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# RESOURCE MATERIAL BARRIERS: THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF ZIMBABWE

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## ABSTRACT

The study sought to assess whether resource materials affects the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools of Zimbabwe. A descriptive design was used in this study. Two hundred and fifty primary school teachers from five different selected primary schools in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe participated. The data were collected using a questionnaire. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 was used to perform the descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. The results revealed that there was lack of material resources available for the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools of Zimbabwe. The findings also indicated that there was lack of resources such as computers and text books, trained teachers, finances, classrooms, time, playing grounds, tables and desks for use by children with learning disabilities in some schools. The study recommended that there is need for teachers to partner with other stake holders such as communities and voluntary organizations in the requisition of physical, material, financial and curricular resources for the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools of Zimbabwe.

**Keywords:** Inclusion, Inclusive education, disabilities, learning disabilities, resource material.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.

Inclusion is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal issue on how some learners can be integrated in mainstream education, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It aims towards enabling teachers and learners both to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment of the learning environment, rather than a problem. According to UNESCO, inclusive education is a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all children by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within



and from education. It is a process of increasing the presence, participation and achievement of all learners (Booth and Ainscow 2002). In other words, Inclusive education is about improving learning environments but also about providing opportunities for all learners to become successful in their learning experiences.

A range of resources (e.g. teaching materials, special equipment, additional personnel, new teaching approaches or other learners) can provide support in the task of learning. "Support" refers to all of these resources and, in particular, those resources beyond what the teacher can provide. Teachers, parents, communities, school authorities, curriculum planners, training institutes and entrepreneurs in the business of education are among the actors that can serve as valuable resources in support of inclusion. Some (teachers, parents and communities) are more than just a valuable resource; they are the key to supporting all aspects of the inclusion process. This involves a willingness to accept and promote diversity and to take an active role in the lives of students, both in and out of school. The optimal learning environment for inclusion depends largely upon the relationship among teachers, parents, other students and society. Ideally, effective inclusion involves implementation both in school and in society at large. The present study sought to assess whether resource materials affects the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities.

The implementation of more inclusive systems of education is possible if schools themselves are committed to becoming more inclusive. The development of enabling mechanisms such as national policies on inclusion, local support systems and appropriate forms of curriculum and assessment are important in creating the right context for the development of inclusion. Inclusion has important benefits for all children as it produces schools with more enriching learning environments that view diversity as a positive force which must be acknowledged and celebrated.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term resources refer to material and human resources available to teachers from within the schools (Ladbrook, 2009:59). Teaching inclusively requires the grafting of traditional special education practices and additional material and human resources into mainstream schools (Slee, 1997:409). Material resources include funding, classroom resources such as books, computers and availability of programmes for learners with learning disabilities. Human resources include expertise available from professionals within and outside the schools. Signatoriesto the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994: ix) and the framework for action on special needs education committed themselves to providing adequate human and financial resources when offering inclusive education services to all their children, including those with learning abilities. This study sought to establish whether or not resource materials such as trained teachers and educational facilities in inclusive schools affect the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools of Zimbabwe.

Budgetary constraints on the part of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education and the school authorities themselves may create limitations in the implementation of various projects in schools (Mandina, 2013:229). One explanation for this is that most of the budgetary allocation is spent on salaries. A disproportionately small fraction is spent addressing real educational issues such as providing adequate school infrastructure, teaching and learning materials. This hinders the effective implementation of a coherent basic education programme in the country. Namibia and South Africa, both rural and urban schools lack the resources to engage in inclusive education practices but prudently utilise the available resources (Zimba et al., 2007:43; Tshifura, 2012:101). The findings by Mbibeh (2013:57) in Cameroon; show that parents, teachers and administrators are of the opinion that low budgetary allocations are impediments to the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities. In accordance with the different learners' needs, budgets do not cater for the purchase of materials needed in the teaching of children with learning disabilities or for learners with visual and hearing impairments like tape cassettes, headphones, Braille machines, tactile maps, large print books, sign language books etc (Mbibeh,2013:58). In another research, carried out in Botswana by Dart (2007:63), the participants complained about lack of financial resources in their schools due to budgetary constraints experienced by the school authorities. The lack of financial resources within the school system will create problems in the provision of other resources such as books, computers, and teaching aids that will be used in the implementation of inclusive education within different classes of the schools.

A research by Johnstone and Chapman (2009:140) in Lesotho, found out that lack of resource materials such as classrooms and other facilities affected inclusive education for children with disabilities in primary schools. A similar scenario was also reported in South Africa by Eloff and Kgwete (2007: 353) who revealed that South African teachers included large classes and insufficient resources as challenges to inclusive education. Lack of classrooms may result in overcrowding of classes in schools (Mafa, 2012:20). Previous Zimbabwean studies (Chireshe, 2011:157; Mavundukure&Nyamande, 2012:12; Musengi&Chireshe, 2012:112) lamented on the shortage of resources as an impediment to the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities. The lack of resources is worsened by the high teacher pupil ratio (1 to 40) in many Zimbabwean primary schools (Mafa&Chaminuka, 2012:37). Because of this high teacher pupil ratio and over crowdedness, teachers are left with no room to cater for children with disabilities in



inclusive environments. Over crowdedness of classes create negative attitudes by teachers towards children with disabilities in inclusive settings and this may also negatively affect the provision of resources to them (Mandina, 2012:230).

A study conducted by Gwala (2006:63) in South Africa, revealed that teachers were frustrated with the unavailability of time and resources for planning together and supporting personnel in the provision of training to the staff in inclusive education. The shortage of time for training and planning together has serious implications for the implementation of inclusive education in the classroom. The implication here is that learners' needs are compromised and they cannot be identified or supported because teachers do not have the time or expertise to design their support programmes. According to Mukhopadhyay et al. (2012:6), Botswana teachers involved in inclusive education feel that there is insufficient time available for collaboration and consulting with other teachers, parents and professionals to meet the needs with special needs. The learners with learning disabilities cannot receive quality support from their teachers because there is no time for teachers to sit down as a team to design strategies that can best serve the needs of the learners (Eloff&Kgwete, 2007:354). The research by Mkhuma (2012:38) found out that support services such as professional support, parental support and administrators' support were perceived to be critical resources in the implementation of inclusive education in Botswana. His findings affirms the findings by Chhabra, Srivastava and Srivastava (2010:225) who argue that learners with learning disabilities need professional support and should be referred to specialists when necessary.

The lack of material resources, such as teaching aids and physical structures hampered the success of implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities (Eloff&Kgwete, 2007: 354). This is similar to the findings by Dart (2007:64) who noted that implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities were being hampered by lack of resources in schools of Botswana. Observations in computer resource centres for children with disabilities, in and around the schools, show that the centres had outdated software and non-functional hardware. Because much of the hardware, software and expertise needed for the upkeep of the computers are only available outside Botswana, it is extremely difficult to maintain the little provision that exists.

Resources allocation at most inclusive schools are too low to support learning and teaching in Lesotho (Tshifura, 2012:93). In Zimbabwe, the same situation prevails (Chireshe, 2013:226). In Zambia, a study by Aro and Ahonen (2011:31) found that the shortage of textbooks and instructional materials for children with learning disabilities persists especially in primary schools. Other than textbook shortage, schools are characterised by inadequate instructional materials such as student workbooks, teaching aids and enrichment materials. The education of children with learning disabilities might be impossible in many regions of the world because of a lack of resources needed to meet the individualised needs of such children (Tshifura, 2012:93). The United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights of disabled persons and the World Programme of Action concerning people with disabilities both called for provisions for persons with diverse abilities (UNESCO, 1994:iv), but allowed for indefinite procrastination in implementation because of using language which encouraged nations to take action only if resources were available.

There is no equal distribution of qualified teachers for inclusive education in primary schools within the urban and rural areas in South Africa (Ntsanwisi, 2008:61). Most qualified teachers for inclusive education do not always prefer to work in rural areas because of the lack of basic infrastructure such as tarred roads to schools, which makes most rural schools inaccessible during the summer rainy season (Ntsanwisi, 2008:61). Cottages for teachers are usually in poor condition, unsafe or nonexistent. When posts for trained inclusive education teachers become available in better areas, these qualified teachers move away. These movements leave rural schools with no alternative but to employ unqualified teachers who do not have expertise to provide quality instruction to learners with learning disabilities and this creates challenges in the implementation of inclusive education (Ntsanwisi, 2008:62). The present study endeavours to establish whether the scenario prevailing in South Africa applies to Zimbabwe.

## 2.1 Statement of the Problem

The study was designed to find an answer to the following main research question: To what extent do material resources affect the implementation of inclusive education for learners with learning disabilities in primary schools in Zimbabwe?

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Design

The survey design was used to collect data for this study. The survey design was preferred because it is the most appropriate design where self-reported beliefs and opinions of participants are sought (Neuman, 2000; David and Sutton, 2004).

### 3.2 Sample

Two hundred and fifty primary school teachers, thirty university lecturers and twenty education officers participated in the study. Participants were purposively selected from a group teachers, education officers and university lecturers who were willing to



participate in the study. In purposeful sampling, the knowledgeable people are selected (McMillan and Schumacher 2006). The participants were qualified teachers, education officers and university lecturers who were knowledgeable about the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools.

### 3.3 Instrumentation

Questionnaires were used in this research in an effort to reach as many respondents as possible. The questionnaire with 5-point Likert scales was used in this study for the structured items to allow for fairly accurate assessments of opinions from the respondents. The items focused on how legislation influences the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities Zimbabwe.

### 3.4 Procedure

The researcher explained the purpose of the study to teachers, education officers and university lecturers in selected primary schools in Bulawayo. After the explanation, the participants were invited to fill in the questionnaire. All the questionnaires were returned.

### 3.5 Data Analysis:

The SPSS- version 16.0 was used to analyse the data. Obtained data were presented in tables. Descriptive analysis, frequencies and percentages were used. Quantitative responses from open-ended items reflecting the same themes were grouped together.

## 4. FINDINGS

The findings from the questionnaire are presented in Table 1 in accordance to the categories that emerged. The findings show the extent to which material resources affected the implementation of inclusive education for learners with learning disabilities in primary schools in Zimbabwe are presented and analysed below.

**TABLE 1:** The extent to which material resources affected the implementation of inclusive education for learners with learning disabilities in primary schools (N= 300)

Material resources and supplies	Level of satisfaction for teachers							Chi-square (X <sup>2</sup> ) X <sup>2</sup> =768.84 df=24 p<0.01 (significant)
	Strongly satisfied	Satisfied	Undecided	Unsatisfied	Strongly unsatisfied	Total	Ratio	
1. Computers and textbooks.	21(1.4%)	36(2.4%)	5(0.3%)	111(7.4%)	77(5.1%)	250(16.7%)	0.3	
2. Trained teachers.	24(1.6%)	54(3.6%)	10(0.6%)	103(6.9%)	59(3.9%)	250(16.7%)	0.5	
3. Finances	22(1.5%)	32(2.1%)	13(0.9%)	97(6.5%)	86(5.7%)	250(16.7%)	0.3	
4. Classrooms,	16(1.1%)	31(2.1%)	11(0.7%)	92(6.1%)	100(6.7%)	250(16.7%)	0.2	
5. Time	19(1.3%)	34(2.3%)	8(0.5%)	84(5.6%)	105(7.0%)	250(16.7%)	0.3	
6. playing grounds	22(1.5%)	46(3.1%)	8(0.5%)	87(5.8%)	87(5.8%)	250(16.7%)	0.4	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>124(8.3%)</b>	<b>233(15.5%)</b>	<b>55(3.7%)</b>	<b>574(38.3%)</b>	<b>514(34.3%)</b>	<b>1500(100%)</b>		
Material resources and supplies	Level of satisfaction for education officers							Chi-square (X <sup>2</sup> ) X <sup>2</sup> =113.46 df=16 P<0.01 (significant)
	Strongly satisfied	Satisfied	Undecided	Unsatisfied	Strongly unsatisfied	Total	Ratio	
1. Computers and textbooks	1(0.6%)	4(2.2%)	0(0%)	19(10.6%)	6(3.3%)	30(16.7%)	0.2	
2. Trained teachers.	1(0.6%)	2(1.1%)	0(0%)	16(8.9%)	11(6.1%)	30(16.7%)	0.1	
3. Finances	3(1.7%)	2(2.2%)	0(0%)	15(50%)	10(33.3%)	30(16.7%)	0.2	
4. Classrooms,	2(1.1%)	4(2.2%)	0(0%)	15(8.3%)	9(5%)	30(16.7%)	0.3	
5. Time	2(1.1%)	2(1.1%)	0(0%)	19(10.6%)	7(3.9%)	30(16.7%)	0.2	
6. playing grounds	3 (1.7%)	0(0%)	1(0.6%)	16(8.9%)	10(5.6%)	30(16.7%)	0.1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12(6.7%)</b>	<b>14(7.8%)</b>	<b>1(0.6%)</b>	<b>100(55.6%)</b>	<b>53(29.4%)</b>	<b>180(100%)</b>		



Material resources and supplies	Level of satisfaction for University lecturers							Chi-square (X <sup>2</sup> ) df=20 p>0.01 (non-significant)
	Strongly satisfied	Satisfied	Undecided	Unsatisfied	Strongly unsatisfied	Total	Ratio	
1. Computer&textbooks.	2(1.4%)	3(2.1%)	0(0%)	10(7.1%)	5(3.6%)	<b>20(14.3%)</b>	0.3	
2. Trained teachers.	1(0.7%)	3(2.1%)	0(0%)	10(7.1%)	6(4.3%)	<b>20(14.3%)</b>	0.3	
3. Finances	1(0.7%)	2(1.4%)	0(0%)	9(6.4%)	8(5.7%)	<b>20(14.3%)</b>	0.2	
4. Classrooms,	2(1.4%)	2(1.4%)	1(0.7%)	14(10%)	1(0.7%)	<b>20(14.3%)</b>	0.3	
5. Time	0(0%)	2(1.4%)	0(0%)	10(7.1%)	8(5.7%)	<b>20(14.3%)</b>	0.1	
6. playing grounds	2(1.4%)	2(1.4%)	0(0%)	11(7.9%)	5(3.6%)	<b>20(14.3%)</b>	0.3	
7 Tables and desks	1(0.7%)	4(2.9%)	0(0%)	7(5%)	8(5.7%)	<b>20(14.3%)</b>	0.3	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9(6.4%)</b>	<b>18(12.8%)</b>	<b>1(0.7%)</b>	<b>71(50.7%)</b>	<b>41(29.3%)</b>	<b>140(100%)</b>		

The first column of Table 1 represents the material resources that influence the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in Zimbabwe. The second column in the table represents responses to the rating scale of the particular questionnaire item. The rating scale shows the level of agreement on the various statements from 'strongly satisfied' to 'strongly unsatisfied'. The last two columns represent ratios and Chi square (X<sup>2</sup>) calculations respectively.

Table 1 above has a p value of less than 0.01 for education officers in the current study. The calculated Chi-square test for education officers reveals that there was a significant difference in the perception of education officers on the availability of material resources in the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools of Zimbabwe. The ratios in Table 1 also show that education officers negatively rated their satisfaction on the availability of classrooms, computers, textbooks, finances, time, trained teachers and playing grounds, for the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in mainstream classes. This bears a similarity to the rating given by the primary school teachers on the availability of material resources for the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools.

The information from Table 1 also shows a p value of greater than 0.01 for college/university lecturers. Such a current difference is extremely and statistically not significant by conventional criteria. The computed Chi-square test for college/university lecturers shows no significant differences in college/university lecturers' responses on material resources in the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools. The ratios in the table show that college/university lecturers negatively rated their satisfaction on the availability of classrooms, computers, textbooks, finances, time, trained teachers, playing grounds tables and desks in the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools.

## 5. DISCUSSION

It emerged from the present study that there was lack of material resources available for the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools of Zimbabwe. The primary school teachers, education officers and college/university lecturers negatively rated their satisfaction with the availability of resources such as computers and text books, trained teachers, finances, classrooms, time, playing grounds, tables and desks. This lack of material resources negatively impacted on the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities. The unavailability of computers, classrooms and finances was likely to be a barrier to the provision of assistance to children with learning disabilities in the implementation of inclusive education. The unavailability of textbooks and classrooms was likely to deprive children with learning disabilities of reading sessions, materials and other resources to address their academic problems they experienced at school.

The primary school teachers, education officers and college/university lecturers negatively rated their satisfaction on the availability of trained teachers as material resources in the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in schools. The unavailability of trained teachers in special needs education was likely to deprive children with learning disabilities the proper teaching methods that can improve their academic potential. Findings that lack of trained teachers as material resources influenced the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities, were also established in a study in Botswana, by Abosi (2007:196) who concluded that schools are already experiencing difficulties in meeting the needs of children with disabilities due to unavailability of trained teachers, inadequate teaching techniques, transportation problems, lack of resources and lack of facilities. This implies that the practical implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities is often hampered by the unavailability of sufficiently trained teachers in special needs education.

It also emerged from the current study that lack of financial assistance as a resource material affected the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in Zimbabwe. The primary school teachers, education officers and college/university lecturers perceived negatively the availability of financial resources made available to assist children with learning disabilities in schools. Implementing inclusive education for children with learning disabilities requires adequate financial resources. The



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unavailability of adequate financial assistance for the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities was likely to deprive these children with learning disabilities of textbooks, tables and desks and other resources to address their academic and personal/social challenges they experienced at school.

It further emerged from the current study that lack of time affected the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools in Zimbabwe. Primary school teachers, education officers and college/university lecturers negatively viewed the availability of time for the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools. This lack of time compromised the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in schools. Teachers were likely to have limited time to deal with problems of children with learning disabilities as they will be chasing to finish the syllabus with other children in the same class.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The present study revealed that there was lack of material resources in the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean inclusive primary schools lacked material resources specifically classrooms, textbooks, trained teachers, tables, desks, finances, time, and computers to mention just a few. The unavailability of trained teachers, inadequate teaching techniques, lack of resources and lack of facilities, particularly stationery and textbooks hampered the practical implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools of Zimbabwe. It also emerged that the unavailability of adequate financial assistance for the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities deprived these children with learning disabilities of textbooks, tables and desks and other resources to address their academic and personal/social challenges they experienced at school. The current study also revealed that lack of time affected the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools in Zimbabwe.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need for teachers to partner with other stake holders such as communities and voluntary organizations in the requisition of physical, material, financial and curricular resources for the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools of Zimbabwe. The government should provide more adequate resources, equipment, and teaching material for learners with diverse learning needs and there should be a separate budget for inclusive education so that the issue of resources can be addressed. Adequate resources for the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities can be accumulated if primary schools would establish networks with key stakeholders of inclusive education such as the government, communities and non-governmental organizations on how to get the necessary material resources for inclusive education.

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