



Observations of Students Who Have Impairments in a Welcoming Learning Atmosphere at an Institution of Learning in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore the challenges faced by students with disabilities in inclusive educational settings at a school in Bulawayo and to identify strategies to improve these students' experiences. All 15 of the subjects that were randomly selected by the researcher gave answers to the questions. The descriptive survey method was chosen for this study because it effectively captured the attitudes and views of the respondents. The two main research tools used to gather data from the respondents were the questionnaire and the interviews. Tables and graphs were used to display the data that had been gathered. The study's conclusions showed that cultural attitudes toward disability still prevent people with impairments from receiving social welfare services like education. As a result, stigmatization and prejudice have emerged as one of the country's biggest obstacles to inclusive education achievement. Children with disabilities are subjected to both intentional and unintentional stigmatization and discrimination in school and society at large, which puts them at a high risk of dropping out of school or not being sent to school at all out of concern that they won't be able to handle it. In order to teach youngsters how to get along with their peers who have special needs, the research suggested that disability awareness programs be added to the school curriculum. Inclusionary legislation must be passed.

Keywords: Various cultural attitudes, stigmatization, and discrimination

Introduction

Background of the study

Zimbabwe's educational authorities have long practiced different educational systems (Chimoyo, 2010). When the term "normal" was first used, students who were recognized as such attended regular schools. Students with particular academic challenges, behavioral issues, and physical, neurological, or psychological deficiencies were accommodated in special schools. Recently, in the early 2000s, it was questioned whether it was suitable to have such distinct systems from the perspectives of human rights and effectiveness (Zimunya, 2012). Due to the inclusion of the issues of race, gender, class, and religion, the practice demonstrated discrimination towards people with disabilities and those who had previously faced disadvantage.

Both academic and social learning for kids with and without special needs benefit from including kids with disabilities in mainstreaming programs (Cole-Runswick, 2011). Similar to how Mara and Mara (2012) see inclusive education as more effective in both the academic and social arenas and socially just from a social perspective. The inclusion principle has been accepted by educational authorities all around the world in order to fulfill their social and moral duty to educate all

students. Inclusionary education, according to Kearney and Kane (2006), is a fresh approach to education and disability that upholds human rights and promotes social justice. It serves as a reminder to appreciate all people. The aforementioned points suggest that inclusive education is about social justice and equity and takes into account the abilities, potential, and variety of needs of learners. The student does not need to change to fit the educational system. According to Kugelmass and Ainscow (2004), in order to address the educational needs of all students in a given community, the school or the educational system must alter. To adapt to the diversity of children in a community, schools must change their cultures, regulations, and practices. This is what is meant by inclusion. The idea behind inclusive education is that every student has the right to attend regular schools where they can study. It supports equality and ensures that disabled children have the right to an education (Operti and Brady, 2011).

However, despite being a signatory to the Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education as well as a number of other international charters and conventions related to inclusive education, Zimbabwe does not have any specific legislation for inclusive education

(Meijer, Soriano, and Watkins, 2007). Despite this, many government policies are in line with the goal of inclusive education. For instance, all students, regardless of race, religion, gender, creed, or disability, must have access to basic or primary education up to grade 7 according to the Zimbabwe Education Act (Education Act, 1996), the Disabled Persons Act (Disabled Persons Act, 1996), and various Ministry of Education circulars (Education Secretary's Policy Circular No. P36, 1990) (Mara and Mara, 2012).

Literature Review

Disability's social model

This study has implications for social models of disability, according to Guthrie (2012). The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) activists created the social model of disability in the 1970s, and it received academic validation through the writings of Vic Finkelstein (1980, 1981), Colin Barnes (1991), and especially Mike Oliver (1990, 1996). According to the social model, persons who live with impairments engage with an environment that is full of physical, mental, verbal, and social impediments. It implies that in order to enable people with disabilities to participate in society on an equal basis with others, the physical, attitudinal, communication, and social environments must alter. The inclusive education tenet is founded on the social model, which views the current educational system and institutions as biased and ineffective. It calls on schools to make adjustments to accommodate each student's unique requirements, regardless of whether their absence from mainstream education was caused by a handicap. Both the field of disability and educational ideas on inclusion have been significantly impacted by the social model of disability. According to the inclusive education document, all countries who ratified the convention must make adjustments to their educational systems in order to accommodate all students with varying requirements. Therefore, inclusive education is a method for boosting participation and lowering exclusion that successfully addresses the various requirements of individual students.

Students with impairments face challenges in inclusive learning environments

Due to the numerous difficulties it encounters, inclusive education hasn't been given the boost it needs to advance (Guthrie, 2012). Even if efforts and gains that were first realized at the beginning of inclusion programs have resulted in gradual development and stagnant positions. As a result, several alleged obstacles have been given as the causes of the implementation's slowdown. According to UNICEF (2000), implementing inclusive education will cost governments an estimated \$8 billion annually. As a result, the lack of adequate funding for education, particularly in Africa, leads to real and imagined anxieties about the implementation of inclusive education at the global level (Cole-Runswick, 2011). Due to the country's inability to provide free primary and secondary education, let alone set aside funds to accommodate disabled children in inclusive courses, Zimbabwe's education ministry only receives a small portion of the national budget (Mullick, Deppeler, and Sharma, 2012). According to a study conducted in South Africa on the education of kids with special needs in a general education classroom, some students need extra planning and alterations to help them learn, and these students are known as students who encounter learning barriers (Guthrie, 2012). However, it is the educator's duty to use his or her expertise to recognize exceptional students and be able to

instruct and encourage them as they reach their full potential. When students didn't reach the department's predetermined academic criteria, South Africa's previous educational system applied pressure to them (Crotty, 2013). They were referred to as "disabled" or people with special needs and were sent to special schools as a result.

According to studies conducted in Zambia, it is practically impossible to run an inclusive classroom without the cooperation and engagement of parents because they are the learners' primary caregivers (Tador, 2009). Effective learning is jeopardized and hampered when parents don't participate as much in their kids' education. According to Banda's (2011) prediction, parents will be uninterested in helping educators succeed if they are not empowered and informed about what is expected of them and are not encouraged to be part in their children's education.

Methodology

Research Design: According to Newman (2014), the study design outlines the steps that will be taken to finish the research process. The glue that keeps the research endeavor together, according to Chalse (2010), is a research design. It is used to organize the research and demonstrate how all of the key components of the project work together to try and address the main research questions and achieve the study's goals (Patton, 2012). It is a framework that outlines the factors to be taken into account when choosing the right methodology, selecting respondents, and analyzing the data (Flick, 2011).

The researcher will interact with the research subjects in their natural context and tries to learn as much as she can about the homes and environments the subjects originate from. Naturalistic inquiry is a non-manipulative, unobtrusive, and non-controlling style of qualitative inquiry that is receptive to whatever data come up in the research environment (Tesch, 2010). Jackson and Mazzei (2012) provide evidence in favor of the commitment of qualitative researchers to a naturalistic and interpretive interpretation of human experience. According to them, qualitative researchers emphasize the social construction of reality, the close bond between the researcher and the subject of their research, and the limitations imposed by the environment on their ability to conduct their research (Crotty, 2013).

Interviews: In this study, semi-structured interviews will be used in addition to questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews are conversations between the interviewer and the respondent with the aim of extracting specific data from the respondent, according to Moser and Kalton (2006), referenced in Bell (2010). Interviews are started by the interviewer with the express goal of gathering information for study. The benefit of semi-structured interviews over questionnaires is that the researcher can explore motives and feelings, probe responses, and follow up on ideas in a way that a questionnaire cannot. According to Pulla (2016), interviews allow for flexibility and adaptation.

Ethical Considerations: When conducting or starting a research project, there are a number of ethical criteria that should be considered, according to Pulla (2016). These ethical precepts were fundamentally based on the need to (a) do good (also known as beneficence) and (b) do no harm (also known as non-maleficence). In accordance with the aforementioned ethical principles, the researcher will obtain informed consent from prospective research participants, minimize the risk of harm to participants, protect the anonymity and confidentiality of all research participants, avoid using

deceptive practices to the extent possible, and in the interest of the research and participants, as well as provide participants with the right to opt out of the study when feasible.

Discussion

The study sought to identify the experiences of students with disabilities in inclusive educational settings, investigate the challenges faced by students with disabilities in inclusive educational settings at a school in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province in Bulawayo, and offer suggestions for improving those students' experiences.

All 15 of the subjects that were randomly selected by the researcher answered the questions. The descriptive survey method was chosen for this study because it effectively captured the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents. The two main research tools used to gather information from the respondents were the questionnaire and the interviews. Tables and graphs were used to present the data that had been gathered.

Eight out of fifteen respondents performed poorly in class, according to eleven (11) out of fifteen (15) respondents, who claimed that there were too many students in the class and that this prevented the teachers from giving them enough individual attention. The results of this compilation of data are consistent with a South African study on the education of children with special needs in an inclusive classroom, which revealed that some students' education requires additional planning and modifications in order to help them learn, and these students are referred to as those who encounter learning barriers (Guthie, 2012).

Conclusion

The study's conclusions showed that cultural attitudes toward disability still prevent people with impairments from receiving social welfare services like education. As a result, stigmatization and prejudice have emerged as one of the country's biggest obstacles to inclusive education achievement. Children with disabilities are subjected to both intentional and unintentional stigmatization and discrimination in school and society at large, which puts them at a high risk of dropping out of school or not being sent to school at all out of concern that they won't be able to handle it.

Therefore, in order to satisfy the needs of any society, the supply of proper teaching and learning materials as well as other resources, as well as the support of educators who have received adequate and appropriate training, are crucial to the successful implementation of inclusive education.

The biggest barriers to inclusive education are brought on by society, specifically by cultural preconceptions that breed discrimination and unfavorable attitudes. Negative attitudes are still a problem in society because of conventional stereotypes, social discrimination, and a lack of understanding. All identifying methods should be used with disability awareness programs to promote societal acceptance of diversity and reduce the risk of discriminatory labeling.

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