

Development of Schools for All: Challenges and Opportunities in Teacher Education in Zimbabwe

By

¹*Ngwarai Richard* and ²*Ngara Rosemary*

¹Lecturer & Programme Coordinator, Department of Disability Studies and Special Needs Education, Zimbabwe Open University, Masvingo Regional Campus. [richardngwarai@gmail.com]

²Lecturer & Programme Coordinator, Department of Education, Zimbabwe Open University, Masvingo Regional Campus [rosemaryngara@gmail.com]

Abstract

The study sought to find out teachers' views on the restructuring of teacher development programmes in Zimbabwe to suit inclusive classrooms. The study also sought to identify opportunities and constraints in development of schools for all in Zimbabwe. A descriptive survey was conducted using questionnaires as data gathering instruments. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics. Research findings indicated that the effective way of training in special needs education (SNE) is in-service training. If pre-service, it should have bias towards inclusion. SNE training should be on-going or continuous after the basic training in teacher education. Resource shortage, (human and material), lack of specific legislation and negative attitudes were some of the challenges encountered in attempts to restructure teacher development for meaningful inclusion. A number of recommendations were made including the following. There is need to include SNE in all teacher education training courses at both diploma and degree programmes. In-service training backed by part-time learning should be offered to all teachers to provide them with adequate training knowledge skills and techniques to manage the diverse learning needs of children with SEN. The existing teacher education curriculum of having a component of SNE in teacher training colleges and universities to regular school teachers should be restructured to suit the inclusive objectives.

1. Introduction

The process of becoming a teacher is not accomplished overnight because there are many issues to be learnt about teaching such as the dynamics of society in general, the political and socio-economic complexities of the teacher's country. Sound teacher education programmes therefore should include curriculum matters, child development ,learning and teaching styles, content to be taught, teaching strategies, conditions necessary to establish a conducive learning/teaching atmosphere, discipline, classroom management, evaluation, cultural norms and values and self development among others (Chanakira 1998).The influence of lecturers and teachers on personality development cannot be underestimated as performance of educators will ultimately be reflected by performance of their products in real life situations.

Teacher Education in Zimbabwe covers many historical, social, economic and political facets whose impact has determined and will continue, directly or indirectly, to influence present and future graduates. This paper focuses on areas needing attention such as teachers' re-orientation, changes in attitudes of both lecturer and the teacher trainee, re-organisation of teacher education structure and its content in order to meet the demands of a new education philosophy, that of inclusive classrooms.

Special Needs Education (SNE) in Zimbabwe has a long history stretching as far back as the 1930s during which time facilities were designed either for blacks or whites. Primarily, these facilities were provided by non-governmental organisations. This politically oriented approach painfully dragged on until 1980 when the country achieved its independence.

At independence in 1980, SNE experienced a major paradigm shift in both intention and structure. The ministry of education, Sports and Culture took over the education of children with special needs. The

structure of SNE and the government's intentions were enunciated through the 1987 Education Act and Policy statements. As of late, the Zimbabwean model of training specialists is through the establishment of a department of SNE within the regular teacher training college offering specialization in specific disability areas such as Visual Impairment(VI), Hearing Impairment(HI) and Mental Retardation (MR), (Chimedza, 2003). This model of training specialist teachers was influenced by the history of SNE in which followed specific labels or categories of disabilities. This model has since changed.

The present model gives a broader view about SNE to the teacher. It includes a core course, that is, a general foundation which covers all disabilities. It is hoped that this model will produce a more versatile and functional practitioner who can work comfortably in an inclusive setting. Although many teachers' colleges are now emphasizing increased awareness of special needs education in the initial teacher training programmes, much still needs to be done in this area.

Purpose of the study

The study aimed at weighing the various teacher training approaches and coming up with suggestions for suitable training programmes in SNE in Zimbabwe.

Statement of the problem

Teachers behave differently towards individuals with disabilities. They have their own reactions to physical and behavior features of such individuals. Generally it is believed that students with disabilities can be included into ordinary schools. Regular teachers in Zimbabwe are not well equipped to include students with disabilities. The question is, "What model should be used to train teachers for inclusive classrooms?"

Significance of the study

Policy makers and managers will develop an insight for the need for an appropriate curriculum. Teachers will improve their professional development to meet the needs of learners with a wide diversity of needs

Research questions

The following research questions were made:

- Which training programmes or models are effective for training in SNE?
- Are there adequate resources for effective inclusion of children with special needs?
- Is there a legislation to allow effective inclusion of people with special needs?
- What variables are there that would help to enhance the philosophy of inclusive education in Zimbabwe?

Delimitation of the study

The study was undertaken in Masvingo only with participants from Zimbabwe's ten (10) Provinces.

Limitations of the study

The study was undertaken over a small but representative sample and in Zimbabwe alone. The results of this study may thus not be generalized to other countries.

Keywords

- **Special Needs Children**-----children with diversity of needs(disadvantaged groups , those with disabilities ,those with superior intelligence, emotional problems etc)
- **Schools for all** -----mainstream schools that are able to educate all children in regular programmes
- **Teacher Development(Teacher Education)**—Teacher Training Programme
- **Pre-service Training**---Initial Teacher Training (Equips teachers with regular education)

- **In-service Training**---Special Needs Education Training offered by the Department of SNE at UCE to teachers with pre-service qualifications
- **On The Job Training**---SNE offered to teachers in their schools.
- **Post-Basic Training**----Training offered after initial qualification
- **Short Courses** --- Courses offered over a short period of time given certificates on completion.

2. Literature Review

Professional Development for Inclusive Education

Training is a planned system of providing individuals with the knowledge required to perform a certain job. It is a method of improving the performance of teachers in handling children with special needs. It implies giving the much needed skills for handling children with special needs (Proctor 1984). SNE requires well trained and experienced teachers. It is important to make special education more common and less special. Skilled professionals are essential for leadership staff training and support as well as quality services. The success OF Education For ALL (EFA) depends on the quality of teacher education (O.E.C.D,1997).

UNESCO (2003) says that the development of a teaching force skilled in inclusive practices is vital to the campaign for inclusive education. The most urgent need for teacher development is in mainstream schools.

Pre-service or Initial Training

It is the starting point of any specialization. It is a pre-requisite for specialist teachers. Pre-service training is the platform for further training or the stepping stone towards further training. Hegarty (1987) says that students should not specialize in special needs education until they have completed general teacher training. All teachers should have a thorough grounding in mainstream teaching. Teachers should acquire pre-service skills through theory and practice before specialization. They will be able to transfer learned knowledge and make adaptations to suit the type of child they will be dealing with.

UNESCO (1986) feels that components of SNE should be taught in pre-service training at diploma, degree or post graduate diploma. According to Salamanca statement (1994) all initial teacher training courses should have a strong component of SNE. All teachers should be provided with the requisites knowledge and skills to enable them to respond to SNE in their classrooms.

In-Service Training

It can be organized by training institutions or special schools. It is offered to qualified non-specialist teachers and to qualified specialist teachers. According to Butler(1991)SNE in-service should be introduced in all teacher training institutions. In-service training can be full time or part time. Full time is preferable to part time training courses because of the opportunities it offers for more sustained study. In practice, however part time training is more practical. A determined effort should be made to ensure that short in-service courses be provided as a matter of urgency. Duration of the courses can vary according to need (Wanork Report,1987).Distance learning is an effective mechanism for giving teachers in remote areas access to training(UNESCO 2003).

Inclusive Schools

According to UNESCO (2003), inclusive education has grown from the belief that education is a basic human right and that it provides the foundation for a more just society. All learners have a right to education regardless of their individual characteristics or difficulties. Segregated educational provision separates children from their peers and families and may not be cost effective. Inclusive education is about helping mainstream schools to overcome barriers preventing these children from learning in these schools. It is about helping mainstream schools to meet the learning needs of all children.

Inclusive education encourages policy –makers and managers to look at the barriers within the education system, how they arise and how they can be removed. These barriers usually include:

- Inappropriately-designed curricula
- Teachers who are not trained to work with children who have a wide range of needs
- Inappropriate media for teaching
- Inaccessible buildings

Some Findings on Zimbabwean teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities

Research on Zimbabwean teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities suggests a need for enhancement of the teacher training in inclusive education practices. For example, Barnatt and Kabzems (1992) reported that about half of Zimbabwean teachers did not support the placement of students with mental retardation in mainstream settings, in general, and that 64 percent of teachers would not accept these children in their classrooms. Legally, Zimbabwean teachers cannot deny a child admission to their classrooms. In practice, however, children with significant disabilities have been turned away from schools because teachers perceived themselves as untrained and ill-equipped to teach the children. The literature looked at in this section was considered related to the study.

3. Methodology

The research design, because of the nature of the study was a descriptive survey. The survey design was preferred because it is the most appropriate design where perceptions of participants are sought (Neuman 2000). Surveys are descriptive and explanatory and have the advantage of allowing the use of a sample to generalize the results. Leedy (1997), points that descriptive survey design is one of the most effective ways of conducting research. A survey was made taking the views, opinions and impressions of teachers working in Masvingo. These are teachers with pre-service training and wide experience in regular education. Some of the teachers have a diploma in special needs education.

Population

The target population for this research was all regular trained teachers in Masvingo.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A random sample of thirty (30) teachers working in Masvingo Urban was selected.

Research Instruments

Questionnaires were used to collect data on models of teacher education, resources and legislation. The questionnaires were both structured and open ended. The open ended part of the questionnaire sought information on teacher's views on legislation and availability of resources to enable inclusive classrooms.

Data Collection Procedures

Questionnaires

These were personally administered to the participants. They completed the questionnaires in their classrooms without sharing information. The researcher collected the questionnaires as soon as they were completed.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Data: the School (N=30)

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
GOVERNMENT	18	60
PRIVATE	3	10
CITY COUNCIL	8	26.67
MISSION	1	3.33
TOTAL	30	100
LOCATION OF THE SCHOOL		
HIGH DENSITY	22	73.33
LOW DENSITY	8	26.67
TOTAL	30	100
CATEGORY OF SCHOOL		
SPECIAL SCHOOL	5	16.66
REGULAR SCHOOL	25	83.33
TOTAL	30	100

Table 1 shows that most of the respondents (60%) work in government schools. Seventy three percent of the schools were in the high density areas of Masvingo. The majority of the respondents (83%) worked in regular schools.

Table 2: The teacher N = 30

ATTRIBUTE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
GENDER		
MALE	14	46.66
FEMALE	16	53.33
TOTAL	30	100
AGE(YEARS)		
20-25	1	3.33
26-30	3	10
31-35	6	20
36-40	9	30
41-45	9	30
46+	2	6.66
TOTAL	30	100
HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION		
O LEVEL	17	56.66
A LEVEL	13	43.33
TOTAL	30	100
HIGHEST PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION		
CE/DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION	24	80

CE/DIPLOMA IN SNE		3	10
DEGREE/MASTERS	IN	3	10
EDUCATION			
TOTAL		30	100
WORKING EXPERIENCE(YEARS)			
5-6		3	10
7-8		4	13.33
9-10		4	13.33
11+		19	63.33
TOTAL		30	100

Most of the respondents were females with a percentage of 53%.The respondents' were mainly in the age range from 31 to 45.This shows that they were generally young .All respondents had the relevant qualification expected of teachers in Zimbabwe. Majority of the respondents (90%) lack special education training as they have regular education only. Majority of the respondents had experience of more than eleven years (See Table 2 above).

Table 3: Summary of ratings

The most appropriate way of training for sne is-----.

ITEM	NUMBER (N)	PERCENTAGE (%)
PRE-SERVICE TRAINING	10	33.33
POST BASIC TRAINING	0	0
IN-SERVICE TRAINING	15	50
ON THE JOB TRAINING	5	16.67
TOTAL	30	100
SNE CAN BE OFFERED THROUGH PRE-SERVICE AS A-----.		
A COMPONENT OF ONGOING	10	33.33
PRE-SERVICE TRAINING	4	13.33
MAIN SUBJECT OPTION	16	53.33
OPTIONAL COURSE	0	0
TOTAL	30	100
SNE CAN BE OFFERED THROUGH IN-SERVICE TRAINING AS-----.		
A COMPONENT OF ONGOING	5	16.67
IN-SERVICE TRAINING	12	40
PART TIME COURSE	2	6.67
SHORT /PROFICIENT COURSE	2	6.67
SCHOOL BASED TRAINING COURSE	8	26.67
DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE	1	3.33
TOTAL	30	100

POST BASIC TRAINING FORMAT IS-----.		
SUBJECT SPECIALISATION	18	60
GENERAL PRACTITIONER	12	40
TOTAL	30	100
UNIVERSITY TRAINING		
FULL TIME	22	73.33
PART TIME	0	0
DISTANCE LEARNING	8	26.67
TOTAL	30	100

Table 3 shows that most respondents (50%) chose in-service as the most appropriate way of training in SNE while 33% preferred pre-service training. In-service training can be offered as a component of ongoing training. As post basic training format, 60% favour subject specialization. For university training, 73% prefer it on full time basis.

Responses on Legislation and Resources

Most respondents indicated that Zimbabwe's legislation was too general. Inclusive education requires a specific legislation. Heads of schools are not compelled by law to include children with special needs into their classes.

A specific legislation would enable adequate funding of the educational programmes. Funding is required for both human and material resources.

5. Discussion

Most of the participants in this study work in government high density regular schools. More such teachers were attracted as these schools are more than those in the low density. There were more female participants implying that there are now more female teachers than male teachers in Zimbabwean schools.

The respondents' experience, academic and professional qualification show that they are knowledgeable people who are likely to provide meaningful information about inclusive schools.

In-service training was rated as the most appropriate way of training for SNE. The Salamanca Statement (1994) however advocates that SNE programmes be provided to all student teachers, primary or secondary alike so as to develop an understanding of what can be achieved in schools with locally available support services. The majority of the participants (40%) think that in-service training is ideal since it gives the teacher enough time to learn after gaining experience. Evans (2000) says that there is great responsibility for the in-service education of teachers. It is imperative that the appropriate attitudes, skills and competencies be developed in teachers in the years of their training. In-service training caters for more teachers. Savolvainen, Kokkala and Alasuutar (2000) hold the view that there is a strong case for in-service teachers to be school based and planned to complement the learning that takes place in the learning organisation on a day to day basis. This agrees with 26.67% of the respondents who indicated that in-service training should be school based.

On post basic training format, majority of the participants (60%) preferred subject specialization while 40% were for general practitioner. This information shows man's unwillingness to accept change. Guijairro (2000) making reference to Latin American schools says teachers are not ready to meet the

needs of the diversity of learners because they have been trained in a homogenizing approach. Inclusive classrooms require a general practitioner because it enables the teacher to handle all children in an inclusive setting. For university training, 73.33% say that SNE should be offered on a full time basis .Full time equips the trainee with the necessary skills and knowledge.

Comments made by most of the participants on the level of success of SNE training offered at the present moment in Zimbabwe indicate that it is inadequate since it lacks both human and material resources .The teachers who are being trained are few and cannot cater for all the needy children .Their knowledge and skills are also limited taking into account the varied and often difficult conditions under which they serve (Salamanca Statement,1994).Some of the respondents though few (16,67%) suggested that in-service training should be ongoing. Chimedza (2003) points out that teacher training should continuously retool ordinary teachers to meet the paradigm shift taking place in the education in Zimbabwe.

Majority of the respondents (53%) preferred main subject option because it helps teachers to acquire more knowledge and skills about the course .Some respondents (26.67%) hold the view that SNE training should be school based since all teachers require such training. Guijairro (2000) concurs saying the in-service teachers must be centred on the school as a whole because the training of isolated teachers does not achieve significant changes in the school culture.

Only three out of thirty (10%) of the respondents had SNE training. There is thus shortage of specially trained teachers to handle inclusive classroom. Data from gathered from respondents indicate also shortage of material resources in the ordinary schools. Current legislation does not promote inclusive education.

6. Recommendations

- Regular school teachers should be in-serviced for them to handle children with diverse needs.
- There is need to revise government policy and legislation to enable restructuring teacher development programmes in Zimbabwe.
- There is need for re-evaluation of teacher education programmes in Zimbabwe.
- More human, material and financial resources are needed for inclusive education to succeed.
- There is need to restructure curriculum in teacher's training colleges and universities.
- Further studies should be done on the best teacher trainings model to be offered in teacher's colleges to suit inclusive classrooms.

References

- Butler S.R (1991) *The Exceptional Child .An Introduction to Special Education* .London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovick.
- Chanakira ,J. E (1998) *Elements of Teacher Education and The Single Teaching Service In Zimbabwe*. Sebri Printers.
- Chimedza, R (2003) *Special Needs Education and Teacher in Zimbabwe. Rethinking and Retooling Regular Teacher Preparation*, The Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education.
- Evans, P. (2000) *Including Students With Disabilities in Mainstream Schools. A Report to UNESCO* , Paris.
- Guijairro,R.B. (2000) *Inclusive Education in Latin America .A Report to UNESCO* ,Paris.

Hegarty,S (1987)Special Needs in Ordinary Schools .London :Cassell.

Leedy P D, (1993)Practical Research :Planning and Design ,Columbus :Merril Prentice-Hall,Inc.

Neuman ,W.L(2000) Social Research Methods , Needman Heights : Allyn and Bacon.

O.E.C.D (1997) Implementing Inclusive Education , Paris :O.E.C.D Publishers.

Proctor,N (1984) Professional Studies and the Q.T.C Review in Journal of Education for teaching,
Volume 15 No 2 pp97-109

Salamanca Statement (1994) Principles, Policy and Practice in SNE , Paris, UNESCO.

Savolainen, H., Kokkala, H and Alasuutari, H. (2000) (eds) Meeting Special and Diverse
Educational Needs .Helsinki : International Development Cooperation.

The Warnock Report (1987) Special Educational Needs, London: OHMS

The 1987 Education Act (1996) Revised, Harare:, Zimbabwe World Declaration on EFA 1990s

UNESCO (2003) Open File on Inclusive Education: Support Materials for Managers and Administrators,
UNESCO.