

Towards Inclusive Education in Zambia: Barriers, Policies, and Strategies for Improvement

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Abstract: This study examined inclusive education, its challenges, and Zambia's plans to solve them. Two primary schools in Zambia's Sesheke district were studied. The researcher used focus group interviews and open-ended questions to acquire qualitative data from 80 respondents. Teachers and students, including those with children with normal and special needs, participated. The survey found that few teachers understood the concept of inclusive education. Negative attitudes, physical hurdles, and limited government financing hinder inclusive education. The survey also indicated that rural elementary schools have a limited number of SEN-qualified teachers. Poor educational organisation is one of the challenges to inclusive education in Zambia. The study revealed that the Zambian government has published two inclusive education policies and guidelines: The Inclusive Education Policy Guidelines in 2017 and the Inclusive Education and Special Education Focus. These policies aim to overcome the challenges. Zambia has disability education laws and policies in place. The findings recommended that the government, through the Ministry of Education, provide SEN teachers with in-service training. They will learn how to teach an inclusive classroom. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) should be increased to educate instructors on learning difficulties and provide inclusive classroom techniques.

Keywords: Inclusive Education; Special Education Needs; Education Policy Guidelines; Continuous Professional Development; Learning Difficulties; Inclusive Classroom Techniques.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Almost every country in the world is moving toward more inclusive schools. In the last few years, more and more people around the world have become interested in inclusive education [21]. This has resulted in global support for inclusive educational approaches [13]. Most countries in the globe can't build additional separate schools in real life. From an educational point of view, it is also not a good idea. UNESCO [21] and UNESCO [22] said that all kids, even those with disabilities or

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other special needs, should have the same chances to get an education. Both groups agreed that inclusiveness is the best way to teach students with exceptional needs. Countries today have made rules and plans that make sure everyone can get an education, even people with learning difficulties and other disabilities. There have been several conferences and conventions, and laws have been made to help disabled students around the world get an education [1].

Anastasiou and Kauffman [6] observe that nations in advanced economies have progressed from categorical provisions to the complete inclusion of individuals with impairments in educational settings. Most African governments' promises to help people with Special Educational Needs, on the other hand, started in the 1970s. Many African nations continue to grapple with the challenge of accommodating children with special needs, even within conventional educational frameworks. Bryman [3] notes that many African countries have shown theoretical interest in special education needs (SEN), even though many governments in those countries have trouble making sure that people with disabilities can go to school. This is seen in the development of programs such as mainstreaming, family, community, or social rehabilitation, which reflect a commitment to actualizing the concept of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, irrespective of their physical or mental conditions [5].

As one of the African countries, Zambia has made strong promises to educate people with disabilities and special needs by signing and ratifying different agreements on education and the rights of people with disabilities. The country went to the Salamanca Conference in 1994, where they agreed on non-discriminatory education systems and signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 1994, ninety-two (92) countries and twenty-five (25) international organizations met in Salamanca, Spain, to talk about inclusive education. After the Salamanca Conference in 1996, Zambia adopted its first policy on inclusive education. The Salamanca Conference characterized inclusive education as a methodology for recognizing and accommodating the varied needs of all learners by enhancing involvement in learning cultures and communities while mitigating exclusion both inside and beyond the educational system [21].

Zambia is dedicated to adopting Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on fair, inclusive, and lifelong learning skills for everyone, including those with disabilities. These kinds of promises should lead to real assistance for people with disabilities, especially their entitlement to an education [11]. In an inclusive classroom, all students' different needs are satisfied because of the principles of inclusion. The United Nations (UN) standard norm on equalizing opportunities for people with disabilities, which was approved in 1993, says that people with impairments have the right to an education. It also said that people with disabilities should be given care in both integrated and inclusive settings. However, even though there have been positive changes in the way schools include students with disabilities, there are still some things that make it hard for schools to fully implement inclusive education for individuals with disabilities [2]. This study was conducted to delineate the obstacles impeding the implementation of inclusive education and the initiatives undertaken by the government of the Republic of Zambia to mitigate them.

1.2. Statement of the problem

International organizations, especially the Jomtien Conference on Education for All and the Salamanca Statement on Special Education Needs, have had a big impact on the Zambian government's attitude on inclusive education. By signing a number of agreements on education and the rights of people with disabilities, Zambia has made big promises to improve the education of people with disabilities and special needs. The country took part in the Salamanca conference in 1994, which supported education systems that don't discriminate and agreed to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since 1977, when the first policy document (Reforms and Recommendations) made issues related to the education of students with disabilities official, progress toward inclusive education has been seen in policy documents like Focus on Learning 1992 and Educating our Future 1996, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, the Dakar Education for All Framework for Action, and Article 11 of the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Zambia. Nonetheless, notwithstanding the existence of policies advocating for the philosophy of inclusive education, there is a deficiency of research regarding the concept of inclusive education, the obstacles to its implementation, and the actions undertaken by the Government of the Republic of Zambia to mitigate these challenges. This article sought to delineate the obstacles encountered in the implementation of inclusive education programs in certain rural primary schools within the Sesheke district, as well as the initiatives undertaken by the government to mitigate these challenges.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' understanding of the concept of inclusive education, the barriers to its implementation, and the measures the Zambian government is taking to address these barriers.

1.4. Research Objectives

- To find out teachers' understanding of the concept of inclusive education.

- To establish the barriers to the implementation of inclusive education in rural primary schools in Sesheke.
- To establish the measures, the Government of Zambia is taking to address the barriers to inclusive education.

1.5. Research Questions

- What is the teachers' understanding of the concept of inclusive education?
- What are the barriers faced in the implementation of inclusive education in rural primary schools in Sesheke?
- What are the measures that the Government of the Republic of Zambia is taking to address the barriers to inclusive education?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in its potential to enhance comprehension of inclusive education for learners with special educational needs (SEN). The study will also enhance the current understanding of the obstacles to educational attainment encountered by learners with SEN in various schools. This study will enhance the comprehension of the obstacles that hinder the execution of inclusive education in elementary schools in Sesheke. It is presumed that the government recognizes the obstacles to inclusive education in numerous Zambian schools. By implementing measures to address these challenges, school administrators, teachers, and students with special educational needs (SEN) will acknowledge the government's commitment to the principles of free education and Education for All. The study would also be important for raising awareness and gathering information to help with the current advocacy and lobbying efforts of different groups that want to improve the education of students with special needs, especially those in low-income areas, through the recommended all-inclusive education services.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

To understand the concept of inclusive education, including its barriers and the measures the government is taking to address these challenges, the study employed two theories. The theories adopted are the Classical Liberal theory and the Social Model of Disability. Bryman [3] stated that a theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories.

1.8. Classical Liberal Theory

Bryman [3] supported the theory. This philosophy supports giving all students equal chances in school, no matter what their differences are [3]. This notion posits that individuals should have the opportunity to advance through all educational levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary) without their access being contingent upon their special educational needs (SEN). But this is still achievable for the learner. This is done by giving students with special educational needs (SEN) chances to study, encouraging positive attitudes toward inclusive education, and obtaining the skills and information needed to help students with learning difficulties.

For example, barriers that stop students with learning disabilities from using their natural skills should be taken down. These barriers could be based on their socio-economic status, their culture, their location, or their school. This is because being disabled doesn't mean you can't do anything. Scott [20] says that people typically think of education as the great equalizer. So, it can put students with special educational needs on the same level as "normal" students. This can only happen if schools make their classrooms a good place for students with special needs to learn. In this approach, education would give everyone the same chances to make money and be free, so that all classes, races, and genders could benefit from the great academic performance of all students.

1.9. Social Model of Disability Theory

The Social Model of Disability theory asserts that individuals with disabilities are more hindered by societal factors than by their actual disabilities and impairments. Society has been said to have barriers that are too high for disabled people to overcome, which keeps them from taking part in community activities and making a living. If people were treated the same, there would be no problems with making competition unfair. Most importantly, the unfavorable opinions that people have toward people with disabilities make their problems worse [11].

The social model of disability theory posits that society disables individuals by precluding their full involvement in social activities. This leads to oppression of individuals with disabilities [15]. Muzata et al. [11] observed that societal restrictions have restricted educational chances for those with disabilities due to stigma and the perception that they are incapable, when, in many instances, they are capable, particularly with support. So, society has a big effect on how one's genetic potential changes and how well they fit in with others.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of Inclusive Education

At the Salamanca Conference, a lot of African countries agreed to the idea of inclusive education. In Zambia, inclusive education goes back to 1994, when ninety-two countries and twenty-five international organizations met in Salamanca, Spain. After the Salamanca Conference in 1996, Zambia put its first policy on inclusive education into place. The Salamanca Conference characterized inclusive education as a method of accommodating and addressing the varied needs of all learners by enhancing involvement in learning cultures and communities, while minimizing exclusion both within and beyond the education system. Miles et al. [19] define inclusive education as “the process of increasing the presence, participation, and achievement of all students in their local schools with particular reference to those groups of learners who are at risk of exclusion, marginalisation, or under-achievement” [19].

This definition of inclusive education is more pertinent in the Zambian context, considering that “a disproportionate number of children with Special Educational Needs (SENs) are in the community, receiving no education at all” and their exclusion is attributed to “poverty, a long distance from home to school, and illnesses” [18]. UNICEF [24] asserts that an inclusive education system serves all students, irrespective of their skills or needs, throughout all educational levels – from preschool to university, vocational, and lifetime learning. Ainscow [12] characterizes inclusive education as the predominant method employed to meet the educational requirements of all pupils, irrespective of their disability, gender, age, religion, or ethnicity. The Salamanca statement says that “schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions.” This is what all of the preceding definitions of inclusive education mean. This should encompass disabled and gifted children, street (and working) children, those from distant or nomadic communities, linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities, as well as other disadvantaged or marginalized populations or groups.

2.2. Barriers to Inclusive Education in Zambia

In an inclusive classroom, all of the different needs of all of the students are satisfied. The United Nations (UN) standard norm on equalizing opportunities for people with disabilities, which was approved in 1993, says that people with impairments have the right to an education. It also said that people with disabilities should be cared for in both integrated and inclusive settings. But Zambia and many other African countries have not done this since there are many things that make it hard for everyone to have an education. Barriers to inclusive education are things that keep people from going to school. Anything that makes it harder for a youngster to learn well is a barrier to learning. A student may face one or more obstacles to learning during their schooling.

A child with a handicap may perceive that disability as an inherent impediment to learning and will necessitate diverse degrees of support to adapt to their disability in order to achieve their maximum academic potential. There are more than just innate hurdles that make learning hard. They might also be problems that come from society or the environment. For instance, severe poverty, maltreatment, or neglect will all impede a child's learning [17]. Zambia, like many other nations in Southern Africa, has problems that make it hard to fully implement inclusive education. Attitudinal barriers, a lack of clear and coordinated school inclusive policy guidelines, inadequate government funding, and a lack of teaching and learning resources and trained teachers to help children with disabilities are just some of the problems that make inclusive education hard to achieve. Many students, especially those with physical limitations, can't go to most places of learning. Most of the poor schools in rural areas are inaccessible because of ancient, unrenovated buildings.

These kinds of school buildings are not safe for students with impairments, therefore they can't get to them. They don't have enough lighting, ramps for wheelchairs, or good washrooms. UNESCO [23] also says that throughout time, there have been challenges with infrastructure and not enough permanent classrooms in schools, especially in impoverished areas like rural primary schools for students with special needs. At the same time, the infrastructure that is already there is not very good since it hasn't been built well or maintained well, which makes it not a good place for students with special needs to learn. ZECF [26] said that many schools don't have the right facilities to teach students with learning difficulties or that the ones they do have are not good enough. In impoverished countries, inadequate facilities, such as a lack of support services, huge class sizes, and insufficient infrastructure, make it hard to achieve genuine inclusion.

Another physical barrier to inclusive education is not having the right tools or technology to help kids with a certain kind of problem. The Technology-Related Assistance to Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988 says that assistive technology (AT) is “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.” Assistive technology empowers persons with special needs to augment their capabilities and engage meaningfully in the daily activities of their home, school, workplace, and community [8].

3. Methodology of the Study

Gall et al. [14] refer to the method as a channel used to demonstrate an activity during instruction. Methodology is a systematic approach used in a particular area of study or activity to gather information. It explains how the research will answer the research questions. This section discusses research design, study area, target population, sampling design, sample size, and ethical considerations.

3.1. Research Design

According to McMillan and Schumacher [9], a research design “showed which individuals were to be studied, as well as when, where, and in which context”. Miles et al. [19] state that a research design is a plan, structure, and strategy for investigation, conceived to obtain answers to research questions or problems. This study adopted a qualitative case study approach to study the inclusion of learners with SEN in the selected primary schools of Sesheke District, Zambia. Creswell [25] defined a case study as a qualitative approach in which the researcher explores the case or cases over time through detailed and in-depth data collection. The qualitative case study approach was deemed an appropriate research design for this study due to the nature of the research questions and the qualitative, interpretive position adopted by the study. Therefore, the case study methodology provided a systematic approach to collecting data, analysing it, and reporting the results.

3.2. Study Area or Site

The study was conducted in two selected primary schools in the Sesheke District in Zambia. Berg [4] advises that the ideal setting for any study is one that the researcher has an interest in, is easily accessible, and allows the researcher to receive immediate support from the respondents. Sesheke District was chosen for the study because it is the researcher's hometown.

3.3. Target Population

According to Burns and Grove, population is the “set of individuals (or objects) having some common characteristics as defined by the sampling criteria established for the study”. Creswell [25] defines population as all members of any well-defined class of people, events, or objects. Gall et al. [14] state that a target population refers to all the members of a hypothetical set of people, events, or objects to which we wish to generate the results of our research. In this study, therefore, the target population consisted of teachers, the so-called normal learners, and those learners suspected of having SEN/disabilities.

3.4. Study Sample

This study has a sample size of 50 participants from two selected schools in the Sesheke district. Ten participants (5 from each school) are teachers, and 40 are pupils (20 from each school).

3.5. Sampling Procedure

The study used a purposive sampling technique to select five teachers from each school. The reason for using purposive sampling was to get information on the measures the government was taking to remove the barriers to inclusive education in the Sesheke district. With permission from the head teachers of each school, the class teachers randomly selected 20 pupils from each school, including those with learning disabilities and those without, to participate in the research. This technique is called purposeful random sampling. This strategy is useful because it can also be applied to a small sample size. Learners with SEN/disabilities were chosen to be participants to find out whether they feel included or excluded in education in the classroom and the school environment. Learners without disabilities were also selected to gauge their feelings on inclusive education.

3.6. Research Instruments

The research employed semi-structured interviews, observation, focus group discussions, and document review. The semi-structured interview is a useful qualitative collection technique and is most appropriate for situations in which you want to ask open-ended questions. Mangal indicates that interviews are advantageous because they provide the researcher with an opportunity to get direct information from the interviewee. According to Miles et al. [19], semi-structured interviews typically involve the use of an interview guide, which consists of items related to the phenomenon under study. In this study, the interview consisted of written questions that were answered by both teachers and pupils, serving as the interviewees. This was to collect data from both teachers and pupils. The interview guide was developed using open-ended questions for in-depth information. The in-depth interviews provided teachers with questions to gauge their understanding of the concept of inclusive education, the barriers to inclusive education, and the measures the government is taking to address them.

Another research instrument used by the researcher was the observation method. The observation guide contained a list of facilities against which the researcher counter-checked to confirm whether these facilities were available, adequate, or inadequate, and whether they were disability-friendly or not. A Focus Group Discussion guide was used to collect data from the learners. The focus group discussion centred on the nature of the difficulties learners face in their studies, whether they are affected by the difficulties encountered from teachers and peers, the attitudes of teachers, and the nature of support offered to them. Document review is another research instrument commonly used to collect data by reviewing existing documents. This method involves collecting data by reviewing various documents, including books, journals, and internet materials. The researchers conducted a document review of various study-related documents.

3.7. Data collection procedures

The researcher got authorization from the Social Welfare department to do the research and then showed it to the two head teachers of the two schools. Before collecting data, the researcher made it very clear what the study was about and what each group of respondents had to do. This helped the people who answered the questions feel more at ease about the privacy and anonymity of the data being collected, which made their answers more objective. The teachers and students with special needs who were the respondents filled out the interview questions on their own and without being asked. The learners only had group conversations once they had filled out the interview forms. The responders had enough time to fill out the questionnaires. The researcher collected the interview forms once they were filled out so that they could be used for data analysis.

3.8. Data Analysis

This study mostly employed qualitative data analysis. We manually converted and summarized qualitative data from focus group discussions and interview guides to get short measures of the data using thematic analysis. This is in line with Creswell [25], who says that thematic analysis is the process of finding topics or main themes that come up in interviews or focus group discussions. Following Creswell [25], qualitative data were subsequently presented through themes and narratives. The issues that arose from this study were comprehension of the notion of learning impairments, obstacles to educational inclusion, the characteristics and prevalence of learners with learning disabilities, and the support measures provided by the government to these learners. Data gathered through observation was evaluated and compiled in a Table.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are an important part of every research article. During the data collection process, ethical concerns were taken into account. The researcher asked the management of each school he studied for permission to do the research when he got there. Since the people he was talking to didn't know him, he told them he was a student at DMI-St. Eugene University. The researcher told the principals, teachers, and students that the study was exclusively for academic purposes. This enabled them to be honest and give the information they needed. To protect privacy and confidentiality, respondents were not asked to include personal information such as names, gender, phone numbers, or identification numbers on their forms. Additionally, responders were told that the data collected would remain confidential and not be shared with any other individuals.

4. Results and Discussions

The purpose of this study was to get an understanding of the concept of inclusive education among teachers and pupils, barriers to inclusive education, and the measures the government of the Republic of Zambia is taking to address them.

4.1. Concept of Inclusive Education

The understanding of inclusive education was asked in the focus group for both teachers and pupils. Teachers were told to write their understanding of the concept of inclusive education, while pupils were asked to discuss it. Ten (10) teachers from the two schools were asked to write their understanding of the concept of inclusive education in a focus group discussion. Table 1 shows their responses.

Table 1: Understanding of the concept of inclusive education: School A

Teaching that engages students in learning which is meaningful, relevant, and accessible to all.
It is a class that is supposed to have more girls than boys.
It is a class where learners with disabilities are treated fairly.
A class for learners with SENs and those without SENs
A school environment with proper lighting and wheelchairs for disabled children
Education that accommodates all students, whether with or without SEN

The process of increasing the presence, participation, and achievement of all students with disabilities in local schools
A class containing both boys and girls with SENs
An education that caters to the needs of learners with disabilities
It is a class with an equal number of boys and girls.

From the responses above, it is evident that very few teachers understand the concept of inclusive education. More needs to be done in colleges and universities to help teachers gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of inclusive education. This is also an indication that the teachers may not be qualified to teach learners with special education needs, which are found now in every school and each class in the two schools under study in the Sesheke district. After understanding that inclusive education means incorporating learners with SENs/disabilities in the same classroom as the so-called 'normal' learners, teachers were now able to notice that they had learners with SENs. They started discussing the kinds of SEN and disability that are found in their classrooms. Among the SENs that were mentioned were: attention deficit disorder, amnesia, speech problems, writing problems, and very intelligent learners. They even called a learner who is very intelligent a marking key. From the focus group discussions held with pupils, it has been shown that most learners are unfamiliar with the concept of inclusive education. Before an explanation of the concept of inclusive education, learners denied having children with disabilities in their classrooms. However, after knowing what it meant, most of them acknowledged the fact that they have several friends with special educational needs and different disabilities in their classes. Even among the pupils chosen to participate in this study, some had, in one way or another, a disability.

The study, through group discussion, has revealed mixed feelings among the pupils concerning inclusive education. Some were for the idea with reasons that learners with disabilities were people like them and created in the image and likeness of God, born from the same parents, living in the same community. Hence, they needed to be educated in the same way, by the same teachers, and in the same classroom. They went further on to say that it is good that these learners are not excluded from them because by mixing with them, they also learn that there is a 50 per cent chance that anyone can become disabled even in old age. Inclusive education is beneficial to both learners with disabilities and to their typically developing peers. When inclusive education is successful, both typically developing children and those with disabilities experience positive outcomes, such as a strong sense of belonging, connected relationships, and development that enables them to reach their full potential. This is fulfilled in what some learners said: Anastasiou and Kauffman [6] were for the idea that “inclusive education promotes empathy and friendships among learners with disabilities and those without. Attending an inclusive classroom is an opportunity to be with people who are different from me.” Bryman [3] opined that inclusive education can help me treat people with disabilities with mercy and love, and to recognise that they are also human beings.

He went on to say, “Being in an inclusive class, I learn a good deal about tolerance, individual difference, and human exceptionality by interacting with those with disabilities.” Berg [4] (not his real name), with a speech Problem (dysphasia), said: “Learners without SEN can also learn something from us with disabilities. Our presence in this classroom provides students with the opportunity to learn about various human service professions, including special education, speech therapy, physical therapy, recreational therapy, and vocational rehabilitation. For some, exposure to these areas may lead them to make a career in any of these areas later, like the different therapists I see when I go to the hospital.” According to the observation method, the researcher noted that the two primary schools lacked some essential services that could facilitate inclusion. The two schools lacked wheelchairs, braille materials, or eyeglasses. The researcher observed that the school buildings were so old that they had no ramps to accommodate learners with disabilities. Through the observation method, the researcher noticed that some teachers lacked the skills to handle learners with disabilities. The observation method also served to verify the information provided by teachers in group discussions regarding the type of learners found in their classrooms. Through the observation method, the researcher observed some disabilities among the learners as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Types of disabilities

Types of disabilities	School A	School B
Dwarfism	-	1
Writing problem	1	3
Speech problem	2	-
Albinism	1	-
Reading	1	1
Forgetting	1	2
Amputated	-	1
Total	6	7

4.2. Barriers to Inclusive Education

4.2.1. Attitudinal Barriers

Some teachers mentioned negative attitudes as the greatest barriers related to inclusion in education. Many people are not prepared to interact with people with disabilities. They think that people with disabilities lack the skills needed to live in the community or to be educated with nondisabled children. One teacher from the school noted that “physical and emotional bullying is another attitudinal barrier towards inclusion, which can lead to isolation and closure of possible inclusion. Often, they are the object of ridicule or outright ostracism in schools and the community.” This aligns with the literature reviewed. As with society in general, consistent and strong advocacy must be given to them, considering that a lack of knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of people with disabilities often causes negative attitudes and stereotypes. Table 3 below shows the number of teachers and pupils who mentioned negative attitudes towards learners with a disability as a barrier to inclusion.

Table 3: Negative attitudes as a barrier to inclusive education

Schools	A	B	Total
Teachers	2	3	5
Pupils	14	9	24

4.2.2. Society

Society was identified as a barrier to inclusion in education by four teachers from School A and five teachers from School B. They believed that society, and not a particular medical impairment of a learner, is a barrier to inclusion. This is because society always labels a person with a learning disability as one who is dull and cannot grasp anything. This is not true because many people with SEN are engaged in various types of work. Negative attitudes can take the form of social discrimination, lack of awareness, and traditional prejudices. Regarding disabled children, some pupils have observed that society still maintains the established belief that educating people with disabilities is pointless. Table 4 presents the number of teachers and pupils who identified society as a barrier to inclusive education.

Table 4: Society as a barrier to inclusion in education

Schools	A	B	Total
Teachers	4	5	9
Pupils	15	13	28

4.2.3. Long Distances to School

The long distance to school, especially in rural areas, is a barrier to inclusive education, as mentioned by both teachers and pupils. Teachers, as well as pupils, said that, unlike in urban areas, where learners often travel to school by motor vehicle. In rural areas, the story is different. Learners have to walk long distances to school, approximately two hours. This is discouraging for some learners, and ultimately, they feel excluded and drop out of school. This was mentioned in a group discussion by all teachers and all pupils, apart from one pupil from school A, who seemed not to understand what was going on. Table 5 illustrates the long distances to schools in rural areas as a barrier to educational inclusion.

Table 5: Long distances to schools in rural areas

Schools	A	B	Total
Teachers	5	5	10
Pupils	19	20	39

4.2.4. Inadequate Infrastructure

Most rural elementary schools in the Sesheke district do not have enough infrastructure for their students. This study has shown that many rural primary schools do not have the right infrastructure and equipment to facilitate the implementation of inclusive education. Teachers said that the school's facilities don't make it easy to provide inclusive education. For example, the ground is sandy. This makes it hard for a student in a wheelchair to get about, for example. Some teachers thought that hallways should have both stairs and ramps, one for those who are not disabled and the other for people who are. These results regarding

objective number two align with ZECF [26], which suggests that the necessary facilities for educating students with disabilities in numerous schools are either missing or severely insufficient. Furthermore, inadequate facilities, lack of support services, large class sizes, and poor infrastructure are significant barriers to achieving meaningful inclusion in developing nations. Students and instructors both felt that the lack of public transportation in rural elementary schools in the Sesheke District was a concern. This is another problem that many kids with disabilities in most schools in Zambia have to deal with because of physical constraints. Students with impairments typically have trouble getting to and from school and other public locations. Most public schools are not quick to meet these criteria.

4.2.5. Policies as Barriers

Regarding policies as barriers to inclusive education, Teachers opined that policymakers with an unsound grasp of or opposing views on inclusive education are obstacles to the implementation of inclusive policies. This came from three (3) teachers who agreed that when policymakers make poor policies in education, there is a risk that some policies may not favour pupils with learning disabilities.

4.2.6. Untrained Teachers

Cheelo [5] said that teachers are the most important people for making education more inclusive. Their knowledge and attitude have a big effect on the lives of pupils who are different and have varied learning needs. Sadly, the teachers' skills and attitudes might be the biggest obstacles to inclusive education. Teachers at all levels don't always get enough training. This study found that there aren't enough instructors in rural primary schools in Zambia who are qualified to educate students with Special Educational Needs (SENs). Nine out of ten teachers from both schools in the study were not trained to teach students with special educational needs.

4.2.7. Insufficient Funding by the Government

This study concluded that not having enough money is a big problem for making education more inclusive. During the study, six teachers said the same thing. But they did say that the Constituency Development Fund had helped improve the infrastructure at other schools. They said that the lack of resources, such as not enough classrooms, not enough facilities, not enough teachers or the death of talented staff, and not enough learning materials, is because the government doesn't provide them enough money. This is in line with what the Government of the Republic of Zambia said in 2020: it can be hard to tell how much attention is being given to inclusive education right now based on how money is being spent, since there is no separate budget for it. The literature assessment on funding also concluded that "inclusive education plans and strategies lack credible costing and that when costing, it is not clear how these relate to actual spending, or whether they are reflected in annual budgeting cycles" (Figure 1).

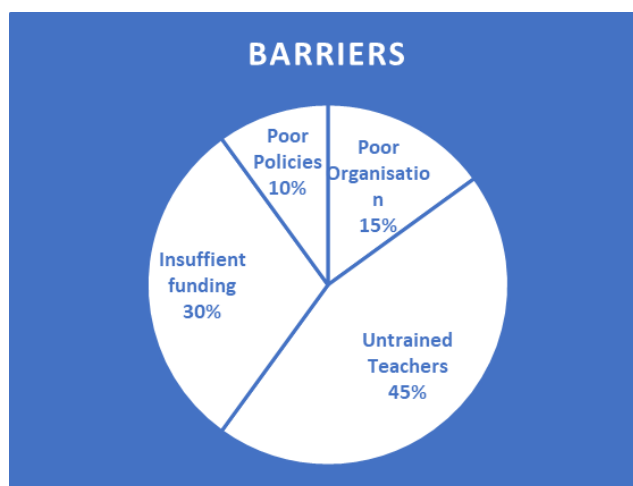


Figure 1: Percentages of barriers to inclusive education

4.3. Measures to Be Taken to Address Barriers to Inclusive Education

After hearing the instructors talk about some of the problems that make it hard for everyone to go to school together, I asked them what the Government, through the Ministry of Education, was doing to solve these problems. During a group discussion,

some teachers said that the Zambian government knows about the problems with inclusive education that were talked about above. The Government of Zambia came up with two particular policies and guidelines for inclusive education to deal with these problems: Inclusive Berg [4] and Inclusive Education and Special Education Focus: Implementing Education Sector and Skills 2019–2023.

They also said that the Ministry of General Education should make sure that teachers get training while they are working so that they can better comprehend students with special educational needs. This can help teachers learn how to deal with them in classes that are open to everyone. Another instructor said that the United Party for National Development (UPND) Government has hired 30,000 teachers, some of whom work with special needs students. This is the first stage. One instructor noted that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) should be improved to make teachers more aware of learning difficulties and provide them ideas for how to teach them in classrooms that are open to everyone. The literature analysis revealed that Zambia had legislative and policy frameworks that facilitate the education of individuals with disabilities, notably the 1996 education policy paper, 'Educating our Future,' and the Education Act of 2011. The Zambia Persons with Disabilities Act also tells organizations to respect the rights of people with disabilities [7]. The Ministry of Education in Zambia wants to keep kids with special educational needs in conventional schools as much as feasible. The government's Inclusive Schooling Program (INSPRO) started as a trial project in 1997 in the Kalulushi district of Copperbelt Province.

A good review in 2002 led to its spread across Zambia [16]. Even while unfavorable views about inclusive education, especially for individuals with disabilities, are still a problem, the Ministry of Education has let teachers test out new ways to teach that might work better. This implies that teachers have been given the power to take the lead in putting inclusive policies into action and making inclusive education a reality in their classrooms [16]. One thing that shows how important inclusive education is in Zambia is that all trainee teachers at the country's Teacher Training Colleges must take a required course on special needs. The Ministry of Education has made it clear that "all student teachers shall be exposed to adequate skills in special education and guidance and counselling" [10]. In an inclusive classroom, teachers who work with students who have learning difficulties need to give them a lot of help so that they can get the most out of the education system. A teacher said that one of the options available to students with learning impairments in inclusive classes is counseling. Kasongole and Muzala's [7] literature study supports this. They said that students with learning difficulties need counseling services because they face many challenges in school. Counseling and guidance services assist students with learning challenges in achieving their maximum potential.

In Zambia, 70% of the Education program expenditure went to elementary education, which shows that the focus has also been on primary or lower levels of education for children with disabilities. To improve the implementation of inclusive education programs, the government should train more instructors in special education, develop infrastructure that is easy for SEN students to use, and offer support services to children with SENs. This will help Zambia do a better job of implementing inclusive education. A instructor said. Ainscow [13] said that physical barriers should be taken down so that students with physical limitations can get to the classroom. The Berg [4] also told developing nations, including Zambia, to create and improve schools that are sensitive to disabilities and provide safe, peaceful, welcoming, and effective places for all students to learn. UNESCO [21] and Bryman [3] also talk about some of the changes that need to be made for inclusive education. For example, they say that compounds used by deaf, blind, mentally ill, and physically disabled children should be barrier-free. They also say that toilets, bathrooms, and bars should be built to help the children hold on while bathing, showering, and using the toilet. Instead of steps, have ramps with suitable slopes, dorms, and play areas. Every classroom should be big, bright, and well-ventilated. This is because students with special needs have not been given any unique tools that work for their disability.

5. Conclusion

This study was undertaken to discuss the concept of inclusive education, barriers, and the measures the Government of Zambia is taking to address the barriers to inclusion. The study's findings suggest that many teachers in rural primary schools lack a clear understanding of what inclusivity in education entails. As such, more needs to be done in colleges and universities to help teachers gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of inclusive education. The study identified numerous barriers to inclusive education, including societal attitudes toward learners with disabilities, physical barriers, and insufficient funding from the Ministry of Education for inclusive education initiatives. However, the government of Zambia is aware of all the challenges faced by people with disabilities, and it is taking some measures to support inclusive education.

5.1. Recommendation

Based on the findings on the challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education in rural primary schools and measures that are taken to remove the barriers, we therefore recommend the following:

- The Ministry of Education should establish specialised infrastructure to support inclusive education practices.
- Pupils with SEN and those without SEN should continue learning together in the same class.

- The Ministry of Education should reduce class sizes and child-teacher ratios to about 25 learners in each class to create enough time for learners with SEN/disabilities to be attended to.
- The Ministry of Education should encourage active partnerships with parents to make them understand the concept of inclusive education.
- There is a need to sensitise society that learners with disabilities are normal human beings who are not supposed to be victimised.
- There is a need for the Government to work together with the Ministry of Education to build more colleges of special education, preferably one in each province, so that we can have more teachers for pupils with SEN/disability.

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