Teachers implementation of inclusive education in Eswatini: Problems and Implications for Policy and Inclusive Counselling

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Abstract

Inclusive education has become a world trend within the provision of services for learners with special academic needs. the aim of the study was to analyze factors touching the implementation of inclusive education in Swaziland. The study employed qualitative methods in which individual interviews, observation and document analysis were utilized. Eight (n=8) headteachers and (n=8) teachers were purposively sampled from primary schools in the Manzini, Hhohho, Lubombo and Shiselweni regions. Conventional content analysis was utilized to analyse the data. The data were thematically presented. The findings from the study indicated that various factors hinder the implementation of inclusive education namelynegative attitudes from teachers and lack of resources. It can be concluded that teachers generally lacked self-confidence as they attempted to create an inclusive space for learners with special educational needs. The study recommends that, the Ministry of Education and Training needs to consider increasing the availability of special needs based programmes in tertiary institutions, teachers' service training programmes and for teachers who are already teaching in primary schools.

Key words: Classroom, Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Mainstream, Special Education, Special educational needs.

Introduction

Providing school plant facilities get right of entry to the school building, lecture rooms and centers is vital to make certain that all college students can bodily benefit get right of entry to the academic surroundings and be covered altogether suitable sports along their peers (Van Zyl, 2002). that is frequently in particular applicable for schoolchildren with bodily disabilities; ok get right of entry to need to be supplied as needed, such as the deliver of ramps and lifts, and tailored toilets. Those schoolchildren with bodily disabilities also can revel in functions like tailored chairs, or tables which are on the proper top for a wheelchair (Maguvhe, 2014). Mamba (2013) highlighted that, growing differentiated studying centres in the lecture room lets in college students to require some time to concentrate on a selected project or topic in extra detail. At number one level, the lecture room will have specific areas truly sports; those can encompass a analyzing corner, track and listening centre, arts and crafts location and a piece of writing corner.

Inclusion in schooling includes valuing all schoolchildren and team of workers equally. It includes growing the participation of schoolchildren in and lowering their exclusion from the culture, curricula and groups of nearby faculties. Inclusion additionally includes restructuring the cultures, guidelines and practices in faculties in order that they reply to the variety of schoolchildren withinside the locality. Inclusion is likewise approximately enhancing faculties for team of workers in addition to for college students (Thomas & Vaughan, 2005). Until there are absolutely inclusive groups and absolutely inclusive neighbourhoods, it's miles tough to look how faculties may be absolutely inclusive (Drudy& Kinsella, 2009). Although, withinside the context of inclusion, schoolchildren's rights are visible as paramount, Lindsay (2003) reminds us that, inclusion is the coverage framework. The crucial difficulty is the translation and implementation of inclusion in exercise. We want to make certain that there's a twin method which makes a speciality of both, the rights of youngsters and the effectiveness in their schooling. There is a want to broaden past issues approximately inputs and settings a focal point on reviews and results and to discover causal relationships (Lindsay, 2003).

Inclusive pedagogy calls for instructors to undertake a humble and introspective mindset. The poor effect on instructors in phrases of strain and workload has been one of the objections raised to the employment of a few inclusive pedagogy (Brackenreed, 2008). It have to be mentioned that the adoption of inclusive schooling method does constitute new approaches of running for instructors, and calls for the adoption of various factors of view. Many instructors these days paintings in environments in which the scientific version of coming across what is "wrong" with a scholar after which attempting to "fix" that scholar remains very influential and present. Instead, the adoption of inclusive pedagogy calls for humility: reputation that if a scholar isn't always getting to know it is able to be the coaching this is the trouble instead of the learner. When instructors can replicate and are available to those conclusions they're in a higher role to transport ahead and sincerely undertake inclusive approaches of coaching. Indeed, as Katz (2015) demonstrated, the selection to embody inclusive schooling pedagogy can serve to alleviate activity-associated strain for instructors and beautify their emotions of self-efficacy at the side of enhancing activity satisfaction.

Teachers first want to understand that beginners come into the school room with a lot distinction and variety among them; they want to understand that the beginners have a continuum of educational desires and that academic practices want to be shifted thus to reply as it should be to all of the character desires of the beginners (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006). Learners deliver their cultural histories into the school room each day. Teachers and their expert worlds are actively engaged in shaping and setting up those cultural contexts thru a mixture in their character and collective cultural histories which have been formed through personal, expert and network interactions (Kozleski& Smith, 2009). It is consequently vital that instructors are continuously aware about elements touching on variety and the way it impacts the beginners and their coaching processes.

Just as youngsters arrive withinside the school room with all their particular characteristics, so do instructors, instructors consequently need to make aware selections approximately a way to reply in a manner this is maximum appropriate and suitable for every child. For the instructor, the pass from the acknowledgement of variety withinside the school room to the effective control of singularities calls for a paradigmatic alternate. He or she has to undertake a version concentrated at the look for variety that's not a trouble to be overcome, however an possibility to be seized (Thomazet, 2009).

Brandon (2006) tested attitudes of Botswana instructors towards inclusive schooling and determined that schoolteachers held non beneficial attitudes towards inclusive schooling due to the fact they felt overloaded and now no longer educated to educate unique want beginners. In addition, synthesis of those studies research additionally suggests an opening among advocated exercise and the truth of implementation of inclusive schooling. A examine of number one and secondary faculty instructors in England through Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) concluded that, teachers with enormous schooling have been greater effective approximately inclusion, and this become meditated of their self-belief in character academic plans (IEP) meetings. The instructors meditated definitely on their interactions with college students with disabilities, along with their modified perceptions of the location of the scholars of their school rooms and their multiplied expertise of approaches of coaching them. Similarly, Giangreco (2000) notes multiplied instructor mirrored image and willingness to learn, delight in openness to alternate and reputation of the significance of a welcoming mindset and the want to version reputation as a number of the effect that inclusive schooling has had on instructors.

Method

In this study, a qualitative research design was employed because it is flexible and enables one to investigate a phenomenon in its natural context.Data collection methods used was individual interviews, observation and document analysis. Sixteen (16) Participants were purposively selected. In this study, the non- probability criterion sampling was employed to select the schools and the participants (headteachers and teachers). They were purposively targeted because they were the first schools to pilot inclusion. Purposive sampling was used to select the teachers who teach grade 7. The sampling was chosen because in the schools selected grade 7 classes were not single stream but double and triple streams; each class having a class teacher,the population was divided by the number needed for the sample. In this case, every 2nd member was selected, one from each school and made a total of eight (8) participants. The sample was homogenous as all the members possessed certain similar characteristics, as they were all in the inclusive schools and they were the headteachers and teachers in the schools. The headteachers and teachers were included if they met the criteria of being administrators and teachers in the inclusive schools and teachers who were teaching grade 7. This type of sampling was chosen because it allowed the selection of the first inclusive schools and sixteen (16) participants (headteachers and teachers) who were teaching in the inclusive schools.**T**hey represented typical features required for the study and in this case, headteachers and teachers teaching in the inclusive

schools were interviewed because of their experiences. Data obtained from observation and document was analysed using content analysis and thematic analysis for individual interviews. Verbatim quotations from tape-recorded individual interviews were used to support findings from the study. Notes written during observation and analysis of documents were read repeatedly for understanding before patterns were drawn for further analysis.

Results

The following five themes emerged from the individual interviews: lack of clear approaches, teacher experiences, policy and legislation, inadequate training and lack of resources. The table below summarises the themes.

Table 1
Themes from Individual Interviews

Themes	Sub Themes
1. Inadequate training	-Negative attitudes
-Frustration	
-Waste of time	
2. Lack of resources	- Inadequate of funds
- Lack of teaching materials	
- Poor infrastructures	

Theme 1: Inadequate training
One of the most important themes identified is inadequate training.Participants mentioned that according to their understanding, the role of the Ministry of Education and Training towards supporting teachers in the implementation of Inclusive Education is to train more teachers and conduct workshops to teachers through regional inspectors. They further stated that it is the role of the ministry to introduce a course on inclusive education in colleges and universities. They stated that, little is being done and teachers who enrol in special education programmes are sponsoring themselves without any help from the government. Other participants mentioned that at the present moment it is just a waste of time. They stated that it could take longer to be implemented due to poor infrastructure and the mindset of the teachers and the syllabus.
One had this to say:
 The introduction of inclusive education in schools without enough trained teachers to me is waste of time and resources as teachers are not well introduced to this educational change.Teachers are more frustrated and this result to negative attitude towards inclusion (participants # 7, male, 55 years, school G).

Another participant stated that:
Due to lack of training in the field of inclusive education, I am frustrated and thinking of quitting for another job (participant # 5, female, 40 years, school E).

The findings revealed that, most headteachers and teachers who are not trained and are unwilling or half-hearted about working with learners with disabilities are a barrier to successful inclusion. Training often falls short of real effectiveness, and teachers already experiencing strain owing to large workloads may resent the added duties of coming up with different teaching approaches. There is no provision for inclusive education in universities and colleges that train teachers. The teachers are not supposed to hold onto the information they got. Instead they should put it into practice. This will help the learners to be accommodated instead of the entire burden to be left to teachers.

Theme 2: Lack of resources
Inadequate facilities and lack of relevant materials is one of the major obstacles to the operation of inclusive education. Almost all the participants stated that there are limited resources in the schools so they cannot meet the demands of the diverse learners and they do not have enough funds to support this innovation since Free Primary Education (FPE) grant is too little to run the schools.
All the participants were concerned that the introduction of inclusive education in Swaziland brought a number ofchallenges. They stated that the country does not have sufficient funds to cater for the introduction of inclusive education.
 One participant was quoted:
Inclusive education was not supposed to be introduced since it needs a lot of funds unless government have a special budget to embrace it. At the present moment the government is struggling even to address the issue of Free Primary Education (FPE). In a nutshell, the

introduction of inclusive education had created more problems not only for the schools but also for the educators, parents and learners as well (participants #1, male, 57 years, school A).

Adequate funding is a necessity for inclusion and yet inclusive education is poorly funded in Swaziland. Schools often lack adequate facilities, qualified and appropriate trained teachers and staff members, educational materials and general support.

One participant had this to say:

Sadly, lack of resources is pervasive throughout the educational system one participant highlighted (participant # 15, male, 40 years, school G).

Another participant had this to say:

The schools do not have proper infrastructures to accommodate learners with special educational needs. As you see there are no ramps making it difficult for wheel chair to move due to inadequate of funds(participant # 11, female, 38 years, school C).

At some schools where children with hearing impairment were included, their hearing aids had no batteries and some of the ear moulds were chipped. Some learners' wheel chairs were old fashioned and cumbersome to push. One could not wheel oneself and therefore needed someone to assist them all the time, which deprived them of independence and privacy.In some schools, the classrooms are upstairs with no wheelchair ramps, thus making it difficult for a learner to move up and down. Some did not have good lighting systems which hinders learners with visual special needs as they need more light. The school administration admitted that implementation of inclusive education was being weighed down by lack of funds and appropriate infrastructure.

One participant stated that:

We do not have much support from the Ministry of Education and training. We have written to them twice or thrice this year but there is no response (participant # 2, male, 44 years, school B).

These findings showed that learners with special educational needs face a number of challenges in such situations. This hinders the effectiveness of teaching and learning for the learners. Time has come for the government, professionals and parents to pull their resources together and create equal opportunities, consider suitable learning environments and social justice for learners with special educational needs.

Findings from none participant observation

None participant observation used as a data collection method in the study.It was of significance to witness the classroom management and organization to see whether or not it facilitates inclusive education. It was also important to see how teachers provided effective teaching and learning in the physical environment of the classroom and check for the availability of assistance devices for learners. Results from observation are presented below.

Managing and organization of inclusion in the classroom

In this aspect it was observed that in six schools the classrooms had high numbers of learners whereby the teacher learner ratio ranged 1: 65. There was no space for the teacher to move around in the class. Furthermore, learners who were seated at the back would strain their necks to see the teacher in front thereby affecting their concentration because after a few minutes the learners then try to relax and some frequently ask for permission to go to the toilet.

It was also observed that when the teacher gives learners a task, learners were seen asking their neighbours for assistance and this was a clear indication that they did not follow and understand the lesson. Learners in the front seemed more active than the learners sitting at the back and when the teacher asked learners to bring their work for marking the ones sitting at the back would hide until the lesson is over. The teachers faced problems in this regard as they were to teach the next subject and unable to assist the learners who might have not understood the previous lesson.

Effective teaching and learning on the physical environment of the classroom/school

The physical environment plays a critical role in successful implementation of inclusive education. The Ministry of Education and Training's objective is to enhance the provision of accessible safe and friendlyenvironment and facilities for learners with special needs. Findings from observation study showed that the learning environment, buildings, services, equipments and furniture,pose accessibility challenges to learners with special needs. These are not allowing them to operate and access inclusive education with minimal hindrance.

Teachers faced several challenges while teaching learner's with disabilities since they lacked knowledge on how to effectively deliver lessons in inclusive learning environments. For instance, some teachers used cursive writingand this was a barrier to some learners who were partially sighted. Some learners would keep on asking about the written words on the chalkboard. Some teachers had bad hand writing which hindered the learners from seeing clearly. In some classes, the chalkboards were worn out with little space to write on and some were shiny and faint making it difficult for learners to see from some angles.Almost all the classes were displayed with clear and beautiful teaching aids such as the charts distributed by the Ministry of Education and Training. In some classes though, there were

charts which were designed by the teacher but they were not nicely drawn and the writing was not clear. Some classroom walls of the classes were not good thus resulting in the falling of the learning aids.

Unavailability of assistance devices for learners

It was observed that all the classrooms had children with different forms of disabilities. These included learners with partial hearing impairment, partial visual impairment, Down syndrome, behavioural problems, autism and learning challenges. Learners with partial visual impairment were easily identified because they were wearing glasses. However, some did not have the glasses and it could be assumed that their parents did not have money to buy them glasses. Their eyes were seriously strained as they tried to read what was written on the chalkboard and in the books. There were only two schools were large print books were available for learners with partial vision. The other six schools used regular printed books which frustrated those with visual problems.

In some classes learners with hearing impairments were identified. The teachers faced challenges when teaching the learners as they were not able to hear properly. The learners did not have hearing aids to assist them in their residual hearing. They were frustrated as they were forced to lip read the teacher's lips. It was observed that the main problem was that most teachers are not competent in the use of sign language. One teacher would just make some gestures which sometimes were not understood by the learners. Such actions bothered the teachers as they felt that they were not doing justice to the learners. Some learners were autistic and they have behavioural problems. In one school it was observed that on autistic learner would just stand up and look through the window and the rest of the class would just laugh at her. Upon hearing sounds of laughtershe would clap her hands and make some dancing movements. The teacher found itdifficult to teach and even to control the learner thus disturbing the whole class. The teacher seemed unaware of such behaviour and did not bother to teach her and the child does things her own way.

Findings from document analysis

Another method which was used in the study was document analysis. It was employed to see if learners living with disabilities were admitted in the schools by examining the school admission book, the individual educational plans (IEPs) and school reports. Results from the documents analysis are presented below.

Learners admitted in the schools

All the eight school's admission books revealed that enrolment rates of learners with disabilities or special educational needs are generally low. Though there were learners with somedisabilities in some classes they were very low. The records showed that children's rights were not respected by the school headteachers. According to the Special Education Policy Statement (1999),"The Ministry of Education shall support integration and inclusion of children with special educational needs in the Education System".

No individualised education plan (IEPs)

It was ascertained that there were no IEPs in the schools. Teachers lack knowledge on how to teach the learners who have special educational needs. They should plan lessons according to learner's needs identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the learner. Instead, a general lesson plan was used. The absence of the IEPs in the schools hinders the progress of the learners since IEPs are designed to meet the unique educational needs of learners with special educational needs identified as having a disability. Without the individual educational plan, learners with disabilities would not realize their full potential.

School reports

School reports were issued in every school mainly in term 2 and 3. The reports only record marks in the various subjects with comments like Master (M), Border (B), and Non Master (NM). It was ascertained that positioning of learners was discouraged among learners so as to cater for learners with special educational needs. It was emphasized that every learner has got his/her own strengths and weaknesses. Also the use of a red pen in recording the scores was not encouraged in all the eight schools as this lowered the child's self esteem.

Discussion

In ascertaining how schools respond to special educational needs, the findings exposed that teachers and school heads in the current study were very concerned with the lack of support and non availability of resources in the schools. Children living with disabilities require special school facilities (RoK, 2009).The findings of this study resonate well with the study carried out by Ocloo and Subbey (2008). This showed that teachers were conscious of the need for assertive facilities for individuals with disabilities. The findings further revealed that teachers felt that inclusive education was imposed upon them as government was not providing any support. Almost all those interviewed said that so far there was no support, and they had to do their work astrained teachers without inclusive education

support. The government had not prepared them for inclusive education before introducing inclusive education in mainstream schools. According to Fullan's theory the principal assists the implementersand other stakeholders in understanding the need for the inventive stage and creates a shared vision of how the intended changes will significantly help the school(Fullan, 2007). However, in this regard, the school headteachers stated that they also lack the vision of inclusion resulting in difficulties in the implementation of inclusive education in their schools. The researchersconcurs with the suggestions raised by the teachers because even if teachers sponsor themselves for further studies especially in special education, the government does not appreciate their efforts. Such behaviourmakes the teachers to doubt if education of learners with special educational needs a first priority.

The findings of the current study concur with findings derived by Tshabalala (2000), in a study conducted in Swaziland whereby exclusion of children with disabilities and other educational problems in Swaziland showed that, the teaching profession only sees special schools as the only places to teach children with disabilities. Nkambule (2011) in a survey study assessed the attitudes of Swaziland primary school teachers towards inclusion. The study revealed that teachers hold positive attitudes toward inclusion as they revealed that they are willing to assist learners with special educational needs.

From the above findings, one can conclude that ordinary teachers generally lacked confidence and knowledge as they attempted to include learners with disabilities into mainstream classes. This may be the result of lack of adequate training. The aforementioned circumstances corresponds with Thwala's (2004) assertion that despite many efforts being put forth for the successful implementation of inclusive education in primary schools in Swaziland there are still numerous challenges which are faced by teachers in the implementation of the programme.

Teachers find it difficult to implement inclusive education because of diverse reasons. The significance of the study gives a vivid image of how theimplementation process ofinclusive education in Swaziland. There will be no development if existing challenges which are encountered by the educators persist.

Conclusion

This study suggests that lack of resources in schools was a major concern; the schools were not able to provide learners with assistance devices except for two schools. Some learners were seen struggling to read from the chalkboard due to eyesight problems. The learning material was not conducive for their learning needs as the books were not written in large print to cater for their visual impairment. This also affected learners living with albinism. Even the sitting arrangement was not properly set up by the teachers. Some teachers were not welcoming learners with special educational needs in their classrooms and they preferred that they should learn in special schools.There is also lack of support from the government, shortage of appropriate instructional materials and inadequate resources in the schools.

Recommendation for action

1. Inclusive education has been lauded in this study as the latest acceptable educational alternative for learners with special needs all over the world. It enables the bringing together of learners with special educational needs and their mainstream counterparts into one educational environment without discrimination. As a consequence, it is strongly recommended that for inclusive education to be successful, all stakeholders should consider ensuring that approaches and practices are addressed in the schools.
2. The Ministry of Education and Training may create clear educator skills development maps to tackle the problem of the shortage of skillsand techniques on the part of educators who are teaching in the mainstream schools to gain vast experience on issues pertaining inclusive education.
3. Policy guidelines need to be formulated and implemented for the admission of learners with special educational needs. The government may enforce workable policies through appropriate implementation and the education system needs to review its policies in order toaccommodate inclusive education.
4. Inclusive Education needs to be a core course included in education programmesthat are undertaken by trainee teachers in all tertiary institutions.
5. The Ministry of Education and Training may make all possible efforts to improve and modify the existing physical facilities to make sure that they are barrier-free and easily accessible to all learners. It may also increase the budgetary allocation to SNE in its annual budgets to cater for the resources.

Recommendations for further study

The researcher recommends the following for further research:
1. Research on school inspectors' considerations regarding the implementation of inclusive education in local schools.
2. Research on overcoming exclusion through inclusive policies in education.
3. Factors influencing inclusion of learners with special needs in regular primary schools.

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