

Inclusive Education Implementation Challenges Facing Selected Primary and Secondary Schools in Mashonaland East Province in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Despite many efforts put forth for the successful implementation of inclusive education in primary and secondary schools in Watershed cluster, Marondera district in Mashonaland East province, Zimbabwe, there are numerous challenges being faced in this area. The study aimed at investigating the challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools housed in Watershed cluster, Marondera district in Mashonaland East province. Two secondary schools and one primary school were targeted in this study. The study adopted a qualitative design and conducted a few numerical analyses to examine the challenges faced by schools in implementing inclusive education. Thirty learners and 15 teachers were sampled and data was collected through questionnaires, focus group discussions and observations. The research findings indicate that a lack of support from the society, negative attitudes from the teachers, incapacitation of schools and inadequate physical resources that would assist in the implementation of inclusive education were the major challenges. This means that the Zimbabwean Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) should consider



increasing the availability of special needs courses and workshops and conferences for teachers and create funds for renovating and building schools.

Keywords: inclusive education; implementation challenges; disability; primary and secondary schools

Introduction and Background Analysis

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics and UNICEF (2015, 15) define inclusive education as increasing the participation of students in public schools and reducing their exclusion from the cultures, curricula and communities of public schools. Inclusive education has been implemented successfully in many countries. Examples of such countries include New Zealand, Italy and the United States of America. These countries have successfully promoted inclusive education practices and policies that eliminate barriers and create enabling conditions for all learners to learn (Nguyet and Ha 2010). Inclusive education has been successful where all stakeholders, parents, people with disabilities and teachers impress the vision and value of inclusive change on government and school leadership (Bunch 2008). Education is a field that makes major contributions to the structuring of human identity. The main aim of education is to foster an all-round, holistic development of a child, irrespective of their status. This essentially involves intellectual (cognitive), physical, moral, sensible and social development. To fulfil these objectives, it is vital to strike a balance between a syllabus, curriculum, books and co-curricular activities in an all-inclusive manner. The concept of inclusivity in education is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning cultures and learning communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It further involves a range of changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children with special educational needs.

It is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO 2005). The concept of inclusive education is based on the fact that all children and young people, regardless of their different cultural, social and learning backgrounds, should have equal learning opportunities in all kinds of schools (UNESCO 2008). Zimbabwe has done little in terms of inclusivity, particularly on the practical aspect, yet there is an array of well-articulated educational policies aimed at addressing the challenges that exclude some learners. In this context, inclusive education must put flexibility and variety at its core. This should be evident in the structure of the school, the content of the curriculum, the attitudes and beliefs of staff, parents and learners, and the goal should be to offer every individual a relevant education and optimal opportunities for development (UNESCO 2005). In the Zimbabwean context, the curriculum, which was reviewed in 2015, addresses inclusivity and incorporates aspects that were not in the previous curriculum. The updated curriculum states that every child should have access to basic education, although implementation is a challenge. This is a step in the right

direction. However, challenges related to attitudes and resources endure, making implementation difficult. Parents and learners themselves have important contributions to make to shape the implementation of inclusivity (Lindsay 2007). However, in Zimbabwe, particularly in the Watershed cluster of Marondera district in Mashonaland East province, parents tend to shun the new curriculum as it has made education more expensive than before. Learners from the age of seven are allowed to enrol in Grade 1, and learners are allowed to enrol in secondary schools from the age of 13 to 14. Most families find it difficult to pay fees because of the harsh economic conditions experienced in Zimbabwe. It is also a racially diverse society, with many people from countries such as Mozambique and Malawi. The main source of income within this district is agriculture. Christianity is the dominant religion, but there are also a few Muslim sects. Poverty affects the lives of many people in this area, and it causes many students to drop out of school, especially the special needs learners.

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2021) estimates that 15% of any population is disabled. In addition, approximately 85% of the world's children with disabilities who are below 15 years old live in developing countries. According to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's (MoPSE 2014) *Annual Statistical Report for 2014*, the number of in-school children with impairments enrolled in 2014 was 34,734. This figure increased to 52,232 in 2016, representing a percentage increase of around 50%. It is very difficult in Zimbabwe to get recent information pertaining to numbers of disabled students because of financial problems and the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. There are other groups being sidelined by the education system, citing challenges such as a lack of adequate resources, infrastructure and funding to cater for them (UNESCO 2005). According to UNESCO (2008), every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs and those with special needs must have access to regular schools that should accommodate them with a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting those needs. The education systems, schools and teachers should focus on generating inclusive settings that uphold the values of respect and understanding of cultural, social and individual diversity (Nyagadza and Mazuruse 2021). Essentially, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the challenges faced by learners with special needs. Focusing on inclusive education can be useful in the development of policies and strategies that address the causes and consequences of discrimination, inequality and exclusion within the holistic framework of educational goals (UNESCO 2005).

Berg (2004) indicates that successful inclusive schools provide a unified educational system in which general and special educators work collaboratively to provide comprehensive and integrated services and programming for all students. In such schools, inclusive practices have been carefully developed and implemented by the entire school system and they are provided with resources to support and maintain change. Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2006) postulate that the rights perspective invalidates any argument that some children's needs are best served in any kind of

special setting. The government of Zimbabwe joined other countries and started special education after independence in the year 1980, and education has since been offered to all categories of children with all learning disabilities (Chireshe 2013). However, the major challenge has been the lack of inclusivity in the education approaches. Equally important, the government has not been following up on determining whether the approaches are inclusive or not. Adopting an inclusive education system is vital in addressing barriers to learning for children with disabilities. The implementation of inclusive education is hampered by teachers' lack of skills and knowledge in differentiating the curriculum to address a wide range of learning needs. Learners living with disabilities in Zimbabwe are failing to access basic human rights such as education and health that are enjoyed by their able-bodied colleagues (UNICEF 2021). A report from the World Bank (2013) shows that many disabled children fail to realise their full potential as they struggle to access basic rights. The report notes that efforts by Zimbabwe soon after independence to improve the lives of people living with disabilities were eroded by serious economic challenges. UNICEF (2021) alludes that about 600,000 children are living with some form of disability in Zimbabwe and this makes up one of the most socially neglected groups in society today. They face different forms of exclusion that affect their learning. The exclusion is due to different factors, such as the kind of disability they have, where they live, and the culture or class to which they belong (UNICEF 2013). Teachers and schools are not well-equipped to educate and account for learners living with disabilities, therefore most drop out by the third grade (Chireshe 2013). Schools are finding alternative ways of performing inclusive education on an individual basis, but there is still a lack of standardisation and quality, especially in rural areas. Despite these challenges, the government and other stakeholders such as UNICEF are trying to improve inclusive education. No learner is to be denied enrolment on grounds of disability, background, ethnicity or creed. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has a department that is responsible for ensuring that inclusive education is being followed. Due to the lack of resources, the MoPSE encourages schools to keep learners with disabilities in classrooms with all other learners and to teach them the same curriculum without documenting their specific disability (Matereke 2012). The government through MoPSE crafted the policy instruments on the subject, for example inclusive sensitive infrastructure such as ramps and appropriate toilets. The government also deployed special needs teachers. The school feeding programme recently started to ensure that all learners are fed.

The MoPSE has the School Psychological Services (SPS) and the Special Needs Education (SNE) Division to better serve learners experiencing disabilities in schools. The SPS department provides a wide range of counselling services (Mutepfa, Mpofu, and Chataika 2007). The Zimbabwe Education Act (Government of Zimbabwe 1996a), the Disabled Persons Act (Government of Zimbabwe 1996b), and various Ministry of Education circulars (for example, the Education Secretary's Policy No. 36, [Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture] 1990) require that all students, regardless of race, religion, gender, creed, and disability, have access to basic or primary education (up to Grade 7). As mentioned above, according to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary

Education's *Annual Statistical Report 2014*, 34,734 in-school children with impairments were recorded in 2014 and this figure increased to 52,232 in 2016. Recent statistics for this area remain a challenge due to economic challenges and Covid-19. It is important to note that the Disabled Persons Act (1996) does not commit the government to providing inclusive education in any concrete way. In fact, it specifically prevents citizens with disabilities from suing the Zimbabwean government (Mutepfa, Mpofu, and Chataika 2007).

Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as UNICEF facilitate funding researchers on inclusivity to inform policy and programming. For less privileged learners, they pay fees and provide uniforms and sanitary wear. They have for many years been involved in supporting inclusive education in a variety of ways, including through the provision of learning materials. Save the Children's (SC) education work started in 1983. The strategy of SC is to support the less privileged, local authorities and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the provision of basic education with a focus on increasing access to basic education. Despite many efforts to create inclusive education in Zimbabwe, there are many factors that have hindered development in this area of education. Some of the challenges that are being faced by learners in achieving inclusive education are the attitudes of learners and teachers and inadequate resources (Nyagadza, Kadembo, and Makasi 2020, 2021). As such, there has been a plethora of challenges affecting the education sector in terms of inclusivity, and schools in Watershed cluster in Marondera district have not been an exception. It is thus the aim of this article to analyse the major challenges of inclusive education in both primary and secondary education. The specific objectives of the study were to examine societal factors that act as barriers to educational inclusivity, to determine the attitudes of learners and teachers on educational inclusivity challenges, to investigate the capacitation of schools in accommodating learners from different backgrounds, and to determine the adequateness of resources for inclusive education in schools.

Literature Review

Learning Benefits and Consequences of Inclusive Education

According to teachers, the inclusion of students living with disabilities could benefit both disabled and typically developing peers in terms of social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Ajuwon 2008). Students with learning disabilities seem to benefit from their enrolment in inclusive classrooms in terms of their course grades in language, arts, mathematics, sciences, and social sciences (Rea, McLaughlin, and Walther-Thomas 2002). Research has shown that inclusion had no negative impact on the learning development of the other children in the classroom. Instead, the performance of children with mental disabilities proved as good as at a special school, especially in language courses. Moreover, the benefits to regular learners include reduced fear of human differences, increased comfort and awareness, growth in social cognition, improvement in self-concept, and development of personal principles, warm and caring friendships. Parents confirmed improved outcomes for their children without challenges when the

children with challenges are included in the regular classrooms. However, negative attitudes are also present in terms of the outcomes for students with specific learning disabilities and for typically developing students (Savolainen 2012). Lindsay (2007), an English teacher and former supporter of full inclusion, claims that inclusive education does not provide clear evidence for the expected learning benefits. As revealed from a study with 840 participants in Germany, parents of children with disabilities who were in special schools expressed negative attitudes, arguing that in the mainstream school their children would not have the necessary support, although they accepted the advantages of inclusive education.

The Influence of Societal Factors on Inclusive Education

Where do people living with disabilities fit into the social system? Some see persons with disabilities as belonging to a fifth caste, below all others. In addition, the strong link between poverty and disability implies that many children with disabilities will be members of poor families, perhaps reinforcing their marginalisation. While disabilities are not restricted to any one class or age group, people with disabilities are often found to be amongst the poorest of the poor (DFID 2000). In Zimbabwe, the majority of learners living with disabilities are from a low socio-economic background (Mutepfa, Mpofu, and Chataika 2007) and their parents or guardians are marginally involved in their schooling. The higher prevalence of disabilities in children from low socio-economic backgrounds in Zimbabwe is due to the parental lack of literacy and inadequate access to preventive medicine or healthcare. Families with a low socio-economic status might typically lack knowledge about community resources that could make the student more successful in school. Mutepfa, Mpofu, and Chataika (2007) gave an account about a father of a child with spastic cerebral palsy who received a wheelchair with the help of an international relief agency. The father used the chair as his personal chair, preventing the child from using it for personal mobility needs and transportation to school.

Teachers' Attitudes on Inclusive Education

In order to understand how teachers' attitudes affect inclusive education, it is worth defining the term "attitude." The word refers to "an individual's viewpoint or disposition towards a particular object or person" (De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert 2011), and it represents relatively stable knowledge, emotions and reactions regarding people, phenomena and situations. Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education must be studied to identify deficiencies within the education system that may create negative perceptions. DeBoer, Pijl and Minnaert (2011) suggest that the successful implementation of inclusive education is dependent on the teacher's willingness to accept the inclusion model. The negative attitudes that teachers have towards inclusive education can have a detrimental impact on student learning and may impede the success of inclusive education (Cassady 2011). Taylor and Ringlaben (2012) highlight the detrimental impact of negative attitudes towards inclusive education as these attitudes extend throughout the school culture and result in teaching practices that

impede student learning. Gal, Schreur and Engel-Yeger (2010) conclude that teachers' attitudes is one of the most important aspects of teaching and that negative attitudes negatively affect the teaching practice in the classroom. The significance of teacher attitudes was highlighted by Hattie (2010), who stressed the importance of teacher attitudes as a factor contributing towards student learning via the influence they have on teaching practices and the classroom environment. Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2006) claim that teachers' attitudes influence their thinking and as a result impact their role in supporting inclusive practices. In other words, some teachers have the tendency to hold low academic expectations of students with disabilities in their classroom (Silva and Morgado 2004). Inclusive education can be achieved, but it depends on teachers' positive attitude in teaching disabled children without exhibiting certain stereotypical patterns regarding students' academic behaviour (Jordan, Glenn, and McGhie-Richmond 2010). Although some teachers have negative attitudes towards inclusion, there are some barriers that impede inclusion that need to be acknowledged. Teachers lack training on inclusive education; there is a shortage of teaching and learning materials to facilitate inclusive education; there are large numbers of pupils in classes, a high number of periods and poor parental support. These are some of the deterrent factors that could have a negative impact on teachers' beliefs about inclusion of learners (Anastasiadou 2016).

The Role of the School as an Institute in Inclusive Education

According to Garrison-Wade, Sobel, and Fulmer (2007), one of the most important challenges in education is to create and nurture inclusive environments that support learning for all learners. The degree to which learners can be well-educated is directly correlated to a system of personnel preparation that results in a qualified workforce so that every student has highly skilled and competent teachers and administrators. School administrators in inclusive education settings need to be more knowledgeable and informed about the practices and facilities that have to be made available for the students with learning disabilities. This will in turn have an impact on the student's performance, as it will increase their level of motivation and allow initiatives that have been put in place to support these students to be monitored (Garrison-Wade, Sobel, and Fulmer 2007). Creating a barrier-free environment within compounds used by the learners includes many factors, such as adapted toilets and bathrooms with bars added to help learners to hold on while toileting and exits to all facilities such as classrooms, dormitories and playgrounds that can be used by students with disabilities. Classrooms should be well lit and well ventilated for students with physical disabilities. Kithuka (2008) found that physical facilities were inadequate. Classrooms were overcrowded and toilets were narrow and had no seats, making it difficult for special needs education (SNE) learners to use them.

The Influence of Teaching and Learning Resources (TLR)

There is a need for adequate resources to make teaching and learning effective in inclusive programmes. The government resources are inadequate to meet the basic

needs in education (UNESCO 2005). According to UNESCO (2005), there are no special facilities for children with various disabilities, for instance hearing aids, Braille materials, spectacles, and white canes. The adequacy of teaching and learning resources refers to the satisfactory or acceptable quality and quantity of material resources, physical facilities and human resources. According to the Department for International Development (DFID 2000), the adequacy of instructional materials such as textbooks, which are the main instruction material, is the most cost-effective input affecting student performance. In this context, an adequate supply is usually assumed to be a minimum of one textbook per three learners and at primary level enough reading books so that every child has the opportunity to read at least one new book every week. Stubbs (2002) suggests that where there are few resources, a specialist teacher should help SNE children in a resource room within the school. Various reports agree that resources (or a lack of them) are always used as a reason for lack of action. Underlying this is often a lack of commitment to change. More funding will enable schools to provide teaching and learning materials. Schools will equally install water points on school premises. As children receive such support, they will find school user-friendly. Material resources include textbooks, charts, maps, audio-visual and electronic instructional materials such as radios, tape recorders, televisions and video tape recorders. Another category of material resources consists of paper supplies and writing materials such as pens, erasers, exercise books, crayons, chalk, drawing books, notebooks, pencils, rulers, slates, workbooks and so on (Atkinson 2000).

Methodological Delineation

A qualitative technique making use of a few numerical analyses was applied in examining the challenges faced by schools in implementing inclusive education. The study made use of a questionnaire, focus group discussions and observation to collect data. It utilised a qualitative design to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomenon and to describe what exists with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Orodho 2004). This design was appropriate for this study as it enabled the acquisition of the relevant information. The questionnaires were used to collect information from teachers, and the focus group discussions were developed for obtaining in-depth information from the learners. The questionnaires for the teachers focused on the challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education in Watershed cluster, Marondera district, Mashonaland East. The sample consisted of three school heads (100% of the 3 public primary and secondary schools), with 30 learners from the same schools (10%) and 15 teachers (50% of the teachers from the schools involved in the study). The respondents' answers were presented in a realistic manner and the true feelings of the respondents were organised and summarised.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Information of the Participants

The data for the study was collected from three public primary and secondary schools in Marondera district, Mashonaland East province. An item was included in the questionnaire that sought information on the gender of the 27 learners who were included in the focus group discussions. Of the 27 learners who were in the focus group discussions, 11 (41%) were females and 16 (59%) were males. The study revealed that the majority of the pupils who responded were males. All the head teachers were males (100%). Females were perhaps missing due to poor qualifications and experience. This implies that Marondera district has a vast majority of male head teachers in public primary and secondary schools. The majority (57%) of the teachers were female; 43% were male. This is an indication that there are more male teachers compared to female teachers in public primary and secondary schools in Marondera district. These findings imply that there is an inequitable representation of head teachers and teachers by their gender, which is an unfair practice since learners of a certain gender may feel that their rights are better understood by teachers of a certain gender. More than half of the head teachers (66.7%) were aged between 36–50 years, while 33.3% were aged above 50 years. Many teachers were in the ages ranging from 36–50 years and from 21–35 years. The ages of the head teachers and teachers depict mature people who are in a position to give reliable information about the situation in their respective schools. Age in any profession is very important as it has an effect on how issues in life are handled. The ages of the head teachers and teachers were therefore of importance, and were purposefully sought by the study. The findings indicated that there were seven, eight and 12 learners who have ages ranging from 10–13 years, 14–16 years and above 17 years, respectively. Many learners have ages above 14 years, which showed that they can give reliable and mature suggestions about inclusive education. Very few learners were from the primary school.

Distribution of Respondents by Their Academic and Professional Qualifications

The data collected showed that all head teachers and teachers were professionally trained. Most of the head teachers have master's degrees and only one had a diploma in education. The qualifications of the head teachers are important in this study because they are the basis upon which knowledge of inclusive education will be implemented. The majority (57.1%) of public primary and secondary school teachers, on the other hand, held bachelor's degrees and only one teacher had master's degree. The level of education of both teachers and head teachers is important since it would directly translate into know-how on inclusive education and its eventual implementation. According to a report from the World Bank (n.d.), qualified teachers feel secure and prepared both in terms of subject content and classroom practices. The findings showed that 67% of the head teachers have been in the profession for more than 10 years and the other 33% have 6–10 years' experience. More experienced head teachers are better able to handle special needs education (SNE) because of their longer involvement with

education. Teachers are seen as agents of change at an individual and societal level, and this only happens due to the level of exposure that comes about due to the length of service in a certain position. The study revealed that 7% of the teachers had less than five years' experience; 36% of the teachers had experience of 6–10 years and 57% had 10 years' or more experience. Experience in this profession is important since less experienced teachers might not have been exposed enough to matters on inclusive education. The duration one has been in the teaching profession determines the level of exposure gained in implementing inclusive education. The majority of the class teachers had more than 10 years' teaching experience, a clear indication that most teachers in the district are mature, which makes them conversant with inclusive education.

The Influence of Societal Factors on Inclusive Education

Society has been highlighted as one of the factors contributing to the challenges of implementing inclusive education at school. In cases where parents and society are unable to play their roles, learners are affected. This has affected the implementation of inclusive education in many ways. Below are various ways in which societal factors influence the implementation of inclusive education based on the perspectives of various respondents. All the teachers agreed that there is a lack of support from parents, and that there is poverty and isolation. Teachers claimed that due to financial constraints, most parents are not able to support their children. Most of the respondents claimed that poverty prohibits learners from accessing important resources for learning to take place. This factor was followed by negative peer influence, which received 13 “yes” votes (only 1 “no”), indicating that it is a significant problem. Some were of the view that the long distance to schools may not affect the social well-being of learners, as shown in Figure 1, with four teachers voting “no.” The above results provide a clear indication that societal factors may influence learners in a negative way, and it is the duty of all teachers, communities and parents to support the learners.

According to Karp and Tanarugsachock (2000), inclusive education cannot be effective unless educators, parents and students combine their resources and efforts. Welch (2000) emphasises that inclusion is more likely to succeed when teachers and parents collaborate. All teachers in this study claimed that they involve parents in school activities such as discussions about learners' progress with their schoolwork. They explained that to invite parents, they send them letters. Some teachers indicated that some parents are cooperative. One of the teachers said: “We always invite parents to school by writing letters to them and others are really participating.” Many teachers indicated that some learners come to school without proper exercise books and other learning aids. Parents should make sure that their children are given enough support for the effective implementation of inclusive education. However, it is not only the parent who should provide assistance. The two parties, the parent and the teacher, should work together in supporting learners. Poverty hinders the implementation of inclusive education at school. In cases where parents are unable to pay school fees, learners are affected. This affects the implementation of inclusive education. Another issue that was

raised relates to learners in Grade 1 who have not attended early childhood development (ECD) classes due to a lack of finances. Teachers are of the opinion that children who lose out on early childhood development are compromised. This omission also leads to delays in the processes of early childhood identification and intervention in addressing barriers to learning. So, if children are not able to attend school, they remain at risk. All the heads agreed that the following affect learners: negative peer influence, isolation, poverty, and non-participation of all stakeholders in policies that affect learners. None of the school heads indicated a “no” for these items, except for the item on the long distance to school. This is an indication that societal factors have a negative influence on the implementation of inclusive education.

The Influence of Attitudes on Inclusive Education

The attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education is one of the aspects investigated in this study. Views from different teachers in the three selected schools in Waddilove cluster, Marondera were sought. A total of 14 teachers drawn from the sample schools were asked to respond to questions on items that examined their attitudes towards including learners with special needs in mainstream classes. Their responses are captured in Table 1.

The items were examined using five parameters or keys: strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, undecided=3, agree=4 and strongly agree=5. The mean was arrived at through the following sum: $1+2+3+4+5$, divided by the number of items, thus $1+2+3+4+5/5=3$. For the mean 3.0, the interpretation is as follows: above 3.0 means agree strongly, =3.0 means neutral, and below 3.0 means disagree. The results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers’ views on the inclusion of different types of learners with special needs

Statement	Mean		SD
Learners with mobility problems	2.07	1.16	1.16
Learners with hearing impairments	3.86	1.30	1.3
Learners with visual impairments	3.71	1.28	1.28
Learners with speech problems	1.93	1.03	1.03
Learners with behavioural problems	3.29	1.44	1.44
Learners with mental disabilities	1.64	0.81	0.81
Learners with emotional disorders	1.86	0.91	0.91
Learners with special learning difficulties	2.36	1.11	1.11

N=14

Based on the findings, the teachers disagreed on the following groups: learners with special learning difficulties, learners with emotional disorders, learners with mental disabilities and learners with speech problems, with the following means (mean=2.36, standard deviation=1.11), (mean=1.86, standard deviation=0.91), (mean=1.64, standard deviation=0.81) and (mean=1.93, standard deviation=1.03), respectively. Based on these findings, some teachers disagreed that learners with special needs should be included in a school set-up, meaning that they have a negative attitude towards learners with special needs. The teachers, however, agreed on the statements concerning the following groups: learners with hearing impairments, learners with visual impairments, and learners with behavioural problems, with the following means (mean=3.86, standard deviation=1.30) and (mean=3.71, standard deviation=1.28) respectively. Some teachers were in agreement on the inclusion of learners with hearing, visual and behavioural problems. The above information suggests that some teachers have a negative attitude towards the inclusion of these learners in mainstream education. There are many arguments that could explain their attitude and some of these may be based on poor remuneration and poor training on how to handle learners with specific needs. Although attitudes are not the only factor related to teaching and learning, it directly influences learning considerably.

Table 2: Teachers' views on aspects that affect learners

Statement	Mean	SD
Inclusive education has a positive effect on the social and emotional development of children with special needs	1.64	0.89
Inclusive education is beneficial to both children without special needs and children with special needs	1.71	1.10
Inclusive education lowers the quality of instruction for all pupils	3.43	1.59
Teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusive education	3.07	1.28

N=14

Based on the findings shown in the Table 2, teachers were in disagreement on the following statement: "Inclusive education has a positive effect on the social and emotional development of children with special needs" and "Inclusive education is beneficial to both children without special needs and children with special needs," with the following means (mean=1.64, standard deviation=0.89) and (mean=1.71, standard deviation=1.10), respectively. The teachers, however, agreed on the following statements: "Inclusive education lowers the quality of instruction for all pupils" and "Teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusive education," with the following means (mean=3.43, standard deviation=01.59) and (mean=3.07, standard deviation=1.28), respectively. Based on these findings, some teachers disagreed with the benefits of inclusion for social and emotional development. The head teacher's view was sought to measure teachers' attitudes towards including learners with special needs into public primary and secondary schools. The majority also indicated that inclusive

education has a positive effect on the social and emotional development of learners with special needs and learners without special needs. A few of the respondents indicated that inclusive education lowers the quality of instruction for all pupils.

Capacitation of Schools for Inclusive Education

The findings indicated that 36% of the respondents viewed the curriculum being offered as irrelevant; 29% indicated that it is fairly relevant, and only 14% of the respondents felt that it is relevant. As a result, learners with special needs would find it difficult to survive schooling because of the high level of competition and stress. The findings showed that the curriculum needs to be more flexible to accommodate the needs of different types of learners and different ability levels. This information above suggests that the government in partnership with other important stakeholders such as UNICEF and UNESCO have a big role to play in promoting inclusive education in Zimbabwe. Administration also plays an important role in promoting inclusive education. The results indicated that 36% of the respondents were in support of the implementation of inclusive education, while 64% were not supportive of inclusive education. The 36% of respondents who supported inclusive education indicated that the school did not discriminate based on the learning disabilities of students during the admission process and always supported the teachers in finding ways to handle these students. On the other hand, the 64% who did not support the administration of inclusive education indicated that the school administration was more interested in maintaining a high level of performance and hence was not able to support such students. As a result, this research suggests that the administration of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools can be a successful venture only if some structures and policies are put into place to support the students and the teachers who are handling such students.

The Availability of Teaching and Learning Resources

The research sought to find information on the availability of physical facilities for the implementation of inclusive education. According to research objective 4, the researchers sought to assess the availability of teaching and learning materials required for the effective implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools. Educational resources are important in every aspect of learning for all learners, including those with special needs in education and those who require physical facilities that facilitate their learning. The teachers' views on the use of instructional materials were sought. They were asked to respond to questions on items that sought their feelings about the influence of disability-related materials, hearing aid materials, special textbooks, signposts and special charts.

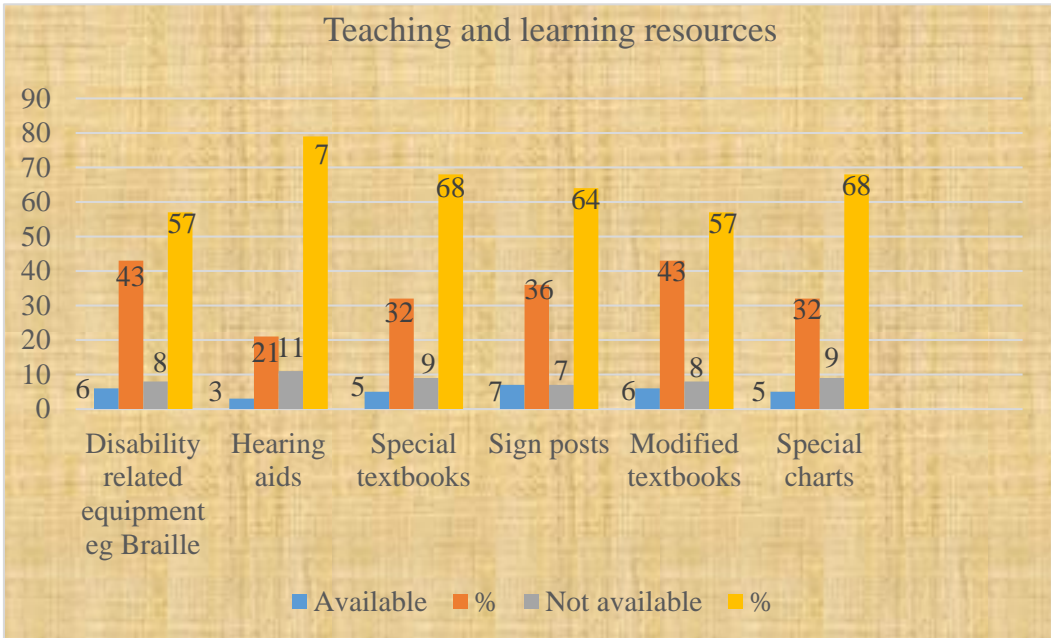


Figure 1: Teachers’ views on the availability of teaching/learning materials for special needs

According to the responses, 43% of the respondents indicated that disability-related equipment and materials are available, while 57% claimed they are not available. Regarding hearing aids, 21% of the respondents indicated that they were available while 79% of the teachers indicated they are not available. In terms of textbooks, 32% had special textbooks while 68% did not. The same scenario was also noted regarding special charts, where five teachers out of 14 indicated that they were available. Overall, 35% indicated that they have adequate teaching and learning resources while 65% indicated that they did not. Based on the data, it can be deduced that most schools have few resources to effectively implement inclusive education in Marondera district. These findings are in line with those of Wachira (2012), who found that teaching and learning materials were inappropriate to cater for effective implementation of inclusive learning in most public schools. The researchers asked the teachers in their questionnaire about the textbook ratios among them to ascertain the availability of teaching learning resources. The results show that 7% of the respondents had a textbook and reveal the following regarding textbook-to-pupil ratios: pupil ratio of 1:01 as well as 1:03, 14% had a ratio of 1:02, 21% had a ratio of 1:04, while 50% had a ratio of 1:05. From the above data, it is clear that the majority of the schools had a textbook, with a pupil ratio of 1:05. The availability of textbooks could be attributed to government allocation of funds to purchase instruction materials. However, the findings of the study also revealed that inclusive education instructional materials were inadequate. The head teachers were also in agreement with the teachers’ views.

Observation Schedule

The researchers sought some of the information on the ground using an observation schedule, which will act as a yardstick to fulfil the objectives of the study. The following key was used: Yes=1, No=2. The mean was arrived at with the sum of keys 1+2 divided by the number of items, thus $1+2/2=1.5$. With the mean at 1.5, the interpretation is as follows: above 3.0 means no, =1.5 means neutral and below 1.5 means yes.

Table 3: Observation checklist findings on the challenges of the implementation of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools

Indicators	Yes	No	Mean	SD
Suitability of textbooks in class to the level of the learners with special needs	2	1	1.33	0.47
Availability of a learning assistant	2	1	1.33	0.47
Spacious classrooms	1	2	1.67	0.47
Availability of desks and chairs	1	2	1.67	0.47
Space for other activities such as sports	1	2	1.67	0.47
Cooperation and reception of learners	1	2	1.67	0.47
Ventilation of classrooms	0	3	2	0

It was noted that teachers agreed on the following statements: the suitability of textbooks in class to the level of the learners with special needs and the availability of a learning assistant, because they have a mean less than 1.5. However, the teachers were in disagreement on the questions concerning the following: the availability of desks and chairs, spacious classrooms, space for other activities such as sports and cooperation and reception of learners. All these indicators had a mean of 1.67. The results match those found by UNESCO (2021), which stated that inclusive education faces a lack of appropriate classrooms. This shows that schools in the Watershed cluster, such as Grassland and Waddilove secondary schools, are facing a lot of problems in implementing inclusive education.

Cochran's Q Test

Three schools were selected in this research to examine the suitability and availability of resources. The procedure computes the non-parametric Cochran's Q test for related categories where the response is binary. The binary response is either yes or no. From the information above, the null hypothesis and the alternative hypothesis are formulated below:

H_0 : The distribution and suitability of textbooks in class to the level of the learners with special needs, the availability of a learning assistant, spacious classrooms, the availability of desks and chairs, space for other activities, cooperation and reception of learners and the ventilation of classrooms are the same.

H_1 : The distribution and suitability of textbooks in class to the level of the learners with special needs, the availability of a learning assistant, spacious classrooms, the availability of desks and chairs, space for other activities, cooperation and reception of learners and the ventilation of classrooms are different.

Reject H_0 if $X^2 > X^2_{5\%}(6)$ where $X^2 = 7.5$ and $X^2_{5\%}(6) = 12.6$. Since $7.5 < 12.6$, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is often recommended to adopt a higher p value (rather than 0.05) as a threshold for statistical significance when using Cochran's Q test to determine statistical differences. The Cochran's Q test has a p value of 0.277, indicating that we are going to accept the null hypothesis that there is no difference in terms of resources for the three schools selected. The results show that the schools are facing the same problems as far as inclusive education is concerned.

Focus Group Discussions

The results from the focus group discussions were almost the same as what the teachers pointed out in the questionnaires and observation schedule. The results from the discussions held revealed that teachers have a negative attitude towards inclusive education, although this may be attributed to a number of factors such as incapacitation of teachers by the government, which is failing to meet their needs, and the environment in which they are operating. Another major discovery of the study was the critical lack of both teaching and learning materials. Instructional materials such as chairs were inadequate although organisations such as UNICEF and Plan International are donating materials to use. It was noted that the teachers at the schools indicated that they did not have adequate instructional materials and teaching aids in order to deliver the curriculum to the learners with special needs. The respondents were asked whether the school administration was supportive of inclusive education or not. Roughly 36% indicated that the school administration was supportive of the implementation of inclusive education, while the percentage of the population that indicated that the administration was not supportive constituted 64%.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The research findings could assist schools and the ministry to enhance their performance. The schools can draft programmes about inclusive education tailored for teachers and hence improve the conditions prevailing at schools. Moreover, the ministry can use the research as a yardstick for measuring the needs in terms of teacher training, which can eventually lead to good practices. In addition, this research can improve learners' welfare and help to assess the need for continuous training of teachers in handling inclusive education. It is recommended that the government of Zimbabwe should put in place resources to train teachers on how to handle learners with special needs.

Implications for Future Research

The study was conducted in Zimbabwe. It is difficult to generalise the findings to other developing countries. As such, there is a need to conduct more studies of this nature in other countries. A few schools in Marondera district were selected due to limited resources. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies may consider many schools across all the provinces in Zimbabwe. Although the research was done in one district, this is very important since most schools in Zimbabwe are public schools with almost the same resource base.

Conclusion

The objectives for the study of investigating the factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools in Watershed cluster, Marondera district in Mashonaland East were achieved. From the results, it was concluded that there is lack of support from the society, negative attitudes from the teachers, an incapacitation of schools, and inadequate physical resources to assist in the implementation of inclusive education. In addition, inclusive education was implemented when teachers are not well-educated on inclusive education. This has led to the SNE learners being ignored in mainstream classrooms. It is also notable that teachers and school heads could have a negative attitude towards children with special needs, which could inhibit the effective implementation of inclusive education. The learning environment in the public primary and secondary schools was not learner-friendly and could not guarantee quality learning, especially for children with physical impairments. Before all students are included, it is essential that the school environment is welcoming and learners without special needs are briefed on how to relate with children with special needs. Moreover, learner-friendly facilities should be provided for all learners in an inclusive set-up. The study also suggests that given the challenges faced by teachers during the implementation of inclusive education, there is a need to for physical facilities as well as teaching and learning resources. The curriculum should also be modified to suit an all-inclusive education system.

Declaration of Interest Statement

The researchers declare that they do not have any financial interest or benefit that has arisen from the direct applications of this research study.

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