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## **Universal Access to Early Childhood Development (ECDB) in Zimbabwe: An Analysis of Challenges Faced by Children**

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### **Abstract:**

*This study focused on universal access to Early Childhood Development (ECD B) by children. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. The quantitative approach was used collect data to address issues such as the spread of ECD centre, total enrolment of ECD B children and the age range of children in the ECD B classes through the use of questionnaires. The qualitative approach included desk review of relevant literature, observations, informative interviews and focus group discussions. Through focus group discussions with School Development Committees and Associations, the study employed a community based process of analysis to establish perspectives, challenges, regarding access to ECD B by children. The study was carried out in all the ten provinces of Zimbabwe. Districts were randomly sampled from each province. Schools were randomly and purposively sampled according to their location (that is farm, resettlement, rural and peri-urban) and responsible authority (for example urban, rural district, mine, Government, mission or trust). Sampling of participants was done purposively. The study established that the majority of children in all the ten provinces walk between 1 and 5km to and from school. Findings revealed that there are many factors that prevent ECD B children from attending school, these include: hunger, limited places, economic hardships, fees and other school charges, parent`s ignorance on the importance of ECD, mobility of parents, lack of infrastructure among others. Measures in place to ensure all children attend ECD B were cited by respondents as: advocacy and community awareness on the importance of attending ECD B, sustainable school feeding programmes to motivate and entertain children to attend ECD B and parental involvement in ECD B matters. Participants indicated that throughout the ten provinces ECD B places are inadequate.*

**Keywords:** Universal access, Early Childhood Development, challenges.

### **1. Introduction**

In education, the term access typically refers to ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure, or at least strive to ensure that children have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education. Access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) ensures that quality programmes are available for all children in the year before starting formal school. Research shows that participating in a quality Early Childhood Development programme can significantly increase positive educational and life outcomes for children especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Following the 1999 Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET) Report, the Ministry of Education commissioned a review of Early Childhood Education and Care in Zimbabwe to establish the status of its provision. Through the Secretary`s Policy Circular No. 14 of 2004, the Director`s Circular No. 12 of 2005 and Statutory Instrument No. 106 of 2005, the findings of the review enabled the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to specify guidelines on the provision of ECD in primary schools. In line with the CIET Report main recommendation to democratize pre-school education, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education designed a two phased ten year programme to establish ECD classes at every primary school in the country. During phase one (2005/6 to 2010), every primary school was expected to attach at least one ECD class of 4-5 years old, referred to as ECD B to prepare children for Grade one the following year. In phase two (2011 to 2015), every primary school should attach another ECD class of 3 to 4 years old referred to as ECD A to prepare them for ECD B. It is against this background that this article reports on the impediments that hamper universal ECD B access in Zimbabwe.

### **2. Methodology**

The study was carried out within the context of the following research questions:

- 1) How widespread is access to ECD B in Zimbabwe?
- 2) What factors are preventing children from attending ECD B?
- 3) What measures were put in place to ensure that all children have access to ECD B?

### 2.1. Research Design

Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were used to assess the accessibility of ECD B by Zimbabwean children. The qualitative approach included a desk review of relevant literature, informative interviews and Focus Group Discussions. The approaches established perspectives and challenges about issues surrounding access to ECD B. They were used to elicit views, perceptions, expectations and knowledge of the key ECD professionals and other stakeholders. In-depth interviews with key informants such as head teachers, teachers and parents were conducted. Document analysis was carried out on various Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Circulars, Education Act 2006, National Statistical Reports and 1999 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training.

The quantitative approach was used to collect statistical data to address issues such as the enrolment of children and the spread of ECD B centres.

### 2.2. Data Collection Methods

#### 2.2.1. Focus Group Discussions

Participatory Reflective Analysis (PRA) techniques which focused on Focus Group Discussions were employed with key informants. In this assessment, Focus Group Discussions were carried out to gather in-depth information, views and opinions about access to the ECD B programme.

#### 2.2.2. Key Informant Interviews

Key Informant Interviews were conducted with selected school heads, Teachers` In Charge and Early Childhood Development (ECD B) teachers. They were interviewed as part of knowledgeable individuals to solicit information on access to ECD B by children.

#### 2.2.3. Questionnaires

In order to gather specific statistical data on access to ECD B by children, questionnaires were administered to Provincial Education Directors (PEDs), selected District Education Officers (DEOs) and Early Childhood Development Education Officers based at Head Office. These were the most suitable subjects to provide the reliable statistics needed about access to ECD B.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis took place concurrently with data collection. Hence themes were identified as they emerged from the data.

### 2.4. Sampling

#### 2.4.1. Population

The assessment was carried out in all the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe. The population from which the sample was drawn from included all primary schools, Education Officials, at district, Provincial and Head Office levels and registered ECD B centres in Zimbabwe.

#### 2.4.2. Sample and Sampling Procedures

The following sampling procedures were used in selecting the sample for this assessment: Random, purposive and convenience sampling procedures. Sampling of interviewees was done purposively. Officials at policy making level were selected and administered with a questionnaire. Focus Group Discussion participants were randomly selected for interviews and these included parents and school children.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

### 3.1. Total Enrolment at ECDB Level

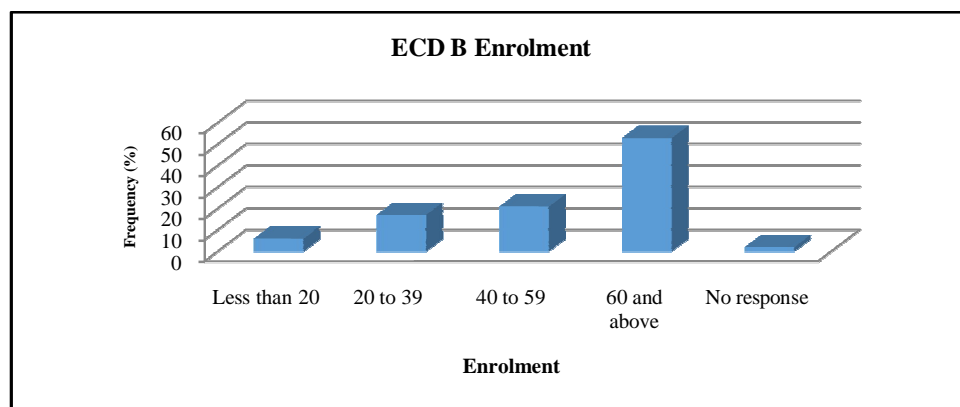


Figure 1: Enrolment at schools offering ECD B

The survey established that, most children have access to ECD B. The trend across the ten provinces is that teacher –pupil ratio is high. Those classes with 60 children and above in Bulawayo are 60.5%, Harare 76.2%, Manicaland 68.3%, Mashonaland Central 69.9%, Mashonaland East 47.7%, Masvingo 52.4%, Matabeleland South 46.3% and Midlands is 40.7%. Mashonaland West and Matabeleland North have a high teacher-pupil ratio which is between 40 and 59 children with 42.9% and 35.7% respectively. This goes against Statutory Instrument (SI) 106 of 2005 which indicates in Section 13.1(a) that, ‘There shall be one teacher to a minimum enrolment of 20 children at each ECD centre’. The Annual Statistical Report (2012:44) reiterates the above when it points out that, ‘Each ECD centre must have 1 teacher to 20 pupils’.

It is possible that high teacher- pupil ratio is unavoidable. The Secretary’s Circular 13 of 2014 emphasizes, that ‘Every child has a right to be enrolled into an ECDB class on presentation of a health card, must be at least 4 years of age....’ The Constitution of Zimbabwe stipulates that, “every child has the right to education”. In line with the above, the Education Act 2006 (Chapter 25:04), as amended provides that every child in Zimbabwe has the right to education. No child shall be refused admission to any school or be discriminated against by the imposition of onerous conditions with regards to admission to any school on the grounds of his/her race, tribe, place of origin, national or ethnic origin, political opinion, colour, creed or gender.

Findings revealed that reasons for high teacher-pupil ratio are:

- i. Inadequate infrastructure in the schools; and
- ii. Schools are prohibited from turning away children who are in need of places. (Education Act 2006 [Chapter 25:04], as amended, The Secretary’s Circular 13 of 2014). This is a good move in affording eligible children access to ECD B education.

However, in a scenario where teacher-pupil ratio is high, ECD B children may not benefit in terms of the holistic development of the child. Teacher-pupil interaction is compromised as the teacher may not adequately stimulate all children. The teacher may not be in a position to provide adequate resources for the large class and he/she may not be able to pay attention to the individual needs of children. However, such large classes need the presence of two teachers, a qualified teacher and an assistant teacher. Such a scenario is not possible in Zimbabwe at the moment due to shortage of manpower and funding.

### 3.1.1. Age to attend ECD B

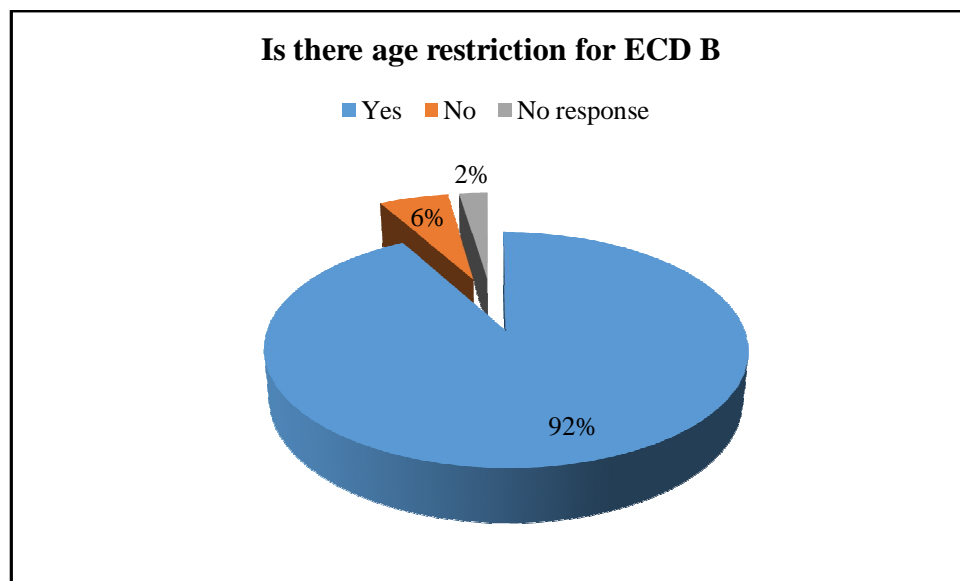


Figure 2: Responses to age restriction on ECD B attendance

Ninety-two per cent of the respondents indicated that there is age restriction into ECD B classes, while 6% indicated that there is no age restriction into ECD B classes. Two per cent of the respondents did not answer. All the ten provinces indicated that there is an age restriction into ECD B as reflected by the statistics for the different provinces: Bulawayo(90.7%), Harare(100%), Manicaland(100%), Mashonaland Central(86.3%), Mashonaland East(88.6%), Mashonaland West(100%), Masvingo(97.6%), Matabeleland North(89.3%), Matabeleland South(91.0%) and Midlands(84.7%). The respondents are in line with the Secretary’s circular 14 of 2004 and the Director’s circular 12 of 2005 which indicate a minimum of 4 years as the age entry into ECD B.

### 3.1.2. Age range allowed into ECD B (Youngest/Oldest)

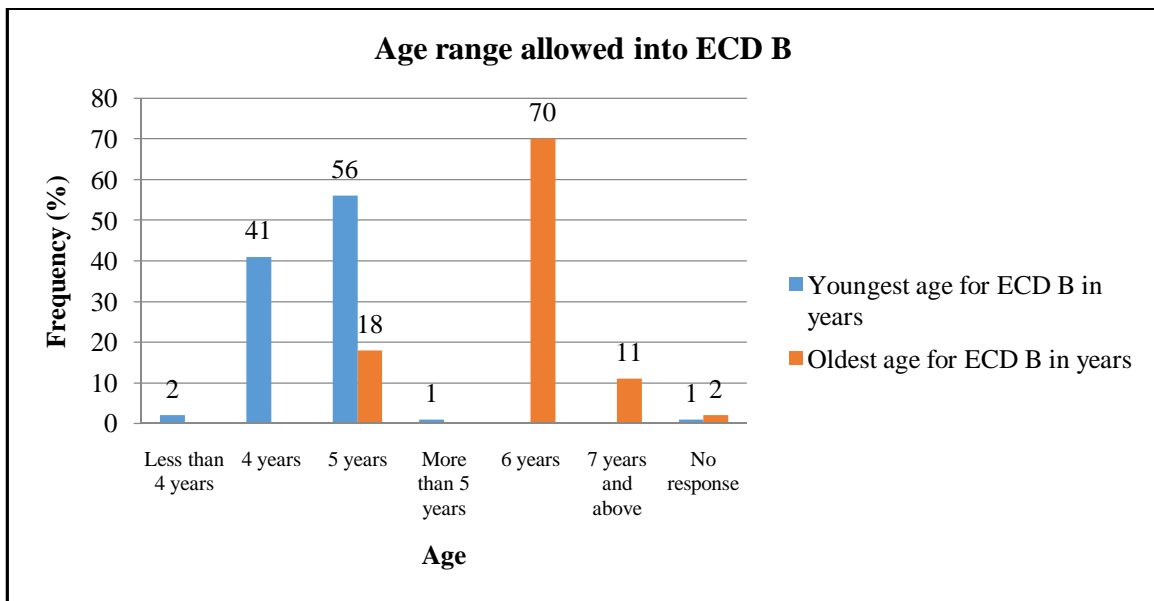


Figure 3: Age range of ECD B children

Two provinces out of ten indicated that the youngest age into ECD B class is 4 years (Bulawayo 47.6% and Midlands (54.5%). The two provinces are in line with the Secretary’s Circular 13 of 2014 which stipulates that, ‘Every child has a right to be enrolled into an ECD class.... must be at least 4 years of age’. The Secretary’s circular 14 of 2004 and the Director’s circular 12 of 2005 reiterate the above as they also take 4 years as the age of entry into ECD B. The rest of the provinces indicated 5 years as the youngest age into ECDE, these are: Harare 52.4%, Manicaland 68.3%, Mashonaland Central 53.1%, Mashonaland East 84.6%, Mashonaland West 54.3%, Masvingo 50.0%, Matabeleland North 55.6% and Matabeleland South 60.7%. On the other hand, all the ten provinces indicated that the oldest age into ECD B is 6 years (Bulawayo 40.5%, Harare 76.2%, Manicaland 88.9%, Mashonaland Central 53.1%, Mashonaland East 100%, Mashonaland West 51.4%, Masvingo 66.7%, Matabeleland North 70.4%, Matabeleland South 62.3% and Midlands 72.7%).

This implies that 5 years is the maximum age restriction into ECD B. The Annual Statistical Report (2012:19) states that, ‘The official primary school entry age is 6 years. It goes further to say, --- the 2012 data analysis shows that only 38% of pupils entering Grade One for the first time are 6 years, 42% are 7 and 12.1% are 8 years old. ‘However, some schools are in line with the Director’s circular 48 of 2007, item 4.2 which states that, ‘Where there are more applicants for admission to that level than there are places, the Head of the Centre shall give preference to the oldest applicants.’ Field work established that some schools do not enroll children into Grade One unless they have passed through ECD B which is a pre-requisite into Grade One. This is why we find Grade One children aged 7 and 8 years respectively.

3.1.3. When was ECD B attached in the schools?

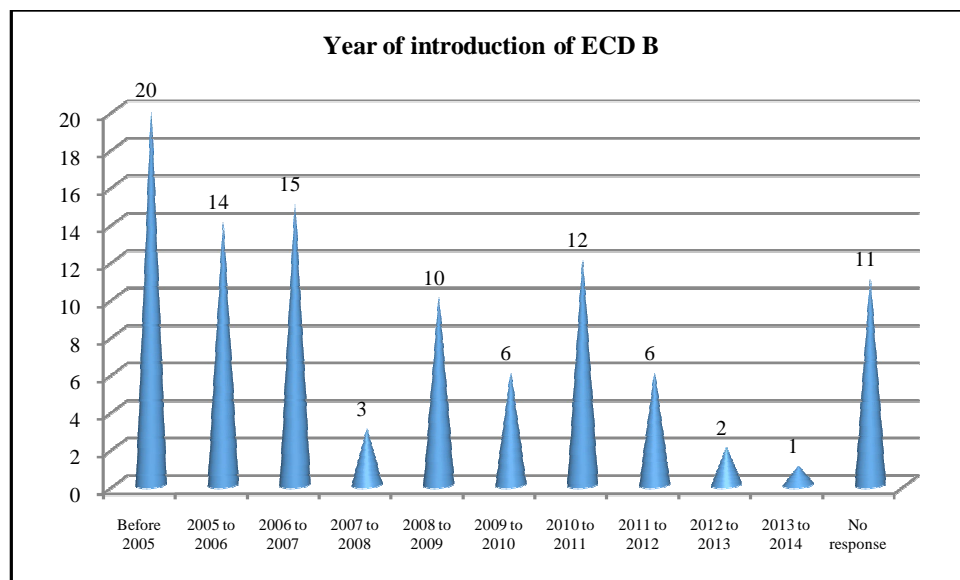


Figure 4: Year of introduction of ECD B



The ECD B classes were attached to different schools at different times across the ten provinces. Eight provinces out of ten had ECD B classes attached to some of their schools between 2005 and 2006: Bulawayo 30.2%, Harare 28.6%, Manicaland 15.9%, Mashonaland Central 20.5%, Mashonaland West 14.3%, Matabeleland North 10.7%, Matabeleland South 16.4% and Midlands 6.8%. In other words, the majority of the provinces took heed to the call that was made in 2004 in line with the Secretary's circular 14 of 2004 which instructed all primary schools in Zimbabwe to attach an ECD B class of children aged between 4-5 years with effect from 2005. It is interesting to note that almost all the provinces except Bulawayo had ECD B classes attached to some of the primary schools before 2005. In a similar vein, the Director's circular Number 12 of 2005 gives guidelines on the provision of ECD B. It states that the provision of ECD is done in phases and that the first 5-year programme would see every primary schools attaching an ECD B class of children between 4 and 5 years. These are the children who graduated into Grade One in 2006. The process went beyond the 5-year period that was stipulated by the Ministry of Education. The schools gradually attached the ECD B classes in accordance with their ability to provide resources. By about between 2013 and 2014, three provinces had ECD B attached to some of their schools (Manicaland 4.8%, Matabeleland North 10.7% and Midlands 1.7%). There is a possibility that such schools which attached an ECD B class at this point are satellite schools. According to the Annual Statistical Report (2012:8), in 2012 a total of 5, 625 (98%) of primary schools were offering ECD B classes and this is in line with the policy of increasing children's access to ECD. The Report goes further to say that the number of primary schools offering ECD increased by 9% from 5, 114 in 2010 to 5,625. This is a positive move towards affording all children access into ECD B education as well as realizing their right to education and it fulfils one of the Nziramasanga Commission's recommendations which called for increased access to Early Childhood Education. By 2012, ECD B classes in the ten provinces of Zimbabwe had a total of 234,332 children of which 117,271 are boys and 117061 are girls (The Annual Statistical Report, 2012). The Annual Statistical Report (2012:3) concurs with the above when it articulates that, 'In order to increase access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) for all children, with effect from 2005 the Ministry adopted a policy to introduce an ECD class at every primary school.

### 3.1.4. Furthest distance walked by children attending ECD B classes from their homes

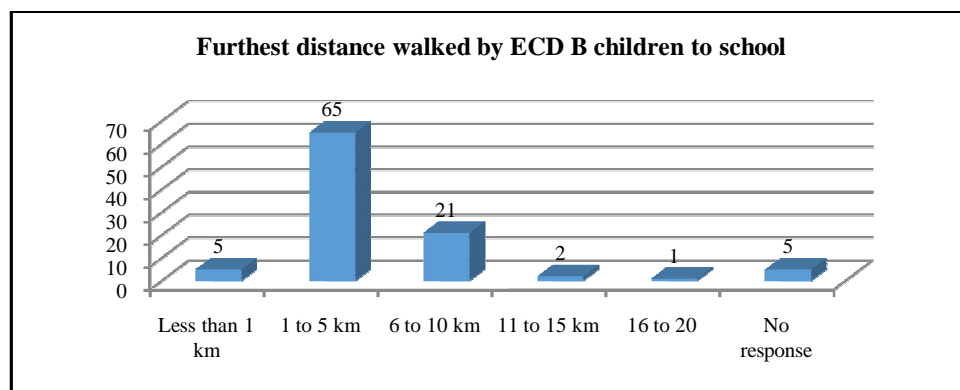


Figure 5: Furthest distance walked by children

About 5% of children across the ten provinces walk less than 1km to and from school. Sixty –five percent indicated that they walk between 1 and 5 km. Twenty – one percent walk between 6 and 10 km. Two percent walk between 11 and 15 km. One percent walk between 16 and 20 km. Five percent did not respond. The majority of children in all the ten provinces walk between 1 and 5km to and from school (Bulawayo 58.1%, Harare 57.1%, Manicaland 92.1%, Mashonaland Central 50.7%, Mashonaland East 43.2%, Mashonaland West 77.1%, Masvingo 81.0%, Matabeleland North 78.6%, Matabeleland South 73.1% and Midlands 45.8%) This implies that the majority of the ECD B children throughout the ten provinces are within the stipulated walking distance of between 1 and 5 km. This is supported by the Annual Statistical Report (2012:8) which states that, 'A primary school child shall not walk more than 5km to a primary school. ECD B children are also part of the primary school system (The Director's Circular 12 of 2005, page 2, Item 2.1; The Secretary's Circular 2 of 2014, page 3, item 4.1). However, findings revealed that a significant number of children are still walking a long distance of between 5 and 10km to and from school. Bulawayo has 18.6%, Harare 14.3%, Manicaland 1.6%, Mashonaland Central 43.8%, Mashonaland East 31.8%, Mashonaland West 8.6%, Masvingo 14.3%, Matabeleland 14.3%, Matabeleland 17.9% and Midlands 30.5% of children travelling this long distance. This is against the stipulated distance to be walked of between 1 and 5km and hence such children are prone to abuse on their way to and from school (Director's Circular 27 of 2008 Items 3.1 and 3.3). They are not likely to benefit from the programme because when they get to school they are tired and may fall asleep. It is necessary to have community-based ECD B centres in order to cut the distance short. The community-based ECD centres should be attached to the nearest primary schools for the purposes of administration, monitoring and supervision (Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005). Findings indicated that there are still other children who travel between 11 and 15km to and from school (Harare 4.8%, Manicaland 6.3%, Mashonaland Central 1.4% and Matabeleland). Provinces like Mashonaland East (4.5%) and Masvingo (4.8%) have other children who walk between 16 and 20km to and from school. The study revealed that such children are attending satellite schools situated in resettlement areas which are very far from each other, hence the need for community –based or village ECD centres.

3.1.5. Availability of transport for ECD B children coming from outside walking distance

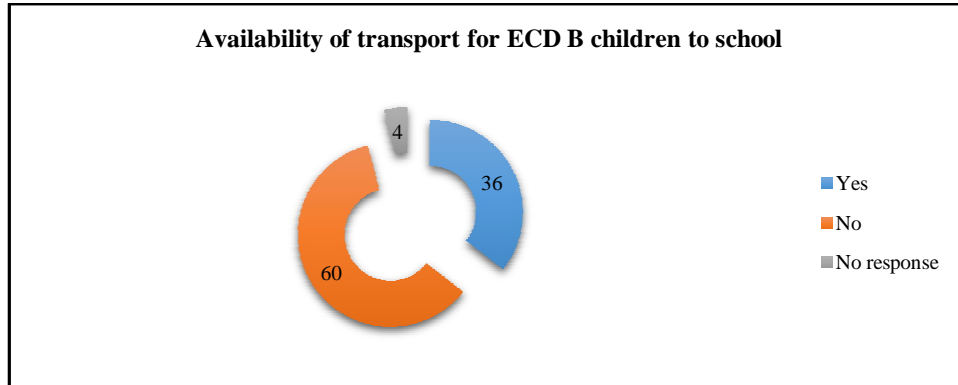


Figure 6: Availability of transport for ECD B children

Across the ten provinces, about 36% of ECD B children are provided with transport to and from school. Some parents ferry their children to and from school while others use public transport. Sixty-point percent are not provided with transport. Field work revealed that most of the children who walk for a long distance are found in resettlement areas where schools are very far. Therefore, communities need to be mobilized, sensitised and educated on the dangers of having children walk for long distances.

Long distances have the implications that children will drop out of school and this negatively affects access to ECD B. The Annual Statistical Report (2012:61) points out that there are several reasons why pupils drop out of school. It goes further to say the most common reason at primary level is relocation which contributes 51.6% of all primary school dropouts. Most parents benefitted from the land reform programme and they need to be educated in order to see the need to come up with village ECD centres that would help their children walk for shorter distances to school.

3.1.6. Factors That Prevent ECD B Children from Attending School

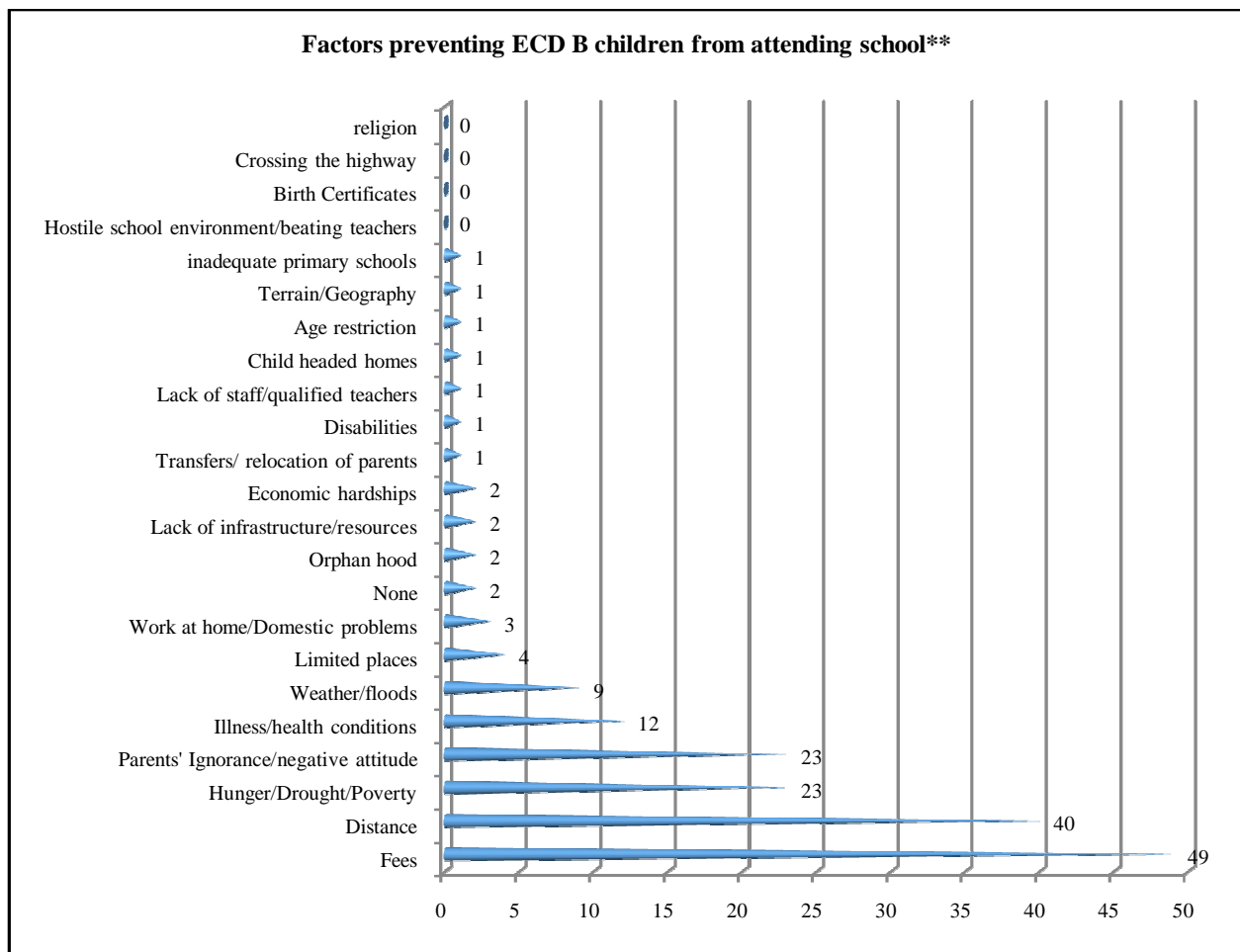


Figure 7: Factors preventing children from attending ECD B

Findings revealed that there are many factors that prevent ECD B children from attending schools. Some of the factors are 1) distance walked to school by children (38%), 2) hunger 22%), 3) limited places (1.3%), 4) economic hardships (0.9%), 5) fees and other school charges (0.9%),6) parent’s ignorance on the importance of ECD (22%),7) mobility of parents (0.2%), 8) lack of infrastructure (1.3%) among others. This is supported by the National Statistical Report (2012:51) when it articulates that, ‘There are many factors that contribute to inequality in children’s schooling ranging from socioeconomic, cultural and parents’ level of education’. Findings revealed that economic hardships prevent the ECD B children from going to school. Parents do not have money to pay fees for their children. The National Statistical Report (2012:61) concurs with the above by articulating that, ‘School fees are the next greatest barrier to a child participating in education---’. Ewen, Blank, Hart and Schulman(2002) in Yelovina(2003) concur with the above when they articulated that, ‘... affordable, high-quality child care and education programmes remain unavailable to the majority of families with young children-especially low-income families’. In Zimbabwe ECD B is privately funded hence, chances of many children failing to go to ECD B are likely to be high. This alone contributes towards inequality in children’s schooling. The National Statistical Report (2012:51) pointed out that, ‘Government has put in place programmes that seek to address inequality in schooling for vulnerable children. Some of these children deserve to get assistance from the state in the form of Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM)’. This is in line with the Constitution of Zimbabwe (No. 20) Act 2013 Chapter 4 Section 56 sub-section 3, which stipulates that, ‘Every citizen has a right to state funded education...’

Findings revealed that hunger is one factor that hinders children from going to school and that some areas have been hard hit by drought such that parents would not allow their children to go to school when they are hungry. It surfaced from the findings that the issue of distance walked by ECD B children seems to be one of the biggest challenges that hinder ECD B children from accessing ECD B education and hence the right to education by children cannot be fully realized. If community- based ECD centers are established, they would cut short the distance walked by the children to school.

3.1.7. Dropout Rate for ECD B Children.

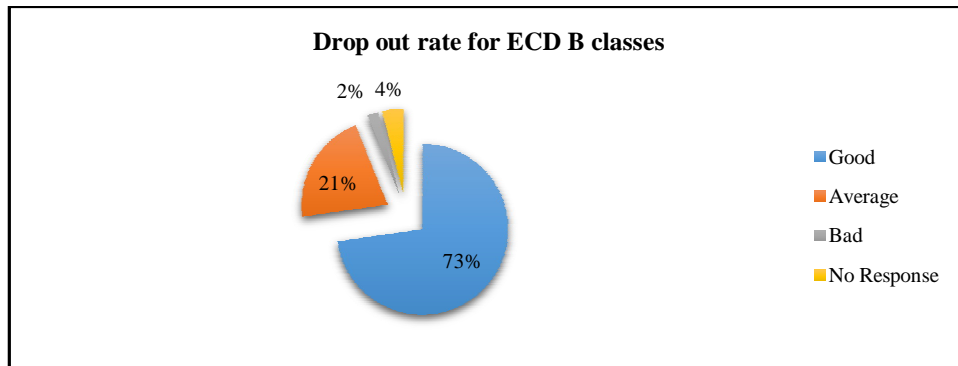


Figure 8: Dropout rate for ECD B children

Throughout the ten provinces, the dropout rate for ECD B children is good (73%).This implies that once children have enrolled into ECD B classes, they are not likely to drop out. They are retained at school until they graduate into Grade One (Bulawayo 51.2%), Harare (90.5%), Manicaland (71.4%), Mashonaland Central (74.0%), Mashonaland East (100%), Mashonaland West (77.1%), Masvingo (85.7%), Matabeleland North (25.0%), Matabeleland South (77.6%) and Midlands (62.7%). Only 2% of the respondents across the ten provinces indicated that the dropout rate is bad. This is an indication that most primary schools have the ability to retain children once they enroll into ECD B classes and access into ECD B by all eligible children is ensured. However, measures need to be put in place so that children who are likely to dropout due to circumstances that can be avoided should not do so. Twenty-one percent were average and 4% did not respond.

3.1.8. ECD B as a Pre-Requisite for Entry into Grade One

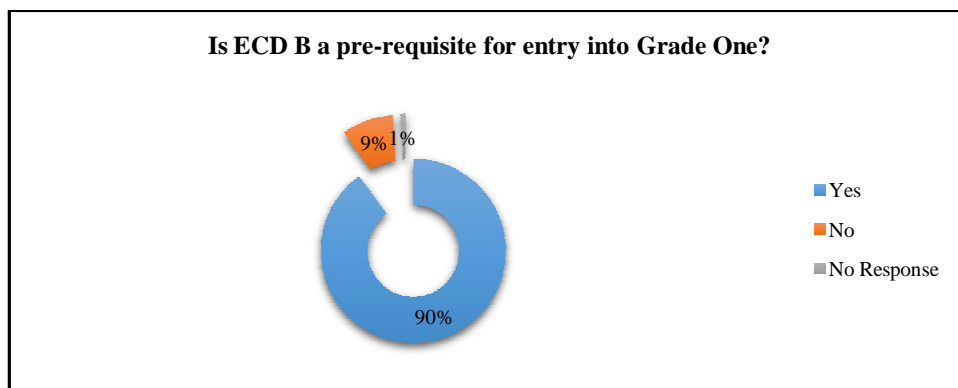


Figure 9: ECD B as a prerequisite for entry into Grade One

Findings have revealed that responses (90%) from all the ten provinces acknowledged that ECD B is a prerequisite for entry into Grade One (Bulawayo (62.8%), Harare (71.4%), Manicaland (84.1%), Mashonaland Central (95.9%), Mashonaland East (95.5%) Mashonaland West (91.4%) Masvingo (97.6%), Matabeleland North (96.4%), Matabeleland South (98.5%) and Midlands (91.5%). This is in line with the Secretary's Circular minute 2 of 2014 item 4.1 which articulates that, "This policy strategy effectively means that it is not optional for any learner to omit attending ECD B and item 4.2 which stipulates that, therefore, with effect from January 2014, every Zimbabwean child is expected to receive two years of structured quality pre-formal learning through attendance in an ECD A and ECD B facility of the primary school closest to his / her home in preparation for grade one enrolment". Findings have revealed that some schools do not enroll a child into Grade One unless he/she has gone through ECD B. Nine percent indicated that ECD B is not a prerequisite for entry into Grade One. One percent did not respond.

### 3.1.9. Measures in Place to Ensure All Children Enroll for ECD B

Respondents gave a number of measures which they think if put in place may ensure all children enroll for ECD B. Some of the measures include 1) no child will enroll into grade one without passing through ECD B, 2) teaching parents the importance of ECD, 3) production of a graduation certificate before enrolling for grade 1 among others. This simply means that some parents are not aware of the importance of ECD and hence, they are not likely to send their children to school. Therefore, parental education and involvement on ECD matters is very crucial in ensuring that all children enroll for ECD B. The Directors' Circular 12 of 2005 item 3.4 supports the idea when it states that, 'Given the fact that ECD classes are an integral part of the primary school systems, School Development Associations / Committees (SDA/C<sup>s</sup>) are expected to play a crucial role in developing and promoting the ECD programme at their school. They should contribute towards the construction and furniture of ECD centres / classrooms. They should also decide on fees and levies in the usual manner'. The same measures will also ensure that ECD B children do not drop out of school.

MoPSE believes the following provisions can circumvent the impediments that hamper the achievement of universal ECD B attendance in Zimbabwe:

- MoPSE advocacy and community awareness for children to enrol;
- MoPSE is adopting partnership approaches for inclusive age appropriate infrastructure; and
- Sustainable school feeding programme to motivate and entertain children to attend ECD B.

### 3.1.10. Do Schools Accept Children with Disabilities?

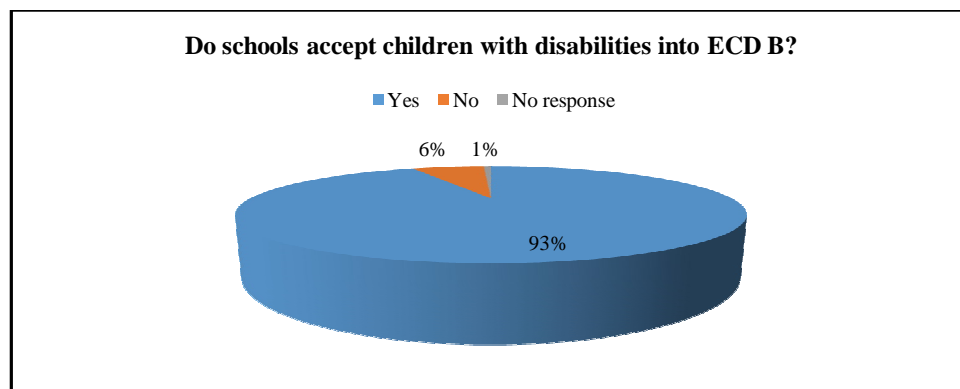


Figure 10: Acceptance of children with disabilities

Ninety three percent of the respondents indicated that schools accept ECD B children with disabilities. Six percent of the responses indicated that they do not accept children with disabilities. One percent did not respond. This is a clear indication that ECD B education in Zimbabwe is inclusive. It is non-discriminatory. This is in line with the Secretary's Circular minute 13 of 2014 item 2 on legal provisions that stipulates that, 'According to the constitution of Zimbabwe, Chapter 4, part 2, section 56, subsection (3), every person has the right not to be treated in an unfairly discriminatory manner...' Findings have revealed that most schools in Zimbabwe are trying to implement inclusive education by way of having ramps on their classroom blocks and toilets. Those schools which have not adjusted their infrastructure to accommodate children with disabilities are not enrolling such children for the time being.

### 3.1.11. Nature of Disabilities of Children Accepted into Schools

Findings revealed that children with all forms of disabilities which include partial hearing, autism, physical and mental challenges among others are accepted into ECD B in the schools. This is a positive move which is in line with the Education Act of 2006 [Chapter 25:04] as amended which provides that, 'Every child in Zimbabwe has the right to education; no child shall be refused admission to any school or be discriminated against by the imposition of onerous conditions with regards to admission to any school on the grounds of his/her race, tribe, place of origin...' The Provincial Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs Education team were mandated to place children with disabilities and other special needs in the schools (Secretary's Circular 2 of 2014 Item 5.6). However, children with profound disabilities still need to be placed in special schools.

**3.1.12. Provisions that ensure that Children with Special Needs are not disadvantaged**

The Principal Director’s Circular 4 of 2010 gives guidelines on the provision of a child friendly school environment with regard to teaching and learning materials which include children with special needs. Respondents indicated various ways that would ensure children with special needs are not disadvantaged which include:

1. Rumps on the buildings;
2. Equal treatment as their counterparts;
3. Provision of the right equipment; and
4. Teaching their peers to be positive towards them.

This is a good indication that the schools are going inclusive and are non-discriminatory although some schools do not have the above mentioned because of financial limitations.

**3.1.13. Are there ECD B Centers attached to your School?**

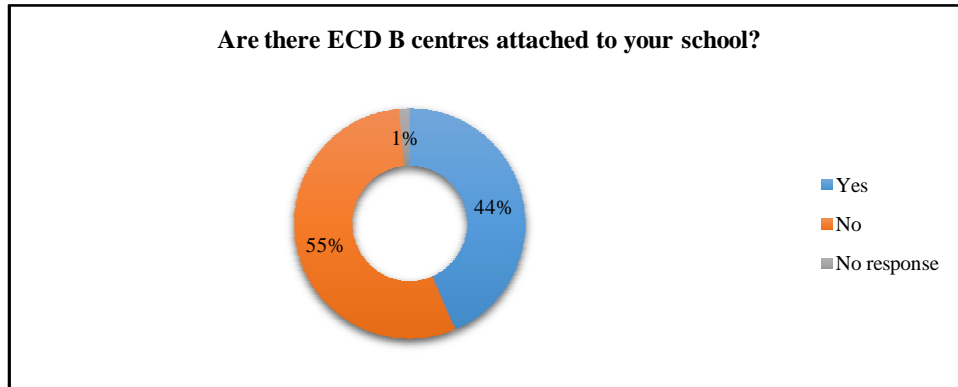


Figure 11: Centres attached to schools

The majority (8 provinces) of the responses (55%) indicated that they do not have ECD B centres attached to them (Bulawayo (53.5%), Harare (81.0%), Manicaland (58.7%), Mashonaland East (54.5%), Mashonaland West (51.4%), Matabeleland North (57.1%), Matabeleland South (62.7%) and Midlands (62.7%) while only 44% of the provinces have ECD B centres attached to them. The average ECD B class should not exceed 20 pupils (Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005). This leaves a lot of children not catered for by the Ministry, and this calls for the mushrooming of private ECD B centers which are not registered. When the Nziramasanga Commission of 1999 recommended the democratization of ECD in Zimbabwe, it did not make private ECD centers illegal. The process itself left a lot of gaps which the owners of private ECD B centers were quick to capitalize upon (The Principal Director’s Circular 26 of 2011). This implies that there are many ECD B centers running in the country but are unregistered and this is why they are not attached to the schools.

**3.1.14. Role of Schools with ECD B Centers attached to them**

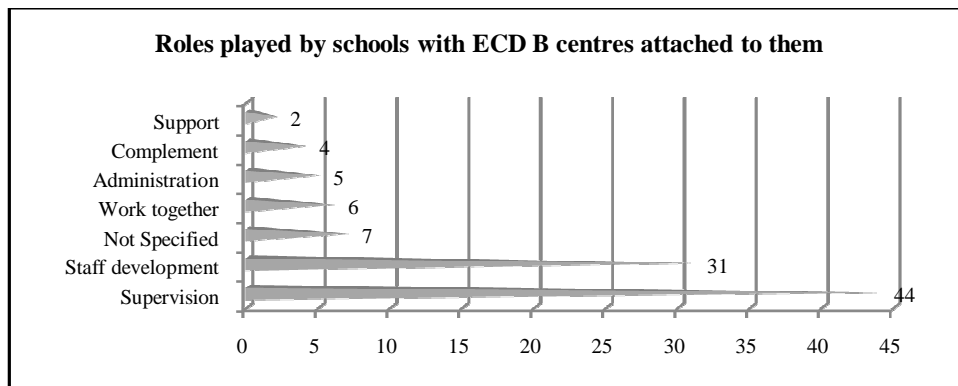


Figure 12: Roles played by schools with ECD B

Findings revealed that the common role played by the schools on ECD centres attached to them is supervision (41%) while staff development is ranked second (28%). They staff develop teachers. They supervise the day-to-day running of the centers as well as administering the centre activities. This is in line with the Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005, Section 14a to f) which stipulate the ‘Duties of the head or supervisor.’ Supervision is very important because it helps the centers to get professional guidance from the school heads so that they are run in line with the Ministry’s expectations. This means that those centers that are not attached to the schools are likely to be run in an unprofessional way. Hence, there is need to register all the ECD centres that are operational in



Zimbabwe and regularize their activities by attaching them to the nearest primary schools so that they can benefit from the professional guidance offered by the school authorities. It is also a move that enables all eligible children to gain access into ECD B since schools have limited places due to shortage of infrastructure.

### 3.1.15. Availability of ECD B places in schools

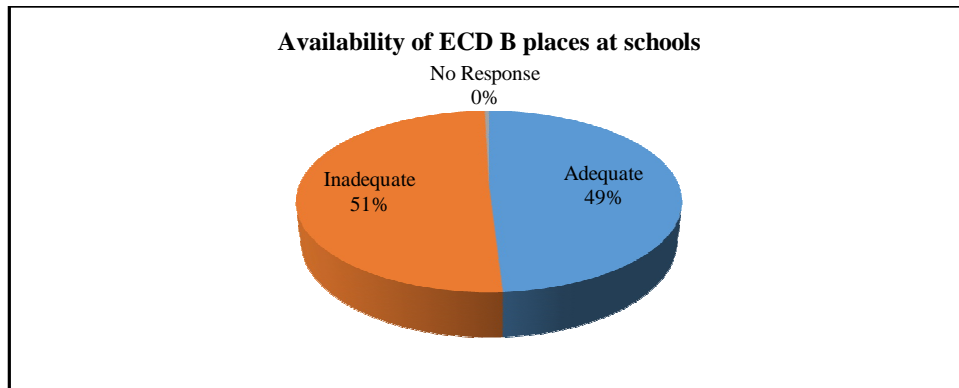


Figure 13: Availability of ECD B places in schools

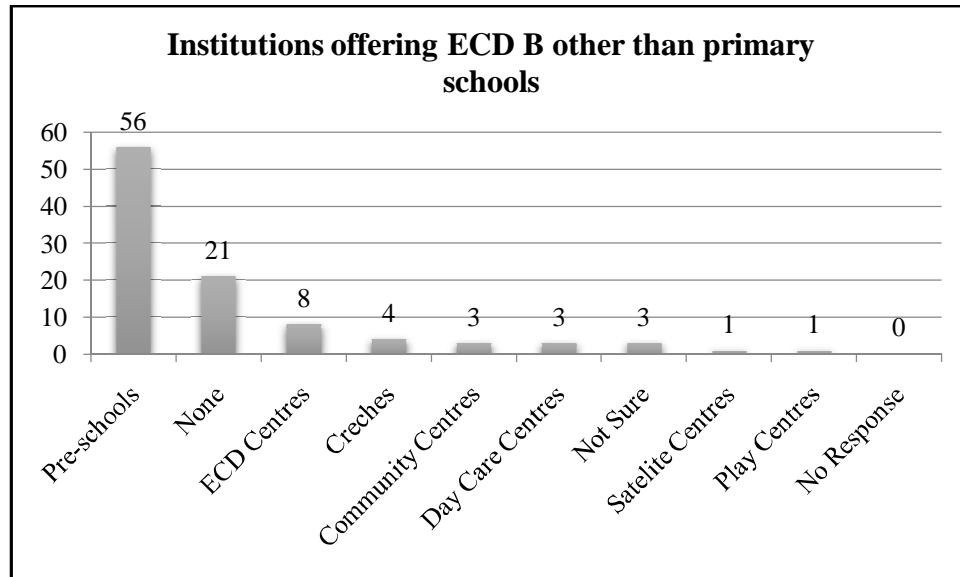
Throughout the ten provinces it is clear that ECD B places are not adequate (50.5%) while 49.1% indicate that the places are adequate. The schools with adequate places have infrastructure to accommodate the ECD B children while those with inadequate places do not have infrastructure and teachers. Field work established that some children are having their lessons under a tree or sharing one very small room/hut.



Figure 14

This situation does not promote access into ECD B for all children. The Ministry must make an effort to register most private ECD B centers and regularize their operations so that some children can be absorbed by the private centers. The primary schools in the country cannot absorb all children into ECD B.

## 3.1.16. Other Institutions that are offering ECD B Classes



*Figure 15: Other Institutions that are offering ECD B Classes*

The responses (56%) indicated that pre-schools, ECD Centres (8.0%), Creches (4.0%), community-based centers (3%), day care centres (3%), play centres (1%) and Satellite centres (1%) respectively are the institutions that offer ECD B other than primary schools. Twenty-one percent indicated that they do not offer ECD B. The Annual Statistical Report (2012:9) states that, 'There are many more private ECD schools that operate in the country and have not yet been reached by the Ministry's EMIS data collection exercise'. Hence, there is need to register them and then regularize their operations so that data collection by EMIS can be accurate about ECD B children in the country. The Constitution of Zimbabwe(No. 20) Act, 2013, encourages the establishment of privately owned ECD centres as articulated in Chapter 4 Section 75 subsection (2) that, 'Every person has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions of reasonable standards, provided they do not discriminate on any ground ---'. What is needed is close monitoring of their centres to make sure they operate within the stipulations of the Ministry's standards.

#### 4. Conclusion

Access to ECDB in Zimbabwe needs a multi-sectoral approach, that is, parents, teachers and other education professionals must work together to make it a success. Funding to build the necessary infrastructure is needed so that children do not walk long distances to school. Children with disabilities need to have the necessary equipment and infrastructure in place so that inclusive education becomes a reality.

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