

Assessment of Teacher Readiness for Implementing Quality Inclusive Education in Reigate District Secondary Schools in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to assess teacher readiness to implement quality inclusive education in two schools located in the Reigate District of Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. The study employed a mixed methods approach and was guided by the behaviourist theory. The population in the study comprised of all the teachers and school Heads in the two selected secondary schools in the Reigate district of Bulawayo Metropolitan. Non-probability and probability sampling techniques were utilized, namely purposive, convenience, and random sampling, to attain a sample of eighty respondents from the two schools (forty from each). Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with the pre-service teachers and school heads, as well as through questionnaires from qualified teachers. The study established the inadequacy of school strategies with regard to addressing the factors that influence teacher preparedness to implement quality inclusive education, as well as in monitoring and evaluating teacher readiness in the same regard. Findings also revealed that most teachers have insufficient knowledge of inclusive education due to inadequate content coverage during their training, as well as a lack of in-service training. These constraints result in the teachers' inability to utilize assessment strategies catering to the diversity that characterizes inclusive setups. Based on the results, some recommendations were made to MoPSE to organize in-service as well as pre-service training on the concept of inclusion to all teachers. Therefore, the study concluded that even though inclusive education has been embraced by the nation, teachers are still ill-prepared to implement it. Drawing from the above results, the study recommended that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should continue to organize more workshops and in-service training on inclusive education on a regular basis for all teachers to capacitate them on how to effectively implement inclusive education. Teacher training institutions should also include special needs education as a stand-alone module in their curriculum to effectively prepare teachers for inclusion.

Keywords: Readiness, inclusive education, disability.

INTRODUCTION

The contribution of education towards the holistic development of learners cannot be overemphasized. As a matter of fact, the human right to education is recognised and safeguarded by international organisations and national institutions, (Hitch, Macfarlane, & Nihil, 2015). Instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action of 1994, and Sustainable Development Goals of 2015 are evidence that inclusion is no longer an option, but a mandate for every nation (Paramanik & Barman, 2018). In 2015, the Incheon Declaration recalled the importance of inclusive education for all; targets 4.5 and 4.6 call for access to education and the construction of adapted facilities for children with disabilities (Paramanik & Barman, 2018). In support of this view, several countries globally and regionally have implemented policies that foster the integration and, more recently, the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) into mainstream schools (Batnagar, 2013). However, simply enrolling learners with diverse abilities is not enough; the teaching- learning process must be of quality to help learners develop fully. Moreover, the training of competent teachers who are able and ready to work with children with disabilities is one of the major factors in the implementation of inclusive education (Karynbaeva, Shapovalova, Shylyar, Emelyanova, & Borisova, 2019). Hence, this study assessed teacher

readiness towards implementing quality inclusive education and consequently made recommendations towards its successful implementation.

Background

There are still numerous challenges with regards to the effective implementation of quality inclusive education in schools, despite its global adoption. Research has established that persons with disabilities have lower literacy rates than those without worldwide (United Nations, 2018). There is also a difference based on the nature of the disability. Illiteracy is higher in children with visual impairments, multiple or mental disorders, compared to children with motor disabilities (Singal, 2015). Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018) point out that countries, especially in the Global North, channel considerable economic resources towards the implementation of inclusive education policies and practices, while the response to inclusive education in developing countries, particularly in the Global South, has been a challenge. Among the deterrents to implementing inclusive education in the Global South highlighted within the literature is the lack of clarity and coherence on the conceptualisation of inclusive education (Sharma & Das, 2015). In addition to that, poor accessibility, which includes school buildings, the location of schools, transportation, and inclusive latrines, is said to deter equal access to education (Yadav, Das, & Tiwari, 2015). Additionally, attitudinal barriers among teaching staff and parents of children without disabilities are a challenge in the enrolment of children with disabilities within mainstream education (Batnagar, 2013). Magumise and Sefotho (2018) examined parent and teacher perceptions on inclusive education in Zimbabwe and reported mixed results that they categorised into positive, mixed and negative perceptions. Chavuta, Itimu- Phiri, Chiwaya (2018) also reported negative teacher attitudes towards inclusive education in Malawi. Similarly, Haitembu (2014) in Namibia identified negative teacher attitudes towards inclusive education stemming from being under-resourced.

Notwithstanding the barriers to inclusivity, countries and organisations are taking perceptible actions for inclusive education to succeed internationally as well as in individual African countries, (Soni, Lynch, Mbukwa- Ngwira, Mankhwazi, & McLinden, 2020). As a matter of fact, several treaties have been adopted in support of inclusive education. For example, South Africa's Department of Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001), Namibia's Ministry of Education Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) and Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Education National Policy on inclusive Education (2016), (DeSounza, 2021). In Zimbabwe, there is no clear stand-alone policy on inclusive education; however, Zimbabwe has demonstrated a commitment to inclusive education through various legislative and policy initiatives. For example, the Education ACT of 1987 (amended in 2006 and 2020) mandates the inclusion of learners with disabilities and other marginalised groups. The National Disability Policy, (2021) further reinforces inclusive goals in education by outlining institutional responsibilities for accommodating students with disabilities (Government of Zimbabwe, 2021). Scholars have noted, however, that although policies are progressive, their implementation is often fragmented and inconsistent, (Mhaka, 2020; Nzenza. 2021

On the other hand, it has been noted that the statistics of persons with disabilities (PWDS) attending mainstream government Secondary Schools is still worryingly low, (Chinyoka & Mutambara, 2020), even though the disability prevalence as estimated by the World Health Organisation is approximately 15% of the population, (MoHCC & UNICEF, 2015). It is therefore necessary to follow up on the implementation aspect of inclusive education and discover why these policies have not translated to practice. Important to note, Zimbabweans are aiming at achieving the middle-income status by 2030, (Macheka, Sibanda, & Taru, 2022). It is with this in mind that this research sought to contribute to the development of quality education which has been shown to increase productivity, creativity as well as stimulating entrepreneurship and technological breakthroughs, (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015) by assessing teacher readiness towards implementing quality inclusive education in secondary schools located in Reigate district of Bulawayo Metropolitan Province.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Inclusive education has been embraced by many nationalities despite the challenges faced in its implementation. Currently, the inclusive philosophy is informed by the need to support all learners to learn

successfully. According to the United Nations (2022); Inclusive education is understood as including all children regardless of gender, ethnic and linguistic minority or family background, disability or learning difficulty, or any other feature in mainstream education.

A significant number of authors have shown that focus must be at the classroom and school level in order to achieve efficiency in the implementation of inclusive education. To clarify, Carrington, Pillay, Tones, Nickerson, Duke, Esibaea and Malifoasi (2017) identify three areas to put focus on namely; school structure and culture, teachers, and school leadership. Shuelka, (2018) further adds that in order to monitor and evaluate the implementation of inclusive education, it is important to have a clear understanding of the key constituents of a successful inclusive education programme. For example, the Index for Inclusion provides a planning framework to facilitate school evaluation for inclusion (Botha, 2021). Also, the resource pack by UNESCO provides a framework for school review, (UNESCO, 2014). In other words, proper documentation on issues regarding inclusive education implementation is crucial in not only monitoring but also evaluating the same.

Important to note, measuring the success of inclusive education should go beyond merely counting students to evaluate access, but should include measures of educational quality, outcomes, and experiences: understanding and evaluating teaching practices, (UNESCO, 2017). One of the key implementers of inclusive education are teachers. However, teachers often feel that inclusive education is something they are told to do – often without support and resources – and it becomes a top-down burden rather than a collaborative process, (Carpenter, Ashdown, & Bovair, 2017). Therefore, it is of paramount importance to empower teachers with knowledge and skills to create inclusive classrooms. Instead of holding once-off workshops in this regard, literature suggests that intentional, consistent professional development on inclusive education would have more impact and therefore bring about systematic change, (Hehir, et al., 2017). Inclusive pedagogy should also be emphasized during teacher training. However, Musengi, Mudzahoto and Chireshe (2020) observe that teacher training colleges are not mainstreaming inclusive practice in their teacher education program. This means that teachers are not equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to teach differently abled learners. Studies reveal that the effective implementation of inclusive education is also derailed by a lack of resources. According to Nyagadza, Kadembo, and Makasi (2021), the lack of resources is worsened by the high teacher- pupil ratio of up to or exceeding (1 to 40) in many Zimbabwean Government schools.

Studies also reveal that school leadership plays a significant role in determining the quality of inclusive education that learners get. According to Sherab, Dorji and Dukpa (2015), the most inclusive and high-quality schools are those that have school leaders who lead with vision, inclusive values, motivation, autonomy, and trust in school staff. It has been observed however that educators face challenges with regards to the organizational characteristics of the school such as school governance structures and leadership that may not be enabling. Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes and Kyndt (2015) refer to the scenario as cultural “ethos” of the school and further adds that they can create an atmosphere of distrust.

This study, therefore, sought to gain an in-depth understanding on the readiness of teachers to implement quality inclusive education in schools guided by the following research questions:

- What factors influence teacher readiness in secondary schools in Reigate District of Bulawayo Metropolitan Province to implement quality inclusive education?
- What are the challenges and opportunities encountered by Government secondary school teachers in Reigate District of Bulawayo Metropolitan Province in implementing quality inclusive education?
- What are the strategies used by secondary schools in Reigate District of Bulawayo Metropolitan Province to promote teacher preparedness with regards to implementing quality inclusive education?

Behaviourist Theory in Inclusive Education

Behaviourist theories provide a foundational framework for understanding how learning behaviours can be shaped to promote inclusivity within educational environments. There are a number of these theories that can be applied to inclusive education practices. Included in the list is Pavlov's (1927) *classical conditioning* theory which emphasizes learning through association, suggesting that positive reinforcement and predictable routines can help learners, including those with special educational needs, develop positive attitudes toward learning.

Similarly, Skinner's (1953) *operant conditioning* underscores the role of reinforcement and consequences in shaping behaviour. In inclusive classrooms, teachers can employ positive reinforcement strategies such as praise, tokens, or privileges to encourage participation and engagement among diverse learners. Extending these principles, *applied behavior analysis* (ABA) offers systematic methods which modify and reinforce desired behaviours, particularly effective for learners with autism and developmental disabilities (Daffin, 2021). In addition to that, there is Bandura's (1977) *social learning theory* which integrates behavioural and cognitive perspectives by emphasizing observational learning, where students learn desirable behaviours by observing peers and teachers.

This paper was, however, guided by, Mager's (1962) *behavioural objectives theory* which reinforces the importance of designing clear, measurable learning goals that accommodate individual differences, a key principle in individualized education plans (IEPs). This behaviourist perspective contributes significantly to inclusive education by offering practical strategies for managing classroom behaviour, enhancing motivation, and ensuring that all learners can participate meaningfully in the learning process. Furthermore, this behaviourism theory is viewed as a prevalent concept that puts emphasis on how students learn and focuses on the impression that all behaviours are learned through interaction with the environment. As a matter of fact, behaviourist believe that the only proof that the learning has taken place is when there is a change in behaviour. Also, that change in behaviour is a result of stimuli and maintained reinforcement. That is to say, behaviour is learnt, and it is governed by the context in which it transpires, (Al-Shammari, Faulkner, & Forlin, 2019).

The behaviourism theory is also related to the best practices in inclusive education as classroom conditions are the basis of functional behavioural assessment. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to overlook the stigma and disadvantage that learners with disabilities continue to face in accessing education due to a facet of reasons including attitudes of the society, grounded on misinformation, myths and lack of resources. In fact, about 65 million school-aged children in developing countries have disabilities, out of which 50% are out of school, (Open Society Foundation , 2019). In addition, continents such as Asia, Africa and Latin America where poverty is high, less than 10 per cent of children with disabilities have never been in a classroom, (UNICEF , 2018) . In fact, even those children with disabilities that are in school, are less likely to stay or are being promoted, (Mbwambo , 2015) . Nevertheless, having a disability should not be the main hindrance in the attainment of education for any learner. The utmost barriers include the attitudes of people in society, (Kampen, 2019); (Dogan , 2017); (Mbwambo , 2015). Therefore, in order to achieve inclusive education, we need a total change of behaviour , stemming from the beliefs of the society and consequently creating a culture that embraces diversity. In other words, inclusive education would not be a foreign concept that people need to be 'prepared' for, but a way of life.

Systemic Barriers to The Implementation of Inclusive Education in Zimbabwe

Inclusive education in Zimbabwe has been endorsed through various national policies and international commitments, including the Education Act (Amendment, 2020), Zimbabwe Education Sector Strategic Plan (2021–2025), and Zimbabwe's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Despite these developments, the practical realization of inclusive education remains limited. Several systemic barriers continue to hinder its effective implementation. These include:

Policy–Practice Gap

Although Zimbabwe has established progressive legislative and policy frameworks to promote inclusive education, there remains a significant gap between policy intentions and classroom practice. Policies such as the Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2014) and Education Amendment Act (2020) articulate inclusion principles but lack clear implementation strategies, monitoring mechanisms, and adequate resource allocations. Consequently, inclusive education often remains aspirational rather than operational. For example, schools may enroll learners with disabilities without the necessary support structures, leading to tokenistic inclusion.

Inadequate Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Teacher education and continuous professional development (CPD) programs in Zimbabwe have not adequately equipped teachers with the knowledge and skills to support diverse learners, (Chireshe, 2011).

According to Chitiyo & Muwana, (2018), most teacher training colleges and universities still emphasize traditional, one-size-fits-all pedagogies. There is, therefore, limited focus on inclusive instructional strategies, curriculum differentiation, and use of assistive technologies. As a result, teachers often feel ill-prepared and anxious about handling learners with disabilities, which undermines their confidence and willingness to implement inclusive practices.

Resource Constraints and Infrastructure Challenges

Zimbabwe's education sector is characterized by financial limitations that restrict the availability of essential resources for inclusion. For instance, many schools lack accessible infrastructure, learning materials in Braille or large print, hearing aids, and other assistive devices, (Majoko, (2020). Dube, (2021) said that, rural schools are particularly disadvantaged, facing overcrowded classrooms and poorly maintained facilities. Without adequate resourcing, learners with special needs are often marginalized within mainstream classrooms.

Curriculum and Assessment Rigidities

The national curriculum in Zimbabwe remains highly standardized, emphasizing academic performance and national examinations that are not adapted to accommodate diverse learning needs. While the Competence-Based Curriculum (2015) aimed to promote flexibility, its implementation has been constrained by lack of materials and teacher support, Ncube, (2020) Consequently, learners with disabilities or learning differences struggle to meet uniform assessment criteria, leading to exclusion or repetition.

Negative Attitudes and Socio-Cultural Beliefs

According to Mpofu & Shumba, (2012), cultural perceptions and stigmatization of disability continue to undermine inclusive efforts. In some communities, disabilities are still associated with misfortune or punishment, leading to concealment of affected children or resistance to their enrollment in mainstream schools. Teachers and peers may also hold prejudiced attitudes, perceiving learners with disabilities as burdensome. These attitudes perpetuate exclusionary practices and hinder the creation of supportive learning environments.

Collaboration of Universities and Education Colleges with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE) on Inclusion Practices in Schools

Collaboration among higher education institutions and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE) is crucial for the advancement of inclusive education in Zimbabwe. Universities and teacher education colleges play a pivotal role in preparing educators with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to implement inclusive practices in schools. Effective partnerships between these institutions and MOPSE can ensure alignment between teacher preparation, national education policies, and classroom realities.

MOPSE is the principal policy authority responsible for implementing inclusive education at the primary and secondary levels in Zimbabwe, guided by frameworks such as the *Education Amendment Act (2020)*, the *Education Sector Strategic Plan (2021–2025)*, and the *Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2014)*. Universities and teacher education colleges, under the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development (MHEISTD), are tasked with training teachers who can operationalize these policies, (Chitiyo & Muwana, 2018).

& Muwana, 2018). This misalignment leads to a disconnect between pre-service teacher preparation and the inclusive education demands faced by in-service teachers in schools.

There is however, a positive development within institutions of higher learning. For instance, Universities such as the University of Zimbabwe, Midlands State University, and Great Zimbabwe University, along with teacher education colleges like Seke, Hillside, and Mutare Teachers' Colleges, have introduced special needs and inclusive education courses within their programs. These efforts reflect a growing recognition of inclusion as a central element of teacher competence, (Dube, 2021). Research conducted by universities and colleges, also provides evidence-based insights to guide MOPSE in policy formulation and practice improvement.

Some collaborative studies, such as those by the University of Zimbabwe's Faculty of Education, have explored barriers to inclusion, teacher preparedness, and curriculum responsiveness, (Mpofu & Shumba, 2012). In addition to that, teacher education institutions in Zimbabwe have revised curricula to incorporate inclusive education modules, consistent with MOPSE's *Education Sector Strategic Plan (2021–2025)* which prioritizes inclusivity. Despite this, practical exposure for student teachers during teaching practice is often limited by the lack of inclusive model schools and inadequate supervision capacity, (Ncube, 2020). Majoko, (2020) however, argues that, coordination between MOPSE's schools and teacher education institutions in placing student teachers for inclusive education practice remains insufficient. Strengthening this collaboration could enable teacher trainees to engage with real-world inclusion challenges, thereby improving their pedagogical competence and responsiveness.

Case studies of successful Inclusion Practices within Zimbabwe and other African Countries

Zimbabwe: the “Whole School Approach” in Midlands Province

In a study titled “*A whole school approach in implementing inclusive education in one province in Zimbabwe: a case study*” by Annah Dudu (2019), a school in the Midlands Province was selected to examine how the “Whole School Approach” (WSA) can support inclusive education in Zimbabwe. The school adopted the WSA framework, which views the school system as comprised of interconnected dimensions: school policies, culture and practices, all aligned to support learners with differences. School leadership and staff collaboratively developed inclusive-friendly school policies, adjusted school culture (attitudes, norms) and changed classroom practices to accommodate learners with special educational needs. The case showed increased awareness among staff about individual differences and a shift from seeing inclusion as only for “special needs” to seeing it as a whole-school responsibility. The WSA enabled systems thinking: rather than isolated support for a few learners, the school engaged all staff in a shared vision of inclusion.

Important lessons to learn from this study is that, leadership is critical, that is, school heads must drive the inclusive culture, not just delegate. Policy, culture and practice must align because inclusive policy without culture or practice change will falter. In addition, capacity-building for all staff (not only specialists) is essential to embed inclusion across the school. This study, by Dudu, (2019), was limited to one school, so generalisability may not be possible. For the Zimbabwean context, however, (with its resource limitations, large classes, infrastructure challenges) the WSA model offers a promising systemic framework rather than piecemeal interventions. It emphasises shifting the school culture, which is arguably more sustainable than expensive infrastructure alone.

Kenya: Community-based Inclusive Education in Embu Diocese

In the Embu Diocese (Kenya) programme, a pilot initiative was run across 30 schools to develop inclusive education in partnership with community-based rehabilitation (CBR) efforts, inclusive-education-in-action.org. The project mobilised local community participation, school staff, church networks and local government to support inclusive schooling for children with disabilities. Schools were supported with training, adaptation of their environments, and community-school linkages to identify and support learners with special educational needs. Over three years, monitoring and research were carried out to identify features of successful inclusive practice. The initiative demonstrated that inclusive education can be advanced when schools engage their surrounding communities; local ownership reinforced sustainability. It enhanced awareness among parents, reduced stigma (in some cases), and improved enrolment of children with disabilities in mainstream settings within the diocesan network. Given Zimbabwe's strong role of faith-based organisations and community involvement in education, this model of community-school collaboration offers a useful template. Engaging local churches, parents and neighbourhood structures could bolster inclusion efforts within Zimbabwe's schooling context.

Ghana: Inclusion of Children with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (IDDs) in Accra.

In a study by Christiana Okyere, Heather M. Aldersey & Rosemary Lysaght (2019) titled “*The experiences of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities in inclusive schools in Accra, Ghana*” the authors

explored how children with IDD experience mainstream inclusive schooling. (African Journal of Disability), The study involved 16 children with IDD in inclusive schools in Accra, using observations, interviews and draw-and-write techniques to capture their perspectives. It focused on understanding individual, environmental and interactional factors that influence their inclusion. The children reported experiences of peer support and positive relationships in some cases: they felt included by some classmates, and had opportunities to engage. The study provides valuable child-centred insight into inclusive schooling, emphasising that the voices of learners themselves matter. Lessons derived from this study are that: listening to learners' lived experiences is important, that is, inclusion is not just structural but relational; peer relationships and inclusive classroom interactions matter significantly for learners with IDD. While there were positive stories, the study also found negative experiences: victimisation, corporal punishment for slow performance, and minimal family or teacher support. For Zimbabwe, where children with IDD are often marginalised, this Ghanaian case underscores that placing children in mainstream schools is only the first step; ongoing relational and environmental support is necessary. Zimbabwean policy makers and school leaders need to pay attention to the "experience" of learners, not just enrolment statistics.

Summary Comparison Table

Case study	Country / Setting	Key enablers	Main Achievement	Key Lessons
Whole school approach	Zimbabwe (Midlands)	Systems-change model within one school (policy + culture + practice)	Shift in staff mindset, inclusive culture	Leadership + systemic alignment matters
Embu Diocese Pilot	Kenya	Community-school collaboration + training + monitoring	Increased enrolment of children with disabilities, community buy-in	Community involvement + ongoing training
IDD Inclusion Study	Ghana	Learner-centred research, focus on peer/support interactions	Insight into children's experiences of inclusion	Learners' voices + relational/interactional support critical

METHODOLOGY

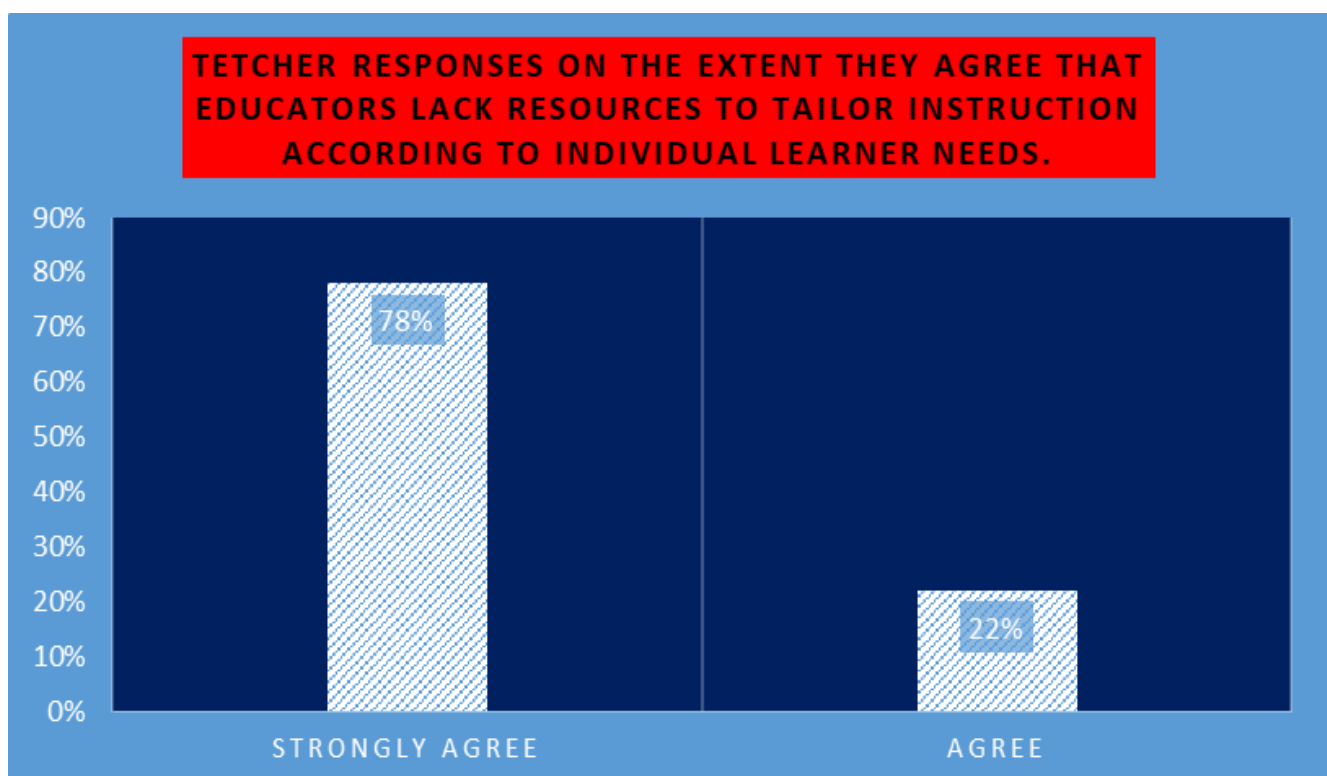
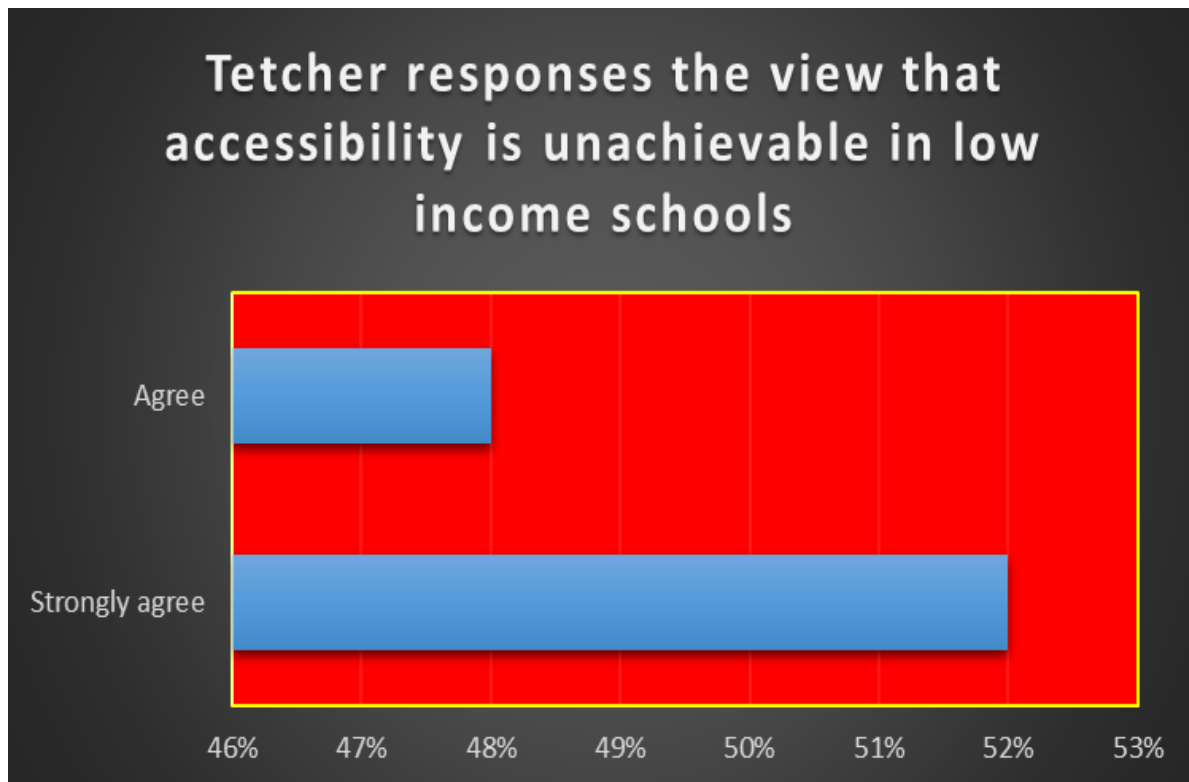
The study employed a mixed methods approach and was guided by the behaviorism theory. The value of employing the mixed methods approach was in that it enables data triangulation which is generally accepted as a strategy for validating results obtained with the individual methods, (Bergman, 2018). The population in the study comprised of all the teachers and school Heads in the two selected secondary schools in Reigate district of Bulawayo Metropolitan from which a sample of eighty educators was selected. Both probability and non probability sampling techniques were utilized, namely purposive, convenience sampling, and random sampling to obtain a sample size of eighty respondents. In the study, data was collected using semi-structured interviews from the school Heads and pre-service teachers, while questionnaires were used to collect information from the qualified teachers.

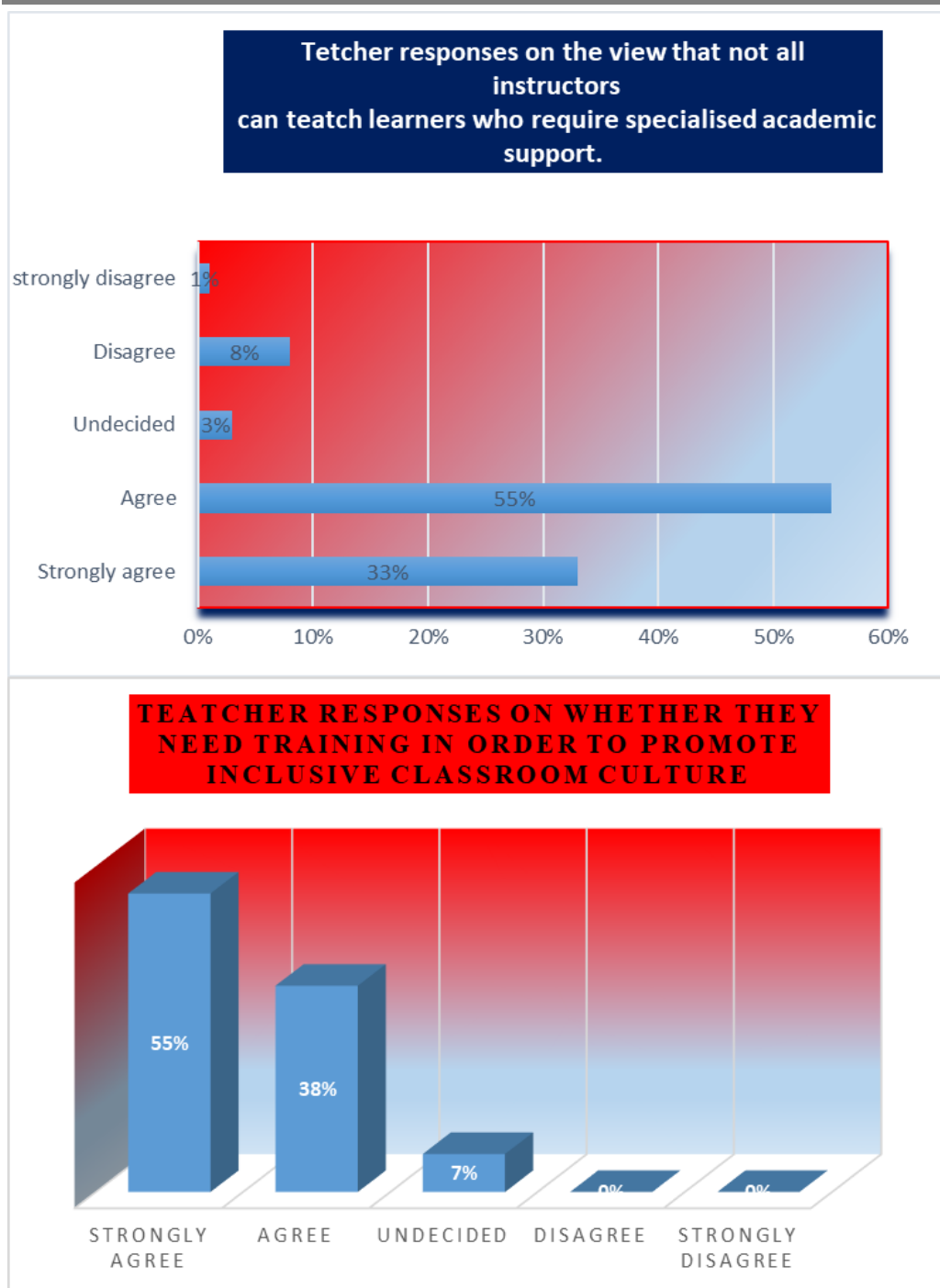
As a matter of fact, research has established that questionnaires are the most effective, cheap and efficient way of eliciting views and opinions from a large number of participants in a structured way, (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). However, face to face interviews complemented the questionnaire data in that they were interactive and therefore allowed for more insight to be gained on teacher readiness to implement quality inclusive education. Noyes, McLaughlin, Morgan & Roberts (2019) opined that qualitative interviews have the advantage of being interactive and allowing for unexpected topics to emerge and be taken up by the researcher. Consequently, quantitative data was analysed and presented with the aid of tables, bar graphs and pie charts, while qualitative data was analysed thematically. To enforce anonymity, the school Heads were coded SH1, SH2, while the preservice teachers and qualified teachers were coded ST1, and TQ1 respectively.

RESULTS

Factors influencing teacher readiness to implement quality inclusive education

The study sought to establish the factors influencing teacher readiness to implement quality inclusive education in Reigate district secondary schools of Bulawayo. The results were obtained through questionnaires. The data in this section is presented under the sub-themes of accessibility, lack of resources, collaboration, the curriculum as well as teacher training. The teacher respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that accessibility is impossible in low income schools. Their responses are shown in figure 4.2 below:





Implementation Strategies Of Inclusive Education.

The study sought to find out the implementation strategies of inclusive education in Reigate district secondary schools. To begin with, the respondents were asked if they had attended any workshop on inclusive education implementation in the last five years.

The results obtained from the survey showed that the majority of the teachers had no training on inclusive education implementation and this directly affects their readiness to implement inclusive education. It was gathered from the participants that none of the student teachers had attended a workshop on inclusive education before. On the other hand, both school Heads agreed that they had attended a workshop in this regard but further added that it was a long time back. They could not comment on the effectiveness of the workshop as they could no longer remember the activities. These were their views:

SH1 said: *Yes. Was long back though, can't really remember the activities.*

SH2 added: *Yes. This year, was once. I think they shared valuable information, time seems inadequate.*

The participants were further asked to shed more light on the support systems present at school, district as well as at the provincial level to facilitate the implementation of inclusive education.

Table showing if there are support systems that help in the implementation of inclusive education at School, District or Provincial level.

	YES	%	NO	%	Not aware	%
SCHOOL	20	27	50	68	3	5
DISTRICT	27	37	43	59	3	4
PROVINCE	28	38	45	62		

The table above shows the data gathered from the teachers with regards to the support systems present at, school, district as well as provincial level. The greater part of the sample disagreed that the support systems existed, with a ratio of 2:5 at school level, 27:43 at district level and lastly, 28:45 at provincial level. The proportion that agreed that the support systems were present said the support systems came in the form of workshops but however added that they were ineffective; stating inadequacy of time and the frequency of the workshops as the major hindrances. Below were some of the teacher responses:

TQ7 said: *These are not very effective as they are done once a year.*

TQ9 said: *Inclusion in both school, district or province should be implemented fully.*

TQ 49 said: *No idea*

TQ 33 said: *They are not effective since time is a limiting factor*

TQ56 said: *Very effective but not frequent, they are rarely done.*

75% of the student teachers were not aware of any support systems of that nature. The other quarter however pointed out that they were told to let their immediate mentors know if they needed any support. These were their responses:

ST1: *We were taught of hierarchy to follow, I talk to my mentor first, who then takes it to the HOD AND SO ON, the issues end up being forgotten.*

ST2: *Not that I know*

The school Heads on the other hand, both pointed out that the MOPSE District office as well as the Psychological Services Department at Mhlahlandlela, often ask for disability statistics in the schools for keeping records.

Challenges faced by teachers in implementing quality inclusive education

Table showing teacher responses on the challenges faced in implementing quality inclusive education

Facilitators lack the necessary support from parents of learners with disabilities to effectively implement inclusive education. Frequency %			There is inadequate time allocation to implement inclusive education. Frequency %		
Strongly Agree	39	53	Strongly Agree	31	42
Agree	21	2	Agree	33	45
Undecided	0	11	Undecided	02	03
Disagree	05	07	Disagree	02	03
Strongly disagree	00	00	Strongly disagree	05	07
Total	73	100	Total	73	100

The above table shows the numerical data on the challenges faced by teachers in implementing inclusive education namely: Facilitators are unable to teach learners with learning disabilities and that effective collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers is not an achievable goal. It was also gathered that the teachers faced a number of challenges in implementing quality inclusive education. The challenges include learning disabilities, collaboration, support from parents, time allocation and the curriculum. A similar observation was made when the teachers were asked if effective in-service training was provided for those teachers who had no teaching skills for learners with disabilities especially the hearing and visual impairment. Most of the teachers opined that in-service training was hardly done and that whenever the training was done only senior teachers had the privilege to attend. As a result, most teachers agreed that not all teachers can implement inclusive education since they are not trained to handle learners of diverse ability. The interviewees were asked if all teachers can teach learners who require specialised academic support. The majority, (75%) of the pre-service teachers said yes; pointing out that the exercise requires patience and is a lot of work. A quarter of the respondents however was of the opinion that there are some disabilities that can be managed by everyone, citing difficulty in walking as an example and that other disabilities like hearing and visual impairment require additional specialised training. These were their responses:

ST1: *Yes, they require patience and specialised training.*

ST2: *I agree, it is a lot of work, However, there are some disabilities that are not as challenging to manage, like difficulties in walking.*

ST3: *Teaching learners with disabilities can be demanding.*

ST4: *I agree; it requires one to be naturally gifted. Maybe if pastors came and created awareness that they are like everyone else*

One of the School Heads interviewed agreed with the student teachers that opined that some disabilities are not very easy to manage and therefore require trained personnel. The other School Head however, pointed out that it is just an issue of attitude, that all learners can be taught. They had this to say:

SH1 said: *Very true. Some conditions require psychological support and teachers are not trained to do that. Take for instance a learner with visual impairment for example; the best that a teacher can do is to have them seat in the front row, there is no way they can know the degree of the impairment.*

SH2 pointed out that: *I do not agree with that line of thought. I think with the right attitude, any learner can be taught, what if it was your child?*

The interviewees were asked if collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers in teaching the same class is achievable in all schools. Three quarters of the teachers agreed that it is achievable; they also added however that it would require team skills and dedication. A quarter of the student teacher sample however could not comment on the view, stating that they had never heard of such a strategy. These were their views:

ST1 said: *It is achievable, could help in ensuring effective implementation.*

ST2 said: *It can be challenging, since it would require team skills, characters may clash.*

ST3 pointed out: *It is achievable if people can remember the idea behind it.*

ST4 stated: *I have never heard of that strategy.*

In response to the question of whether collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers in teaching the same class is not achievable in all schools, both school Heads concurred with the majority of the student teachers that it was achievable, adding that it would go a long way in facilitating the implementation of inclusive education. These were their words:

SH1: Not true. It is very possible with the right leadership and attitude.

SH2: *Not true. It is actually a good strategy that could make the vision of effective implementation possible*

DISCUSSION

It was gathered from the data that inclusive education is being implemented in secondary schools. It was further revealed that although inclusive education is being implemented in schools, the majority of teachers are ill prepared to teach learners with learning disabilities as they had never attended training on inclusive education. It was also revealed that the fact that inclusive education programs are not ongoing means that teachers are not up to date with curriculum changes and consequently demotivates them in implementing it. This is in agreement with Chimhenga (2016) in his study on the Hope Fountain cluster where he reiterates that schools have challenges in the implementation of inclusive education despite the entailments of the 2013 constitution.

Furthermore, some schools do not, while others rarely provide Inclusive education training, sustained support and resources for teachers. Also, workshops on the implementation of inclusive education are rarely done, with no follow up or resources to facilitate the ideas, both at provincial and district level.

Collaboration between general and special education teachers if it is achievable in all schools, this would help facilitate the implementation of inclusive education. These findings concur with those of Nishan (2018), where he asserts that the core elements of inclusive education include effective team collaboration, administrative leadership, welcomed membership, full participation in general education and social interactions in the classrooms and community. There were a few respondents who had reservations on the idea as they felt this would affect the tone of the classroom due to clashing/ conflicting character traits of educationists.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study established the inadequacy of school strategies with regards to, addressing the factors that influence teacher preparedness to implement quality inclusive education as well as in monitoring and evaluating teacher readiness in the same regard. Drawing from the results, the study concluded that even though inclusive education has been embraced by the nation, teachers are still ill prepared to implement it due to inadequate content coverage during their training as well as lack of in service training. The study therefore recommended that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should continue to organise more workshops and in-service training on inclusive education on a regular basis for all teachers in order to capacitate them on how to effectively implement inclusive education. Teacher training institutions should also include special needs education as a stand-alone module in their curriculum in order to effectively prepare teachers for inclusion. In addition to that, schools should conduct staff development sessions on inclusive education in order to enlighten teachers on how to teach learners with special needs in a regular class.

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