

Parent and teacher perceptions of inclusive education in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Inclusive education (IE) is a global restructuring strategy envisioned to embrace learners with different abilities in mainstream schools. Previous research shows that parent and teacher inclusive education perceptions depend largely on their experiences of IE. This study examined parent and teacher perception of IE in the context Zimbabwean primary education. Data were collected from 12 parents and 12 teachers of learners in IE. Results indicated that participants' perceptions of IE divide into three main categories; i.e. positive, mixed and negative perceptions for various reasons. The results were presented in a tree diagram and a model and discussed with potential implications for various stakeholders.

Keywords: Inclusive education; perception; parent; teacher; typical learner; learner with disability

Introduction

The idea of inclusive education developed when special education could not go down well with the rise of global civil rights pressure group in the mid-twentieth century. Then, the parallel separatist special education began to be queried, and people with disabilities started disputing the 'stigmatizing and limiting nature of segregated education ...' (Winter and O'Raw 2010, 5). Since then, equality of access issues gathered momentum. This, bolstered by a political push from the disability angle and parents calling for change, culminated in rectification of legislation on education, with educators continually seeking improved ways of catering for the previously isolated groups. Winter and O'Raw (2010,) purport that it is the time when 'the efficacy and outcomes of segregated education came under scrutiny'. According to Thomas, Walker, and Webb (1998, 4) 'By the end of the twentieth century there was a growing consensus, resulting from moral imperatives and empirical evidence, that inclusion was an appropriate philosophy and relevant framework for restructuring education'.

Thus, as Ainscow (1999) puts it, the contemporary prominence of IE entrenched in the ideology of human rights is a step in its history. Emphasising the importance of the then long overdue IE, Winter and O’Raw (2010, 7) assert that, ‘The most compelling rationale for IE is based on fundamental human rights’. IE is thus a befitting replacement of segregated (special) education which potentially would contravene pupils’ rights to mainstream education in their neighbourhood area schools. Stressing the importance of IE and of introducing it, UNESCO (2005, 9) had the following to say:

The view implies that progress is more likely if we recognise that difficulties experienced by pupils result from the ways in which schools are currently organised and from rigid teaching methods. It has been argued that schools need to be reformed and pedagogy needs to be improved in ways that will lead them to respond positively to pupil diversity-seeing individual differences not as a problem to be fixed, but as opportunities for enriching learning.

The actual IE kick off, however began with the ‘Salamanca Statement’ taken up at the ‘World Conference on Special Educational Needs’ which, upon emphasising issues of Access and Quality, called on all governments to ‘adopt as a matter of policy the principles of IE, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise’ (UNESCO 1994, ix). Since then nations, including Zimbabwe embraced IE, with various policies introduced to bolster the new practice.

Context of the study

Inclusive education started in the United States (US) and Europe, but kicked-off with the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on special needs education. IE is at varied ratification and implementation levels in various nations. In Canada, in places like Brunswick, all learners with disabilities receive education in general classrooms (Ferguson 2008). In the US students with learning disabilities in general education form a relatively low national average of 51.9%, while in countries like the United Kingdom (UK) and Norway students in mainstream school actually spend most of their time in separate classes within the school (Ferguson 2008). The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (European Agency 2017) established that there are no binding documents at EU level about education in general and IE in particular. The inclusive enrolment rates in Europe, based on an 80% placement benchmark, are between 93.47% and 99.88% (European Agency 2017). The relatively high inclusive enrolment rates show IE is positively perceived in the US and Europe.

In Africa, many barriers interfere with education, especially of children with disabilities (ACPF 2011). In Ghana goals for IE and policies on inclusion are not clear (Amatepee and Anastasiou 2015), indicating not so good perception of IE. In Kenya, improvements in advocacy, change in perception of disability and reconceptualisation of mainstream education goals were among factors necessary for a future of IE (Williams 2014). Drawing closer home, in South Africa IE is hampered by lack of teacher skills in adapting to IE (Chataika et al. 2012). However, in South Africa, Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom through Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements direct school managers and teachers on planning and teaching in IE (Department of Education 2011).

Zimbabwe has embraced IE, and is a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on special needs education (Musengi, Mudyahoto, and Chireshe 2010; Chireshe 2011). In Zimbabwe inclusion involves fully utilising resources for improved education and partaking in school activities by all learners (Chimedza and Peters 1999; Mpofu 2004). In a school situation, effective IE involves learners and their families in daily activities of the school society. It also ascertains meeting needs of those with disabilities.

The Zimbabwean national literacy rate of more than 90% is rated among the very high regionally and globally (UNICEF 2006). About three million learners attend school in Zimbabwe (Education Management Information Systems 2004). Of these, a sizeable fraction comprises learners with disabilities. Zimbabwe's education system works together with the Zimbabwe School Psychological Services and Special Education (SPS and SE) department. The SPS and SE section helps with counselling services (Mpofu and Nyanungo 1998) in line with the Nziramasanga report of 1999, which revised Zimbabwean education, advocating education for learners with disabilities of the same standard as that of the general education.

Zimbabwean laws and policies for IE are however still not very clear (Mpofu 2004). Nonetheless, some administrative policy issues like the Zimbabwe Education Act of 1996, the People with disabilities Persons Act of 1996 and the Education Secretary's Policy Circular No. P36 of 1990, align well with the purpose of inclusion. Likewise, the Zimbabwean 1987 Education Act, revised in 2006, emphasises inclusion in regular classes, of learners with disabilities (Mudekanye and Ndamba 2010). Conversely, the People with disabilities Persons Act (1996) does not oblige the government to offering inclusivity in education in any tangible manner. It bars people with disabilities from taking the Zimbabwean government to courts relating to government service access concerns (Mpofu et al. 2006).

Although IE in Zimbabwe intends to achieve the noble goal of enhancing social emancipation of learners with disabilities and their families, inclusion is yet to flourish. The IE status quo may be consequential to stakeholder perceptions of IE, among other factors.

Methods

This study espoused *constructivism* for its paradigm. Constructivism enabled us to obtain and accept in-depth information on parent and teacher perceptions of Zimbabwean IE. Mayring (2014) contends that constructivism concerns itself with constructed or co-constructed realities. Thus it allowed us and participants to socially construct the context-specific realities of how IE is perceived among parents and teachers in Zimbabwe. The paradigm permitted us to focus on the research problem while utilising approaches available to gain a clear picture of the participants' IE perceptions (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010). Constructivism saw us benefitting more from a blend of qualitative research methods than would be possible through using any one singly.

Multiple case studies, as a *qualitative design* were adopted for studying two schools. Case study, which is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system, maintains deep connections to core values and intentions and is 'particularistic, descriptive and heuristic' (Merriam 2009, 46). Qualitative methods are utilised when studying people in their social

worlds, and qualitative data refers to data which result from contextualised observation and interaction (Richards 2014). If a researcher seeks people's own understanding of particular social contexts, given in their own words, it is best to adopt the qualitative research design. We had to interact with participants to get data that are contextual. Galvanising the importance of qualitative research, Creswell (2013) reiterates that qualitative methods are suitable for studies that are exploratory in nature.

Multiple case studies, sometimes called a collective case studies, are whereby a number of cases are chosen to develop a more detailed comprehension of the phenomena being studied than a single case study can provide (Yin 2013; Baxter and Jack 2008). One of the merits of case studies is they have a clear focus on dynamic interactions (Rossman and Marshall 2014). In IE, interactions tend to differ with situations. According to Yin (2013), multiple case-studies focus on real-life contexts, and permit a researcher to check for consistencies in research results. Thus the design is suitable for studying parent and teacher perceptions of IE, and for analysing data within each setting and across settings.

The study confined itself to studying a *sample* of 24 participants [12 parents and 12 teachers of 12 learners in inclusion (6 per school)] drawn from a population of 113 parents and 32 teachers. Khan (2009) says a sample is a subset of the research population used to determine the feature of the population, while Remler and Van Ryzin (2011) contend it is part of the population from which inferences about the population can be made.

Convenience sampling was used for selecting parents and teachers from two *purposively* selected inclusive schools. To Patton (2002), purposive sampling involves selecting individuals or artefacts that represent categories. Convenience sampling was used whereby 6 learners whose parents were easily accessible and willing to partake in the study were chosen from each school. Remler and Van Ryzin (2011) say convenience sampling implies taking advantage of a natural easy access to potential participants.

For data generation, we used *focus group discussions* (FGDs) and *interviews*. FGDs enabled us to assemble 12 people for participation in a discussion on the study topic. Interviews enabled a direct interface between us and participant(s), enabling us to draw out information, feelings and views from interviewees through use interactive conversation. O'leary (2010) contends that focus groups and interviews put the researcher in charge, allowing him/her to ask it the way he/she wants. More so, the methods permitted us to easily direct the research to match the research questions with some precision. Merging group and individual interviews normally indicate the greater breadth of FGDs and the greater depth of interviews (Crabtree and Miller 1993).

Thematic analysis was used. It is often said the key to meaning is interpretation (George Eliot, cited in O'leary 2010), implying data collected can make meaning only after having been systematically interrogated and interpreted. Ibrahim (2012) avers that, thematic analysis is most appropriate when discovering through use of interpretation. According to Grbich (2007), thematic analysis is a process of segmenting, categorising, linking and re-linking aspects of data before interpreting it.

Computer software, *NVivo* was used and allowed us to import and create data sources which could take the form of interview transcripts, audio or video recordings, documents or notes. *NVivo* enabled data segmentation into chunks or units, complex searches to establish linkages between data units, searching and retrieving data units with a particular code, and had a facility for attaching memos to documents or codes. King (2004, 263) asserts that,

Software such as *NVivo* is invaluable in assisting the researcher index segments of text to particular themes, to link research notes to coding, to carry out complex search and retrieve operations, and to aid the researcher in examining possible relationships between the themes. It could also search for strings, patterns, words and phrases in the text, could count frequencies of codes and words, among other things, in my data sources, and enable production of maps, networks and diagrammatic representations of links between codes and data.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations observed include informed consent, confidentiality and protection of participants. To ascertain reliability of the methods and study validity, quality criteria including credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability were ensured.

Results

Participants' demographic information

The majority of the participants were female, i.e. 15 in number, comprising of 5 parents and 10 teachers. Only nine of the participants, comprising of seven parents and two teachers were male (Figure 1).

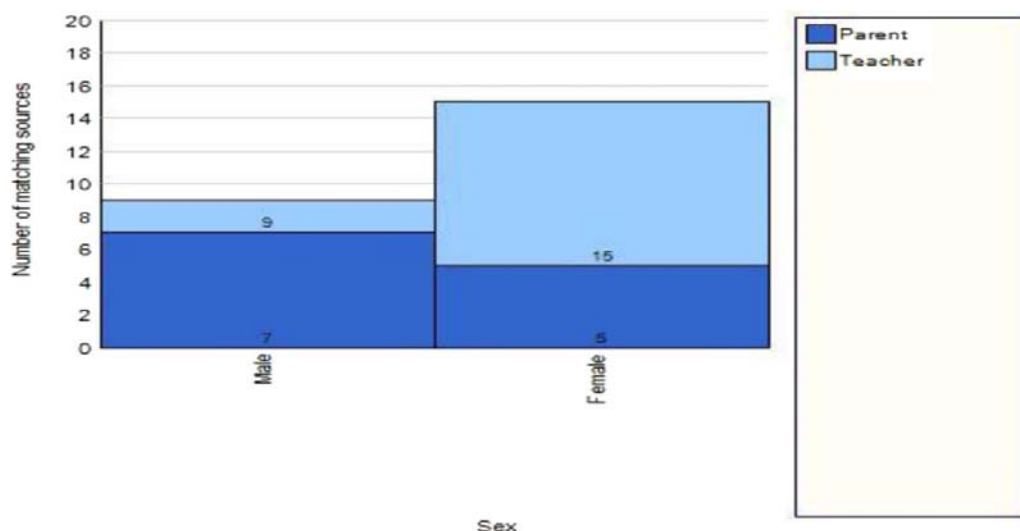


Figure 1. Demographic information: sex of participants.

The rest of the parents had at least one child with disability. Of all the parents who participated, only one 40–44-year-old parent had a child without disability. Most of the parents were aged 45–49 years (Figure 2).

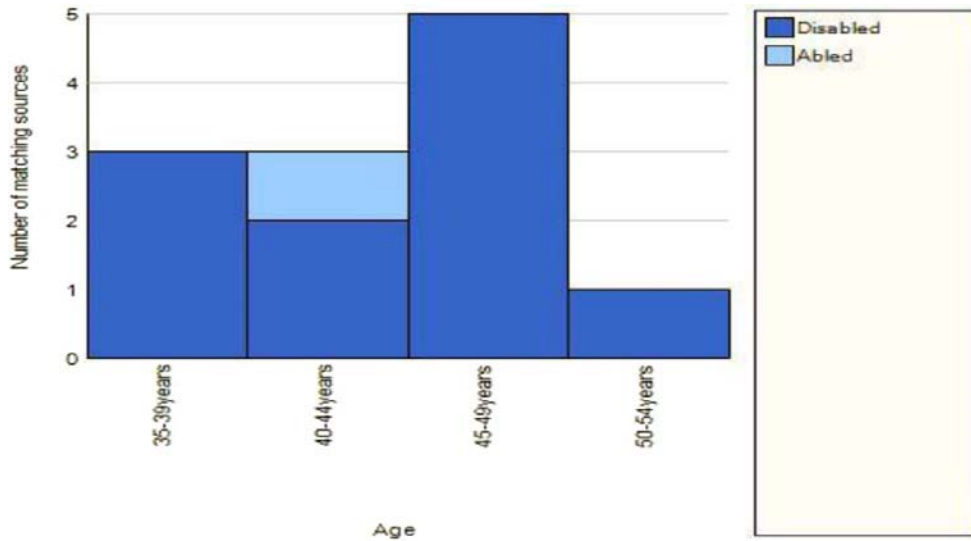


Figure 2. Demographic information: age versus child status.

Of the teachers who participated in the study, only two were males with 21–25-year and 26–30-year teaching experiences. The rest of the teacher participants were females. Of the female participants, two had 11–15, five had 16–20, two had 21–25 and only one had 31–35-year teaching experience (Figure 3).

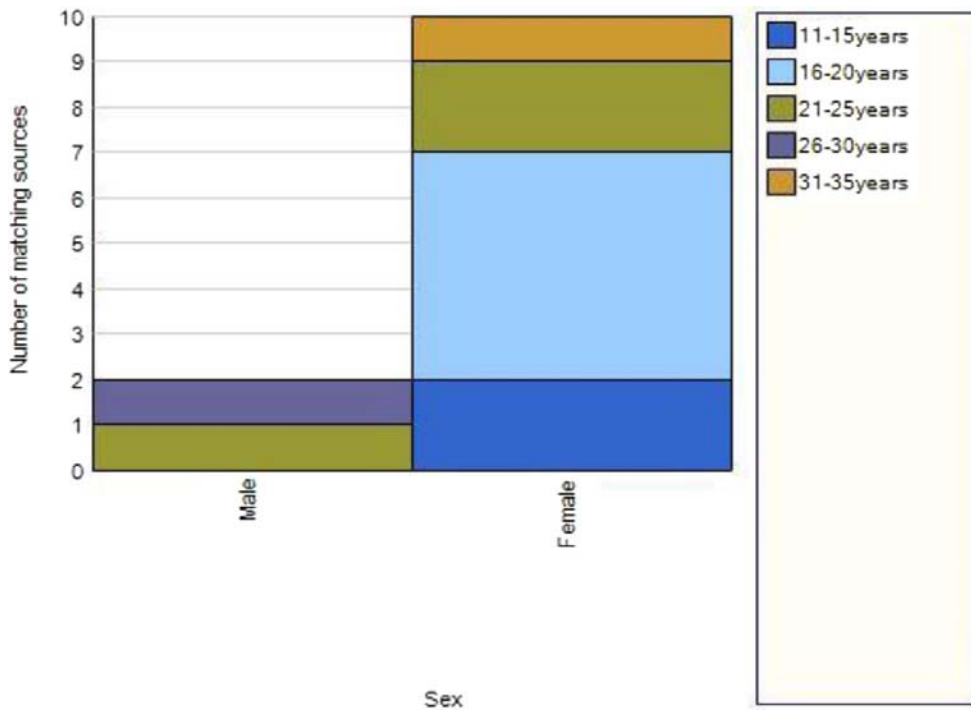


Figure 3. Demographic information: sex versus teaching experience.

As portrayed in Figure 4, participants had varying feelings towards IE which largely depended on their IE experiences. The views, summarised into concomitants based on how related they are, are shown in Figure 5.

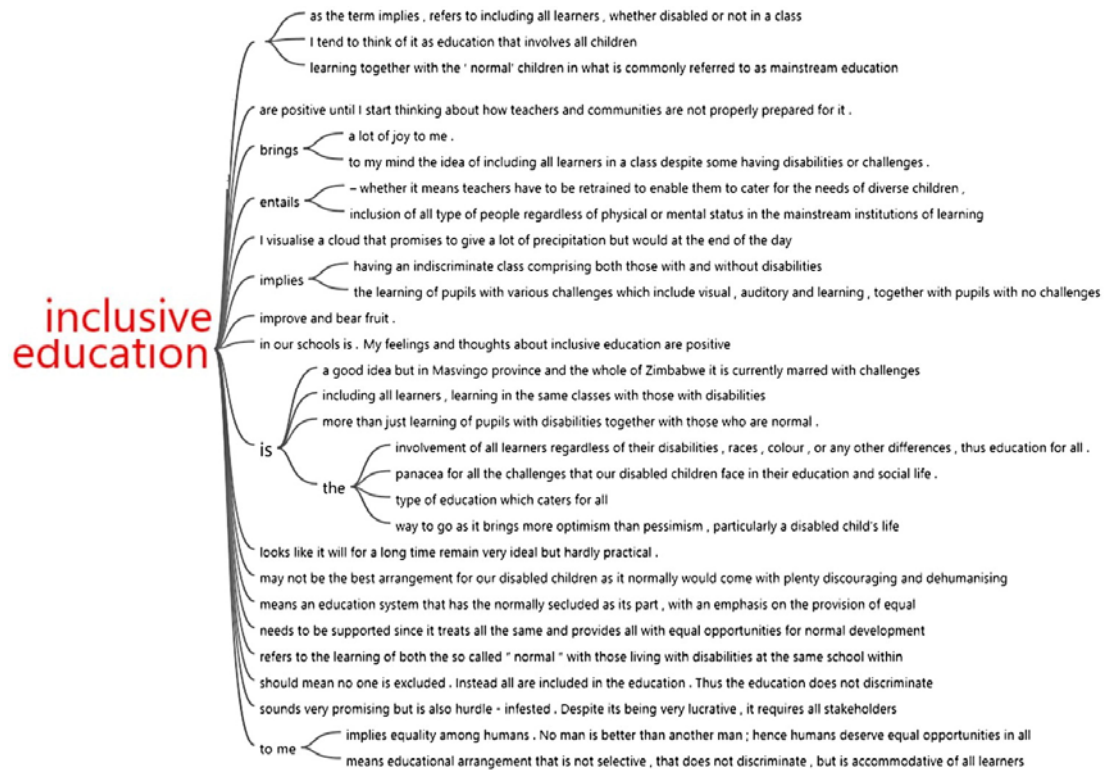


Figure 4. Parent and teacher feelings about inclusive education.

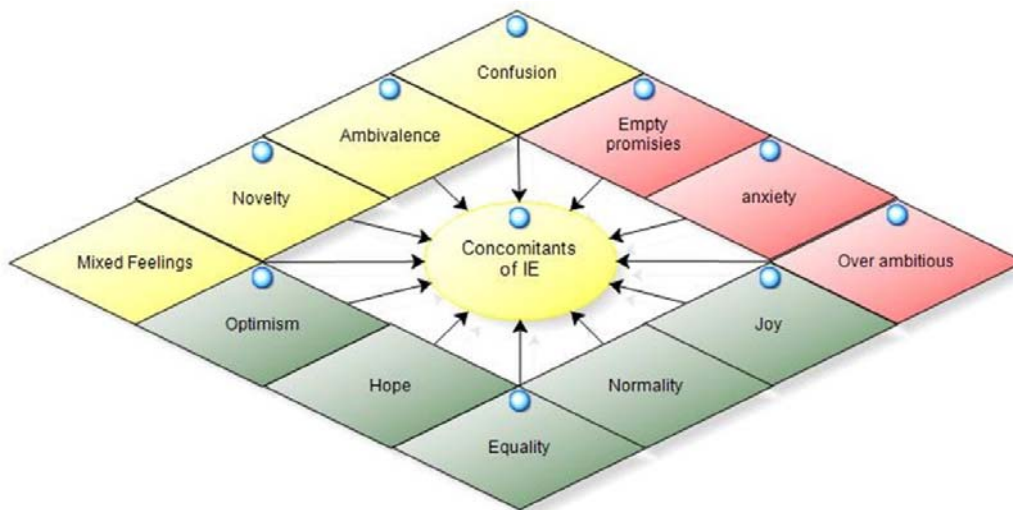


Figure 5. Clustered participant feelings of IE

Three main concomitants, i.e. positive feelings, mixed feelings and negative feelings about IE could be discerned.

Figure 5 shows that parent and teacher perception based concomitants about IE are divisible into three major categories, i.e. positive perception encompassing optimism, hope, equality, normality and joy; mixed perception covering ambivalence, novelty and confusion; and negative perception including anxiety, empty promises and being over ambitious. The major perception categories have their bases presented below.

Positive perception

Equality

As shown in Figures 4 and 5, most participants pointed out that IE was concerned with affording equality to all children. From their IE experience, parents realised IE allows for equal opportunities among learners. Thus, IE targets promoting egalitarian ideologies concerning equality and social justice. Teachers also felt IE needs not discriminate learners on whatever basis, favouring the less restrictive placement position. IE was thus identified as an educational arrangement that permits learning together by all, despite differences.

As noted above, participants viewed IE as education that is wholly anti-discrimination. However, the extent to which IE caters for equity remained unclear. This indicates that IE might be more concerned with equality than with equity, in a way leaving those with disabilities vulnerable, a situation contributing IE controversy.

Optimism and joy

Parents and teachers associated optimism with positively perceiving IE. They considered IE a practice that continually searches for valuable ways of addressing diversity stimulated challenges, while worrying more about getting rid of obstacles to inclusivity, involvement and achievement by all. They contend IE enables equal opportunities through providing educational needs of those prone to marginalisation, exclusion and underachievement. They also felt IE generates learning environments that meet the needs of all learners taught together in age appropriate ordinary education classrooms. With the advent of IE, some teachers felt very optimistic, especially about the lives of children with disabilities, as reflected in the following words by one teacher;

I feel inclusive education is the way to go as it brings more optimism than pessimism, particularly in a people with disabilities child's life ... Upon mention of the phrase 'inclusive education' feelings of hope engulf my heart and mind. I, however, experience totally different feelings when I reminisce how ill-resourced inclusive education is in our schools.¹<Internals\FGDs\Teachers FGD> - § 2 references coded [3.64% Coverage]

It shows therefore that teachers believe in embracing IE, although it is often taken aback by lack of resources and stakeholder ill-preparedness.

Similarly, some parents associated IE with joy:

The phrase 'inclusive education' brings a lot of joy to me. This is perhaps because I had a child who once was learning at a special school but would rarely or would take

too long to show any developmental progress both academically or socially. It is when I had him learn together with the 'normal' children in mainstream education that I began to see remarkable change for the better in both his education and social life.¹<Internals\\Interviews\\Parents\\Parent A3 Interview> - § 1 reference coded [4.52% Coverage]

Parents' associating IE with joy indicates they perceive inclusion positively, believing children benefit more when in inclusive environments than when in secluded places. Actually, parents and teachers advocate the social model understanding of disability, like those with disabilities themselves. Parents and teachers who positively view IE expressed ill-feelings about special education.

Mixed perception

Ambivalence, confusion and novelty

There has been lack of shared understanding of IE, and hence dissimilar perceptions within and among participants, of the idea of inclusivity. To some, IE implied destroying the benefits of special education, yet to others, IE is more than an education provision strategy recognising those with disabilities and their right to belong. Those with mixed feelings had good and bad memories; hope and scepticism; fear and happiness about IE;

The phrase 'inclusive education' brings with it both good and bad memories to me as a parent of a people with disabilities child who, for the past four years, has been in inclusive education, learning together with the 'normal' children in what is commonly referred to as mainstream education. My child and I have had good and bad experiences of inclusive education. Bearing in mind the fact that what affects my child also affects me, and what brings happiness to my child also brings happiness to me. While positive attitude by both teachers and peers of my child would always make my child's and my own days worthy living, negative attitude, discrimination and labelling by some teachers and peers would dampen those very same days.¹<Internals\\Interviews\\Parents\\Parent A5 Interview> - § 1 reference coded [8.55% Coverage]

Experiences of mixed feelings about IE could partly explain the confusion in some parents;

When I hear the term 'inclusive education' confusion engulfs my mind. I am not very clear on what inclusive education entails – whether it means teachers have to be retrained to enable them to cater for the needs of diverse children, or it requires those with disabilities child to adjust and suit the mainstream class and ways of learning. What boggles my mind the more is the question of feasibility of striking a state of equilibrium between the time the 'normal' child needs, and that which those with disabilities child would require to learn and master, as well as accomplish certain concepts and learning activities, respectively.¹<Internals\\Interviews\\Parents\\Parent A4 Interview> - § 1 reference coded [6.05% Coverage]

Some parents wonder what the idea implies to teacher training, and how balance can be struck when simultaneously teaching those with disabilities and the 'normal' children. The IE concept is new and the perception of novelty maybe another reason for scepticism.

Negative perception

Anxiety and empty promises

While others were positive and some ambivalent, others were more symptomatic of psychopathological reaction;

The term 'inclusive education' actually arouses a lot of anxiety in me. When hearing it I tend to believe inclusive education is the panacea for all the challenges that our children with disabilities face in their education and social life. However, I also would always develop feelings that inclusive education may not be the best arrangement for our children with disabilities as it normally would come with plenty discouraging and dehumanising acts and activities, especially by the non-people with disabilities against those with disabilities. A few examples are teasing, scolding and labelling of those with disabilities by peers, and even teachers who often become very impatient with those with disabilities and usually slow learning children.¹<Internals\\Interviews\\Parents\\Parent A1 Interview> - § 1 reference coded [6.29% Coverage]

Parents, particularly of children with disabilities felt that more often than not, their children were negatively affected by IE; and could hardly catch up with their 'normal' peers, a situation that exacerbated their vulnerability to different forms of ill-treatment, for example, being bullied, teased or neglected. IE thus, brings about anxiety due to positives and negatives associated with it. Parents pointed to the need for their children to write and pass examinations that are recognised nationally as another source of anxiety.

There was fear of empty promises among parents;



Each time I hear or think about inclusive education I visualise a cloud that promises to give a lot of precipitation but would at the end of the day only drizzle if at all it rains. This is because to me inclusive education sounds very promising but is also hurdle-infested. Despite its being very lucrative, it requires all stakeholders to give their all if it is to pay dividends. In other words, inclusive education looks like it will for a long time remain very ideal but hardly practical.¹<Internals\\Interviews\\Parents\\Parent A2 Interview> - § 2 references coded [5.48% Coverage]

Some parents do not fully believe in IE. There was a feeling that endeavours on IE are overambitious. This could be because, despite its palatability, IE is tainted by several factors that negate its success.

Factors that include limited awareness, inadequate resources and inappropriate teacher training, which interfere with progress in IE, were apparent in sentiments by parents and teachers that follow:

Inclusive education is a good idea but in Zimbabwe and the whole of Zimbabwe it is currently marred with challenges that include inadequate resources, yet to be upgraded teacher training curriculum and lack of awareness among the general people who are an important stakeholder in inclusive education.¹<Internals\\FGDs\\Parents FGD> - § 1 reference coded [3.39% Coverage]

My feelings and thoughts about inclusive education are positive until I start thinking about how teachers and communities are not properly prepared for it.²<Internals\\FGDs\\Teachers FGD> - § 1 reference coded [1.64% Coverage]

Every time I hear the phrase 'inclusive education' I think of our preparedness as schools, communities and the entire nation to adopt the idea of inclusivity in the education system. Despite the palatability and popularity of the idea, I still personally am of the opinion that schools, communities and the whole nation are too ill-resourced to do fruitful inclusive education. Looking at factors such as teacher training, teacher to pupil ratio and resource shortage in general, I wonder if time is really ripe for us to embrace and implement inclusive education. However, more of intrinsic motivation, determination, and clear focus by all stakeholders would see inclusive education improve and bear fruit.³<Internals\\Interviews\\Parents\\Parent A6 Interview> - § 1 reference coded [8.01% Coverage]

Parents and teachers perceive IE as the panacea to lack of comprehensive development of those with disabilities in special schools. They feel much need to be done to improve IE. Teachers believe IE, though thwarted by factors including resource shortage, should be embraced. Teachers cited reading material inadequacy, hardly accessible physical environments and congested classrooms; as compounding their inability to effectively assist learners with disabilities in inclusion.

Discussion

Parent and teacher perceptions indicate that IE opposes discrimination and allows for equal opportunities among learners. IE targets promoting egalitarian ideologies concerning equality and social justice (Miles and Singal 2010). Conversely, founders of special education advocated accommodating learners with disabilities in separate specialised institutions for their education (Reynolds and Ainscow 1994), as they were considered unable to gain from mainstream education (Thomas, Walker, and Webb 1998). Dunn (1968) argues against the separatist type of education, favouring the less restrictive placement position. This implies that while IE came to address shortfalls of special education, it may utilise certain aspects of special education to buttress its effectiveness.

Participants positively perceived IE. Bryant, Smith, and Byrant (2008) also view IE as one that educates learners with special educational needs in ordinary learning settings. Thus, to curtail or eliminate segregation, the school should welcome and accept the learner (BPS 2002; cited in Winter and O'Raw 2010). IE implications are that every child has the right to mainstream education. Participants viewed IE as education for all, dispensed under the same conditions and from local schools. Similarly, Mariga, McConkey, and Myezwa (2014), DfES (2001a), Knight (1999) and Sebba and Ainscow (1996) say IE enrolls all children, and has them taught under same conditions and with relatively similar treatment. Slee (2001a) says a lack of balancing the need for equality and equity in the definition of inclusive education could be a contributing factor towards IE controversy.

Positive perception

Optimism and joy

Positive parent and teacher perception of IE breeds optimism. UNESCO (2005) postulates that IE involves ongoing search for effective ways of responding to diversity stimulated challenges, and concerns itself with eliminating barriers to inclusivity, in order to meet educational needs of those prone to marginalisation, exclusion and underachievement. Kavale and Foreness (2000) cite Ferguson (1996) as saying IE creates schools that meet the needs of all learners taught together in age appropriate ordinary education classrooms. The advent of IE therefore brought about optimism, especially among children with disabilities. This may imply that IE creates ideal learning environments that accommodate all learners. Consequently, teachers' belief that inclusive education should be embraced signifies optimism. However, they say it is often consequently, compromised by lack of resources, as well as stakeholder ill-preparedness for it. A study in Ghana by Agbenyega (2007) reveals teachers' having inadequate resources as another factor compounding their problem of not meeting expected IE standards. This implies that, any country that adopts IE should strive to generate sufficient resources for the implementation of IE programmes.

Parents' associating IE with joy agrees with De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2010) and Duhaney and Salend (2000) who concur that parents perceive inclusion positively, believing their children benefit more when in inclusive environments. Parents whose children had physical or sensory disabilities score highest on positive perception of IE (Balboni and Pedrabissi 2000; Tafa and Manolitsis 2003). Parents and teachers advocate the social model

understanding of disability, like those with disabilities themselves. Gallagher et al. (2004) believe IE is indeed emancipatory to those with disabilities who have for a very long time been beleaguered. Parents and teachers who positively view IE have ill-feelings about special education. Concurring, Oliver (1996) and Gerrard (1994) advance that, grounded in the medical model and aligning with clinical approaches, special education, which IE emerged to replace, was undeniably causative to the age-old persecution of people with disabilities. However, IE stakeholders need to be clear on aspects of special education that are retrospective, for others may still be useful in IE.

Mixed perceptions

Ambivalence, confusion and novelty

Lack of shared understanding of IE yielded dissimilar perceptions within and among individual participants, of IE. Thus to some, IE implied dismantling positives about special education (Diamond 1995; Kauffman and Hallahan 1995), yet to others, IE is more than a service placement and a way of living together that values those with disabilities and their right to belong (Villa and Thousand 1995). It implies therefore that, some parents and teachers were more of mixed feelings, exhibiting good and bad memories; hope and scepticism; happiness and fear.

Regarding teacher attitude towards IE, Fakolade, Adeniyi, and Tella (2009) say attitudes are complex and vary with teachers and schools. Findings by Agbenyega (2007) reveal that teachers look down upon pupils with disabilities, considering them unsuitable for mainstream education, especially those with visual and auditory disabilities. Teachers' attitudes towards pupils with disabilities tend to depend on some form of quasi-medical diagnosis or psychological measurement, which is retrogressive (Bunch 1999). Similarly, Avramidis (2005) says continually emphasising deficits of those with 'special' needs distracts focus from barriers and attitudes in schools and societies. Hence, with teachers negatively perceiving IE, progress is substantially hampered.

Some parents wonder what the idea implies to teacher training, and how balance can be struck when teaching those with disabilities and the 'normal' children together. Perceiving novelty in IE may be a reason for scepticism. Thus, while parents recognise the educational, social and emotional benefits of IE (Gilmore, Campbell, and Cuskelly 2003), fears that inclusion lowers the academic achievement of learners in inclusion have begun to show (Florian et al. 2004). Thus, as Armstrong, Armstrong, and Spandagou (2011) postulate, inclusion is extremely contestable.

Concurring with parents' mixed feelings about IE, Florian et al. (2004) say parents of children without disabilities resist inclusion as they believe it negatively affects the academic progress of their children, despite its palatability.

Negative perception

Anxiety and empty promises

Some participants were more symptomatic of psychopathological reaction. Rogers (2007) says parents of children with disabilities and their children were negatively affected by having their children's 'normal' peers growing out of reach, leaving them more vulnerable to forms of ill-treatment, for example, being bullied, teased or neglected (Warnock 2005). Parents were also anxious that IE may too mean their children need to write and pass examinations that are recognised nationally (Benjamin 2002; Russell 2003). Similarly, Rogers (2007) avers that, parents are affected negatively when their children in IE fail to live up to their education in inclusion. It implies therefore that what affects the child in IE has a ripple effect on the parent.

Some parents felt that endeavours on IE are over ambitious. This could be because, despite its palatability, IE is tainted by several factors that negate its success. While IE entails unconditionally embracing differences among humans (Forest and Pearpoint 1992; Uditsky 1993; Ballard 1995; Clark, Dyson, and Millward 1995; Stainback and Stainback 1995; Rouse and Florian 1996; Thomas 1997; Cologon 2013), schools may not be ready for full inclusion. As such, Gains (2008) contends that full inclusion is an expansive and over-blown rhetoric, mainly politically driven, but lacking with regards to rigorous thought, debate or evidence. Contrarily, Bunch (1999) urges people not to bow down to the belief that variations in learning abilities should imply segregation of the not so privileged young boys and girls. For Bunch (1999, 4) 'all children have the right to go to the same school attended by their brothers, sisters, and neighbourhood friends ...' Bunch (1999, 9) argues that, '... we learn to talk by talking ... to read by reading ... to write by writing ... and hence to include by including'. Thus perfection of IE is only possible with implementation.

Parents and teachers perceive IE as the panacea to lack of comprehensive development of those with disabilities in special schools. They however feel much needs to be done to improve IE. Teachers believe embracing inclusive education is noble, but is thwarted by factors including resource shortage. Agbenyega (2007) reiterates that teachers viewed their IE expert knowledge and skills as inadequate to successfully educate learners with disabilities in regular schools; while citing inadequate resources as compounding their inability to effectively assist learners with disabilities in inclusion. Similarly, Engelbrecht et al. (2003) found IE to worsen stress among teachers who already have pupils with disabilities in their mainstream classrooms, citing administrative issues, teachers' low self-efficacy in IE, lack of collaboration with parents and inadequate support, as some of the most stressful areas. This, as some participants felt, may serve to explain variations in perceptions of IE and the consequential lack of progress in IE.

Conclusion

Parents and teachers' perceptions of inclusive education vary. Some positively perceive it. Others assume the middle of the road approach to perceiving IE, understanding what it can potentially produce, but are worried about lack of preparedness for IE in Zimbabwe and the

entire of the developing world. The third and last group of parents and teachers negatively perceive IE.

Limitations

- Assembling parents for FGDs was difficult as they stayed far from each other. I had to allow them time to adjust their busy schedules so they could avail themselves for the FGDs.
- I had no funding whatsoever from anywhere for my research. I had to use remnants from my little earnings to meet travel, accommodation and stationery expenses.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made;

- There is a need for policy development at different levels, from national to schools, on inclusive education,
- Research should be done on how certain aspects of special education can be utilised for improving inclusive education and
- Education should get the first priority when allocating resources.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Johnson Magumise (PhD) lectures at some university in the department of education, offering educational psychology courses. He is relatively new in the world of publishing even though he has written and published books and study modules. He also content reviewed study modules.

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