

**Challenges Faced By Learners With
Physical Disabilities In Accessing
Inclusive Education In Zambia: A
Case Study Of Gracious Libubi Of
Monze District-Southern Province**

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Introduction

- Inclusive Education has become a global trend in the provision of services for pupils with disabilities world wide (UNESCO,2015).
- Several developing countries, Zambia inclusive have adopted international initiatives such as those prescribed by UNESCO and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in ensuring that all children have a right to free and appropriate education and this includes all pupils even those with disabilities e.g. Jomtien Conference of Education for All (1990) & Samalanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994)

Introduction Cont'd

- At Local level, the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) has put in place several policies, plans & legislation such as:
 1. **Sustainable Development Goals-** (Goal # 4-Ensure inclusive & equitable education & promote lifelong learning opportunities for all)
 2. **Vision 2030:** Improving the well-being of all
 3. **7th National Development Plan (2017-2021):**-Accelerating development efforts towards vision 2030
 - Poverty & vulnerability reduction
 4. **Patriotic Front(PF) Manifesto (2016-2021):**Quality Education & Skills Development
 5. **Several Educational Policies** (post-independence & after Independence) – Sets the vision and strategy for educational development.
Educational Reforms of 1977, Focus on Learning of 1992, Educating our Future of 1996

Introduction Cont'd

Despite the Ministry of General Education adopting a number of policies to guide the provision of education equitably, the system currently does not assure access by learners. For instance, pupils with disabilities still face challenges hence this case study which focussed on a Grade 12 girl pupil Gracious Libubi at Monze Secondary School in Monze District of Southern Province of Zambia.

Objectives

- i. To identify challenges that Graciuos Libubi faces in accessing education in Monze District;
- ii. To determine measures that could address the identified challenges faced by Gracious Libubi in accessing inclusive education in Monze District.
- iii. To determine the views of Teachers & Administrators in whether or not inclusive education was feasible in Monze District;

Methodology

- This study adopted a case study design. Both Quantitative and Qualitative methodology was employed.
- Whereas qualitative method relied on Focus Group Discussion, quantitative method on the other hand, used questionnaires.
- Data was collected from Gracious Libubi, Teachers & Administrators

Findings

This section presents findings of the study in relation the set objectives

Objective 1: Challenges Faced By Gracious Libubi

- Non-user friendly infrastructure
- Mobility
- Discrimination/Stigma

Findings Cont'd

Objective 2: Measures To Address Identified Challenges

There is great urgency by Government through the Ministry of General Education to:

- Introduce an infrastructure policy that will compel all schools to have user friendly buildings that would accommodate pupils with physical disabilities as well as teachers;
- Train more teachers in special education & all teacher education training institutions to include basic special education in their curriculum;
- Embark on a robust sensitisation programme to pupils, teachers, parents and the community at large to curb discrimination & stigma

Findings Cont'd

Objective 3: Teachers' Views Regarding Inclusive Education

- Inclusive Education is feasible **but** it is a long and slow process that requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders;
- Stigma & Discrimination: Both learners with disabilities and their teachers are isolated and stigmatised.
- Teachers noted that most schools still have inadequate trained special education staff, dealing with multiple disabilities e.g. blind, deaf or physical disability & non-friendly infrastructure.
- Inadequate funding to schools.
- Overcrowding in classes, a situation that makes it conducive for pupils with disabilities.

Discussion of Findings

1.Challenges Faced by Gracious Libubi

This study revealed that, Gracious as a pupil with physical disabilities face numerous challenges in accessing inclusive education and this has a negative impact on the performance of the learners. Meanwhile, Eklindh & Balescut (2006) observed that there is growing evidence that children with disabilities learn better when they are allowed to go to a public school within their neighbourhood.

-The research revealed that it is not the disabilities of the pupils that hinders them from accessing education but rather the social factors.

2. Views of Teachers

Teachers of Special Education revealed that there is still a lot to be done if inclusive education is to be attained.

Similarly ZECF (2012) suggests that teacher education institutions should include special education in their curriculum

Discussion Cont'd

3. Measures To Address Identified Challenges

The study revealed some measures

- i. Ministry of General Education should ensure that infrastructure is modified so that it is accessible to all learners including those with physical disabilities

- i. Teacher training curriculum must integrate basics on how to handle pupils with special needs

- iii. Multi sectoral approach is desirable. This is in tandem with Tembo (2018) who contends that multi sectoral approach is going to enhance opportunities and social inclusion of learners with disabilities

Conclusion

Upon analysis of the findings, the study concluded that:

- Learners with physical disabilities face many challenges ranging from non-friendly infrastructure, mobility, inadequate teaching/learning materials, stigma and discrimination.
- We still see a disparity between people who are the abled bodied & those that are differently able; theory & practice; policies & implementation.
- To this extent, it can be argued that it is time to re-think our approach to attaining inclusive education.

Recommendations

- Ministry of Education should ensure that infrastructure is modified so that it is accessible to all learners, including those that are differently able.
- Ministry of Education to provide appropriate teaching materials & train more teachers of Special Education.
- Teacher training curriculum must integrate basics on how to handle pupils with special needs.
- Strengthen Empowerment of households, families and communities keein

Acknowledgements

- Sincere gratitude goes to Norwegian Disability Consortium & Health Help Zambia for the support without whom the study would have not been possible.
- Other thanks go to the Organisers of the conference and the respondents

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