# Effectiveness of the Inclusion of Teachers with Disabilities in the Teaching and Learning Situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province Schools

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Abstract: The study sought to establish the effectiveness of the inclusion of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools. It was guided by the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's social ecological systems theory. The mixed methods approach with case study were used to enable an in-depth exploration of purposively snowballed Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools. Questionnaire and interview were employed for generating interim and thematic analyzed data. This study revealed that teachers with disabilities were given minimal opportunities by schools thereby affecting their inclusion and effective curriculum implementation. Negative attitude, limited teaching aids, lack of funds and discrimination, stereotyping and stigmatization were some of the main challenges diluted the effectiveness of the inclusion ofteachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in schools. The recommended that there is need for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to revise and review the education policy on the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning and provide clear guidelines on how to accommodate them. It is recommended that there is need to cultivate and nurture positive attitudes towards the inclusion of teachers with disabilities to stakeholders such as school Heads, teachers without physical disabilities, students and parents in order to achieve the effective inclusion of teachers with disabilities in Zimbabwean schools. There is need for the teachers with disabilities to be given due recognition and equal rights in accessing all school facilities to achieve their effective inclusion in the teaching and learning situation.

*Keywords:* Teachers with disabilities, effectiveness, inclusion of teacher with disabilities, effective curriculum implementation, challenges, teaching and learning situation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of inclusive education, rules of section 504 of the rehabilitation Act and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) created an opportunity for the inclusion of trained teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation globally. Indeed, some of the teachers were born with disability while others acquired it later in life. A teacher with disability has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major teaching activities (Whetzel, Goddard and Mathess, 2016; Panick, 2017). Teachers with physical impairments always have limitations in motor movements such as walking, lifting,

standing, writing, gripping, and maintaining stamina (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016; Sokal, Woloshyn and Wilson, 2017). However, Salamanca statement through inclusive education has been offered to both in-service and pre-service teachers with or without physical disabilities, globally, to guide them in their teaching of mainstream classes. Ministry of education throughout the world is mandated to employ qualified individual teachers with physical disabilities to teach the mainstream (Bowman, Barr, Ford, McCracken, McCullum-Clark and Jaeger, 2018; Magot, 2018). Teaching is one of the disabilities iobs people with can Zimbabwe(Tambala, 2016). A survey by the council of labor affairs in Zimbabwe revealed that there is an increase of people with disabilities working as teachers in primary and secondary schools. If teachers are required to demonstrate competency in teaching diverse students, it is ironic that no research existson the effectiveness of the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning in schools in Zimbabwecreating a strange paradox.

#### Statement of the problem

Given the persistence of using teachers with physical disabilities in Zimbabwean primary and secondary schools, it was important for this study to find an answer to the following research question: How effective is the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools?

## Sub-questions

- 1. What is the interactive nature of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in schools?
- 2. What are the challenges experienced in the inclusion of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in schools?

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was informed by Bronfenbrenner's social ecological systems theory which suggests that a person's surroundings including their school environment, students, curriculum, work, workmates, school heads, and government have an influence on the way an individual teacher with

disability participates ((Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2010). The social ecosystem framework states that human development (effectiveness) occurs within an interactive system of nested influences between the teacher with disabilities and the school system (Chataika, 2007; Donald et al, 2010). This implies that the effectiveness of the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in teaching and learning in schools cannot be achieved in isolation but in relation to their school system. The rationale for the use of Bronfenbrenner's social ecosystem framework in this study is from the understanding that humans (teachers with disabilities) are social species that interact with the environment (school, students, workmates, school heads). The social ecosystem framework went further to widen the scope of this study by guiding the researcher to assess the experiences of teachers with disabilities in schools and establishedthe effectiveness of their inclusion in the teaching and learning situation (Chinyoka, 2013; Donald et al, 2010).

This framework explains that the interconnectedness and interdependences of elements signify a causal or correlational effect (effectiveness of using teachers with disabilities in schools). If there is a gap in any of the elements (between teachers with disabilities and schools system) the result will be a short circuit (challenges faced by teachers with disabilities) and will show that inclusion of teachers with disabilities is not significantly effective (Chataika, 2007). The assumption here is that, an occurrence of a short circuit at any stage of interconnectedness would result in a major disruption of working towards the inclusion process of teachers with disabilities in the mainstream schools (Chataika, 2007; Donald et al, 2010). Thus, any challenge or problem (major disruption) experienced in the use of teachers with disabilities in schools would evaluate this inclusion process as not significantly effective. To establish the effectiveness of the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools, Bronfenbrenner's social ecosystem framework request a better understanding of the intertwined nature of the requirements, context and process of teachers with disabilities in school society from micro to macro levels (Chataika, 2007; Donald et al, 2010; Chinyoka, 2013).

# III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Teachers with disabilities need reasonable accommodations related to cognitive, mental health, motor, sensory, and other disabilities to effectively perform their teaching roles (Bowman et al, 2018; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Teachers with difficulty standing in front of class need to bepermitted to sit/stand or require an adjustable height stool(Panick, 2017; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2005). Schools should adjust height of chalkboard, whiteboard, or interactive whiteboard to promote the effective use of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning situation. Generally, schools need to ensure appropriate mobility aids to physically disabled teachers with

difficulty moving around room, building or grounds (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016;Lepkowska, 2012).

Physically disabled teachers in South Sudan were highly qualified in their teaching field (Magot, 2018) with relevant degrees and diplomas in education from reputable higher tertiary institutions around the world (Magot, 2018; Tambala, 2016). Ministry of education, throughout the world, mandated to employ qualified teachers with physical disabilities holding requisite teaching skillswithout endangering the psychological health of the learners (Bowman et al, 2018).

In developed countries, profoundly deaf teachers worked with interpreters as their voice in the teaching and learning situation(Van Niekerk and Van der Merwe, 2013; Lepkowska, 2012). Visuallyimpaired teachers were provided with information in large print (Ofuani, 2011) and supported by their non-disabled Teaching Assistants to achieve effective curriculum implementation (Magot, 2018; Smith (2000). Teachers with physical disabilities were also required to attend several seminars and workshops to acquire and improve their teaching skills for mainstream classes (Ferri et al, 2002).

Attitudinal barriers towards teachers with physical disabilities created unique challenges that affected their effective teaching in the mainstream classes (Gida and Ortlepp, 2007; Ferri, Keefe and Gregg, 2002). It is a serious challenge for the teachers with disabilities to teach in a mainstream school where other teachers and learners have mixed feelings and teacher's attitude toward the disability(Lepkowska, 2012).Limited teaching aid materials was one of the challenges faced by physically disadvantaged teachers in the teaching and learning situation in South Sudan (Magot, 2018), and in Sussex (Lepkowska (2012). Moreover, costs of employing disabled teachers and making building modifications as well as equipment available were too high for many schools ((Magot, 2018); Lepkowska, 2012).

Equal opportunities between teachers with and without disabilities have not been attained (Ofuani, 2011) and this adversely impacts on the disabled teachers in their schools(Guimaraes, Martins and Barkokebas Jr, 2012; Li and Goldschmidt, 2009). In United States disabled teachers were Stigmatized, stereotyped (Sokal, Woloshyn, and Wilson, 2017; Valle, Solis, Volpitta and Connor, 2004) and discriminated against due to their disability (Panick, 2017). The results indicate that teachers with disabilities were characterized as lacked classroom management, unable to discipline mischievous learners and unable to deliver the lesson. According to Gowan (2010), teachers with disabilities were underemployed and lacked career advancement opportunities which were likely to be offered to teachers without disabilities. They were denied to some responsibilities such as coaching sports due to their disabilities, had no opportunity for representing the school to some workshops or seminars and encountered challenges to get promoted in their

careers due to their physical disability (Van Niekerk and Van der Merwe, 2013).

## IV. METHODOLOGY

## 4.1. Design

The case study mainly mixed methods in nature was considered the most appropriate design for this study (Elman et. al., 2016; Freeman et. al., 2012; Sandelowski, 2011; Gibbert and Ruirok, 2010) because it provided an in-depth investigation ofhow effective was the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in a real-life context (Crowe et. al, 2011). Case study allowed this study to generate a variety of evidences on the effectiveness of the inclusion of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools.

#### 4.2. Sample

Teachers with disabilities and their School Heads from both primary and secondary schools were used in this study because teachers were experiencing teaching of inclusive classes in a disability state in Bulawayo metropolitan province. School heads were directly involved with the supervision and monitoring the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools. They were a rich data source of information to describe the effectiveness of the inclusion of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools. The sample of snowballed 16 teachers with disabilities and 4 school heads determined by data saturation (Johnson and Christensen, 2014 Creswell; 2007) was drawn from 20purposefully selected secondary and primary schools in Bulawayo Metropolitan province.

## 4.3. Instruments

Questionnaires and interview were used to generate dataon the effectiveness of the inclusion of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools. Self-administered questionnaire was used to collect information from teachers with disabilities about their attitudes, knowledge, experiences, beliefs and feelings (Babbie, 2009) towards theeffectiveness of the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools. Interview was used to generate data from School Heads on the effectiveness of the inclusion of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools and it enabled the researcher of this study to build trust relationships with the participants and, thereby, ensured authenticity of the data obtained.

# Data collection procedure

Permission to conduct the study was sought and granted by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe. The researcher personally administered questionnaires and interviews to the participants. Participants were assured that participation was voluntary and were free to withdraw from the study at any stage during the study(Johnson and Christensen, 2014).

## Data Analysis

The researcher used interim analysis throughout the study where generated data was constantly reviewed, categorized, labelled and analyzed to form themes and patterns based on objectives which guided this study. Interim analysis allowed a deeper understanding and presentation of the participants' opinions on the effectiveness of the inclusion of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools.

## V. FINDINGS

The findings are presented in accordance to objectives that guided the study to establish the effectiveness of the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools. The findings on the interactive nature of teachers with physical disabilities in schools in order to evaluate the effectiveness of their inclusion in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools are presented below:

5.1.The interactive nature of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools

Teachers with disabilities indicated that they were given minimal accommodations by their schools and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education thereby affected their effective curriculum implementation in their Bulawayo metropolitan province schools. Results reflected that there were only few school facilities which allowed them to move around with majority of classrooms and school environment not user friendly. Participants indicated that although minimal accommodations like adjusted timetables, accessible toilets, and staffrooms were provided, important teaching and learning facilities like adjusted chalkboards, ergonomic chairs and adjusted stools, interactive whiteboards, user friendly classrooms, library or ICT labs and sports fields were not available. Findings also disclosed that teachers with disabilities used Teaching Assistants but the main challenge was poor classroom management due to unqualified Teaching Assistants. The following excerpts from the questionnaires confirm the above:

"As teachers with physical disabilities, we are getting little accommodations from our school. There are only two classrooms which allow my wheel chair to get in. It is difficult for me to move around the school to execute my teaching roles".

"Our government inclusive schools provide us with minimum accommodations such as adjusted timetables, accessible toilets and staffroom only. However, adjusted chalkboards,

ergonomic chairs and adjusted stools, interactive whiteboards, user friendly classrooms, library or ICT labs and sports fields are not available. Although the school has a projector, we do not have an opportunity to use it to achieve our effective teaching".

## VI. DISCUSSION

In this discussion references is made to the available reviewed related literature on interactive nature of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in schools. Teachers with disabilities were given minimal accommodations by their schools and Ministry of primary and secondary education thereby affected their teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo metropolitan province schools. The above findings failed to concur with Bowman et al (2018) and Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) that teachers with disabilities may need reasonable accommodations to effectively perform their jobs. They may need accommodations from the school or Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education related to cognitive, mental health, motor, sensory, and other disabilities to achieve effective execution of their teaching roles (Bowman et al, 2018; Panick, 2017). This is also reiterated with the results from a study by Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2005) in United States that teachers with difficulty standing in front of class are permitted to sit/stand or require an adjustable height stool. Thus, the school should adjust height of chalkboard, whiteboard, or interactive whiteboard as well as implementing smartboard/projector/interactive whiteboard to promote the effective use of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and situation (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016;Lepkowska, 2012).Teachers with disabilities used Teaching Assistants but the main challenge was poor classroom management due to unqualified Teaching Assistants. This concurs with Van Niekerk and Van der Merwe (2013) and Lepkowska (2012)that profoundly deaf teachers worked with interpreters as their voice in the teaching and learning situation. Visually impaired teachers were supported by their non-disabled Teaching Assistants to achieve effective curriculum implementation (Magot, 2018; Smith (2000).

6.1. Challenges experienced in the inclusion of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in schools

Results on the challenges experienced in the inclusion of teachers with physical disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo metropolitan province schools are presented below:

Table 1 Table showing teachers with disabilities' responses on the challenges they experienced in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo metropolitan schools

N = 16

Responses generated (challenges)	Frequency	Percentage
Negative attitude	14	88%

Lack of supportive teaching devices and resources	10	63%
Lack of funds to hire the interpreters, Teaching Assistants and modifying school facilities	12	75%
Discrimination, stereotyping and stigmatization	15	94%
Denied some teaching responsibilities eg senior tr, sports,	14	88%

Table 1 illustrates that negative attitude towards teachers with disabilities affected effective inclusion of theses teachers in the teaching and learning in Bulawayo metropolitan province schools. Some teachers and learners without disabilities had mixed feelings and negative attitudes towards teachers with disabilities defining them as not fit to provide effective lessons in the mainstream classes. This concur with the findings from a study by Ferri, Keefe and Gregg (2002) that attitudinal barriers towards teachers with physical disabilities created unique challenges for the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in schools. Inclusive schools had mixed feelings and negative attitude toward the teacher's physical disability and defined them as not fit to provide effective tuition to the mainstream classes (Lepkowska, 2012).

The information from Table 1 also shows that lack of supportive teaching devices or resources made their inclusion in the teaching and learning in Bulawayo metropolitan province inclusive schools ineffective. The study revealed that teachers with physical disabilities lacked adjustable stool, chalkboard, projectors, revolving boards, whiteboard, or interactive whiteboard to promote their effective inclusion in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan schools. Teachers with difficulty standing in front of class need to be permitted to sit/stand or require an adjustable height stool (Panick, 2017; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2005). Schools should adjust height of chalkboard, whiteboard, or interactive whiteboard to promote the effective use of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning situation. Generally, schools need to ensure appropriate mobility aids to physically disabled teachers with difficulty moving around room, building or grounds (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016; Lepkowska, 2012).

Lack of funds to hire the interpreters, Teaching Assistants and modifying school facilities was another challenge affected the effective inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools. Thus, the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning in Bulawayo Metropolitan province was not significantly effective due to lack of funds to hire the interpreters, Teaching Assistance and modifying school facilitiessuch as ramps, accessible pathways, accessible classrooms, ergonomic chairs and adjusted tools or boards. This concur with findings from Magot (2018) and Lepkowaska (2012) that costs of employing disabled teachers

and making building modifications as well as equipment available were too high for many schools.

Table 1 shows that teachers with disabilities experienced and felt stigmatization, stereotyping and discrimination in their schools hence significantly diluted their effectiveness in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province schools. The results indicate that teachers with disabilities were characterized as lacked classroom management, unable to discipline mischievous learners and unable to deliver the lesson.In United States disabled teachers were Stigmatized, stereotyped (Sokal, Woloshyn, and Wilson, 2017; Valle, Solis, Volpitta and Connor, 2004) and discriminated against due to their disability (Panick, 2017).

Table 1 shows that teachers with disabilities were denied to some responsibilities such as coaching sports, representing the school at some workshops or seminars or promoted to senior master or school head posts. This concur with Gowan (2010) and Van Niekerk and Van der Merwe, 2013) that teachers with disabilities were denied to some responsibilities such as coaching sports, representing the school to some workshops or seminars and encountered challenges to get promoted in their careers due to their physical disability. According to the theoretical framework by Bronfenbrenner's social ecological systems theory, there is a gap between teachers with disabilities and schools system in Bulawayo Metropolitan province due to a short circuit (challenges faced by teachers with disabilities) and showed that inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning is not significantly effective (Chataika, 2007).

#### VII. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning situation in Bulawayo Metropolitan province was not significantly effective due to the provision of minimal accommodations by their schools and Ministry of primary and secondary education, negative attitude, lack of supportive teaching devices and resources, lack of funds to hire the interpreters, Teaching Assistants and modifying school facilities, discrimination, stereotyping and stigmatization, and denied some teaching responsibilities.

#### VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from this study, it is recommended that there is need to cultivate and nurture positive attitudes towards the inclusion of teachers with disabilities to stakeholders such as school Heads, teachers without physical disabilities, students and parents in order to achieve the effective inclusion of teachers with disabilities in Zimbabwean schools. The study also recommended that there is need for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to revise and review the education policy on the inclusion of teachers with disabilities in the teaching and learning and provide clear guidelines on how to accommodate them. There is need for the teachers with disabilities to be given due recognition and equal rights

in accessing all school facilities to achieve their effective inclusion in the teaching and learning situation.

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