Declaration

I Nongola Donald Nongola do declare that this dissertation presents my own work and that it had never been previously submitted for a master’s degree at this or any other university.

Signed …………………………………………………………….

Date……………………………………………………………….
Approval

This dissertation by Nongola Donald Nongola is approved as a partial fulfillment of the requirement of the award of the degree of Master of Education (Special Education) of the University of Zambia.

Signed .................................. Date ........................................

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Acronyms

CBM - Christian Blind Mission
CSEN - Children with Special Educational Needs
ICEVI - International Council for the Education of people with Visual Impairment
ECZ – Examination Council of Zambia
ESO – Education Standard Officer
FNDP – Fifth National Development Plan
HI – Hearing Impairment
ID – Intellectual Impairment
IEP – Individualised Educational Plans
LSEN – Learners with Special Educational Needs
MFNP – Ministry of Finance and National Planning
MoE – Ministry of Education
PD – Physical Impairment
PTR – Pupil Teacher Ratio
SSI – Sightsavers International
UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNZA – University of Zambia
VI – Visual Impairment
ZAMISE – Zambia Institute of Special Education
ABSTRACT

Special education in Zambia does not appear to receive much attention from the Ministry of Education. Standards Officers in the Ministry of Education have been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that all schools, including special education schools provide the set standards of high quality education. When Standards Officers visit schools, they are expected to guide the teachers. For things they are not sure of, they are supposed to be referring them to other departments particularly the departments of Curriculum Development, and Teacher Education. With the deplorable state of special education schools, it became necessary that this study be undertaken to determine the effectiveness of inspections. In order to determine if there is effective monitoring of special education schools, the Ministry of Education monitoring tool was the focus in this study. This is because one tool may not be adequately capturing the needs of all learners. Special education provision is quite demanding, therefore may require some adaptations in the tool.

Data was collected through questionnaires that were administered to eighty-eight special education teachers and twelve Special Education Standard Officers from 4 provinces. A focus group discussion was also held in Kabwe. It comprised twelve teachers from all the provinces except North Western province. These teachers were attending a workshop organized by Teacher Education department, and the researcher took advantage of it. The teachers were tasked to discuss the inspections being conducted, and the teachers’ questionnaire was used as a guide for a two hours discussion whose theme was ‘views on the quality of special education inspection’.

The study found out the following: It was found that the Ministry of Education’s inspection tool was not suitable for monitoring special education provision in Zambia. The areas reflected on the tool were too general; they did not bring out key special education issues. Issues such as the right pupil - teacher ratio for a special education class were not reflected on the tool. Other issues interviewees felt needed to be included were Individualised Educational Plans, Early Identification and Assessment. In addition the tool does not bring out differences among the different special education settings such as Inclusive, Unit, Day or Special education school. This therefore implies that the inspection tool has some gaps. These gaps could be contributing to problems in special education schools.

One of the problems that was brought out was that of inadequate teaching and learning resources. In addition final examination results for learners with visual impairments were being released late and/or got lost. The curriculum and examinations were also found to be inappropriate for learners with special
educational needs. Special education teachers also complained of not having adequate skills for teaching learners with exceptional needs. Furthermore it was found that Standards Officers for special education did not have sufficient expertise for advising teachers who had problems with teaching learners with exceptional needs.

It was also found that attitudes among some education officials (ordinary teachers, parents) towards special education were not that good. Funding to special education schools was also found to be insufficient. In addition learners with special educational needs were usually allocated small classrooms, often in isolated areas.

In order to effectively measure education standards in special education schools, the researcher has recommended the following: The Ministry of Education should prepare a separate inspection tool for monitoring standards in special education schools. For this to work well the Ministry of Education should establish a Directorate of Special Education so that special education issues are easily taken care of. For special education teachers and Standard Officers to have enough expertise the University of Zambia should revamp the training of special education teachers at high schools, especially in the areas of braille and sign language. Braille should be taught every semester, and in the last two years of the study it should be linked to the content subject(s) one is taking.