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Inclusive Education And The Primary School Teacher Education Curriculum In Zimbabwe: The Need For A Paradigm Shift

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Abstract:

In line with global trends regarding people with disabilities, Zimbabwe swiftly promulgated policies to ensure the inclusion of previously marginalised pupils in schools. Though policies have been easy to craft, a major challenge remains in that the policies have not been translated into tangible transformational approaches in the primary school teacher education curriculum. Primary school education is a critical base which should unequivocally show commitment to inclusion in explicit and ostensible ways rather than through mere spoken or written pronouncements. This qualitative research established that because of the dearth of clear commitment in teacher education curriculum, the college products are largely ill equipped to deal with children with special learning needs. A serious discord between policy pronouncements and the primary teacher education curriculum exists. There is a need for a paradigm shift in the primary school teacher education curriculum for production of teachers who can effectively handle both mild and severe cases of special need failing which the dream for inclusivity will always remain a dream. The research is in the form of a case study of three primary school teacher training colleges in Masvingo province, Zimbabwe. Interviews with college administrators, teacher educators and student teachers alongside the observation of general infrastructure and routines at these colleges as well as analysis of relevant documents which include, among others, syllabi, schemes of work, lecture notes and even assignment and examination questions provided the data for analysis.

1. Introduction

1.1. Special Needs And Inclusive Education – Global Trends

Global, Inclusive Education is a relatively new phenomenon in education driven by the philosophy that all children, regardless of their mild or severe individual differences should attend the same school, in the same class with their peers. Inclusive Education owes its foundations to the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s (Thomas et al, 1998). During the same period, segregated provision of services like health and education on the basis of race and colour began to be seriously questioned if not rejected by those segregated against. In the same manner, those who were segregated on the basis of their physical impairments began to agitate for eradication of stigma especially in education provision. Following this campaign for civil rights in America, it began to be realised that physical impairment did not necessarily mean disability. While traditional thinking looked at children with various forms of impairment as disabled, emerging thinking viewed those with physical or mental challenges as children with special needs (Winter and O'Raw, 2010). This is so because it was discovered that these children were unique and needed unique but specialised treatment to make them benefit from the education system.

Towards the later part of the 20th century, disability began to be perceived as a social construct and Inclusive Education sought to demolish socially constructed impediments which society put before those with physical impairments. By the end of the 20th century there was growing consensus that "inclusion was an appropriate philosophy and a relevant framework for restructuring education" (Thomas, et al, 1998:4). There was also a realisation that inclusion was in line with the dictates of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). The declaration of rights is "anchored on the imperative to value and treat everyone equally and according to need" (Winter and O'Raw, 2010: 6). This thinking marked a clear and yet necessary shift in the perception of society towards children with handicaps of different forms.

Traditionally, provision of education for those with disabilities was met in separate institutions yet, ironically, upon leaving school; such children were expected to perfectly fit into society. It became apparent that institutionalisation was at the core of negative perceptions towards disability and the continued isolation of the disabled from mainstream society.

Traditionally, Inclusive Education was viewed as primarily concerned with the provision of education to those with physical disability, like those with blindness, the deaf and dumb as well as those with mental retardation (Peters, 2004). After the Jomtien and Salamanca Conventions of 1990 and 1994 respectively, most proponents of Inclusive Education assumed a paradigm shift.

Inclusive Education now broadly pertains to children who are vulnerable as a result of being orphaned or as a result of poverty and war among others (Winter and O'Raw, 2010). Inclusive Education according to this current thinking, should address the needs of all children who carry certain disadvantages be they physical, psychological or emotional in nature.

Advocates of total inclusion advocate for a zero rejection philosophy where no child is turned away from the local school on the basis that he/she is handicapped regardless of the severity of the handicap. These proponents argue that there should however be enough support services in the form of specialised gadgets or the presence of an aide to ensure that within that inclusive environment, the handicapped child benefits. Inclusive Education is driven by the philosophy that special gadgets for use by those with handicaps should find their way to the school where the children are and not the other way round where children with special needs are isolated and sent to the so called special schools which in essence are segregated communities of people with different forms of impairments. Inclusive Education unlike separate placement which works on the philosophy that the child with challenges must adjust to school environment operates on the thinking that "it is the school that must make adjustments to accommodate or include the child" (Mushoriwa, 2001 in Chitiyo, 2004:14). This research perceives Inclusive Education as the kind of education which should break the barriers of participation by children on the basis of "ability, gender, race, ethnicity, language, care status, socioeconomic status, disability, sexuality, or religion" (Gerschel, 2003 in Winter and O'Raw, 2010:4).

The conviction of the researchers is that primary school teacher education institutions in Zimbabwe should be the torchbearers in the discourse and practice of inclusion. The nature and quality of education in primary schools are dependent on the quality of teachers and such teachers should be products of a "carefully planned policy on teacher education" (Zvobgo, 1996:82). For effective implementation of Inclusive Education programmes in Zimbabwe, teacher training institutions should simply lead the way. The challenge of primary school teacher education institutions is to make inclusion "embedded deeply in the very foundation of the school, in its missions, its belief system, and its daily activities, rather than an appendage that is added to a conventional school" (Lipsky and Gartner, 1997:390). These institutions should lead in marrying theory and practice to ensure that the student teachers fully appreciate inclusive teaching strategies for implementation in schools. This research seeks to examine the extent to which the primary school teacher education institutions in Zimbabwe go in preparing trainee teachers for implementation of inclusive education in schools when they graduate.

1.2. Special Needs Education– The Zimbabwean Experience

In order to fully appreciate the developmental trajectory of education provision to persons with special needs in Zimbabwe, there is a need to look at how the disabled persons were treated in Zimbabwe before, during and after the colonial era.

In Zimbabwe just like in most African countries, the traditional pre-Christian way of life was averse to any form of disability. Physical and mental handicaps were perceived as punishment by god or the ancestral spirits for transgressions committed by the disabled child's parents; there was need to kill or to throw away the handicapped child since such a child was viewed as an abomination (Hapanyengwi, 2009). If the disability was detected later, the child had to be hidden so that whatever affliction she/he had would not affect those who would see him/her (Mashiri, 2000). With the coming of Christianity, a small proportion of disabled persons took sanctuary in missionary institutions as the myths around disability gradually got demystified.

In colonial Zimbabwe, the work of the Dutch Reformed Church is a case in point. In 1927 in Chivi district in southern Zimbabwe, a female missionary, Margareta Hugo pioneered the provision of special needs education to Africans when she took into her custody 3 blind people in a gesture which marked the humble but determined beginnings of what is now Capota School for the Blind in Zimbabwe (Hapanyengwi, 2009). Though she did not have specialist skills to help the visually challenged to learn, she was spurred on by her moral religious conviction. By 1934 her school had forty pupils. In 1939 the school was moved to Capota after the church secured land in Zimuto communal area near Masvingo. By 1958 the school had an enrolment of 156 pupils. Capota was able to open a secondary school for the blind in 1976. Driven by Christian moral calling, the Dutch Reformed Church in 1947 was also able to establish Henry Murray School for the Deaf at Morgenster Mission, 30 kilometres from the then Fort Victoria which is now Masvingo. A few other missionary and charitable organisations had to follow suit in years that followed.

It is observable that to colonial governments, provision of special education to Africans was simply not a priority since the disabled did not fit in any way in the labour intentions of the exploitative colonial establishment. It is therefore apparent that before independence in 1980, special needs education was uncoordinated and almost chaotic. Churches and other charitable organizations implemented special education in ways they deemed fit without a centrally designed curriculum or policy framework (Hulley, 1980; Peresuh and Barcham, 1998). While the driving force behind missionary involvement hinged on Christian moral values, for charitable organisations, it was more of philanthropy than anything else. As a result of the lack of a national thrust to special education by successive Rhodesian colonial administrations, only twenty schools existed for persons with different forms of disability when Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980 (Hapanyengwi, 2009).

In both Missionary and charitable institutions as observed by (Peresuh and Barcham, 1998), the curriculum was largely made up of Religious Education and training in practical skills in subjects like leatherwork, building, basketry, woodwork, cookery as well as sewing. Even today, Capota School for the Blind is reputable for chalk making, basket weaving and the production of woven chairs from its workshops.

With the attainment of independence and the pre independence war cry and ideology of equality of all people, those with disabilities had their rights to claim. The new government whilst maintaining separate placement in terms of special education advocated for integration.

1.2.1. Efforts To Provide Special Education Through Integration In Zimbabwe

Well before the Jomtien (1990) and Salamanca Conventions (1994), the Zimbabwean government's policy of education for all enacted through an amendment to the Rhodesian Education Act in 1987 had made primary education compulsory and free for all

children implicitly meaning even those with various forms of challenges. The government pursued the concept of segregated placement as well as integration. The Secretary's Circular Minute Number p36, of 21 June 1985, gave school Heads the mandate to enrol pupils with mild disabilities and place them in a separate class at the same school with their peers. These pupils would be assisted by specialist teachers posted to each school and officials from Schools Psychological Services, a department which government had created within the Ministry of Education to deal with children with special learning needs (Gatawa, 1998; Musengi and Chireshe, 2012).

In 1989, another intervention was done by the government through Chief Education Officer's Circular Minute No.3/89 which advised special schools to adopt the same curriculum with those schools enrolling children with no special needs. In 1990, the Education Secretary's Circular Minute No. p36 of 1990 officially made operational integration through its directive that schools should provide specialised rooms for use by those with mild or severe special needs. Special schools however remained fully operational with government support in terms of grants and qualified manpower provision. Pressure from human rights campaigners and coupled with the resolutions of Jomtien and Salamanca conventions drove the government to introduce Inclusive Education.

1.2.2.The Adoption Of Inclusive Education In Zimbabwe

In the late 1990s the government of Zimbabwe adopted the policy of Inclusive Education. The Jomtien Conference (1990) had affirmed the need to uphold the rights of all people while the Salamanca Convention (1994) ostensibly supported Inclusive Education by affirming that inclusive schools are the most potent in "combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving an education for all" (UNESCO, 1994: ix). By being a signatory to the Salamanca Convention of 1994 the government was fully obliged to implement inclusion. The convention's framework for action outlined that,

Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse

The needs of their students, accommodating both different styles

and rates of learning and ensuring quality education

to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements

teaching strategies, resource use and partnership with their

communities (Salamanca Frame work of Action, 1994 in Peters, 2004:5).

There have been many policy pronouncements on Inclusive Education. In 2001, through the Director's Circular No. 1, 2004, pupils with disabilities were supposed to be included in sporting activities in their own category whenever those without disabilities participated. Another policy directive in the form of Director's Circular No.2 of 2001 directed that sign language be taught in all primary schools in Zimbabwe. Through partnership with Leonard Cheshire Zimbabwe Trust in 2010 the Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture launched a campaign named Inclusive Education for All which was targeting 1000 children with disabilities from government schools (Samkange, 2013). The Leonard Cheshire Zimbabwe Trust also planned to staff develop teachers on Inclusive Education. As of now, it seems the Trust's zeal has waned possibly as a result of resource constraints. Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution, also upholds the rights of all people including those vulnerable and disabled (SIDA, 2012).

Despite the availability of supportive policy framework for implementation of Inclusive Education, challenges still persist. According to the United Nations quoted in a local daily newspaper, only 33% of the estimated 600 000 (six hundred thousand) children with disabilities have access to education as compared to 90% school attendance for those who are able bodied (World Health Organisation in Antonio, 2013). A significant number of parents still lock up their children at home and therefore deny them education and much needed social interaction. Effective teachers should work within communities to ensure that all children attend school. This is only possible if the teachers possess the skills to make the school experiences of those children with disabilities a worthwhile experience.

It is therefore observable that Zimbabwe has no dearth of policy provisions on Inclusive Education. What this research endeavours to establish is whether or not the teacher education curriculum for primary school education adequately prepares student teachers for the implementation of Inclusive Education when they eventually leave college as qualified teachers.

1.3.Research Question

How far does Zimbabwe's primary school teacher education curriculum embrace Inclusive Education?

1.3.1.Research Sub-Questions

- How far do the in-class and out of class activities of primary school teachers' colleges reflect inclusion?
- Are the primary school teacher educators equipped to deal with Inclusive Education?
- Do colleges have requisite infrastructure for children with mild and severe disabilities?

2.Research Design

2.1.Theoretical Framework

This research is predominantly informed by Tyler's (1949) original objective model of curriculum planning. There is need for the curriculum to state objectives clearly as well as to be clear of the expected goals. The extent to which primary school teacher education addresses critical curriculum objectives like inclusion is critical. Because the curriculum can be defined as all the experiences children experience under the guidance of a school as Tyler (1949) argues, the primary school teacher education

programme will be interrogated on the basis of its effectiveness in inculcating the correct attitudes and imparting the requisite skills in student teachers for them to be able to handle Inclusive Education after qualification.

The research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research by its very nature is a form of research in which people interpret and make sense of the experiences and the environment they operate in through the use of thick descriptions, interpretations and analysis (Blackwell Publishing, n.d). This research seeks to create a deeper understanding of the circumstances and nature of Inclusive Education as reflected by the primary school teacher education curriculum in Zimbabwe.

2.2.Sampling

Sampling was purposively done. Three primary school teacher training colleges from Masvingo province make the sample. The researchers chose these three for convenience purposes. The researchers could immerse themselves into these institutions with much ease. Three college administrators, three heads of departments, three coordinators, three ordinary lecturers and 12 randomly selected student teachers who make the sample from where the data was generated come from the 3 colleges. Each college contributed an equal number of respondents.

2.3.Methodology

The research relied on in-depth informal and semi-formal interviews with college administrators, ordinary lecturers and student teachers. Document analysis involved the analysis of college syllabi, lecture notes and even examination questions. Observation looked at the infrastructure like buildings and availability of specialist equipment like assistive devices used by students with special needs. Buildings, grounds and vehicles were also observed. The real college routines before, during and after lectures as part of the hidden curriculum were also observed to establish their contribution or lack of contribution to the agenda of inclusion.

3.Findings

The findings from each instrument are presented separately.

3.1.Findings From Interviews

3.1.1.Views Of Administrators

From the in-depth informal and formal interviews, it emerged that college administrators (principals) are aware of the policy provisions pertaining to Inclusive Education. Inclusive Education is a government policy and according to college administrators, all colleges should make sure that Inclusive Education is taken seriously. The administrators however indicated that it is not clear how this Inclusive Education should find its way into the curriculum. In the words of administrators, "it's policy and cannot be questioned". Colleges should therefore be seen to be doing something. Mission statements carry inclusivity as a core value yet there seems to be no zeal and conviction to implement it.

At the moment, staff development workshops on Inclusive Education have been done and it appears the thrust is on creating awareness among lecturers and students on the need for inclusive approaches in the teaching learning situation. Administrators noted that not all lecturers can be specialists in various areas of special needs education. Theory of Education as a section of the primary teacher diploma course is mandated to teach student teachers the theory of Inclusive Education. The skills students get seem not to enable them to deal even with mild cases.

On the construction of requisite infrastructure and procurement of specialist equipment, there was consensus among administrators that the funds are not available. In the three colleges, libraries have no books or computers for the visually handicapped and the deaf. The process of making infrastructure like toilets user friendly to students with special needs is sometimes absent and, in rare cases, where it is found it is slower than would be ideal.

In terms of enrolment, administrators indicated that it seems those with special needs do not just come to train as teachers. This could be because they do not qualify or because they find teaching difficult to handle considering their physical challenges for example visual impairment.

3.1.2.Views Of Lecturers

Lecturers felt that Inclusive Education at teachers' college level could be taken seriously than what is happening at the moment. The lecturers all agreed that the syllabi for subject areas taught at primary school, except that for Theory of Education, are silent on Inclusive Education. Teaching strategies which lecturers use and encourage their student teachers to use are meant for those with no special needs. Asked about the policy and its implementation, one lecturer said, "Like all policies crafted from the top, Inclusive Education faces passive resistance from lecturers. Children with disabilities should simply go to special schools rather than have their time wasted in so called inclusive schools. In any case most parents know that special schools like Capota and Henry Murray are the best in provision of education to the blind and the deaf respectively". On a general level, the majority of lecturers encourage student teachers to attend to all children as a moral issue, though the student teachers might not have, for instance, the special skills for sign language or Braille. Specialist lecturers, who make up 2% of total lecturing staff felt that the time available for specialist training of student teachers is limited. At most the number of hours allocated in the whole programme is six hours. During this limited time, there is focus on theory without practice.

The University of Zimbabwe which certifies the students in the lecturers' view is driven by the conviction that student teachers should do general teacher training at diploma level before specialising later at degree level. If student teachers wish to pursue studies in Special Needs they would do so after the diploma course and this is taken up by relatively few students owing to prohibitive tuition fees and the limited vacancies in the institutions concerned.

3.1.3.Views Of Student Teachers

The student teachers interviewed indicated that though they are given some theoretical content on handling children with special needs, they lack the practical experience and adequate grounding in skills to deal with different forms of impairment. One student said, "Inclusive education is just another area I will be happy to forget about. If I have challenges in helping those who are able bodied what about those with disabilities?" They also indicated that they will find it difficult to handle cases of special needs in their classes though they feel they are morally obliged to. Student teachers also felt that focusing attention on one or two pupils with special needs might present serious discipline problems in their classrooms given the teacher pupil ratio of around 1: 40 at primary school. They felt that severe cases of failure to grasp concepts, physical disability, mental retardation, blindness and deafness should continue to be handled by special schools or by a specialist teacher in a special class like what prevails now. Adventurous students felt that they can take the bull by the horns and even go to special schools to do their teaching practice. Theirs will be more of an apprenticeship programme because their mentors would have to teach them from the basics. This might however mean that they will only be trained in handling one form of impairment for example mental retardation because in Masvingo, well established special schools specialise on one particular form of disability for example visual impairment.

3.2.Findings From Document Analysis

The documents analysed include syllabi for subject areas, students' lecture notes and teaching programmes for lecturers. The teaching diploma programme is covered in two terms residential phase for theoretical grounding, five terms of teaching practice and the last two residential terms for revision and final examination to give a total of three years. A term is approximately ten weeks. The curriculum in the three teachers' colleges is uniform though there are variations in the actual syllabi used. Each teachers college generates its own syllabus which is the endorsed by the University of Zimbabwe. Syllabi for the three colleges are now almost identical through constant moderation by the University of Zimbabwe. The curriculum is made up of four sections as follows:

- Section 1: Teaching Practice
- Section 2: Theory of Education
- Section 3: Academic/Main Study
- Section 4: Professional Studies Syllabus A, B and C

Teaching Practice is a practical phase of five school terms embarked on after the initial two terms of theoretical grounding in Theory of Education, Academic Study and Professional Studies Syllabus A, B and C. In the five terms of Teaching Practice, Theory of Education, Academic Study and Professional Studies continue to be studied through Distance Education. At the end of Teaching Practice, students have an extra two final terms for additional content coverage, revision and final examinations.

Theory of Education is made up of the study of philosophical, psychological and sociological theories underpinning primary school education. Academic Study involves a specialisation by a student in one subject area chosen from the subjects taught at primary school. These are: Art and design, English, Environmental Science, Home Economics, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Religious Studies and Shona. Academic Study involves an in-depth study of content of the subject area without necessarily linking it with pedagogical issues. Professional Studies is made up of three syllabi. Syllabus A deals with professional and theoretical issues critical to classroom practice. Syllabus B is made up of pedagogical subjects taught at primary school like Art and design, English, Environmental Science, Home Economics, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Religious Studies and Shona. Health and Life Skills, Information and Communication Technology and National and Strategic Studies are part of Syllabus B. Though they do not exist as separate subjects at primary school but they are critical in providing requisite life skills to the teacher. Except for the Health and Life Skills syllabus and Theory of Education, all the other syllabi are silent on the need for Inclusive Education. Syllabus C is concerned with a research project and from the records students do not carry out their researches in Inclusive Education. Theory of Education is concerned with equipping students with "basic theoretical understanding and appreciation of disability and vulnerability" without clear focus on how to assist disadvantaged learners.

3.3.Findings From Observation

The researchers observed infrastructure and general routines, before, during and after lectures to establish the presence or absence of an inclusive culture at the colleges identified. Generally the infrastructure, especially the grounds and buildings, are meant for student teachers with no impairments. At all the colleges investigated, there are very minimal modifications to the infrastructure and these modifications are meant for those using wheelchairs. These modifications also appear as after thoughts after the original plan ignored the provisions for the handicapped. The passages to critical areas for example the library are all very difficult to navigate for those with visual and physical impairments to the legs. In addition to buildings, institutional vehicles in the colleges under research do not carry any special provision for the handicapped.

It was also observed that college administrators are 100% able bodied and about 99% of lecturers are also able bodied. Even among the support staff there are 0% cases of disability.

Generally there are very few cases (about 2%) of those with special needs training to be teachers.

Most of the renovations and improvements to buildings were done following injuries to student teachers who were already in stream. Such students find it very difficult to move about the college and in most cases they solicit the services of friends to be able to move about.

In terms of extracurricular activities, the student teachers with challenges find a problem of finding mates to train and compete against. At the end of the day those with handicaps are left out of critical activities of the curriculum.

4. Discussion And Conclusion

The findings reflect the opportunities and challenges which beset primary school teacher education in the colleges identified. It is apparent that though there are policy provisions which support the implementation of Inclusive Education, Primary school teacher education is simply not 'walking the talk'.

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education through its representatives seems reluctant to assume a paradigm shift. Infrastructural developments like renovations and improvements to buildings and grounds to accommodate those with different forms of handicaps are a reactive rather than a proactive undertaking. Administrators only think of provision for the disabled when they have seen one. Children and adults with special needs are likely to suffer from stigma and low self esteem after the realisation that whatever was first constructed did not take them into consideration. Worse still, the complaints and excuses about inadequate finances when it comes to renovations and procurement of requisite resources like Braille machines and other assistive devices for the disabled are likely to entrench the feeling that handicapped students are an extra burden which is not worth carrying yet disabled persons have entitlements enshrined in numerous international and Zimbabwean statutes. Primary school teacher training colleges should lead the way in setting up well equipped laboratories and libraries in addition to recruiting specialist personnel for the effective training of trainee teachers to handle children with special needs in inclusive classrooms.

Worse still, the current primary school teacher education curriculum where all the majority of subjects are largely silent on Inclusive Education shows no commitment to inclusivity. On leaving college as a qualified practitioner, the student teacher is ill-equipped to effectively assist those with special needs to the extent that the purported inclusive classroom will be a de facto exclusion zone where the child with special needs is clearly left alone and ignored as others learn (Nyoni et al, 2012; Musengi and Chireshe, 2012). It becomes very difficult to advocate for a transition from separate placement offered by special schools to so-called inclusive schools which in real essence will be damaging in terms of educational attainment and self esteem. Without the requisite infrastructure and the correction of negative attitudes towards Inclusive Education in teacher education institutions, it is only proper to say that special schools will remain a useful tool in addressing the educational aspirations of persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe.

The mismatch between policy and implementation might be an indictment of the government's planning, implementation and supervisory machinery which seems to work without particular benchmarks and timelines. It is baffling that critical stakeholders like teacher educators are not consulted for their input during policy formulation and yet they are supposed to implement programmes conceived from above. Even with meticulously crafted policies in Inclusive Education, if the core implements, the teachers, do not fully appreciate the critical nature of inclusion, and if they are not equipped with the necessary and requisite skills, Inclusive Education in Zimbabwe will remain a pie in the sky. This lack of proper consultation before enactment of policies explains why Zimbabwe's education landscape is littered with policy failures (Gatawa, 1998).

By not creating an enabling environment for the few student teachers with handicaps, these institutions are disabling students who might have great potential if assisted. These students are likely to feel the debilitating effects of an environment that constantly puts physical and emotional barriers on their way. This, in a way, becomes a violation of their rights as enunciated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013). Perhaps this is so because those persons with disabilities, from the observations made in the three colleges, seem not to have genuine ambassadors amongst both academic and non-academic staff to put forward their views. In situations where all administrators, lecturers and support staff are overwhelmingly able bodied, it becomes very difficult to empathetically lobby for an inclusive culture.

What is equally worrying are the attitudes which might be engendered in student teachers as they go through their experiences during the years of training. If the curriculum is about all the experiences students go through under the guidance of the school (Tyler, 1949), then the experiences of student teachers should unequivocally display the conviction of teacher education institutions to fully embrace inclusive education because

Full inclusion must be embedded deeply in the very foundation the school, in its missions, its belief system, and its daily activities, rather than an appendage that is added on to a conventional school (Levin in Lipsky and Gartner, 1997: 390).

An exclusive education system cannot mould an inclusive classroom practitioner. This is so because curriculum experiences come mainly from three sources which are: the formal curriculum that is planned by the school for example subjects like Mathematics, languages, and sciences; the co-curricular activities for example sports, cultural activities and educational tours as well as from the hidden curriculum that results from the student's interaction with the school environment and the school community (Chitiyo, 2004). There is need for a holistic approach which seeks to revamp the way Inclusive Education has been perceived and handled at primary school teacher training level for it to succeed.

The findings confirm that there are still hurdles to surmount for the primary school teacher education system to produce a teacher who fully appreciates the value of all school children, as human beings regardless of any disabilities they may carry. The current situation might be indicative of the sad reality that time and energy are wasted on policy formulation, workshops and seminars on Inclusive Education without directing energies towards real implementation.

The current apathy in terms of implementation of Inclusive Education might also lie in the history of special education provision in Zimbabwe. The long history of separate provision of special needs education through missionary run special schools seems to have an indelible effect on attitudes. There is a deeply entrenched belief that special schools have been doing it right and should continue doing it. Perhaps it would also be important at some point to examine the attitudes of those who run special schools to establish their attitude towards inclusivity. It might be that they have also grown protective of the way they have dispensed special education for many decades.

This research notes that most researches have focused on the implementation of Inclusive Education in schools in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, it therefore hopes to make a worthwhile contribution to the discourse on Inclusive Education by focusing on the preparation of primary school teachers. This is so because of the critical role of teachers in community and national development. The research being a case study is also aware that the findings might not necessarily be replicated if different cases are used.

5. The Way Forward

For the effective training of teachers in Inclusive Education in Zimbabwe, this research recommends the following measures:

- Policy makers, the government in particular, should ensure that the policy on Inclusive Education clearly finds its way into the primary school teacher education curriculum. All college syllabi should clearly articulate inclusion in their content and teaching approaches. In addition to this, all support resources should find their way to teacher training colleges to boost the practical element of specialist training. Primary school teacher training colleges should go beyond mere possession of policy documents but should match policy with practice by making the concept of inclusion an institutional culture to indicate real commitment.
- There is need for primary school teacher training colleges to have a serious relook at their infrastructure in a proactive manner rather than to react to new cases of disability which are enrolled. There is need to have a physical environment which promotes mobility of persons with visual and severe physical handicaps who might need the use of a wheel chair. Well equipped laboratories stocked with assistive devices should be set up as well.
- There is need to put in place an affirmative action for the recruitment of disabled students into teacher education institutions as well as on allocating them of posts of special responsibility for them to be part of the decision markers in colleges. This has the net effect of raising the self esteem of those with different forms of handicaps through supplying role models to many handicapped children who might be unaware of their potentialities despite their handicaps. Affirmative action will enable those with challenges to speak from within the corridors of power as well as raising enrolment figures and making people with special needs a common feature of teacher training institutions. This will encourage these institutions to remain seized with the issue of inclusion.
- All lecturers at primary school teacher training colleges should go for staff development to ensure that they can handle Inclusive Education effectively.
- Policy makers should put a monitoring mechanism which is tasked with assessing the effectiveness of Inclusive Education strategies implemented and recommending possible improvements. At the moment it looks as if the policy planners simply end at policy formulation with no effective monitoring and evaluation.
- Inclusion as a policy should be taken up by all sectors of society as a priority issue. All sectors of the state including business community should be encouraged to channel resources towards inclusion.
- There should be a persistent and consistent awareness campaign for inclusion at national level because the negative attitudes towards those with special needs and the very high numbers of children with special needs who do not attend school could be indicative of deep seated negative societal perceptions towards disability.

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