Analysing the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Public Primary Schools in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Research Article

Analysing the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Public Primary Schools in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The study sought to analyse the implementation of Inclusive Education in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) was employed in this study to explain how ecology embeds and influences child development. The study adopted the phenomenological hermeneutic philosophy by Van Manen (1990) based on the lived experiences of research participants. Hence, the study employed the qualitative phenomenological approach. In line with the phenomenological approach, purposive sampling was used to select public primary schools and participants. The researcher was the main research instrument of data collection. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed to analyse the data. Four main themes emerged, thus lack of inclusive education policy, lack of skills and knowledge, lack of adequate resources, and stakeholder partnership. The study recommended that the Government develop a clear inclusive education policy. The study further recommends the government to make every effort to include all learners, particularly those with special needs in mainstream classrooms and provide them with the needed learning assistance. Lastly, the study recommended regular classroom teachers be equipped with the skills and knowledge required for inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Public Primary Schools, Quality Education, Special Needs, Orphans and Vulnerable Children

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is an attempt at educating learners with special educational needs. Based on the inclusive education model, learners with special needs spend most of their time with non-disabled learners regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area and seek to maximize the potential of all learners (John, 2020). Positive inclusive education happens mainly through acknowledging, understanding, and attending to learners' differences and variety, including physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional (Abbotti, & Cribb 2001). Hence, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments to respond to learners' challenges, particularly those with special needs. This study, therefore seeks to analyse the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study sought to analyse the implementation of Inclusive Education in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

It is globally estimated that at least 15% of any population is disabled, and approximately 85% of the world's children with disabilities who are below 15 years old live in developing countries such as Zimbabwe. A study by UNESCO (2018) revealed that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs. Learners with special needs must have access to ordinary schools that ought to accommodate them with child-centered teaching methods (UNESCO,2018). The education systems, schools, and teachers should focus on generating inclusive settings that uphold the values of respect and understanding of cultural, social, and individual diversity (Nyagadza and Mazuruse 2021). Inclusive education is seen as a programme that allows children with disabilities to learn together with other children in regular school with appropriate support (Ozoji, 2006 & John, 2020). This means that effective inclusive education involves the use of appropriate supportive services to meet the needs of learners with special needs in the regular school system. Inclusive education is a process that involves the transformation of schools and other cultures to cater for all learners in a school. Inclusive education involves changes and modifications in content, approaches and strategies, facilities, and services with a common vision that covers all learners of appropriate age (Abbotti & Cribb, 2001; John, 2020). The ordinary primary school setting is responsible for teaching all children in a particular community regardless of disability or social, cultural, or any other status. A study by Mont, (2007) established that children with disabilities in poor and developing countries such as Zimbabwe encounter certain experiences associated with poverty and social barriers. In various traditional cultures, a child with a disability is perceived as a bad sign, bad luck, or a result of poor

lineage. Some children with disabilities are hidden from the community and kept out of schools. Hence, every child has the right to education.

Research Question

How inclusive education is being implemented in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Inclusive education encompasses different and diverse students learning side by side in the same classroom. They enjoy field trips and after-school activities together, they participate in student government together and they attend the same sports meets and plays (John, 2020). Inclusive education appreciates diversity and the unique contributions each learner brings to the classroom. A study by John (2020) further revealed that in a truly inclusive setting, every child feels safe and has a sense of belonging. UNESCO (2015) and a study by Mazuruse, Magadza, and Makoni (2022) define inclusive education as increasing the participation of students in public schools and reducing their exclusion from the cultures, curricula, and communities of public schools. Studies revealed that inclusive education has been positively implemented successfully in many countries such as New Zealand, Italy, and the United States of America. These countries have positively encouraged inclusive education methods and practices, and policies that remove barriers and constitute favorable conditions for all learners to learn (Nguyet and Ha 2010, Mazuruse, *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, Bunch (2018) established that inclusive education has been successful where all stakeholders, parents, people with disabilities, and teachers impress the vision and value of inclusive change on government and school leadership. Parents and learners themselves have important contributions to make to shape the implementation of inclusivity (Lindsay 2007). Studies by John (2020; Abbotti & Cribb 2001) revealed that successful inclusive education happens primarily through accepting, understanding, and attending to student differences and diversity, which can include physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional. Education is a discipline that provides main contributions to the structuring of human identity, hence, the concept of inclusivity in education is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning cultures and learning communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education (Mazuruse, *et al.* (2022). In addition, Inclusive education encompasses a variety of changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures, and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children particularly those with special educational needs.

It was declared by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 194 that basic education should be free and compulsory for all children. Universal primary education has been on the agenda of many education systems (Garira, 2015). Several countries have done a lot in trying to achieve universal basic education. The work by Ringson (2017) in Gutu, Masvingo established that the Zimbabwe Government has made great strides in establishing policies and frameworks in line with international instruments such as the UNCRC (1989). Studies by Mabhagu (2009 & Lemeyu 2022) reveal that one of the main child rights laws in Zimbabwe is not limited to children though as enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) is the Children's Act (2001) which stipulates that Children Recognized as in need of care and support are those whose parents are deceased, unknown, cannot look after the child, or whose parents cannot control their children (Lemeyu, 2022). The Children's Act (2001) is one of the most important pieces of legislation that provides for the protection, adoption, and custody of all children in the country (Ringson, 2017). In addition, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights of the Child (ACERWC) (2015) argues that the Children's Act provides for the setting up of the Children's Court (formerly known as the Juvenile Court) to deal with matters about children. The Education Act (2006) is also one of the laws that have been put in place to address children's issues on the administration of education in Zimbabwe and also addresses access to education for children by specifying that all children who are supposed to be in school should have access to primary education (Chinyenze, 2018 & Lemeyu, 2022). Studies highlighted that the concept of inclusive education is based on the fact that all learners, regardless of their different cultural, social, physical, and learning backgrounds, should have equal learning opportunities in all types of schools (UNESCO 2018). Hence, a study by Mont, (2017) established that children with disabilities in poor and developing countries face particular difficulties, linked to poverty and social barriers. Some children with disabilities are hidden from the community and kept out of school. Those who do attend school, are often the ones with less severe disabilities and may face embarrassment, discrimination, and misunderstanding. Hence, every child has the right to education. Regrettably, in the past many people assumed that the best place for children with disabilities was in a special school or classroom, separated from their 'normal' peers (John, 2020).

The government's legislation, policies, and child support frameworks are key indicators of quality education and support services for all learners in schools including the Education for All policy, Inclusive Education Policy, and National Orphan Care Policy. However, there is no specific legislation for inclusive education in Zimbabwe (Lemeyu (2022 & Mpofu, 2004). However, several government policy issues are consistent with the intent of inclusive education. For example, the Zimbabwean Education Act (Education Act, 1996 as amended 2006, 2013, 2020), the Disabled Persons Act (Disabled Persons Act, 1996), and various Ministry of Education circulars (Education Secretary's

Policy Circular No. P36, 1990) require that all students, regardless of race, religion, gender, creed, and disability, have access to basic or primary education (up to Grade 7). These non-discrimination provisions expanded the right to education in Zimbabwe for all children, including OVC. Furthermore, the Secretary for Education's directive for inclusive education requires schools to provide equal access to education for learners with disabilities, routinely screen for any form of disability, and admit any school-age child, regardless of ability or any other status such as orphan and vulnerable children. Any school that refuses to enrol a child on grounds of disability or status violates the Disabled Persons Act (1996) and faces disciplinary action from the District Education Inspectors. A study by Mutepfa, Mpofu, and Chataika (2007) highlighted that in the Zimbabwean context, inclusive education involves the identification and minimization or elimination of barriers to students' participation in traditional settings that is schools, homes, and communities and the maximization of resources to support learning and participation. In school settings, successful inclusion results in students' and their families' participation in the regular activities of the school community while meeting their unique needs, as well as contributing to the development of the school community. On the other hand, a study by Mudzengerere (2017) revealed that most schools in the country are struggling to offer inclusive education. The rate of school dropouts and cases of discrimination in schools has also indicated that more needs to be done to readdress the education policy and laws that support inclusive education, particularly in public primary schools.

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2019) propounds that the laws and policies of Zimbabwe for children appear to be good, but the challenge lies in implementing the laws to realize tangible benefits for children. Studies established that Zimbabwe has done little in terms of inclusivity, particularly in the practical aspect, yet there is an array of well-articulated educational policies aimed at addressing the challenges that exclude some learners (Mazuruse, 2022). In this background, a study by UNESCO (2018) highlighted that inclusive education must put flexibility and variety at its core. This should be evident in the structure of the school, the content of the curriculum, the attitudes and beliefs of staff, parents, and learners, and the goal should be to offer every individual a relevant education and optimal opportunities for development. Berg (2004 & Mazuruse 2022) indicates that successful inclusive schools provide a unified educational system in which general and special educators work collaboratively to provide comprehensive and integrated services and programming for all students. Studies established that in schools where inclusive education is positively being implemented, they are provided with the resources and support they need. There is a need for adequate resources to make teaching and learning effective in inclusive education,

hence lack of resources compromises the implementation of quality inclusive education.

Chireshe (2018) highlighted that the Government of Zimbabwe joined other countries and started special education after independence in the year 1980, and education has since been offered to all categories of children with all learning disabilities. However, the main challenge has been the absence of inclusivity in the education approaches. Likewise, the government has not been following up on verifying whether the approaches are inclusive or not. Implementing an inclusive education system is fundamental in addressing barriers to learners with disabilities. A study by Mazuruse, Nyagadza, and Makoni (2022) revealed that the implementation of inclusive education is hampered by teachers' lack of skills and knowledge in differentiating the curriculum to address a wide range of learning needs. Learners living with disabilities in Zimbabwe are failing to access basic human rights such as education and health that are enjoyed by their able-bodied colleagues (UNICEF 2021). The World Bank (2013) reported highlighted that numerous disabled children are failing to realise their full potential as they struggle to access basic rights. Hence, efforts by the Zimbabwean Government soon after independence to improve the lives of people living with disabilities were eroded by serious economic challenges. Furthermore, a study by UNICEF (2021) established that about 600,000 children are living with some form of disability in Zimbabwe and this makes up one of the most socially neglected groups in society today. They encounter psychological challenges that affect their academic performance and social life in general. These psychological problems induced stress, depression, lack of love, discrimination and stigma, lack of concentration in class, loneliness, isolation, and rejection. Children need care and love from adults; they need good shelter, clothing, and all forms of social support. Such psychological issues, if not properly attended to, may seriously affect the entire life of learners in public primary schools. The demonstration of love towards learners in schools may be seen as critical because love impacts children's future lives, especially in relationships with other people in the community and society as a whole (Barr *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, Berk (2014) revealed that showing children love is critical in child development as it influences the psychological functioning and development of children. Against this backdrop, schools must have professional school teachers and counselors who can adequately assist learners, particularly those who need psychological help. A study also revealed that learners with disability also may face exclusion due to is due to different kinds of disability they have, where they live, and the culture or class to which they belong (UNICEF 2013). There is also a lack of skills and knowledge as teachers and schools are not well-equipped to educate and account for learners living with disabilities, therefore most drop out by the third grade (Chireshe 2013). Schools are finding

alternative ways of performing inclusive education on an individual basis, but there is still a lack of standardization and quality, especially in rural areas. Despite these challenges, the government and other stakeholders such as UNICEF are trying to improve inclusive education. No learner is to be denied enrolment on grounds of disability, background, ethnicity, or creed (Mazuruse, Nyagadza, and Makoni, 2022).

Teachers' attitudes may affect inclusive education. Studies highlighted that teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education must be studied to identify deficiencies within the education system that may create negative perceptions. DeBoer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2011 & Mazuruse *et al.*, 2022) suggest that the successful implementation of inclusive education is dependent on the teacher's willingness to accept the inclusion model. The negative attitudes that teachers have towards inclusive education can have a detrimental impact on student learning and may impede the success of inclusive education (Cassady 2011). In another study by Taylor and Ringlaben (2012) established that negative attitudes toward inclusive education by teachers may extend throughout the school culture and result in teaching practices that obstruct students' learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study employed Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) to provide a context for how child development is embedded and influenced much by ecology. The basis of the Ecological Systems Theory is that the environment affects every person's development. This theoretical framework provides a detailed analysis of environmental influences and argues that natural environments are the major source of influence on developing persons (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this study, these developing persons are all learners in primary schools, whose environment was divided into five different systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem (Donald *et al.*, 2010). Inclusive education derives from this theory as it emphasises the interconnectedness of various systems such as family, primary school, and community in supporting learners with diverse needs. In the context of inclusive education, Ecological Systems Theory enables practitioners in inclusive education to establish the relationship between the school, the home, the health centre, and other related systems in their efforts to support learners such as those with disability and others who need special care and support in public primary schools. In the same way, Swick and Williams (2006) state that the Ecological Systems Theory seeks to provide a platform to explore the situation of vulnerable children's educational needs concerning different socioeconomic and cultural factors. This is because children's characteristics heavily depend on the elements of the broader environment in which they (together with their families) live and function (Steliou, 2006). The theory further appreciates that international and regional instruments, as well as national legislation

and policies, national programmes, cultural and religious beliefs, local communities and families, friends, and peers, have an impact on child development, particularly on children who need special care and support (Lemeyu, 2022; Hayes, O'Toole, & Halpenny, 2017). Furthermore, Meadows (2008) suggests that disabled children in schools experience discrimination at different levels of their ecology and that could affect their education and development. Ulla (2018) says, policies in the school education ecosystem are key for the success of inclusive education in primary schools, and provide many other privileges if they are well crafted and well implemented. This implies that having well-developed policies and rules could empower the schools, school heads, and teachers and also make children aware of what is expected of them concerning standards of behaviour and performance. Policies in most cases create a safe learning environment that involves protecting children, particularly those with special needs from physical, emotional, and psychological harm. Children need to feel safe and secure at school to learn effectively (Policy Management Library, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted the phenomenological hermeneutic philosophy by Van Manen (1990) which is based on the lived experiences of research participants and their interpretation and implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Harare. Interpretative phenomenology stresses the co-creation of interpretations between the researcher and participant because all of them share context, culture, and language (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The current study adopted the interpretative methodology as it is regarded as the best phenomenological methodology when studying the lived experiences of participants in their natural settings. This study used an interpretative ontological position which emphasizes that there are multiple realities; hence, the researcher in this current study was to appreciate the subjective views, feelings, awareness, knowledge, and experiences of learners, particularly those with special needs, school heads and teachers regarding inclusive education in public primary schools. Mumby and Putnam (2002) view hermeneutics as one of the many schools of thought that focus on conversational, behavioural, and etymological patterns and as an approach that focuses on the individual, methodological, and epistemological issues oriented toward society and cultural critique. Therefore, the use of hermeneutics philosophy enables the researcher to critically view the phenomenon from different perspectives such as the hermeneutic/interpretive perspective (Ricouer, 2005). The data analysis of this current study is therefore interpretive in nature because it makes use of hermeneutic phenomenology to critically analyse the implementation of Inclusive Education in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe. Harrison (2006) and Ringson, (2018) concur that hermeneutics phenomenology is based on principles of plurality and complexity, and demands a critical assessment of

existing social institutions, cultural beliefs, and political systems. This pluralistic/multiple reality view of hermeneutics phenomenology allows learners to be explored in a comprehensive and triangulated critical thinking approach by acknowledging that dealing with learners in public primary schools is a complex process influenced by multiple stakeholders with different perceptions, views, knowledge, and feelings about learners with special needs. Furthermore, the researcher was the main instrument of data collection and has played a very critical role in creating an environment that allowed participants to express their thoughts and feelings about inclusive education in public primary schools in Harare. In this study, the researcher interacted with participants in their school environment to gather data on the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools. In the present study, the researcher interviewed school heads and teachers and held focus group discussions with learners in primary schools. These interviews and FGDs were in line with hermeneutic phenomenology, which allowed the researcher to explore learners' lived experiences in schools. Hermeneutic phenomenology stresses the use of qualitative research techniques such as interviews, focus group discussions, and observations (Lemeyu at el.*et al.*, 2023 & Cunliffe, 2006). The researcher in this study aimed to depend on research participants' views on the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe. The researcher had to listen very carefully to what respondents were saying since the researcher wanted to get the truth of the experiences, opinions, and views expressed by the people who were directly involved in inclusive education in public primary schools. Hence, the study employed the qualitative phenomenological approach as the researcher found it most relative as it allowed the researcher to examine the perceptions, views, awareness, knowledge, and feelings of learners, school heads, and teachers on inclusive education implementation in public primary schools. Another reason why the researcher adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach was its commitment to descriptions of experiences rather than explanations or analysis. In line with the phenomenological approach, purposive sampling was used to select public primary schools and participants. Purposive sampling is an approach whereby participants are selected because of the rich information they hold that is required to answer the research questions (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed to analyse data on the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Harare. The researcher found interpretive phenomenological analysis as the most appropriate for this study as it allowed the researcher to produce a detailed narration of studied problems from the subjective and lived experiences of research participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Interpretative phenomenology analysis was employed and four themes emerged, thus lack of inclusive education policy, lack of skills and knowledge, lack of adequate resources, and stakeholder partnership.

Lack of Inclusive Education Policy

The current study established that participants were not aware of inclusive education policy, and there seemed to be no clear inclusive education policy in public primary schools. Participants further revealed that they were not aware of what exactly is to be done in schools when implementing inclusive education. The lack of inclusive education policy in primary schools compromised the implementation of inclusive education and also affected learners' academic performance. It further emerged from the study that school heads and teachers, due to lack of policy were compromising the quality of education and support services they were to provide to learners with special needs in primary schools as they did not know policies that guided them. However, the study revealed that various child-related policies in Zimbabwe support the education of children in primary school. Policies such as the Zimbabwean Education Act (Education Act, 1996 as amended 2006, 2013, 2020), the Disabled Persons Act (Disabled Persons Act, 1996), and various Ministry of Education circulars (Education Secretary's Policy Circular No. P36, 1990) require that all students, regardless of race, religion, gender, creed, and disability, have access to basic or primary education (up to Grade 7). The participants highlighted that there is no written stand-alone legislation or policy for inclusive education in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the study established that the Zimbabwean Education Act (Education Act, 1996 as amended 2006, 2013, 2020) revealed that every child has the right to access education at the nearest school and should not be discriminated against by the imposition of onerous terms regarding admission to any school on the ground of race, tribe, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed or gender. It provides for access for all to basic education up to grade seven.

Participants further revealed that there is Secretary's Circular No. P36 of 1990 which could stand as the primary policy instrument for the regulation of inclusive education in primary schools for learners with disabilities. This Circular makes special education provisions in ordinary schools for learners with varying degrees of disabilities and special education placement and procedures for special classes. The same circular set limits for learners with disabilities in special needs education. It further emerged from the study that the 2016 to 2020 education sector strategic plan had committed to developing an inclusive education policy that would address the issues of early identification of needs, infrastructure, teachers' training, financing, and monitoring. The findings of the current study concur with Hlatywayo & Mapolisa (2022) and Mazuruse *et al*. (2021) who established that the absence of an Inclusive Education policy. They noted that there seemed to be no

clear inclusive education policy on what is to be done in public primary schools. This might affect the implementation of inclusive education as primary schools lack cohesion. However, there are other provisions and guidelines on including students with disabilities such as the Secretary's Circular No. 2 of 2000 and Director's Circular No. 24 of 2001, but they seemed not to be specific on inclusive education. Hlatywayo & Mapolisa (2022) further highlighted that there are other provisions and guidelines on including students with disabilities such as the Secretary's Circular No. 2 of (2000) and Director's Circular No. 24 of (2001), but they seemed not to be specific on inclusive education. Lack of clear government inclusive education policy course lack of uniformity on the roles and functions of public primary schools. Therefore, this may negatively affect the implementation and management of inclusive education in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe. A study by Lopez-Gavira *et al.* (2016) established that regulations and statements alone are not adequate to ensure quality education and meet the rights of learners with disabilities. One of the participants in this study strongly stressed that:

"Schools are implementing education policies by the fact that all children are being enrolled in schools regardless of their status. However, due to the lack of a specific inclusive education policy, we are unable to implement inclusive education probably as expected. Guidelines and circulars are just not enough…".

Lack of Skills and Knowledge

The study established that school heads and teachers in public primary schools are well-trained and well-qualified general primary school teachers. It further emerged from the study that various teachers lack specialised skills, knowledge, attitudes, and understandings on managing and administering quality inclusive education in public primary schools. Lack of skills and knowledge by teachers was further highlighted as affecting the implementation of inclusive education because it was the teachers who were perceived as the most important stakeholders in the education-making process, particularly in inclusive education. Participants revealed that they did not receive proper training in implementing inclusive education during their teacher training. The findings concur with Hlatywayo & Mapolisa (2022) and Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2012) who revealed that there were no adequate lecturers when mass lectures were conducted with many students in lecture theatres or halls. There was also a shortage of quantity and quality of teachers in China despite the training of teachers for inclusive education. It further emerged that school heads and teachers though had diplomas and degrees, these qualifications had no specialization in inclusive education, particularly when handling learners with disabilities and others with special needs in schools.

According to UNESCO (2018), specific training is required to expect quality services from a teacher or any other skilled professional. Teacher training is determined by many factors, but a major among them is curriculum change. Due to curriculum changes, teachers should be trained and retrained to upgrade and align their skills with new developments (Dekeza, 2018). This need for training applies to Zimbabwean teachers where curriculum change has been going on which includes the introduction of inclusive education. Teacher training in respect of inclusive education particularly in providing care and support to learners is critical to the well-being of those learners who need special attention. Clarke (2018) observed that 'those teachers, who take up the duty of care and assume the role of parent at school (*in loco parentis)*, are viewed as 'heroes' in the classroom'. Concerning teacher training in inclusive education, Human Rights Watch (2005) advocated for reorientation of the curriculum in both pre-service and in-service training programmes. Some of the participants state that:

"As a school head, who oversees the implementation of all school programmes, I feel ill-equipped to supervise the implementation of inclusive education at this school. The challenge is that in most cases the ministry hurries to introduce new things in the curriculum before training the implementers of the curriculum…".

"Our challenge is made worse by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's hesitancy to conduct training or workshops to equip teachers and administrators in implementing inclusive education in schools".

Lack of Adequate Resources

The study revealed that public primary schools had inadequate resources; hence lack of resources compromised quality education and quality support services received by learners who need special care and support in public primary schools. The study further revealed that lack of resources impeded achieving quality inclusive education and quality support services for learners. Findings further revealed that schools were facing serious financial constraints and as a result, schools were failing to provide enough teaching and learning materials including textbooks, stationery, child-friendly classrooms, and many other educational needs. Lack of financial resources was the stumbling block for learners to receive quality education and support services in schools. The findings regarding inadequate financial resources concur with Adedeji (2014) who highlighted those inadequate financial resources result in poor policy implementation. The findings established that learners especially orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) were sometimes asked to go back home for not paying school fees or not having adequate stationery or not having complete school uniforms. As mentioned before, the Education Act (2006) stipulates that no child shall be sent home over non-payment of levies and tuition fees, school

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authorities (SDCs and Heads), still disregard the law by sending the vulnerable children home for the same reasons (Kelly, 2009). Sending OVC back home for not paying school fees is actually against the education policy and also against Article (28) of the UNCRC which states that member states should make primary education compulsory and available to all children. Nyamwega (2016) reveals that there is a need for schools to make efficient use of all available opportunities to raise supplementary finances for funding their programmes. Similarly, Nyaga (2005) and Lemeyu (2023) suggested that schools should run income-generating activities, which could raise revenue to enhance school finances. Findings further highlighted that there was a shortage of teachers in schools and the teacher-pupil ratio became too high at 1:60 and above. As mentioned earlier, this kind of ratio affected the quality of teaching and learning as teachers were not able to give maximum support to all the learners. The current study furthermore established that public primary schools had no specialized teachers, as most of them were trained as general/regular teachers. This concurs with Dekeza (2018) who established that there were no trained counselors in public primary schools who would professionally attend to the psychological needs of OVC and this had a bad impact on the welfare of OVC in schools. The lack of specialized teachers in schools compromised the implementation of inclusive education. The findings of the current study are in harmony with Barr *et al*. (2008) who revealed that most schools are ineffective and inefficient in implementing inclusive education due to a lack of in-depth training in inclusive education. One of the participants states that:

"Shortage of resources, thus financial, material and human resources are serious problems we are facing as the school, and we are finding it difficult to implement quality inclusive education as required ...furthermore, lack of skilled personnel; teachers need further training for example in computers and on how to handle learner with special needs in classes".

Stakeholder Partnership
The present study revealed that the Government of Zimbabwe is the major stakeholder of government line ministries that implement its vision and policies at different levels. These government line ministries include education, health, and social welfare. The findings of the present study established that Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) were major stakeholders in trying to implement inclusive education and providing care and support to learners in public primary schools. Non-governmental organizations and FBOs were helping learners in schools with different phenomena such as school fee payment, uniforms, school feeding programmes, psychosocial support, medical bills, and birth registration facilitation. These programmes ensured that OVC had access to, and remained in schools and further helped them to perform much better in school.

The findings of this study concur with Dube (2016) who revealed that non-governmental organizations such as UNICEF, World Vision, Plan International, World Health Organisation, Save the Children, World Vision and UNAIDS are engaging in different kinds of projects to promote childcare and protection. Mafico (2007) established that non-governmental organisations seek to empower children, families, communities, and partners to prevent and respond to exploitation, neglect, abuse, and other forms of violence affecting children, especially orphans and vulnerable children. They offer services inclusive of educational assistance, psychosocial, nutritional, health care, and referral services. These are the nature of services that several non-governmental organisations and FBOs offer to learners with special needs. The current study further revealed that non-governmental organisations particularly those who worked with children provided schools with porridge and children were fed during break time. The study also established that through the provision of school feeding OVC were motivated to attend school more regularly and such learners were academically improving by being better nourished. One of the participants states that:

"Non-governmental organisations, churches, and local business people are also recognised as major stakeholders in supporting learners with special needs in public primary schools as they provide fees, stationery, food, and uniforms to some learners in primary school."

CONCLUSIONS
Based on the research findings, the study concludes that the lack of inclusive education policy affects the standardisation or uniformity of implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. Lack of adequate resources, thus financial, material and human resources compromised the implementation of inclusive education in schools. The study further concluded that a lack of particular skills and knowledge affects the implementation of inclusive education and academically, socially, and psychologically learners with special needs are seriously affected. Lastly, the study concluded that Non-Governmental Organisations and Faith Organisations were playing critical roles in trying to implement and promote inclusive education in public primary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- The Government should come up with clear inclusive education policy.
- The government should make every effort to include all learners, particularly those with special needs in mainstream classrooms and provide them with the needed learning assistance.
- The regular classroom teacher should be equipped with the skills and knowledge required in inclusive education.

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- The Government through the Ministry of Finance should provide enough funds for the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools.

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