SCHOOL READINESS: AN ASSESSMENT OF ORDINARY SCHOOLS' READINESS TO RECEIVE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN GRADE ONE

By

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A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Zambia in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Education in Special Education

The University of Zambia

School of Education

Lusaka, Zambia   **2014**

DECLARATION

I, MUNSANJE SIKALINDA, declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it has not been previously submitted by anyone at the University of Zambia or at any other University.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation of MUNSANJE SIKALINDA is approved as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Special Education of the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

Although primary school enrolments for children with special educational needs in Zambian ordinary primary schools has increased dramatically in recent years, primary school completion rates remain relatively low. The highest rates of drop outs and repetitions are at grade one. In such a context it becomes critical to examine children's entry into, adjustment to, and success in the earliest years of primary school- in other words children's transition to school. In examining this phenomenon, the study employed the concept of 'School Readiness'- a concept that is receiving global attention as a viable means to improve academic outcomes in primary school years.

The study employed a descriptive survey design and was guided by the following research objectives: To assess ordinary school teachers' readiness to receive children with special educational needs in grade one; To examine if schools are equipped and ready to provide optimal learning environments for children with special educational needs; To ascertain the nature of transition practices between home and school for children with special educational needs and To examine the extent of parental involvement in the education of children with special educational needs in grade one.

The results of the study revealed that ordinary primary school teachers are not ready to receive children with special needs in grade one. The study also revealed that ordinary schools are not equipped or ready for to provide optimal learning environments for children with special needs. The study further revealed that more than half of all ordinary primary schools in Luanshya district have no formal transition programmes for incoming children and parents of children with special needs in grade one are involved in the education of their children to a lesser extent.

Based on the findings, the conclusion is that ordinary primary schools in Luanshya district are not ready to receive children with special educational needs in grade one. The study has made the following recommendations: Ordinary primary schools should be provided with extra learning and teaching material for children with special educational needs, teachers receive training in teaching children with special educational needs and schools be supported to enhance active involvement of parents and communities.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my two families: the Munsanje and Malilwe families, your words of encouragement will still live on.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr Beatrice Matafwali for her constant and constructive guidance throughout this study. On several occasions she took time off her busy schedule to provide valuable help in order to ensure the success of this study.

I wish to also extend my gratitude to Dr Ndhlovu Daniel and staff in the Department of Educational Psychology, Sociology and Special Education (EPSSE), for the support they rendered to me.

My sincere gratitude goes to Monde Malilwe my lovely fiancé who endured my absence during the study period. I also wish to thank my family: Mom, dad, Hope, Catherine, Nabusangu and my nephew Chileshe, for their everlasting support.

Furthermore, I wish to thank Mrs Malilwe and Mweene for the endless help that they rendered throughout my study. Tribute goes to my course-mates and friends, whose contributions helped to see the successful completion of my dissertation.

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ACRONYMS

EFA	Education for All
ECD	Early Child Development Programme
MOE	Ministry of Education
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NBTL	New Breakthrough to Literacy
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter presents an overview of the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study and objectives of the study. It further presents the study questions, the significance of the study, limitations of the study and finally the definition of the terms.

1.0 BACKGROUND

Through a combination of national policies and international articulations including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) targets, Zambia like many other countries is working towards a society in which all children will complete primary or basic education at a minimum. In the quest of realizing these targets, children with special educational needs have not been left out. Today more and more children with special educational needs are enrolled in ordinary schools as per guiding principle of education enshrined in the national policy on education document MoE (1996) and Education Act (2011). The enrolment levels for children with special educational needs in grade 1-9 have improved steadily from 5.13% in 2008 to5.65% in 2010 as highlighted by MoE Statistical Bulletin (2008 and 2010). Although primary school enrolments for children with special educational needs has increased steadily over the years, primary school completion rates remain disappointing with highest drop outs at grade one.

In such a context, it becomes critical to examine children's entry into, adjustment to and success in their earliest years of schooling. In other words, children's transition to school and schools readiness to provide optimal learning environments for all children is cardinal in the provision of quality education. This study explores the notions of readiness in the context of ordinary Zambian primary schools, with a focus on children with special educational needs.

Globally, school readiness is gaining recognition as a viable strategy to close the learning gap and improve equity in achieving lifelong learning and full developmental potential among young children. It does so by considering all children, especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged, including girls, children with disabilities, ethnic minorities and those living in rural areas (UNICEF, 2012). School readiness supports the adoption of policies and standards for early learning, expanding the provision of opportunities beyond formal centre-based services to target those who are excluded. School readiness has been linked with positive social and behavioural competencies in adulthood as well as improved academic outcomes in primary and secondary school, both in terms of equity and performance. In addition, school readiness has been garnering attention as a strategy for economic development. Approaches to economic growth and development consider human capital as a key conduit for sustained and viable development, the inception of which begins in the early years.

1.1 SCHOOL READINESS

Many definitions and conceptualizations of school readiness have been used in the past decades (Scott-Little and Clifford, 2000). The definition of school readiness has undergone major shifts. It has changed from a primarily maturation definition to a more constructed concept. Until relatively recent, approaches to school readiness stressed the maturity level of the child that was almost entirely influenced by chronological growth and children inherent characteristics that would allow for quiet, focussed work as the primary indicator of school preparedness (Murphy and Burns, 2002). More recent approaches stress the bi-directionality between the child and the environment (Murphy and Burns, 2002). As per these newer perspectives, school readiness takes a broader approach which looks at the contributions of communities, schools and families to children's readiness to learn across developmental domains.

It is the 'goodness-of-fit' between the child and the environment that supports and promotes optimal development. In other words, School readiness is the product of the interaction between the child and a range of environmental and cultural experiences that maximize the developmental outcomes for children. School readiness is therefore, defined by three interlinked dimensions: (a) ready children; (b) ready schools; and (c)

ready families. The present study was thus, guided by the conceptual framework proposed by UNICEF 2012. *(See Figure 1 on page 3)*

SCHOOL READINESS: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Transition
How are schools making provisions for admitting new children into the system and creating environments, representing individual and societal diversity?

Ready families
Parent and care giver attitudes towards and involvement in their children's early learning and development and transition to school.

Ready children
What children should know and be able to do in order to enter school ready and eager to learn, thereby enabling a successful transition to a primary school environment.

School Readiness

Ready schools
School environments and practices that foster and support a smooth transition for children into primary school and later years. These practices also promote the learning of all children.

Transition
How are children able to adjust to learning environments?
How are families able to work with the school system?

Figure 1: School Readiness Conceptual Framework, UNICEF 2012

1.1.2 Ready children

Children's readiness for school has been conceptualized as the characteristics and skills children should possess in order to be able to learn effectively in school (Janus, 2007). Children's readiness typically was considered a function of reaching a certain age or of progressing through specific stages of development that were influenced almost entirely by chronological growth and children's inherent characteristics(Pianta and Kraft- Sayre 2003). What does being ready for school imply? The response varies by the respondent. Parents typically stress pre-academic skills and knowledge (UNICEF 2012), while primary school teachers tend to stress social and emotional aspects (Janus, 2007). This variation in emphasis suggests that a broad range of

developmental skills and abilities encompass 'ready for school'. Children's readiness for school in this study refers to all children, especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged, including girls and children with disabilities.

By the simplest definition, "a child who is ready for school has the basic minimum skills and knowledge in a variety of domains that will enable the child to be successful in school" (Pianta and Kraft- Sayre 2003:13). These minimum standards set the bar for what children should know and be able to do, so they enter school ready and eager to learn, thereby enabling a successful transition into a primary school learning environment. Success in school is determined by a range of basic behaviours and abilities, including literacy, numeracy and ability to follow directions, working well with other children and engaging in learning activities (Brooks-Gunn and Mclanahan 2005).

Broader definitions of school readiness are holistic and include five domains linked with later school performance and behaviour. Janus and Offord (2000:12) describe five major developmental domains: (1) physical health and well-being, which includes physical readiness for the school day, physical independence, and gross and fine motor skills; (2) social competence, which includes overall social competence, responsibility and respect, approaches to learning, and readiness to explore new things; (3) emotional maturity, which includes pro-social and helping behaviour, anxious and fearful behaviour, aggressive behaviour, and hyperactivity and inattention; (4) language and cognitive development, which includes basic literacy, interest in literacy/numeracy and memory, advanced literacy, and basic numeracy); and (5) communication skills and general knowledge. Children's development and readiness for school is determined and influenced by a number of factors, at the level of the child and in the surrounding environmental context. Factors that have been associated most consistently with children's cognitive and/or social-emotional preparedness for school include among others the following:

- *Socioeconomic status (which often interacts with race or ethnicity)* - Socioeconomic status has consistently been found to be one of the most

critical influences on children's developmental outcomes (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 2003). "Family poverty has been shown to adversely affect children's health, intellectual capabilities, academic achievement, and behaviour" (Weitzman, 2003:23). Socioeconomic status can impact children's development in a number of ways, including nutrition, educational opportunities, and home environment. Nutritional deficiencies strongly associated with poverty result in poor behavioural and cognitive development in infants and children (UNICEF, 2012).

Malnourished children are less engaged in their environments, less active, and have shorter attention spans than their well-nourished counterparts (Weitzman, 2003). They are less likely to be enrolled in school, attain lower achievement levels, and have poorer cognitive ability. In many low-income countries, in Africa and South Asia for example, many poor children never enter school (UNESCO, 2007). Others enrol but are unable to successfully transition into the school environment, performing poorly, repeating grades, or dropping out at high rates. Furthermore, children who live in poverty in their early years tend to have more disadvantaged learning environments in their homes (UNICEF, 2012). For example, children from poor families generally have significantly less verbal interaction and begin school with less language than peers from higher income backgrounds.

- *Family background characteristics, particularly the mother's education, single-parent status, and mental health; the home and community environment, including risk factors and literacy*-it is important to note that the home learning environment can have more of an effect on children's development than socioeconomic status. Research in the United Kingdom has demonstrated that activities in the home that offer learning opportunities to the child (For example reading to children, teaching songs and nursery rhymes, playing with letters and numbers and having friends with whom to play) are more strongly associated with children's intellectual and social development

than either parental education or occupation (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2004).

Similarly, the Turkish Early Enrichment Project (Kagitscibasi, Unar, and Bekman, 2001) implemented mother training and preschool programs in low-income, low-education areas of Istanbul. This research demonstrated significantly improved school attainment and retention for children. Seven years after the program, 86% of the children whose mothers had participated in the program were still in school compared to 67% of those who had not. Children who had been exposed to either type of intervention (mother training or preschool programs), compared to those who had not, exhibited higher school attainment, were more likely to attend university, began their working lives at a later age, and had higher occupational status. These findings illustrate the significant impact not only of programs directed towards children but also of programs, like mother training, that empower parents to provide a supportive home learning environment to their children.

Across families of diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, it is clear that parents' emotional well-being, positive inter-parental relations, and consistent parental support and discipline facilitate children's well-being, often to the point of compensating for economic hardship, family disruption, and other adverse life circumstances (Pianta and Kraft- Sayre, 2003). Indeed, a review of literature has demonstrated that support and warmth from a caregiver during the early years results in children's greater social competence, fewer behavioural issues, and enhanced cognitive skills in school

- *Importance/benefits of Participating in some type of preschool program or Early Child Development (ECD) programme-* Around the world, ECD programs are viewed as an important strategy for addressing the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized children and families (Bradley and Corwyn 2002). Evidence abounds that disadvantaged students especially children with disabilities are those making the most dramatic gains from ECD programmes and in turn from school readiness programs (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani, and

Merali, 2007). In Brazil, children with special educational needs from low-income families who attend community-based preschool programmes are twice as likely to reach Grade 5 and three times more likely to reach Grade 8, as compared to those who don't attend preschool (UNICEF,2012). In Nepal, the implementation of Early Childhood and Care Education (ECCE) increased the disabled to non disabled school ratio from 0.6 to 1 in Grade 1. High-quality preschool experiences have been linked with improved high school graduation rates (Reynolds, 2001). These results are reported from a longitudinal study of close to 1,000 low-income African-American families and children who took part in the Chicago Child-Parent Centres.

In Peru, Aldaz-Carroll (1999) found that nearly 60% more poor children who participated in preschool completed primary school than poor children who did not access preschool. In India, Chaturvedi, Srivastava, Singh, and Prasad (1987) found that less than one third of children who had participated in an ECD program dropped out of school by fourth grade, compared to nearly half of children who had not attended any such program.

These and other studies from around the world demonstrate significant differences between children who have participated in ECD programs and those who have not. Children who have participated in ECD programs are able to work independently, have more confidence in themselves and higher aspirations for their futures. The results indicate that children who participated in this early education programme stayed in school slightly longer and were more likely to graduate from primary school. Quality ECD programs ensure the synergy of protection, good health and nutrition, supportive and affectionate interaction, stimulation, and opportunities for exploring the environment (UNICEF, 2012). Children who participate in ECD programs do better in school, are healthier, and do better as adults in terms of being economically productive, emotionally balanced, and socially responsible.

1.1.3 Ready schools

Schools' readiness for children is defined in terms of the aspects of the school environment that support a smooth transition for children (and their families) into primary school and advance learning for all children (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre 2003). Although this component is the most recent addition to the school readiness model, it is gaining rapid importance. In particular, ready schools are available and accessible, of good quality, and recognize and adapt to local needs and circumstances (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre 2003). Among other things, good quality includes the availability and use of books and materials, as well as responsive and enthusiastic teachers. Education experiences prior to primary school are varied and disparate across the globe (UNESCO 2007). But they do have one characteristic in common: Most early childhood care and education programmes differ greatly compared to the education philosophy, teaching style and structure of primary school. Creating continuity and maintaining learning expectations for children between early learning and primary school environments is a defining characteristic of ready schools.

Ready schools have a mission of providing all children with a high-quality learning environment that offers appropriate levels of instruction and is safe, secure and inclusive. Ready schools promote a social learning environment where the relationship between teachers and children is critical for the development of social, ethical, emotional, intellectual and physical competencies (Shore, 1998). The specific aspects of the teacher-child relationship might vary across cultures, but it has been proposed that responsive, mutually respectful and reflective teaching is always a central element for enhancing child learning outcomes.

However, schools are often not ready for children, in that they fail to provide an environment which enables all children to learn effectively. A number of factors seem to impact schools' readiness for children, including teacher capacity, particularly in the early primary grades;   communication, and understanding; bureaucratic requirements; language barriers; and of course large class sizes, overcrowding, and high teacher child ratios (Abadzi, 2006).

1.1.4 Ready families

Prior to entering school, the family is the most important context for development. The family, as an institution, has been broadly defined as a co-residing social unit (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre 2003:12). With reference to school readiness, family is understood as those members who co-reside with the young children, including biological and non-biological caregivers, siblings and extended family members (Bradley and Corwyn, 2005). In understanding the issues of families' readiness for school, the most studied factors have been parenting practices, attitudes and knowledge.

Supportive parenting and stimulating home environments have been shown to be among the strongest predictors of school performance during primary school and beyond (Bradley and Corwyn, 2005) Researchers have highlighted that the family and effective parenting are central to children's mental health. Parenting practices and the quality of the parent-child relationship have implications for children's academic and social competence and behaviour in the early years at school, as well as longer term school success and achievement (Bornstein, Marc, Robert and Bradley, 2003). Providing information and support to parents and carers about the school and the range of changes their child is likely to encounter as they start school, can enhance parental confidence and in turn, also enhance children's confidence.

Parents' education goals for their children and their beliefs, attitudes and commitment to education are considered to be crucial for school success. Children of mothers with higher education do better at school (Bohan-Baker and Little, 2004). Parental beliefs and expectations are often cited as two explanations for the link between maternal education achievement and child learning outcomes (Bornstein, Marc, Robert and Bradley, 2003). Parents' perceptions of what their child should be able to do at the age of school entry are frequently oriented towards academic accomplishments such as counting and knowing the letters of the alphabet. Parental commitment to ensuring on-time enrolment for their young children is being recognized as an important aspect of successful school transition.

The learning environment provided in the home – as indicated by parents' engagement with their children in learning activities such as singing, reading books, telling stories and playing games – is considered to be one of the characteristics of ready families (Bornstein, Marc, Robert and Bradley, 2003). The learning environment provided in the home – as indicated by parents' engagement with their children in learning activities such as singing, reading books, telling stories and playing games – is considered to be one of the characteristics of ready families children who live in homes with greater verbal engagement, interaction, stimulation and support do better in school than those lacking the same degree of interaction (Pianta, 1991). Another aspect of family readiness is how responsive parents are to children's needs and requests for attention. Data from several developing countries indicate that young children whose mothers are more responsive to their developing needs have a larger vocabulary and better cognitive skills, enthusiasm and persistence for learning compared to children whose mothers do not demonstrate the same degree of responsiveness (UNICEF,2012:23). Supportive and responsive relationships within the family are the building blocks of children's social and emotional development required for success in school.

Schools have an important role in supporting children and families during transition. This includes not only supporting children, parents and carers to understand the changes, expectations and practicalities (for example, uniforms, starting and finishing times), but also assisting children and families to adjust to the social and emotional demands of starting school (Bohan-Baker and Little, 2004). Helping parents and care givers to become more aware of potential challenges and common behavioural responses as children adjust to change, and providing information and practical strategies for supporting children can help to promote positive parenting practices and support children's mental health and wellbeing during this important period.

1.1.5 Summary

In summary, school readiness encompasses children, schools and families as they acquire the competencies required for a smooth transition and interaction with the other dimensions of the paradigm. Of the three dimensions, children's readiness for

school is probably the most studied. The focus of 'ready children' has been broadly on holistically defining skills, abilities and attitudes that children require to succeed at school, and the greatest benefits of such interventions accrue to the most disadvantaged children including children with disabilities. In terms of 'ready schools' the focus has been on quality and practices that support a smooth transition for children and their families. It should be noted, however, that these practices are primarily derived from and based on school systems in Western and high-resource countries. Little is presently known about the characteristics of ready schools in low-resource and developing countries where the issues of schooling are dissimilar to developed countries. To that end a School readiness study in the Zambian context is worthwhile. This study therefore, focuses on one critical question: Are Zambian ordinary primary schools ready to receive children with special educational needs in grade one

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

While the concept of school readiness is receiving attention globally as a viable strategy to close the learning gap, improve equity in education and improve educational outcomes in early primary years, this concept has not received adequate attention in the Zambian education system in general and special education in particular. There remain many gaps with regards to a cohesive understanding of the concept and its applications to improve the learning and development of all children. In an effort to address this knowledge gap and given that the National policy on education MoE (1996) emphasizes that children with special educational needs should be integrated in programmes offered to children in ordinary schools, the current study sought to assess the readiness of ordinary primary schools to receive children with special educational needs in grade one.

1.3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to assess ordinary primary schools' readiness to receive children with special educational needs in grade one.

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess ordinary school teachers' readiness to receive children with special educational needs in grade one.
2. To examine if ordinary primary schools are equipped and ready to provide optimal learning environments for children with special educational needs in grade one.
3. To ascertain the nature of transition practices between home and school for children with special educational needs.
4. To examine the extent of parental involvement in the education of children with special educational needs in grade one.

1.5. STUDY QUESTIONS

1. To what extent are ordinary school teachers ready to receive children with special educational needs in grade one?
2. Are ordinary primary schools equipped and ready to provide optimal learning environments for children with special educational needs in grade one?
3. What is the nature of transition practices between home and ordinary primary schools for children with special educational needs?
4. To what extents are parents involved in the education of children with special needs in grade one?

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is hoped that the study may provide sufficient knowledge on the concept of school readiness within an easily understandable framework relevant to young children with special educational needs entering grade one in Zambian ordinary primary schools. The study may also provide policy makers, stakeholders and administrators in the area of education, special education in particular with evidence based information on the extent to which ordinary primary schools in Luanshya district are ready to receive children with special educational needs in grade one, this may help in guiding policy direction, guide teachers and schools in their preparation for including children with special educational needs in grade one in the quest of realizing 'Educational for All'. Lastly, the information which has been generated by this study may add to the vast

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knowledge on school readiness and may stimulate further enquires on the topic by other researchers and scholars.

1.7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (formerly the ecological model) (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006) was used to optimize optimal relationships between the child home and school. The model highlights the complex layers and processes around the child that influence development both directly and indirectly. This includes the child's individual characteristics and their interactions and experiences with peers, parents and care givers, school and preschool staff and within the wider community. It also includes social and cultural influences as well as government policies and legislation. The ecological model evolved to become the bioecological model to incorporate the process of development through the complex interaction between the biophysiological characteristics of a person and their environmental context (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). When transition to school is informed from this perspective, rather than viewing the child in isolation, the multidimensional influences that can support or impact on successful adjustment to the school environment are recognized (Dockett and Perry, 2001).

Urie Bronfenbrenner conceptualized development as occurring within a set of embedded contexts, from the child's most immediate environment, to institutions and relationships that influence that environment, and beyond to the broad social and cultural mores, beliefs, and practices that help shape daily life and interactions. The importance of applying a bio ecological perspective to transition of children with special educational needs is especially apparent when it comes to determining whether or not a child has made a successful transition to school or whether schools have successfully incorporated children into formal learning institutions. Parents and care givers and teachers may share some expectations relating to children's transition to school but, as transition itself is contextually bound and experienced in different ways, it is not surprising that parents and care givers and teachers have been known to have very different perceptions and expectations of what makes for a successful transition.

Teachers generally place more emphasis on children's adjustment to the school context, and their attitudes and feelings about being at school and learning, whereas parents focus more on children's academic progress (For example: reading and counting) than teachers do. Teachers' perceptions of adjustment problems of children in their class may reflect a 'poor fit' between children's competencies and aspects of the school classroom context (including teachers' expectations and demands((Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta and Cox, 2000). Furthermore, teachers' judgements of whether children have adjusted may also be affected by factors relating to the ethnicity, culture and socioeconomic status of both the teachers making the judgments and the children being assessed (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta and Cox, 2000).

Following on from the growing debate around what constitutes 'school readiness', and whether it is more important for the child to be ready for school or for the school to be ready for the child, it is useful to pay attention to what makes for a smooth and successful transition to school. School readiness, or the extent to which a child is deemed by adults to be ready and to have the intellectual, social and personal competencies to be able to be successful at school can influence a child's transition experience in that children are perceived as 'not ready', especially by their teachers in their first year of school, are more likely to struggle to feel suited to the environment or to meet its expectations. (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta and Cox, 2000)

Dockett and Perry,(2008) asserts that not only do children have to be helped to be 'school ready', but that schools have to strive to be 'child ready' and be able to adequately support the child's transition from home or preschool to school (by creating a welcoming environment for families and children and providing adequate home–school communication both before and after the child's transition to school) and be able to cater to the child's psychological and physical needs, perspectives and interests in order to create a sense of 'fit' with the new school environment and a sense of belonging, wellbeing and capacity for success. 'Ready schools' are synonymous with flexible, adaptable, supportive environments, guided by strong leadership and positive relationships, that are responsive to the children attending and

facilitate family engagement and connections with local prior-to-school settings and the broader community (Dockett and Perry, 2008). As such, in reality, 'school readiness' is a multidimensional relational concept that needs to consider multiple factors in order to facilitate a child's smooth transition to school (Dockett and Perry, 2008).

Thus, when assessing schools' readiness for children, it is important to obtain information from multiple perspectives; that is, that of teachers, children and their families. The quality of the parents' or care givers' relationship with school staff and parental involvement in their child's education may also be a valid indicator of a positive transition outcome that can serve to sustain and support the child through further transition points over time (Bohan-Baker and Little, 2004).

1.8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As with all descriptive surveys, data collected tend to cover many topics, but without probing them deeply. Descriptive surveys seek to evaluate how much involvement has happened or are happening thus making 'directionality' hard to determine.

Lack of assessment data for children with special educational needs in ordinary schools made it difficult for the researcher together with the class teachers to identify children with special educational needs, thus the study relied heavily on the information provided by parents and class teachers to identify children with special educational needs.

Due to the failure of sample respondents to answer with honesty, results might not accurately reflect the opinions of all members of the included population .The scope and generalisation of this study may be limited to selected ordinary government primary schools in Luanshya District.

Therefore, the findings of this study may be subjected to many interpretations and or would not even be generalized to all ordinary primary schools in the entire country.

1.9.   DELIMITATIONS

Due to the large number of potential participants in the study population, the population involved in the current study focused only informants in selected government ordinary primary schools, preschools and parents of children with special educational needs within the surrounding communities of the selected schools in Luanshya District. Therefore findings may be subjected to limited generalisations.

1.9.1   DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study.

Children with special needs: Children who for various reasons cannot take full advantage of the curriculum as it is normally provided.

Transition: children moving into and adjusting to new learning environments and schools making provisions for admitting them into the system.

School readiness: a multifaceted concept involving; children's readiness for school, schools' readiness for children and family and community readiness for children's education.

Ready school: schools making provisions for admitting new children into the system and creating environments representing individual and societal diversity. These practices also promote the learning of all children.

Inclusive education: inclusive education is a practice of including children with special educational needs in the regular educational programmes.

Ordinary school: any school operating within the conventional or traditional education system in Zambia. Such schools are usually meant for children without special educational needs.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review discusses attributes of ready schools. The discussion is in the context of ordinary schools' readiness for children with special educational needs entering grade one. The first part of the literature review gives a background as well as attributes of 'ready schools'. The second part lays out arguments in favour of schools' readiness and its implications for children with special educational needs.

The reviewed literature has been discussed under the following headlines

- ➢ Ready schools.
- ➢ Teacher readiness to receive children with special educational needs in grade one.
- ➢ Optimal learning environments for children with special educational needs
- ➢ Transition practices between home and primary schools.
- ➢ Community and parental involvement in the education of children with special educational needs in grade one.
- ➢ Summary of literature review.

2.1. Ready schools

The concept of 'ready schools' was popularized in the 1990s by the American National Education Goals Panel, a taskforce of educators and politicians. The purpose of this taskforce was to set national educational policy in terms of readiness goals for children and schools. The National Educational Goals Panel (1998:12) recognized that 'preschool and family support services may not be sufficient to enable children to learn skills that precede an ability to succeed academically'. To the National Education Goals Panel, ensuring that children start school ready to learn is vitally important. But ensuring that schools are ready for children is important as well. Recognizing that good education means both ready children and ready schools, it recommends ten specific approaches found in successful elementary schools and

documented by research to be keys to ready schools. The ten key principles that the panel considered essential to achieving "ready" schools are that schools must:

- ***Smooth the transition between home and school-***Ready schools pay attention to the transitions that children and their parents make as they move from the familiar home setting to the public school classroom and from preschool or child care to kindergarten. For many, these passages are exhilarating; for others, they are treacherous. For children who have spent their first five years at home, the demands of becoming a group member, sharing the teacher's attention, and spending long stretches away from home are new and challenging. For others, going to school means negotiating unfamiliar linguistic and cultural terrain. Therefore ready schools are those that help children in their transition from home to school.

- ***Endeavour to achieve continuity between early care and education programs and elementary schools***-Today, most young children experience some kind of out-of-home care before entering grade one, often beginning before their first birthdays. Only a few weeks or months separate the preschooler from a grade one. In that short span, children's developmental needs do not change radically, but the kindergarten classrooms in which they receive care and education may differ dramatically from the settings to which they have grown accustomed. Children often have difficulty adjusting to classrooms where the rules and routines, atmosphere, or philosophy differs dramatically from those of their familiar child-care setting. Primary schools can help to ease the transition to grade one by forging links with the community, their preschools and all of the other settings where their kindergartners have spent their days, and by drawing on the best practices of early childhood centres so as to provide a sense of continuity for children and parents, and allow a better alignment of philosophy, expectations, and curriculum across institutions and the community.

- ***Help children learn and understand their complex world-***Ready schools help children master literacy, numeracy, and other skills and use their knowledge to make sense of their world. Ready schools recognize that self-esteem stems

from competence-from students doing tasks that are engaging and challenging, and gaining the ability to solve problems with what they have learned.

- ***Strive to help every child achieve success***-Ready schools expect children to arrive at their doorsteps in varying stages of readiness. Ready schools are demanding, but they build into their organization and curriculum sufficient flexibility to respond to dramatic variations within a class, and to meet the changing needs of individual children over time. They introduce curricula and teaching methods that are "ready" for children that are open, flexible, and engaging.

- ***Help every teacher and every adult who interacts with children during the school day be successful-***Ready schools give teachers time to improve their skills and develop their craft. A qualified teaching staff and effective, ongoing professional development are the foundation of ready schools. As a recent study noted, "what teachers know and do is the most important influence on what students learn."(Pianta 2003:44)

- ***Introduce or expand approaches shown to raise achievement***-Research over the last two decades has produced convincing evidence that some education strategies are consistently effective. Educators know more than ever before about boosting achievement and preventing school failure, based on both research evidence and practical experience from programs and schools that have established strong records of success. Some approaches have been shown to work, or not work, with particular groups of students, such as those at risk of academic failure.

- ***Alter practices and programs if existing ones do not benefit children-***Ready schools alter strategies that have not consistently promoted their children's development or learning, and have failed to show lasting benefits in research studies.

- ***Serve children in communities-***Ready schools recognize that schools alone cannot meet the broad spectrum of children's and families' needs. Children are more likely to make a successful adjustment to school when they have easy access to a range of services and supports in their community. Adequate health

care and nutrition are especially vital to children's well-being and success in school.

- ***Take responsibility for results-***Ready schools challenge every child. They may set different standards for different children, reflecting different rates of development, but they do not excuse children from success. They set high standards for all children, and commit themselves to zero failure. Holding themselves accountable for the success of each individual student, they provide immediate, targeted assistance for those who show signs of falling behind.

- ***Have strong leadership-***Ready schools have a clear and unmistakable source of leadership that provides instructional focus and coherence to the many activities and efforts under way in many classrooms. Many leadership styles and arrangements are effective. Leadership may be vested in one individual or shared. The crucial element is that the leader or leaders have an agenda: they are guided by a vision of education that is responsive to the needs of the children and their community, informed by research and dedicated to the proposition that all children can learn to high standards.

Summary

Schools' readiness for children can therefore, be conceptualized as schools providing an environment in which all children are able to learn. In particular, ready schools are available and accessible, of good quality, and recognize and adapt to local needs and circumstances (CGECCD, 1991). Schools' readiness for children is defined in terms of the aspects of the school environment that support a smooth transition for children (and their families) into primary school and advance learning for all children (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre 2003). In this study, we do not know whether or not schools for children with special educational needs and this is what the study intends to establish.

2.2 Teacher readiness to receive children with special educational needs in grade one

2.2.1 Teacher qualification and competence

There is evidence that teachers are a critical factor in ensuring learning and it is important to have quality teachers in the early grades (Aldzi, 2006). Research confirms that early primary teachers tend to be viewed as less important than those teaching higher grades. The availability of motivated teachers who know how to support children's development and promote their learning is vital. The teachers' application of skills and competencies, and whether they have access to core teaching and learning materials (for example, teacher's guides, textbooks), all influence what happens for children and their learning. Many Grade 1 and 2 teachers' lack proper training in teaching and promoting literacy skills in order to develop children's fluency in reading and writing. They are also less likely to have had specialized teacher training to help them organize, manage and teach the large and diverse groups of students in their classrooms.

The MoE (1996:66) Educational Policy Document of Zambia re-affirms the notion that "the effectiveness and quality of an effective educational system relies on the quality and competence of teachers". Teachers at ready schools have high expectations of all learners enrolling in grade one. Teachers believe that all children rich or poor and with or without special educational needs can learn and they also communicate this readiness to their learners through realistic, yet high ambitions.

Teachers' professional qualifications have been linked with overall classroom quality. Primary schoolteachers with early childhood training are more effective in the early grades. Equipped with information on how young children learn and develop, they help ease the transition of children and families to schools much more than teachers who lack this background. Without the skills and competencies necessary to smooth the transition for children with special educational needs, schools and Grade 1 teachers are ill-prepared to receive them (UNESCO, 2007). Because the schools are not responsive to their needs, children and families make it to the school door but do not remain. They feel uncomfortable; they drop out. Inaction at the primary school

level translates into a high cost for society, which misses out on the potential talents and contributions of a portion of its citizenry.

2.2.2 Class Size and school readiness

With the introduction of free universal primary education policies in Zambia and other countries, classroom sizes have increased drastically in recent years, particularly in Grade one. For instance, the Ministry of Education (MoE) recommends a class size of 45 at basic school level but the 2008 Zambia National Assessment Survey found that the average of most grade 1-5 classes was 55. This was largely attributed to the free basic educational for all policy which has seen an increase in the number of pupils but without a corresponding increase in the number of classroom teachers.

While the impact of large class sizes on student achievement may not be so adverse in later primary years, this is not the case for the early years of learning. Large early grade classes interfere with the capacity of teachers to teach and children to learn (O'Sullivan, 2006). Teaching 75–100+ children in Grade 1 is not an effective way to instil the key skills and competencies that are critical for later learning and success. Overcrowding is combined with little or no access to the learning materials which are critical for the development of basic skills and competencies. The introduction of shifts (to address large class sizes) in some school has resulted in even fewer contact hours (Abadzi, 2006).

Large class sizes are seen as a barrier to the inclusion of disabled children in all countries. In economically wealthy countries, class sizes of 30 are considered too large, yet in poorly resourced countries, class sizes of 60–100 are the norm. Small, well managed classes are, of course, more desirable than large classes with inadequate resources. For instance in Zambia a case study of Chongwe district by Ndlovu (2007) revealed that some classes were large and overcrowded making it unconducive for pupils with disabilities. Such overcrowding of classes is what Mandyata (2002) also reported in a case study of Kasama district to have caused some teachers to refuse accepting children with special educational needs in their classes.

However, the size of the class is not necessarily a significant factor for the success of inclusion, where attitudes are positive and welcoming. There are many examples of disabled children being successfully included in large classes. Attitudinal barriers to inclusion are arguably greater than the barriers posed by inadequate material resources as observed by Moberg and Kasonde-Ng'andu (2001).

2.2.3 Language of Instruction

The language of instruction is a key factor in children's early learning experiences (Abdazi, 2006; Benson, 2005). Many children enter school unable to understand anything the teacher says. In Malawi, for example(Chilora, 2000; Chilora and Harris, 2001) observed that students whose home languages were the same as their teachers' (even if the language of instruction was different) performed significantly better in primary school. In Zambia, a language policy called the primary reading programme with the New Break through to Literacy (NBTL) has been introduced ever since 1998 as an intervention measure to improve reading in primary schools. The policy recognises the role of language in the development of early reading and literacy skills. Notwithstanding the achievements that have been seen under the primary reading program however, there have been instances where children have failed to reach expected reading levels. One of the reasons for such an outcome is the mismatch between the child's mother tongue and the language of instruction as documented by Matafwali (2010).

However, It is important to note that the language policy in Malawi and Zambia has changed with the introduction of new curricular. Children in the lower grades are now being taught in a familiar local language. Children learn language rapidly in their early years. Becoming a competent communicator and fluent reader is much easier to accomplish initially using the mother tongue where there is already familiarity and vocabulary (Abadzi, 2006).Teaching in a local language can be effective, but this is difficult, and often impossible, in cases where there are a number of languages in the class. The importance of language of instruction is recognized in numerous studies (Abadzi, 2006; Benson, 2005, Matafwali, 2010) as well as in an increasing number of government policy documents and national plans. However, pressure on education

budgets means that, although many projects policies may be developed, few actually end up in the hands of classroom teachers and children. Even with accumulating knowledge and experience, practices on the ground may not change.

2.3. Optimal learning environments for children with special educational needs

Creating a welcoming and accessible environment in which children can learn is a defining characteristic of ready schools. Children need to be able to travel safely to school, and be in a safe physical and social environment. They also need a caring and stimulating learning environment to understand what is being taught, and be able to interact with their peers and teachers. This may require the adjustment of teaching methods, materials, settings and timetabling, rather than adjusting the children to existing methods. Such adjustments will benefit education quality for all children – not only those with a disability. Children with special educational needs may require optimal learning environments for them to benefit fully from the learning normally offered in ordinary schools. The learning environment should therefore include the following:

2.3.1 Inclusive curriculum

Today, the emphasis is that children with disabilities be served in "inclusion" settings-regular classrooms whose resources have been modified or augmented to allow children with special educational needs to participate successfully in them (UNESCO,2009). Research around the globe conducted by UNICEF (2012) shows that in such settings, special needs children make somewhat greater academic and social gains than their peers in self-contained special education classrooms. Ready schools therefore should be guided by the philosophy of inclusion and may take diverse instructional approaches and be ready for all students. Introducing inclusion as a guiding principle has implications for teachers' practices and attitudes – be it towards girls, slow learners, children with special needs or those from different backgrounds.

2.3.2 Quality of instruction

Ready schools are determined to provide a high quality of instruction. This entails, maintaining an appropriate level of instruction, reinforcing incentives for learning, and using time effectively. The questions teachers ask, the discussions they encourage, and the books and software they use make sense to all students including those with special educational needs. Information is presented in an organized and orderly way; students find it interesting and easy to remember and apply (Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000).

A growing body of research according to the EFA Global monitoring Report (2005) has revealed that in the many developing countries (of which Zambia is not an exception) that are striving to guarantee all children the right to education; the focus on access often overshadows the issue of quality. Yet quality stands at the heart of Education for All. It determines how much and how well students learn, and the extent to which their education achieves a range of personal, social and development goals. Hence, in assessing schools' redness for children with special educational needs in Zambia, an examination of what curricular is offered to children at grade one entry becomes worthwhile.

2.3.3 Appropriate levels (pace and content) of instruction

Children with special educational needs have been shown to learn best when material is new to them but within their reach, and they are provided the support of teachers or peers (Lombardi 1992). In a ready school, children are motivated to pay attention, study, and learn because materials seem interesting and valuable and children are encouraged by praise, comments, and feedback on their progress. Teachers can build upon children's own desire to learn by making material engaging, relating it to their prior knowledge and interests, and actively involving them in using new skills and knowledge. Teachers of young children can create child-cantered environments capable of accommodating each child's individual learning level.

2.3.4 Accessible learning environment

The accessibility of the learning environment is crucial for all children to participate equally, and be fully included. Travelling to and from school can be very difficult for

all children, and is often used as an excuse for not sending disabled children to school Savolainen, Kokkala, and Alasuutari, 2000). Once children have reached school, there are other physical access issues to consider as regards entering the school buildings, and ease of movement around the teaching and recreation areas. The physical safety and comfort of children should also be a major concern in all schools if learning is to be accessible. Children need to be able to travel safely to school, and be in a safe physical and social environment (UNICEF, 2012). They also need a caring and stimulating learning environment to understand what is being taught, and be able to interact with their peers and teachers. This may require the adjustment of teaching methods, materials, settings and timetabling, rather than adjusting the children to existing methods. Such adjustments will benefit education quality for all children – not only those with a disability (Savolainen, Kokkala, and Alasuutari, 2000).

2.4. Transition practices between home and primary schools

Entry to kindergarten is the critical point at which readiness becomes a concern with immediate as well as long-term ramifications for school success (UNESCO: 2007). The transition to kindergarten is a dimension, or focal point, of readiness that has begun to develop its own literature base and policy and practice debates, though the two concepts are linked closely (Bohan-Baker and Little, 2002).

As with readiness, various conceptions and definitions of transition exist:

> Some regard transitions as a set of onetime activities, undertaken by children, families, and programs. . . Others regard transitions as ongoing efforts to create linkages between children's natural and support environments. . . Still others regard transition as the manifestation of the developmental principle of continuity (for example, creating pedagogical, curricular, and or disciplinary approaches that transcend, and continue between, programs). The researcher suggest that all three interpretations are part of what is meant by transition and that transitions are defined as the continuity

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of experiences that children have between periods and between spheres of their lives (Kagan and Neuman, 1998:67).

With respect to ready schools, transition is defined as children moving into and adjusting to new learning environments and schools making provisions for admitting new children into the system (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 20003). Education experiences prior to primary school are varied and disparate across the globe (UNESCO 2007). But they do have one characteristic in common. Most early childhood care and education programmes differ greatly compared to the education philosophy, teaching style and structure of primary schools. Creating continuity and maintaining learning expectations for all children between early learning or home and primary school environments is a defining characteristic of ready schools (Lombardi, 1992). Research has revealed that, the greater the gap between the early childhood care and education system (primary school system), the greater the challenge for young children to transition from an early learning to a primary school environment.

Transition periods represent times of potential challenge. While the transition to primary school is one of many transitions that children face in the course of their lives, starting school is one of the most challenging experiences in the early years (Reynolds, 2000) and is a particularly vulnerable time for children with special educational needs. Increasing numbers of young children with special needs are being cared for in early childhood settings in their community. The commencement of formal schooling is associated with the negotiation of changes or discontinuities in physical and learning environments, rules and routines, social status and identity, and relationships for children and families. All of which result in "tensions between change and stability and between adjusting to new challenges and preserving old patterns" (Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000: 505). In light of this, it can be argued that what constitutes a successful or unsuccessful transition to school has less to do with the presence or introduction of discontinuity in itself and more to do with how children, families, schools and communities interact and support each other, how prepared they are for the transition, and how successfully they cope with and adjust to the changes.

Research tells us that for the majority of children, the transition to formal schooling is a relatively smooth process. However, some children experience adjustment difficulties and distress during this period. For example, one United States (US) study found 16% of children had difficult entries, marked by serious concerns or multiple problems as reported by teachers (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, and Cox, 2000). Another US study found 15% of children exhibited two or more adjustment difficulties (such as pretending to be sick, complaining about school or a reluctance to go to school) while 13% showed one adjustment difficulty, as reported by their parents (Hausken and Rathbun, 2002; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, and Cox, 2000). More recently, research in the US has suggested that approximately one in five children meet the criteria for a "psychiatric disorder with impairment as they make the transition into formal schooling" (Carter et al., 2010:695). These statistics highlight the vulnerability of children during this period and thus their need for support.

Researchers have examined a range of social and demographic factors that can influence children's early adjustment to school. These factors include a child's age, gender, early childhood education and care experiences, social and emotional competence, primary language spoken at home, socioeconomic status, parental employment and parenting practices (UNICEF: 2012). Boys tend to have more adjustment difficulties than girls while children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those with disabilities are more likely to have difficult transitions (Hausken and Rathbun, 2002). It should be highlighted however, that the impact of these factors remains unclear, with further research needed. For instance, research studies around transition of children with special educational needs into primary schools are inconsistent and limited with researchers focussing mainly on children without disabilities.

The American National Goals Panel (1998:34) clearly indicate that "strengthening achievement requires not only getting children ready for school, but also getting schools ready for the particular children they serve". To that end the national Goals panel convened advisors to form a Ready Schools Resource Group in the year 1998

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and asked them to delineate the essential attributes of a "ready school." Their report suggests that ready schools pay attention to the transitions that children and their parents make as they move from the familiar home setting to the public school classroom and from preschool or child care to kindergarten.

Early, Pianta, Taylor, and Cox (2001:203) conducted a survey and reported that "the most common types of transition practices occur after the beginning of the school year and are aimed at the class as a whole. Transition practices that occur while the child is still in the preschool setting and those that are aimed at individual children and families are less common. Practices involving coordination with preschool programs and the community are also relatively rare. Rathbun and Germino Hausken (2001:78) surveyed teachers regarding six different types of transition practices; they found that the most commonly used practices "were phoning and sending information home about the kindergarten program, and inviting parents to attend a pre enrolment orientation," while the least-used activities were "shortening the school days at the start of the school year and home visitations by teachers at the beginning of the school year"

Both the data obtained by Rathbun and Germino-Hausken (2001) and the National Goals Panel(1998) reported in the three studies by Pianta and his colleagues found similar trends in the use of transition practices as they related to school characteristics: "As schools (or districts) became increasingly urban and had higher percentages of minority and/or low- Social economic status (SES)students, teachers reported personal contacts less often, and low-intensity school contacts occurring after school had started were more common" (Pianta, Cox, Taylor, and Early, 1999, p. 71). Teachers also tended to report more barriers to using transition practices in schools in more urban settings and with higher proportions of minority students.

In the survey conducted by Early, Pianta, Taylor, and Cox, (2001) it was revealed that the major barriers to using transition practices, particularly those involving more individualized contact with families and children, included class size, the late dates at which teachers generally received lists of students who would be in their kindergarten classes, and the fact that contacting families before the start of school required

summer work not supported by teachers' salaries. Pianta and his colleagues also found that, "strikingly, the largest between-group differences" in teachers' use of transition practices "were between teachers who had and had not received training in transitions. Teachers with such training were more likely to use all types of transition practices. However, "few teachers have such training" (Early, Pianta, Taylor, and Cox, 2001:205).

In the study by LaParo, Kraft-Sayre, and Pianta (2003:153), the authors looked at families' reports of their involvement in transition activities. "More than 50% of families reported participating in almost all of the transition activities offered by their children's school". Parents' most frequent school-based transition activity was visiting their child's kindergarten classroom; the least frequent activity was attending an orientation to kindergarten. The most frequently reported barrier to participating in school-based transition activities was parents' work schedules. At home, parents most frequently reported teaching their child "school-related skills," such as learning their address and home phone number, discussing behavioural expectations with their children, talking with their children about meeting new classmates, and talking with other parents about kindergarten.

Rathbun and Germino-Hausken (2001:6) also reported associations between teachers' use of specific transition activities and teacher reports of parents' involvement in kindergarten: "Teachers who reported that they or their school telephoned or sent home information about the kindergarten program indicated that a larger proportion of children in their classrooms had parents who attended teacher-parent conferences, open houses or parties, and art/music events, and volunteered regularly in the classroom or school. The same pattern of parent involvement was found for teachers whose schools hosted pre-enrolment visits . . . , parent orientations, and had preschoolers spend some time in the kindergarten classroom".

Although these studies give us an overview of the transition practices that are and are not used commonly in different settings, they do not speak to the impact of such practices on children with special educational needs or their families. None of the studies explored possible links between the use of transition practices and children's

readiness outcomes or kindergarten performance, and the researcher did not find any information in any sources indicating the existence of research addressing children with special needs. Furthermore, despite a growing body of research describing schools' transition practices, little to no research has been advanced in Zambia highlighting how children transit or adjust to early days of school. Worse still little research has been conducted to address the plight of children with special educational needs in ordinary schools especially at grade one entry with many studies focussing on inclusive education.

2.5. Community and parental involvement

Parents' education goals for their children and their beliefs, attitudes and commitment to education are considered to be crucial for school success. Parents are children's first and most important teachers. A key to success for any early childhood program is meaningful parent involvement. This does not change when children enter elementary school (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 2003). Research has demonstrated that effective schools go beyond traditional parent activities such as fundraising and parent-teacher conferences(Izzo, Wiesberg, Kasprow and Fendrich , 1999). Mindful of parents' busy lives, they offer paths to involvement that are realistic and convenient, making it clear that family members are welcome to participate in whatever way they prefer and can best manage. Such schools recognize the diversity of their students' households, reinforce the importance of the learning that occurs at home, and communicate respect for all kinds of families.

Schools provide an ideal point for families to access information and support. As an established institution, schools should provide an appropriate, non-stigmatising, and universal setting for supporting parenting. Research suggests that parental involvement is likely to be greater in the early years of schooling (Izzo, Wiesberg, Kasprow and Fendrich , 1999) and is therefore, an opportunity for schools to work with a larger number of parents and carers providing information and activities that promote positive parenting practices and support children's learning. Research indicates that school-based interventions, particularly during transition to school, that

support effective parenting can help to reduce some family-relate d risk factors for children's readiness for school (Sanders, Tunner and Markie-Dadds, 2008).

A growing body of literature refers to the importance of schools supporting parents and carers in preparing and assisting children to adjust to formal schooling(Izzo, Wiesberg, Kasprow and Fendrich , 1999). This includes embedding parenting information into transition practices such as information about challenges children face and how parents and carers can support their child. Better informed parents and carers are less likely to be stressed about their child's transition to school and therefore better able to support their children in adapting to a new school (Reynolds, 2000).When schools prioritise and encourage the development of positive relationships with parents and carers during transition it has the potential to have long-term implications for family involvement in children's education which can have benefits for children both academically and socially(Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

The American National Centre for Family and Community connections with schools published a synthesis of research (Henderson and Mapp, 2002) with most authors reporting that students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background were likely to: earn higher grades and test scores and enrol in higher level programs; attend school regularly; have better social skills, school improved behaviour and adapt well to school and graduate and go on to post secondary education. Clearly, parent involvement in children's lives is important at all times but even more so as children begin the major transition into schools. Research shows that not only do parents want to know about academic and behavioural expectations for the incoming year (Wildengner and McIntyre 2010) but they also want to know what they can do to prepare their children for the transition. Though much has been written about what teachers can do to prepare children. Little has been written about what teachers/schools can do to inform and support parents in preparing these children for this transition.

Although families of all types of backgrounds are often involved in their children's preschool educational or child care programs, their involvement tends to decline when

the children enter kindergarten. Both the types and frequency of family-school contact tend to change from preschool to kindergarten. Two of the studies reviewed for this research explored patterns of contact among families and young children's educational programs at both the preschool and kindergarten levels. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (1999 and 2004) conducted two separate studies in which school staffs maintained a daily log of contacts with the families of children in their classrooms. In the 1999 study, they compared family-school contact among two preschools within a single regional program and one kindergarten program, and families and teachers of children who moved from preschool to kindergarten, over a 2-year period. The study involved 188 preschool children and their families in Year 1 and 82 kindergarten children and their families in Year 2, along with preschool and kindergarten teachers who maintained family-school contact logs.

Results from the 1999 study showed: Home visits, conversations during pick-up and drop-off, and phone calls were more common in preschool than kindergarten whereas notes were more typical in kindergarten. Contacts shifted from being typically home initiated while children were in preschool to school-initiated while children were in kindergarten. Positive topics were discussed a greater percentage of time in preschool than in kindergarten, whereas family support, academic problems, and behavioural problems were discussed more frequently in Families and teachers tend to have somewhat different perceptions about what matters most in children's readiness for kindergarten. The impact of these different perceptions, if any, on children's readiness and their kindergarten achievement has not been documented.

In the 2004 study, preschool and kindergarten teachers and family workers of 75 children from families with low socioeconomic (SES) status logged the frequency and characteristics of family-school communication over a 2-year period. Participants in this study were drawn from two separate school districts. Both studies found that family members' contacts with their child's teachers declined from preschool to kindergarten. In the 2004 study, the results showed no relationship between any of the family factors assessed in the study, such as sociodemographic risk and families' views of the school staff, and the types and frequency of family-school

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communication in kindergarten. Even families who communicate frequently with their child's preschool teacher do not necessarily communicate frequently with their child's Kindergarten teacher.

Many studies, however, limit their focus to a single caregiver, usually the mothers. Focusing narrowly on a single caregiver, or even on two parents, may be a limiting problem for both researchers and educational practitioners. Research on families in poor neighbourhoods has found that "a range of significant others" assist parents in the care of their children (Jarrett, 2000:23). These include grandparents, great-grandparents, siblings, other relatives, and neighbours. As Demo and Cox (2000: 19) observed, "Family researchers and child developmentalists need to move beyond a preoccupation. There is need to move beyond a preoccupation with conventional classifications of family structure to explore the rich variety of family members, kin support networks, and neighbourhood resources impacting on children's development. Worse still, in the light of ready schools, very little research has been conducted on family involvement in the education of children with disabilities.

A number of scholars have noted the lack of consistency in the ways in which researchers describe and most critical for the utility of research findings measure family involvement. Differences exist both in the broad categorizations of family or parent involvement and in the specific activities used to represent and assess those broad categories. In their critical review of the research base regarding parent involvement, Baker and Soden (1997:13) observed that, "even when focusing on the same aspect of parent involvement, researchers have operationalized it inconsistently". In the studies addressed in this study, "family involvement" is most often discussed in terms of families' participation in activities at school or child care centres. A good deal of variability is seen in researchers' and educational practitioners' characterization as to what constitutes "high" or "low" incidences or levels of family involvement (Baker and Soden 1997)

Conclusion

Despite the above highlighted body of literature, little is presently known about 'ready schools' particularly characteristics of ready schools in low resource and developing countries (Zambia inclusive) where the issue of schooling is dissimilar to developed countries. Worse still, little to no research has been advanced in the area of special education. Hence the current study becomes worthwhile.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study. The chapter is organized under the following section: research design, population, sample, sampling procedure, instruments for data collection, procedure for data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, research schedule and timeline, as well as proposed budget and references.

3.0.   RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a descriptive survey so as to explain and describe the phenomenon comprehensively as it is. A descriptive survey is a non-experimental research method that can be used when the researcher wants to gather data that may not be directly observed, for instance, school readiness, perceptions and attitudes among others. In this type of survey, data is drawn from samples of the population (Kombo and Tromp 2006).Descriptive and Explanatory techniques assisted to evaluate ordinary schools' readiness to receive children with special needs in grade one and also to examine the nature of transition practices employed in schools to help children settle in school. The research design comprised of both qualitative and quantitative designs. This method compensated weaknesses in each one of them and took advantage of their strengths. For example, in case of relying on information from key informants (qualitative), and once the researcher felt that the results were biased;

the quantifiable results (quantitative) could be used. In other words, the methods were complementary of each other. Some of the brief explanations of each design are as follows:

i. *Quantitative Approach*

The quantitative design generated quantifiable results and made it easier to analyze the data. This data was in form of tables, percentages, and graphs which made data analysis easier when evaluating the extent to which ordinary schools in Luanshya district are ready to receive children with special educational needs in grade one.

ii. *Qualitative Approach*

This approach offered an in-depth explanation of the phenomenon which was under investigation, and generated information related to preschool teachers and administrators views regarding the inclusion of children with special educational needs at grade one entry. However, this approach required appropriate skills during the process of collecting and analyzing the data. In many instances data from qualitative instruments were categorized and coded, and this facilitated data entry and analysis.

Study Site

The study was conducted in Luanshya district Copper belt Province. The choice of this area for this research was based on the existing low enrolment levels for children with special educational needs in the lower grades of ordinary primary schools. Luanshya district has thirty one (31) registered primary schools, eight (8) secondary schools and nineteen (19) registered community schools and the district lacks primary school teachers who are specially trained in special education. The district also has fifteen (15) privately owned preschools.

3.1. POPULATION

This study was conducted in selected primary schools of Luanshya district. The population consisted of all primary school teachers teaching lower grades (1-3), parents of children with special educational needs, preschool teachers and primary school administrators as key informers.

3.2. SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The sample for this study consisted of 120 respondents comprising 50 teachers, 50 parents, 10 preschool teachers and 10 school head teachers. The study was conducted in 10 selected ordinary government primary schools and 5 preschools in Luanshya district. Stratified simple random sampling was used to select the ten (10) ordinary primary schools where as 10 School administrators from each school were purposefully selected. From the surrounding community of each school five(5) parents of children with special educational needs in grade one were purposively identified as part of the study sample. 5 preschools were purposefully selected and two teachers were drawn from each school.

3.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

3.4.1 Head teachers (School administrators)

10 Head teachers (school administrators) were drawn from 10 government ordinary primary schools. Of the 10 head teachers, 7 were female and 3 were male. 6 head teachers possessed a diploma as their highest qualification attained, 2 had certificates and 1 was currently studying for a first degree.

3.4.2 Ordinary primary school teachers

50 ordinary primary school teachers teaching lower grades (1-3) were drawn from 10 ordinary government primary schools. Of the 50 teachers, 10 (20%) were male and 40 (80%) were female. 20 (40%) were certificate holders, 29(58%) were diploma holders only 1(2%) was a degree holder.

3.4.3 **Preschool teachers**

10 preschool teachers were drawn from 5 preschools. Of the 10 preschool teachers, 8 were female and 2 were male. It should be noted that all the 10 preschool teachers had certificates in early childhood education as their highest qualification attained.

3.4.4 **Parents**

50 parents of children with special educational needs in grade one were drawn from the surrounding community of each ordinary primary school in the sample. Of the fifty (50) parents who constituted the study sample 20 (40%) were male and 30 (60%) were female, 19 (38%) had primary education as their highest education attained, 16 (32%) had Basic education and 15 (30%) had secondary education. Of the 50 parents 19 (38%) who attained primary education, only 1(5%) was in formal employment whereas 18(95%) were in informal employment. For the 16(32%) who attained basic education, 1(6%) was in formal employment, whereas 15(93%) were in formal employment. Finally, 15(30%) who attained secondary education, only 1 (6%) was in informal employment whereas 14(93%) were all in formal employment.

3.5. **RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

Firstly, concert was obtained from the District Education Board Secretary to proceed on data collection. Data for this study was collected from 3rd January 2014 to 10thFebruary, 2014. Data was collected using both primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires containing both close ended and open ended questions were used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The inclusion of open ended questions was meant to elicit detailed responses. All the questionnaires were administered by the researcher with the help of research assistance. The curriculum and school environment was observed based on the checklist. The above data collection methods were used to collect primary data. Secondary data was collected through desk research from various sources such as School readiness research synthesis, Ministry of Education Science Vocational Training and Early Education (MESVTEE) publications and bulletins, journals, the internet and other relevant publications.

3.6. DATA PROCESSING

The questionnaires were checked thoroughly so as to discard data that could not be used or not in line with the study. This was done the period 12th February to 14th February 2014. Thereafter a coding system was developed. This coding system facilitated all raw data entry and storage in SPSS.

3.7. DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16.0 was used in the analysis of quantitative data whilst qualitative data from open ended questions in the questionnaires was analyzed using content analysis. Closed ended questions in the questionnaires were coded. The responses in the open ended questions were categorized, coded by assigning figures, and this facilitated data entry and analysis. Content analysis was used to analyse responses from the key informants. The SPSS software package was used because it offered some of the following among the many merits: it was user friendly, it had enough space for long range of numbers; and mathematical manipulations were dealt with using its in-built functions. It also permitted a variety of presentation of data in form of tables, frequencies, bar charts and other figures.

3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As indicated by Eby (1991) researchers have a clear responsibility to ensure that they recognise and protect the rights and general wellbeing of participants regardless of the nature of research. To that end the study adhered to the following ethical issues. The study considered confidentiality thereby instilling confidence and trust into the participants. For example it was made clear that whatever responses they had given remained confidential. In this case the respondents could not hide anything but freely brought out information that was important to the study. The study considered participants' rights to participation, confidentiality and anonymity, privacy, self confidence. In addition, the researcher got information from the participants; hence the right to know was upheld. It was also made clear in the first place that there were no forms of intimidation since complete voluntary and free participation in the study was encouraged. Also when some participants decided not to take part or withdrew

due to one reason or another during the study, it was clearly stated that no form of coercion or penalty could be sanctioned on them. Translation into the participant's language was used in situations where the respondent did not speak the language in use. This was done by getting verbal consent from them. The Introductory letter about the study was accessed from the Luanshya District Education Board Secretary.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study in accordance with the research questions which were as follows:

4.1   STUDY QUESTIONS

1. To what extent are ordinary school teachers ready to receive children with special educational needs in grade one?
2. Are ordinary primary schools equipped and ready to provide optimal learning environments for children with special educational needs in grade one?
3. What is the nature of transition practices between home and ordinary primary schools for children with special educational needs?
4. To what extents are parents involved in the education of children with special needs in grade one?

4.2.   Ordinary school teachers' readiness to receive children with special educational needs in grade one

There is clear evidence that teachers are a critical factor in ensuring learning and it is important to have quality teaching in the early grades. The availability of motivated teachers who know how to support children's social and emotional development and promote their learning is vital. The teachers' application of skills and competencies, and whether they have access to core teaching and learning materials (e.g., teacher's

guides, textbooks), all influence what happens for children with special educational needs and their learning.

In determining teacher readiness, the researcher sought to examine if teachers underwent training in teaching children with special educational needs and whether such training was sufficient. The table below indicates the results. See figure 3

Table 1: Table showing if teachers were trained in teaching SEN children and how they were trained

		If yes how			Total
		As a topic in course	Full course	N/A	
Trained in SEN	yes	24	3	0	27
	no	3	0	20	23
Total		27	3	20	50

(Source: primary data)

Of the fifty (50) teachers teaching grade ones, twenty seven (27) teachers representing 78.1% were trained in teaching children with special educational needs whereas twenty three (23) teachers representing 21.9% did not undergo any training in teaching children with special educational needs. However, out of the twenty seven (27) teachers trained in teaching children with special educational needs only 3 underwent specialized training as a full course specifically designed to train teachers to teach in special schools were as twenty four (24) of the teachers underwent specialized training within the mainstream course of teacher education.

Learner assessment is vital in the education of children with special educational needs. As such teachers need to assess learners to ascertain their needs and or nature of disability. There are a number of assessments a teacher can employ in the classroom to determine children with special educational needs such as observations, review of

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medical records and information from parents. However, regarding the nature of assessment employed by ordinary school teachers to assess children with special educational needs, the current study revealed the following. See figure 7 below.
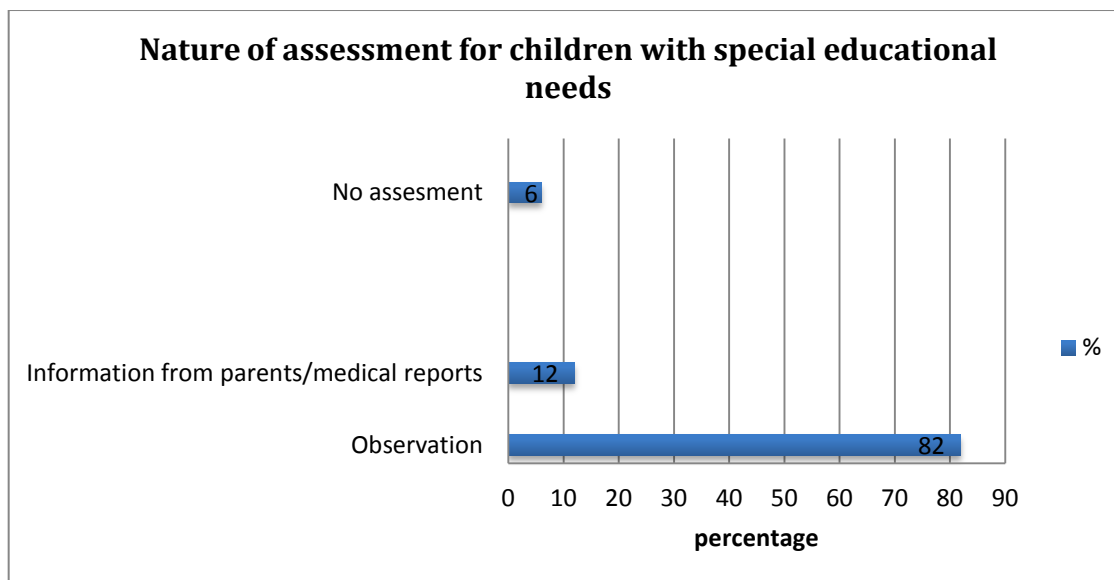
(Source: primary data)

Figure 2: Bar chart showing types of assessment used by grade one teachers to assess children with special educational needs

It is evident from the bar chart above (figure 7) that most of the teachers teaching grade ones in ordinary schools use mere observations as a method of assessing children with special educational needs. This is true of 82% of the teachers who indicated the use of observations for assessment. 12% percent of the teachers indicated the use of information obtained from parents and medical reports whereas 6% of the teachers did not assess children at all.

Table 2: Table showing availability of teaching and learning materials for children with special educational needs

Response	Frequency	Percent
yes	3	6.0
no	47	94.0
Total	50	100.0

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The table above indicate the availability of appropriate teaching and learning resources for children with special educational needs. It was evident that most of the schools are under resourced in terms of learning and teaching materials. 47 (94.0%) of respondents indicated that their schools had inadequate learning and teaching materials to cater for children with special educational needs. Only 3 (6.0%) teachers indicated that their school had adequate teaching and learning materials for children with special educational needs.

Table 3: Table showing grade one teachers' rating of their readiness to teach children with special educational needs

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not ready	34	68.0
Ready	16	32.0
Total	50	100.0

(Source: primary data)

Grade one teachers were asked to rate their readiness to teach children with special educational needs. According to the table above (table 5), 34 (68%) out of 50 indicated that they were not ready to teach children with special educational needs whereas 16(32%) affirmed their readiness to teach children with special educational needs.

4.3. Optimal learning environments for children with special educational needs in grade one

The learning environment is an important factor to consider when assessing the readiness of schools for children with special educational needs. Children with special needs learn best in an environment that has been adapted to suit their needs. Similarly they require a curriculum that is flexible and responsive to their needs. Thus they require optimal learning environments to learn effectively. The current study revealed the following results:

The researcher sought to ascertain whether ordinary schools use assessment data to plan curriculum for children with special educational needs, the study revealed that only three (3) schools of the ten (10) schools under investigation used assessment data to plan curriculum for children with special educational needs whereas 7 schools did not plan curriculum but rather subject learners with special educational to the ordinary curriculum.

Furthermore, a checklist for curriculum observation was administered to assess the nature of the curriculum offered in ordinary primary schools for grade ones and the following came out clearly. Of the ten schools sampled, the study revealed that all of them (10) schools do not have a curriculum depicting people with special educational needs engaged in real life situations. Regarding the presentation of curriculum information to the learners with special educational needs, it was evident that only 2 schools presented information in multiple formats to address all sensory modalities whereas 8 schools did not present information in multiple formats.

Based on the curriculum checklist, the researcher was able to assess the appropriateness of the curriculum for children with special educational needs in grade one and the assessment revealed that 9 of the10 schools use a curriculum that is inappropriate for children with special educational needs in the sense that it was not responsive to their diverse needs. It appeared too rigid and inflexible. However, only 1 of the schools using a curriculum deemed appropriate for children with special educational needs.

Using an environmental observation checklist, the researcher was able to rate how favourable the environment is for learners with special education needs in grade one. With regards to space in the classrooms, the study revealed that of the schools sampled, 80% of the classrooms do not have ample classroom space for children with special needs (e.g. physical disability) to access all areas of the classroom. Only 20% of the classrooms had enough space. This may be necessitated by high enrolments levels in grade one classes. The bar chart bellow depicts a summary of the

favourability of the learning environment for children with special educational needs. See figure 3 below.

How favourable is the learning environment for children with special eduactional needs
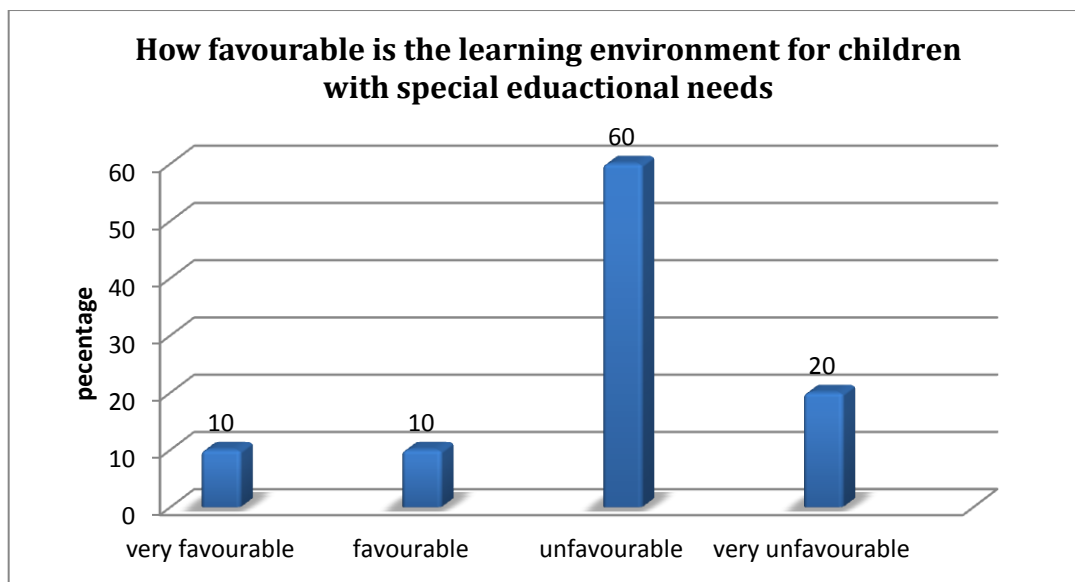
(Source: primary data)

Figure 3: Bar chart indicating if the school environments are favourable for SEN children to learn and interact effectively

The graph above indicates that 10% of the classes observed had very favourable learning environments, 10% had favourable learning environments, 60% had unfavourable learning environments and 20% had very unfavourable learning environments.

4.4. Nature of transition practices between home and ordinary primary schools for children with special educational needs

Research has identified the transition to school as a time of potential challenge and stress for children and families. It involves negotiating and adjusting to a number of changes including the physical environment, learning expectations, rules and routines, social status and identity, and relationships for children and families. Whilst it can be a time of great excitement, it is not uncommon for children with special educational needs to experience some distress and adjustment difficulties during this period. Schools have an important role in supporting children and families during transition.

This includes not only supporting children, parents and care givers to understand the changes, expectations and practicalities (e.g., uniforms, starting and finishing times etc.), but also assisting children and families to adjust to the social and emotional demands of starting school.

Among the common transition practices that have been proved to be effective in helping children to adjust to formal schooling include the following: Home visits by teachers and head teachers before children enter school; Orientation sessions for parents and children; A warm welcome to children and parents as they come to school for the first time; Forging links with preschools and all settings where children have spent time so as to draw best practices from there; and helping parents to identify support groups.

Highlighted in the following paragraphs are the transition practices which ordinary primary schools in Luanshya District have put in place to help narrow the transition gap between home and schools for children with special educational needs.

Of the ten (10) schools under study, 8 head teachers affirmed that their schools plan transition practices for incoming grade one children and 2 head teachers clearly indicated that their schools do not plan transition practices for incoming children. Regarding the nature of transition activities, it was evident that most schools as indicated by the 6 head teachers plan orientation sessions for incoming grade one children and 2 head teachers indicated that their schools   invite parents to discuss possible challenges children with special educational needs are likely to encounter and the curriculum. It also came out clearly that most schools give special consideration to children with special educational needs as evidenced by 6 of the head teachers who indicated that their schools have put in place special programs for the transition of children with special educational needs whereas 4 head teachers indicated that they do not have any consideration for children with special needs during transition.

Research around the globe has demonstrated the importance of schools to communicate with preschools for continuity of educational programmes. The current

study however revealed that only 1 of the 10 head teachers affirmed communicating with preschools were the children are coming from for continuity sake where as 7 head teachers affirmed that they did not contact preschools and 2 head teachers affirmed that they sometimes contact preschools to enquire about the children.

Transition to primary school can be a time of great challenge for children with special educational needs and their parents. Schools should therefore, inform parents well in advance of the school requirements. Similarly children must be enrolled in school early enough before the beginning of the term so that they have ample time to settle in a new school environment. The current study revealed the following. See figure 2 below.
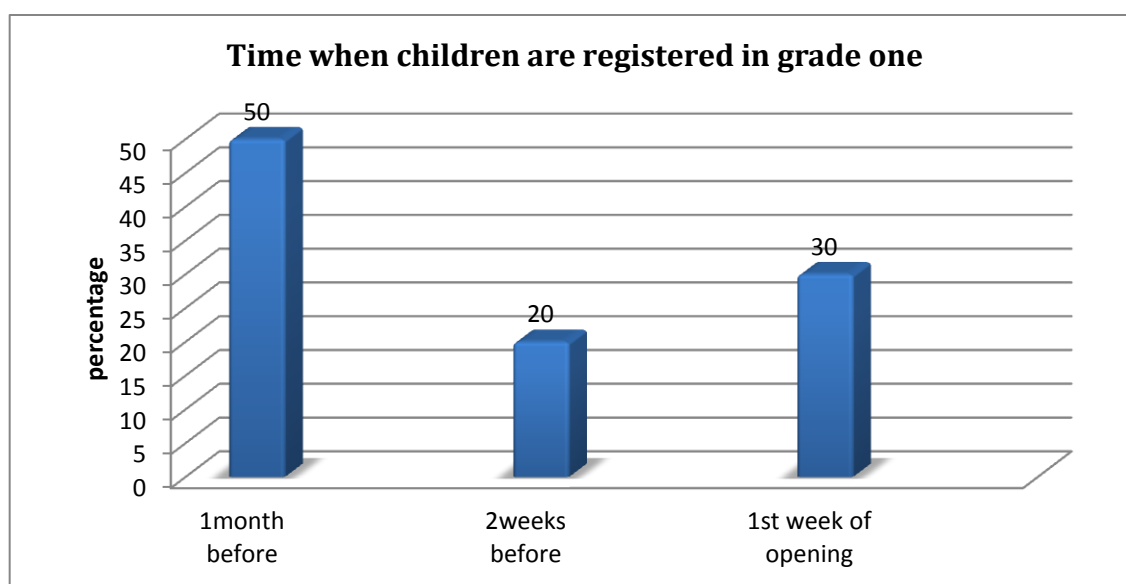
(Source: primary data)

Figure 4: Bar chart indicating the time when incoming grade one are registered at school

The graph above reveals that for most of the schools that were observed, children were registered for grade one at least 1 month before school starts as evidence by 50% of the schools. 20% of the schools enrol children for grade one 2 weeks before school starts and 30% of the schools register children in the 1st week of opening.

4.5. Communities and families involvement in the education of children with special needs in grade one

A growing body of literature refers to the importance of schools supporting parents and care givers in preparing and assisting children to adjust to formal schooling. This includes embedding parenting information into transition practices such as information about challenges children face and how parents and care givers can support their child; effective school to home communication; involving parents in decision making; parent teacher associations and participation in class activities. Better informed parents and caregivers are less likely to be stressed about their child's transition to school and therefore better able to support their children in adapting to a new school (Margetts, 2007). With regards to how ordinary grade one schools in Luanshya District involve and support parents during transition, the current study revealed the following:

Effective engagement of parents is indeed possible when done purposefully. Clear communication from educators on academic expectations, school policies and resources is important, but parents must also have the opportunity to bring their perspectives to the table. When parents know their chief concerns are being addressed, they are most open to constructive involvement. The table bellow indicates the involvement of parents in decision making or policy formulation. See table 1 below

Table 4: Table showing if parents participate in decision making and or formulation of school policy

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	18	36.0	36.0	36.0
No	32	64.0	64.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

(Source: primary data)

The table above indicates that of the fifty (50) parents who constituted part of the study sample, 18 (36%) confirmed their participation in making decisions as well as formulating school policy whereas 32(46%) admitted that they did not take part in decision making as well as policy formulation.

In addition, parents were asked to indicate the events which they participate in at school, such events as Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and fundraising ventures. The table bellow indicates the findings. See table 2 below.

Table 5: Table indicating school events of which parents are involved in.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
PTA	31	62.0	62.0	62.0
fundraising	7	14.0	14.0	76.0
None	12	24.0	24.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

(Source: primary data)

The study revealed that of the fifty (50) parents, 31(62%) Attended Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings, whereas 7 (14%) indicated that they mainly participated in fundraising events and 12 (24%) indicated that they did not participate in any of the two.

Schools provide an ideal point for families to access information and support. As an established institution, schools should provide an appropriate, non-stigmatising, and universal setting for supporting and communicating with parents of all backgrounds. Schools should therefore effectively communicate with parents regarding the education of their children. School to home communication can be in form of newsletters, telephone calls, notes and home visits However, regarding the communication between the school and homes or families of children with special educational needs in grade one, the study revealed the following. See figure 4 below.

School to home communication
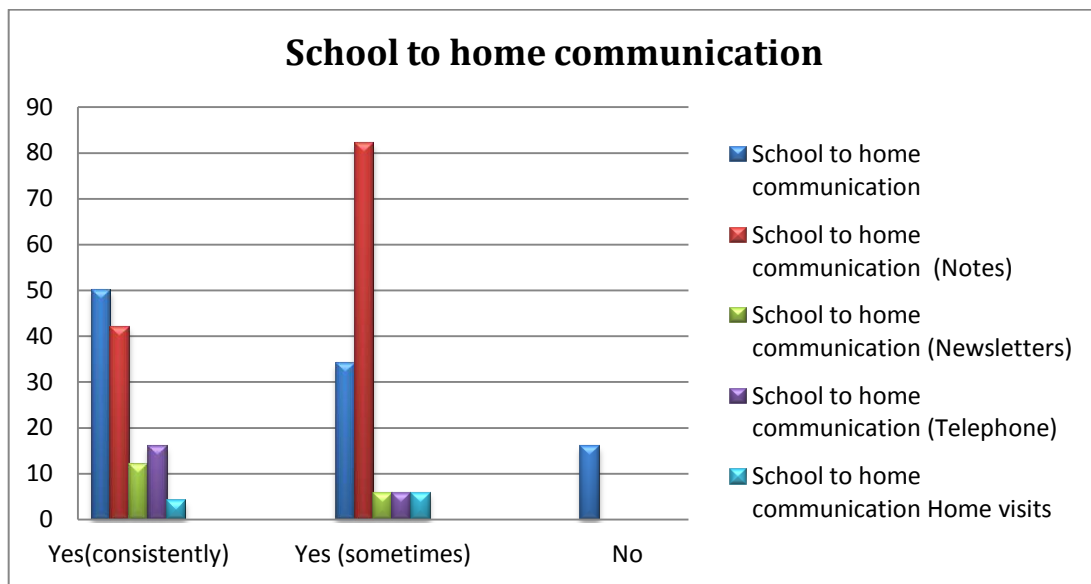
(Source: primary data)

Figure 5: Bar chart indicating nature of school to home communication

Of the fifty (50) parents 25(50%) indicated that the school consistently communicates with them and the most commonly used type of communication is the use of notes which stands at 42% were as the use of newsletter and home visits stands at 12% and 16% respectively. The graph further reveals that 17(34%) indicated that they were sometimes communicated to by the school and similarly the most common type of communication is the use of notes which stands at 82% whereas the use of newsletters and home visits stand at 5.8% and 5.8% respectively. Finally 8(16%) of the parents indicated that the schools did not communicate to them in any way.

Parents were asked to confirm if they participated in any classroom activities. Classroom activities in this regard refer to: teachers welcoming parents into the classrooms at any time of the day, parents to help their children with homework and teachers to welcome suggestions from parents to foster effective teaching and learning for children with special educational needs. The current study revealed the following. See figure 5 below
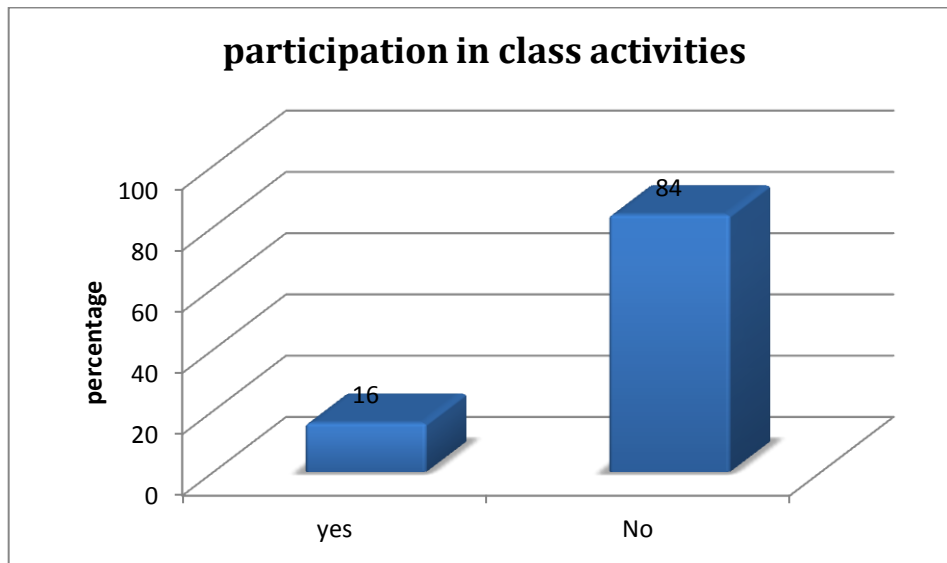
(Source: primary data)

Figure 6: Bar chart indicating whether parents participate in classroom activities

Regarding the participation of parents in classroom activities, 8(16%) of the fifty (50) parents who constituted the sample indicated that they participated in classroom activities whereas 42 (84%) indicated that they did not participate in any classroom activities.

Parents were asked to rate their overall involvement in the education of their children with special educational needs. Overall involvement in this regard refers to every activity parents participate in ant school which include classroom participation, decision making, fundraising ventures, Parent Teacher Associations and formulation of school policy. The current study revealed the following. See figure 6 below.

Overall parental involvement
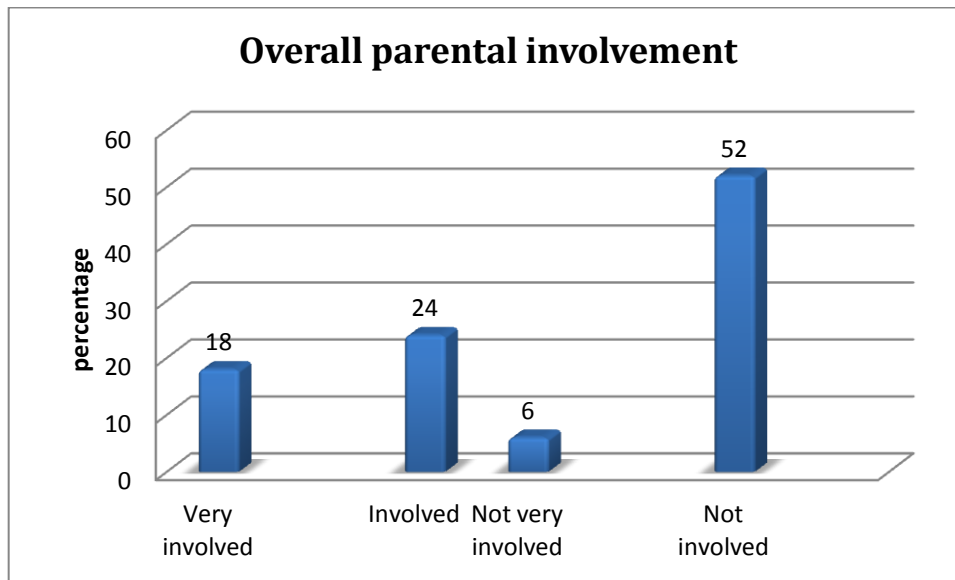
(Source: primary data)

Figure 7: Rating of parental involvement in the education of their children

Parents were asked to rate their overall involvement in the education of their children. 9 (18%) indicated that they were very involved, 12(24%) indicated that they were involved, 3(6%) indicated that they were not very involved and the majority which is 26(52%) indicated that they were not involved.

4.6 Views from interviews with head teachers

To substantiate the quantitative findings the researcher conducted semi structured interviews with the head teachers using a semi structured interview schedule and the following results were revealed.

All the 10 head teachers interviewed were aware of the international and national articulations such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, Education for All (EFA) and Universal Primary Education (UPE). However, it was interesting to note that 4 of the 10 head teachers interviewed did not fully understand the guiding principle on the education of children with special educational needs enshrined in the National policy document Educating our Future (1996) and Education Act (2011) respectively.

In line with the Educational for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Universal Primary Education (UPE) targets by 2015, it came out clearly that schools are doing everything possible to enrol children with special educational needs in ordinary primary schools. During interviews, head teachers were however, quick to highlight the enormous challenges associated with enrolling children with special educational needs in ordinary schools. Among other challenges highlighted by the head teachers include: Inadequate government funding to ordinary primary schools. As lamented by one head teacher "*the introduction of free basic education has left ordinary primary schools with scanty resources because schools only depend on a grant from government which usually comes late and in piece meal. Usually such money is used for administrative purposes*"

Another challenge highlighted was lack of infrastructure to cater for children with special educational needs. Similarly the researcher observed that the infrastructure in all the 10 ordinary primary schools visited was not user friendly for children with special educational needs .Coupled with lack of infrastructure, was lack of adequate appropriate teaching and learning materials for children with special educational needs and that most teachers did not have the skills and training of teaching children with special educational needs.

With the above mentioned challenges, it was observed that head teachers were reluctant to enrol children with severe or moderate disabilities or special educational needs but would rather enrol children with mild disability or special educational needs in their schools. "*We do not enrol children with disabilities in this school, when they come we refer them to special schools or schools with special units*" reported one head teacher. This implies that children with severe to profound disabilities continue to be marginalised in terms of access to education in ordinary primary schools.

With regards to transition management, the head teachers plainly stated that they have no formal transition practices for children with special educational needs. However, all the 10 head teachers stated that their schools organised orientation programmes for incoming children. Orientation sessions addressed to the whole crop of enrolled

children, usually during the second week of opening. There is no special consideration whatsoever for children with special educational needs during transition and finally all the 10 head teachers interviewed stated that they did not co ordinate or contact preschools or ECD centres for continuity of programmes.

4.7   Results from interviews with preschool teachers

Throughout the interviews with the 10 preschool teachers it came out clearly that today more than ever before; children with disabilities are being enrolled and cared for in preschools. It is interesting to note every preschool teacher interviewed reported at least having more than 5 (five) learners with special educational needs in every class of 20-30 pupils. With regards to parental involvement in the education of children with special educational needs, the study revealed that parents are actively involved. "*Parents are actively involved in the education of their children with special educational needs. Not only do they want to know about the educational progress but also want to know what they can do to prepare their children for formal primary schooling*" Lamented one preschool teacher.

The study also established that parents are also involved in Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and fundraising ventures. It is also important to note that parents work with schools to arrange for medical services such as immunisations and under five child medical services. The study further revealed that there is no coordination, cooperation or contact between preschools and primary schools regarding the education or transition of children with special educational needs from preschool to primary school. All the 10 preschool teachers interviewed reported not having any contact with primary schools after children had graduated from preschool. As one teacher lamented "*when preschoolers graduate they are no longer our responsibility, what happens there after matters less to us, we do not contact primary schools neither do primary schools contact us regarding continuity of programmes* ".

4.8 Summary

According to the quantitative and qualitative data presented above, it is evident that, ordinary school teachers teaching lower grades are lack training in teaching children with special educational needs. The study has further revealed that ordinary primary schools fail to provide optimal learning environments for children with special educational needs in that the curriculum offered is not responsive to their needs, equally the environment is inappropriate and lack of appropriate teaching and learning resources. It is also evident that ordinary primary schools in Luanshya district have no formal transition programmes for incoming children with or without special educational needs. However, of the few schools that reported having transition programmes in place, the nature of such programmes is limited to holding orientation sessions for incoming children usually in the second week of opening.   With regards to parental involvement, it came out clearly that parents are not actively and consistently involved in the education of their children with special educational needs.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0   Introduction

Chapter five discusses the findings of the study according to the objectives of the study. The purpose of this study was to assess ordinary schools' readiness to receive children with special educational needs in grade one. The research questions of the study were as follows:

1. To what extent are ordinary school teachers ready to receive children with special educational needs in grade one?
2. Are schools equipped and ready to provide optimal learning environments for children with special educational needs?
3. What is the nature of transition practices between home and ordinary primary schools for children with special educational needs?
4. To what extents are parents involved in the education of children with special needs in grade one?

5.1 Ordinary school teachers' readiness to receive children with special educational needs in grade one

There is clear evidence that teachers are a critical factor in ensuring learning and it is important to have quality teaching in the early grades (Abadzi, 2006). The availability of motivated teachers who know how to support children's social and emotional development and promote their learning is vital. The teachers' application of skills and competencies, and whether they have access to core teaching and learning materials (e.g., teacher's guides, textbooks), all influence what happens for children and their learning.

Regarding teacher readiness, the current study revealed that more than half representing 68% of the entire teacher population teaching lower grades in ordinary primary schools of Luanshya district are not ready to receive children with special

needs in grade one and or their classes. This could be attributed to lack of training in teaching children with special educational needs. Most teachers indicated that they lacked training in special education and felt it contributed greatly to exclusion of pupils with special educational needs especially those with hearing and visual impairment. Similarly, Kalabula (1991) pointed out that most children with disabilities placed in ordinary classes in Zambian schools did not have adequate human and material support. In addition, Mandyata (2002) reported that non acceptance of children with disabilities by ordinary teachers in Kasama was mostly due to lack of training and resources to equip teachers in handling children with special needs in ordinary classes. An analysis of the observations by Mandyata (2002) implies that if support services were available in schools teachers would accept children with disabilities. It can therefore be deduced that teacher training affects readiness to teach. Training in special education for all teachers is therefore, critical to the success of inclusive education in Zambia

However, despite not being qualified enough to handle children with special educational needs, a fraction of teachers representing 32% of the sample of teachers teaching grade one were willing to receive children with special educational needs in their classes but are de-motivated by the lack of teaching and learning resources. Nearly all ordinary primary schools of primary schools in Luanshya district lack teaching and learning resources for children with special educational needs. This observation is supported by a lamentation from one of the head teachers who stated "*the introduction of free basic education has left ordinary primary schools with scanty resources because schools only depend on a grant from government which usually comes late and in piece meal. Usually such money is used for administrative purposes".* The implication is that schools are not in the capacity to provide appropriate teaching and learning resources and as such teachers would prefer that such children (children with special needs) are not enrolled in ordinary primary schools but rather be taken to special schools. Meaning that, a large number of innocent children with special educational needs have been denied entry to grade one.

5.2. Optimal learning environments for children with special educational needs

Ready schools expect children to arrive at their doorsteps in varying stages of readiness. Ready schools are demanding, but they build into their organization and curriculum sufficient flexibility to respond to dramatic variations within a class, and to meet the changing needs of individual children over time. Ready schools have high expectations for children with special educational needs, just as they do for all children (UNICEF, 2012).

The curriculum should be inclusive of all learning modalities and developmental domains. This entails considering a curriculum that links child assessment to classroom planning. However, the current study revealed that the majority of ordinary primary schools that is 8 out of the 10 do not use neither assessment data nor developmental observations to plan curriculum. In fact it is important to note that there is no curriculum specially designed for children with special needs, it is incumbent upon the class teacher to adapt or augment the general school curriculum in order to make it responsive to the needs of children. But the majority of school teachers fail to do that because they lack training in special education though it may be argued that teaching children with special needs is incorporated in teacher training courses, such training is not sufficient enough to enable them adjust the curriculum in order to meet the needs of children with special educational needs. The implication is that children with special educational needs are subjected to a curriculum that is too loaded and inflexible, in such contexts children with special educational needs do not benefit fully from instruction offered in mainstream classes.

Similarly, special educators prefer that classroom materials (books, posters, figures etc) show/depict diverse images of children and adults with special needs engaged in typical life situations and community roles(Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000). The current study found out that such is not explicitly depicted in the curriculum for grade ones. In addition special educators have proposed that curriculum information for children with special needs must be presented in multiple formats including all sensory modalities. However, the current study revealed that much of curriculum

information is not presented in multiple formats in all the schools. It came out clearly that information is only presented by oral means (verbal communication) meaning that children with hearing impairments are disadvantaged and may not participate fully in the learning process.

The learning environment is an important factor to consider when assessing the readiness of schools for children with special educational needs (UNICEF, 2012). Children with special needs learn best in an environment that has been adapted to suit their needs. For example children with physical disabilities may require enough space in the classroom and outside for them to move freely and access all areas of the class and school surroundings. The current study however, revealed that 80% of the grade one classes does not have ample classroom space for children with special educational needs to access all areas freely. Lack of classroom space can be attributed to over enrolments with enrolments levels ranging from 50 to 100 pupils per grade one class.

The researcher observed throughout the study that some classes were large and overcrowded making it unconducive for pupils with disabilities. For instance, at one basic school, there were 98 pupils in one grade 1 class. Such overcrowding of classes is what Mandyata (2002) also reported to have caused some teachers in Kasama to refuse accepting children with special educational needs in their classes. It is hoped that if class sizes were minimal to acceptable standards, teachers would accept children with special educational needs in their classes.

The findings of the current study are consistent with studies on inclusive education in Zambia conducted by Kalabula (1991), Moberg and Kasonde Ng'andu (2001) and Mandyata (2002) who clearly indicated that most schools do not have facilities or resources conducive for inclusive education thereby excluding a lot of children with disabilities from accessing education in schools. Generally, the study has revealed that most of the ordinary primary schools in Luanshya district have learning environments that are not favourable for children with special educational needs to learn effectively and with less difficulty.

5.3. Nature of transition practices between home and ordinary primary schools for children with special educational needs

With regards to transition practices between home and school for incoming children, the current study revealed that ordinary primary schools in Luanshya district do actually plan transition activities for incoming children and their parents. However, it is important to note from the onset that such practices are not formalised or embedded in the school policy but rather remain an exception to every school. Research has highlighted several transition practices that can be planned by schools to smooth the transition process for incoming children and their parents (Pianta, 2003). Most common transition practices include home visits by teachers or head teachers before school starts, orientation sessions for incoming children and their parents and inviting parents and stakeholders to discuss the curriculum for grade one and possible challenges children are likely to encounter (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

The current study revealed that most of the ordinary primary schools in Luanshya district place much emphasis on planning orientation sessions for incoming children and their parents than home visits and or discussions about the curriculum as a way of smoothing transitions. The current findings are in line with the results of a survey conducted by Early, Pianta, Taylor, and Cox (2001) who reported that the most common types of transition practices are planned orientation programmes that usually occur after the beginning of the school year and are aimed at the class as a whole and those that are aimed at individual children and families are less common.

However, orientation sessions alone are not enough to enable children settle successfully in a primary school. Today, most young children with special educational needs experience some kind of out-of-home care before entering kindergarten, often beginning before their first birthdays. Only a few weeks or months separate the preschooler from the kindergartner. In that short span, children's developmental needs do not change radically, but the kindergarten classrooms in which they receive care and education may differ dramatically from the settings to which they have grown accustomed. Children with special educational needs often have difficulty adjusting to classrooms where the rules and routines, atmosphere, or philosophy differs

dramatically from those of their familiar child-care setting. In particular, children may find it difficult to adjust to a change in teachers' expectations and styles of interacting (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

Preschools or early childhood service is therefore, another key stakeholder in the transition process. Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) highlight that just as relationships between schools, parents and care givers provide a bridge between children's prior experiences and school, so too can relationships with early childhood services. Primary schools can help to ease the transition to kindergarten by forging links with the community, preschools, and all of the other settings where their kindergartners have spent their days, and by drawing on the best practices of early childhood centres.

It is however, sad to note that most of the ordinary schools in Luanshya district as revealed by the study do not contact preschools or any other setting where children have spent time. For instance one preschool teacher plainly lamented "*when preschoolers graduate they are no longer our responsibility, what happens there after matters less to us, we do not contact primary schools neither do primary schools contact us regarding continuity of programmes"*. Similarly head teachers confirmed that they do not contact preschools or child centres where children have spent time before entering primary school. The current findings are in contrast with the report of The American National Goals Panel (1998) which reported that creating continuity and maintaining learning expectations for all children between early learning or home and primary school environments is a defining characteristic of ready schools.

Clearly, the goal is not to replicate the child's preschool experience especially in light of the fact that quality is so elusive in many early care and education settings. But contact with previous caregivers can facilitate planning for individual students, provide a sense of continuity for children and parents, and allow a better alignment of philosophy, expectations, and curriculum across institutions and the community. For example, when early childhood services and schools work together to share information, they are better able to provide children with consistency and continuity, develop an understanding of children's prior learning and experiences, and create

programs that build on existing knowledge, needs, capabilities, experiences and skills base.

The vast majority of primary schools in Luanshya district have no formal policy governing activities aimed at strengthening continuity and easing transitions from early care and education programs. This could be because there are no structures in place for transition management. Similarly, it could be because of barriers associated with transition programmes as observed in the survey conducted by Early, Pianta, Taylor, & Cox, (2001) who reported that the major barriers to using transition practices, particularly those involving more individualized contact with families, preschools and children, included class size, the late dates at which teachers generally received lists of students who would be in their kindergarten classes, and the fact that contacting families before the start of school required summer (holiday) work not supported by teachers' salaries.

Transition periods represent times of potential challenge. While the transition to primary school is one of many transitions that children face in the course of their lives, starting school is one of the most challenging experiences in the early years (Reynolds, 2000) and is a particularly vulnerable time for children with special educational needs. As such special care or consideration of children with special educational needs is cardinal. However, the current study revealed that most primary schools do not provide special considerations for children with special needs during transition but would rather subject them to transition actives planned for their peers without disabilities.

5.4. Parental involvement in the education of children with special needs in grade one

Schools provide an ideal point for families to access information and support. As an established institution, schools provide an appropriate, non-stigmatising, and universal setting for supporting parenting. Furthermore, teachers, having high community visibility, respect and trust are often consulted by parents or care givers with child rearing concerns (Sanders, et al., 1999). Literature suggests that parental involvement

is likely to be greater in the early years of schooling (Izzo, et al., 1999) and is therefore an opportunity for schools to work with a larger number of parents and care givers providing information and activities that promote positive parenting practices and support children's mental health to smoothen the transition process.

The study revealed that more than half of the parents who constituted the study sample had basic and secondary education as the highest educational level attained. It can be inferred that there educational background made parents to be more reserved and reluctant to participate fully in education of their children. As such 64% of the parents sampled did not participate in school decision making or policy formulation procedures. The study also revealed that most ordinary primary schools in Luanshya district encourage parents to get involved in Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). However, only 62% of the parents sampled affirmed attending PTA meetings. Involving parents only in PTA meetings is not sufficient enough to warrant successful parental involvement because such meetings are only held once in a year and worse still mainly focus on the problems faced by the school and not the plight of children. This observation is supported by Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, (2003) who demonstrated in their research that effective schools need to go beyond traditional parent activities such as fundraising and parent-teacher conferences if they are to meaningfully involve parents in the education of their children.

A growing body of literature as highlighted by (Margetts, 2007, Rimm Kauffmann and Pianta 2004 and Wildengner and McIntyre 2010) refers to the importance of schools supporting parents and care givers in preparing and assisting children to adjust to formal schooling. This includes embedding parenting information into transition practices such as information about challenges children face and how parents and care givers can support their child. Better informed parents and caregivers are less likely to be stressed about their child's transition to school and therefore better able to support their children in adapting to a new school (Margetts, 2007). The current study revealed that only 50% of the schools consistently communicate with parents and the most commonly used type of communication is the use of notes (letters) to communicate with parents. The findings are consistent with Rimm Kauffmann and

Pianta's research conducted in (1999 and 2004) respectively who's results showed: Home visits, conversations during pick-up and drop-off, and phone calls were more common in preschool than kindergarten whereas notes(letters) were more typical in elementary (primary)schools.

Parental involvement in children's lives is important at all times but even more so as children begin the major transition into schools. Research shows that not only do parents want to know about academic and behavioural expectations for the incoming year (Wildengner and McIntyre 2010) but they also want to know what they can do to prepare their children for the transition and also participate in classroom activities. However, with regards to class participation, the current study revealed that 84% of the parents sampled plainly indicated that they did not participate in any classroom activities or are not invited to class by the class teachers. This could be attributed to the fact that most of the primary schools have no deliberate policy for parental involvement. This observation is supported by conclusions drawn by LaParo, Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) in their research whom observed that although families of all types of backgrounds are often involved in their children's preschool educational or child care programs, their involvement tends to decline when the children enter kindergarten.

However, Wildengner and McIntyre (2010) affirms that when schools prioritise and encourage the development of positive relationships with parents and caregivers during transition it has the potential to have long-term implications for family involvement in children's education which can have benefits for children both academically and socially. Thus schools should endeavour to develop policies that will translate into meaningful parental involvement. Effective engagement of parents is indeed possible when done purposefully. The researcher recommends that there should be clear communication from educators on academic expectations, school policies and resources is important, but parents must also have the opportunity to bring their perspectives to the table.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

6.0. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to assess ordinary primary schools' readiness to receive children with special educational needs in grade one. In assessing readiness, the study relied heavily on the concept of 'school readiness' particularly the dimension of 'ready schools'. To that end the following parameters have been discussed: Teacher readiness to receive children with special educational needs; Optimal learning environments for children with special educational needs in grade one; Nature of transition practices employed by schools to bridge the gap between home and school and Community and parental involvement in the education of children with special needs. The following conclusions have been drawn:

The study has concluded that ordinary primary schools in Luanshya district are not ready to receive children with special educational needs in grade one. As with teacher readiness, the study has concluded that more than half of the teachers representing 68% of all the teachers teaching lower grades in Luanshya district are not ready to receive children with special educational needs in grade one. This could be attributed to lack of sufficient training in teaching children with special educational needs, lack of teaching and learning resources and generally reluctance to take up the challenge of teaching children with special educational needs.

The study has also concluded that schools fail to provide optimal learning environments to children with special educational needs in grade one in that the present curriculum offered to grade one children in ordinary schools is not responsive to the needs of children with special educational needs. The curriculum is overloaded and inflexible. Similarly most schools lack appropriate teaching and learning materials and have unconducive learning environments which all hinder full participation of children with special educational needs in the learning process.

The study has also concluded that despite research showing the importance of transition activities, transition activities remain the exception rather than the rule in our ordinary primary schools. According to the current study, more than half of the ordinary primary schools in Luanshya district have no formal transition programmes for incoming grade one children. Of the few schools that plan transition activities for incoming children, much emphasis is placed on organising orientation sessions for incoming children and parents at the expense of other transition activities. Thus orientation sessions for parents and incoming children describe the nature of transition activities employed by ordinary schools in Luanshya district.

Regarding parental or community involvement, the study has concluded that besides attending Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, 52% representing more than half of the entire population of parents of children with special educational needs in grade one are not involved in the education of their children. This is because schools do not involve them in the formulation of policy or school decisions, they are not invited to participate in classroom activities and schools do not engage into consistent home to school communication. Thus it is true to say, parents are involved to a lesser extent in the education of their children with special educational needs.

The study therefore, calls for action in school readiness as a path to meeting the international education targets in a timely and sustained manner. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011 estimates that, given current trends, nearly 72 million children will remain out of school in 2015. School readiness has the capacity to prepare children for school, prepare schools for children, and prepare families for this experience, thereby promoting enrolment, sustaining attendance in school and increasing retention rates, key facets of the education goals.

6.1.   Recommendations to:

The Government through the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational and Early Education (MoESVEE).

1. Very little information is available on children's outcomes in the early years. The health sector has long measured child survival using two points (Infant mortality rate and Child mortality rate). It may be useful for the education sector to establish similar indicators of primary school survival for children with special needs in ordinary schools. This would involve having data not only on school completion rates but also on grade one survival. Data would need to be collected regularly on promotion rates between grade one and two as well as drop outs and repetition rates.

2. Schools should be provided with extra learning and teaching material for children with special educational needs, teachers receive training in teaching children with special educational needs and schools be supported to enhance active involvement of parents and communities.

3. There is need to come up with more and better Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes which should ensure that most disadvantaged children are reached

4. Inclusive education initiatives need to be given priority in national "Education for All" efforts and other school improvement programs since they can result in gains for all students, children with disabilities and their non-disabled peers.

School administrators

Schools can work throughout the year to narrow the gap between the culture of the home and the culture of the school and smooth the transitions between home and school by:

1. Giving families and children an opportunity to visit the school and meet teachers and school administrators prior to the first day of school to discuss possible challenges and requirements.

2. Schools should devise a method for learning about incoming children's background, talents, needs and interests, such as structured intake process, home visits, parent conferences or any other "getting acquainted" activities.

3. The school should develop better links, coordination, cooperation and understanding between ECD programmes and the primary school system to ensure continuity of programmes.

4. Schools should effectively accommodate the language culture and special needs of the children it serves.

5. Schools should routinely monitor student success for learners with special needs, alter practices and programmes that are not effective and provide supportive interventions.

6. Effective engagement of parents is indeed possible when done purposefully. The researcher recommends that there should be clear communication from educators on academic expectations, school policies and resources is important, but parents must also have the opportunity to bring their perspectives to the table.

6.2. Areas of future research

Little is presently known about the characteristics of ready schools in low-resource and developing countries where the issues of schooling are dissimilar to developed countries. There is need to gather research evidence and draw out best practices from programmes around the world which successfully enhance children's readiness for school, schools readiness for children and the transition process.

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Appendices

<u>Ready School Assessment Questionnaire</u>

Serial No……………………..

Dear Respondent,

I am a student doing my Masters Degree at the University of Zambia, Great East Road Campus. You have been selected to participate in the research. Please, be rest assured that the information which you will provide will be treated as confidential and for academic ⬚√ purposes only. Please Tick in the box.

And fill in the blanks where necessary.

Date of Interview_____

Appendix one

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEAD TEACHERS

School is_____ Urban_____ Rural_____ Suburban

Total school enrolment for grade one is_____ Number or grade one classes_____

Number of pupils per grade one class_____

Total number of children with Special Educational Needs (CSEN) in grade one classes _____

Academic qualification

Qualification	Tick
Certificate	
Diploma	
Degree	
Any other (specify)	

1. Are you aware of the target for Education for all by 2015? Yes [   ]   [   ]
2. Are you aware of the target of universal access to primary education by 2015?
   Yes [   ] No [   ]
3. In line with the above targets does your school enrol children with special educational needs in grade one? Yes [   ] No [   ]
4. Before school starts for grade ones, does your school plan and coordinate transition practices for incoming children? Yes [   ]o [   ]ometimes [   ]
5. If the answer to question 4 is yes, please specify the types/nature of transition practices_____
   _____
6. Parents of incoming children are informed about registration for children entering grade one, by multiple means if necessary 1- 3 months before school starts? Yes [   ] No [   ]ometimes [   ]

7. Please specify the means by which parents are informed _____

_____

_____

8. Incoming children are reregistered at school   1 month before   [ ]

2 weeks before   [ ]

First week of opening   [ ]

9. Are children with special educational needs given special consideration during transition from home to school? Yes [ ] o [ ] netimes [ ]

10. What consideration is given _____

_____

11. The school communicates with preschool or childcare to obtain information about incoming children and their family settings. Yes [ ] No [ ] Sometimes [ ]

12. If your answer to question 11 is yes, please specify the type of information obtained_____

_____

13. For parents of incoming children, the school holds orientation sessions at school prior to the first day? Yes [ ] o [ ] netimes [ ]

14. Families of incoming children are sent welcoming materials (e.g. individualized letters, lists if probable supply and clothing needs) before school starts? Yes [ ] o [ ] ometimes [ ]

15. Please specify the welcoming materials sent to parents _____

_____

16. Do parents participate in making school policy and decisions? Yes [ ] No [ ]

17. How would you rate the participation of parents in the education of children with special educational needs in grade one?

Very active [ ]   Inactive [ ] ery inactive [ ]

18. Would   you   specify   the   activities   that   parents   involve   in

_____

_____

_____

19. Does your school have enough teaching capacity to handle grade one? Yes [ ]

    No [ ]

20. Does your staff teaching grade one have a background of teaching children with special educational needs? Yes [ ] one [ ] me have [ ]

21. Are teachers teaching grade ones capable of teaching children with special educational needs in their class? Yes [ ] No [ ]

22. In your own words explain the readiness of your school to receive children with Special educational needs in grade one.

    _____

    _____

    _____

Appendix two

<u>Curriculum checklist</u>

	Question	Response	Official Use Only
01	Does the school use a social skills curriculum that emphasizes kindness, empathy and play skills?	Yes ☐ No ☐	☐
02	Do classroom materials (books, posters, dolls, figures) show positive and diverse images of children and adults with disabilities engaged in typical life situations and community roles?	Yes ☐ No ☐	☐
03	Does the classroom library have a variety and range of books suitable for different developmental domains/abilities?	Yes ☐ No ☐	☐
04	Is information presented in multiple formats i,e. pictures, symbols and words to communicate with children with special educational needs?	Yes ☐ No ☐	☐
05	Does the curriculum include all sensory modalities-visual, auditory and kinaesthetic?	yes ☐ No ☐	☐
06	Do teachers individualize teaching and use opportunities for repetition for children with special educational needs who may need more time or experiences to learn?	yes ☐ No ☐	☐
07	Do teachers offer individualized support so that all children learn how to play and learn together in class and beyond?	yes ☐ No ☐	☐
08	Do teachers plan and support peer interaction between children with special educational needs and their peers without special needs?	yes ☐ No ☐	☐

09	Do teachers offer individualized remedial work for children with special educational needs?	yes ☐ No ☐	☐
10	Do teachers use developmental observations (assessment) observations to collect information, and do they use the information to plan the curriculum for children with special educational needs?	yes ☐ No ☐	☐
11	Hoe effective/appropriate is the curriculum offered to learners with special educational needs in grade one	Very appropriate ☐ Appropriate ☐ Inappropriate ☐ Very inappropriate ☐	☐

Appendix three

<u>School Environment Checklist</u>

	Question	Response	Official Use Only
01	Classrooms are free of safety and health hazards.	Yes ☐ No ☐	☐
02	Ample classroom space permits children with special educational needs to move play and work freely.	Yes ☐ No ☐	☐
03	Are all areas of the classroom accessible to all children including those with special educational needs?	Yes ☐ No ☐	☐
04	Does the learning environment address all sensory modalities, visual auditory and kinaesthetic?	Yes ☐ No ☐	☐
05	Classroom atmosphere is predominantly positive (e.g. respectful, relaxed and happy)	yes ☐ No ☐	☐
06	Are all areas of outdoor play accessible to children with special educational needs?	yes ☐ No ☐	☐
07	Classrooms use a balance of group sizes, individual, small group, and whole group activities?	yes ☐ No ☐	☐
08	How favourable/prepared is the classroom environment for learners with special educational needs?	very favorable ☐ favorable ☐ unfavorable ☐ very unfavarable ☐	☐

Appendix four

<u>Questionnaire for parents</u>

Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

   Occupation_____

  Highest education attained_____

1. For your children entering grade one, did the school inform you about registration by multiple means 1-3 months before school starts? Yes ☐ No ☐

2. Does the school hold orientation sessions for parents/families of incoming grade one children prior to the first day? Yes ☐ o ☐

3. Did the school send you welcome materials (e.g. individualized letters, lists of probable supply and clothing needs) before school starts? Yes ☐ No ☐

4. If the answer to question 3 is yes, please specify the materials that were senttoyou_____

_____

5. Do you participate in school decision making? Yes ☐ ☐

6. Do you participate in forming school policy? Yes ☐ ☐

7. Are you involved in school events and activities like PTA, fundraising committee e.t.c? Yes ☐ o ☐ metimes ☐

8. Do teachers allow, welcome you and involve you to participate in classroom activities at all times of the day? Yes ☐ o ☐ metimes ☐

9. P.T.A meetings focus on child's strengths, setting goals and building a team rather than dealing with problems? Focus on child ☐ Focus on problems ☐

10. Do teachers consistently and effectively utilize multiple methods of school to home communication to provide families with ongoing information about school programs or about children's' problems (e.g. newsletters, notes, telephone calls and home visits)? Yes ☐ No ☐ metimes ☐

11. Please specify the method of communication between school and home_____

_____

12. Special consideration is given to parents that do not speak English and a system is put in place to provide families with opportunities to engage in school-to- home and home-to-school communication? Yes ☐ o ☐

13. If the answer to question 12 is yes, please specify the considerations that the school has put in place_____

_____

14. Does the school promote community linkages by making and following up on appropriate referrals of children and families to social services and health agencies? Yes ☐ o ☐

15. How would rate the schools' involvement of parents in the education of their children in grade one? Very involved ☐ Involved ☐ Not very involved ☐ Not involved ☐

Thank you

Appendix five

Questionnaire for Teachers

Sex: Male_____ Female_____

Academic qualification

Qualification	Tick
Certificate	
Diploma	
Degree	
Any other (specify)	

Number of pupils your class_____

Total number of children with Special Educational Needs (CSEN) in your class
_____

1. Did you undergo any training in for teaching children with special educational needs? Yes [   ] No [   ]

2. If yes, how were you trained? As a topic in a course? [   ] Or as a full course? [   ]

3. Was the training adequate to handle children with special educational needs? Yes [   ] No [   ]

4. For how long have you been teaching? Less than one year [   ] Between one and three years [   ] Between three and five years [   ] Over five years [   ]

5. What criteria do you use to assess children with special educational needs?

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. How often do you offer extra help to children with special educational needs in your classroom? Often [   ] ery often [   ] ot at all [   ]

7. Is the time allocated in class adequate to meet the needs of children with special educational needs? Is the time allocated in class adequate to meet the needs of children with special educational needs? Yes [   ] o [   ]

8. Do you have enough materials for teaching children with special educational needs in your class? Yes [   ] No [   ]

9. In your own personal rating, how ready do you think you are to teach children with special educational needs in grade one?   Very ready [   ] Ready [   ] Not Ready [   ]

10. Do you have detailed information about incoming children with special educational needs so that you know the children and their family settings? Yes [   ] No [   ]

11. Records for children with special educational needs from preschool or hospital are transferred to grade one teachers? Yes [   ] No [   ]

12. How do you help children with special educational needs settle in an ordinary school?_____

_____

_____

13. Do you allow, welcome and involve families (parents) to participate in classroom activities at all times of the day? Yes [   ] No [   ] Sometimes [   ]

14. If the answer to question 13 is yes, please specify the activities in which parentsparticipatein_____

_____

15. Do you consistently and effectively utilize multiple methods of school to home communication to provide families with ongoing information about school programs or about children's problems? Yes [   ] No [   ] Sometimes [   ]

16. Specify the methods you use to communicate with families/parents

_____

_____

17. Would you welcome suggestions from parents on the education of their children? Yes [   ] No [   ]

18. Special consideration is given to parents that do not speak English and a system is put in place to provide them with opportunities to engage in home to school communication? Yes [   ] No [   ] Sometimes [   ]

19. Specify the system that you have put in place to communicate with parents who do not speak English _____

Appendix six

1. Are you aware of the Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Universal Primary Education targets by 2015?
2. In line with the above policies and or targets, does your school enrol children with special educational needs in grade one?
3. Do you have any structures or policies put in place at your school for management of the transition process for children with special educational needs
4. In your own opinion, do you think your school is ready to receive children with special educational needs in grade one?
5. Does your school coordinate or cooperate with preschools or Early Development Centres (ECD) for purposes of continuity of programmes?

Appendix seven

<u>**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS**</u>

1. Do you enrol children with special educational needs at your school?
2. Are parents involved in the education of their children with special educational needs?
3. Does your school coordinate or cooperate with primary schools to smoothen the transition process children with special education needs have to make from preschool to primary school?