 2006),. Because disability imposes serious restrictions to an individual's ability to move about freely and confidently assistive technology has become a vital part to enable the child with blindness to move freely in order to access his/her environment and learning materials (Hallaham & Kauffman, 2006).

Employment of effective teaching approaches based on targeted goals, alternative routes for learning, flexible instruction and the use of clear feedback to learners provides the solution for enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education. These approaches take cognizance of monitoring, assessment, evaluation and high expectations (Special Needs Education in Europe: Provision in Post-Primary Education, 2006). In addition, flexible learning can be achieved through sufficient teacher training and positive teacher attitudes. Teacher attitudes are generally seen as decisive for achieving inclusive education and these attitudes depend heavily on their experience specifically with students with Special Educational Needs their training, the support available and other conditions such as the class size and their workload (Mafa, 2012).

To accommodate children with blindness in the regular classes there is need to emphasize on activity-based learning. Such type of learning requires more time, flexible timetables and short but comprehensive syllabi. Adaptations in classrooms that benefit the disabled person's learning process needs to be put in place (The National Disability Policy, 2012). The adaptations, in the classroom, should measure up to all the requirements of the five or remaining senses of the disabled learner. Schools should provide classroom assistants to support children with disabilities accessing buildings and learning. It may be more practical and cost-effective to employ helpers in schools rather than investing in new equipment or rebuilding parts of the school (DFID, 2010). .

Capacity building is important to achieve inclusive education. Achieving the right to inclusive education for children requires that all levels of government, public officials, those

delivering services, and other duty bearers have the capacity, commitment and resources to implement the laws, policies and programmes in place to support that goal (UNICEF, 2012. Governments need to invest in awareness rising to promote understanding of the nature of disability, the social model of disability, and the strengths of inclusive education. They also need to provide training to inform all relevant duty bearers of their responsibilities under the law, and to provide an understanding of the rights of children (Forlin, 2012).

The implication of inclusive education is that pupils with severe intellectual disability should learn the same content with other learners but with minor modifications. 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 that is to cater for individual differences purported by educationists (Mpofu, 2000).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. Pupils with severe intellectual disability require individual attention and their work should be presented in small teachable units (Mpofu, 2000).

Successful inclusion would entail the involvement of collaborative partnerships (Winzer, 1996). Although educators provide direct instruction to the learners with visual impairments, they are not alone in this exercise. They should employ the services of other professionals like psychologists, social workers, physiotherapists and speech therapists. These professionals will assist the teacher in planning best possible education for the learners. Although they may not be professionals in the technical sense of the term, parents and family members should be part of the team to effectively assist children with visual impairments. Collaborative effort will ensure that the child with visual impairments receives best practices from best people operating at best places (Ainscow, 1999).

Pupil-centred learning is a descendant of constructivist learning theories that have defined learning as an "active process in which learners are active sense makers who seek to build coherent and organized knowledge" (Mayer, 2004, p. 14).Through a range of approaches and technology, the teacher can make the curriculum more captivating and meaningful for pupils so that they are active agents in their own learning. Common features of pupil-centred teaching approaches include that knowledge is constructed rather than received, there is emphasis on both individualized work and group processes, learning and assessment can be performed in various ways, pupils are responsible for their learning, and the teacher acts as a

facilitator creating a framework for pupils to work within. Following a constructivist viewpoint, the main aim is that pupils are active sense-makers (Cannon & Newble, 2000).

An overview of the theoretical framework

Inclusive pedagogy(IP) is based on the following principles: a) A shift in focus from one that is concerned with only those individuals who have been identified as having 'additional needs', to learning for all—the idea of everybody (not most and some)(Floriana &Black-Hawkins, 2011). The examined teacher's experiences in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes. Subsequently, IP works towards creating opportunities for the all the learners regardless of abilities and revisiting the teaching strategies that caters for all the learners than the provision of differentiation of instructions (Florian & Black- Hawkins,2011). The study looked at teachers' strategies for catering for all the learners in their experiences in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary school classes. In addition, resources should be mobilised for all the learners to benefit in the classroom (Floriana &Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Teachers make countless decisions and take innumerable actions in response to the learning of the students in their classes. All too often these decisions and actions are influenced by the assumptions of bell-curve thinking about ability, which have become naturalised in education (Thomas & Loxley, 2001). The study examined teachers' roles in the provision of inclusive education for learners with blindness in regular classes despite the bell curve notion that emphasises on the education system that looks at students with disabilities as outliers and who need additional support and may retard the learning of those without disabilities.

Students who have been identified as having 'special' or 'additional'1 educational needs are especially vulnerable to negative effects. This vulnerability is compounded when teachers also believe that such students need specialist teaching that they have not been trained to provide (Hart et al., 2007). Focus on the research was to interrogate teachers' experiences in teaching learners who are blind in regular classes under the inclusive pedagogy against the thinking that inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classes will hold back progress of learners without learning difficulties.

IP focuses on the rejection of deterministic beliefs about ability (and the associated idea that the presence of some will hold back the progress of others (Floriana &Black-Hawkins, 2011). 1 will examine how teachers uses the approach to promote the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary classes.Consequently, IP endeavours to maximise on the potential

of the learners rather than focusing on the inability of the students to complete various tasks allocated(Florian &Black-Hawkins,2011). The study explored how teachers caters for the needs of all learners in regular classes.In addition, IP implores teachers to apply various strategies that are inclusive and support for all the learners in the classroom rather than providing differentiated instructions that alienates other learners from the learning process (Florian & Linklater, 2009). Researchers examined the strategies that teachers employ to promote all inclusive learning for students in regular classes.

One other principle of IP is on seeing difficulties in learning as professional challenges for teachers, rather than deficits in learners, that encourage the development of new ways of working (Floriana &Black-Hawkins, 2011). Thus, the study examined the role of teachers in the provision of inclusive pedagogy in regular classes that include learners who are blind. Thus, IP implores teachers to be professional and to respect every child despite individual abilities.

Inclusive pedagogy calls for a shift in teaching and learning from an approach that works for most learners existing alongside something 'additional' or 'different' for those (some) who experience difficulties, towards one that involves the development of a rich learning community characterised by learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available for everyone, so that all learners are able to participate in classroom life (Florian & Linklater, 2009). Hence, the study examined further the strategies that teachers employ to facilitate learning of children who are blind in regular classes through assessing the learning opportunities that are availed in the regular classes.

The qualitative research approach

The use of qualitative approach, information gathered is received through directly interfacing with the people and assessing how they behave and act in their natural context (Creswell, 2013). in addition, qualitative research provides a holistic account of teachers' experience in an inclusive education under study. The researcher has room to look at issues from multiple perspectives, identifying patterns and creating a bigger picture of the practice under study (Creswell & Brown (1992).

The approach creates room for engaging in deductive inquiry, whereby a researcher can refer back to data on themes in order to establish how comprehensive the information is and there is a window of opportunity to gather additional data if a researcher notices some deficiencies in that aspect (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, it is significant to note that qualitative approach enables the researcher the chance to adopt content analysis in the processing of the data

analysis through examination of the ideas that inform the experiences of teachers with learners who are blind in inclusive settings (Nueman, 2014).

Research design

This study used a single case study research design. Case-study research intensively investigates one or a small set of cases, focusing on many details within each case and the context. In short, it examines both details of each case's internal features as well as the surrounding situation (Neuman, 2014).Thus, the approach will help in gathering data about teachers' experiences in teaching learners who are blind in regular classes.

Case studies enable us to link micro level, or the actions of individuals, to the macro level, or large-scale structures and processes (Vaughan, 1992). As Walton (1992b:122) remarked, "The logic of the case study is to demonstrate a causal argument about how general social forces shape and produce results in particular settings." Thus, the approach helped in gathering data about teachers' experiences in teaching learners who are blind in regular classes.

When examining specific cases, the intricate details of social processes and cause-effect relations become more visible. The increased visibility allows us to develop richer, more comprehensive explanations that can capture the complexity of social life (Neuman,2014).Thus, the approach helped in gathering data about teachers' experiences in teaching learners who are blind in regular classes.

Case studies provide evidence that more effectively depicts complex, multiple-factor events/situations and processes that occur over time and space (Bryman, 2001).Hence, the approach helped in gathering data about teachers' experiences in teaching learners who are blind in regular classes.

Case studies can elaborate on an entire situation or process holistically and permit the incorporation of multiple perspectives or viewpoints (Nueman, 2014).Hence, the approach helped in gathering data about teachers' experiences in teaching learners who are blind in regular classes. In addition, case studies enable researchers to adjust measures of abstract concepts to dependable, lived experiences and concrete standards (Yin,2011).Consequently, the approach helped in gathering data about teachers' experiences in teaching learners who are blind in regular classes.

Data collection methods

The researcher will use face to face structured interviews, non-participant observations and the documentary analysis to collect data on the teachers' experiences in teaching learners who are blind in regular classes. The study employed ace-to-face semi-structured individual interviews to collect data. Semi structured interviews are important in this study as they allow predetermined questions, but order can be modified based upon the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate. (Forrest & Teijlingen, 2004).

At the same time, the study used non participant observation. It is a way to gather data by watching people, events, or noting physical characteristics in their natural setting. Observations can be overt (subjects know they are being observed) or covert (do not know they are being watched) (Nueman, 2014). Researcher becomes a participant in the context being observed. In addition, the study used document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Population, sampling technique and sample.

The section will focus on population, sampling technique and the sample of the study.

Population

Population refers to the set or group of all the units on which the findings of the research are to be applied (Shukla, 2020). Thus, the population in this study are teachers who in inclusive setting where blind children learn in regular primary schools.

It is important to note that researchers choose a sample population in order to identify a population that shares the characteristics important for exploration of a phenomenon under study (Moyo, 2013).

Sampling technique

The study used purposive sampling method to select participants for the study. Purposive sampling entails the development of a framework that involves selection of participants who are grounded in the matter under study (Patton, 2015). Thus,

> *"The logic and power of purposive sampling lies on the selection of information rich cases for in-depth study. The information rich cases are those from which one learns a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of inquiry."* (Patton, 2015:264).

In tandem with the qualitative approach, a small sample size was observed. This is done to acquire information that is useful for understanding the complexity of the phenomenon rather than the use of a representative population that characterise quantitative research (Merriam, 2009).

Sample

In this study, the 30 participants interviewed were chosen purposively for their characteristics useful to the answering of the research questions. The advantage of purposive sampling is that the researcher will identify participants who are available, willing and able to articulate their experiences in the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular primary schools (Creswell, 2013).

Data analysis method

During the data analysis process, the researchers transcribed the interviews data, by making sense of the whole data by referring to it several times. The process entails assessment of manifest (developing categories) and latent (developing themes) data. Content analysis focuses on identification and examination of ideas and assumptions that informs the phenomenon. The themes were extracted from cross cutting data drawn from research instruments and text in order to establish repeated patterns to establish meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

When using the content analysis method, researchers were guided by the six thematic phases. Thus, the Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic data analysis method. Braun and Clarke (2006) data analysis method constitute Phase 1-Data familiarising (transcription of data and noting down of initial ideas; Phase 2- Generating Codes (establishing codes from raw data), Phase 3-Establishing themes (refocusing analysis for broader themes emerging from data. Other phases that were taken into consideration include, Phase 4-Reviewing themes (creation of a thematic map); Phase 5-Defining and naming Themes (establishing clearer patterns of the

themes) and Phase 6- Production of report (final report on the extracts and report writing) (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Discussion

Teachers' understanding of inclusive education

The study looked at teacher's understanding of the concept of inclusive education. From the teacher's responses, inclusive education involves children who are blind learning in the same class with those children who are sighted. Findings from the study indicates that teachers view inclusive education as education that involves children with disabilities learn in their neighbouring schools alongside those without disabilities.It is the education of learners with disabilities alongside their peers without disabilities in the same class. In addition, inclusive education is the involvement of all learners in class despite their disabilities. At the same time, inclusive education involves students with special needs spend most or all of their time with non-special needs students. It is the education of disabled children alongside their normal peers. Such views are supported by literature that states that inclusion rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities from students without disabilities (UNICEF, 2007). In addition, inclusive education entails that schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual social, emotional, linguistic or any other condition. In other words, inclusion discourages any form of discrimination on persons with disabilities and children with exceptionalities (Salamanca Statement, 1994). Thus, the responses of the teachers in the study reveals that inclusive education is about children who are blind enjoying the same privileges in class alongside their peers who are sighted, sharing the same resources. As teachers interact with children in the regular class, they experience the inclusion of the blind children were they interact with the blind children alongside those children who can see.

Teachers' methods of including children with blindness in regular classrooms

The study revealed various methods that teachers use to include learners who are blind in regular classes. Teachers employ the methods of making sure that children who are blind can sit in front of the class. This is done to allow the blind children to be in closer proximity to the teacher and board. Some teachers use group work method and this allows positive interaction among the children. In addition, teachers' emphasis much on oral teaching so that

children who are blind are able to follow the proceedings that takes place in class. One participant said "*I verbalize notes as you write on the board. If a student cannot see or keep up with board work*" Verbalisation method is key in that it allows the students to take down notes and the teachers are able to explain the concepts that are being taught in class. Verbalisation is important because it helps students to get the information the teachers is putting across as the students who are blind miss visual cues and written instructions. Thus, talking while teaching helps to compensate the loss of sight and this is important because the student may miss visual cues and written instructions (Saskatchewan Learning, 2003).

The study revealed that teachers use cooperative learning is one of the best method used. This concept in simple terms allow the teacher to group students together and ask them to peer teach each other. This allows the students are able to share ideas and integrate together. In addition, when teaching children with blindness, the teachers' use of Braille symbols and supplementing visual materials with verbal.

A participant notes. "*When teaching children with blindness I use of braille symbols and supplementing visual materials with verbal. Normally children with blindness they need to supplement loss of sight and they use the strength of their hearing hence I help them understand what I teach through verbatim*". For those children who blind in class or keep up with board work, teachers provide them with enlarged print copy or a scribe to write the notes using NCR(no carbon required) paper. This is in tandem with literature review that points out that the use of Assistive Technology (AT) makes it easier for a child with disabilities to perform much better. The ATs include Physical Resources such as education kits and activity boxes containing basic sets of materials which will support the learning of all children, such as manipulative, brightly coloured or learning materials with attached noise-makers, Braille or large-print books. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be of significant benefit for children with disabilities, and facilitate flexible learning as it enables greater interaction with people in their immediate environment, and promote communication, interaction, cognition and learning(UNICEF, 2012). Thus, teachers indication of the use of technology and cooperation enhances the learning of children who are blind in regular classes.

Teachers employ the remediation method to help blind children in regular classes. Individualised remedial approach to suit my learners with blindness is key approach. The study revealed that this is important as the teachers draw out a plan that suit my learners with

blindness. Remediation is important because the children are able to get extra support where they will be missing out during the normal routine teaching. In addition, teachers, teachers' uses role play method.

In the study, one participant pointed out that. "*Individualised remedial approach to suit my learners with blindness is key approach. I use individual education plan where I draw out a plan that suit my learners with blindness. The media I use will be different from the other teaching aids as they will be concrete. This helps learners with blindness to feel the objects*". The method allows students to explore realistic situations by interacting with other people in a managed way in order to develop experience and trial different strategies in a supported environment. In addition, teachers use the hands on experience, this entails the exploration of objects using the tactile skills, for example, if a teacher wants to describe a hoe, she asks the learner to touch the hoe. Thus, pupil-centred teaching approaches include that knowledge is constructed rather than received. Subsequently, inclusive education, entails that a teacher should be flexible, responsive, committed to each pupil, and using a variety of teaching approaches creates an opening to effectively educate a diverse group of pupils according to their resources and funds of knowledge (Gillies, 2004). Hence, teachers responses are supported by literature they employ a variety of methods that enhances the learning of children who are blind in regular classes.

Teachers' difficulties in including children with blindness in regular classrooms

The study revealed that some children with blindness experience concentration span. This is common when the workload is too much as it is compounded by the new curriculum that requires students to do both CALAZ projects as well as the theoretical work in class. The other challenge that confronts children with blindness in class is that sometimes the children are frustrated due to disability. Children who are blind have challenges in reading and get tired after reading for long. They have challenges in writing in unfamiliar places.

One participant notes. "*Children who are blind have challenges in reading and get tired after reading for long. They have challenges in writing in unfamiliar places. At the same time they feel frustrated with their vision*" At the same time they feel frustrated with their vision, in addition, some of the children are slow in capturing concepts, Learners with disabilities are slow to capture what will be delivered in class. The other issue has to do with teaching and learning materials that are inadequate. Such challenges are collaborated with starting that children with disabilities face because they can easily get disturbed when the work becomes

too much as they fail to cope with the demand of the workload. This is collaborated with literature that stated that teachers face the barrier when they have inadequate resources to help them understand the concepts being taught in class (UNICEF, 2011).

The study revealed that there is inadequate teaching and learning resources in schools. Teachers indicated that resources are a big challenge to cater for the educational needs for learners with blindness, for example, large print book. One participants said. "*I experience limited resources to cater for the educational needs for learners with blindness. I feel that there is limited support from the ministry of education in the provision of teaching and learning materials for children with challenges to learn in an inclusive environment*". In the study teachers revealed that they encounter a number of challenge of lack of resource materials. Teaching requires teaching aids and books.

A participant notes. "*I encounter a number of challenges when dealing with blind children in inclusive setting. One of the challenges is lack of resource materials. Teaching requires teaching aids and books. For children who are blind, they require materials for reading that is is braille. So such materials is not available*" For children who are blind, they require materials for reading that is Braille materials and such materials is not available. Hence, inadequate resources limits the provision of quality teaching for the learners. Such views are collaborated by literature review that points out that lack of suitable facilities and adequate resources, hampers the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular classes. Teachers need resources to produce teaching aids and to differentiate instruction. In view of the teachers responses it is also noted in literature review that students who are blind require assistive technology, for example, computers and braille equipment to cater for their special education (Hunter & Johnson, 2014). Hence, resources should be made available to enhance the education of children who are blind in regular classes.

 One other challenge that confronts the teachers in teaching blind children in regular classes is the abilities to use the Braille, some of the teachers indicated that they have difficulties in brailing their work. The use of Braille is key in facilitation of the learning of the children with blindness especially when writing and reading materials. One participant notes. " *My braille skills are not refined. Teaching and learning materials are inadequate for example, I don't not have brailed charts to illustrate some of the concept. The inclusion parents are reference is a challenge*". The other challenge that confronts the teachers in the regular classes is that the Braille is too noisy when tying such that it disturbs other students in class. Such challenges are collaborated in literature that states that lack of suitable facilities and adequate

resources, hampers the inclusion of learners who are blind in regular classes. Teachers need resources to produce teaching aids and to differentiate instruction. Such views of the teachers are supported by Dakwa(2014) who found out that inclusion was not successful due to lack of material and human resources such as assistive devices to support inclusion of both blind children and those with blindness were inadequate.

Children who were blind, faces mobility and orientation problems. They experience difficulties in moving around, understanding and locating their environments. A participant in study points out that. "*learners who are blind face mobility challenges in navigating the school environment and the class. Sometimes, the students require assistance from their peers in class*". Children also revealed that the classroom teachers ignored their needs when they continually used the lecture methods and ignored the presence of children with visual impairments (Dakwa, 2014). In addition, children in certain poorly resourced centres, they lack Brailled books and other learning materials and how this hampered their learning progress.

The other challenge that teachers pointed out is that learners with blindness in regular schools face the challenge in mobility and orientation. Children with blindness have challenges in mobility especially moving around the school yard and the class. Mobility challenges are experienced in navigating the school environment and the class. Sometimes, the students require assistance from their peers in class. A participant said. "*Mobility challenges in navigating the school environment and the class. Sometimes, the students require assistance from their peers in class*". Hence, the challenges in mobility are experienced especially moving around the school yard and the class. Thus, literature collaborates these that one of the challenges confronting children who are blind is the inaccessibility of the offices, classrooms, dining halls and libraries. These facilities in most areas are built without the exceptional students in mind (Mutasa, Goronga & Tafangombe, 2013).

The study revealed that the class size too big for effective teaching and learning. Teachers revealed that the classroom size is large for individual attention. In the study the average class size is forty and teachers indicated that it is difficult to provide adequate support for children who are blind in regular classes. In addition, other children in class who are sighted also need attention and this leaves the teachers overwhelmed by work. One participant said "*The classroom is too big, 40 students are too much*". The challenge of class size is collaborated in literature as research indicate that one of the challenges negatively impacting on the inclusive education is that the class sizes are too big. The classroom size of the regular schools is a

major problem. In a qualitative study of inclusive education in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), Mafa (2012) highlighted that in public schools the average class size was 40. Thus, the 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.

Teachers' successes in including children with blindness in regular classrooms

The study revealed that the teachers' successes in including children who are blind in regular classes include the use of pre and post vocabulary in teaching, encouragement of participation and cooperative learning. These approaches are helpful handling the education of learners with blindness in regular classes. The use of use of pre and post vocabulary helps students with blindness need assistance in making the connection between vocabulary and real objects, body movements and abstract ideas. One participant notes. "*Students with blindness need assistance in making the connection between vocabulary and real objects, body movements and abstract ideas. Pre-teach vocabulary and key concepts which relate to the curriculum through verbal explanations and concrete experiences using a multi-sensory approach. For example, I orient the student to the library before the library time or develop the concept of the skeletal system with real bones*". Hence, pre-teach vocabulary and key concepts which relate to the curriculum through verbal explanations and concrete experiences using a multisensory approach. For example, orient the student to the library before the library time or develop the concept of the skeletal system with real bones. Hence, helping students with blindness improve their vocabulary is useful as it promotes areas of communication – listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition, vocabulary is directly related to school achievement, to think and learn about the world and the expansion of the child's ability to access new information (JCFS, 2020)

The study also revealed that teachers' success in inclusion of blind students in regular classes is reflected by meaningful participation by students with blindness in class activities. Some teachers revealed that the participation by the children who are blind is good. Children with blindness participate like others in class discussion. For example, some children are very active and are cheer leaders. Teachers revealed that they motivate their students to develop physical fitness is as important for the student with blindness as the sighted child. Sensory-motor skills are necessary for good concept development, physical conditioning and orientation and mobility skills. The student with blindness should participate in the regular physical education program. Adaptations may be required depending on the functional vision

of the student. He/she may not be able to participate in all activities and team sports. A parallel physical activity should be provided. Witten (2018) states that participation success is collaborated by literature that states that participation is crucial for the health and well-being of children. It promotes physical and mental well being through pathways such as a sense of belonging and the networks for social support. Hence, for participation in class plays a significant role to improve the social integration of children with blindness in regular classes.

Findings from the study reveals that there is cooperation among the students is positive. There is reliance amongst students who are blind. Other students help those with blindness in accessing books and other support materials. Teachers encourage cooperative learning. A participant notes " *I encourage cooperative learning. In cooperative learning, this has been a success because in my class, it's a family and those who are not disabled can work together with learners who are blind. Also there is a lot of sharing amongst students"* In cooperative learning, this has been a success because in class, it's a family and those who are not disabled can work together with learners who are blind. Also there is a lot of sharing amongst students. In addition, there is reliance amongst students who are blind. Other students help those with blindness in accessing books and other support materials. At the same time friendships are visible among the students. One of benefit of inclusive education is the development of friendship among learners and acceptance of individual differences. Inclusive education has provided all children with opportunities to develop friendships with one another. Friendship provide role models and opportunities for growth. Findings from the teachers is collaborated by literature (Raising children.net, 2020) that points out that friendships and cooperation plays a central role in the learning and development for children. It helps children with disabilities to learn skills and abilities including social – emotional, communication and physical skills.

Strategies that could improve the inclusion of children with blindness in regular classrooms

The research revealed that the strategies that can be implemented to improve on the inclusion of children with blindness in regular classes are diverse. One of the strategies employed teachers is the use of assistant teacher. Teacher assistants are part of the support team. The primary responsibility of the teacher assistant is to support the classroom teacher, enabling the teacher to provide an educational program that meets the needs of all the students in the class, including the student with a visual impairment. Teachers views on the use of assistant is supported by Adam(2020) who states that the role of teaching assistants in crucial as it is

collaborated with literature because they help the teacher create a classroom that is conducive, they inspire learning and stimulate curiosity among the students.

The study also revealed that to improve the inclusion of children who are blind in regular classes the teachers use the verbalisation approach when teaching. Teachers verbalize praise and disapproval or use gestures such as a hand on the shoulder. They promote oral activities in activities that are done in class. A participant in the study said *"I speak when teaching and always check regularly to ensure that student is writing accurate notes"*. This is important because it allows the children to get what will be teaching rather than using the chalk board as they cannot see. In addition, teachers speak when teaching and always check regularly to ensure that student is writing accurate notes. Thus, ADCET (2018) supports the use of verbalisation, as it is crucial for teachers as it draws the attention of the children. Teachers verbalise what is written on the chalkboard, they talk through any calculations as they are made or procedures as they are carried out. There is need to read any printed information and describe the charts being used for the benefit of learners who are blind. This enhances the understanding of children who are blind to follow what is being taught in class.

The study also found out that in teachers use concretisation teaching method to help students who are blind to capture the concepts. Teachers use tactile, concrete and real life material as much as possible. This provides opportunities for kinesthetic and tactile learning. For example, in the teaching of Maths, students with blindness must physically manipulate concrete materials to master the basic concepts of maths. A participant notes. "*In the teaching of Maths, students with blindness must physically manipulate concrete materials to master the basic concepts of maths. The basic concepts of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division should be thoroughly understood, hence, I encourage the practice mental math skills. I also provide a compartmentalized tray in which to place articles for counting and matching. For language skills, I use real-life examples and concrete material can assist in establishing relationships between abstract learning and the student's experience*" Thus, basic concepts of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division should be thoroughly understood, hence, teachers encourage the practice mental maths skills. Teachers also provide a compartmentalized tray in which to place articles for counting and matching. For language skills, they use real-life examples and concrete material can assist in establishing relationships between abstract learning and the student's experience. Thus, Moshi (2018) posits about the same approach of the use of the concretisation of the materials such as life

examples and concrete material that can assist in establishing relationships between abstract learning and the student's experience.

The study revealed that teachers use of audio materials to facilitate learning for children who are blind inclusive settings. Teachers modify the amount of reading and provide audio cassettes or have someone read to the student, if necessary. Teachers play audio for the children to use their sense of hearing to facilitate learning for the students. Such a view is collaborated the Leornard Cheshire Disability(2011) that points out that audio recordings enhances the understanding of the concepts being taught in class. Hence, lessons can be tape recorded for later playback at home or as revision

The study found out that teachers make use of self-development plans for the children. Individual educational plans helps in the development of a behaviour management plan, since there will be buddie system in class. One participants said. "*In facilitation of reading, I use a multi-sensory approach when teaching the alphabet. For example, real objects should be used to illustrate the initial sounds of words. Modify the amount of reading and provide audio cassettes or have someone read to the student, if necessary*". Thus, learners help each other and share problems. It also helps the teacher has support personnel it makes the learner to be prepared to play a key role in beginning and maintaining an inclusive focus. In addition, the teacher can choice of relevant literature helps to improve inclusion since teacher will be knowing how to solve problems and how to improve their classroom to suit all learners. Mpofu (2000) states that Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) should be prepared for each child with disability that is to cater for individual differences. Ordinary regular teacher should try to change the classroom environment to suit the needs of these particular students. Pupils with severe intellectual disability require individual attention and their work should be presented in small teachable units.

The study reveals that one of the strategies that can be employed in the learning of children with blindness in regular classes is group work. Group is important as it allows students discuss and share ideas. The good part is that young children are not discriminatory in nature, hence, group work will encourage sharing of ideas. One participant said. " *I will allow group-work. For me group is important bas it allows students discuss and share ideas. The good part is that young children are not discriminatory in nature, hence, group work will encourage sharing of ideas*". Thus, use of group-work is key as it encourages children to work together. Such a method is collaborated by Johnson & Johnson(2006) who states that group-work is important because the students will use discussions to learn. Such ideas are collaborated with literature that emphasises that group work is essential because it motivate

students, encourages active learning and the development of critical skills. Group promotes communication and decision making skills among the students.

Findings from the study reveals that there is need to enhance mobility and orientation of children who are blind in regular schools. The teachers indicated that children with low vision need to learn techniques that enable safe and efficient travel from an early age if they are to function independently in and be knowledgeable about their environment. A participant notes. "*Children with low vision need to learn techniques that enable safe and efficient travel from an early age if they are to function independently in and be knowledgeable about their environment*". At the same time, mobility and orientation skills enhances self-esteem of the children. Willings(2019) states that children with blindness needs functional skills on assertiveness, the student with blindness needs to learn when and how to request or refuse help and how to make needs known. It also encourage independent effort and incorporate pro-active behaviour to reduce the likelihood of becoming dependent.

Summary of findings

Teachers' understanding of inclusive education:

The study looked at teacher's understanding of the concept of inclusive education. From the teacher's responses, inclusive education involves children who are blind learning in the same class with those children who are sighted. Responses of the teachers in the study reveals that inclusive education is about children who are blind enjoying the same privileges in class alongside their peers who are sighted, sharing the same resources. As teachers interact with children in the regular class, they experience the inclusion of the blind children were they interact with the blind children alongside those children who can see.

Teachers' methods of including children with blindness in regular classrooms:

The study revealed various methods that teachers use to include learners who are blind in regular classes. Teachers employ the method that involves learners with blindness to sit in front of the class to allow easy attention for the child. The other methods used by teachers include verbalisation that allows students understand what the teachers is saying, group work is also key in teaching, and cooperative learning allows the teacher to group students together and ask them to peer teach each other. The study also found out that teachers use individualised remedial approach that allows learners to get extra support s well as concretisation of concepts that creates an exploration and tactile understanding of the illustrations.

Teachers' difficulties in including children with blindness in regular classrooms:

The research findings show some difficulties faced by teachers in teaching children with blindness in regular classes. These difficulties include the low concentration span by children with blindness, inadequate teaching and learning resources in schools challenges in the use of the Braille, some of the teachers indicated that they have difficulties in brailing. Some of the difficulties experienced have to do with mobility and orientation and the class size are too big for effective teaching and learning. As revealed by the study other difficulties faced by children with blindness have to do with health challenges and some experience low self esteem due to the nature of their disability.

Teachers' successes in including children with blindness in regular classroom:

The study revealed that the teachers' successes in including children who are blind in regular classes include the use of pre and post vocabulary in teaching, encouragement of participation and cooperative learning. These approaches are helpful handling the education of learners with blindness in regular classes. The use of use of pre and post vocabulary helps students with blindness need assistance in making the connection between vocabulary and real objects, body movements and abstract ideas. Success in orientation of the student to the library, success in inclusion of blind students in regular classes is reflected by meaningful participation by students with blindness in class activities. Cooperative learning has been a success because in class, children are like a family and those who are not disabled can work together with learners who are blind.

Strategies that could improve the inclusion of children with blindness in regular classrooms:

As revealed by the research findings, strategies that teachers can use to improve the inclusion of children who are blind in regular classes include the use of teacher assistants are part of the support team, verbalisation approach when teaching, use concretisation teaching method to help students, audio materials to facilitate learning, group work and individual education plan. The study found that teachers use of self-

development plans for the children that are encountered on individual plans to help children with blindness to understand some of the concepts that are taught in class.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study:

The study concluded out that teachers make use of self-development plans for the children. Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) should be prepared for each child with blindness to cater for the individual needs to facilitate leaning.

It is also concluded that teachers encounter a number of challenges such as inadequate resources, the class sizes in the regular classes is too big to cater for the needs of children with blindness. At the same time, the challenges of mobility and orientation are common. Teachers also expressed challenges of using the Braille.

It can be also concluded that teachers experience successes in the inclusion of learners with disabilities as the children are able to forge friendship and cooperation. The benefit of inclusive education is the development of friendship among learners and acceptance of individual differences. Inclusive education has provided all children with opportunities to develop friendships with one another. Friendship provide role models and opportunities for growth. At the same time, success is witnessed through active participation by the learners extra curriculum activities such as physical activities.

The study conclude that teachers employ various strategies to promote learning of blind children inclusive setting such as verbalisation, use of audio recording, provision of brailled materials as well as concretising teaching and learning for the blind children to be able capture the concepts taught in class.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions above, the researcher came up with the following recommendations.

There is need to address the issue of teacher-pupil ratio. 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 forty children. With that number of children in class, it becomes difficult for the teacher to give children the individual attention required.

The government should provide adequate resource to facilitate learning at schools. Resource constrains are the major factor that affects the provision of inclusive education. Therefore, more resources should be channelled towards the education of children with blindness in inclusive set-ups.

Schools should be in a position to give support to teachers with students with disabilities especially to consider the number of children in a class. Schools should also prioritise allocation of teacher assistants in classes with children with disabilities because it helps the class teacher to cater for the educational needs for all children in class.

Schools should enhance mobility and orientation of children who are blind in regular schools. Children with blindness need to learn techniques that enable safe and efficient travel from an early age if they are to function independently in and be knowledgeable about their environment. As such mobility and orientation skills enhances self-esteem of the children.

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