

Insights into the Value of Inclusive Education to Both Children with and without Disabilities at Kabulonga Boys Secondary School in Lusaka, Zambia

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Abstract

The study was undertaken to analyze the benefits of inclusive education to children both with and without special education needs. A descriptive survey design was used. The study sample comprised 20 participants: one head teacher, one deputy head teacher, nine special education teachers and nine regular teachers. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select these participants. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides while analysis of data was done by SPSS (descriptive statistics) and themes (thematic analysis). The study revealed that the benefits of inclusive education are many; inclusive education can be an important and a meaningful thing or program to implement if all the materials needed are available, and if specially trained teachers are available to work with regular teachers and other stakeholders that may be needed for it to work. The study also established that regular teachers face many challenges in curriculum modification and adaptation. The study suggests that CPD activities be done so as to train regular teacher on how to modify and adapt the curriculum in inclusive classes; more sensitization of the benefits of inclusive education be done via different media platforms, and schools to strictly follow the stipulated guidelines on inclusive education and special education. This study concludes that there many benefits of inclusive education to both CSENs and those without special educational needs. On the other hand, curriculum adaptation and modification is very vital for inclusion to come to fruition. However, regular teachers face many challenges in this area.

Keywords: Inclusive education, curriculum modification and adaptation, children with and without special education needs.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Students with special education needs are increasingly educated together with their peers without special educational needs throughout the world (World Health Organization, 2011). It is an arrangement where school responds to the diverse educational needs of pupils, accommodates different learning styles and rates among pupils within a regular classroom setting (UNESCO, 1994). It is an educational setting which is flexible enough to respond to individual learning differences of all pupils. It is further, identified as a practice in education, which ensures quality of Education for All, allow for a differentiated curriculum for pupils and provide appropriate learning resources for all learners within the same classroom (Sharma, 2006; Mandyata, 2011). In this arrangement, use of appropriate teaching strategies and provision of support services to match the learning needs of pupils is encouraged (UNSECO, 1994; 1996; Kabwe, Mandyata & Chakulimba (2020). This practice is referred to as inclusive education. The growth of inclusive educational practices stems from increased recognition that students with special education needs and/or disabilities thrive when they are, to the greatest extent possible, provided the same educational and social opportunities as those with special education needs or the non-disabled students.

Essentially, children with special education needs receive special education; a ‘specially’ designed instruction to meet the unique needs and abilities of exceptional students (Trembley, 2007; Mpolomoka & Sakai, 2021).

Historically, children with special education needs were isolated into specific facilities such as hospitals, asylums, or other institutions that provided little, if any education. However, since the earliest forms of special education to be provided in the world in the 1800s, special needs education has undergone four major periods: *Instruction for pupils with sensory disabilities*. During this period many disabled children were excluded from school; *Care for the disabled*, during this period medical care and rehabilitation was provided to the disabled. In addition, during this period children were segregated into homogenous groups to receive care; *The principle of*

normalization and integration, during this period the disabled were integrated into the society and some into schools but received instructions in special rooms meant for them; *Educational equality and equal educational services (inclusion)*, during this period (the current period) children with special education needs are receiving instructions alongside their peers without special education needs in the same setting (Banja & Mandyata, 2018; Mpolomoka, Muyoba & Mutumba, 2017).

Inclusive education demands a focus on peers. This implies that special units, special classes and schools should be used to a limited extent, and as exception from ordinary education. In addition, it means all children, also children experiencing barriers to learning, development and participation, including children with disabilities, have the right to quality education in a school that is close to their home and in a class that suits their age.

Inclusive education is a child's right, not a privilege (Mag, Sinfield and Burns, 2017; Chikopels, Mandyata; Ndhlovu and Mpolomoka, 2018). In light of the above, many international and local commitments and policies have been drafted and adopted by many countries, including Zambia. For instance, in 1948, *The Universal Declaration of on Human rights (1948)* was adopted. This advocates for quality education for all despite their ability, disability and ethnic group. In 1966, *The UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* advocated for free and compulsory primary education for all children. Similarly, in 1989, *The UN Convention on the Rights of Children* advocated for the child to receive education without discrimination.

Moreover, one of the major milestones of inclusive education was in 1994 when *The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)* World Conference on Special Needs Education issued a consensus report on the education of students with disabilities. The resulting *Salamanca Statement*, signed by representatives of 92 countries and 25 organizations, states that "those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools. The statement affirms that inclusive regular schools "are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all." The Salamanca Statement was part of a global movement toward inclusive education and offered guidelines for action at the national, regional, and international levels. The Statement called for governments to promote, plan, finance, and monitor inclusive education programs within their education systems (UNESCO, 2009).

Another breakthrough with regards to the promotion of inclusive education was in 2006 when *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)* was drafted. This binds its 161 signatory states to ensure that "persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live." Article 24 of the Convention requires states to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels for people with disabilities as well as opportunities for life-long learning. This Article also stipulates that students with disabilities must not be excluded from general education, that reasonable accommodations and individualized supports must be provided for them, and that people with disabilities should have access to tertiary education, vocational training, and adult education on an equal basis with non-disabled students.

Many countries have developed national policies to promote and provide inclusive education. In Zambia, the provision of special education is backed by the following legal and policy frameworks on disability, according to the Ministry of General Education (2016: 10-11):

The Universal Declaration of on Human rights (1948) which provides for quality education for all despite their ability, disability and ethnic group;

The UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) which provides for free and compulsory primary education for all children;

The UN Convention on the Rights of Children (1989) provides for the child to receive education without discrimination. This emphasizes providing for equal opportunities and upholds the right for every child to have equitable quality education and care. This convention advocates for provision of appropriate accommodation and education support for LSEN;

Education for All (EFA) (1990) emphasizes the right of every child to the full cycle of primary education and child-centered pedagogy that is inclusive of all children.

UN Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities (1993) affirms that persons with disability have a right to education. It also affirms that education for persons with Disabilities be provided in both integrated and inclusive settings;

The Salamanca Declaration and Framework for Action (1994) on persons with Special Educational Needs emphasizes the right of every child to learn in the mainstream Institution nearest to their home irrespective of disability. The main focus is on inclusive education;

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) Article 24 on

education promotes the rights of persons with Disabilities to inclusive and mainstreaming of disability issues.

Educational Reform document (1977) emphasizes on the principle of positive discrimination in favor of LSEN in the provision of education. This policy document also set the categories of SEN.

Educating our Future (1996) the national policy on education upholds the principle that every child has a right to quality educational opportunities and mainstreaming.

Education Act No.23 of 2011: The Act has provided for LSEN in a number of educational areas including materials and accessibility;

Persons with disability (PWDs) Act No.6 of 2012 Part 5 Division 1 upholds the right to Inclusive Education based on opportunities for PWDs. It also upholds the provision of reasonable accommodation to meet the learning needs of PWDs. It also provides for protection from any form of discrimination on the basis of disability.

Education is the best equalizer for all, and it is a basic human right that should be enjoyed by all children. The importance of education cannot be overemphasized as it enables one to learn many basics things about themselves, their environments and many more unknown things about the world and concepts. A worthwhile education must be provided to the best extent possible without any restriction. Restrictions can be in many forms such as segregation, environmental and instructional barriers etc. however, many scholars and advocates are championing inclusive education as opposed to segregation of children with unique of special education needs in institutions that impede their development and make them feel unwanted. It is believed that there are many benefits of inclusive education, hence this study.

Objectives

- i. To analyze the benefits of inclusive education to children both with and without special education needs.
- ii. To establish challenges regular teachers, face in curriculum modification and adaptation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefits of Inclusive Education for children without special education needs

The benefits of an inclusive classroom are either neutral or positive for children without special education needs (Ruijs and Peetsma, 2009; Muvombo, Mpolomoka and Ng'uni, 2019). For instance, inclusive education enables teachers to employ different strategies and teaching techniques which met the needs of diverse learners. (Dessemontet and Bless, 2013; Mpolomoka, Muyoba & Mutumba, 2017). Salend and Duhaney (1999) found that typically-developing students in inclusive classrooms received the same level of teacher attention as students in non-inclusive classrooms and had similar levels of academic achievement. In addition, average non-disabled children can benefit from gifted and talented children academically in that they can learn from them (Kalambouka, et al, 2007).

Another benefit of inclusive education is that it changes their attitudes on disability and this helps them to embrace other children with special educational needs. Therefore, inclusive education promotes friendship among students (Brennet, Deluca and Bruns, 1997; Chikopela, Mpolomoka, Mandyata, Kaoma & Ndhlovu, 2017).

Cologon (2019) lists the benefits of inclusive education for all students as follows: It results to a more positive sense of self and self-worth; improved behavioural development, with less 'challenging' or 'disruptive' behavior; greater independence; greater social development and the opportunity to develop friendships they may not have considered or encountered otherwise; enhanced communication and language development; the development of qualities such as patience and trust, as well as greater awareness and responsiveness to the needs of others; an increased awareness and valuing of diversity, and understanding of individuality; higher quality education and care; higher quality instruction that is better suited to individual needs.

Benefits of inclusive education for children with special education needs

Children with special education needs develop better academic and vocational outcomes than their peers in non-inclusive settings. Hence inclusive education helps them to have better academic and vocational skills. In addition, CSENs experience greater social interaction that results in more opportunities to establish and maintain friendships with their peers without special education needs. Further, there is an increased independent communication and speech and language development, in turn supporting greater inclusion and active participation among CSENs in inclusive classes. Inclusive education also enables CSENs to have access to a broader range of play and learning activities, which can stimulate physical development and enhance children's experiences (Chikopela, Mandyata, Ndhlovu & Mpolomoka, 2018).

Challenges teachers face in curriculum modification and adaptation

Curriculum adaptation is a strategy that reaffirms inclusive education as a policy that as outlined at the Salamanca Conference in Spain in 1994 (Mergler, Carrington, Kimber and Bland, 2016). This policy statement provides illumination of special needs and the requirement to offer support to learners with diverse learning difficulties. Schools across the world have adopted inclusive education that centres on a curriculum that is adapted to support the needs of learners with learning difficulties.

According to Marishane, Marishane and Mahlo (2015), there is a great need of teachers who have expertise and who are equipped to meet the needs of all learners through the provisioning of inclusive education. This will afford learners equal opportunities to succeed in their learning.

Exploring good practice in the curriculum adaptation process is essential, mainly as this will support all learners with learning difficulties to achieve in an education system that is inclusive and sensitive to their needs (Adewumi, Rembe, Shumba and Akinyemi, 2017).

Fourie and Hooijer (2016) note that it is important for teachers to know which aspects of the curriculum need to be adapted as it may be the content, the methods, the resources or the learning environment. Moreover, teachers should be continuously developed to teach according to the diversity of the learners in their classroom – they should thus not assume that all learners learn in the same way.

Teachers need to possess the required knowledge that will enable them to properly use all the innovative strategies of implementing curriculum adaptation to offer support for learners with learning difficulties and it should thus be applied as an effective tool to pay attention to the learning needs of each learner. However, many regular teachers lack the knowledge and skills with regards to curriculum adaptation and modification (Bird, Alton and Mackinnon, 2004). Mandyata and Kamukwamba (2018) for example, reports that inadequate skills in sign language among teachers had negatively impaired classroom interaction among teachers, pupils with hearing impairment and their peers within a regular classroom setting. The calls for equipping teachers with necessary skills in sign language for them to be of benefits to pupils with hearing impairment included in the mainstream classrooms.

The main challenges faced in curriculum adaptation and modification by regular teachers include but not limited to these inadequate knowledge, skills and training of teachers to implement inclusive schooling effectively; and also the lack of educational and teacher support. Other factors include inadequate provision of facilities, infrastructure and assistive devices.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was adopted. The study constituted the head teacher, deputy head teacher, special education teacher and regular teachers at Kabulonga Boys Secondary School.

The study sample comprised 20 participants. This was divided into 1 head teacher and 1 deputy head teacher and 9 special education teachers and 9 regular teachers. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select participants who were better positioned to provide the information which suit the topic at hand.

Questionnaires and interview guides were used. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students because it enabled the researchers to reach some measure of objectivity, validity and reliability. Interview Guides were used to collect data from administrators. They enabled researchers to obtain detailed information about personal feelings, perceptions and opinions with regards to the benefits of inclusive education to both children with and without special educational needs.

Qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were utilized. To be specific, thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. Major themes drawn from the interview guides, were coded. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS to obtain descriptive statistics.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Participants were asked to state the benefits of inclusive education to children both with and without special education needs.

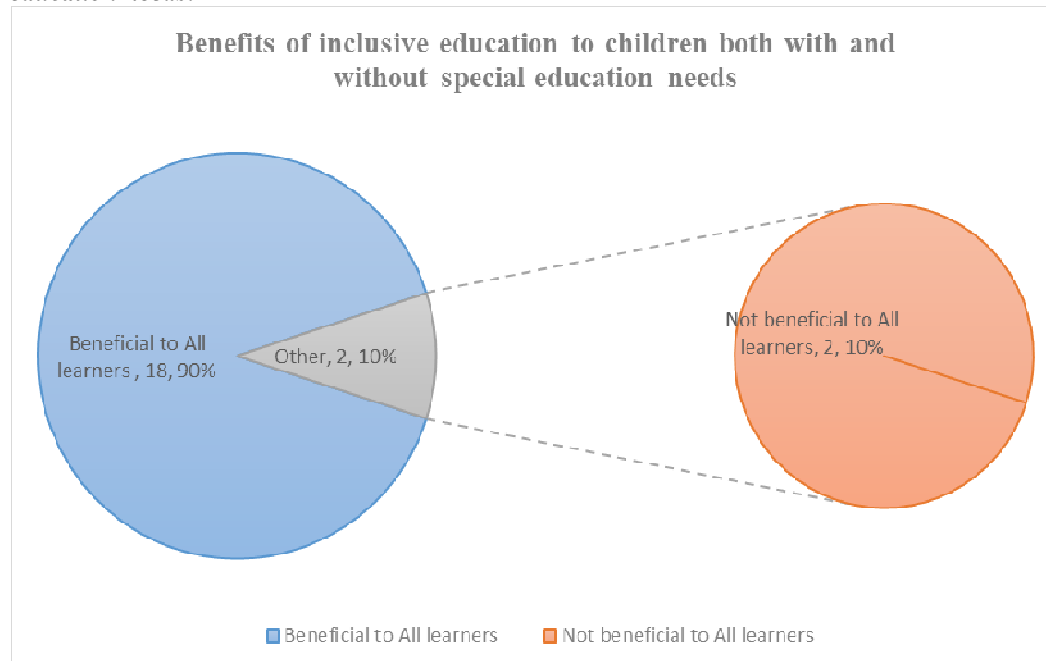


Figure 1: Benefits of inclusive education to children both with and without special education needs.

All the participants except two had similar views that inclusive education is beneficial to learners. However, some of them expressed ignorance of what it means and what it is about. For instance, T₉ indicated that *"I do not really know what inclusive education is all about but I feel it is an important concept in education. I hope to learn more about it."*

However, T₁ indicated that

The benefits of inclusive education are many. To begin with inclusive education fosters pupil's interactions in future in the sense that all children whether with or without special needs will work together, thrive as well compete in the same environment with equal expectation from their communities. Hence the need to nature them in the same learning conditions to help them co-exist.

T₂ indicates that

Inclusive education is not beneficial to learners nor it is not a good idea because it is time wasting and a difficult concept to undertake. Some learners especially those without special educational needs are not ready to accommodate their counterparts. Moreover, many teachers at this school do not really understand the concept of inclusive education and do not have any special education training background.

T₃ stated that

Inclusive education can be an important and a meaningful thing or program to implement if all the materials needed are available, and if specially trained teachers are available to work with regular teachers and other stakeholders that may be needed for it (inclusive education) to work. If this is not the case, then it is not beneficial to anyone.

T₄ stated that

I am trained in special education. I fully understand the importance of inclusive education, hence its importance cannot be overemphasized, as it one of the many of ways of teaching pupils that all people are equal despite the disabling conditions or not.

T₈ stated that

Inclusive education is important because it enables disabled children to develop a sense of belonging, confidence and self-esteem.

T₉ indicated that

Due to inclusive education, learners without special needs learn to accept learners with special educations. This changes their attitudes.

T₁₀ indicated that

It is important because the best way to educate children is to teach homogenous (similar characteristics) groups. Children with special needs must be taught is special units by teachers who understand them,

who have the technical knowledge about the well-being of children with special education needs.

Challenges faced in curriculum modification and adaptation by regular teachers

Participants were asked to state the challenge they faced in curriculum modification and adaptation by regular teachers.

T₂ indicates

The major problem I am facing as a regular teacher is that I have no training in special education. Hence I am having difficulties to handle children with severe conditions such as blindness.

T₃ states that

I am only trained to handle learner without special needs hence it becomes difficult for me to plan and deliver lessons well.

T₂ states that

I do not have knowledge of sign language and braille, hence I cannot modify or adapt the curriculum for children with hearing and visual impairments respectively.

T₅ indicates that

Modification and adaptation of the curriculum is a lot of work. It means that I have to plan twice for the same class. It even gets very difficult to work when the specialist teacher is not around to help.

T₆ observes that

Some regular teachers have negative attitudes towards inclusive education. Therefore, it is difficult to work with in the modification and adaptation of the curriculum. In addition, limited teaching and learning aids pose a further challenge to achieve this.

T₇ explained that

Being a teacher of special education I know the importance of inclusive education and I support it but my concern is that the infrastructure and the setting has not been favorable for the implementation of the program.

DISCUSSION

Benefits of inclusive education to children both with and without special education needs

The benefits of inclusive education are many. To begin with inclusive education fosters pupil's interactions in future in the sense that all children whether with or without special needs will work together, thrive as well compete in the same environment with equal expectation from their communities. Hence the need to nature them in the same learning conditions to help them co-exist. This finding is consistent with Brennet, Deluca and Bruns (1997) who indicate that inclusive education changes learner's attitudes on disability and this helps them to embrace other children with special educational needs. Therefore, inclusive education promotes friendship among both students.

Based on the above findings, In Zambia, the benefits of inclusive education are obvious. It has been seen as the most effective means of fighting negative attitudes; developing a proactive inclusive society and surest way of achieving Education for All. Kalabula and Mandyata (2003) observe that learning outcomes of both children with and without special needs are better in an inclusive setting than is the cases in separate learning environment; staff satisfaction is greater; provide better learning opportunities, help to improve communication among peers in schools. Mandyata, Kasonde-Ng'andu, (2015) observes that, parents and communities through inclusive school practices, help to minimize inconsistent in response to children's educational needs. Chikopela, Ndhlovu, Mandyata & Mpolomoka, (2022) however, report that such benefits do not come about without a good deal of hard work involving various stakeholders in open and distance arrangement, parents, teachers and the community drive the school success. This calls for commitment of staff, collaboration among parents and educators and indeed, development of a more supportive legislation, and policies supportive of inclusive school practices.

Challenges faced in curriculum modification and adaptation by regular teachers

These findings were consistent with those of Bothma (1997) which revealed that hesitation in acceptance of inclusive schooling by most regular teachers could be due to a number of factors such as inadequate knowledge, skills and training of teachers to implement inclusive schooling effectively; and also the lack of educational and teacher support. Other factors include inadequate provision of facilities, infrastructure and assistive devices. Bird, Alton and Mackinnon (2004) also complement these factors by indicating that many regular teachers lack the knowledge with regards to curriculum adaptation and modification.

CONCLUSION

There many benefits of inclusive education to both CSENs and those without special educational needs. On the other hand, curriculum adaptation and modification is very vital for inclusion to come to fruition. However,

regular teachers face many challenges in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Schools and institutions of higher learning should conduct CPD activities to train regular teachers on how to modify and adapt the curriculum in inclusive classes.
2. Schools and institutions of higher learning should sensitize the masses on the benefits of inclusive education via different media platforms.
3. Schools should strictly follow the stipulated guidelines on inclusive education and special education.

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