Assessing Factors Hindering the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Rural Primary Schools: A Case Study of Shikabeta Chiefdom of Rufunsa District

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Abstract

This study assessed factors hindering the implementation of inclusive education in rural Primary Schools of Shikabeta Chiefdom of Rufunsa District. The study used the descriptive survey and employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. The sample size comprised of 50 learners with and without SEN, teachers, head teachers and ESO special making a total of 50 respondents from four schools. Data collection instruments used was; questionnaires, interview guides, Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and observation checklist. Data was analysed using spreadsheet and SPSSS 16.6 Version.

The major findings were inadequate teaching and learning resources that are disability specific, lack of trained teachers in diverse disabilities management, no suitable physical and environment thus infrastructure, lack of curriculum modification knowledge and skills, financial constraints, negative attitude towards persons with disabilities and lack of communication. In respect to the infrastructure as one of the key areas, the study revealed that most of the rural government schools had no suitable infrastructure, equipment and specialised human capital.

The conclusion drawn was that inclusive education is an important challenge for all—policymakers,

teachers, support staff, parents and learners alike. Strategies towards its broad aims are adapted on the international level as well as in the classrooms themselves. Teachers around the world support the ideas of inclusive education, but raise a number of practical problems that prevent reaching our common goals. It is clear that international commitments such as the Salamanca declaration and the Dakar Framework for Action do not fail because of their ambition (which indeed still needs to be higher), but because of problems in their implementation.

The recommendation made is that the government should consider siphoning more education funds to increase the number of resources in the classrooms both for teaching and learning. Strengthen the links between schools and society to enable families and the communities to participate in and contribute to the educational process. Develop early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes that promote inclusion as well as early detection and interventions related to whole child development. Teachers should be equipped with adequate resources to teach a certain concept so that the students are able to grasp it easily.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The World Health Organization (WHO-2020) estimates that 10% of any populations are disabled and in addition approximately 85% of the World's children with disability below 15 years live in the developing countries. In 1994, UNESCO world conference on special needs held in Salamanca, Spain the idea of inclusive education was given further impetus. Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs and those with special needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them with a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting those needs.

This paper perceives inclusion in education as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It therefore involves a range of changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children with Special Educational Needs and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children" (UNESCO, 2015). In this context, inclusive school must put flexibility and variety at its core. This should be evident in the structure of the school, the content of the curriculum, the attitudes and beliefs of staff, parents, and pupils, and the goal should be, „to offer every individual a relevant education and optimal opportunities for development" (UNESCO, 2015). Parents and pupils themselves have important contributions to make to shape the implementation of inclusion (Lindsay, 2017).

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Zambian government has been influenced by the strong stance of the international organizations on inclusive education, particularly the Jomtein Conference of Education for All, convention on the rights of education, and the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education Statement. As a follow up of this noble stance, the government of the Republic of Zambia through the Patriotic Front-Manifesto has promised to promote inclusive education by integrating children with mild to moderate learning disabilities in the mainstream schools (Patriotic Front -Manifesto, 2011 to 2016). Consequently, the ministry in charge of education in Zambia, which is the Ministry of General Education, has not also strongly embraced the commitment to provide education opportunities of particularly good quality to all children with SENs through provision of inclusive education (MOE, 2016).

Despite both the stance and commitment by the international community and the Zambian government respectively to provide education opportunities of particularly good quality to all children with SENs through the provision of inclusive education, the implementation part has however seemed to be on a slower side especially in rural primary schools. Therefore, this research aims at establishing the challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education programme in selected rural primary schools of Rufunsa district of Southern Province.

1.3 Main Objective

The general objective of the study was to establish the challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education programme in selected rural primary schools of Rufunsa District..

A. ### 1.4 Specific objectives

i. To find out strategies and policies that support the implementation of inclusive education.
ii. To establish challenges faced in implementation of inclusive education in rural primary schools

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Bryman (2004) stated that theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories. This study's theoretical basis was on the classical liberal theory of equal opportunities propounded by Sherman and Wood, 1982 (Cohen et al, 2003). The major theoretical foundation is that there is need to aspire for equal opportunities in education for all eligible learners. This theory contends that each individual is born with a given amount of ability regardless of the status. As such, the theory encourages the educational systems to be designed with a view of removing barriers of any kind to allow full inclusion of learners with Special Educational Needs. For instance, barriers based on socio-economic, socio-cultural, geographical and school-based factors which prevent learners who

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have a learning disability from benefiting by using their inborn talents should be removed. This is because disability is not an inability. The education offered to such groups of learners will accelerate them to social promotion since education is a great equalizer which enhances life chances of the children with special needs (USDG, 2015).The theory demands that opportunities be made available for individuals to go through all levels of education (ECE, primary, secondary and tertiary) to which access to quality education will not be determined by the disability of the learners but on the basis of individual capabilities and abilities.

In this way, education would at least provide equality of economic opportunities where children with SENs could benefit and contribute economically from excellent academic performance. The theory further states that social mobility will be promoted by equal opportunity for all citizens to education. Moreover, many economists have supported the policy on FPE. This policy made education free and compulsory for all as Zambia was trying to meet the MDGs by 2015 (UNESCO, 2013). Through acquiring quality education by all children of school-going age on an equitable basis. In Zambia the local communities, parent groups, associations of disabled persons, churches and community leaders have tried to work for the inclusion of children with SENs into public schools in partnership with the government and other professionals, but very little have been achieved.

2.0. LITERATURE RE VIEW

The government of the Republic of Zambia is constitutionally committed to ensuring the right of every child to basic education. The Government has created numerous policies around special education since the country's independence in 1964. One of the earliest formal initiatives undertaken by Ministry of General Education are the pronouncements and declarations that has been made through Educational Reforms (1977), Focus on Learning (1992), and current Educating Our Future (1996) documents. All these documents have highlighted the importance of educating learners with disabilities having realized the crucial need of an institution to monitor and regulate programmes in the field of disability rehabilitation.

One of the main arguments here in these documents is that the learners with learning disabilities need to learn how to interact with normal learners and vice versa in regular schools. The emphasis on these documents is on integration of learners with mild to moderate disabilities as long as they are in the school going age. Inclusive education has been defined at various ways that addresses the learning needs of the differently able children. The efforts of the Government of the Republic of Zambia over the past ten or more years have been towards providing comprehensive range of services towards the education of children with disabilities. In 1974, the centrally sponsored scheme for Integrated Education for disabled Children was introduced to provide equal opportunities to children with disabilities in general schools and facilitate their retention. The Government initiatives in the areas of inclusive education can be traced back to the National Education Policy, 1996 that recommended, as a goal, to integrate the disabled with the general community at all levels as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence. The World Declaration on Education for All adopted in 1990 gave further boost to the various processes already set in the country. The National Policy for Persons with Disability, 2006, which attempts to clarify the framework under which the state, civil society and private sector must operate in order to ensure a dignified life for persons with disability and support for their caretakers. Most recent advancement is the right of children for free and compulsory education in Educating Our Future that guarantees the right to free and compulsory education to all children in the school going age from grades one to seven.

3.0. METHOD AND PROCEDURE

3.1 Research Design

A research design according to Osuala (1982) is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems. Data collection involved collecting qualitative data concurrently, analyzing the information separately, and then merging the two databases. Ideally, this design prioritizes the two types of information equally and uses the same sample.

3.1 Target population

According to Shajahan (2004) the term population refers to the set of all elements of interest in a particular study. Target population in this research comprises of all those potential participants that could make up the study group. In this research, the target population was 200 pupils from Shikabeta, Lubalashi, Munyeta, Lukwipa, ESO Special Basic Schools.

3.2 Sample size

Random sampling of respondents was carried out. The respondents were picked from various participants involved in various basic schools such as Shikabeta, Lubalashi, Munyeta, Lukwipa, ESO Special Basic Schools. This was done in order to extract correct and accurate information because the problem at hand required such consideration

3.3 Sampling procedure

According to Cooper and Schindler (2003) sampling is the process of selecting a predetermined number of subjects from a defined population as a representative of that population. Basically, to say that sampling is the process in which a representative part of the population is picked for the purpose of determining the characteristics and parameters of the entire population. This research used the random sampling technique.

3.4 Data collection methods

In order to collect information from students, questionnaires were used. Questionnaires are the best for collecting primary data and are easier to analyze and are possible to gather information of all, Taylor & DeVault (2015).

3.5 Data analysis

The study used qualitative approaches to analyze the collected data. For analysis SPSS software was used in determining descriptive statistics consisting of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were utilized in the analysis of qualitative information. Microsoft Excel was also used to derive visual aids such as graphs and charts for data presentation. The method chosen to analyze data gathered through the interview was qualitative content analysis which was done manually. This study basically used questionnaires to collect primary data. All the primary data from total 50 questionnaires will be analyzed.
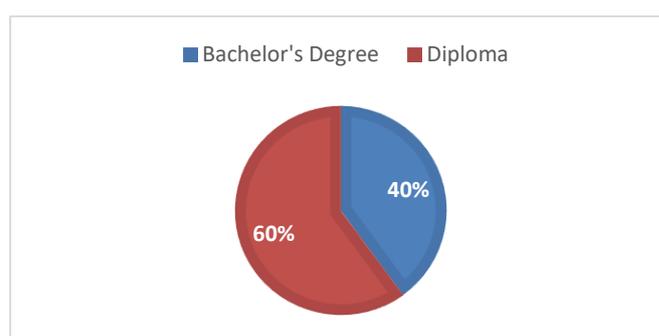
4. FINDINGS

B.   4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

This section covered the general information on the characteristics of the respondents in terms of their age, sex, and employment status.

1)   Level of education for teachers

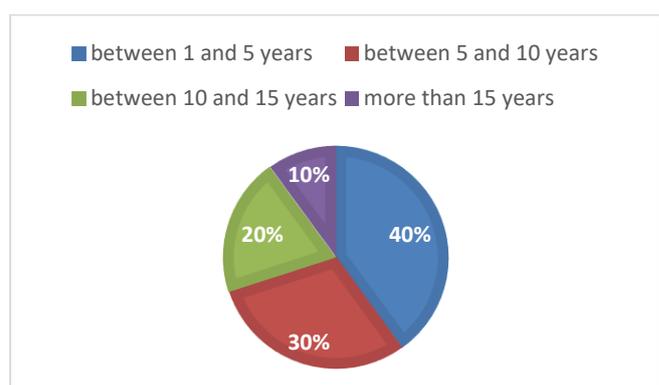Figure 4. 1 Level of education for teachers

The above results show the education level of the teachers that were sampled for this study. 60% of teachers had bachelor's degrees in Local languages while 40% of them had diplomas.

The Figure above shows education level specialization in languages of all the teachers that were purposively sampled for the study. According to the results given in the Figure, all the teachers are qualified with better and above qualification, and their specialization does not align with English as a language for them to teach. The results show that they are qualified enough and they have been trained for different local languages but not English
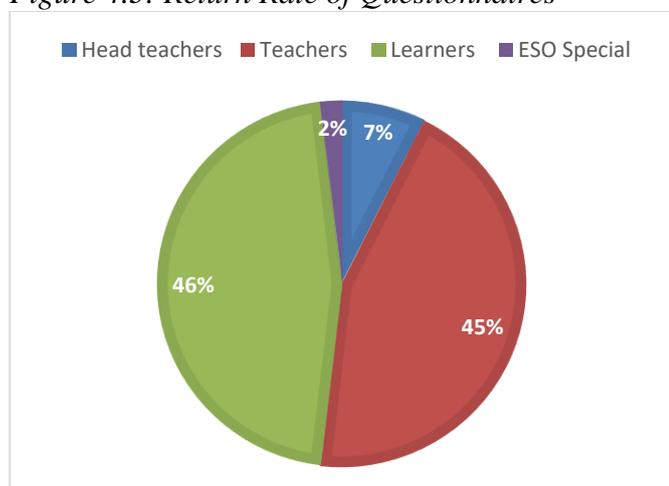
Years of teaching experience.

Figure 4. 2 Years of teaching experience

The results in the Figure shows different years of teaching experience of the teacher respondents. According to the results, all the teachers that were interviewed purposively for this study are not very experienced judging from the number of years given in the Figure, as this may have an effect on the performance of pupils being taught. 40% of teachers had been teaching in the years between 1 and 5 years, 30% taught between 5 and 10 years, while 20% had been teaching for years between 10 and 15 years and finally, 10% taught more than 15 years

The researcher administered questions to the respondent sampled to participate in the study. The targeted number was 50 and the questionnaire return rate was as on the table below.

Figure 4.3: Return Rate of Questionnaires

All heads, teachers participated and only one learner opted not participate. However, this did not affect the results because at least 99 percent were positive and responded satisfactorily for the purpose of the study.
The data below describes the number of teachers trained in special education and their levels of qualifications.

4.2 Presentation of results based on strategies and policies that support the implementation of inclusive education.

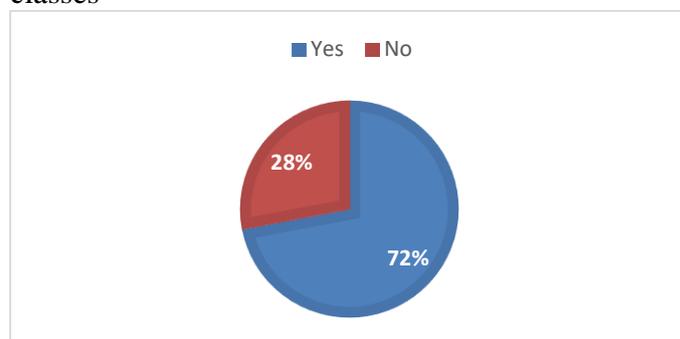Figure 4.4.: Teachers trained in Special Education
From the findings in figure 3 above, only 50 percent of teachers are trained in Special Education in the four targeted primary schools. 82 percent of the

teaching faculty at the four primary schools are not qualified to teach students with disabilities.
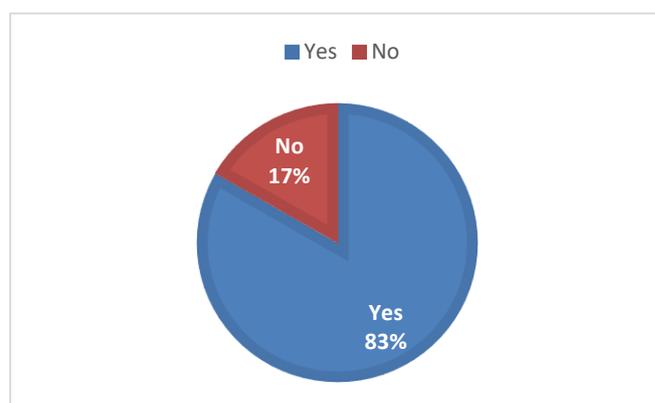

This is an implication that majority of teachers may lack the appropriate skills and knowledge in handling disabled students.
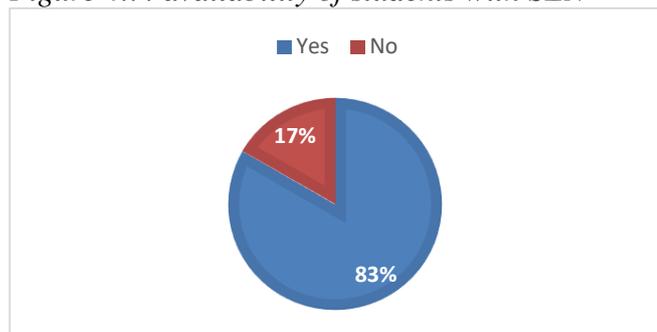Figure 4.5: Presence of learners with SEN in their classes

According to table 2 above, 17 teachers (72%) stated that they had children with SENs in their classes. While 8 teachers (28%) stated that they had no learner with SENs in their classes.
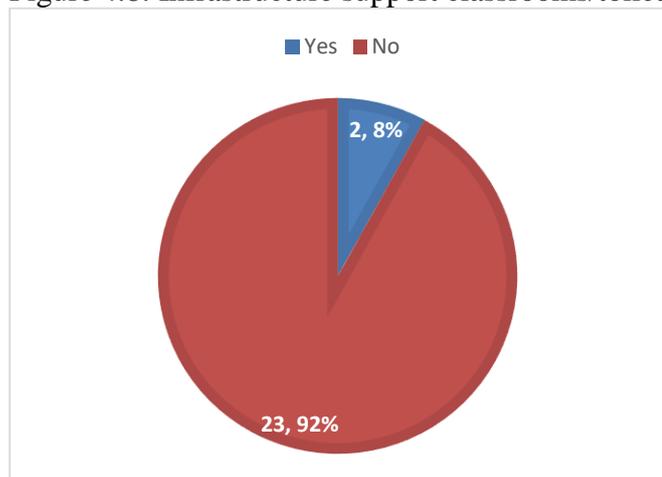Figure 4.6: Teachers trained in teaching SEN

From the findings of the study, 20 teachers confirmed that they teach SEN students in their class which is represented by83 percent. 4 teachers thus 17 percent of the teachers.

Figure 4.7: availability of students with SEN

From the findings of the study, 20 teachers confirmed that they teach SEN students in their class which is represented by 83 percent. 4 teachers thus 17 percent of the teachers have no special needs students in their classes.

The findings on the research items below focus on assessing the general infrastructures of the schools that offer inclusive education.
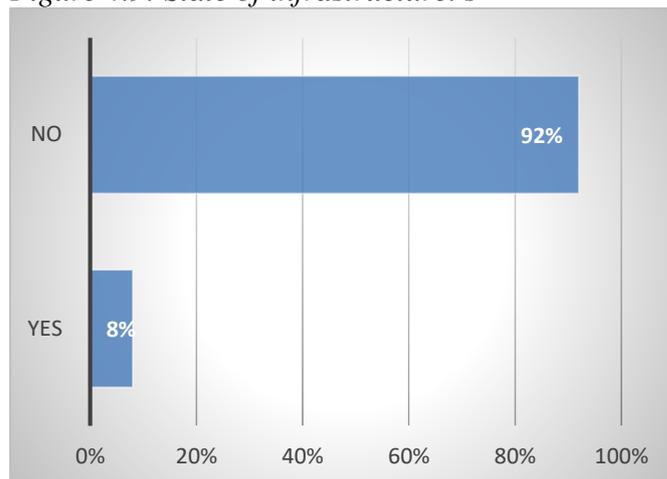
4.3 Presentation of results based on challenges faced in implementation of inclusive education in rural primary schools

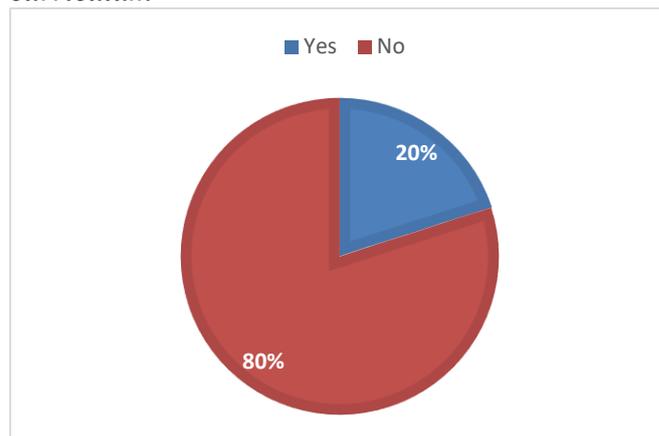Figure 4.8: Infrastructure support classrooms/toilets

The findings on the research items below focus on assessing the general infrastructures of the schools that offer inclusive education as to support the inclusive education. The responses indicate that 8%, 2 out of 25 teachers agreed while 92%, 23 out of 25 teachers disagreed.
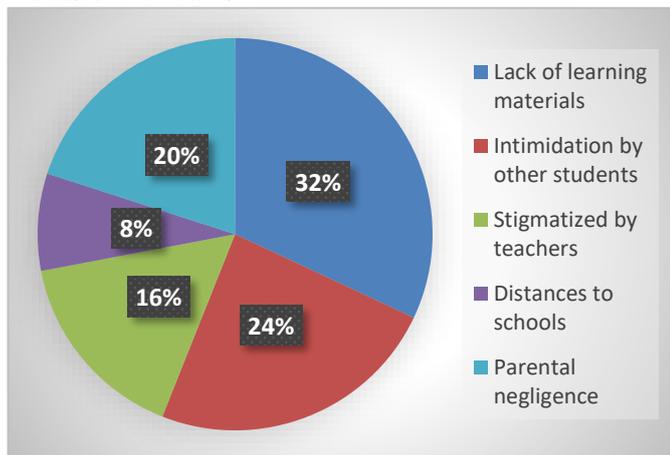
Figure 4.9: State of infrastructure. s

The data below shows the percentage of teachers' responses on the support of the infrastructure in implementation of inclusive education. From the findings on this research items shows that (2) 8 percent of the teachers agree that the infrastructures support the inclusive education while (23) 82 percent stated that the infrastructures do not support implementation of inclusive education.

Figure 4.10: Learners cope with the present primary curriculum
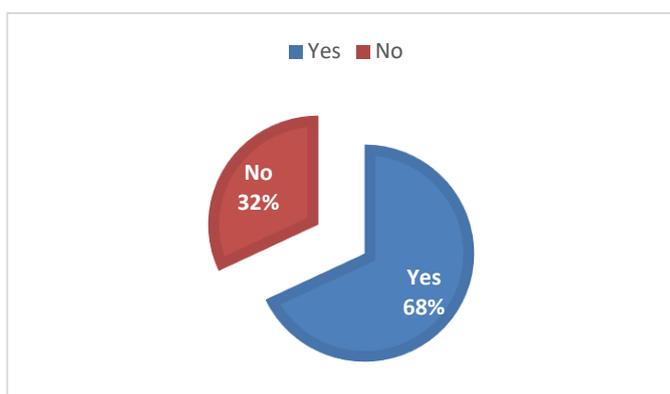

From the findings of the study, 20 percent of the teacher's see infrastructures that support inclusive learning environment whilst 80 percent are saying the infrastructures are not used friendly in terms of inclusive education

Figure 4.11: Reasons for drop out of students in inclusive education
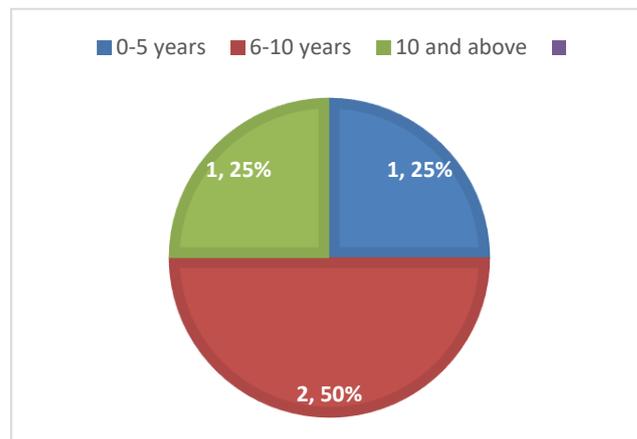

The findings in the table 9 above indicates that (8)32 percent of the students with learning disabilities dropped out of the school system because of lack of disability specific learning materials, (6) 24 percent indicated that the drop out was caused by intimidation by fellow able students in class. Teacher stigmatizing level was at (4) 16 percent, distance from school was at (2) 8 percent and parental negligence rated (5) 20 percent.

Figure 4.12: Is the school administrations supportive of inclusive education?
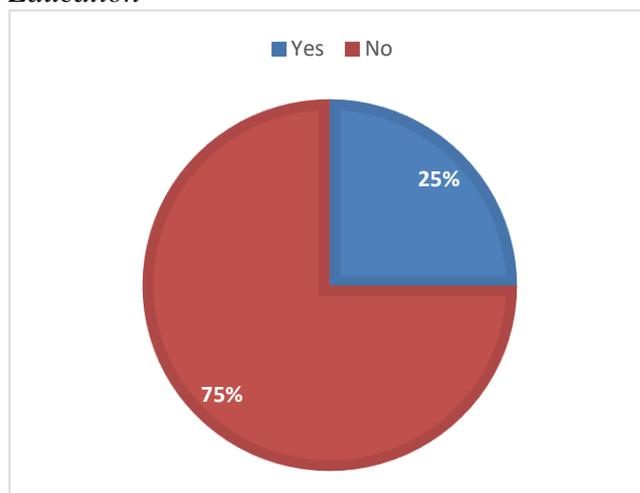

The findings on figure above indicated that (17) 68 percent of teachers agreed that the administration support inclusive education whilst (8) 32 percent of teachers disagreed the support by the administration. This was the general efficacy in the administration of inclusive education.

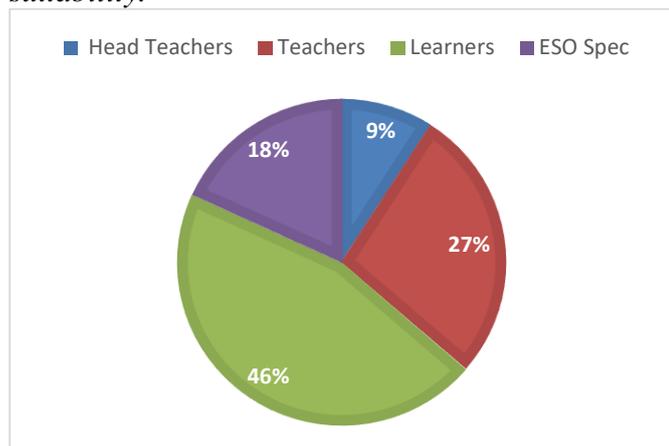*Figure 4.13: Head teachers' experiences in teaching*

The Head teachers have at least enough work experience in the administration of the schools as shown in the figure above.

Figure 4.14: Supports from the Ministry of Education

From the above table, it can be observed that, 1 out of the 4 respondents, that is 95 percent indicated that the school administration was supportive of the implementation of inclusive education theoretically, 3 out of 4, 5 percentage of the respondents indicated that the administration was not supportive.
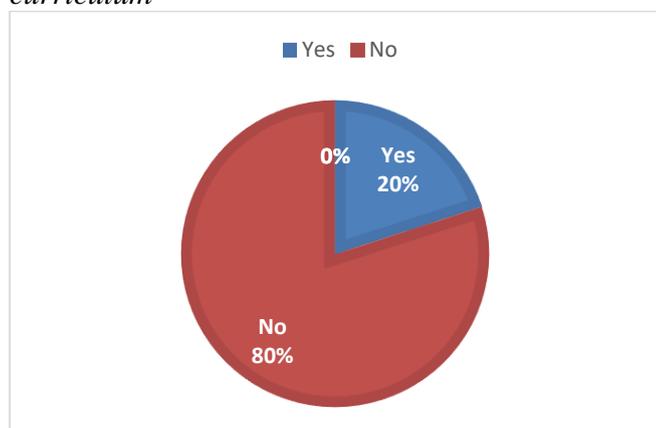
Figure 4.15: Respondents on infrastructure suitability.

From the findings from the table above reveal that 1 head teacher indicated that the physical environment was adequate, 3 head teachers indicated that the physical environment were not adequate, while 3 teachers indicated that the school physical was adequate 21 said that it was not adequate. 5 learners indicated that it was adequate and 20 said it was not. The ESO Special also indicated that the school physical environment was not adequate to accommodate learners with disabilities.

The data above suggests that all the three physical facilities namely classrooms, playgrounds and toilets are highly inadequate for learners with disabilities. This is a suggestion that the external environment around and in the school is not conducive enough to cater for diverse SEN learners.
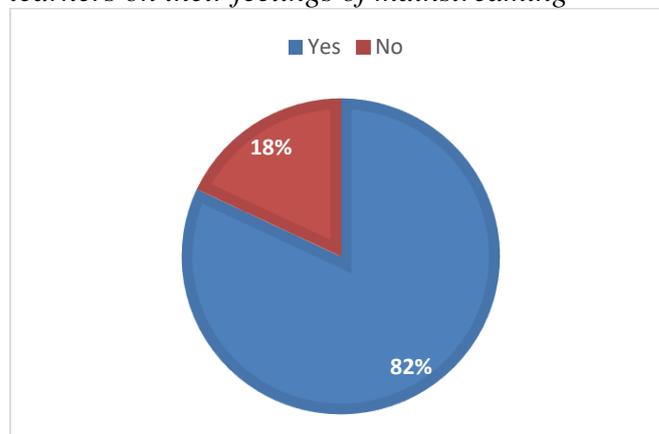
Figure 4.16: learners cope with the present primary curriculum

From the pie chart above it can be observed that 80 percent of the respondents indicated that the students with the learning disabilities were not able to cope with the present primary school curriculum, while 20 percent of the respondents felt that they were able to cope with the present primary curriculum. The 80 percent whose opinion was that they could not cope felt that the present primary school curriculum was more exam oriented where mean scores are highly valued. As a result, the non-performers were not able to cope because of the high level of competition and stress. On the other hand, the 20 percent who felt that they can cope said that if the curriculum was taken or driven in the right way it would be possible for every student to succeed. Nevertheless, the data still suggests that in order to successfully administer inclusive education settings in public primary schools, the curriculum needs to be more flexible to accommodate the needs of different types of learners and different ability levels.

Figure 4.17: below indicates the responses from the learners on their feelings of mainstreaming

Therefore, the data above suggests that nearly 82 percent of the respondents indicated that students with learning disabilities are available in their classrooms and 18 percent indicated that they do not have learners with disability in their classrooms. This could mean that there are various challenges being faced by teachers and administrators to successfully implement inclusive education in their current education settings.

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5.0 DISCUSSION

There have been several attempts to improve the education and social outcomes for learners with impairment. Methods for improving the education and social outcomes of these children have generally aimed at increasing the frequency and quality of social interactions between children with disabilities and their non-handicapped peers (Bainet, 2015). These approaches can be divided into three broad categories: those that strive to increase non-handicapped learner's awareness of the needs of students with disabilities, those that teach social skills to children with disabilities, and those that have fostered contact between the two groups of children. However, while several interventions exist to increase children with disabilities social interactions in inclusive education, accompanying each intervention are its unique benefits and limitations. Examples of such are sensitization to increase knowledge about the impairments, inclusiveness, film shows, drama, videos just to mention a few.

Inclusive education is based on ethical, social, educational and economic principles. It is a means to realize the right to high quality education without discrimination and having equal opportunities. Education is a public good and an essential human right from which nobody can be excluded since it contributes to the development of people and society. The right to education in its broadest sense goes beyond the access to free and compulsory education.

In order to fully enjoy this right, a high quality education must be provided; promoting the highest development of the multiple abilities of each individual, that is to say, the right to education is the right to lifelong learning. To conceive education as a right and not as a mere service or product, implies that the State is obliged to respect, guarantee, and protect all the learners regardless of the ability or disability.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Inclusive education is an important challenge for all policymakers, teachers, support staff, parents and learners alike. Strategies towards its broad aims are adapted on the international level as well as in the classrooms themselves. Teachers around the world support the ideas of inclusive education, but raise a number of practical problems that prevent reaching our common goals. It is clear that international commitments such as the Salamanca declaration and the Dakar Framework for Action do not fail because of their ambition (which indeed still needs to be higher!), but because of problems in their implementation. It is argued that inclusive education cannot be a success without

Strengthening the dialogue between the policymakers and the professional in the classroom. The voices of teachers as well as parents and learners need to be heard and magnified, in order to address the problems, they experience while implementing our common commitments. With their support, inclusive education can start to benefit all members of future generations.

7.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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