

***Teachers' Situational Analysis of the Integration of Pupils  
With Disability in Selected Primary Schools in Zambia***

**By**

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**Abstract**

*In this article, we report the findings of a study undertaken to determine the extent to which students with disabilities have been integrated into school practices in selected primary schools in Zambia. The sample comprised of 28 specialist teachers, 30 regular teachers and 10 head-teachers. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used. Quantitative data were collected through self-administered questionnaires while qualitative data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and document review. Findings revealed that there was a government policy on the integration of pupils with disabilities into the mainstream. Findings*

*also revealed that specialist and regular teachers as well as headteachers were aware of this policy on the integration and supported it. The paper discusses major practical challenges being faced by the government in its attempt to translate policy into practice which have hindered meaningful and fruitful realisation of the advocacy for integration of children with disability into the mainstream of education. These challenges include inappropriate infrastructure, unsuitable materials and insufficiently qualified personnel,*

**Keywords:** Disability, integration, specialist teachers, regular teachers, special education needs.

## **Introduction**

Historically, disability has been viewed almost exclusively from medical and psychological perspectives (Drame & Kamphoff, 2014; McCloskey, 2010). Consequently, disability has been defined in terms of functional deficiencies and the discipline of medicine responded by trying to cure disabled people (Purkey, 1990). An individual and tragic view of disability has tended to dominate both social interactions and social policies (World Health Organisation, 2011). Issues of people with disability have been marginalised and categorised as ‘special’ or ‘different’, and the concept of ‘integration’ has been based on changing the individual to conform to society, rather than promoting social change that liberates, empowers and incorporates the experiences of people with disability (Freeman & Sugai, 2014, National Disability Rights Network, 2009). The term ‘disability’ is now used by many people with disability to represent a complex system of social restrictions imposed on people with impairments by a highly discriminatory society. Disability, therefore, is a concept

distinct from any particular medical condition (Waddington & Reed, 2006). It is a social construct that varies across culture and through time, in the same way as, for example, gender, class or caste. Merriam Webster Dictionary (2017:28) defines disability as ‘a physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person’s ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions’. In Zambia, the Persons with Disability Act of 2012 states that a person with disability is ‘a person with a permanent physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder that person to fully and effectively participate in society on an equal basis with others,’ (Ministry of Justice, 2012: 72).

Arising from the global picture on the plight of persons with disability, disability has increasingly become a major source of concern for both the government and communities in Zambia. In line with the current education policy, integration of learners with disability in the school system in Zambia started way back in the early 1970s as a follow up to the 1971 Presidential decree which led to government’s active involvement in the education of people with disability. The government’s role and responsibilities became more pronounced in the *1977 Education Reforms*, the *1992 Focus on Learning and implementation* under the 1996 Education policy–*Educating Our Future: National Policy on Education* (Ministry of Education, 1977; 1992; 1996). *The 1996 Education Policy* emphasised on the integration of children with disability in the mainstream of education as opposed to a segregative education. This is in response to various international conventions to which Zambia appended her signature such as the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and the United Nations 1994 *Standard Rules on Equalisation* of opportunities for persons with disability (United

Nations, 1994) and the resolutions of the 1994 Salamanca World Conference on Special Education which centred on an integrative approach to the education of people with disabilities in the world society (UNESCO, 1994).

With increasing poverty levels in Zambia, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has argued that the problem of disability in both rural and urban areas has created immense suffering among persons with disability (ILO, 1998). The ILO report has singled out inaccessibility to education and training as one of the serious contributors to poverty and a barrier to a high quality of life among persons with disability in Zambia. In a study targeted at tertiary institutions of learning under the Technical Education and Vocational Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA), Kalabula, Mandyata and Chinombwe (2006), established the need to make education and training more accessible to persons with disabilities in order to minimise poverty among such individuals and families in the communities. Kalabula *et al.* (2006), called for a collective effort to improve the socio-economic status of individuals living with disability for them to live a meaningful life.

According to Jones (2014) and Freeman & Sugai (2014) there has not yet been a great deal of research regarding the attitudes of practitioners towards integration in primary school education. Even in Zambia, the extent to which students with disabilities have been integrated into school practices in primary schools in Zambia, continues to be rather speculative. The current study was, therefore, aimed at determining the extent to which pupils with disability had been integrated in selected primary schools in Lusaka and Kabwe districts in Zambia. Specifically, the research questions sought to address what the perceptions of teachers on the integration of pupils with disability were; what the impact of integrating pupils with disabilities on school practices was and what the obstacles to integration of pupils with disabilities in

school practices were.

### **Perceptions Towards Integration**

The issue of integration has raised a lot of debate amongst the specialists and people in educational administration. Some specialist and regular teachers are in support of integration while others are in support of exclusion of children with disability meaning that children with disability should learn on their own (Foley, 2016, Mandyata, 2015). However, most specialist teachers in many cases are against the integration of pupils in regular schools and classrooms because of disability unfriendly school infrastructure; ill-preparedness of teachers for integration and limited learning resources and services to support such children (Drama & Kamphoff, 2014; Mandyata, 2011). Further, the attitudes of the regular teachers towards the people with disabilities is also an issue which has prompted a lot of debate on whether the pupils with disabilities should be in regular or in 'segregative' schools and classrooms (Nishimura & Busse, 2016).

Although the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), the International Conventions on Civil and Political Rights, and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Conventions Outlawing Discrimination on the Grounds of Race (1965) and Against Women (1979) do not specifically target people with disabilities, clauses stipulating that they include 'all people' without exception imply that people with disabilities are included in all spheres of life including education and training. These documents, nevertheless, have rarely been used to support the rights of people with disabilities because of the traditional view of people with disabilities as objects of welfare and service provision, rather than people whose rights need to be defined and upheld in all human societies in the world.

In 1971, the United Nations recognised the rights of

mentally retarded persons in a Declaration, which was followed in 1975 by a Declaration on the rights of all disabled persons. These Declarations were the first international documents to specifically acknowledge that disability is a human rights issue. The United Nations then recognised that there had to be a considerable advance in awareness to ensure that these newly defined rights were assured. The United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons of 1981 was therefore, the first effort to focus on issues of disability in the society worldwide with an emphasis on establishing ways and means of integrating persons with disabilities in the mainstream of the society. The objective of the United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons of 1981 was the ‘full and equal participation of disabled persons in society’, which was repeated in the 1982 World Programme of Action (WPA) concerning Disabled Persons giving member states recommendations on how to implement the right to full and equal participation of the persons with disabilities in the mainstream society programme and activities including those leaning on education and training.

Reflecting on this assessment of disability as a human rights issue, the United Nations General Assembly in October 1992, declared that 3<sup>rd</sup> December each year would be the International Day of Disabled Persons. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights passed a resolution appealing to member states to observe the Day, declaring its objective to be ‘the achievement of the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society’ by people with disabilities. The Third Committee of the General Assembly later adopted the *United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* on 28 October 1994; International classification functioning, disability and health (WHO, 2011) have all seen integration as the right way to go in the creation of an integrative global

society and education as a means of creating a more integrative human society. The view is supported by the International Bill of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the World Programme of Action, from the political and moral foundation of the *Standard Rules* through which the philosophy of integration in education and training is founded.

Mpofu & Harley, (2007) argue that the recommendations of the United Nations over the years have called for the equalisation of opportunities and a focus on mainstreaming disability and an aspect of human rights during the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons which recognised integration as a vehicle and indeed an issue of social change. The study further argues that changes in legislation as an indication of increasing policy awareness on disability is a human rights issue. Integration has been seen as a means through which to provide for persons with disabilities within the mainstream of society (WHO, 2011). It is equally important to note here, that people with disabilities will not be assimilated into their societies through the *goodwill* of the powerful but through provision of quality education and training during their tender years. People with disabilities will change society through their increased participation, their skills, experience and insights. But this will happen only when they are equipped with necessary education and training built on the philosophy of integration for them to function effectively in the wider human society (ILO, UNESCO, WHO, 2004).

As we might all know by now, a teacher is one of the most important people in the educational life of any pupil. Apart from parents, the teacher constitutes the second strongest influence on a student's life. His/her attitudes and opinions regarding the education of pupils have a significant influence on their success

in a school setting.

A synthesis of research literature by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) which dated back to 1958 indicated that approximately, two-thirds of the 10,560 general educators surveyed across the years agreed in principle with the concept of integration in the education of students with disabilities. The general educators' degree of enthusiasm on integration however, decreases depending on the extent of disablement of the child. However, when the concept is personally referenced for example, 'Are you willing to teach students with disability in your classroom?' (Bragiel, 2016), the majority of educators in the mainstream of education decline to commit themselves to an integrative approach for various reasons. In fact, support decreases even further when questions address teacher's willingness to make curriculum modifications for identified needy students. The teachers felt ill-prepared for intergrative school practice hence their unwillingness to support policy implementation in the school system (Manda, 2013).

Kasonde-Ng'andu and Moberg (2001) in their study found that, 67 per cent of their respondents felt that the best place for the handicapped is separate provision in special schools, because in a separate school the children are free from being laughed at, stared at or teased by the 'normal' children. They however, found that 33 per cent of the participants thought that the best learning environment was in regular schools. The reason was that, children with disabilities are not made to feel different from the 'normal'. The children feel accepted and part of the able bodied children as they learn side by side and help each other in class.

### **Impact of Integration**

The way that society is constructed - the characteristics of a particular built environment and the dominant attitudes and expectations of a people - can lead to restrictions on certain



groups which deny them equal opportunity to participate in all areas of life. This occurs either through conscious discrimination or because society has not adapted to those groups' needs. The World Health Organisation (2011: 238) through the World Report on Disability reports that 'persons with disabilities experience worse socio-economic outcomes and poverty than persons without disabilities.' It is because of this that the World Health Organisation (2011: 239) in its World Report on Disability reports that disability is increasingly a human rights issue because 'people with disabilities experience inequalities, for example, when they are denied equal access to health care, employment, education, or political participation because of their disability.'

However, it must be noted that the different physical, sensory and intellectual capacities of some groups do not *necessarily* lead to social exclusion. For example, people who are colour blind are not excluded because, on the whole, societies are not ordered and regulated by colour recognition Ainscow, Dyson, Goldricks & West, 2012). Also, while people who are left-handed still face problems because most objects in society were designed for use by people who are right-handed, social attitudes to left-handed people have changed and they are no longer at risk of being burnt to death as witches, as they were in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe, or forced to try to write with their right hands - a common practice in many parts of the world until recent decades (Payne, 2005).

Nonetheless, people with disability and their experiences in fact, have been largely ignored in such places as academic circles (Drame & Kamphoff, 2014). In recent years, many public and private sector bodies have gradually realised that their work, practices and policies fall far short of fulfilling the needs, rights and aspirations of people with disabilities who are their clients, customers and co-workers and that, in order to change this situation, they need to turn to people with disabilities for education and guidance. From this realisation has grown the demand for

Disability Equality Training (DET), which aims at helping people to understand the meaning of disability, to identify changes in work practice, and plan strategies to implement change. Education and training have been seen, therefore, as vehicles of developing an inclusive society world-wide (Chilufya, 2005).

Despite important advances at international level, and a huge change in attitudes towards people with disabilities in some countries, the situation for the vast majority of the world's people with disabilities especially for those living in developing countries, remains bleak (Freeman & Sugai, 2014). In the early 1990s, the United Nations reported the miserable circumstances of the majority of people including those with disabilities (United Nations, 1994). It is from such thoughts at global level that we see a great breadth and complexity of the understanding of disability. As a result, the WHO (2011) broadens the of perception of disability and rehabilitation beyond the scope of education to include health or biological functions or physical environment individuals finds themselves in as well as the attitude people such as teachers, employers have towards the integration of disability in the mainstream of human society.

### **Obstacles/Barriers to Integration**

It is worth noting that many educators agree that the idea of integration is good but they seem not to be ready to have the students in their classrooms due to their limited skills and experience to handle children with disabilities together with the normal children. This agrees with Manda (2013) who found that Zambian teachers encountered huge challenges handling children with disabilities. Further, in his study, Chilufya (2005) found that when regular teachers were asked if they could teach in a class that had children with disabilities if the class teacher fell ill, the

teachers said they would not do so because they did not have the right training or experience to enable them do so irrespective of the age of the children with disabilities integrated in their classrooms.

The move to improve the lives of people living with disabilities through education and training in the society faces numerous challenges including: insufficient physical infrastructure and teaching/learning resources to meet the learning needs of children with disabilities in schools practicing integration (Mandyata, 2011; National Disability Rights Network, 2009). Further, lack of regulations and policies that are centred on initiatives that are directed at increasing accessibility to education and training, continue to limit participation of children with disabilities in the mainstream of education.

Realising the problem of access to education among children with disabilities, the Ministry of Education with the support of donors such as the Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI), the Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA), the Danish International Development Agency (DANNIDA) and the Royal Netherlands on the one hand, and communities on the other hand, have teamed up to support school improvement initiatives with a view to making regular schools accessible to learners with disability. This paradigm shift in the education of children with disabilities has been supported by the 1996 Education Policy, the Education Act of 2011 which has called for the provision of education and training of persons with disabilities where possible through the mainstream of education and training (MoE, 1996).

In an attempt to create school communities which were more sensitive to children with and without disabilities in primary schools, authorities have been working towards creating more integrative schools in Zambia. The Ministry of Education with

support from donors, parents and local communities has been making efforts to create more responsive and accommodative learning environments in primary schools. This has been with the aim of increasing access to education, promoting equalisation of educational opportunities and improving the quality of education provided to all children with disability in Zambia. The move has led to rapid increase in enrolment of children with disability in mainstream primary and secondary school education (MoE, 2013; 2014;).

## **Methods**

This section discusses the research methodology that was used in the current study. A descriptive survey design was used. This design was chosen because it allowed for the collection of in-depth data and its description relative to such issues as, values, attitudes, beliefs and characteristics (Cresswell, 2009). In this study, therefore, efforts to contribute towards understanding the perceptions of teacher and head teachers about integrating pupils with disabilities into mainstream schooling were undertaken by means of a qualitative methodology. The approach helped to provide in-depth insight into and understanding of the educators' perceptions (Merriam, 2009). This enabled us to explore how the participants viewed and interpreted their own experiences and what values they attached to their world as it related to the issue of inclusive schooling. This uncovered the different meanings they may have attached to the issue of integration (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

**Table 1: Profile of Participants**

<i>1</i>	Gender	<i>Specialist Teachers</i>		<i>Regular Teachers</i>		<i>Head teachers</i>	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
		10	22	5	23	8	2
<i>2</i>	Location	Low density		Medium density		High density	
		21		22		27	
<i>2</i>	<i>Age</i>	25 years & below	25-30 years	31- 35 years	36-40 years	41- 45 years	45 years & above
		1	3	19	17	12	9
<i>3</i>	Nature of school	Government		Grant-Aided		Private	
		49		5		1	
<i>4</i>	Teaching Experience	5 years & below		6-10 years		10 years & above	
		18		24		28	

In relation to the demographic characteristics of participants, there were more female participants (47) than male participants (23) in the present study. With regard to the location from which participants were drawn, most of them (27) came from high density areas while a minority of the participants were from low density areas. It was also evident from the findings that the majority of the participants (19) were those aged between 31-35 years while the least were those aged 25 and below. The majority of the participants were from public (government) owned schools while a minority of them came from private schools.

Purposive sampling was employed to choose the special education teachers and school head teachers while simple random sampling was used to pick regular class teachers. Thirty specialist teachers, thirty regular teachers, and ten head teachers drawn from ten schools practising integrative education in Lusaka and Kabwe towns made up the sample. All the respondents participated voluntarily in their individual capacities. The schools were located in areas deemed representative of the different socio-economic statuses in the study cites. Nine of the ten schools sampled were government-run schools while one was a grant-aided school, run by a church with government support.

A mixed methods approach was used to collect data. Quantitative method included two self-administered questionnaires that comprised both qualitative and quantitative questions. One was administered to specialist teachers and the other to regular teachers. The researchers used instruments that they had themselves designed for all the groups of participants. In order to get as much qualitative information as possible about the participants' perceptions, the researchers used semi-structured interviews with the ten head teachers and focus group discussions with the specialist and regular teachers. The interview guide was developed before conducting the interviews as it is seen to be an important tool when it comes to being sure that the same categories of information are obtained from a number of participants about the phenomenon being studied.

Interviews and focus group discussions consisted of oral questions asked by the interviewer and oral responses made by the research participants. The entire interview/ focus group discussions were tape-recorded (in English as all the participants were versatile in the English language) and later transcribed by the researchers. Each entire interview/focus group discussion was

played over and over again and transferred onto a written text for coding and analysis. As a result, during the interview process/ focus group discussions, the researcher was able to probe further as well as to counter-check some of the major and interesting issues arising from the responses. In doing so, the researchers were able to obtain opinions and attitudes as well as beliefs of the participants through interacting with them. Each interview/ focus group discussions focussed mainly on four aspects, namely, the participants' perceptions on integration, integration and its perceived impact, obstacles to integration and curriculum modification and implementation. The interview lasted around 30 minutes each while the focus group discussion took about 50 minutes each.

In addition, this study made use of qualitative document review which was conducted on documents relating to the integration of pupils with disabilities in the school system. These secondary sources provided further insight and a useful check on information generated from semi-structured interviews and self-administered questionnaires. All this information became important during the data analysis stage (Bryman, 2004). The documents analysed consisted largely of the Ministry of General Education policy documents. Triangulation of different data sources was important in collecting qualitative data as it helped in comparing and contrasting information from different sources (Creswell, 2007). In terms of data analysis, quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical

Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. computer programme for windows, to obtain descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages that were then presented in the form of tables and charts.

Qualitative data from both the self-administered questionnaires and the interviews with head teachers were analysed using generic format. The researchers collected qualitative data, transcribed all

the interviews, and then proceeded to analyse the information to come up with a number of codes, themes and patterns and accordingly reported the most salient (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative data was analysed through grouping and coding of themes emerging from the study as well as qualitative document analysis which was done through the reduction of data to come up with patterns of data. For example, when data was collected about the perceptions towards integrating pupils with disability into mainstream education, a female regular teacher explained about how mixing ‘normal’ pupils with pupils with disability slowed down the progress of ‘normal’ learners in class. A male head teacher pointed to the fact that integrating pupils with disability with ‘normal’ pupils was wasting the time of pupils with disability as they learnt nothing. These two views were suggestive of negative perceptions towards integration which was then listed and discussed as a category.

Data from different schools was processed until no new categories emerged, thereby pointing to data saturation. We were already able to see from this stage that certain concepts suggested similarities whilst others suggested contradictions. Having identified these, the researchers interpreted them and then proceeded to attach meanings to the categories. The analysis of interview transcripts was accompanied by document analysis, observations and literature review. The literature provided insight into how certain categories could be interpreted. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed before analysis.

## **Results and Discussion**

As the findings generated from the questionnaires and focus group discussion of both the specialist and regular teachers were largely confirmed by the data collected through interviews with the head-teachers, the data has been discussed in an integrated and thematic way. This data has been presented according to the



following themes: perceptions towards integration, integration and its perceived impact, obstacles to integration and suggested curriculum modification and implementation

### ***Awareness of Government Policy on Integration***

The majority of head teachers and teachers, both regular and specialist, were aware of the Ministry of General Education national policy on integration of learners with disability in regular schools. The majority (08) of the headteachers, twenty eight (28) of the specialist teachers and fifteen (15) of the regular teachers professed to knowing about the educational policy on the integration of learners with disabilities in regular schools. This was clearly captured in the following statement by one of the head teachers:

*'We are aware about the policy but not sure how to best implement it in our school.'* (Female Head Teacher).

From the excerpt above, it is evident that teachers and head-teachers were quite aware of the existence of a policy on the integration of children with disabilities in the school system although they were mindful of the barriers such as ill-preparedness of teachers and limited resources to make all children benefit from such an education setting. The above findings were in agreement with those of Chilufya (2005) and Mandyata (2011) whose studies showed that regular teachers felt incompetent to teach in a class of learners with diverse learning skills and instead supported segregated education for learners with disability. Most teacher-participants believed that they did not possess sufficient teaching skills despite their awareness of the policy on integration for them to teaching in integrative schools.

In addition, the data revealed that head teachers, specialist and regular teachers used a variety of methods and sources to classify children with disabilities in schools. These included assessment records and observations. Besides teachers and head

teachers, the data revealed noticeable levels of involvement in promoting of integration of children with disability in the regular school by local church, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), charitable organisations and social welfare workers among others. The role of the NGOs in promoting integration is demonstrated in the following quote:

*‘We receive specialised equipment (like wheel chairs, braille writers) and support services for children in integrative classes not from government but charitable organisations such Lions’ and Rotary International Clubs.’* (Female Head Teacher).

### ***Positive Perceptions on Integration***

Apart from being aware of the government policy on the integration of regular and learners with disability in the school, the majority of the head teachers (07), thirteen (13) specialist teachers and fourteen of the regular teachers supported integration. This was demonstrated in such statements as indicated below:

*‘It is a good move as it allows children to learn to live together with those who are different from them.’* (Male Regular Teacher)

*‘In our school, issues of disability have been included in both class and out of class curriculum. The disabled are made to participate freely in all.’* (Male-Head Teacher).

Arising from the above excerpts, it was clear that regardless of the teachers’ and head teachers’ professional orientation, integration was perceived to have the potential of contributing to positive social acceptance of persons with a disability not only in a school setting but in the community. Based on the above, outcome benefits of integrative education are obvious. Teachers perceive

integrative education as the most effective means of fighting negative attitudes; developing a proactive integrative society and surest way of achieving Millennium goals on education. Jones (2014) and Freeman & Sugai (2014) observe that learning outcomes of both children with and without disability are better in an integrative school setup; staff satisfaction is greater; provide better learning opportunities for all and help to improve communication among learners with diverse learning needs in the schools.

However, it is necessary to note that such benefits do not come about without a good deal of hard work involving various stakeholders such as teachers and head teachers and their knowledge of integration is necessary for integration to succeed as one special education teacher observed:

*‘Hearing impaired learners can get extra information and help from their non-disabled friends in an integrative school set up unless in a separate school where they have to depend on themselves.’* (Male Special Education Teacher).

### ***Negative Perceptions on Integration***

However, although there was awareness of and support for the Ministry of General Education policy and guidelines on the integration of learners with disability in regular schools among head teachers and teachers, issues of integrating children with disabilities were rarely raised or discussed in school meetings with teachers and pupils. Unsurprisingly, therefore, three of the head teachers, nineteen (19) of specialist teachers and half (14) of the regular teachers opposed the integration of regular and learners with disability in schools. The participants opposed to integration lamented that children with disability tended to disturb and slow down the learning of other pupils. Often such children needed

more learning time and learning materials while some disabilities were seen to be too severe to be handled in a regular class that teachers required re-training in order to deal with such learners. The participants opposed to integration were aware of the huge challenges which acted as obstacles to the successful implementation of integration. The study seems to be revealing that top on the list of negative perceptions towards integration are the negative attitudes by different stakeholders including head teachers who are supposed to be in the fore front championing the cause of children with disabilities. This is made clear in the following statements:

*‘Integration does not seem to favour severely disabled children and teachers have no necessary skills in screening learning needs.’* (Female-Regular Teacher).

*‘Mixing of learners with and without disabilities is not good as it slows down the progress of normal learners in class.’* (Female Regular Teacher).

*‘Most pupils who are integrated in schools learn nothing, we are just wasting their time. They are better off in a separate education system.’* (Male head teacher).

*‘Head teachers are quite negative about the presence of a disabled child in their schools how do you expect integration to succeed?’* (Female Special Education teacher).

*‘The deaf use sign language while non-deaf use verbal for their daily communication, its difficult to teach them in one class.’* (Female Special Education Teacher).

From the views above, the participants seem to be sharing concerns on the negative attitudes of school authorities on issues

of integration and on the slowness of learners with disability. On their part teachers exhibited negative attitudes due to a different orientation received during initial teacher education. Participants have equally expressed concern on communication modes for certain categories of learners such as the deaf who have been integrated in regular schools. These views are also echoed by Leyer and Kirk (2011) who cite several barriers to mainstreaming of certain categories of learners such as those with Angelinan Syndrome.

### ***Integration and its Perceived Impact***

The data revealed a wide agreement on the role of integration in increasing access, promoting equity and quality of education for children with disabilities in school. This has been made possible through regular, even if inadequate, supply of learning materials, increased access to class practical activities, and the existence of disability friendly infrastructure of one kind or the other. Further, the study revealed that integration was seen as a vehicle for improving social and academic connections and interactions among children with and without disabilities in the schools.

The participants who supported integration of regular and learners with disability in school identified the promotion of the right to education for all, the need to promote social and academic interaction, improvement in the performance of disabled children and promotion of the sense of belonging among the children with disability as some of the reasons for their support.

According to these participants factors which supported integration of children with disability included good interpersonal/ social relationships among the different players in the school, which has given birth to freedom to participate in school activities, and the reduction of stigmatisation, the supply of learning materials

and the presence of qualified teachers and affordable school fees.

The positive impact of integration is well expressed in the following excerpts:

*‘they learn the same things with the normal pupils, an act of integration.’* (Female-head teacher)

The above sentiment agrees with the literature that integration is key for children with disability to participate fully with their normal’ friends and by so doing contribute to society through effective participation.

Some of the participants however, disagreed with the integration of children with disabilities in their activities and felt that integration in the schools had failed to increase access, promote equity and quality of education for children. This failure was attributed to little attention been paid to children with disabilities once they were placed in regular schools, presence of disability unfriendly school infrastructure, inability of the school system to place learners according to levels of performance and inadequately trained teachers in the field of special education. This failure to increase access is evidenced by the low numbers of children with disabilities attending regular schools in the study districts. Further, there was no agreement when it came to whether or not there were any differences in accessing the learning activities between pupils with and without disabilities in the school. The participants were split almost along equal lines on the issue of accessibility to classroom curriculum.

### ***Obstacles/Barriers to Integration***

Outstanding obstacles included inadequate and inappropriate infrastructure and insufficient teaching and learning materials to support the different disabilities. The unsuitability of various

materials and equipment that are available for use by the pupils in the school was generally recognised by the three sub-populations. Eight (08) head teachers, twenty four (24) specialist teachers and twenty (20) regular teachers were of the opinion that the materials and equipment for the pupils with disabilities were either slightly suitable or not suitable at all. Similarly, the majority of the respondents, eight (08) head-teachers, twenty-seven (27) specialist teachers and twenty-four (24) regular teachers reported that the infrastructure in terms of learning facilities was not appropriate for the promotion of integration in the schools. This viewpoint is supported by such statements as:

*'I see state of infrastructure as a barrier to effective integration in our school.'* (Male regular teacher).

*'Schools need adequate materials to support integration.'* (Male head teacher).

*'Zambia is not ready for integration, children with disabilities are being just dumped in regular classes without any support at all.'* (Male regular teacher).

Apart from inadequate and inappropriate infrastructure another major obstacle to successful integration of pupils with disability was inadequately trained specialist teachers; seven (07) head teachers felt there was a shortage of staff qualified to handle learners with disability (of the ten head teachers only one had training in special education). This concern is reflected in the following views:

*'Teachers do not seem to have enough information on integrative school practices to support it.'* (Female head teacher).

*'I have a disabled learner in my class and I don't know what to do with him since I have no training to cater for him.'* (Female regular teacher).

*'most teacher in the mainstream are not trained to enhance integration of disabilities in learning programmes and activities.'* (Male Sp. Ed teacher).

From the views above, the participants seem to be sharing concerns on the integrative teaching skills; teachers felt ill-prepared to effectively interact at classroom level with learners with disability. The lack of appropriate skills in turn led to communication barriers between teachers and learners. The barriers discussed above were significant obstacles that were considered detrimental to the drive towards integrative practice in the schools.

All these factors led to the conclusion among teachers that children with disability demanded more than what the schools under the current environment could satisfactorily offer them. It appears the same difficulties that Manda (2013) and Mandyata (2011) wrote about over a decade ago still haunt attempts to integrate learners with disability into regular primary schools in Zambia.

### ***Curriculum Modification in Integrative Class Settings***

A number of other areas outlined in the Ministry of General Education policy on learners with disability have been implemented in the schools. These were the creation of learning spaces/places, the enrollment of children with disabilities, allowing the establishment of a special education unit within the school, giving assessment, extra time and attention to children with disabilities, and provision of a localised type curriculum in line with home-based education programme where it was being practised. In addition to these, several other suggestions were made to modify the curriculum and how to implement it. Some of the suggestions included:

*'Teachers with special education training be allowed to work alongside regular teacher in school based staff*



*development for integration to succeed.*’ (Male Special Education Teacher).

*‘Parents and community must be oriented on integration for them to support the initiatives of schools on integration of disability issues.’* (Male Special Education Teacher).

*‘On all teachers are trained in special education to attend to such issues. If they are to be trained, training must enable them to comprehend all disabilities not just one. Curriculum ought to be standardized too for a meaningful integrative to occur.’* (Female Special Education Teacher).

*‘Actions to create a conducive integrative learning environment should be a responsibility of all stakeholders including parents and not just schools.’* (Male Head Teacher).

It appears clear from the above suggestions that there is a need to enhance community based interventions by having not only teachers and school administrators participating in integrative school practices but parents as well as communities who were primary stakeholders in the education of all children. The participants therefore called for the promotion of a joint ownership of integration through adequate preparation of teachers and administrators through training. From the findings, we learn that, although it may appear difficult for teachers to associate themselves fully with integration, a positive change of attitudes of the head teachers would contribute to a successful integrative education system in the study schools.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The data largely confirmed the wide gap that exists between

policy pronouncements and classroom actualities. It appears plausible then, in view of the findings regarding recognition of the need for integration that integration is on two levels; institutional integration and social integration. Institutional integration refers to policy related programmes and procedures and practices that have the backing of government policy and enforcement. On the social level, there are those aspects that are related to the social considerations of individuals or groups of individuals acting out of their own volition and individual belief in the necessity of associating and integrating with people with disabilities. On the social context, head teachers, specialist teachers and regular teachers all felt there was a difference in the way 'normal' boys and girls in the school interact with their peers with disabilities. The interaction in terms of the social context is further demonstrated by the fact that all the subpopulations were agreed that pupils with disabilities easily accessed help from other pupils in the classroom/school activities.

While policy documents eloquently lay out elaborate strategies for ensuring integration of pupils with disabilities into mainstream schools, there exist momentous challenges that stand in the way of such well meaning endeavours. These challenges hinder the realisation of the expectations of the Zambian government and other stakeholders for incorporating pupils with disabilities in mainstream education. To ensure progress in this area, practical steps have to be taken to put in place the requisite infrastructure and a trained cadre of specialist teachers, without which the march towards integration of students with disabilities in school will remain a pipedream. Expecting that poorly funded schools will divert their scarce resources that are meant to process in-house examinations, and running costs in attempts to promote integration and channel them to incorporating students with disabilities into school is a farfetched dream.

It appears that head-teachers and teachers who opposed integration were concerned more with the practical realities and difficulties that integration entailed. Those who supported it on the other hand seemed more concerned with whatever benefit integration would bring the way of the learners irrespective of the challenges involved. More importantly, they seemed aware of the emotional benefits that integration would have on the children with disabilities.

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. In view of the revelation from the data as discussed above, there is great need to modify certain aspects of the regular curriculum in order to enhance integration of pupils with disability into school practices among pupils in schools. Further, curriculum at colleges should include special education in order to equip the trainee-teachers with necessary skills to support integrative school practices.
2. However, it appeared that the extent of measures on the integration of pupils with disability into school practices were highly ineffective for them to have impact on the education of children with and without disability in regular schools. Therefore, learning/activities that have been integrated in the curriculum need to be adapted to create a less restrictive environment.

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