

## Challenges to the Provision of Inclusive Education in Primary and Secondary Schools: A Case of Four Newly Created Districts in Northern Province, Zambia

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### Abstract

The purpose of the study was to establish the challenges faced in the provision of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly created districts namely; Lunte, Lupososhi, Nsama and Senga Hill of Northern Province, Zambia. The target was 20 head teachers, 20 deputy head teachers, 40 guidance teachers, and 120 teachers from primary and secondary schools giving a total of 360 respondents. A quantitative and qualitative study approach, which followed a descriptive survey study design, was used. The research instruments used were: -observation checklists, questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. The analysis done was both qualitative and quantitative. Data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and was presented in form of graphs, percentages, tables and charts. Results of the study established that teachers are not suitable to teach learners with SEN because of poor working relationship with the parents; and lack of special skills to teach learners with SEN. The study has also established that the infrastructure is not

suitable because of lack of: special toilets for wheelchair bound learners; special table for wheelchair bound learners; special water points for physically challenged learners; special chalkboards to wheelchair bound learners; special classroom buildings for physically challenged learners, and special playground facilities for learner with SEN. In view of these findings, it was recommended that Government through the Ministry of General Education should build special toilets, water points, playground facilities, special classroom buildings, special tables, and special chalkboards for learners with SEN. It was further recommended that Government through the Ministry of General Education should deploy qualified and experienced teachers who are trained to teach learners with disabilities.

**Keywords: Inclusive education, education, SEN, SEN learners**

## **I) INTRODUCTION**

“Inclusion” has become a catchphrase, not only among the educationists, but among administrators, policy makers/implementers, human rights advocates (particularly those who advocate for the rights of people with disabilities) and social workers (who advocate for social justice and empowerment of vulnerable members of society). Most children with disabilities are not educated in the mainstream school system but rather in the parallel special schools’ system. This problem is thought to be more pronounced in developing countries. The exclusion of people with disabilities from education often leads to severe consequences in later life: many do not gain the necessary skills to enter the competitive labor market and thus get excluded from economic activities (Noyoo, 2000). Therefore, many are denied the opportunity to lead an independent life (and experience the dignity that economic independence affords). Other offshoots of exclusion from education are increased crime rate, street children and other social problems such as destitution (Gates, 2007).

Inclusive schools are thus perceived to be vital in providing education to children with special needs and those without special needs, alike. Croft (2010) points that getting children with disabilities into schools is one thing, but overcoming attitudes, bureaucratic, and economic barriers is another. Therefore, presence alone is not enough to guarantee participation in all activities. A conducive learning environment must be ensured, as it is a prerequisite to inclusive education. These days, there are unprecedented efforts by policy

makers and implementers in trying to come up with acceptable social policies that promote the wellbeing of all children regardless of their abilities. Noyoo (2000) argues that change agents such as social workers are also advocating for social policies that would facilitate higher living standards for marginalized groups in society. Further, governments world over, including Zambia, are enacting laws and social policies that are meant to incorporate children with disabilities into the mainstream society by ensuring that all people are accorded equal opportunities in all spheres of society (MoE, 1996).

The population of people with disabilities in Zambia is estimated to be between 700,000 to 1 million, representing around 7 to 10 percent of the total population. The majority of people with disabilities are found in the rural areas of the country. Further rural areas in Zambia are characterized by limited basic services (health and education facilities). People with disabilities are mainly involved in agriculture activities—accounting for 80 percent of the common occupation among persons with disabilities (Mubita, 2009). Hence, the majority of people with disabilities are impoverished since agriculture in a country like Zambia does not offer high returns. Further a significant number of persons with disabilities have low literacy levels, and a considerable number of them are involved in street begging as a survival strategy, especially in the major cities (MoE, 1996).

Within the education sector according to MoE (1996), about 15% of children in Zambia have special education needs, meaning that in 1995,

there were between 160,000 and 250,000 primary school children with Special Education Needs (SEN). However, most SEN schools in Zambia hardly cater for children with intellectual special needs. The ultimate goal of the government is to ensure that children with SEN are included in mainstream classrooms so that social inclusion can be fostered. Thus, in Zambia, inclusive education is perceived as an extension of special education, administered alongside the ordinary school system (Galvin, 2005).

The Zambian government undertakes to adhere to the obligations of the international treaties that it has signed and ratified such as the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policies and Practice in Special Needs Education together with the Draft Framework for Action, and the United Nations Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, among others (Mubita, 2009). For this reason, the country's social policies state that the government will ensure that every person has equal opportunity to social services in terms of accessibility, quality, participation and benefits derived thereof. The government also undertakes to put in place measures and interventions aimed at ensuring that the vulnerable children are supported in accessing social services (MoE, 1996).

However, as much as Zambia has signed and ratified international obligations that aim at upholding the rights of children with disabilities, and promoting equality of access to social services such as an inclusive school system like many

developing countries-Zambia is still not doing well in terms of discharging its obligations on the principles of an inclusive education system. There is little evidence of the strategies to show that children with special needs are being included in the regular school system. Apart from that, as much as many proponents of inclusive education state inclusive schools enhance integration and interaction between students with disabilities and those without, the few available literature indicates that there is growing concern that many children with disabilities who are in the inclusive school system feel socially secluded (Tavares, 2011).

While most of the studies have looked at challenges faced by teachers in their implementation of inclusive education, challenges faced by SEN learners in their implementation of inclusive education, the importance of social networks for people with disabilities in schools, a study of opportunities and challenges for children with disabilities and Teachers and students' perceptions of inclusive education (Chilangwe, 2010; Chirwa, 2013; Khoaeane, 2012), all the above stated studies had little focus on establishing whether teachers are trained in handling learners with special education needs and determining whether infrastructure is suitable for the provision of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern province, gave rise for a need to carry out a study to ascertain the challenges to the provision of inclusive education in primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern province.

## II) LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The Concept of Inclusive Education**

As stated in Engelbrecht and Green (2007), the term inclusive education is about changing and transforming the education system to accommodate all children, regardless of the strength or weakness in any area and to become part of the school community. The Education White Paper (2000), defines inclusion as an ending process rather than a simple change of the state. It is viewed as a process of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusive from culture, curriculum and communities of local centres of learning

### **Global outlook on Inclusive education**

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education (SNE) paved the way for inclusive education globally.

The 2030 ASD (2015) affirmed to provide inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of education. The ideal situation is that all children and youths, especially those in vulnerable situations such as CWDs should have access to life-long learning opportunities that help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society. Member countries for 2030 ASD (2015) strive to provide children with disabilities with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities through cohesive communities and families.

In some Asian countries, the concept of inclusive education is still being defined. For instance, in India Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, a government programme to provide useful and relevant elementary education for all children aged six to fourteen promotes inclusive education; however, there are no clear national guidelines on how it is to be implemented. State governments are responsible for drawing up their own inclusive education policy and strategy, with educational provision for disabled children mostly focused on allowances, accessibility and teacher sensitisation.

In the US, a longitudinal study which tracked the progress of 8,000 young people showed that students with physical disabilities who received a mainstream education were 43 percent more likely to be employed after leaving school than those who had been in segregated schooling (Woronov, 2010). The research evidence, however, is not unequivocal; a review of eight model programmes found evidence of variable effectiveness and concluded that outcomes of inclusive programmes were relatively unimpressive given the significant investment of resources (Manset and Sammel, 2017). Other reviews during the 1990s failed to produce clear evidence for the superiority of inclusive education (Hegarty, 2013; Sebba and Satchev, 2017). Lindsay concluded that the evidence for the effectiveness of inclusion, by the end of the twentieth century, 'might best be described as equivocal, although equally, there was little evidence for the superiority of special education (2017, p.7).

## **Inclusive Education in Africa**

Inclusive Education, according to McConkey, Mariga, and Myezwa (2014), is perceived as being practically challenging in low-income countries like those in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). In 2011, nearly 30 million children in SSA were not attending school at all and over half of those children who attended primary school did not learn the basic reading and writing skills by Grade 4 (UNESCO, 1994).

Many countries in Africa have made pronouncements on the need to have inclusive education where the disabled learners are integrated into the mainstream education. A good example is the commitment made by Kenya. However, the problem is that, at present, such policies basically amount to little more than unachievable, empty promises. Full inclusion of disabled children in mainstream education might sound good, and such a position is better than not having a policy at all. But it only takes a small amount of unpacking to realise that this noble declaration is not all that it seems. It only really represents an admission that the resources, or perhaps the political will, to deliver an education system which affords every individual the most appropriate educational experience. The decision to put all children in one school is frequently an economic consideration rather than one based on sound educational theory. Such pronouncements and policies will fail to address the issue of disability holistically and they don't encourage innovative thinking about solutions to the problem (McConkey, Mariga and Myezwa, 2011).

Research studies in Africa on inclusive education reveal that many mainstream primary schools in Africa lack some key materials and resources which would make the inclusion of disabled children easier (McConkey and Mariga, 2011). Teachers, often with classes of more than fifty, generally lack the training and skills to meaningfully include disabled children in their lessons. With underfunded and inaccessible (or virtually invisible) systems for the assessment of children with impairments, vital information and advice is not passed on to school staff. Perhaps, above all though it is attitudes of non-disabled staff and students that present the greatest barrier to disabled children's inclusion. A poor understanding of a child's impairment, combined with stigma, leads to a lack of recognition of their educational capabilities and in many instances quite simple, inclusive accommodations that need to be made. At worst, such attitudes could manifest as active hostility to the idea of inclusion in education. Consequently, disabled children can find themselves effectively dismissed by school staff as 'somebody else's problem'.

## **Inclusive Education in Zambia**

In understanding Zambia's commitment to providing quality education for children with disabilities, it is important to trace the historical background of education in Zambia. Education for children with special educational needs (SEN) has been in existence in Zambia for over 100 years. The first attempts to educate children with Special Educational Needs were made by missionaries in 1905, when Mrs. Ella opened the first special school for the blind in Magwero, Chipata. Later the

Zambian government took over the responsibility of educating children with special needs and the Ministry of Education was mandated to take up the portfolio of special education in 1971. The first major educational policy document in Zambia pertaining to special education stated that all handicapped children like any other children are entitled to education and should receive basic and further education by full-time study (Educational Reform GRZ, 1977). It further, stated that since the handicapped are a special case, there should be 'positive discrimination' in their favour in the provision of facilities and amenities for education purposes' (Educational Reform GRZ, 1977).

The second major educational policy document 'Focus on learning' corresponded to the World Declaration on Education for All. The 1992 document emphasised on the mobilisation of resources for the development of school education for all children including learners with special educational needs (Ministry of Education, 2012). This development led to infrastructure expansion in the provision of special education. In 1995, there were 31 special education institutions of which 28 were at primary, one at secondary and two at tertiary. There were also 80 special education units and it is anticipated that the number of special education institutions and units could have increased over the last sixteen years (Ministry of Education, 1996).

The third policy document, Educating Our Future from 1996 is fairly advanced compared to the previous ones. Educating Our Future (1996) contains many statements such as:

- The Ministry of Education will ensure equality of education opportunities for children with special educational needs.
- The Ministry is committed to providing education of particular good quality to learners with special educational needs.
- The Ministry will improve and strengthen the supervision and management of special education across the country,

■ The Zambia Government Education Policy (1996) aims at providing an equitable access to education for children with special educational needs. In striving for the realisation of this policy aspirations, supportive environment has been created such as curriculum adaptation and modification responsive to the needs of learners with disabilities have been given primacy which have led to increased enrollment for children with disabilities in special schools and units. In 2011, Northern Province recorded highest with 29,694 while Lusaka had the lowest with 9,290 learners. The distribution of learners however, varied from one province to the other indicating that variation was due to different levels of availability of facilities (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Other recent developments in the field of Special Education have been the enactment of the Education Act of 2011 and the Persons with Disability Act of 2012 providing the legal framework for the provision of special education in Zambia. The preamble to the Education Act 2011 makes specific reference to provision for the education of persons with disabilities or special educational needs. The main objective of the Act is

to give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children to education including children who have a disability or other special educational needs. It also outlines the roles and responsibilities of schools and boards of management in making appropriate provision for learners with disabilities or special educational needs (Education Act 2011, Cap 333 of the Laws of Zambia). The Act further states that educational institutions should ensure to provide learners with special educational needs with quality education in appropriate designed and well-resourced educational institutions, staffed by qualified and dedicated teachers (Ministry of Education, 2011).

The Zambian government in response to the EFA campaigns appears to be working towards increased access for all children in primary schools. Some of the policy measures adopted by the government include; the abolished of examination fees at grade seven levels, re-introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE), the re-admission of pregnant female pupils and admitting pupils without school uniforms (MOE, 2002). Moreover, the Zambian government also recognizes that all Zambian children including Children with Disabilities (CWD) have a right to a free, compulsory, quality education. The government recognizes the paramount responsibility to provide this education, in collaboration with parents and communities as may be appropriate. However, the widely accepted notion is that conditions required to allow for successful inclusion are those that contribute to overall school improvement and high levels of achievement for all children. Despite the above good policies introduced by the Ministry of

Education, it seems that there are still challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education in primary and secondary schools in most districts in Zambia. Thus, the need to establish whether teachers are trained in handling learners with special education needs and determine whether infrastructure is suitable for the provision of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly created district in Northern Province namely; Lunte, Lupososhi, Nsama and Senga Hill.

### **III) METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive survey study design was employed on establishing the challenges to the provision of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly created districts of Northern Province, Zambia. The target was 20 head teachers from primary and secondary schools, 20 deputy head teachers from primary and public schools, 40 guidance teachers from primary and public schools, and 120 teachers from primary and secondary schools giving a total of 360 respondents.

Data was gathered using observation checklists, questionnaires, and interview schedules. Observation checklist method is known for eliminating subjective bias (Kothari & Garg, 2014) and, “the information obtained under this method relates what is currently happening in a natural setting; it is not complicated by either the past behaviour or future intentions (Berg, 2001 p.19). Video recording was used to collect data through observation to capture data in its totality (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). One of the advantages of

using a video camera to record field observations is that it allows the researcher not only to capture the physical environment but also to revisit the images later and relive the experiences during analysis (Merriam, 1998), and this helped to enhance trustworthiness of these qualitative results (Merriam, 1998).

Questionnaires was preferred primarily for its ability to elicit and generate data on establishing the challenges faced in the provision of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly created districts of Northern Province, Zambia. The questionnaire used in this study was semi-structured because the sample of the respondents was relatively large and they were able to read and write (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section one (1) had Likert scale statements which required to find out if teachers are suitable in handling learners with special education needs in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern province under the following categories: working relationship between parents and teachers, teachers' training and skills regarding inclusive education, teacher's training for blind learners, teacher's training in sign language, adequacy in teacher training and experience, teacher's training with regard to learners with auditory impairment, and presence of special teachers to help students with special needs. Section two (2) had Likert scale statements which required to find out if infrastructure is suitable for the provision of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools under the following

categories: availability of Special toilets for wheelchair bound learners, accessibility of buildings to accommodate physically challenged learners, availability of special table for wheelchair bound learners, and availability of special water points for physically challenged learners. By using questionnaires, one could elicit maximum data and a wide variety of behavioural, perspective, and attitudinal responses from minimum questions (Patton, 1990). Researcher employed the questionnaires because it has an advantage over the interview in that it allows one to sample more units, at lower or no cost.

To collect data in a natural way, Kothari and Garg (2014) suggest that interview schedule is a more natural way of collecting data. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) recommend that interviews help to simultaneously solicit for opinions and experiences of participants in the natural settings. Interviews are also a useful means of exploring someone else's ideas or thinking (Merriam, 1998). Scholars across the globe contends that interviews are said to be the best way to collect data because it helps the researcher to have feelings, opinions, gestures, tone of voice, reactions, attitudes, views, and are useful in gathering in-depth data (Kvale, 1996). Talking to the participants also helped to have an in-depth understanding of whether teachers are trained in handling learners with special education needs in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern province and whether infrastructure is suitable for the provision of inclusive education in public

primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern province.

In this study, quantitative data through questionnaires was managed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 26 to generate tables, graphs, and figures which were used to present, analyse, describe and compare data (Burns, 2000; IBSS, 2020). Qualitative data gathered through questionnaires and semi-structured interview schedule was analysed and significant statements pertaining to the challenges faced in the provision of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools in Lunte, Lupososhi, Nsama and Senga Hills of Northern Province, Zambia were extracted through grounded theory procedures, that is, notes and memos were read and re-read and transcribed into categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This enabled the researcher to establish whether infrastructure is suitable for the provision of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools (Cooper & Schindler, 2003), as the researcher worked with the data, describing, creating explanations and linking the collected data to what others have collected on the similar study (Glense, 1999).

## IV) FINDINGS

In this section, researcher presents results and discussions on establishing the challenges to the provision of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly created districts of Northern Province, Zambia.

### Teachers handling learners with SEN

While the preceding section presented the methodology that guided this study, this section presents findings on whether teachers are trained in handling learners with special education needs in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly created districts in Northern province.

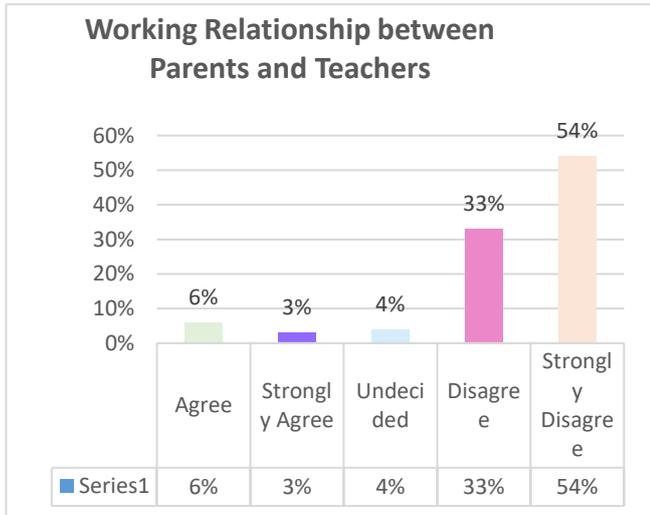
### Working Relationship between Parents and Teachers

Pertaining to weather working relationship between the parents and teachers was good, the findings were shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 below:

**Table 1: Working Relationship between Parents and Teachers**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	22	6
Strongly Agree	11	3
Undecided	14	4
Disagree	119	33
Strongly Disagree	194	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2021



**Figure 1: Working Relationship between Parents and Teachers**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 1 and Figure 1 above shows the responses varied as follows; 54% (n=194) strongly disagreed, 33% (n=119) disagreed, 4% (n=14) were not sure, the remaining 6% (n=22) agreed and 3% (n=11) strongly agreed. It is noted, therefore that the working relationship between the parents and the school is not good. This can hinder learning greatly.

### Teachers' Training and Skills Regarding Inclusive Education

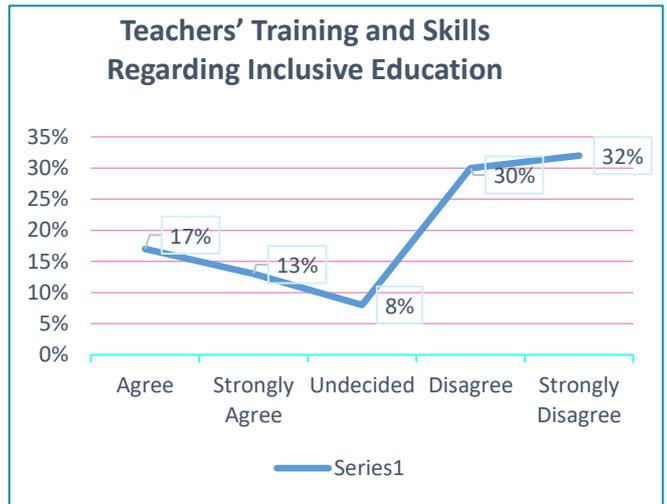
Table 2 and Figure 2 indicates responses to whether respondents have been trained and are skilled regarding inclusive education.

**Table 2: Teachers' Training and Skills Regarding Inclusive Education**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	61	17
Strongly Agree	47	13
Undecided	29	8

Disagree	108	30
Strongly Disagree	115	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2021



**Figure 1: Teachers' Training and Skills Regarding Inclusive Education**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Results in Table 2 and Figure 2 above revealed the following; 23% (n=115) of respondents strongly disagreed, 30% (n=108) disagreed, 8% (n=29) neither agreed nor disagreed, 13% (n=61) agreed and 17% (n=47) strongly agreed. Clearly, results of the study revealed that many teachers both in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern Province are not professionally trained to deal with children with special needs and they cannot function effectively in an inclusive classroom.

### Teacher's Training for Blind Learners

The responses to whether teachers are trained to teach blind learners using Braille are showed the following in Table 3.

**Table 3: Teacher’s Training for Blind Learners**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	54	12
Strongly Agree	43	15
Undecided	36	10
Disagree	90	25
Strongly Disagree	137	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field data, 2021**

The results in Table 3 showed the following, strongly disagree 38% (n=137), 25% (n=90) disagree, 10% (n=36) of respondents neither agree nor disagree. On the other hand, 15% (n=54) agree and 12% (n=43) strongly agree. It is a point of concern that the majority of blind learners are still excluded in the mainstream classrooms.

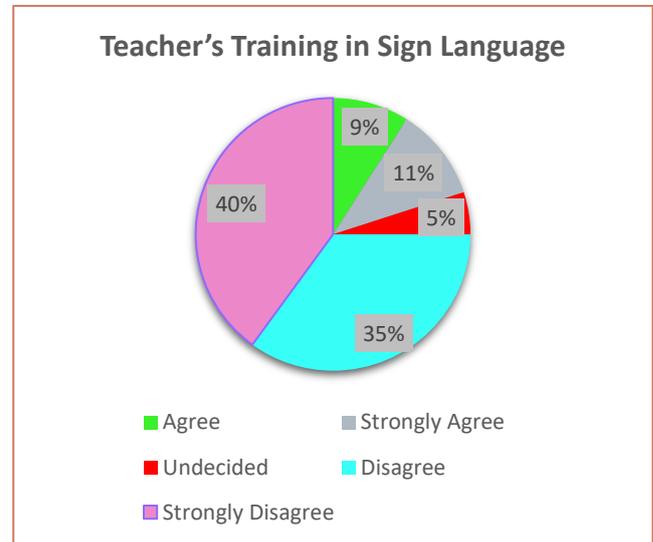
### Teacher’s Training in Sign Language

The respondents were asked to give their opinions on teacher’s training in sign language. The responses were represented as shown in Table 4 and Figure 3:

**Table 4: Teacher’s Training in Sign Language**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	32	9
Strongly Agree	40	11
Undecided	18	5
Disagree	126	35
Strongly Disagree	144	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Fieldwork, 2021**



**Figure 3: Teacher’s Training in Sign Language**

**Source: Fieldwork, 2021**

Respondents who were trained to use sign language formed 11% (n=40) strongly agree and 9 % (n=32) agreed. Respondents who neither agree nor disagree with the statement were 5% (n=10). The greater majority of responses were negative, as shown by 35% (n=126) disagree and 40% (n=144) strongly disagree. Results of the study showed that teachers teaching special learners are not trained to teach sign language.

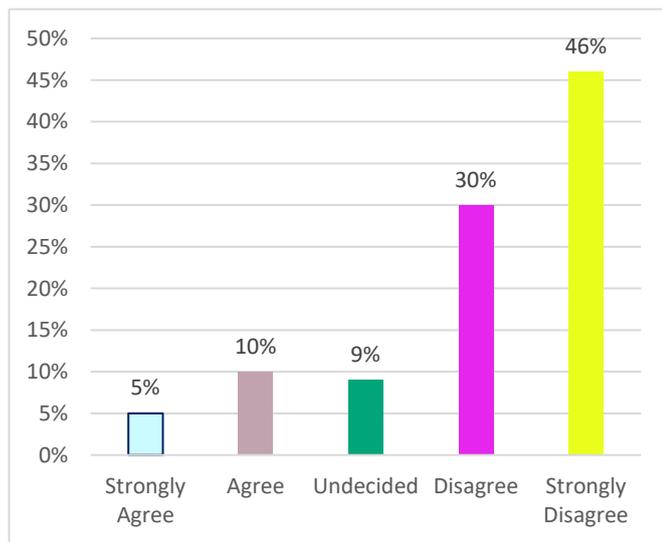
### Adequacy in Teacher training and experience

The researcher asked the respondents to give opinions on whether teachers have adequate training and experience in handling learners with SEN. The findings were as presented in Table 5 and Figure below:

**Table 5: Adequacy in Teacher training and experience**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	36	10
Strongly Agree	18	5
Undecided	32	9
Disagree	108	30
Strongly Disagree	166	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2021



**Figure 3: Adequacy in Teacher training and experience**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

The result in Table 5 and Figure 4 showed that 5% (n=18) strongly agreed, 36% (n=36) agreed, while 9% (n=32) neither agree nor disagree. On other hand, showed that most 46 (n=166) respondents strongly disagreed and 30% (n=108) to teachers having adequate training in handling the SNE learners.

**Teacher's Training with Regard to Learners with Auditory Impairment**

Information was also collected on whether teachers have training with regards to learners with auditory impairment. The findings are summarized in Table 6.

**Table 5: Teacher's Training with Regard to Learners with Auditory Impairment**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	25	7
Strongly Agree	32	9
Undecided	54	15
Disagree	162	45
Strongly Disagree	86	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 6 indicates that the respondents who strongly disagree amounted to 24% (n=86) while 45% (n=162) disagreed. The respondents (15%, n=54) neither agreed nor disagreed. The respondents who showed that they have training regarding the teaching of learners with auditory impairment formed the minority, (that is, 7%, (n=25) agree and 9% (n=32) strongly agree). Very few teachers are able to teach learners who have auditory impairment while the majority remain untrained in this regard.

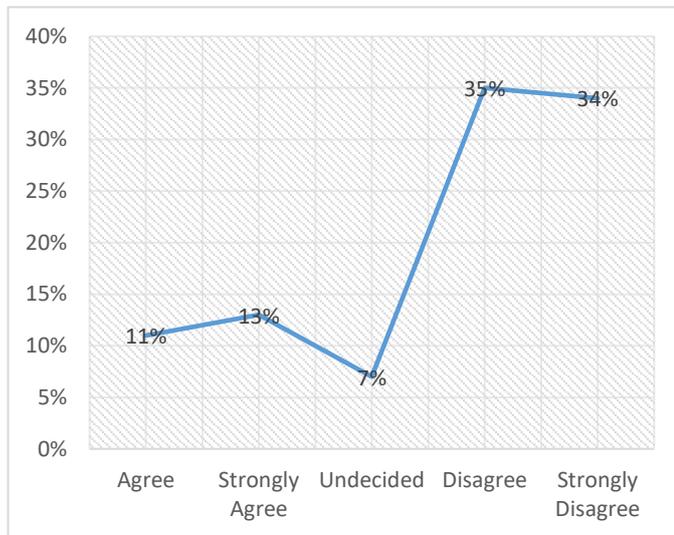
**Presence of Special Teachers to Help Students with Special Needs**

Concerning the availability of special teachers to help students with other special needs, results were summarized in Table 7 and Figure 5 below:

**Table 7: Presence of Special Teachers to Help Students with Special Needs**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	40	11
Strongly Agree	47	13
Undecided	25	7
Disagree	122	34
Strongly Disagree	126	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2021



**Figure 6: Presence of Special Teachers to Help Students with other Special Needs**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 7 and Figure 5 above indicated that 34% (n=122) respondents strongly disagreed and 35% (n=126) of them disagreed. The respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed amounted to 7% (n=25). The rest of the responses were positive (that is 11% (n=40) agreed and 13% (n=47) strongly disagreed). Results of the study showed that there

is no presence of special teachers to help students with special needs.

### Suitability of Infrastructure for SEN learners

While the preceding section presented findings on assessing whether teachers are trained in handling learners with special education needs in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern province, this section presents findings on whether infrastructure is suitable for the provision of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern province.

### Accessibility of Chalkboards to Wheelchair bound Learners

To whether chalkboards are adjusted to allow wheelchair bound learners to write on them, Table 8 shows respondents responses.

**Table 5: Accessibility of Chalkboards to Wheelchair bound Learners**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	11	3
Strongly Agree	18	5
Undecided	14	4
Disagree	79	22
Strongly Disagree	238	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 8 above indicate that the majority of respondents responded negatively whereby 66% (n=238) strongly disagreed, 22% (n=79) disagreed. 4% (n=14) neither agreed nor disagreed, while the positive responses formed the minority, only

amounting to 3% (n=11) agree and 5% (n=18) strongly agree. This indicates that the needs of physically disabled learners are not met.

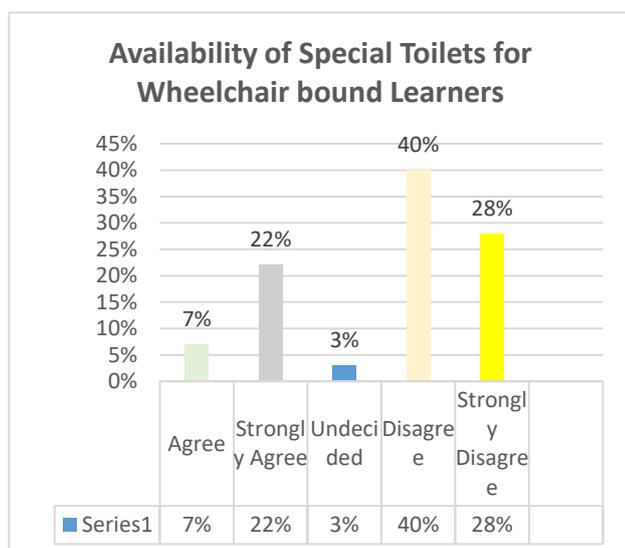
### Availability of Special Toilets for Wheelchair bound Learners

To whether there are special toilets for disabled learners, the responses of the respondents were summarized in Table 9 and Figure 6 as shown below:

**Table 9: Availability of Special Toilets for Wheelchair bound Learners**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	25	7
Strongly Agree	79	22
Undecided	11	3
Disagree	144	40
Strongly Disagree	101	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2021



### Figure 6: Availability of Special Toilets for Wheelchair bound Learners

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Results in Table 9 and Figure 6 above revealed that 28% (n=101) strongly disagreed and 40% (n=144) disagreed and 3% (n=11) neither agreed nor disagreed. The approving responses were 7% (n=25) agree and 22% (n=79) strongly agree. It is evident that disabled learners face great challenges in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly created district in Northern Province. Results of the study also revealed that most of the classrooms had door steps. The following vignettes act as a typical example:



Figure 7: Toilet for learners with SEN

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

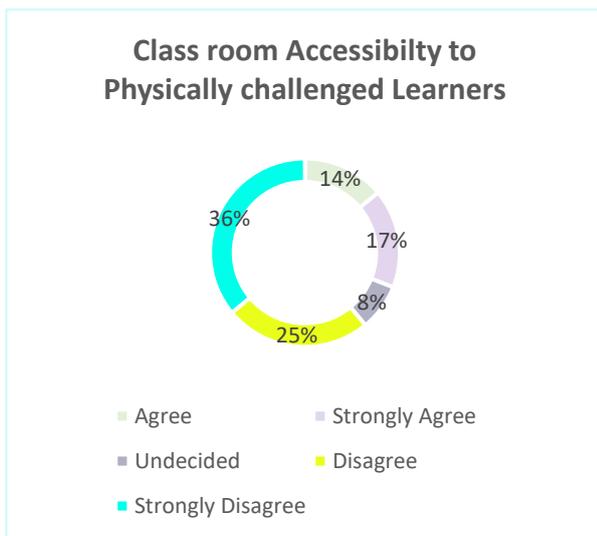
### Accessibility of classroom buildings to Accommodate Disabled Learners

The researcher also sought to establish if the classrooms in schools are accessible to learners with SEN. The results were summarized in Table 10 and Figure 8 below:

**Table 10: Accessibility of classroom buildings to Accommodate Physically challenged Learners**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	50	14
Strongly Agree	61	17
Undecided	29	8
Disagree	90	25
Strongly Disagree	130	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2021



**Figure 6: Accessibility of classroom buildings to Accommodate Physically challenged Learners**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

In Table 10 and Figure 8 above, many respondents 36% (n=130) strongly disagreeing and 20.39% (n=90) disagreeing showed that public primary and secondary schools classrooms buildings do not allow free movement of disabled learners, whereas 8% (n=29) neither agreed nor disagreed. However, 14% (n=50) agreed while 17%

(n=61) strongly agreed that the buildings in their schools allow free movement of SEN learners. According to the findings above it can be noted that public primary and public schools in the four newly district in Northern Province is far behind in terms of inclusion. Results of the study also revealed that most of the classrooms had door steps which showed that provision of inclusive education in the four newly district in Northern has infrastructure challenges. The following vignettes act as typical example:



**Figure 9: Classroom building with door steps**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

### Availability of Special Table for Wheelchair bound Learners

With regards if there are special tables for wheelchair bound learners in public primary and secondary schools, results were summarized in Table 11 below:

**Table 5: Availability of Special Table for Wheelchair Learners**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	58	16
Strongly Agree	86	24
Agree		
Undecided	32	9
Disagree	112	31
Strongly Disagree	72	20
Disagree		
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Fieldwork, 2021**

The responses indicated that the majority do not affirm the statement as shown by 20% (n=72) strongly disagree and 31% (n=112) disagree, while 9% (n=32) neither agree nor disagree. On other hand, 16% (n=58) agreed and 24% (n=86) strongly agreed with the statement. According to the findings this shows that there are inadequate facilities, and this has negative impact on their performance. Therefore, these types of learners are not fully supported.

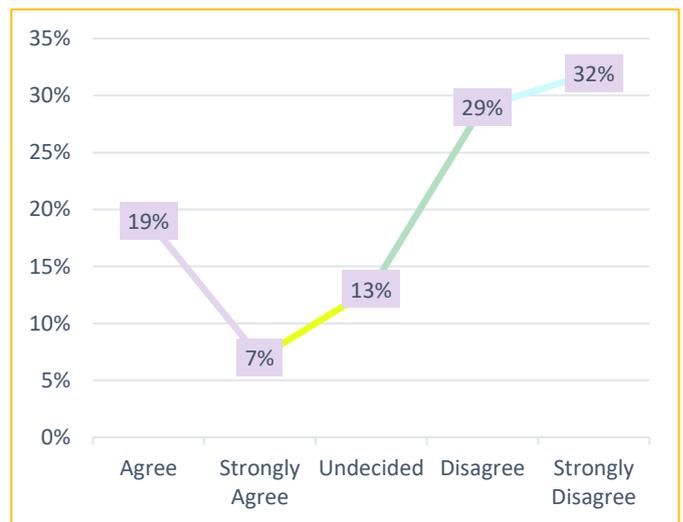
### Availability of Special water points for physically challenged learners

Availability of special water points for disable learners, to this item, the responses were summarized and distributed as follows in Table 12 and Figure 10 below:

**Table 5: Availability of Special water points for physically challenged learners**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	68	19
Strongly Agree	25	7
Agree		
Undecided	47	13
Disagree	104	29
Strongly Disagree	115	32
Disagree		
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Fieldwork, 2021**



**Figure 6: Availability of Special water points for physically challenged learners**

**Source: Fieldwork, 2021**

A large portion of the respondents strongly disagreed 32% (n=115), disagreed 29% (n=104), 13% (n=47) neither agrees nor disagrees, agree 19% (n=68), and strongly agree 7% (n=25). Results of the study revealed that water points structures in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly created district in Northern Province are not suitable for SEN learners.



**Figure 10: Water points design**

**Source: Fieldwork, 2021**

### Provision of play facilities for special learners

When asked to specify whether their schools have provision of play facilities for SEN learners, respondent's responses were summarized in Table 5 below:

**Table 5: Provision of play facilities for special learners**

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	14	4
Strongly Agree	40	11
Undecided	61	17
Disagree	101	28
Strongly Disagree	144	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Fieldwork, 2021**

Results in Table 5 above showed that 40% (n=144) of the respondents strongly disagreed and 28% (n=101) disagreed. The 17% (n=61) of them were not sure. 4% (n=14) respondents agreed while

11% (n=40) respondents strongly agreed. Thus, results of the study showed that public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern Province have no provision of play facilities for SEN learners.

### V) DISCUSSIONS

The study also established that teacher preparedness in terms of training and experience posed a great challenge to the provision of inclusive education. According to the study findings, most teachers agreed to the fact that their professional training was inadequate to take charge and impart knowledge and skills to pupils with special needs in education. They embraced the need to undertake specialized further training in special needs education so that they can be professionally prepared to handle such learners. The findings of this study tie with Rix, Simmons, Nin and Sheely (2005) found who were teaching the deaf and dumb lacked professional training was inadequate to take charge and impart knowledge and skills to pupils with special needs. It has also been established that teachers have a poor relationship between parents of the SEN learners. In respect to this finding, the researcher, therefore, postulate that if the working relationship of the teachers between the parents and the school is not good, this can hinder learning greatly. Researcher further argue that bridging home to inclusive classrooms requires establishing strong, collaborative partnership with families. Ideally these experiences occur both at school and at home through coordinated efforts of teachers and parents (Mohd Ali, Mustapha and Mohdjelas, 2006).

Results of the study showed that teachers teaching SEN learners are not trained to teach deaf and dumb learners using sign language and to teach blind learners using Braille. This means teachers indeed face great challenges in terms of teaching in an inclusive classroom. If a student has a severe hearing loss, a sign language interpreter should be available to help the students. The specialist provides direct service to the student and supplemental materials to the general and special education teacher (Hammeken, 2007). The study also established that very few teachers are able to teach learners who have auditory impairment while the majority remain untrained in this regard. This however, imply that majority of teachers in public primary and secondary schools who teach learners who have auditory impairment are not trained. The findings of this study are consistent with the study done by Adam and Brown (2006) which found out there were few teachers specifically for SEN learners. In view of this, researcher points that it is a point of concern that the majority of blind learners are still excluded in the mainstream classrooms. All public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district now need to recognize that failure to anticipate the needs of students with disabilities may well lead to unlawful discrimination (Rix *et al.*, 2005).

Besides, results of the study showed that there were no special teachers to teach and help students with special needs in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district of Northern Province. Researchers therefore, argue that if there are no special teachers to teach SEN learners it means that teachers have to juggle many tasks and

responsibilities at once, for example, being psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, etc. in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district of Northern province. These findings agree with the assertions of Hammeken (2007), where he says, educators in a team situation must be able to listen to one another communicate effectively and hold common goals and expectations for students. Collaboration is very important with co-teaching. Collaboration is an interactive process that enables teachers with expertise in various academic areas to provide service to a group of students with a wide range of needs.

### **Suitability of Infrastructure for SEN learners**

Results of the study revealed that most of the physical facilities in the sampled schools were highly unsuitable for the SNE learners in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district of Northern Province. Toilets, playgrounds, water points, special tables, classrooms building designs were not adapted to suit the SNE pupils. The SEN learners with learning difficulties instead used the same facilities with their counterpart regular pupils. This posed a major challenge to both the teachers and the learners (Hannell, 2007).

In respect to the above findings of the study, researchers, therefore, argue that there is need for both public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern province to open up a special unit for the pupils or try and integrate them in the regular classrooms which would call for more time since the teacher will need to give specialized attention to the learners with learning difficulties. Researchers further argue that facilities

that are not suit for SNE learners can lead to negative impact on their performance. This indicates that the needs of physically disabled learners are not met. Considering the Education for all policy this is a discouraging factor (MoE, 1996). Therefore, these types of learners are not fully supported. Results of this study are in harmony with Hay (2003) who found out that physical facilities such as toilets and classroom blocks were not suitable for SNE learners. According to the findings above it can be noted that public primary and public schools in the four newly district in Northern Province is far behind in terms of inclusion. This is because majority of the classroom buildings in schools do not allow free movement of disabled learners Physical layout in classroom does not welcome students with disabilities (Rix, Simmons, Nind & Sheely, 2005). This has negative impact on their performance. Therefore, these types of learners are not fully supported.

## **VI) CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study assessed whether teachers are trained in handling learners with special education needs in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern Province namely Lunte, Lupososhi, Nsama and Senga Hill, and assessed whether infrastructure is suitable for the provision of inclusive education in public primary and secondary schools. Results of the study established that teachers in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly district in Northern province are not suitable to teach SEN learners because of poor working relationship between parents and teachers, lack of teachers'

training and skills regarding inclusive education, lack of teacher's trained for blind learners, lack of teacher's trained for sign language, inadequacy in teacher training and experience, lack of teacher's trained for learners with auditory impairment, and lack of special teachers to teach SEN learners. The study has also established that the infrastructure in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly created districts in Northern province is not suitable for SEN learners because of lack of; special toilets for wheelchair learners, special table for wheelchair learners, special water points for disable learners, special chalkboards to wheelchair learners, special classroom buildings to accommodate disabled learners, and special playground facilities for SEN learners. Based on the study findings, the researchers have made the following recommendations:

- i. Government through the Ministry of General Education working in partnerships with Parents and Teachers Committees (PTCs) should build special toilets for wheelchair bound learners in public primary and secondary schools in Lunte Lupososhi Nsama and Senga Hill Districts of Northern Province.
- ii. Government through the Ministry of General Education working in partnership with School managements and PTCs should make special tables for wheelchair bound learners in public primary and secondary schools in Lunte, Lupososhi and Senga Hill districts of Northern Province.
- iii. Government through the Ministry of General Education should build special classrooms without stair cases for special learners to

accommodate disabled learners in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly created district in Northern Province.

- iv. Government through the Ministry of General Education should deploy qualified teachers who are trained to teach deaf and dumb, blind, and differently abled learners in public primary and secondary schools in the four newly created district in Northern Province.
- v. Teacher training should be enhanced especially through in-service training of the classroom teacher and more colleges established for those willing to undertake training in the SNE field and those already in existence upgraded to offer quality teacher training.

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