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Inclusive Education in Africa

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Content

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Foreword

This book offers a unique insight into inclusive education in Africa. The current status of implementation and future endeavours are highlighted in the contributions forwarded by the authors conducting research in selected African countries. With a view to the anticipated volume, the respective authors were advised to adhere to a structured report based on the following headings:

- Portrait of Disability Prevalence and Access to Education (statistical information)
- National Policy and Strategy Document Review
- Disability Education Landscape Review
- Status of Inclusive Education
- Future Prospects for Inclusive Education.

At the outset, finding potential authors proved more difficult than anticipated. Fortunately we were able to engage authors currently working in and around the subject of inclusive education either in a practical situation or (mostly) the field of scientific research. And happily, we were able to launch the project with the support we received from Ms. Anna Hill Martin (Technical Consultant on Disability-Inclusive Education) of the Inclusive Education Initiative of the World Bank Group (Social Sustainability & Inclusion) and the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service)-offices in Nairobi (Kenya), Ms. Birgit Schindler-Kovats, in Accra (Ghana), Ms. Lena Leumer (supported by Ms. Prof. Dr. Bea Lundt) and in Cairo (Egypt) Ms. Isabell Mering und Ms. Fatma Soliman. The contributions are presented in alphabetical order of the countries included in the book.

Each article is a unit in itself, presenting the situation in the respective country and undoubtedly seen from the angle of the respective author.

The publication at hand will present a candid portrayal of varying positions, considerations, ideas for practice and prospects for the various countries involved. Even if confined to a reader-friendly structure, the authors were nevertheless given a certain amount of scope, with the intention of provoking and stimulating professional debate to further enhance the de-

velopment of inclusive education on a global scale in general and in Africa in particular.

The editorial board would like to thank all contributing authors for their dedicated involvement and conscientious drafting of the articles, as well as their cooperation in general. We wish to express our gratitude to Mr. Frank Engelhardt of BELTZ JUVENTA Publishers in Weinheim (Germany) for his support and engagement in this project. Right from the start he was geared towards an Open-Access-Publication, facilitating the widest possible reader circulation. In this context, our gratitude extends to the efforts of the Ludwig-Maximilians-University (LMU) in Munich (Germany), for setting up an Open Access Fund for the corresponding authors and participating members of the university. A contribution to the publishing fees financed by the LMU Open Access Fund via the German Research Foundation was thus possible.

We would also like to thank our translator and English language editor, Jill Stephens, for the editing and fine-tuning of all the contributions which were written in English and forwarded to her.

Finally, for typesetting and book formatting we are endebted to Frau Hannelore Raudszus and likewise to Frau Christine Woolner for her generous all-round support.

Addis Ababa, July 2023
Annette Leonhardt/Tirussew Teferra

Annette Leonhardt

International Comparative Studies on Inclusive and Special Needs Education

International and intercultural comparative studies on inclusive and special needs education focus on the comparative aspects between one or several countries or even continents, as well as the situation in individual countries or groups of countries e.g. in developing countries, in Europe or parts of Europe such as Central Europe/Eastern Europe or in North/South America. For comparative assessment, these will be brought into relationship with each other, using specific criteria to determine similarities and differences. The desired objective and choice of comparative criteria will determine the comparison results (Beltz Lexikon Pädagogik 2007, p. 750).

General background information

Roughly one billion persons worldwide live with disabilities, 80% of whom are living in developing countries (BMZ 2019, p. 5). No reliable statistics as to the exact number of disabled persons are available. Notwithstanding, developing countries are required to create structures to enable children with disabilities to receive a suitable education.

An accurate assessment of the number and situation of persons with disabilities in developing countries is increasingly difficult due to the fact that disability is frequently deemed as divine retribution or a consequence of a sin committed by the mother during pregnancy. In extreme cases, this can result in isolation of the child from the public. Likewise, the cause of disability is often attributed to external occurrence (e.g. falling out of bed or an evil look from the neighbour, assumed fault of the midwife or sins committed by the parents).

Methodology for international observations

Bürli (2016) uses the scientific comparison model for special needs comparison. According to the author, comparisons can be conducted on a *vertical-historical* axis (previous conditions are compared according to current status) or by means of a *horizontal-simultaneous* comparison, whereby (different) spatial factors (e.g., intercultural, international and intranational) are presented in the foreground (ibid. p. 178). Whereas until approx. end of the 1980s description and comparison featured in the foreground, today the focus is on the idea of cooperation (e.g. networking or the implementation of action programmes). Here the main goal is to facilitate transnational support and mutual exchange. Intercultural, international quality assurance and optimisation are secondary goals (Bürli 2020, p. 140). As a result, "solutions to problems are to be embedded in a spatial, temporal and sociocultural network of relationships" (Bürli 2016, p. 178).

Comparative observations and studies on an international scale are frequently hindered by the varying terminology used for comparative assessments in various countries- and often within the country itself. A lack of standard semantic terminology often leads to a distortion of the original meaning, communicating a wider or narrower interpretation of the desired meaning.

Status of Ratification and Signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities in African Countries

Since the entry into force of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (CRPD) 185 and 164 countries have ratified and signed the treaty respectively (status as from May 2022) (www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html). Since then, not only new developments in mainstream and special education worldwide can be observed, but, with the exception of Africa, also structural changes in special needs education to facilitate inclusion, whereby 'special' schools are rare (apart from isolated schools for the Deaf or Blind or students with mental and physical challenges). For many students with disabilities, school attendance – if at all possible – has been invariably 'inclusive'. And in the absence of individual support or monitoring, the dropout quota is extremely high. Measures to address or at least minimise the problem are desperately needed.

An overview of ratification and signing of the UNCRPD is presented below. The countries selected for the book are highlighted.

Table 1: Ratification and Signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by African Countries

State	ratified in:	signed in:
Álgeria	2007	2009
Angola		2014 (Accession*)
Benin	2008	2012
Botswana		2021 (Accession)
Burkina Faso	2007	2009
Burundi	2007	2014
Cabo Verde	2007	2011
Cameroon	2008	
Central African Republic	2007	2016
Chad	2012	2019
Comoros	2007	2016
Congo	2007	2014
Côte d'Ivoire	2007	2014
Democratic Republic of the Congo		2015 (Accession)
Egypt	2007	2008
Equatorial Guinea		2022 (Accession)
Eswatini	2007	2012
Ethiopia	2007	2010
Gabon	2007	2007
Gambia		2015 (Accession)
Ghana	2007	2012
Guinea	2007	2008
Guinea-Bissau	2013	2014
Kenya	2007	2008
Lesotho		2008 (Accession)

* "Accession" is the act whereby a state accepts the offer or the opportunity to become a party to a treaty already negotiated and signed by other states. It has the same legal effect as ratification. Accession usually occurs after the treaty has entered into force. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his function as depositary, has also accepted accessions to some conventions before their entry into force. The conditions under which accession may occur and the procedure involved depend on the provisions of the treaty. A treaty might provide for the accession of all other states or for a limited and defined number of states. In the absence of such a provision, accession can only occur where the negotiating states were agreed or subsequently agree on it in the case of the state in question." [Arts. 2 (1) (b) and 15, Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969] aus: https://treaties.un.org/pages/Overview.aspx?path=overview/glossary/page1_en.xml.

State	ratified in:	signed in:
Madagascar	2007	2015
Malawi	2007	2009
Mali	2007	2008
Mauritania		2012 (Accession)
Mauritius	2007	2010
Morocco	2007	2009
Mozambique	2007	2012
Namibia	2007	2007
Niger	2007	2008
Nigeria	2007	2010
Rwanda		2008 (Accession)
Sao Tome and Principe		2015 (Accession)
Senegal	2007	2010
Seychelles	2007	2009
Sierra Leone	2007	2010
Somalia	2018	2019
South Africa	2007	2007
Sudan	2007	2009
Togo	2008	2011
Tunisia	2007	2008
Uganda	2007	2008
United Republic of Tanzania	2007	2009
Zambia	2008	2010
Zimbabwe		2013 (Accession)

(www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html) (status as from August 2022)

Of the countries presented in the table, ca. three quarters (about 75%) had already ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by 2007. The opening for the signing of the treaty in 2007 triggered a worldwide scientific and educational debate on "inclusion" (particularly at school level), although the term had already been introduced and documented in the Salamanca Declaration of 1994. The remarks made about "education" (Article 24) led to a cross-border professional exchange of views. Multinational comparative studies shifted into focus again.

Research methods and perspectives

Varying research methods are used for international and intercultural comparative studies in the field of special needs education and inclusive education. Both hermeneutic and empirical approaches are possible. Erdélyi (2012), who processed these for international and intercultural comparison of special needs education, differentiates between descriptive (assessment of the situation in the country), comparative (identification of similarities and differences), normative (inclusion of international experience) and cooperative (finding opportunities for cooperation) methods.

The sources of information are very broad, ranging from basic sources and case studies reported in literature and professional discourse to study trips and various periods of stay in the place of observation. There are also personal and foreign experiences or combinations of both.

Last not least is the accessibility of the research field. Each of the above mentioned procedures has its advantages and drawbacks.

International research studies face several challenges: the central problems include accessibility to and context situation of data, country structures (education, health and social systems), varying semantic treatment and translation (Bürli 1997), but also personal experience, moral values and norms of the comparatists.

The diversity of current research subjects is huge. Addressing this issue would require suitable research methods. Likewise, there is a need for systematic, organisational structures.

Worldwide Trend: from the special school to schools for all

Education of children and adolescents with disabilities or special needs is increasingly shifting from the special school to the all-inclusive. This trend can be observed worldwide but mainly in countries of Europe (see Leonhardt & Pospischil 2018) and several industrial nations* outside Europe (see e.g. Felder 2018, Leonhardt 2022) are restructuring their school systems. Until recently these students attended highly differentiated special needs schools. These countries are now striving to create an all-inclusive structure

* Industrial nations (or countries) is to be understood as countries with highly developed industries and technologies – as opposed to agricultural or developing, emerging economies. Among numerous other factors, common denominators include high income per capita, a high level of education and a (mostly) stable currency as well as a high standard of technology (Utopia 2019).

in mainstream schools whereas in many African countries, existing inclusive schools are undergoing structural changes to accommodate more students with disabilities or students with special needs in the currently existing mainstream schools. The first step in this direction was already taken following the Salamanca Conference in 1994, gaining impetus following The UN Convention on Rights of Disabled Persons in 2006.

Creation of inclusive school systems largely depends on the availability of professional staff. How unevenly distributed this appears on the globe is exemplified by the overview of professional teachers for the Hearing Impaired, as presented in the World Report on Hearing in 2021:

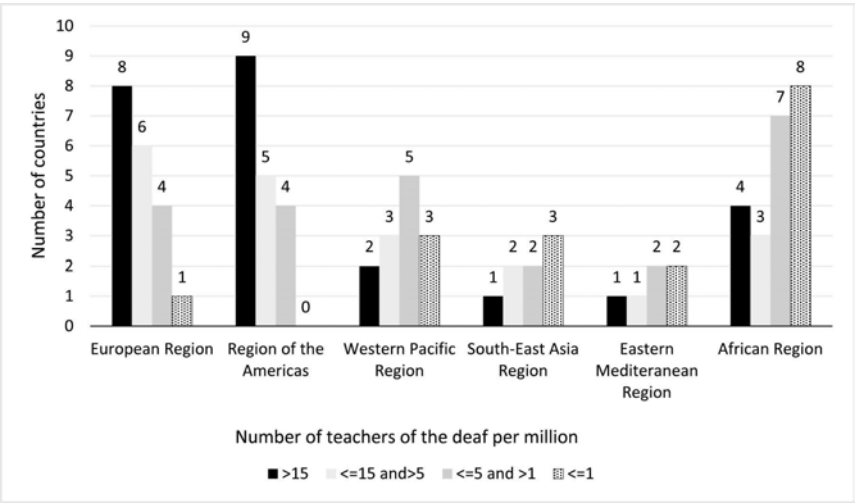

Figure 1: Distribution of teachers for the Hearing Impaired in WHO regions (WHO 2021, p. 168)

This situation applies to all specialist teaching staff. In many African countries teacher training programmes or special needs education are currently available; very few, however, offering qualifications for the individual disability.

Outlook

Compared with industrial nations, African countries have a very different history of schooling for children and adolescents with disabilities as well as different policies towards inclusive education. These are based on their experience, viewpoints and sustained effort to implement inclusive education. Many African countries display not only a great openness but also a

creative talent for practical application which can also be of great interest for industrial nations in the process of implementation.

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Ernestine Ngo Melha

Inclusive Education in Cameroon

International law and human rights agreements firmly enshrine the right of all students to an inclusive education. The human rights-based approach to education advocated by UNESCO justifies the rationale for inclusive education. This approach indeed combines human rights and education; it highlights such principles as participation, governance and non-discrimination. It clarifies the role of the learner as holder of rights; the government and institutions as bearers of responsibilities and duties.

This article presents an overview of inclusive education in Cameroon (Central Africa). The country has an estimated population of 26 million (2021) and the official languages are French and English. The education system is organised into two sub-systems: Anglophone and Francophone.

Portrait of Disability Prevalence and Access to Education

Disability definition in Cameroon

The definition of disability in Cameroon is based on the Protection and Promotion of the Disabled Act (loi No. 2010/002 du 13 avril 2010 portant protection et promotion des personnes handicapées) (République du Cameroon 2010b) and inspired by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). According to this law, disability is "a limitation of opportunities for full participation of a person with impairment in an activity in a given environment".

In Cameroon, prevalence of adult disability is documented in three nationally represented surveys:

- the Third Population and Housing Census of 2005 (troisième recensement générale de la population et de l'habitat (3RGPH)) (Mbouyap & Ahanda 2005),
- the Cameroonian Household Survey (Enquête camerounaise auprès des ménages (ECAM3)), conducted in 2007 (Enquête Camerounaise auprès des Ménages (ECAM3), 2008), and

- the Demographic Health and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (Enquête démographique et de santé à indicateurs multiples (EDS-MICS)) of 2011.

In these surveys, the screening instruments used for measuring disability differ considerably from one another and also from the Washington Group (WG) screening method.

However, two local studies specifically related to disability used the WG screening for disability assessment: the Disability and HIV study among adults in Yaoundé (HandiVIH) in 2015, and the 2014 North West Cameroon Disability Study (NWCDS) were conducted in all age groups of the rural population located in the Northwest Region of the country.

Prevalence of disability in Cameroon

According to the latest Demographic Health and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) of 2011 (Enquête démographique et de santé à indicateurs multiples (EDS-MICS) 2011), 5,4% of the population in Cameroon live with at least one disability; sensory impairments (3,5%) are the most frequent, in particular visual (2,2%) and hearing (1,6%) impairments, followed by physical defects (1,2%) mainly arising from deformation of the lower or upper limbs.

Moreover, the proportion of people with disabilities is higher in rural (6%) than in urban areas (4%) and this proportion increases with age, ranging from slightly above 1% among children aged 0–4 years to 6% in people aged 25–49 and reaching up to 9% in those aged 50 or over.

A detailed survey on the socio-economic situation of people with disabilities in Cameroon, involving the entire population (Mbouyap & Ahanda 2005), identified 262.119 people –127.738 women and 134.738 men – with at least one disability, representing an overall disability prevalence of 1,5%; 1,5% women and 1,6% men. Rural areas have a higher rate (1,7%) than urban areas (1,3%). Men represent 51,4% of the disability rate compared to 48,6% women. In summary, persons with disabilities represent 1,3% and 1,7% of the urban and rural population respectively.

The results of the 3rd General Population and Housing Census conducted by the Bureau central des recensements et des Etudes de Population (BUCREP) in 2005 (Mbouyap & Ahanda 2005) confirm that the prevalence of disability in the country's population increases with age, probably due to incapacitating diseases which also increase with age. The population below the age of 15 has a prevalence of 1,0% whilst 60+ represents 5,7%.

The male population has higher prevalence rates than the female population, irrespective of location. In urban areas the prevalence in the male

population is 1,4% compared with 1,3% in the female population and in rural areas the rate is 1,8% in the male population compared with 1,7% in the female population.

With regard to type of disability, the Deaf, with a 38,8% proportion of all disabilities, have the highest rate, followed by the Physically Disabled of the lower limb (15,3%), the Mute (14,3%), the Blind (10,9%), the Lepers (6,7%), the Disabled of the upper limb (6,3%), the Mentally Challenged (6,3%) and the Albinos (1,4%).

By region, the prevalence rates are as follows: Adamaoua (0,9%), Center (1,6%), East (1,3), Far North (1,6%), Littoral (1,5%), North (1,2%), North-West (1,9%), West (1,8%), South (2,6%) and South-West (1,6%). Thus Adamaoua (0,9%) has the lowest prevalence rate, whilst the southern region rates the highest (2,6%).

In the case where several types of disabilities present in the same person, nearly one in four disabled people has at least two disabilities (23%).

Due to the models used, the statistical data governing the schooling of children with disabilities at the national level lack precision. However, according to estimates from various Cameroonian household surveys: ECAM3 (Enquête camerounaise auprès des ménages) (2008) and the Demographic Health Survey (2012) (Enquête démographique et de santé à indicateurs multiples (EDS-MICS, 2012)), results show that almost 2% of the number of students enrolled following the Dakar declaration on the objectives of education for all. The situations are to be assessed at the local level.

Access to Education

The net enrollment rates for young people with disabilities averages at 69,9% overall; 77,3% for boys and 77,2% for girls in urban areas compared to 66,4% for boys and 63,7% in rural regions. The regional percentage rates for schooling are as follows: Adamaoua (45,3%), Center (76,6%), East (66,1%), Far North (62,8%), Littoral (81,8%), North (55,7%), North-West (72,2%), West (78,9%), South (75,3%) and South-West (76,0%). Apart from the Far North and northern regions, where the schooling of children with disabilities does not seem to be hampered by their disability, the attendance rate of disabled students in the other regions is below the overall average enrollment rates of children in these regions.

These low comparative levels of primary school enrollment rates for children with disabilities will inevitably lead to low levels of education and literacy in adulthood. The Mute, the Mentally Challenged and the Blind are the most disadvantaged in terms of access to schooling.

Review of National Policy and Strategy Documents

In Cameroon the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP) was ratified in 2021 (Décret n° 2021/751 du 28 décembre 2021) (République du Cameroun 2021). In 2010, the country adopted a law No. 2010/002 pledging the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities, which was followed by a decree in 2018 defining the modalities of application of this law (Décret n° 2018/6233/PM du 26 juillet 2018 (République du Cameroun 2020) fixant les modalités d'application de la loi n° 2010/002 du 13 avril 2010 (République du Cameroun 2010b) portant protection et promotion des personnes handicapées); in 1998 an education orientation law was adopted (Loi d'orientation de l'éducation n° 98/004 du 14 avril 1998) (République du Cameroun 1998). An education and training sector strategy, essentially focusing on equity in and access to education, was developed for the period 2013–2020.

The reforms envisaged, in terms of educational access and equity and training structures, focus on taking into account the disabled and vulnerable populations in education policy, particularly in school construction, the training of trainers, and the implementation of targeted policies in favour of the education of minorities such as Baka, Bororos, children of refugees, children with disabilities.

The country has signed and ratified several international conventions on the protection of the rights of refugees, women, children, people with disabilities and learners with special educational needs. The 1996 Constitution and the National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (2015–2019) (République du Cameroun 2015) in the country recognise the right to education (free and compulsory at primary level, regardless of disability), which primarily enables economically and socially marginalised learners to prepare for their entry into the labour market and to participate fully in the life of their community.

Furthermore, the orientation law of education No. 98/004 of April 14, 1998 (Loi d'orientation de l'éducation n° 98/004 du 14 avril 1998) (République du Cameroun 1998), guaranteed equal opportunities of access to education to all citizens, outlawing discrimination on sex, political, philosophical and religious opinions, as well as social, cultural, linguistic or geographical origin. This law also stipulates that the State shall ensure the development and implementation of the education policy in collaboration with the decentralised territorial collectivities, families and public and private institutions.

The Constitution, together with decrees, laws and circulars protect disabled and vulnerable learners. The laws aim to support people with disabilities and indicate that human and didactic resources must be provided.

- Law 83/13 (loi n° 83/13 du 21 juillet 1983 relative à la protection des personnes handicapées) stipulates that families, supported by the State, shall ensure access to mainstream schools for disabled children.
- Law 2010/002 (Loi n° 2010/002 du 13 Avril 2010 Portant sur la Protection et la Promotion des Personnes Handicapées) (République du Cameroun 2010b) focuses on the well-being of disabled learners and aims to strengthen their psychological well-being, self-esteem and their social relations. It authorises penalties for school officials who discriminate against these learners.
- Decree 90/1516 (Décret n° 90/1516 du 26 novembre 1990 fixant ls modalités d'application de la loi n° 83/13 du 21 juillet 1983 relative à la protection des personnes handicapées) (République du Cameroun 2010a) stipulates that students with disabilities must be allowed to repeat a class twice if the failure is due to their disability. The decree also guarantees education quotas and highlights the need to train more teachers in inclusive teaching strategies. Although often not explicitly formulated these laws and practices attempt to achieve inclusion in education.

With regard to policies and practices, the National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (Plan d'action national de promotion et de protection des droits de l'homme (2015–2019)) has made some valuable contributions to inclusive education, including the drafting of a practical guide on the accessibility for contractors, building owners, architectural firms and decision makers. Last not least, the government provides scholarships and training grants as well as excellence bonuses for deserving learners with disabilities.

The 2013–2020 education sector plan (Document de stratégie du secteur de l'éducation et de la formation) (République du Cameroun 2013), confirms a government pledge to intensify its commitment, together with all the actors involved in the detection, support or treatment of disabilities and a disability-friendly schooling environment (adapted premises, equipment, didactic tools, teaching aids, specific training, teaching practices) for an inclusive approach and/or for the development of special education if proved to be more suitable for certain disabilities. Among the reforms focusing on educational access and equity and training facilities, the decree underlines the "*taking into account of the disabled and vulnerable populations in educational policy, particularly in school construction and the training of trainers*" (République du Cameroun 2013: Document de stratégie du secteur de l'éducation et de la formation, p. 61).

Disability Education Landscape

The institutional partnership between the Ministry of Basic Education, Ministry of Secondary Education and Ministry of Social Affairs committed to the integration of young people with disabilities into schools has remained inoperative for many years due to the barriers that exist between these different institutions on the one hand and the absence of a simple school integration service dedicated to children with special educational needs on the other hand.

As in several other African countries, the education system governing learners with disabilities was designed from two models with different philosophies on the education of learners with special needs (Ngo Mélha 2013). The medical model attributes the special needs issue as a condition within the child as if learning difficulties were a kind of illness. The social and educational model of disability, on the other hand, recognises that learning difficulties depend on the educational context in which the child is located and on the type and quality of teachers.

The education sector strategy document does not clearly define children with disabilities in the context of educational needs (Ngo Mélha 2017); they are referred to as "vulnerable children" which is semantically social. One is led to question the way in which actions relating to the social sector (Ministry of Social Affairs) and those carried out by the ministries responsible for national education are coordinated with a view to effectively and efficiently guaranteeing the right to education and optimal personal development, geared towards full participation in society (Ngo Mélha 2020, 2017).

In Cameroon, legal documents concerning inclusion are fragmented and only partially implemented. Typically, they include one or a combination of two or more of the following issues: disability, school or education laws; official circulars, orders or decrees; the national constitution; national adaptation of UNESCO's education for all (EFA) and inclusive education goals (Global education monitoring report 2020). Most forms of support services focus on education rights for all rather than human rights-based support services.

The principles and objectives of education for all are to promote educational rights and access to schooling for all in special, specialised or mainstream schools, whereas inclusion promotes a diversity of students (able-bodied, disabled or disadvantaged) in the same school setting. The models used are school integration and inclusion.

Due to the models used, the statistical data relating to the schooling of children with disabilities at the national level lacks precision. The situations are to be assessed at local level.

Data on the schooling of pupils with disabilities focuses on 3 types of impairments: hearing, visual and physical as well as the respective study level. According to the annual statistical document of the Ministry of Basic Education (Annuaire statistique 2020/2021), 2.342 students with disabilities were enrolled in pre-school, including 304 in public settings, 1.031 in private and community schools; 915 in private secular schools and private catholic schools and 92 in private islamic and private protestant schools.

In primary education a total of 143.565 pupils with disabilities were enrolled including 7.654 in public primary schools, 2.655 in private and community schools, 625 in private catholic and private islamic schools, 1.974 in private secular and private protestant schools.

Law 90/1516 stipulates that the education of children and adolescents with disabilities must be provided for in mainstream and special schools. If necessary, mainstream schools welcoming children with disabilities will be staffed with special teachers and teaching materials adapted to the needs of the children. In general, the provision of education for children with disabilities includes three types of establishments or settings:

- functional rehabilitation centres,
- specialised institutions,
- special classes annexed to ordinary or mainstream schools.

Educational provision is ensured by the State and other private, secular or denominational actors.

Education of children with disabilities is catered for in mainstream or specialised schools depending on the type of disability. However, there is no collaboration between mainstream and specialised education. Children with disabilities attending mainstream schools are disadvantaged in that mainstream teachers are not trained to adapt to their needs; there are specialised schools for the Blind and Partially Sighted, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, as well as for the Mentally Challenged and those with cerebral palsy. Psychoeducational structures exist, offering specific support for autistic students, with the aim of integration into the mainstream environment. This initiative is formulated in an article of the law of 13 April 2010 governing the protection and promotion of people with disabilities. It defines special education as that which consists of providing appropriate methods of communication for those with physical, sensory, mental and multiple disabilities, enabling access to normal schooling and subsequent vocational training.

Education of children with disabilities in mainstream schools leaves much to be desired. Students with disabilities are often enrolled in special schools run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private actors. In 2012, there were 19 special schools in Cameroon, of which 16 belonged

to missionaries and 3 to the government; 60 were run by parents or the community in 2021.

The non-inclusion in mainstream schools of children with disabilities makes social and professional integration difficult. And, incidentally, autistic children are still not accepted in mainstream schools (Ivan 2017).

Status of Inclusive Education

Cameroon does not have a fixed definition of inclusive education with regard to the model used. Inclusive education refers to the category of "vulnerable learners" which includes children with disabilities, children belonging to an ethnic minority (Bororo, Bakas), street children, children from displaced or refugee families, children with HIV/AIDS (Document de stratégie du secteur de l'éducation et de la formation 2013–2020 (République du Cameroun 2013) and 2022–2030 (République du Cameroun 2020)).

Special educational needs

The country defines children with special educational needs (Laws 2010/003 and 2005/006) as those who experience significant learning difficulties due to some form of disability. The concept of special needs has a wider meaning in Cameroon and includes children in educationally isolated landlocked regions, displaced, economically disadvantaged children from marginalised strata, nomads and students in overcrowded classes.

The practice of inclusive education in Cameroon is backed by both national and international legal instruments. At a national level, the country has three important legislative and policy documents dealing with the right to inclusive education of persons with disabilities. On an international basis, the country has ratified the United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) (United Nations 2006) and it is especially committed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SDG4.

Education sector plan

The main objective of the plan (document de stratégie du secteur de l'éducation et de la formation' 2013–2020 and 2022–2030) is to achieve universal quality education at primary level. The plan identifies the main challenges facing the country's education sector: the persistence of disparities between genders, regions and income categories. To address these is-

sues, the plan focuses on access and equity, quality and relevance and sector governance and management. Inclusive education is addressed via a multi-sectoral approach.

Implementation

The government has deepened its reflection together with all the stakeholders involved in the support or treatment of disabilities (health, social affairs, associations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs)) with the aim of studying the response to the inclusive approach and restructuring of the school framework (establishments, equipment, didactic tools, teaching aids, specific training, teaching practices) and/or the development of special education if more suited to certain impairments.

In the case of didactic tools, specific modules have been developed in the initial training of trainers programme. These modules facilitate better understanding of impairments and aim to enable future teachers to identify and handle the most common disabilities. Teachers also participate in further education programmes to enhance their teaching skills.

In 2018, a partnership agreement was signed between the Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC) and the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Sightsavers. This partnership agreement deals with the training of teachers, at the Teacher Training College for General Education (ENIEG) and Technical Education (ENIET) for inclusive education.

For the coming years, a system aimed at a better understanding of students with disabilities is strongly recommended.

Although the country has a solid legal and institutional framework to safeguard inclusive education, children with disabilities still experience a number of challenges when it comes to access to mainstream education. Most of the children lack self-esteem and self-confidence, due to the stigma and discrimination experienced since birth. They may have been subjected to disparate treatment by parents, relatives and neighbours. They often stay at home, isolated in hiding, too insignificant for school enrollment which could offer a rightful education. The teachers lack empathy and are also not equipped with the expertise and skills needed to teach children with disabilities. There is a lack of teaching staff and insufficient teaching materials and teaching aids. Moreover, the schools also lack ramps and appropriate toilets, disability-friendly classrooms and recreational spaces appropriate for these children.

Governance

The Ministries of basic, secondary and higher education are charged with the responsibility of implementing inclusive education in Cameroon. The Ministry of Social Affairs assesses learners with disabilities through its regional delegations, and issues disability cards so that these learners can benefit from education free of tuition fees.

Within the Ministry of Basic Education, there is a sector dedicated to inclusive education. In Cameroon, there is still no strategic partnership for the coordination of inclusive education interventions at a local level.

Services and infrastructure

According to Act 90/1516, schools are required to make the necessary adjustments to meet the needs of all children, including those with disabilities. Law 2011/018 makes the practice of physical and sporting activities compulsory, particularly in rehabilitation institutions for people with disabilities.

A decree which transforms 68 pilot schools into experimental schools with specific attributions was signed in 2018. There are specialised schools under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and private initiatives with sound expertise in special education and inclusive education. Some experimental schools are supported by non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The rehabilitation of schools, the accessibility of the school environment, the adaptation and construction of infrastructure (latrines, classroom lighting) are planned.

Curriculum and teaching materials

The assessment system and curricula are the same except for some learners with disabilities. With regard to student assessment, a reform of the system was planned to transform the assessment of learning into a didactic tool rather than one of exclusion. The country has established individual education plans for children to follow, the provision of schools with specific teaching materials and equipment (Braille table, punch, Braille, tricycle, white canes) and improved physical accessibility in schools (e.g. access ramps). A special fund is available for the purchase of specialised equipment and for the running of the schools.

Future Prospects for Inclusive Education in Cameroon

For inclusive education to work effectively, it must respond to the needs of each child; the types and quality of teaching and resources, including credible systems and the roles of teachers are crucial to learning success. These considerations are important because the right of the child in inclusive education is to receive an education according to both ability and disability and teaching must take this into account in practice (Tchombe et al. 2014).

Apart from international commitments, there is a national political desire towards achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). Regarding SDG4, efforts are being made to train inclusive teachers; build infrastructure accessible to all and proceed with the transformation of existing infrastructure into an accessible institution for all. Several opportunities are also offered to Cameroon, such as multi-country initiatives and funding for inclusive education, the existence of private initiatives with sound expertise in inclusive education; the establishment of an educational management information systems (EMIS), the Program for Education Reforms in Cameroon, the revision of the growth and employment strategy and the education and training sector strategy. The potential existence of an effective information system can provide decision-makers and stakeholders in the education system with reliable data to effectively support decision-making in inclusive education policy. This implies the introduction of quality standard assessment tools.

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Inclusive Education in Egypt: Is There a Way Forward?

Egypt is regarded as one of the earliest and greatest civilisations in the world, with remarkable achievements in all walks of life. In this densely populated country of over 104 million inhabitants, at least 10% of the population live with disabilities. Attitudes towards people with disabilities have recently shifted from the charity or the medical model to a more human rights-based approach, whereby the rights of people with disabilities are seen as vital in all aspects of life. In this respect, Egypt recognises that the inclusion of people with disabilities is the only way forward. This shift is evident in the new disability law, in addition to numerous initiatives currently underway to improve the quality of life and opportunities for people with disabilities. Egypt has not yet reached the required goal but is definitely on the right track.

Introduction

Inclusion of individuals with disabilities has come a long way in securing rights and mainstreaming in society. Even though many efforts were initiated about three decades ago, since 2013 there has been an increasingly upward trend; in other words, the last 10 years have witnessed considerable progress. However, largely due to the economic turmoil in the whole world as well as in Egypt, there still remains a gap between where we are currently and where we aim to be.

One of the first markers in the change of dialogue concerning individuals with disabilities in Egypt is the change in the way they are referred to. Instead of the "disabled" or "handicapped" as was the custom for a long time, people with disabilities are now regarded as people, the disability merely a feature rather than the person as a whole. Some policy makers prefer to use the term "able with difference" (AWD), in an attempt to include these people in mainstream society, focusing more on their individual potential which can contribute to national production. However, the inter-

nationally agreed upon term is persons with disabilities (PWD). This is a significant step since the charity model focused on vulnerability, encouraging kindness, which for sympathetic fellow citizens was a gateway to heaven. It is also significant that there is a shift in the attitude towards people with disabilities from the medical model, which had also prevailed for many years, leading parents and professionals to believe that disability was a kind of illness that may or may not be cured. The negative implication of both the charity model and the medical model is that the education and inclusion of people with disabilities was not regarded as a right but rather as a privilege. Also, there is the implication that nothing can be done to improve the life and future of people with disabilities (Hassanein 2015). However, a change in attitude can be observed in Egypt. But is this enough and is this conceptual change reflected in the education system itself?

Egypt is the most populated Arab country, with 104,4 million inhabitants in 2022 according to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS). The CAPMAS survey of 2020 identified nearly 10 million citizens living with disabilities. This makes the focus on persons with disabilities (PWDs) important; based on the Ministry of Education data, 7–10% of student enrollments in the education system in 2013 have disabilities, ranging from intellectual disabilities to visual and hearing impairments (CAPMAS 2022). Throughout the past years, much progress has taken place in relation to special and inclusive education in Egypt. The new legislation guarantees the rights of PWDs, and the Egyptian government tries to provide different forms of care, including social care, the right to education, physical rehabilitation (Ghobrial & Vance 1988).

Education Disability Landscapes in Egypt

As mentioned above, in Egypt, children with disabilities constitute 10–12% of the population, and many live in impoverished conditions, their disability thus exacerbated by poverty. In this respect, disability does not only represent 10% of the population (the children with disabilities) but also the involvement of their family members. Thus it is safe to say that 25–32% of the population are involved.

Before reporting on the most recent efforts, it is well worth mentioning that Egypt's efforts to provide support for PWDs can be observed over a long period of time. Since 1874, many schools have been established for visually impaired and hard of hearing persons. The efforts include not only the Hard of Hearing or Visually Impaired, but also people with other kinds of disabilities, e.g. in 1956, the Ministry of Education established the first institute for students with an intellectual disability.

More recently, as of 2018, around 19,4 million students were enrolled in Egyptian primary and secondary schools with a net enrollment of 97% and 81% primary and secondary respectively. Enrollments of children with disabilities is nevertheless relatively low.

> *"In 2016, however, the Ministry reported that only 38.135 students with disabilities were enrolled in the education system, corresponding to less than 0,19% of the overall number of students enrolled. This is a disproportionately low and shocking statistic, given the estimation that 15% of the world's population has a disability" (Factsheet – Egypt, April 2022, p. 1).*

In Egypt, there are parallel systems of education: the government schools, private schools and international schools. The exact number of government-run schools for children with intellectual disabilities is not known, but most of them suffer from lack of resources and lack of trained teachers. Currently there are private schools and centres that cater for children with intellectual disabilities such as "The right to live Association" which is a parent led non-profit organisation that provides early intervention, education and vocational training for children with intellectual disabilities.

There is a high incidence of deaf people in Egypt, estimated at almost 5 million, and it is thought that family intermarriage plays a role in this condition. Currently, 113 schools for the Deaf using both sign language and spoken language exist. The level of education is reportedly poor (African Sign Languages Resource Center 2023).

However, there is a nursery school for deaf children with a successful early interventional policy of education in preparation for mainstream schooling (Nida Society).

In the case of blindness, the current estimation of blind people in Egypt is between 800.000 and 1 million and 3 million with visual impairment. There are some schools for the Blind that still use Braille books which are very expensive and hard to get. Also, there is discrimination against blind youth; they are not allowed to pursue further education in science majors and are restricted to certain majors. There are also some NGOs currently involved in supporting children with visual impairment in mainstream schools.

Some of the international schools and some of the private language schools are inclusive schools that try to include children with disabilities.

Moving on to what has been really happening during the past 10 years it is important to highlight that many different organisations – international, national and non-governmental – are collaborating in support of PWDs.

The National Council for Persons with Disabilities was established by Presidential Decree No. 11/2019 to replace the National Council for Dis-

ability Affairs issued by Prime Ministerial Decree No. 410/2012, to which all rights and responsibilities are assumed. The Council's main aim is to promote, develop and protect the constitutionally mandated rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and to raise awareness. This is considered as one of the main efforts made by the government to ensure equality of all individuals with disabilities, including children. As regards our main focus, which is inclusive education, UNICEF is considered as a main supporter and collaborator.

According to the UNICEF programme "Learning Improvement for Everyone", about 181 public primary schools in Alexandria, Assiut, Cairo, Damietta, Gharbia, Matrouh, and Sohag received resource rooms and adequate training for the integration of 1.943 AWDs. Moreover, there are about 1.765 teachers, social workers, school psychologists, principals, and deputies trained in inclusive education. The purpose of the improved capacity of teachers is to improve the quality of teaching not only for PWDs, but for other children as well (UNICEF 2016).

The Study by Elhadi (2021) on the national strategic plan for the reform of pre-university education in Egypt (2008) ensured that PWDs would be supported by special education services through specialised schools, as well as through independent special classes within public schools. The Ministry of Education implemented a number of protocols such as the full inclusion or partial inclusion of PWDs in mainstream schools, on an experimental basis. Both national strategies of 2008 ensured the right of PWDs to be included with other students (Elhadi 2021, Ministry of Education 2016).

More recently, to guarantee equal rights to students with disabilities, various efforts have been made to include persons with disabilities and provide educational opportunities for them. The American University in Cairo established its Centre in 2008 to cater for the needs of their PWDs, and to initiate their educational inclusion. In addition, the "AmidEast" (the America-Mideast Educational and Training Services) which is an American non-profit organization whose objective is to collaborate with countries in the Middle East and North Africa with the aim of offering education and training opportunities, awarded 7% of the 673 scholarships to students with disabilities, on condition that they fulfill certain criteria, in addition to providing them with assistive technology. As a result of the passing of the Disability Law in Egypt (2018 Law 10), very significant achievements for PWD were realised: "Amideast" and "Helm Consulting for Inclusion Solutions" in collaboration with five universities (Cairo, Ain Shams, Alexandria, Mansoura, and Assiut Universities) were founded on campus centres to provide services and accommodation for students with disabilities. In June 2022, there were 15 more public universities that started up centres of support to students with disabilities. The 15 universities include: Tanta, Zagazig, Hel-

wan, Suez Canal, Beni Sueif, South Valley, Fayoum, Sohag, Damanhour, Damietta, Suez, Sadat, Arish, New Valley and Luxor.

Even the Egyptian constitution was modified to guarantee the right to education for students with disabilities, including article 19, 81 and 93. Article 19 of the 2014 The Constitution states that every citizen has the right to education and promotes the values of tolerance and non-discrimination. It also affirms that 'the state is committed to uphold its aims in education curricula and methods, and to provide education in accordance with global quality criteria'. 'Article 81 also guarantees that the right to education is given to any person with any kind of disability. Additionally, the state has to provide work opportunities for these individuals, and allocate a percentage of these opportunities to them, as well as providing public utility equipment in their surrounding environment. The State guarantees their right to integration with other citizens in order to achieve the principles of equality, justice and equal opportunities.' Article 93 of the Constitution states that: 'The State shall be committed to the international human rights agreements, covenants and conventions ratified by Egypt, which shall have the force of law after publication in accordance with the prescribed conditions.' The Constitution also confirms all rights and duties for special needs persons in Articles 53, 55, 54, 80, 81, 180, 214 and 244.

Efforts are not only confined to Egypt. At an international level Egypt ratified the Convention Against Discrimination in Education in 1962. It also ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008. Following endorsement of the CRPD, the Egyptian Ministry of Education issued a ministerial decree in 2009, updated in 2015, mandating the admission of students with mild disabilities to public and private schools pending acceptance whilst aiming to prepare 5.040 schools for the inclusion of 152.000 students by 2012.

It is important to highlight that the 2018 Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities includes seven sections, including one dedicated to education which requires education institutions to adopt policies to support people with disabilities as well as to provide equal opportunities in education. Most essentially, it forbids rejection of student applications due to disability. The law enforces a criminal accountability for officials who infringe this provision, with a fine from 500 to 2.000 Egyptian pounds (roughly US$32 to US$128), with multiple penalties for multiple offences. The Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulates that educational institutions risk losing their licenses for rejecting a child exclusively because of disability. Further, the Ministry of Education and other concerned parties shall be committed to taking the necessary steps to ensure that PWDs are incorporated and assimilated in government and non-government education institutions (Art. 12). Moreover, PWDs have the right to receive a good-quality

and inclusive education in order that they may participate in society without facing discrimination (Art. 12).

The Ministry of Education is mandated through Article 9 of Law No. 139 of 1981 to create schools for gifted and talented students as well as special education schools to teach students with disabilities. Many efforts have been made to allow students with disabilities to participate in the education process, including full integration into suitably equipped schools. However, according to the 2014–2030 National Strategic Plan, the Ministry of Education sees the past and current efforts as merely a 'trial phase'; as there is still a need for efforts to be intensified and repeated to cater for more students with disabilities. Contrary to the aims of the National Strategic Plan 2014–2030, there are few schools offering integration – considering the approx. 796 schools targeted for integration – with only 3.697 integrated students. Moreover, there are about 3.420 trained teachers and specialists with a mere 29 trained specialists trained in applying state of the art standards, as well as only 70 resource rooms. The 2014–2030 National Strategic Plan is thus committed to improving services in the current existing special education schools by means of: 1) expanding the number of schools catering for students with disabilities and 2) providing all new schools with infrastructure to help fully integrate students with disabilities (Strategic Plan for Pre-University Education 2014–2030).

The 2018 Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that public and private education institutions shall be committed to applying the rule of equality for nondisabled and disabled children alike (Art. 13). The Ministry of Education is obliged to offer education based on the nature and level of disability (Art. 12). Moreover, the percentage of accepted/admitted children with disability in non-government education institutions should not be lower than 5%, especially when the percentage of applicants with disabilities exceeds that percentage rate (Art. 14). Some minor projects geared towards providing support for full inclusion in mainstream classes include The Caritas Egypt project. Support, Education and Training for Inclusion projects facilitated inclusion of ca. 1.100 children with disabilities in over 90 regular schools.

The status of Inclusive Education in Egypt

Children with disabilities in Egypt still face numerous obstacles to inclusion in various areas of society. In spite of the fact that Egypt has signed and ratified the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which dictates that all children regardless of their disabilities, are to be included, inclusion in practice leaves much to be desired. Governmental bodies are

not yet able to facilitate the full inclusion of children in all aspects of life. The UN convention also stipulates that children should participate in all avenues of life, particularly social interactions and a range of activities (UNICEF 2013).

In 2018 by presidential decree the year 2018 was named the year of people with disabilities and a new disability law was issued.

The law stated that children with disabilities have the right to access various sports and recreational facilities and shall guarantee special training for working with disabled children and adolescents. The government guarantees a funding for respective facilities committed to the full inclusion of children and youth with disabilities (Youm 7, 2019).

Currently, more and more NGOs are doing their utmost to promote the social inclusion of children with disabilities in Egypt. One such example is the ADVANCE society which offers an opportunity on a weekly basis for social interaction between children with disabilities and others via a recreational club on Saturdays (Advance Society 2019).

An international NGO Sœur Emmanuelle (Asmae) has a base in Egypt responsible for ensuring that children with disabilities have access to education and are included in society. This international NGO works with local NGOs not only for educational opportunities for children with disabilities but also in the field of healthcare. They also provide training for teachers in government schools geared to children with disabilities (Asmae, no year).

As a result of the recently approved Disability Law in Egypt, it has become mandatory for sports and recreational clubs to facilitate membership for persons with disabilities and also to facilitate participation in sporting activities at such clubs (Youm 7, 2019). But according to parents of children with disabilities, even though their children are members of a sports' club and the child is e.g. in the swimming team, exclusion prevails since the teams only include children with disabilities, with little or no chance for any interaction with non-disabled children (Hussein 2019).

As for educational inclusion, as highlighted above, in terms of legislation Egypt has been forthcoming in its legislation policy to promote inclusion. The country was quick to ratify all international treaties geared towards promoting inclusion. Also at local level, there are several ministerial decrees and legislation to promote inclusion for persons with disabilities in all avenues of society and in particular in education. However, despite the legislation, and the obvious good intentions and willingness to promote inclusion, it has simply not materialised. The failure focuses on several factors: the nature of disability, the type of school, the type of curriculum, the quality of the teacher training, the social class, the support available and the prevailing attitude amongst parents and teachers.

Type of disability has an affect on whether or not inclusion is attempted or is successful. In the US and Europe inclusion of children with disabilities is also affected by the type of disability. Persons with sensory disabilities and physical disabilities are easier to include than persons with intellectual disabilities. It is well known that if physical adaptations are introduced, hearing aids, lighting and equipment made available, children will be able to access the curriculum. Children with intellectual disabilities, on the other hand, require a change of curriculum and methods and pace of delivery (Lawson 2011, from El Zouhairy).

Some schools attempt to include children with disabilities, whereas many schools are daunted by the prospect since it entails added burdens to the teachers and more financial burdens and logistical difficulties for the schools so that many schools are put off by the upheaval. The only schools willing to accept the challenge are the international schools which have better resources, better trained teachers and a more positive and modern attitude towards inclusion of children. Government schools, already burdened with crowded classes and inflexible curriculum, with high demands placed on teachers, found themselves forced to fulfill the government mandate to accept and include children with disabilities, with the result that children with disabilities were admitted and included only on paper! Recently I conducted an interview with a mother of a child with autism, living in Upper Egypt whose son is registered in a mainstream government school. When asked about her son's experience, she explained that he is in grade 2 but that he does not attend school at all and that she has to pay for a private tutor to teach him at home since the school does not have the capacity or the know-how to cater for his needs. She added that by the time he reaches grade 6 he will be able to take the official exams since he is registered at the school (Personal interview December, 26th 2022).

The Egyptian National curriculum is a very sound and comprehensive curriculum but is notorious for its lack of flexibility. It seems to be designed with the high achievers in mind and it offers very little room for adaptation or modification to meet the different needs of children. Likewise, the system of assessment which is quite rigid and uniform. Some children who go through the lengthy process of assessment and diagnosis may eventually receive differentiated exams but very little differentiated instruction. This explains why international schools are more likely to include persons with disabilities since there is more room for flexibility in grouping and in assessment.

As for teacher training, despite the fact that the revised National Plan of 2012 prescribed teacher training programmes geared towards Inclusive education, training programmes in Egypt do not include the subject of disability and do not prepare teachers for teaching children with disabilities or

differentiation instruction or assessment. Only those who have received their training in programmes abroad or who have higher degrees in education are highly qualified in the field of inclusion and more likely to be working in international schools rather than government schools.

Social class seems to play a role in the type of services available for children with disabilities, since most of the good quality services are usually very expensive which implies that being on the lower side of the social class invariably means less income and thus less ability to secure adequate support for children with disabilities. The state funded support systems are inadequate and incapable of meeting the needs of the large numbers of children needing support.

Finally, one of the biggest obstacles facing the inclusion of children with disabilities is the prevailing negative attitude towards disability. It appears that the stereotypical attitude still prevails and as previously highlighted, the general attitude towards children with disabilities is negative.

Future Perspectives of Inclusive Education in Egypt

Egypt has indeed taken serious steps in the advancement of inclusive education, in terms of the necessary legislation and policies to facilitate the process. There are also numerous initiatives underway, especially in the field of teacher training and preparation of professionals for working in the field of inclusion. To name some of those initiatives, the American University in Cairo launched the first Graduate Diploma in Inclusive Education four years ago. More recently, Zagazig University has introduced a diploma in the area of teaching children with multiple disabilities. Other initiatives in the field of teacher training, "Nida Society" for the training and support of children with hearing impairment, have adopted the "Perkins" curriculum for training teachers of children with multiple disabilities (Perkins Global Community 2022).

Also "Baseera" NGO has developed a post-graduate diploma for poor vision and blindness studies in cooperation with ESLESCA University (ESLESCA University and Baseera, no year).

Additionally, the Egyptian Autistic Society has promoted the first international certification in the area of "Behavior Analysis" (The Egyptian Autistic Community 2022).

As regards the above-mentioned inclusion of persons with disabilities in the work place, the numerous initiatives accomplished to date are strictly related to type of disability. The law mandates that each firm shall employ a minimum of 5% staff with disabilities.

One significant positive change is observed in public opinion; more and more people are becoming aware of the rights and needs of those with disabilities as apparent in modern media treatment of people with disabilities, portraying these people in a more positive light than previously.

Despite all these positive initiatives in Egypt, reaching the desired goal of positive inclusion of people with disabilities leaves much to be desired. To date, steps in the right direction include a positive change in opinion, more awareness of the rights and abilities of the disabled, a commitment to providing for their needs and realisation that people with disabilities have a lot to offer as well as the potential to be productive citizens in society. Even if the ideal inclusion situation is not yet attained, with the legislation in place, the good will and the different initiatives underway, Egypt is definitely on the right track.

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Cebsile P. Nxumalo

Inclusive Education in Eswatini

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UN 2006, MoET 2018), people with disabilities shall have the same rights as all fellow citizens to freedom, respect, equality and dignity. In actual fact, however, people with disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups throughout the entire world. For various reasons, they have limited access to education, services and employment. Consequently, there is an urgent need to address this gap and ensure that their fundamental rights are respected. This paper presents an overview of inclusive education for persons with disabilities in Eswatini. Demographics of disability are included, as well as reports on the legal frameworks. The paper further highlights initiatives to implement inclusive education and close the gaps. In conclusion, the paper presents perspectives for an enhanced inclusive education for persons with disabilities.

Introduction

Disability terminology is the subject of much debate and definitions depend on national social legislation and cultural standards. The Kingdom of Eswatini has adopted the definition outlined in the United Nation on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD UN 2006, Art. 1) which describes disability as "a short or long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder full and effective participation in society on equal basis with others". The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) Sector Policy defines disability "… as an evolving concept resulting from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (MoET 2018, p. x).

Sometimes the terms 'learners with special education needs (LSEN)' and 'disabilities' are used interchangeably, and in this respect the MoET sector policy follows suit. Drawing from the social model of disability, the Ministry defines SN persons as children and adults who need services which are

over and above what is generally provided in the education system. A broad range of learning needs are assumed to arise from a range of factors including physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments; psychosocial issues and varied intellectual ability, life experiences or socio-economic deprivation. The adopted definitions reflect an approach viewed through the social model lense (Oliver 2013) and are influenced by the human rights approach in anticipation that all planning and programming will also adhere to the human rights model.

Prevalence of Disability and Access to Education

Prevalence of Disability

The 2017 Population and Housing Census adopted the Washington Group model to determine the disability rate in the population of Eswatini. Contrary to all previous surveys this survey included questions pertaining to individual difficulty in functioning with or without assistance. According to the 2017 statistics for Eswatini, people with disabilities account for 176.184, representing 16,1% of the country's population. The Eswatini disability prevalence is notably higher than the previously suggested figure of around 10%, as documented by the WHO, in 2011.

The rise could be attributed to a rapid spread of chronic diseases as well as improvements in methodologies used to measure disability. There is a slight decrease of 0,7 in the 2017 statistics compared with the 2007, estimated at 16,8% of the total population. The prevalence is much higher in rural areas given that 82% of people with disabilities live in rural areas whilst the remaining 18% belong to urban areas. Amongst the four geographic regions of the country the Lubombo region has the highest percentage of people with functional difficulty (17,6%) whilst the lowest is observed in the Shiselweni region, whereby 9,1% of people are identified as having difficulty in performing certain basic functions. In both Manzini and Hhohho regions this type of functional disability is represented by approx. 12%.

The Census of 2017 disaggregate data incidence of disability by age. The 0–4 age-group presents a disability rate of 29.630; the 5–9 group yielded 8.975 children with disabilities; the 10–14 age group represents 8.795 and the 15–19 age-group yields a total of 8.213 children with disabilities. The incidence of disability is greatest amongst children, especially between 0 and 4 years, suggesting a strong link between the conditions in which the majority of young children live and the incidence of disability. According to the Census of 2017, the population of children with disabilities within the age range of 0–19 lies at 55.613 (31,6%) and this group spans pre-primary,

primary and secondary school children amount to 17.486 (10%) whereas those with speaking disabilities represent 2.666 (2%) only.

Statistical Information on Access to Education

According to the 2017 Population and Housing Census about 52% of people with disability (difficulty) in Eswatini have no education. Of those that did attend school, 22,3% attained primary school certificate while 9,6% hold the junior certificate. It should be pointed out that a majority of people with difficulty have no qualification, decreasing proportionately to the rising level of education, e.g. only 0,1% hold a Ph.D. diploma (see Table 1).

Table 1: Qualifications of Persons with Difficulties

Highest Qualification	Walking	Seeing	Hearing	Cognition	Self-care	Communicating	Total	%
None	12482	14971	8956	7049	5851	2625	51934	51,7
Primary certificate	6262	8941	3370	2185	1095	568	22421	22,3
Junior certificate	2680	4268	1221	842	458	203	9672	9,6
O level / GCSE	2306	4317	1146	811	382	257	9219	9,2
A level / IB certificate	74	155	29	15	15	8	296	0,3
Tertiary certificate	401	639	134	110	67	32	1383	1,4
Diploma	918	1739	305	182	133	61	3338	3,3
Bachelor Degree	354	988	133	73	62	29	1639	1,6
Master Degree	100	270	34	14	13	7	438	0,4
PhD Degree	16	26	5	4	5	3	59	0,1
Total	**25593**	**36314**	**15333**	**11285**	**8081**	**3793**	**100399**	**100,0**

(The Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini 2017)

Seeing disability is the most prevalent form of disability in Eswatini. According to the 2007 Housing Census, of the 171.347 people with disabilities in Eswatini, 78.083 (46%) have seeing disabilities followed by a group classified as other forms of disabilities at 47.691 (28%). People with hearing disabilities account for 18.389 (11%), whilst people with memory or concentration disabilities yield 6.832 (4%). People with walking/climbing diffi-

culties are 17.486 (10%) and those with speaking disabilities are only 2.666 (2%).

The 2019 Annual Education Census indicates that there are 41.565 learners with special needs and disabilities in primary (special and regular) schools in the country, of whom 54% are males and 45% females. A number of the learners are over-aged for primary (15 to 21+) and this could be attributed to late entry into school or repetition which is prevalent amongst children with special needs and disabilities. At secondary and high school (senior secondary) level there were 2.261 learners enrolled, of whom learners with visual impairment represented the highest number of learners in school (43%) whilst those with physical disabilities represent the lowest number (4%). There is a notable decline in the number of learners enrolled in primary schools who proceed to secondary and high school.

Glaring inadequacies are reflected in current statistics of inclusive education for children with disabilities. The statistics do not disaggregate in terms of the number of children in special and regular schools. However, Education and Information System and Management (EMIS) is being improved to capture all the necessary data on learners with disabilities. Nevertheless, available evidence shows that a majority of persons with disabilities still struggle to have access to education and this is prevalent at all levels of the education system. Data shows that as high as 17% of persons with disabilities still face barriers to educational access (UNESCO 2018). They are less likely attend and/or complete primary or secondary education and less likely to acquire literacy (UNESCO 2018).

National Policy and Strategy Documents

International Frameworks

The Salamanca Statement championed the concept of inclusive education, advocating radical changes, including the acceptance of a diverse range of special needs and respecting the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) (UNESCO 1994). The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) gave full recognition to the right to inclusive education for persons with disabilities (UN 2006). Article 24 of the CRPD (2006) stipulates that State Parties shall ensure access to inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others. To safeguard this right, the CRPD included a provision for the employment of teachers qualified in sign language and/or braille and for disability awareness training for professionals and staff working at all levels of

education. Article 24 also called for reasonable accommodation and for making learning environments and educational materials accessible.

In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized that persons with disabilities should have access to life-long learning opportunities to facilitate acquisition of the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society. Persons with disabilities are also included in Goal 4 which urges governments to renew their commitment to more inclusive education that promotes values based on respect for diversity, a sense of belonging and social justice for marginalised and excluded populations (UNESCO 2017).

National Frameworks and Strategy Documents

The 2005 Eswatini Constitution guarantees the right of every child to be educated free from prejudice and discrimination of any kind. Section 26 and 30 promote access to free primary education for every child and respect for the fundamental right to education for persons with disabilities (Swaziland National Constitution 2005). Another important legislation is the 2018 Persons with Disabilities Act, which caters for the general rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. The Act makes provision for the establishment of a National Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities in section 3, whose objectives are to ensure that all persons with disabilities have equal access to education, health and other services. Regulations that aim to implement the Act are being finalised. Policies that put a resounding emphasis on the right to inclusion for children with disabilities include the 2013 National Disability Policy and the 2018 Education and Training Sector Policy (EDSEC). These policies are aligned to the CRPD. The EDSEC is considered as instrumental in addressing the wrongs of exclusionary policies of special education which for a long-time dominated policy and practice.

Despite the crusade and global investment, the goal of inclusive education remains distant and there is a discrepancy between policy and practice (UNESCO 2017). Some schools are convinced that 'students with special educational needs' can only be educated by trained specialist personnel, and are therefore reluctant to admit learners with disabilities. Where learners with disabilities have been admitted, the reality of the principles of inclusive education is not adequately reflected in everyday schooling (Smyth et al. 2014). Research highlights that the paradigm shift has overwhelmed teachers who are key agents in the mediation of policy and implementation of inclusive pedagogy (Makoelle 2014, Singal & Muthukrishna 2016). More focus should be placed on developing the capacity of the teachers.

Recently, the Ministry developed an Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) for Eswatini (2022–2034) following a sector analysis which highlighted gaps in achieving inclusive education. The ESSP presents an overarching framework of strategic outputs and outcomes in the education sector with a prime focus on the next twelve years (MoET 2022). Operationalising the ESSP is an action plan which has seven (7) goals. Goal no 6 focuses on 'Ensuring equity and equality of opportunities for inclusive quality education in primary, secondary and post-secondary education and training'. Special needs and disability related activities are also highlighted in all the other goals, for example, "Reviewing and implementing the early identification, intervention and documentation of children with special needs and disabilities" in Goal 1. Furthermore, the Ministry has developed Standards for Inclusive Education which "will help pre-schools, and primary and secondary/high schools, working together with parents and communities, to develop inclusive schools and accessible learning spaces for every learner" (MoET 2019, p. i.v).

Education Disability Landscapes

Until 1999, education for children and adolescents with disabilities was segregationist whereby special schools were conceived of as the only opportunity to provide education for learners with special needs and disabilities in Eswatini. Special Education in Eswatini was run by missionaries; in particular the Catholic Church which initiated education for physically disabled children at St Josephs' Mission in 1967. In the same year, steps were taken to establish a Resource Centre for the Blind and the centre was officially opened in 1969. In 1978, integration of mentally challenged students at Zama Centre within St Joseph's Mission was initiated. In 1975, another school, Ekwetsembeni Special School for children with learning difficulties, was established by two American Peace Corps volunteers. In the same year (1975) catholic nuns established and launched the School for the Deaf at Enjabulweni Orphanage Home in Manzini. The school was moved to Siteki in 1976 and was taken over by the Ministry of Education and Training. In 2007, the first high school for deaf students was established 32 years after the primary school. These four special schools still exist and cater for about 400 children and adolescents with varying special needs and disabilities and still continues to attract learners from all over the country. The effectiveness and quality of education in the special schools has been subject to question, as reflected in the level of education reached by students with disabilities as indicated under demographics.

As a response to the international calls for inclusion, the 1999 National Education Policy Statement, issued by the Ministry of Education and Training, pledged to implement inclusive education rather than special education. However, the 1999 Policy statement was first implemented in 2006 due to lack of capacity in the area. The policy was implemented through targeting and designating nine primary schools as models of inclusion and teachers were trained in support learning for LSEN in the classrooms. In 2010 the government of Eswatini introduced free primary education and all primary schools were mandated to admit all school aged children without discrimination. This policy directive led to the roll out of inclusive education and a huge increase in the admission of learners with special needs and disabilities to regular primary schools.

In reality, however, the majority of children with disabilities are out of school. Those who enter school face other challenges. Access to school in mainstream schools is still denied on the basis of the type and severity of the disability. Schools are also challenged in ensuring the enrolled students are retained. Children with disabilities are less likely to complete primary education than children without. Strategies to mitigate these challenges are discussed below under inclusive education in practice.

The Status of Inclusive Education in Eswatini

Conceptualisation of Inclusive Education

The shift in the thinking and perception of inclusive education as a way of combating exclusion has given the definition a broader scope and understanding. In this context, Ugwu and Onukwufor (2018) define inclusive education as an educational approach to deal with the issue of exclusion in the educational system. Inclusive education basically ensures that learners learn together, receiving necessary learning support and are actively involved in every aspect of school activities (Gajendrabhai & Saini 2020). It enables children and young people to be educated within their communities and neighbourhoods with their peers, free from discrimination despite possible physical disabilities and challenges (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education 2015). Inclusion has introduced a new perspective which demands a shift in thinking and practice on the part of educators. This shift moves inclusion away from the field of disability into the realm of diversity, a terrain that according to Thomas (2013, p. 474) '… now incorporates a more extensive spectrum of concerns and discourses. Such a complete change in the school system is both challenging and time-consuming for teachers'.

Strategies for implementing inclusive education

The implementation of inclusive education in Eswatini must be seen in the context of the country's broader educational development agenda on making education accessible to all children. A dual-track approach is followed with both special and mainstream schools accepting children and adolescents with special needs and disabilities. However, emphasis focuses on admission of learners with disabilities in regular schools existing in their communities. Initiatives to develop an inclusive education system and diminish the gaps include strengthening institutional agreements to enable fulfillment of policy demands, capacity building programs, and provision of assistive devices, inclusive curricula and assessment.

Institutional arrangements

There is improved mainstreaming of disability inclusion in the education sector, which is believed will lead to improved access to inclusive quality education at all levels. From March to April 2020 Eswatini's Education Sector Analysis (ESA) was developed by the MoET using a participatory process and a disability-inclusive lense. Special needs and disability issues were mainstreamed in all the seven (7) goals outlined in the Eswatini Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2022–2034. Specifically, goal 6 (*Access further improved*) focuses on improved equity and equality of opportunities for inclusive quality education at all levels of the education sector.

Institutional initiatives including the setting up of structures are geared towards mainstreaming disability issues in the education sector. Special needs departments have been set up gradually in the Ministry of Education and Training at headquarters and regional level; at the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) and Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) (2020).

Curriculum and Examination

A special education needs department was set up in 2014 at the National Curriculum Centre with the aim of ensuring that all curricula and materials development used a disability-inclusive lense. A significant milestone is the introduction of four new subjects in the newly developed Competency Based Curriculum (CBE) which targets specific needs of learners with disabilities namely, Braille, Eswatini Sign Language, Orientation and Mobility and Daily Living Skills. Syllabuses for all the subjects have been developed and approved by the Curriculum Coordinating Committee (CCC). Manuscripts for teaching and learning material including teaching guides, learning books and video material (specifically for Eswatini Sign Language) are

being finalised for piloting in Grade 1 in 2023. The NCC further facilitates the uploading of soft copies of prescribed textbooks as assistive learning devices. They further provide large print and brailled material based on requests from schools.

The Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) (2020) provides access arrangements for external examinations allowing exemptions, adaptations of the conditions or the format of the exam. Schools are expected to apply for access arrangements and validation of need is done with support from the SEN and Health departments. In their 2020 annual report, ECESWA reported that 84 candidates compared to 96 in 2019 were offered access arrangements including Brailling of papers, extra time, and exemptions from oral exams, listening, employment of a scribe and prompters. The report further highlights challenges with schools that fail to submit applications for access arrangements on time or head teachers who are not familiar with the access arrangements (Examinations Council of Eswatini 2020, p. 18), an issue that needs urgent attention.

Integration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Teaching and Learning

The Ministry of Education and Training ventured into the use of ICT education for learners and teachers with special needs and disabilities as a catalyst to promote Universal Design for Learning (UDL). A variety of classroom equipment, hardware and software is provided for disabled learners at both special and mainstream schools to stimulate deeper thinking and increase engagement in the classroom. Selected schools are equipped with interactive white boards and software such as Clicker 7 and 8; learners are provided with touch screen tablets, Braille note touch 32 for Braille users and Prodigy Connect 12 for learners with poor vision.

Furthermore, a group of 20 officers including special needs and ICT inspectors, NCC officer and teachers from special and regular schools successfully completed a certified online facilitation course offered by the University of Eswatini in July 2022. This course provided the participants with skills and knowledge on how to use ICT to design and develop inclusive online platforms and ensure the continuation of learning, even during humanitarian crises such as COVID-19. This capacity building is aimed at reinforcing the integration of ICT in teaching and learning and promoting blended learning.

In 2021, the Ministry of Education and Training initiated a project focusing on the enhancement of community sensitisation, social inclusion and access to early childhood and on-going education for children with

cerebral palsy. With the funding received from a partner, the Ministry in partnership with NGOs and health professionals provided personalised chairs (adjustable and environmentally friendly) to improve positioning for learners with cerebral palsy. Learners were also provided with Argumentative Alternative Communication (AAC) devices such as touch screen tablets with Snap Core First software and Go Talk. It is anticipated that this project will also build on the capacity of health and education officers, Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) and care-givers.

Teacher development

Villa & Thousand (2016) concede that successful implementation of inclusive practice is largely dependent on teachers and school leadership, i.e. the practitioners. Consequently, there is focus on ways to develop inclusive practitioners through preparation and professional development of teachers (Schlessinger 2018). Capacity building focuses on both pre and in-service trials as well as support to schools.

Pre-service

Since 2012, all teacher training institutions offer special needs and inclusive education as a compulsory course in the three year programme. However, although a number of teachers have completed these courses at college, seemingly few are prepared to teach children with special needs (Asmoa et al. 2018). This stand could well be influenced by the teachers' experience of segregated schooling, confirming that any change is difficult to accept and embrace, especially changes which shatter the foundations of what teachers have become socialised to accept as the way things are and should be.

In-service

The Special Needs Department conducts workshops for school principals and teachers in formal and non-formal education. Various awareness-raising activities are designed to focus on the right of persons with disabilities to education. Furthermore, a local university introduced two accredited part-time degree courses with specialisation in special needs and inclusive education in 2012 and 2013 respectively. The first programme is a three year part-time degree in Special and Inclusive Education, which equips both primary and secondary school teachers with knowledge and skills, as well as the necessary expertise to cater for diversity in their schools and classrooms. The second degree programme is called Leadership and Management of Inclusive Education (LMIE), which targets school administrators (school

principals and deputies) for both primary and high schools, as well as prospective administrators.

However, there is still a gap between policy and practice, despite these pre-service and in-service inputs in teacher training programmes. Some educationists argue that teacher training courses should not only be offered to extend teaching knowledge and skills but should also incorporate theory and practical experience in what Forlin cited by Pit-en Cate et al. (2018, p. 58) as "all the all-important transfer of skills and knowledge to the reality of inclusive classrooms".

Collaborative support systems

One of the principles of inclusive education focuses on collaboration amongst teachers. The understanding is that when teachers support one another and are provided with continuous support in inclusive pedagogy in practice, they become more committed to transformation. To strengthen collaboration amongst teachers, schools are encouraged to create an IE resource team made up of teachers who have been trained in SIE and those who have experience in supporting learners with special needs and disabilities. The team is responsible for identifying, screening and or assessment and recommends to class teachers' appropriate teaching and learning methods for children with disabilities. The teams exist and are working well in some schools, whereas in others they are nonexistent which makes it hard for individual teachers coping alone in their classrooms. Furthermore, the SEN department provides external technical support via visits to the schools, providing advice on how to address specific issues.

Models for inclusive education

The Ministry has constructed resource centres in two regular primary schools targeting regions where there were no special schools. The two primary schools were then designated as models for inclusion. In 2021, four inclusive secondary schools – the first of their kind – opened in the four regions of Eswatini. Using universal design standards through an initiative funded by the Japanese government, learners no longer have to travel far in search of secondary education. All teachers have completed the required training for inclusive education and special needs. The schools are part of a larger nation-wide shift towards inclusive education.

Efforts have also been made for teaching and learning environments to be more adaptable to the diverse needs of students. An initiative to modify infrastructure in schools was started with government funding back in 2006 and this includes the construction of accessible ablutions, ramps and path-

ways in schools where there are learners with disabilities. Schools are also encouraged to budget for modification of infrastructure using school funds. Additionally, there is a campaign for the construction of universally designed structures in all institutions of learning.

Data collection and monitoring initiatives

Data processing in the country has been improved; a key component to ensuring that all learners, including those with a sensory, physical, or learning disability, are reached. The Education and Information System and Management (EMIS) has incorporated the use of the Washington Group/CFM in the EMIS revised data collection questionnaire and further integrated inclusive education indicators in the EMIS system. The indicators were drawn from the 2019 Standards for Inclusive Education in Eswatini.

A system of monitoring, evaluation and reporting for inclusive education was needed to align with the strategic goals set out in the 2018 Education and Training Sector Policy. Hence the adoption of standards in 2019 which serve to measure how schools are implementing the standards which relate to inclusive education as defined within frameworks and programmes such as Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL).

MoET, via the Standards Department, is advocating a comprehensive school self-evaluation and school improvement planning process, drawing on the processes and pillars established within the CSTL initiative (MoET 2018). This aims to create school environments that are friendly, safe, healthy and conducive for learning. The intention is also to align the process of developing inclusive education across all schools. The Standards serves to monitor and support schools, and for the self-monitoring processes in line with these standards. Schools are expected to remain accountable based on these standards.

It is anticipated that this improvement will enhance data availability and the tracking of individual learners with special education needs and disabilities whilst providing timely data on information concerning targeted interventions. It will further enable MoET to identify children's strengths and barriers to learning in the school context and enhance retention of enrolled students and completion rates for LSEN and disabilities whilst directly or indirectly reducing the stigma and preconceptions inherent in questioning "disability".

Critical and Future Perspectives of Inclusive Education

Although inclusive education is championed as a means to remove barriers, improve outcomes and eliminate discrimination, it is nevertheless a complex and contested concept with many and various manifestations in practice. This makes it difficult to arrive at any fixed assessment or prediction for the overall success or failure of inclusive education in Eswatini. The research findings from a number of studies conducted in Eswatini indicate that although Eswatini educators in principle support the justification of inclusive education on social grounds, teachers experience various challenges in implementing inclusive education (see Zwane & Malale 2018, Adebayo & Ngwenya 2015, Thwala 2015). The lack of adequate human, technical, and infrastructural resources to facilitate implementation is a major contributing factor to the negative perceptions within some school communities of its educational and economic viability. Adebayo & Ngwenya (2015) explored the subject of inclusive education and the challenges impeding its implementation in the country, drawing evidence from the Elulakeni Cluster Primary schools situated in the Shiselweni district with 14 head teachers participating. Their study cited lack of competence on the part of the teachers, poor financial and material support for the programme, poor administration, poor attitude of teachers, lack of collaborative efforts, unfair treatment of students and many other challenges. Lack of training for teachers was also cited as the main challenge teachers are facing in a study by Thwala (2015) focusing on teachers who oversee the programme in the country. The low level of training for teachers is a challenge facing a number of countries such as South Africa, Zambia, Nigeria and Lesotho (see Mpu & Adu 2021, Bhat & Geelani 2017, Majoko et al. 2018, Khoaeane & Naong 2015, Chibwe & Mulenga 2021).

Despite these challenges, there is still continued support for an inclusive education agenda at the national level. It is also important to acknowledge that implementation of inclusive education in Eswatini is a continuously evolving process, which needs to be contextually relevant and responsive to the social and economic realities within unique school contexts. It is a genuine concern that despite the transformative policies, concepts and practices of inclusive education in the Eswatini education system, there is still a gap between articulation and realisation of inclusive education. The transformative policies are inconsistent and disconnected from other aspects of social and education policy that drive exclusion in stark and subtle manifestations. The landscape for inclusive education does not only challenge the Ministry of Education and Training; it demands more from teachers as the forefront in an inclusive education setting (Dela Fuente 2021).

The biggest challenge is how to make education equitable, accessible and affordable for every learner – how to effectively translate theory into practice? What needs to happen for teachers to be effectively and appropriately encouraged and supported towards this expectation of shifting paradigms and identities, of fundamentally breaking from the old and familiar traditional principles, understandings and ways of being; of developing a new sense of self, personally and professionally, which moves them out of their historic colonised mentality towards taking on the role of agents of change, cultural workers and teachers teaching for social change, responsibility, inclusion and social justice? The need to rethink teacher development whilst paying particular attention to the spatiality of inclusive education should take centre stage because space is central to the construction of inclusive education in a schooling context (Waitoller & Annamma 2017, Singal & Muthukrishna 2016). Perhaps, piloting of the 2019 Standards for Inclusive Education, which is expected to take a year beginning in the last months of 2022, will help provide systematic data on best practice, mediated power relations, that enhance or protest against the implementation of inclusive education in schools.

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Tirussew Teferra

Inclusive Education in Ethiopia

The article first presents an overview of the causes and prevalence of disability in Ethiopia. Its main focus is to convey the current status and future perspectives of inclusive education in the country of Ethiopia. A review of the national policy and strategy documents governing the development of inclusive education is presented, followed by a portrayal of the present education landscape of persons with disabilities, whilst identifying opportunities, challenges and gaps in inclusive education. Finally, the paper highlights priority areas of intervention at both national and sector levels for the promotion of inclusive education in the country.

Disability and Prevalence

Understanding and determining the causes, prevalence and trend of disability in a country is crucial for a number of reasons. Among others, policy development, the planning of preventive and rehabilitative strategies as well as budgeting are the most pertinent. In Ethiopia, the presence of diversified pre-, peri- and post-natal disabling factors such as the health condition of pre-natal mothers, difficulties at delivery, childhood infectious diseases, under-nourishment, malnutrition, lack of proper child care and periodic episodes of drought and famine as well as civil strife, account for a phenomenal increase in the incidence (Tirussew 1993) of disability. These issues still prevail as a serious challenge to the country. Indeed, the ongoing civil strife with a considerable loss of siblings, displacement, destruction of properties and various degrees of challenge, sharpens the prevalence of disability across different age groups in the country. As in most Sub-Sahara African countries, the causes of the impairments are mainly attributed to environmental factors, which can easily be reduced through primary prophylaxis, i.e., proper health services, nutrition, child care and management, and timely parental education.

Generally, data pertaining to the incidence, prevalence and the situation of persons with disabilities in Ethiopia are fragmentary, incomplete and sometimes misleading. This is mainly because of lack of focus and proper

operational definition on the types of disability which leads to the exclusion or underreporting of those persons with invisible or hidden disabilities. The 1995 baseline sample survey of persons with disabilities in Ethiopia was the first of its kind to operationally define and undertake a systematic study of the subject. Furthermore, during the course of field data collection senior special education students and special needs experts from the Ministry of Education, familiar with the subject matter, were deployed across the regions to conduct a national Sample Survey enumeration study. The Sample Survey included 5.085 households, on the basis of five family members per household, yielding a total population of 25.425. The total numbers of persons with disability in the sample households represented 751, 2,95% of the total population (Tirussew et al. 1995).

Table 1: Type and Prevalence of Disability in Ethiopia

Type and Prevalence of Disability in Ethiopia							
Visual	Hearing	Motor	Intellectual	Behavioral	Speech & Language	Multiple	Chronic health
30,4%	14,9%	30,9%	6,5%	2,2%	2,4%	2,4%	10,3%

This study presents the prevalence of disabilities in Ethiopia (Table 1): persons with motor disorders (inability to walk, sit, or use their hands for eating and drinking) represent 30,9%, persons with visual impairment (total blindness and poor vision) 30,4%, persons with hearing impairment (completely deaf and hard-of-hearing) 14,9%, persons with chronic health conditions (epilepsy, leprosy, asthma, diabetis etc.) 10,3%, persons with intellectual disability (mild, moderate and profound) 6,5%, persons with speech and language impairments (speaking and writing) 2,4%, persons with multiple disabilities (deaf and blind, and other impairment) 2,4%, and persons with behavioral problems (hyper- and hypoactive) 2,2%. When the finding of the sample study is further classified according to age and gender, the following distribution (see Table 2) is given:

Table 2: Age and Gender Distribution of Persons with Disability

Age bracket	Female %	Male %	Total %
1–14	15,9	15,9	15,9
15–25	18,8	26,9	23,3
26–39	15,9	19,2	17,7
40–54	14,9	14,1	14,4
55 and above	34,6	23,8	28,6
Total %	44,2%	55,8%	100

As seen in Table 2, the prevalence of disability in the 55+ age bracket tends to be relatively high (28,6%) compared to other age groups. As to gender disparity, the prevalence of disability in males is 11,6% higher than in females (Tirussew et al. 1995).

According to the three consecutive reports of the Housing and Population Census of the Ethiopian Government (CSA 1998, 2005 and 2013), the number of persons with disabilities constitutes 1,9%, 1,98% and 3,02% of the total population respectively. The population growth rate in Ethiopia is 2,42%, and children and adolescents make up a considerable part of the entire population; about 40% of the population below the age of 15 (World Factbook 2023). This indicates that the two age groups comprising children and adolescents account for almost 60% of the entire study population. The high incidence of disability is indeed documented in other reports, indicating a global percentage rate of 15% (about one billion people), and 17,6 million in Ethiopia, with most extended families including at least one person with a disability. The global disability prevalence is higher than the previous WHO estimates of 10% dating back to the 1970s. Recent figures indicate that the global estimate for disability is on the rise due to population ageing and the rapid spread of chronic diseases, as well as improvements in the methods used to measure disability (WHO & World Bank 2011). This discrepancy may be attributed to various factors such as variation in scope and operational definitions of the subject, socio-cultural factors such as fear of stigmatisation as well as the nature of projections (field and desk-based estimations).

The societal concept governing the causes of disability in children is predominantly traditional, ascribing the cause to supernatural powers such as evil spirits and curses of the parents, grandparents or the forefathers. As a result of these misconceptions and misunderstanding, persons with disability are usually excluded from the mainstream community; hidden or simply out of sight. In most cases, especially those with severe and profound impairment are locked behind the back door, deprived of any form of social contact with the neighborhood or the community (Tirussew et al. 1995). The role of the media in its portrayal of disability is crucial to promoting change in the attitude of society towards persons with disabilities. In general disability is tendentially portrayed as a burden, highlighting the difficulties and limitations affecting the lives of those concerned. This portrayal has a significant impact on societal attitudes towards people with disabilities. It can affect the way they are treated, their access to services and their expectations for the future. The best way to counteract these perceptions is by changing media portrayals of disability. There is a social need for more realistic portrayals showing the positive aspects of living with disabilities, rather than focusing on the difficulties experienced. Individuals with dis-

abilities deserve more attention and better resources. They face many barriers in everyday life and are not given the same opportunities as others. As a result, many try to secure a livelihood by looking for alms; generally for the poorest of the poor in society (Tirussew 2005). The 2013 National Labour Force Survey disclosed an estimation of 95 per cent of all persons with disabilities living in poverty. Many are dependent on family support or begging for their livelihoods (CSA 2014).

Government Policy and Strategy in the Education of Persons with Disabilities

The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has attempted to address the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in its constitution, policy and strategy instruments. Article 41(3, 5) of the Ethiopian Constitution adopted in 1995 (FDRE 1995), stipulates "the right of citizens to equal access to publicly funded services, and the Government shall within available means, allocate resources to provide rehabilitation and assistance to the physically and mentally disabled …". Article 9(4) further states that "All international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land". This means, all pertinent human rights conventions and declarations (including the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1994), The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted by the member States of the Organisation of African Union (OAU) and entered into force on 29 November 1999, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015–2030) and Agenda 2063 (The Africa We Want) (2015)) which advocate for inclusive growth and sustainability should be the guiding instruments for the education of persons with disabilities in the country. It upholds "those rights of citizens to equal access to publicly funded services and the support that shall be given to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities".

Subsequently, the Government introduced specific proclamations: The Federal Civil Servant Proclamation No. 515/2007 providing for special preference in recruitment, promotion, and deployment; Labour Proclamation No. 494/2006 which makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against workers on the basis of nationality, sex, religion, political outlook or any other conditions; Proclamation on Definition of Powers of Duties of the Executive Organs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, No. 691/2010, provides for conditions of equal opportunities and full participation

of persons with disabilities … and Building Proclamation, No. 624/2009 which provides for participation in the design and construction of suitably structured buildings for physically impaired persons.

In the education sector, the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (1994) under (2.2.3) underlines that the education of persons with disabilities is "to enable both the handicapped and the gifted learn in accordance with their potential and needs". The policy also states that the planned strategies include "the provision of special education and training for people with special needs, with particular focus on the preparation and utilisation of support for special education, and availability of special financial assistance". Notwithstanding the positive steps on behalf of the constitution, the education policy and government articulations on realising the rights of persons with disabilities in the country, in most cases implementation is a remote vision, far from reality. This calls for nation-wide intervention to promote and maintain system coherence and accountability of governance, i.e., top-down and bottom-up. Indeed, there have been several attempts to translate the Education and Training Policy (1994) into action by crafting a comprehensive sector strategy and a 20-year Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) which has been rolling in every five years, phase by phase since 1997. The results of the first two ESDPs (1997/1998–2001/2002) showed impressive progress in the overall enrollment rate across the educational board. However, little attention was given to children with disabilities/special needs/during this period. Whatever the case, it is important to note that in ESDP II (2002/2003–2004/2005) specific undertakings towards promoting the integration model such as building special classrooms or units to accommodate children with special needs in regular schools, offering courses in teacher training colleges as well as organising short term teacher training programs have been observed. In ESDP III (2005/2010) attention was focused on the education of children with disabilities. The aim of transforming education into an inclusive system was clearly spelt out for the first time in this country. These initiatives were followed by interventional policies aimed at the provision of regional technical assistance, teacher training courses and continuous professional education programmes as well as establishing Inclusive Education Resource Centers (IERCs) in cluster schools. The actual achievement of these objectives underlines the need for strengthening cooperation between development partners and education offices. It was also during this phase when the first Special Needs Education Strategy Programme (Ministry of Education 2006) to pave the way towards inclusive education was launched. Among others, it defined the national and regional sector planning and reporting systems, developing guidelines for curriculum development and support systems, providing professional assistance, identification and sharing of positive

experiences. Unlike its predecessors, the ESDP IV (2010/2011–2014/2015) emerged with clearly anticipated outcomes to be achieved at the end of the period. The ESDP IV considers special needs education as one of the cross-cutting issues such as civics and ethical education, HIV/AIDS, gender, environment, health and nutrition, drug and substance abuse. The main focus of the plan was to:

- increase the enrollment of children with special needs at all levels of education and also achieve EFA in 2015,
- enlarge the component for special needs/inclusive education in teacher training colleges (by 25%),
- improve the institutional capacity of schools in addressing the academic and social needs of children with special needs (by 25%), and
- increase the nine inclusive education support centres to 500 from 2009/2010 to 2014/2015.

However, evidence suggests that the proposed measures for highlighting the education of children with disabilities were neither visible nor effective in reality. And at mid-stage, the 2nd Special Needs Education Programme Strategy (Ministry of Education 2012) was crafted. Noting the limitations in the Special Needs Education Strategy (Ministry of Education 2006) such as lack of clear strategic directions and commitment, lack of awareness and skills, and failure to address the needs of gifted and talented children, as well as the ratification of the new UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010 served as an impetus for the Ministry of Education to develop the Special Need/Inclusive Education Strategy (Ministry of Education 2012). It came up with new strategic proposals for strengthening educational management and administration, increasing access, capacity building, developing inclusive curricula, designing individual education plans, improving learning assessment, introducing a functional support system, undertaking action research, strengthening partnership among stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation. During this phase, the General Education Quality Improvement Programme II (GEQIP II) also supported the mainstreaming of special needs and inclusive education across the board through school improvement, teacher development, and exploration of possibilities for additional grants for the enrollment of students with disabilities, disadvantaged students (e.g. orphans) and those with learning difficulties (World Bank 2013 to 2018).

With the emergence of ESDP V (2015/2016 to 2019/2020), contrary to ESDP IV, special needs education was not treated as a cross-cutting issue but rather an integral part of the main priority programmes of the education sector. This was also the time when the Ministry of Education launched

a 10-year-Master Plan for Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Ethiopia (2016 to 2025). The 10-year-Master Plan is aligned with ESDP V; it envisions the creation of an educational system that is inclusive and open to all learners by creating a social and physical barrier-free inclusive environment. The Master Plan rests on six pillars which include the creation of a policy framework, a guaranteed autonomous organisational structure, development of human resources (such as specialists, teachers and leaders), access and quality education, creation of reliable reporting mechanisms, and allocation of budget to run the programme (Ministry of Education 2016). This period could be considered as a landmark for the visibility of and shift towards inclusive education in Ethiopia.

It is hoped that such a policy direction will open up opportunities for persons with disabilities to have access to education and develop their potential, finally liberated from the everlasting "dependency syndrome", thus enabling them to live independently. Persons with disability are more likely to succeed in school if they are provided with appropriate educational settings. In the context of Ethiopia, developmental and psycho-social factors, human rights issue, pedagogical benefits and economic viability as well as positive effects on bridging attitudinal gaps, governed the main rationale for advocating the inclusive education movement in the country (Tirussew 2005). It tallies with the social model and the rights – based approach to adjust the social and physical environment to suit all, i.e., "universal design" where products, environments, programmes and services are considered seriously (UN 2006). Indeed, it moves away from the different traditional models based on spiritually and medically oriented approaches. Furthermore, there is a strong belief that inclusive education not only enhances access and equity for learners with disability but also benefits all learners particularly those marginalised due to gender and other socio-cultural factors. Its scope reaches every learner beyond children with disabilities through promoting active learning and flexible child-centered pedagogy which is the cornerstone for quality education. Last not least, unlike segregated education, inclusive education allows children to live with their families, mingle, play, live and grow together with peers in the neighbourhood school and community. This facilitates communication and understanding, as well as helping each other to appreciate and respect differences. More importantly, growing up in such an environment promotes the self-confidence and resilience required to cope and lead successful lives for the rest of the entire lifespan.

Current Landscape of Inclusive Education in Ethiopia

Along with the already existing special schools, the so-called inclusive schools have emerged in different corners of the country. Even though the policy and strategy documents reflect the political will to move towards inclusive education, practical experience suggests that access and equity remain a serious challenge across the educational board (Belay et al. 2015). This is evident in the lack of system coherence and accountability, as observed in the diverse educational services at special schools, special classes, and the so-called inclusive schools. In Ethiopia, there are boarding schools and regular day schools, special classes in regular schools, newly transformed inclusive schools (where children without disabilities are admitted in the former special schools) and mainstreaming of children in regular schools at different grades. Moreover, some children attend special preschools; whereas others start at grade one, leaving at different grade levels. The current landscape of educational delivery for children with disabilities across the country thereby follows a multiple track approach. Special schools and special classes tend to admit children at preschool or grade one, who complete the programme either at grade 4, 6, 8 and are subsequently mainstreamed into regular classes as of grade 5, 7 or 9. This means that the duration of attendance in special classes and schools varies according to the location. Follow-up research, monitoring and assessing the success and failure of the programmes needs to be done.

The annual statistical report of the Ministry of Education (2019/2021) reveals that the participation rate of children with disabilities at pre-primary level is (1,7%), primary (8%) and secondary (2,5%). Unfortunately, the present data shows a decrease of 2,6% from last year. This may be attributed to ongoing civil strife in the northern part of the country as well as Covid-19 induced factors. However, there is still a slight increase in the participation rate at the pre-primary level (see Table 3 below). By and large, the participation rate is negligible and over 95% are still out of school.

Table 3: Gross Enrollment Rate of Children with Disabilities

Year	Pre-primary	Primary	Secondary	Total
2019/20	0,9%	11,1%	2,8%	4,9%
2020/21	1,7%	8%	2,5%	4,06%

The aforementioned modalities of educational service deliveries include the creation of inclusive schools a major operational direction in the educational system. This means that the major share of the enrollment rate reported by the Ministry of Education is allocated to the so-called inclusive

schools. Indeed, the government no longer creates new special schools since the inception of the Special Needs Programme Strategy (2006). However, the already existing special schools still accommodate students with disabilities until the end of grade six, eight and ten. Moreover, those who are enrolled in the so-called inclusive schools do not receive the necessary professional attention and assistance. Essentially, the programmes governing the curriculum, teacher training process and assessment methodology are found to be rigid and fall short of accommodating learner diversity. Furthermore, lack of trained personnel, inadequate and uneven distribution of resources is apparent throughout these schools. In total, this has an adverse effect on the degree of class participation, completion and achievement of students with disabilities. In other words, in the so-called inclusive classes, children with disabilities tend to be victims of 'disguised exclusion', merely physically present without any form of attention and assistance. According to UNICEF, only 10% of all children with disabilities attend school and only half of the students enrolled actually complete their primary education, with many leaving after only a few months or years due to lack of progress (UNICEF 2013). It is also important to note that almost all children with disabilities catered for at the above mentioned facilities, are those with severe sensory limitations such as blindness and deafness, motor impairments, profound intellectual limitations and communication difficulties. On the other hand, there are children with invisible/hidden impairments or functional difficulties who are by default included in the mainstream schools without any support (Tirussew 2001). Worse still, these children may also be subject to lack of understanding by their class teachers and classmates and exposed to different forms of psychological and physical abuse. Generally, the tension between inclusion and exclusion prevails across the educational system. This calls for further research and continuous discourse as well as cooperation on the part of policy makers, researchers, educators, and government and non-government actors in the country.

Opportunities, Challenges and Future Perspectives

In this section, an attempt is made to identify the opportunities, challenges and future perspectives of inclusive education in the country. Indeed, except for a general framework, there is no blueprint as such for inclusive education. Each country should choose a system that is respectively functional and in accordance with the situation of the country. Inclusive education is not a one-off process; it is a long process that may encounter ups and downs and requires adequate time to assess, implement, monitor and make the necessary adjustments. Inclusive education in Ethiopia is still in its in-

fancy: there are opportunities to be exploited, gaps and challenges to be addressed. The final analysis focuses on the future perspectives for inclusive education in Ethiopia.

Opportunities

The availability of national policy and strategy directions towards promoting inclusive education across all echelons of the educational system in the county, and the ratification of all regional and international conventions towards inclusive education by the Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia are positive moves in the right direction. Additionally, the ongoing academic programmes for special needs/inclusive education in the higher learning sector on a national scale, the movement towards inclusive schools as well as the new initiatives to establish cluster Inclusive Education Resource Centers, the associations of persons with disabilities and professional societies which promote inclusive education are fertile grounds on which to build and engage in for the years ahead. Furthermore, the support via the World Bank from Development Partners for the promotion of inclusive education (World Bank 2018) particularly under GEQIP-E2015/2016 to 2019/2021 (General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity) has been particularly instrumental in the expansion of the Inclusive Education Resource Centers (IERCs) in the country. Concerning alignment of the inclusive movement with the UN Sustainable Goals (2015 to 2030), and with the ongoing encouraging initiatives with the development partners, governmental and non-government actors should be recruited and engaged. Last not least, the Ethiopian Education and Training Roadmap (Tirussew et al. 2015 to 2030) has strongly emphasised that an effective and efficient inclusive policy and practice should be the main priority of educational management and leadership.

Challenges

Transforming the school system to an inclusive system poses challenges which require serious follow-up. Analysis identifies the following issues as posing the greatest barriers: among others, attitudinal gaps, the misconceptions and the negative attitudes held by the public towards persons with disabilities – e.g. disability is seen as a tragedy, or something to ashamed of and to hide from society or live in solitude for fear of being victimised by those lacking an understanding of the condition. In some cultures, there is a stigma attached to having a disability, often resulting in discrimination and malpractices. In the school system, even though there are relatively encour-

aging developments in terms of access and equity at primary schools, the following gaps are still observed in practice:

- lack of proper organisational structure, accountability and coherence for the implementation procedure,
- absence of inclusive school culture, poor coordination and teamwork among members of the school community,
- inadequate resources and financing for inclusive schools,
- discontinuation of the limited support for students with disability when moving up to secondary schools, and
- lack of cooperation with partners, the community, neighborhood schools and other relevant government and non-governmental actors.

Future Perspectives

Based on consultations with various sources, as well as the research and the international experience of the author of this article, the following priority areas of intervention need to be in place in order to make inclusive education a reality in the country. The intervention areas could be broadly divided into two parts: general and specific sectors for interventions.

National Level of Intervention

Based on the principle of "Universal Design" which means that products, environments, programmes and services are to be available to all people, to the greatest extent possible (UN 2006) bringing all actors together is crucial. Among others, the systems which require due attention include health, education, transport, information, construction and employment. Therefore, at a national level, there is a need to establish a council or a commission that can oversee and do the necessary follow-up on the accommodation of persons with disabilities via sector ministries. To that end, there is a need to establish a National Council/Commission for Persons with Disabilities in Ethiopia (Accountable to the Office of the Prime Minister which can identify priority areas, offer guidance, monitor and evaluate programmes). Essentially, the main areas of focus shall include:

- encouragement of public awareness and advocacy,
- cooperation with sector ministries and development partners, and
- community-based early intervention services which among others deliver preventive and rehabilitative measures.

Education Sector Intervention

As education is the foundation for human capital development, special intervention strategies are to be considered at different levels to promote inclusive education. This implies a thorough review of state of the art inclusive education vs. the ongoing policy, governance, professional preparation, partnership, educational planning and budget allocation. More specifically, the following interventions in the education sector are suggested:

Level 1 – Federal and Regional

- Governance and Organisational Structure (coherence and accountability),
- Professional Preparation (Pre- and In-service Experts, General educators and common courses),
- Curriculum Development (flexible, learner-centred/Individual Education Plan),
- Introduction of inclusive education right from early childhood; education with the necessary resources unless or otherwise there are compelling reasons for home-based or hospital-based services,
- Launching of online education to promote lifelong learning for persons with disabilities, and
- Introduction of incentive mechanisms for educators involved in inclusive education.

Level 2 – 'Woreda' (District) and School Level

- Institutionalisation of inclusive School Policy and Culture,
- Expansion of Inclusive Education Resource Centers (IERCs),
- Fostering of team spirit and work among the school community,
- Development of experience sharing among inclusive schools,
- Production of local learning-teaching materials and assistive devices,
- Organisation of co-programmes and extra-curricular programmes for students
- Engagement of parents and the community, and
- Collaboration with local governmental and non-governmental organisations.

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Inclusive Education in Ghana

This article presents a report on the prevalence of disability among Ghanaians, focusing on children with disability and their inclusion in Ghana's education system. Our assessment begins with a review of the available literature and statistical data on Ghana's children with disability culled from the national population census in 2010 and 2021, Ghana's Education Strategic Plans from 2003 to date and Ghana's Inclusive Education (IE) Policy. Based on these reviews, we examine how children with disabilities in Ghana access education and how education policies impact Ghana's IE landscape. A revision of the current education Strategic Plan 2018–2030 and the Inclusive Education Policy shows that some policy strides have been made; however, the challenge that seems to persist is the underfunding of IE in Ghana. This cursory assessment of Ghana's IE presents mixed results, indicating the need for further research into IE in Ghana.

Introduction

Historically, Ghana has attempted to expand education for its population, to include minority groups such as persons with disabilities (PWDs). Between 1945 and 1948, e.g., schools for school-aged children with verbal and physical impairments were established in Ghana (Adera & Asimeng-Boahene 2011, Ametepee & Anastasiou 2015). Most importantly, Ghana remains a committed signatory to global IE policies and goals such as the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and The UNESCO Salamanca Statement (Agbenyega et al. 2017, Ametepee & Anastasiou 2015). A proliferation of IE initiatives has encouraged learners with disabilities to attain pre-tertiary and tertiary education. Education institutions such as the Okuapeman Senior High School in Akropong in the Eastern Region of Ghana, Wenchi Senior High School in Wenchi in the Bono Region and the University of Ghana in the Greater Accra are well-known disability-inclusive institutions.

Typically, Ghana has adopted two IE policy approaches. The first approach is an explicit declaration of government policy commitment to in-

crease access to education for all, emphasising minority groups such as girls, women, and PWDs in all Education Strategic Plans (ESPs) (Ministry of Education 2018a, 2003). The second approach is the employment of poverty alleviation strategies such as the capitation grant, which offers free primary school education for all; the school feeding programme and the free school uniform programme that provides children from low-income families with uniforms to ensure that no-one is exempt from education due to hunger and lack of uniform (Akyeampong 2010, Nkrumah & Sinha 2020a, 2020b). Evidence shows that in 2015, via the school feeding programme, about 1,3 million Ghanaian children received nutritional meals in 3.000 schools (Ministry of Education 2018a). Some scholars have observed that these poverty alleviation policies increased Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS) enrollments (Botts & Owusu 2013, Eshun 2015, Mills 2019). For instance, the gross enrollment rate for SHS increased from 37% in 2012 to 50% in 2017 (Ministry of Education 2018a). One of the main assertions is that these poverty alleviating policies can reduce the education financial burden, thereby increasing the chances of enrollment for all (Akyeampong 2007, 2010).

However, these policy approaches have not completely eased the economic and social challenges experienced by children with disabilities. For instance, only 0,6% of the total recurrent education expenditure was allocated to inclusive and special education in 2015 (Ministry of Education 2018a). Also, children with disabilities are highly likely to drop out of school after primary education, especially children with visual impairments who are left behind (Asamoah et al. 2018). The Free Senior High School (FSHS) aimed first to expand secondary education and ensure that gender, ethnicity, physical ability, and social status do not constrain access to secondary education (Ministry of Education 2018a). The policy implementation witnessed 40.000 learners from 'low-income families gain access to SHS as well as an 11% rise in general enrollment from 74% between 2013–2016 to 84% in 2018. More females (79,7%) moved up to SHS compared to males (76,9%) in 2017/2018, but with lower completion rates (49,5% female against 50,3%) male (Ministry of Education 2018b).

The following sections of this chapter discuss Ghana's IE for PWDs, focusing on children with disabilities. The first section delves into the statistical overview of children with disabilities in Ghana. The second section explores Ghana's PWDs policies and how they have evolved over the years. The third section discusses the provision of education for PWDs in Ghana whilst the fourth section discusses the status of Ghana's IE and the final section looks into the future of Ghana's IE system.

Prevalence of Disability and Access to Education

Generally, Ghana's disability incidence is known to be underreported because most children with disabilities are unlikely to be reported (Ministry of Education 2012). Nevertheless, available statistical data shows that Ghana has a high prevalence of school-aged children with disabilities. The 2010 census data reports that 1,4% and 1,3% of males and females respectively have some disabilities. However, relatively higher speaking and physical disabilities were identified in the male children, whilst the female children yielded a slightly higher proportion of seeing, hearing, intellectual, and emotional disabilities. The census further presented a spatial aggregate for the distribution of disability among children according to region. For instance, an analysis of disabilities in Ghana's ten traditional regions revealed that more than half of the male children were reported to have disabilities compared to female children in each region. Taking all regions into consideration, the highest proportion of disabilities among males was recorded in the Upper West, whereby 54% of all reported disabilities were among male children compared to 46% among female children. Additional data showed that in the 2011/2012 academic year, out of 26.207 children enrolled in schools, only roughly 3% of the population were children with disabilities.

Recently, the 2021 census portrayed a similar overall picture of Ghana's children with disabilities. Although the current report fails to provide aggregated data based on age groups, the census states that the incidence of children with disabilities in Ghana remains high. For instance, the 2021 census showed that about 8% (2.098.138) of the population from five years upwards have varying difficulties performing activities. Of this population, 8,8% of female children reported various disabilities compared to 6,7% of the male population. In addition, 9,5% of the people with varying difficulty in performing activities lived in rural areas, whilst 6,5% came from urban areas.

Further, the regional analysis showed that four regions reported higher incidences of children with disabilities. These four regions represented more than half (53,6%) of the 5-year-old plus population with disabilities. The Ashanti, Greater Accra, Eastern and Central regions accounted for 17,3%, 13,%, 12% and 10,8% of children with disabilities respectively (Ghana Statistical Service 2021). As already mentioned above, these statistical data may not provide an accurate account of the current prevalence of disability among Ghana's school children due to discrepancies in reporting. Nevertheless, the data serves as a useful guideline for IE stakeholders to gain an idea of prevalence of disabilities in Ghana.

Ghana, as a country that has ratified various treaties on PWD, has remained committed to drafting national PWD policies, programmes, and legal provisions to ensure that it can achieve these PWD goals. Examples of some of Ghana's PWD policies and strategies include the Accelerated Development Plan (1951), the Free and Compulsory Basic Education provision in the 1992 Constitution, the Education Strategic Plans (ESPs) 2003–2015, 2010–2020 and 2018–2030, Persons with Disability Act (715), Education Act (778), Inclusive Education Policy (IEP) (2015), and the recent Free Senior High School policy. Although some policies, except for the IEP, are not exclusively PWD policies, they provide some general implications for PWDs. These legal and policy provisions appear to have fallen short of addressing Ghana's IE needs. However, we need to focus on how these policies, especially the ESP and the IEP, consider IE for PWD in Ghana.

The ESP of 2003–2015 was implemented in Ghana after the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which aimed at achieving universal primary education for all. This education policy did not adopt a comprehensive approach to providing IE for PWD. The ESP 2003–2010 approach to inclusive disability education for children with a disability focused merely on health and safety measures. Apparently, disability is discussed under the policy for excellent health and environmental sanitation in schools and institutions of higher education throughout the whole ESP 2003–2015. The only PWD goal was to 'promote safety, sanitation and primary health care facilities and access for children with disabilities' (Ministry of Education 2003, p. 17). The policy did not aim to expand access to education for children with disabilities and the ESP 2003–2010 failed to outline goals that targeted teaching and learning materials for children with disabilities, inclusive teacher training strategies, and quality outcomes.

Analysis of the ESP 2010–2020 showed that compared to the ESP 2003–2010, the ESP 2010–2020 had expanded the provision of IE for children with disabilities. The ESP 2010–2020 made provision for special education for children with disability i.e. a new IE policy. Three principles guided the IE provisions outlined in the ESP 2003–2010:

1. The right to education,
2. The right to equality of educational opportunities,
3. The right and obligation to inclusion and full participation in the affairs of society.

To this end, the ESP 2010–2020 explicitly outlined specific IE goals, as shown in Table 1. This shows how ESP 2010–2020 provided a more transparent inclusive policy goal and strategies for implementing the plan. This IE goal focused on the socio-humanistic, educational, and economic needs of children with disabilities.

Table 1: ESP 2010–2020 Goal 4: Inclusive & Special Education (IS) Strategic Goal

Focal Area	Social Humanistic	Educational	Economic
Provide education for excluded children (including those who are physically and mentally impaired or disabled, slow/fast learners, orphans, young mothers, street children, those from deprived areas, slum children, and poverty victims) via inclusion, wherever possible, within the mainstream formal system or, only when considered necessary, within special units or schools.	**IS1.** Inclusion of disadvantaged children within the existing education system and provision of special facilities. **IS2.** Inclusion of all children with non-severe physical and mental disabilities within mainstream institutions. **IS3.** Provision of special schools or education units for those severely disabled. **IS4.** Provision of transport and guides to non-boarding SSU students living more than 5 km and less than 15 km from the school. **IS5.** Motivation of seriously disadvantaged children (severely disabled, orphans, street children, etc.) and their parents to attend mainstream or special schools. **IS6.** Ensure that Health, Sanitation and Safety systems are applied in Special Schools and Units (as well as mainstream schools).	**IS7.** Ensure that Special Schools and Units, and their pupils, have access to appropriate teaching/learning materials (including ICTs). **IS8.** Equip schools and public libraries with special facilities for the development of those who are severely disadvantaged. **IS9.** Ensure that Special Schools and Units curricula are relevant to personal development. **IS10.** Ensure that SSU completers have appropriate life skills, including job-market training for the severely disabled.	**IS11.** Establish SMCs and introduce capitation grants to improve local management of SSUs. **IS12.** SSU teachers provide value for money regarding pupil contact time and practical learning. **IS13.** Develop an open mutual-accountability scheme for parents, SSUs, teachers and districts (likewise, District Education Offices, Regional Education Offices, Ghana Education Service).

Source: Ministry of Education (2012, p. 26–27). SSU = Special Schools and Units (SSU), ICT = Information and Communication Technology, SMC = School Management Committee

Table 1 provides the evidence that the ESP of 2010–2020 moved beyond health and safety provisions in schools for children with disabilities to emphasise specific requirements such as inclusive teaching and learning strategies, the requirement of special school equipment for children with severe

disabilities and permission for those with non-severe disabilities to enroll at mainstream schools. These specific goals addressed the shortfalls identified in the previous ESP 2003–2015. However, the ESP 2010–2020 failed to expound on monitoring these educational outcomes among these special needs children.

The IEP was provided in 2015 when the ESP 2010–2020 was still in use. It is, therefore, not surprising that the IEP expanded the provisions of the ESP 2010–2020. First, this policy developed the conceptualisation of PWD with a detailed account of diverse instances where a learner can be classified as a PWD. Table 2 presents these learners:

Table 2: Groups of Children with Varied Educational Needs

Children with Special Needs	
Persons with intellectual disability; street children; gifted and talented persons; nomadic children (shepherd boys, fisherfolks children and domestic child workers); persons with physical disability; children exploited for financial purposes; persons with specific learning disability; persons with autism; children living with HIV/AIDS; persons with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder	Persons with hearing impairment; persons with visual impairment; persons with deafblindness; persons with speech and communication disorders; persons with other health impairments and chronic diseases such as rheumatism, epilepsy, asthma, spina bifida and sickle cell anaemia; children displaced by natural catastrophes and social conflicts; persons with multiple disabilities; persons with emotional and behavioural disorder

Source: Ministry of Education (2015, p. 4)

Second, the policy outlines four core objectives that expand the IE goals of the ESP 2010–2020:

- Objective 1: improve and adapt education and related systems and structures to ensure the inclusion of all learners, particularly learners with special educational needs.
- Objective 2: promote a Universal Design for Learning (UDL)/learner-friendly school environment to enhance all learners quality education.
- Objective 3: promote the development of a well-informed and trained human resource cadre for the quality delivery of IE throughout Ghana.
- Objective 4: ensure sustainability of Inclusive Education Implementation (Ministry of Education 2015, pp. 5–9)

One of the unique implementation strategies of this IE policy compared to the ESP 2010–2020 and ESP 2003–2015 was that it adopted a well-structured and decentralised approach to monitoring and evaluating IE policies for children with disabilities.

The ESP 2018–2030 is the final and current education policy that builds on the previous education policies. It is the only ESP commissioned in the era of SDG 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UN 2019). Therefore, the ESP 2018–2030 adopts a sectorial approach to IE (Ministry of Education 2018a). The ESP 2018–2030 indicates the involvement of critical sectors of Ghana's economy as partners in providing education for all children with disabilities (Ministry of Education 2018a). The policy outlines the following as instrumental in the achievement of all special needs learners: educational institutions, social protection agencies, health workers and community-based rehabilitation centres (Ministry of Education 2018a).

Moreover, the policy approach to involve these sectors in the provision of IE for special needs children in and out of school was one area the previous ESPs failed to emphasise. The policy goal to provide education for children with disabilities outside schools is essential because, in most cases, most of these special children stay at home as a result of the social stigma and inaccessibility of existing schools for children with disabilities. Therefore, focusing on children with disabilities in schools alone was easier but costly for children with disabilities who were unable to attend schools, especially those in rural communities and low-income homes.

The comparative analysis of these core education policy documents gives an overview of Ghana's IE policies over the years, primarily during the MDG 2 and SDG 4 era, since these global goals have become global policy templates for education policies. The influence of these global education goals on Ghana's IE strategies is noticeable in how Ghana moves from a narrowed approach to educating children with disabilities to a more intersectoral and expanded policy plan by 2018, just as SDG 4 developed the aims of the MDG 2 from the simple expansion of primary education to more IE for all.

Disability Education Landscape in Ghana

Ghana's education system for all citizens, including PWDs, is divided into three parts: pre-school (kindergarten – 2 years, primary – 6 years, and junior high school – 3 years, (a total of 11 years)), secondary (3 years), and tertiary (3 or 4 years) education. In the final year of the JHS, students of all statuses take the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), the results of which determine access to upper secondary education. Contingent on their interest and career aspiration, a choice is made between SHS (Non-technical or Vocational course: Science, Arts, Business, Humanities etc.), vocational, or technical schools.

The structure and governance of schooling apply to all citizens regardless of disabilities. The management of Ghana's education comes under the Ministry of Education, headed by the Minister for Education, taking charge of all the policies, directives, and financing of the sector. The primary education, secondary, and training colleges are under the auspices of the Ghana Education Services (GES), whilst the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission takes charge of all tertiary institutions. The Special Education Department (SED) is a wing of the GES and is mandated to develop and implement programmes and policies to promote quality and IE (Ministry of Education 2018a). However, there are few curricula centred on varying duration and pedagogy for children with disabilities, especially those in special needs schools. For instance, visually impaired students are not enrolled in science and mathematics courses. In that case, they might spend extra years learning to use braille and computers, whilst deaf learners spend an extra year in primary and secondary schools (Odame et al. 2021).

Primary education is an essential part of Ghana's education system. Literacy and numeracy skills begin in primary schools, the foundation for secondary and tertiary education. To this end, the government established the Accelerated Development Plan in 1951 and birthed an upsized primary school enrollment following emergency teacher training and teachers' appointments (Ministry of Education 2015). Additionally, the Education Act (1961), which led to the free and compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), backed by the 1992 constitution, mandated all children to enroll and participate in primary education. These policies increased the number of children accessing schools, with some level of access for children with disabilities (Gomda et al. 2022). The Persons With Disabilities Act of 2006 and the Education Act (778) guaranteed PWDs the right to education, including compulsory enrollment, provision of infrastructure and equipment in schools, free and special schools, and training for PWDs. The Act(s) is targeted at improving the quality of life for PWDs by fostering full and equal participation in education. It prohibited the refusal to admit a person on account of their disability.

Available data from the Ghana Population and Housing Census (2010) on children's access to education reports that 20% of children with disability, thus four out of ten (between age three and four) were not enrolled in schools and received no formal education, with only 17,4% primary school achievement (Gomda et al. 2022). Most schools lack the necessary facilities to support children with disabilities.

> *"Only 32% of special schools have ramps, and 23% have handrails. Only 44% of regular basic schools have functional water facilities, and 43% have no electricity. Sanitation facilities leave much to be desired, with a 46% lack of wash basins for*

SHS. Special Education Needs (SEN) learners comprise only 0,2–0,4% of total enrollment in pre-tertiary institutions, despite prevalence rates of 1,7% in the overall population of pre-tertiary learners" (Ministry of Education 2018a, p. 51).

Inability to access education tends to lead to social exclusion, marginalisation, lack of basic skills and exclusion from participation in the development process. Moreover, the teaching of PWDs in upper-secondary and higher education in Ghana is yet to receive the needed financial support to boost access and completion numbers (Morley & Croft 2011). Braun & Naami (2021) argued that the few in higher education face inaccessible infrastructure challenges. The physical environment in higher education, including lecture halls and libraries, is not accessible for students with physical and visual impairments. The physical environment layout of higher learning institutions does not support easy accessibility due to poor open drain systems and tall buildings without elevators. Undoubtedly, learners with disabilities have poorer learning outcomes in reading, writing, and maths than their peers without disabilities (Ministry of Education 2018a).

Nevertheless, the literature reveals an overall encouraging growth of enrollment in higher education (Darvas et al. 2017, Braun & Naami 2021). For instance, the number of persons with disabilities enrolled in specialist inclusive schools increased by 40,5% (3.361 to 4.722) between 2001/2002 and 2005/2006 (Gomda et al. 2022). Moreover, some higher education institutions have committed to IE with internal and external efforts. For instance, some universities (e.g., the University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, University of Winneba) engage in external marketisation of their programmes, opportunities, and are eager to admit PWDs from high schools.

The University of Ghana 2016/2017 statistics show a single-digit growth above the previous year. The table below presents statistics on the University of Ghana enrollment of students with disabilities between 2009/2010 and 2016/2017.

Table 3: enrollment of students with disability at the University of Ghana between 2009/2010 and 2016/2017

Sex		2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
Males		19	43	55	65	62	56	51	53
Females		3	9	14	22	34	28	23	22
Total		22	52	69	87	96	84	74	75

Source: Office of Students With Special Needs (2019).

The University of Ghana has established the Office of Students with Special Needs (OSSN) with the mandate of assessing the needs of PWDs and providing pastoral and academic support (converting hardcopy text into word or pdf format, providing students with disability orientation, providing and training students to use assistive technologies, etc.). It is important to note that access to statistics on learners with disability in Ghana is generally scanty and unavailable. Through inclusive programmes, higher education in Ghana needs to expand its student enrollment beyond the privileged few to include students with disabilities.

The status of Inclusive Education in Ghana

The previous sections have demonstrated some of Ghana's IE provisions for persons with disabilities. This section elaborates on the discussion by exploring Ghana's IE status after decades of policy diversification and implementation. Essentially, it aims to present the success and the challenges that continue to confront Ghana's IE. In 2011, the SED responded to government directives to implement IE units in 529 schools across 34 districts (Ministry of Education 2015). Activities of the pilot scheme included educating communities, screening children and training teachers to identify and handle children with special needs and disabilities. The primary approaches to IE have increased access and enhanced teaching and learning of PWDs (Ministry of Education 2003, 2018a). For instance, the implementation of the FSHS policy has witnessed 40.000 learners from low-income families gain access to SHS and a total of 11% increment in general enrollment from 74% (2013–2016) to 84% (2018). More females (79,7%) are moving up to SHS than males (76,9%) in 2017/2018, but with lower completion rates (49,5% against 50,3%) (Ministry of Education 2018b). According to the Ministry of Education (2022), the Medium Term Budget Estimate Framework report that a total of 1.281 teachers received training on management and support of students with learning difficulties, and 179 officers comprising completely and partially blind teachers, assistants, and house mothers, also received special training on innovative approaches to teaching. Given the relative success in the provision of IE in Ghana, it is sufficient to say that Ghana has made significant strides towards IE and considerable advances are anticipated in the future.

Despite these achievements, some gaps and challenges persist:

> *"(a) prejudicial public perception of persons with special needs, (b) architectural barriers, (c) inadequate assessment facilities, (d) inaccessible curriculum, (e)*

curriculum inflexibility, and (f) ineffective or inadequate pre- or post-planning in special education needs for regular teachers" (Botts & Owusu 2013, p. 136).

The Ministry of Education has reported that about 20% of JHS learners from the poorest households, deprived districts, and rural areas are five to six times less likely to access secondary education. Inconsistent and diverted resources have hampered many existing policies and programmes that aim to eliminate inequalities.

After almost two decades, these challenges reflect the same problems confronting the IE plan in Ghana, in addition to poverty and the lack of school resources. Gomda et al. (2022), in a review, noted that despite national and international policy propagation, Ghana is still faced with challenges such as the infrastructural deficit, socio-cultural barriers, institutional and policy setbacks, lack of educational attainment and employment availability for disability graduates. Family and community-level constraints such as financial difficulties and the absence of academic and personal needs support for PWD further inhibit their access to education. Despite all the efforts, these challenges are hindering progress in IE.

Future Perspectives of Inclusive Education in the country

Notwithstanding the progress in Ghana's IE, achieving primary IE goals through an intersystem approach across Ghana remains far behind reach. Future perspectives of Ghana's IE should therefore focus on the practical implementation of IE policies. According to the data on IE and special needs education achievements, the country is nowhere near achieving the target of an IE system. For instance, ca. 8.000 girls and 8.000 boys with mild to moderate disabilities in 34 districts as of 2001/2002 were enrolled in mainstream education. However, there had been very little change in these numbers by 2018, with a mere enrollment of 9.846 boys and 8.464 girls with mild to moderate disabilities (Ministry of Education 2012, 2018b).

To meet the IE goals, Ghana must increase special education funding. The current funding situation for special needs education is volatile, with funds usually coming from international development corporations such as the World Bank. Even though the services for the special education population have increased, the budget has claimed less than 3% of the national education budget. For instance, in the ESP 2018–2030, only 1% of the education budget is allocated to IE and special needs education in any given year from 2018 to 2030. Any future benefits could depend on funds available for the implementation of teaching and learning resources for PWDs. The recent introduction of the FSHS policy, for instance, can elevate the

financial burden, which hitherto was seen as an impediment to students of poor status, including disabled students, from having access to education. Significantly, this includes PWDs. Still, for these groups, the continued existence of unavailable technological assistive/learning tools, lack of specialised qualified teachers, and inaccessible infrastructures can, with all certainty, affect retention and outcomes. The FSHS policy is not enough. Therefore, more inclusive initiatives such as the newly introduced computer writing tool for visually impaired students at the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) are to be encouraged.

Another essential element of the IE policy is teaching expertise and delivery; thus, the need for expanding specialised teacher training in all teacher training colleges and universities. Moreover, SED should develop its partnerships to ensure teachers receive technical and professional development training to broaden their knowledge and expertise in inclusive support and practices in and outside the classroom. Social workers can also accelerate collaboration among all relevant stakeholders in the IE programme. Social workers form part of the IE ecosystem who can coordinate and mobilise resources among teachers, parents, and others significant to transforming the needs of Children with Disabilities (CWDs). The complementary roles of all stakeholders can go a long way to improve access, participation, and general learning experiences of CWDs.

In summary, these IE policies and practices suggest that IE has much to offer students with disabilities in Ghana. A cursory assessment of Ghana's IE presents mixed results: success, challenges, and opportunities. The core to realising an IE is financing; hence, to boost IE in Ghana, the government needs to increase the budget allocated to the SED to guarantee the implementation of the existing policies and the provision of resources to schools with special needs students. Setting the goal for 2030, there is a need for long-term institutional reforms and restructuring to expand and strengthen Ghana's IE partnerships at both local and international level.

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Inclusive Education in Kenya

Inclusive education not only impacts the concept and quality of education offered to children with disabilities but also questions the general goals of education, the purpose of schools, evaluation methodologies, the nature and design of the curriculum, and school adaptation to diversity. Kenya is one of the African countries that has achieved significant progress towards inclusive education. The government has embraced and promoted inclusive education by incorporating several international accords into its legislation. To expand the education landscape of persons with disabilities, the government is implementing the Global Disability Standards (GDS) which reflects its desire for disability inclusion in national development. Further, Kenya's government is making significant strides towards creating a more disability-inclusive society by increasing investments in disability technology and research programmes.

Introduction

The development of inclusive practices in education is not fully recognised; an all-encompassing education is still a multi-layered and complex subject (Winzer & Mazurek 2017). As mentioned above, inclusive education not only impacts the concept and quality of education offered to children with disabilities, but also questions the greater goals of education, the purpose of school evaluation methodologies, the nature and design of the curriculum, and school adaptation to diversity.

The way in which mainstream schools respond to children with disabilities may be used as a criteria to assess the quality and eminence of the education system. A good school benefits all students and is committed to the success of all students. This necessitates the modification of school technologies and the environment to accommodate the diversity of learners (UN 2016). The concept of inclusion evolved in the twentieth century, when

many countries struggled to embrace and develop educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

The trend for inclusive education for students with special needs began in the 1960s. The United Nations issued notable proclamations on inclusive education, such as the Convention Against Discrimination in School (1960), which stipulated that individuals with disabilities shall have equal access to education. The Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975) affirmed the respect and dignity of people with disabilities, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) recognised the rights of every child. Similarly, the World Conference in 1990 (Jomtien Declaration) in Thailand established Education for All (EFA) goals, which was reinforced in the Dakar Framework in Senegal in 2000. This promoted the Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on Learners with Disabilities in Spain (UNESCO 2014a) to endorse inclusive education standards and provided a significant motivator for inclusion. The Salamanca Declaration is arguably the most significant international document governing the subject of special education (Tang 2015). Essentially, the Salamanca Statement recommends that every child with special learning needs shall have the right to learn in a regular institution. Governments were expected to prioritise regulatory, legal and fiscal provisions to rebuild the education system to accommodate learner diversity (UNESCO 2017).

As a result, several nations have made significant attempts to improve their educational policies and practices toward inclusive education; notwithstanding, its usefulness and efficiency leave much to be desired. Although numerous countries appear to be devoted to inclusive education as reflected in their legislation and policy, in practice schools often fall short of this rhetoric (Benavot 2017). One of the greatest policy demands confronting American education in the United States, for example, was to place and assist learners with disabilities in the finest inclusive environment, as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997. Although the IDEA requires that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive setting possible, learners with disabilities in public schools, particularly in low-income or urban areas, have difficulties accessing school facilities which are unmodified due to the high expense of modification. Attitudinal barriers and a lack of ability to execute inclusive practices and devices are the most common difficulties impeding ability to teach inclusively (Sharma & Michael 2017).

Evidence of inclusive education in African nations is limited and scattered. In Africa, students with disabilities are hindered by inaccessible surroundings, a lack of appropriate accommodation, unfavorable attitudes, discriminatory patterns and admission procedures, as well as a lack of policies and options governing disability (Sharma & Michael 2017). For in-

stance, Nigeria, which implemented an inclusive education policy in 2008, is still challenged by socio-economic constraints, insufficient money and lack of physical facilities. Kenya, on the other hand, is one of the African countries that has achieved significant progress toward inclusive education (Republic of Kenya 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012). The government has embraced and promoted inclusive education by incorporating several international accords into its legislation.

Prevalence of Disability and Access to Education

According to the World Health Organization, the rate of disability accounts for 15% of the population globally. Disability data in Kenya is uncertain and unreliable (Owino 2020). A preliminary analysis conducted in 2019 using the Washington Group questionnaire revealed that 2,2% of the population aged 5years+ have some form of disability. This prevalence rate is lower compared to the 2009 figure. According to the 2019 census, 2,2% (0,9 million) of Kenyans live with disabilities. Due to the variations in the collection of data methodology, age span and administrative unit size, detecting disability prevalence from 2009 to 2019 is difficult. The 2019 census shows a significant decrease in disability prevalence; whereas the 2009 census indicates 3,5%, and assessment rates in the same age groups yield a prevalence rate in 2009 of 3,8%.

Mobility is the most frequently reported issue, accounting for 0,4 million Kenyans, i.e., 42% of persons with impairments, according to a domain analysis of disability. Other types of impairment, such as visionary, hearing, self-care, cognitive, and communication, include 36% to 12% of people with disability. Albinism affects around 0,02% of Kenya's population.

A subnational examination of the national disability rate of 2,2% demonstrates a regional variation in disability prevalence rates. The highest prevalence rates of disability were seen in Kenya's central, eastern, and western regions. The greatest prevalence rate is seen in Embu County (4,4%), followed by Homa Bay (4,3%), Siaya (4,1%), Makueni (4,1%), and Kisumu counties (4%). The counties with the lowest disability prevalence rates are situated in Kenya's north eastern region and in Nairobi. Wajir has the lowest rate, at 0,6%.

National Policy and Strategy Documents

According to the Ministry of Education National Special Needs Inclusive Education Policy Framework in Kenya, inclusive education is a strategy in

which children with disabilities and special needs, regardless of their disability or age, are offered appropriate education in their mainstream schools (Republic of Kenya 2019). Over the past years the mainstreaming of programmes in special needs education has proved challenging, due to inadequate facilities, inappropriate infrastructure and equipment – thus making integration of regular programmes difficult –, inadequate teaching and learning materials and inappropriate placement of children with special needs. The policy documents governing the education of persons with disabilities include:

I. The Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was legalised in Kenya, having been approved in 2008. The CRPD gives a new meaning to the traditional concept of human rights whilst addressing issues that limited the participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in society. The CRPD initiates a paradigm shift in the context of disability, by introducing a new model of perception for persons with disability. Traditionally, PWDs were considered as subjects for charity and medical treatment. Today, with the new paradigm shift, PWDs are considered as people having rights, claimants of rights, including the right to active involvement in the decision making process on issues governing their lives, with free, informed consent regardless of place of residence. This is also emphasised in article 4.3 of CRPD.

II. The National Disability Policy Draft of 2007

This policy defines disability as a developmental phenomenon and highlights the concept and application of human rights in all avenues of life. The policy strives to eliminate disparities in the provision of services to all citizens with disabilities. Although the policy was never passed officially in parliament, it had an impact on the guidance of activities in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, in charge of disability before 2013.

III. The Kenyan Constitution 2010

The Constitution affirms a commitment to equality and non-discrimination principles, with equality mentioned as one of six key values upon which administration is to be based. Discrimination on the basis of race, marital status, gender, pregnancy, health condition, social or ethnic origin, age, color, religion, belief, conscience, culture, language, or disability is prohib-

ited under Article 10. The Kenyan Constitution urges the government to ensure that persons with all kinds of disabilities shall have access to suitable education and training, and that all schools are to accommodate children with disabilities. Further, every individual shall have access to free (compulsory) education (Article 43). Unique learners, on the other hand, have a right to access and benefit from appropriate facilities that are embedded in the social structure.

IV. Persons with Disabilities Act 2003

The Act acknowledges that people with disabilities are confronted with various types of discrimination and that the government shall use all available resources to instill an awareness of the rights of people with disabilities, as outlined in the Act.

V. Special Needs Education Policy 2009

The Special Needs Education Policy was adopted in 2009 to address major challenges concerning education for learners with disabilities. According to the policy, the all-embracing objective of education is to achieve Education for All (EFA) by 2015, in accordance with 14 global and national commitments. The policy's objective is to establish a welcoming atmosphere for learners with disabilities, with a view to equitable access to higher quality education. This strategy, although not widely distributed, was announced in 2010.

Disability, according to the World Report on Disability, is an issue requiring collaborative effort between the World Bank Group and the WHO to give a comprehensive description of the status of disability, as well as a response based on the appropriate research information and recommendations for action (WHO 2011). The World Report's scope is extensive, and it addresses extremely complicated measures to enhance access and equal opportunity, as well as inclusive participation and increased respect for individuals.

VI. World Declaration on Education for All 1990

In 1990, the Kenyan government accepted the World Declaration on EFA in Jomtien, Thailand. The aim of the declaration was to increase access to elementary education and significantly reduce adult illiteracy (UNESCO 2014b). The declaration proclaimed that access to education is a fundamental human right and set specific aims for meeting basic learning needs by the year of the aspired attainment of goals as follows: universal opportu-

nities for education, educational equity, increased scope of basic education and improved learning environments.

VII. Salamanca Statement 1994

Kenya signed the Salamanca Statement in 1994, together with 91 other nations and 25 international organisations promoting inclusive opportunities for people with disabilities throughout the world. This Declaration emphasised the need for schools across the globe to become more inclusive (UNESCO 2014b) and the policy reaffirmed the right to education for all whilst urging individual governments to prioritise aspects concerning inclusive education.

Disability Education Landscapes

Accessibility is a critical aspect of the education of persons with disabilities. According to the Kenya Disability Act of 2003 and the United Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, learning institutions are mandated to provide equitable access to educational opportunities for learners with disabilities.

Effective learning occurs when learners are able to completely engage with the information and contribute effectively to classroom activities. Higher education in Africa has historically been a preserve of the affluent and other privileged groups, which means that those with disabilities have often been refused equitable access. Currently, less than 1% of PWDs are in higher education, and their success rate is far lower than that of their non-disabled peers. Access to education is hampered by barriers encountered both within and without institutions of higher learning.

The most frequently mentioned impediments include criteria that discriminate against those with disabilities; negative attitudes toward disability; surroundings that make it difficult for individuals to navigate; rigid curricula and evaluation methods that discriminate against PWDs, denying most of these individuals the opportunity for higher education (Elder, Damiania & Oswago 2016). The provision of learning support and accommodation, as well as the application of Universal Design principles in higher education, are crucial in addressing these barriers and in opening up educational opportunities and accessibility for learners with disabilities.

Educational institutions have recently endeavored to provide a framework to enhance prospects for students with disabilities wishing to pursue a higher education. Several African countries have made progress in enacting disability-related legislation, but many of these laws have yet to be imple-

mented. In various African countries, current national legislation concerning equal opportunity for the disabled needs overhauling. The improvement of legislation and processing was identified as one of the primary concerns that needed to be prioritised. Kenya has made significant headway in its 'Education For All' initiative; yet, there is still a gap in providing access to all young people and implementing specialised instruction. This is especially true for higher education. The main impediments to implementing education for learners with exceptional needs include a lack of clear directions on the implementation of an all-inclusive education policy, a lack of reliable information on individuals with disabilities, insufficient facilities and the necessary expertise and skills in assessing and handling learners with disabilities (Republic of Kenya 2009). Unsuitable fundamental frameworks, a scarcity of specially qualified staff and a lack of physical resources aggravate this situation, posing significant hurdles to the integration of specialised instruction into mainstream education (MoE 2018).

In accordance with worldwide declarations, agreements, and standards, the Kenya Constitution (2010) guarantees access to health care and education to all citizens, emphasising the need to provide resources and assistance to vulnerable populations. Articles 53 to 59 of the Constitution of Kenya authorise access to basic compulsory education, free of charge, as well as adequate programmes and support. Furthermore, PWDs have the right to enter all learning institutions and to avail themselves of the resources for PWDs. This involves the use of Sign Language, Braille, or other acceptable ways of communication, as well as having access to resources and assistive technology to help overcome barriers due to individual impairment or condition.

Furthermore, the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2003 specifies the entitlement of PEDs to parity of opportunity. To this end, the Ministry of Education has developed a master plan to reduce current disparities with a view to Education for All. The ultimate goal of the strategy is to ensure that disadvantaged children and other learners with special needs have access to quality education throughout the country. The aim is to accept and implement the Special Needs Education Policy (MoE 2018).

Status of Inclusive Education in Kenya

Currently, inclusive education in Kenya is gaining impetus. The emphasis is on the need to move away from segregated to inclusive education. As a result, inclusive education has become a guiding concept, campaigning for the right of every student with a disability to be enrolled in regular classrooms alongside classmates without impairments (MoE 2018).

Kenya's Ministry of Education (2018) regards inclusive education as a fundamental right to every person and the public schools, both primary and secondary, offer free education to all learners. Inclusive education involves transforming traditional schools into barrier-free environments to accommodate all students including those with disabilities. Policies advocating the availability of skilled employees, zero admission prejudice, partnership between schools and communities, curriculum differentiation, delivery of related services and inclusive ideals will generate successful implementation of inclusive education (Adoyo 2019). Despite the fact that Kenya has long supported the concept of inclusion, a number of reports disclose that school managers, the public and education are still unfamiliar with the subject.

Further, despite the widespread introduction of inclusive education technologies, there is still a very small percentage of children with disabilities out of school. Few students with disabilities attend school due to limited infrastructure and equipment, the high expense involved in classroom adaptation to suit students with disabilities and a shortage of specialised SEN teaching staff (MoE 2018). In the absence of fundamental changes in the administrative approach to compulsory and free education in Kenya, rhetoric outlined in laws will continue to rattle alongside the socio-historic dynamics afflicting the Kenyan education system.

According to Ireri, King'endo, Wangila and Thuranira (2020), the surveys on physical barriers to inclusive education reveal that most schools do not regularly monitor and evaluate physical resources to ensure the safety of children with disabilities. Unmodified physical resources, resulting from sporadic monitoring and assessment of physical resources throughout the schools, prevent learners with disabilities from accessing critical areas. The unfavorable attitudes of key stakeholders towards inclusive education policy, together with a lack of funding, result in inadequate handling of physical impediments to inclusive education implementation.

Future Perspectives of Inclusive Education

Kenya's government is making significant strides towards creating a more disability-inclusive society. The progress made in implementing the GDS pledges reflects the government's desire for disability inclusion in national development. As per the Status Report of Disability Inclusion (Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Senior Citizens Affairs and Special Programmes 2021), the Kenyan government is committed to increasing investments in disability technology and research programmes to enlarge evidence-based and knowledge-based decision making by the government. Additionally, the government is committed towards increasing investments in all initia-

tives that will produce progressive learning models and new technologies, allocating funds for infrastructure, equipment and teacher training to increase future possibilities for inclusive education. The government is also developing stronger national strategies to monitor the inclusive education strategies and Education for All commitments.

Conclusion

The aspirations for inclusive education outlined in Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are viable. Kenya is one of the African countries that has achieved significant progress towards inclusive education. The government has embraced and promoted inclusive education by incorporating several international accords into its legislation. To increase the education landscape of persons with disabilities, the government is implementing the Global Disability Standards, reflecting the desire for disability inclusion in national development. Additionally, as revealed by the 2021 Status Report of Disability inclusion in Kenya, the country is committed to increasing investments in all initiatives that will produce progressive learning models and new technologies, allocating funding for infrastructure, equipment and teacher training, to promote future opportunities for inclusive education. Further, the government is committed to increasing investments in disability technology and research programmes for improved decision – making based on evidence and expertise.

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The Status of Inclusive Education and Special Needs Education in Malawi

This article focuses on the status of Inclusive Education (IE) and Special Needs Education (SNE) in Malawi, based on an analysis of the National Strategy on Inclusive Education (NSIE) activities from 2017 to 2021 (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2017). The analysis includes reviews of annual performance reports and basic statistical data issued by the Ministry of Education. Despite a number of strategies providing guidance for inclusion, the analysis confirms that implementation achievement is still minimal, particularly concerning appropriate adjustment of the education system to accommodate learners with diverse needs. Notable achievement is reflected in the increase in the participation of learners with special learning needs at all levels of education. The implementation process has focused on the provision of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM) and the provision of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in inclusive education rather than the adjustment of the education system. A number of policy areas are suggested.

Introduction and Background

Inclusion and equity are referred to in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for sustainable development goals as a key to the socio-economic development of a country. This is based on the argument that in many countries, unequal distribution of resources and opportunities still persists. However, the potential of education to transform lives and address issues of inequalities and exclusion has been documented with evidence. At an international level, the idea that education is a right for all children irrespective of their diverse learning needs is certainly not new (UNESCO 1960, United Nations 1986, UNESCO 1990, UNESCO 1994, United Nations 2006, United Nations

2015). The philosophy of IE, therefore, is to address all barriers to learning so that each learner has access to a school, is valued and has a right to learn. This will help all learners to realise their full potential in education and contribute to the development of their communities, as well as to the nation.

Even if access to sustainable, equitable and quality education is a right for all children, it is observed that many children in Malawi are still out of school. As cautioned by the 2020 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report, the distribution of educational opportunities continues to be unequal and many learners still face considerable barriers to accessing quality education (GEMRT 2020). The report notes that even before Covid-19, one in five adolescents were entirely excluded from education. According to several studies (Tedessie & Muluye 2020, GEMRT 2020) Covid-19 has exacerbated the problem. Globally, 59 million primary school children, 61 million secondary school-age children and 130 million upper secondary-age adolescents are reported to be out of school. The report indicates that half of these children and adolescents are living in sub-Saharan Africa and that the global share in exclusion for Africa increased from 24% in 2000 to 38% in 2018. Poverty, language, location, gender and ethnicity are assumed to be the primary causes of exclusion.

Special Needs Education (SNE) in Malawi was introduced around 1950 when faith-based organisations assumed a leading role. The first specialist school to be established was for learners with visual impairment at Chilanga in Kasungu in 1950. In 1968 a Specialist Teacher Training College at the Montfort College campus was established. Government commitment was demonstrated in 1967 when it introduced funding for SNE. This was followed by the demand for Universal Primary Education (UPE) which was initiated during the development of the Primary Education Plan for 1962–1967. It was, however, observed that the practicality of achieving UPE was impeded by numerous challenges (Nyasaland Ministry of Education 1963). Guided by the medical model, SNE followed a segregationist approach which introduced special schools and resource centres. Malawi embraced the inclusive education agenda in 2017. Currently, several policies and strategic documents are inclusion-oriented. However, there is still no guidance concerning the provision and implementation of IE in Malawi.

Inclusive education, as defined by the Disability Act of 2012, is a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by means of increasing participation in education, cultures, and communities and reducing exclusion from and within education. The 2017–2021 National Strategy on Inclusive Education (NSIE) (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2017) underlines the inclusion of children who are likely to be excluded from and within the education system. GEMRT (2020, p. 11) de-

fines inclusive education as a process of actions and practices that embrace diversity and build a sense of belonging. This definition is rooted in the belief that every person has value and potential and is to be respected. Learner diversity should therefore be embraced and upheld as a force for social cohesion.

Access to education in Malawi is on the increase in all sub-sectors, with a notable 40% increase for students with special needs from 2007 to 2019. By 2020, 3,4 % of all learners were students with special needs (MOE 2020). Inclusive Education, however, as according to the definition outlined above, does not only involve SEN learners but also those who for various other reasons may not enroll. This means that the number of potential learners that might be out of school could be higher, e.g., the Education Sector Review of 2020 reveals a mere 55% completion rate of primary education, a slight increase from 50% in 2016 (MOE 2020). This is indeed a serious problem.

Methodology

This desk review analysis is primarily based on a literature review of documents produced by the Ministry of Education and National Statistics Office. It further analyses guiding documents from UNESCO, UNICEF, Save the Children, the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR), and some selected policies on Inclusive Education developed by other countries. Education Basic Statistics (EBS) data sets, and Education Sector Performance Reports (ESPR) that are released annually by the Ministry of Education were considerably instrumental in the analysis. Access to these documents was provided by the Ministry of Education and websites. The analysis focuses on consistency, coherency and efficiency. In this context, consistency is analysed in terms of how far the strategies outlined in the document reviews tally with actual implementation. Coherence will be examined on the basis of the rationale behind the policy in the context of its goals. Efficiency in this case focuses on whether both qualitative and quantitative outputs were achieved within the implementation period. These angles of analysis are applied with the caveat that this is a partial review of NSIE.

National Strategy on Inclusive Education

This section takes a look at the implementation of NSIE for 2017 to 2021 developed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST 2017). The NSIE was developed through a wide consultative process with

key stakeholders involved in the issue of inclusive education. This review is based on reports on the nature of IE activities from 2017 to 2021. Technical Working Groups (TWG), ESPR, EMIS, and the National Statistical Office (NSO) reports were sources of the information for the review. TWG meetings are very important because the sectors provide their plans to the group and explain how they intend to implement them. The TWG, in this case, follows up on how the activities are implemented and provides guidance. Reports from the TWG are then presented to the Sector Working Group (SWG) and at the end of the year, an ESPR is produced. Such a process is vital as it connects the policies, strategies and implementation plans. The Implementation of the NSIE, which is expected to adhere to that process, will be traced through these documents. These documents are obtained from the Ministry of Education Department of Planning, which coordinates the development and implementation of the plans and the directorate responsible for IE.

Objectives of the National Strategy on Inclusive Education

The purpose of the strategy was to implement the inclusive policies laid down in the NEP of 2016 and respond to the strategies provided in the NESIP of 2008 to 2017. It is observed that the introduction of Free Primary Education generated some challenges due to the rapid expansion of the primary sector. This consequently led to challenges in education access by learners with special needs. The strategy therefore aimed at providing an interventional framework for inclusive education over a period of 5 years, from 2017 to 2021. The strategy focused on priority areas, an implementation and evaluation plan, and a budget.

The vision, as embraced by the strategy, was to aim for an education that promotes access, participation, and achievement of diverse learners at all levels by 2022. The goal of the strategy was to ensure that learners with diverse needs in Malawi have equitable access to quality education in inclusive settings at all levels through the removal of barriers to learning, participation, attendance and achievement.

The following present eight key strategic areas incorporated in the NSIE

i. capacity for inclusive education,
ii. governance and management of inclusive education,
iii. learner identifications and assessment,
iv. inclusive education management information system,
v. teacher training and motivation,

vi. partners for inclusive education,
vii. adaptation of the environment for teaching and learning,
viii. inclusive education funding.

Achievements of the above strategies are expected to result in increases in access and participation of learners with special needs. The analysis will first focus on achievements in access and equity by comparing the indicators in the base year, 2016, and the final year of implementation, 2021. Assessment of access and equity will be based on Gross Enrollment Rates (GER) and Net Enrollment Rates (NER). Completion and retention rates, repetition and dropout rates will be included to assess participation (internal efficiency) over the implementation period. Learners with special needs, together with the vulnerable (orphans and learners with albinism) will be targeted in the analysis. The analysis will also examine the process of follow up on the implementation of the activities outlined in the key strategic areas provided for in the NSIE. Consistency, coherency and efficiency of NSIE will be tracked in the analysis.

Access, Equity and Participation

Early Childhood Development

Access to education begins with Early Childhood Development (ECD) which has been shown to enhance learner achievements. ECD services are provided by the Ministry for Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, which includes all learners with diverse needs. The Ministry of Health is expected to monitor the development and assessment of children with special needs. However, there are no provisions mentioned in the NSIR concerning ECD for learners with special needs. This, to an extent, shows a gap in the information system for proper analysis of the number of ECD learners with special needs, as well as anticipated policies to be effected. Also, the fact that the policies concerning ECD come under three Ministries – Ministry for Education, Ministry for Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Health – poses a challenge in data management for the proper monitoring of the policies. This is a policy issue governing coordination.

According to the information from the NSO Census for 2018, children with disability in the 5–14 year and 15–17 age groups account for 227.810 and 105.176 respectively. The report indicates that 39,2% were aged 36–56 months, 51% of whom were girls, yielding a disability rate of 3% (NSO 2018, MOE 2020). The ECD enrollment information available via EBS, 2021

indicates a total enrollment of 462.291 including 215.189 boys and 245.081 girls, indicating a GER of 25,8% and 29,4% respectively (MOE 2021). Although NER is considered an ideal method for measuring age-specific access to ECD, the availability of GER is a better practice and should be applied. It shows around 70% of eligible ECD learners are outside the system. The concern should now focus on separate indicators for ECD learners with special needs. As a better practice, we can now observe the integration of ECD data in slightly more detail. However, there is a need to advise the NSO and the EMIS departments on the type of data collection methods for monitoring access, participation and performance of children with special needs. The coverage of ECD policies in the reports needs to be more comprehensive.

Primary Education

Population growth determines the increase in the number of enrollments in absolute terms. As such, admission and enrollment rates provide a better understanding of access and equity in education. The analysis will therefore use the GER and NER in assessing access and equity for education in all the education sub-sectors. When the NSIE was being developed in 2016, primary enrollment stood at 4.901.009 and by 2021 the enrollment had increased to 4.956.667, with an overall increase of 55.658 learners representing a 1,3% increase (MOE 2021). The enrollment rate, however, declined by 8,5% from 2020 to 2021 and this is attributed to the effects of COVID-19. The GER and NER rates are 131% and 98% respectively. By the end of the implementation period of the NSIE, 2021, primary GER had decreased to 126% and NER to 90%. A GER of over 100% indicates the system has some over-aged and under-aged learners. In 2016 the primary sector had admitted 2,9% under-aged and 34,9% over-aged learners to grade 1. In 2021, 2,4% and 29,2% were admitted respectively.

A high GER still enhances inclusive education initiatives, encouraging all to attend school. However, the presence of underaged and overaged in an education system puts a strain on the resources. Also, it might contradict policies enhancing age-specific admission such as the entry age of 6 years. Inclusive policy enhancement requires adequate resources, particularly for SN learners and these are relatively more expensive than standard teaching and learning materials. Prudent control of scarce resources would therefore benefit quality inclusive education. Adherence to age-specific enrollments would help to reduce the overall expenditure on education and direct resources to the training of SEN teachers and the procurement of assistive devices.

Inclusive Education implies all learners but a particular focus ought to target both learners with special needs and the disadvantaged as they are likely to be discriminated against and become dropouts. As previously indicated, this was one of the reasons for the conceptualisation of the NSIE to include learners with special needs. At the inception of NSIE, in 2016, the primary sector is reported to have identified a total of 120.007 learners with disabilities. The largest group comprised learners with learning difficulties – 22,6% boys and 20,0% girls. Learners with poor vision followed with 11,5% and 11,2% for boys and girls respectively (MOEST 2016, p. 28). By 2021, the percentage of SN learners had increased to 3,27% of the total primary enrollment. The output target in NSIE for SN learners in primary schools, was set at 135.008 by 2021 and this was exceeded by 162.174, indicating a great achievement. The figure below shows the trend in the number of learners with SNE from 2011 to 2021.

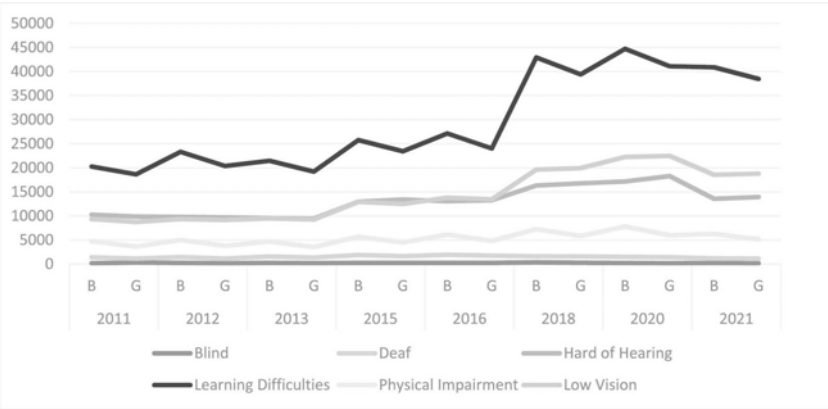

Figure 1: Trend in Enrollment of Learners with Special Education needs: 2011–2021

Source: Authors' analysis of Basic Statistics Data on Education from 2011 to 2021 (MOEST 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2021)

The trend in the absolute number of SEN learners accessing primary school education reveals an increase in the years from 2011 to 2021 with two notable phases; from 2011 to 2016 a slight increase from 2,2% to 2,4% is observed and in the second phase, a noticeable increase from 2,4% in 2016 to 3,2% in 2021. Coincidentally, this is the period NSIE was being implemented and in this respect, the practical initiatives undoubtedly played a role in the increased enrollments of SEN learners. The fact that the increase included all types of disabilities implies that some policies have indeed been translated into action.

Of great concern is the fact that learners with learning difficulties form the majority, followed by learners with poor vision. Further investigation is required here. A declining trend from 2020 to 2021 might be attributed to the effects of COVID-19. In common practice, analysing the percentage of learners with SEN as against the enrollment figures does not reflect a true picture of the total coverage of learners with SEN. Ideally, focus on suitable methods for data collection would be instrumental in calculating admission and enrollment rates for learners with SEN.

Once the learners have enrolled, they will be expected to complete a level of education and proceed to the next level. The NSIE, seems to have glossed over participation and performance of SEN learners. A glance at the activities outlined in the strategic outcomes (MOEST 2017, pp. 21–25) will show that focus primarily targets access and in-service training for teachers. Participation of learners is measured in terms of successful completion of grades or levels, as well as repetition and dropout rates. And accuracy largely depends on internal efficiency. Examination of the internal efficiency of the system is therefore crucial in the determination of the rate of successful completion of a particular level. Inclusive education should not only focus on access to learning but also on learning performance.

It may be observed that inclusive education in Malawi is hindered by inefficiencies of the system as reflected in high repetition, low completion and survival, as well as high dropout rates. In 2016, for example, the repetition rate for the primary level was 24,1% including 24,1% and 22,7% for boys and girls respectively (MOEST 2016). By 2021, the repetition rate had decreased to 21% at national level with a rate of 21% for both girls and boys. Although a decline of 3% can be recognised, the rates are still high and indicate that the completion rate is also low. The completion rate for primary schooling in 2016 was 50,9% with 54,9% and 47,0% for boys and girls respectively. In 2021, the completion rate was recorded at 50%, showing a 0,9% decline (MOE 2021). However, the completion rate is still low indicating that learners are not completing on time, within the 13 years schooling. These are learners without disability and one would imagine that SEN learners would score a lower than 50% rating. These indicators – completion rate, survival rate, repetition rate, and dropout rate – should be included in the collection of data on learners with special needs. The key to meaningful inclusive education for the benefit of all lies with the internal efficiency of primary education.

Despite attempts to deal with high repetition rates such as the introduction of the 1992/93 repetition policy revised in 1995, the challenge still persists. Additionally, in its ESP reports and other document analyses the government recognises that repetition rate is a problem and has included some provisions to deal with this issue. A grade promotion policy was also intro-

duced in 2018 to address the problem. Despite all these initiatives, repetition remains a big challenge within the primary sub-sector and is currently observed in the secondary sector (MOEST 2019, p. 41). If inclusivity in education is to be achieved, the high repetition rate needs urgent attention.

Another category of learners is the disadvantaged and these include orphans, girls and the needy. They receive special recognition for inclusive education with the rationale that due to their situation, they are unlikely to access and participate in education. The baseline data for NSIE, in 2016, indicated there were 411.804 orphans attending primary schools with a target of 500.000 aimed for 2021. By 2021 the actual data indicate that 471.367 disadvantaged learners were enrolled in primary schools, of whom 415.529 were orphans, missing the target by 28,.33 (MOE 2021).

Secondary Education Sector

The secondary education sector in Malawi comprises learners aged (officially) between13 to 17 years. These are students moving up from primary education. The 2016 transition rate was 35%, including 33,5% boys and 36,6% girls (MOEST 2016). The transition rate is a reliable indicator for the accessibility of a higher level of education. The transition rate for the secondary level, however, depends on the availability of space in public or private schools. The lack of available space is a barrier to inclusive education in that a 35% transition rate means that 65% of the learners failed to access secondary education. By 2021, the transition rate for secondary education had risen to 36,5%, comprising a rate of 35,8% and 36,4 % for boys and girls respectively. During the NSIE implementation period, the transition rate increased by 1,5% (MOE 2021). For inclusive education to be fully realised there is a need to increase space in the secondary sector. The NER for secondary education is still low, declining from 15%, for both boys and girls in 2016 to 14,6% – 14,6% for boys and 14,5% for girls in 2021. The decline shows the imbalance between population growth and the increase in the number of schools. Due to a shortage of space, roughly 85% of learners aged 13 to 17 are deprived of access to secondary education; a development that impedes inclusive education.

Regarding learners with special needs, the desired access target for secondary education was aimed at 11.000 by the year 2021. The actual data recorded in 2021, however, identifies 9.008 only. Information on the performance of SEN learners is provided by the ESPR (MOE 2021, p. 106). This is one of the best practices for monitoring the progress of SEN learners. It is reported that out of 1.997 SEN learners who sat for the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE), 1.382 passed, representing a 69,2% pass rate (MOE 2021, p. 92). Of these students, 636 were se-

lected for secondary education. These students require close monitoring to ensure they have the chance to access tertiary education. In 2020, 850 SEN learners were selected for secondary education. There is a need to further report on how learners with special needs are performing in all the education sub-sectors.

The baseline data for the number of orphans in the secondary sector in 2016 was recorded as 12,2%, 42.803, of the total enrollment of students in the secondary sector. By 2021 the percentage of orphans in the secondary sector had increased to 14,3% (59.276) of the total enrollment.

Higher and Tertiary Education

In the era of inclusion, higher education is significant in that it provides for teachers as well as space for learners with different potentials. The development of teachers for both primary and secondary education is crucial as the need for inclusion creates new and significant challenges both for regular school teachers who have to respond to greater diversity and the special teachers who are confronted with many changes and challenges governing the context and focus of their work. The information available in the base year for NSIE included Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) omitting universities. By 2018, EBS had captured datasets from both TTC and the universities. It further provided information on learners with special needs, with a mere 117 public university registration. No data was provided on the number of students with learning difficulties attending TTCs. By the end of the implementation period, EBS datasets record a registration of 38.196 students with 15.077 females and 23.199 males studying at public universities (MOE 2021). The registration number for private universities was 10.205. Public universities registered 131 learners with special needs, a rise of 24 learners from the year 2018. This is a noteworthy practice.

Consistency, coherence and efficiency of the National Strategy for Inclusive Education

Since its inception in 2016, the initiatives of SNIE have been classified as cross-cutting issues. This is probably due to the fact that the department responsible for inclusive education is not a fully-fledged department and is usually considered a sub-sector of the Basic Education Department. SEN activities are therefore considered under the Crosscutting Technical Working Group. Education Sector Performance Reports for 2015/2016, 2018/2019, 2019/2020, and 2020/2021 were reviewed to assess how consistent, coherent and efficient the activities provided for in the NSIE were in

the reports and how they have been implemented over these years. Good practice in monitoring the implementation of the strategy is to include all the activities provided for in the Strategy in the ESPR over the years. This is transparent in the ESPRs because they include a list of planned policies to be implemented in each financial year for various sub-sectors of the Ministry.

A critical look at the NSIE (2017–2021) reveals that it was prepared to lay a foundation for the adjustment of the education system to effectively provide inclusive education. Under the 8 strategic issues outlined in the NSIE, the activities planned to be carried out are generally targeted at establishing a suitable system that provides a conducive environment for inclusive education. Starting with a look at the first strategic issue of *Capacity for Inclusive Education*, key activities embrace (i.) preparation of IE awareness tools, manuals and brochures, radio/TV programs, (ii.) review of the role of the Department of SEN, Department of Teacher Training, special schools and units and the Montfort SEN college, and (iii.) review of the job description for specialist teachers. These activities implied a restructuring of the departments to embrace inclusion i.e., laying a foundation for inclusive education through system adjustment. There is a need for separate classifications for activities relating to the procurement of teaching/learning materials and the training of teachers, for example, which could be done on an annual basis. The ESP reports for 2017 to 2021 do not confirm the implementation of any of these activities in the departments. This implies that change or adjustment in the education system as one of the key principles in providing IE is not yet a reality. Changing a system is not easy and this would require a policy or a law if it is to be enforced.

The second strategic issue concerns *governance and management*, and key activities for laying a foundation to introduce inclusive education: (i.) the drafting of policy statements on IE and circulation in schools, (ii.) the advocacy for IE functions to be incorporated in the functional review and (iii.) establishment of the SEN Technical Working Group for IE. These activities also include the laying of a foundation for an environment conducive for inclusive education and building on the earlier activities of the first strategic issue. Following the restructuring of the departments, review of job descriptions and preparation of manuals, policy guidelines for the operations of the Technical Working Group (TWG) need to be drafted. The establishment of TWG is a milestone, nonetheless requiring policy directions for effective functioning.

According to Ainscow & Miles (2009), inclusive education requires the removal of barriers and this can be done by introducing policies or laws.

The third strategic issue focusing on *learner identification and assessment and case management* embraces two key initiatives for laying the foundation: (i.) the development of identification tools for assessing learners with diverse needs, (ii.) setting up a referral system to facilitate clinical and psychosocial assessment, as well as case management. Consistent with the activities under strategic issues mentioned above, these activities are designed to establish a system which is crucial to the success of IE; the assessment of the situation of the learners before entry to any level of education.

The fourth strategic issue focuses on adjustment of the Education Management System (EMIS) to provide relevant information for the analysis of inclusive educational progress. Some of the key initiatives planned for practical application included (i.) review of data collection tools, (ii.) staff training at all levels of inclusive data management, (iii.) support of phased mobile information technology to transfer data from schools to District Education Managers. These activities, however, are not outlined in reports and the EMIS data present precious little, implying a change in the system for accommodating inclusive education datasets, e.g., the section for special needs learners in the Education Basis Statistics bulletin (MOEST 2016, pp. 28–29; MOEST 2018, pp. 28–29; MOE 2021, pp. 28–29), in the organisation of data, shows that the same information has been collected over these years without any change. The information deals with absolute numbers of learners with special needs, as well as the vulnerable and orphans. Internal efficiency indicators, critical for accurate analysis of progress on the part of SEN learners are not collected. To an extent, this indicates that the planned review of data collection tools was not done. Inclusion of some qualitative data, for example, on stigmatisation, and negative attitudes toward vulnerable children could help in the analysis and better understanding of the barriers to inclusive education.

The fifth strategic issue concerns *teacher education and motivation*. It outlines key activities for system change to align with IE: (i.) a review of both pre-service and special needs teacher education curricula to align with Inclusive Education, (ii.) development of modules for IE for ECD, TTC and universities and (iii.) engagement of writers and publishers to produce IE supplementary materials. To an extent, this has been partially realised, as indicated through the training carried out at Machinga TTC and Montfort focusing on curricula (MOEST 2018). However, the report does not go into detail and specifics are not described. It is apparent that this strategic issue was laying a foundation for institutional changes governing the teacher training. If inclusive education is to be harnessed, this change is needed and ought to be included in the policy.

The sixth strategic issue dealt with *partnership for inclusive education*. Principles governing inclusive education emphasise the need for a whole approach, and also the involvement of the community (Save the Children 2016, UNESCO 2017). This strategic issue, therefore, is aimed at bringing together the stakeholders, understanding their roles and contributions to the progress of IE. Key activities for laying the foundation, in this case, included (i.) stakeholder mapping and development of a directory of the stakeholders, and (ii.) the creation of committees and appointment of supervisors to coordinate the activities. This is aimed at setting up a coordination system. The structure of the committee was designed to assist in the monitoring of implementation of inclusive education activities. This, too, is not highlighted in the ESPRs.

The seventh strategic issue tackles *the provision of a conducive environment for teaching and learning*. Critical activities for setting up a system are (i.) the development of a handbook on curriculum differentiation, (ii.) national physical audit practices to establish whether the structures are disability-friendly, (iii.) development of guidelines for inclusive model resource centres and (iv) construction of a college specialised in inclusive education. These activities were not carried out during the implementation period of the NSIE.

And finally, inclusive education funding. This aspires towards a resource mobilization strategy for IE and is also crucial for the implementation of inclusive education. With stakeholder mapping in place, familiarity with the roles and contributions of stakeholders would follow and a mobilisation strategy would be developed. This would pave the way for implementation of planned IE policies.

In summary, the implementation of the NSIE (2017–2021) appears to have largely focused on training, dissemination and procurement of teaching and learning materials other than activities which would have yielded an adjustment to the system. As much as the provision of teaching and learning materials is an achievement, great achievement implies changing the system to provide a conducive environment for inclusion. Reviewing the roles of the departments concerning IE, drafting policies that can guide the IE, reviewing the job description for specialised teachers, setting up referral systems, adjustment in EMIS data collection to include more relevant inclusive education indicators, creating an Institute of Inclusive Learning, are key policies which can promote change in the education system to accommodate inclusive education. In the implementation procedure, much attention needs to focus on these specific areas.

Suggested Inclusive Education Policy Issues

The review indicates that many of the strategies being implemented for inclusive education are very relevant and respond to the challenges of inclusion. The NSIE (2017–2021) has created valuable strategies that deal with the challenges faced in the area of Inclusive Education but which have not yet been fully implemented. As revealed, most of the strategies focus on the laying of a foundation or put differently, aimed at changing some elements in the education system to embrace Inclusive Education. There is a need, therefore, to come up with policy directions that will harness these strategies. Accordingly, the following policy suggestions are designed to anchor Inclusive Education policy, as per this review:

- identification and assessment of learners,
- teacher training and further human resources for inclusive education,
- inclusive education for teachers,
- capacity for inclusive education,
- inclusive early childhood education,
- inclusive adult literacy,
- inclusive services and programmes for out of school youth,
- inclusive primary, secondary and tertiary education,
- inclusive TVET programs,
- access to sustainable, equitable and quality inclusive education at all levels of education,
- inclusive education curriculum,
- inclusive infrastructure in educational institutions,
- community awareness and mobilisation,
- inclusive education funding.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this brief review of the status of inclusive education in Malawi has focused on the implementation of the National Strategy on Inclusive Education. The strategy comprises eight criteria, with the aim of adjusting the education system to embrace inclusive education. Each strategy focuses on the activities analysed in this review. The review indicates an increase in the enrollment of learners, particularly those with special needs, during the implementation period. By 2021, the percentage of learners with special needs had increased to 3,27% of the total primary enrollment figure. The secondary sector is still struggling with access. By 2021, the transition rate for secondary education had reached 36,5%, with 35,8% and 36,4 % for

boys and girls respectively. Within the implementation period of the NSIE, the transition rate increased by 1,5%. The NER for secondary education is still low, with a decline from 15% including boys and girls in 2016 to 14,6%, representing 14,6% and 14,5% for girls and boys respectively in 2021. A key achievement is highlighted in the establishment of the TWG for Inclusive Education. This provides guidance, direction and follow-up on the implementation of inclusive education activities. What seems to have been neglected are the activities governing the reorganisation of the education system to accommodate inclusive education. Apart from focusing on supplies, such as teaching and learning materials, much emphasis needs to be placed on changing the education system to embrace inclusive education.

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Evariste Karangwa

Disability and Inclusive Education in Rwanda

This article discusses the persistent disability prevalence of over 5% in the Rwandan population, most of whom are women and adults living in rural communities. Both challenges and opportunities are identified in their schooling and subsequent professional participation in society. The Rwandan society is still deeply scarred by the genocide of 1994, whilst disability, morbidity, and vulnerability are factors with seemingly significant influence on the socioeconomic development of the country. Accordingly, disability inclusion as presented in this article, is viewed in the context of the post-genocide socioeconomic reforms which led to a renewed advocacy for equal access and participation for all marginalised groups. The free 9 Year Basic Education (9YBE) strategy of 2009 (upgraded to 13 YBE in 2012) is particularly noteworthy. This policy included free schooling for all disadvantaged groups, resulting in a rise in enrollments and accommodation of adolescents with various disabilities in neighbourhood schools.

Prevalence of Disability

The last thematic report on the Rwandan population with disabilities, published in the Fourth Rwanda Population and Housing Census (RPHC4) of the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), indicated that 446.453 persons with disabilities aged 5 and above are living in Rwanda, of whom 221.150 and 225.303 are male and female respectively (Republic of Rwanda 2012, pp. 15–21). The figure is less than that published by the African Decade for Disability (Rwanda Chapter) report two years previously (Republic of Rwanda 2010, p. 21), which had recorded 522.856 persons with disabilities.

It is noted however, that both reports seem to agree on disability prevalence among the Rwandans (about 5%) aged 5 years and above, and on higher disability prevalence among female than male (5,2% females and 4,8% male), as well as a higher disability prevalence in rural areas than in

urban areas across the five provinces of the country (ca. 5,3% and 3,2% respectively). The RPHC4 report for example, indicates that the Southern Province has the highest prevalence of disability at 5,5% (122.319), followed by the Western and Eastern provinces, with a similar prevalence of 5,3%, followed by the Northern Province with 4,4%, whilst the lowest prevalence of the population with disabilities is observed in Kigali City, yielding a prevalence rate of 3,3% or 32.170 citizens (Republic of Rwanda 2012, p. 10).

It is equally important to note that the methods of identifying disability used in the 2012 NISR Census were based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) accredited by the WHO on 22nd May 2001, which considers disability as a functional limitation (poor vision, hearing, speaking, difficulties in walking/climbing and learning/concentration). Additionally, the African Decade for Disability (Rwanda Chapter) based its survey on the national law No. 1/2007 (Republic of Rwanda 2007) and the Ministerial decree No. 20/18 of 27.07.2009 that characterises disability in terms of five (5) disability categories: physical, visual, hearing, mental, and other disabilities. Given that in the Rwandan sociocultural context, the concept '*Ubumuga*' is often used to denote 'body dysfunctions', it is also used interchangeably to imply impairment, disability, or handicap. The article will deliberately focus on the 2012 NISR census report (Republic of Rwanda 2012, p. 10), highlighting its comparatively more conventional approaches.

Disability prevalence distributions

As highlighted above, age groups, socioeconomic status, as well as urban/rural residence, remain important factors governing disability distribution and prevalence in Rwanda. The Fourth Rwanda Population and Housing Census (RPHC4) for example, emphasised that the predominant type of disability is related to difficulties in walking or climbing, which represents about 3% (220.130) of the Rwandan population aged five and above, whilst other disability types reveal less than 1% of the population (0,9% and 0,6% have learning/concentration difficulties and seeing difficulties respectively). In other words, almost one in two (1/2) of all Rwandan residents with disabilities experience limitations in walking/climbing; 18% have learning/concentration limitations; 3% of persons with disabilities have poor vision, whilst hearing and speaking challenges account for 8% and 4% of disabilities respectively. This is highlighted in Table 1 below (Republic of Rwanda 2012, p. 13).

Table 1: Percentages (%) of persons affected by different types of disabilities in Rwanda

Provinces	Seeing	Hearing	Speaking	Walking/ Climbing	Learning/ Concentrating	Others
Urban (%)	0,3	0,2	0,1	1,9	0,6	0,4
Rural (%)	0,7	0,	0,2	2,6	1,0	0,8
Provinces						
South (%)	0,6	0,4	0,2	2,5	1,3	0,9
West (%)	0,7	0,4	0,2	2,8	0,9	0,8
North (%)	0,6	0,3	0,2	2,2	1,7	0,6
East (%)	0,7	0,4	0,2	2,5	1,0	0,9
Kigali City (%)	0,3	0,2	0,1	1,9	0,6	0,3
Total No.	**57.213**	**33.471**	**16.256**	**220.130**	**84.133**	**66.696**

Source: Fourth Rwanda Population and Housing Census (RPHC4) Thematic Report; socio-economic characteristics of persons with disabilities (Republic of Rwanda 2012)

It is observed in table 1, for example, that districts with a higher share of urban residents have a lower prevalence of all given types of disability than districts that are predominantly rural, whereas disabilities governing walking or climbing continue to prevail across the country.

Disability prevalence disparities

As noted above, age also seems strongly related to disability status in Rwanda, and indeed, numbers of citizens with disabilities rise with age. Until the age of 34 for example, less than 4% of the population live with a disability, whilst in the 45 to 49 age group, the population share of persons with disabilities reaches 9%, and from age 60 to 80 and above the prevalence increases from 16% to 25% of Rwanda's residents with disabilities (Republic of Rwanda 2012, p. 15). It is observed too, that the disability prevalence rates in walking/climbing is low in the younger age groups increasing progressively to 15% at age 80 and above. The prevalence of seeing disability is also very low among children and youths (0,3% at ages 5 to 29), but at 6%, increasingly higher in the population aged 80 and above (Republic of Rwanda 2012).

A study yielding figures contrary to the above, conducted by the World Bank and USAID in Rwanda (World Bank 2022) indicated that Rwandan children with functional difficulties in learning represented 51% of all children with difficulties in the 271 cohort, followed by a percentage rate of 42 in children with difficulties in walking, self-care management and memory. Slightly below a third of the sampled population revealed signs of anxiety (27%) and depression (23%).

The disability disparity pattern in age and gender ranges can also be observed in both urban and rural areas according to the RPHC4 survey, indicating that males and females reveal similar numbers, although the disability prevalence is slightly higher among younger men up to the age of 45 than among women in the same age group (Republic of Rwanda 2012, p. 16).

Disability and access to education

A review of studies investigating education and related services for people with disabilities at both national and sub-regional levels, indicated interlinked stages of evolutionary developments, commencing with the silent community-based service provisions for people with disabilities of the pre-colonial periods; the missionary charity support of the colonial and post-colonial era and the post-genocide period that opened doors to government sponsored schools for all disadvantaged groups, including those with disabilities (Karangwa 2014, 2018, Karangwa, Iyamuremye & Muhindakazi 2013).

Although the roles played by various stakeholders in these three periods are still equivalent, the role played by missionaries for adolescents with disabilities is still conspicuously pronounced, as reflected by the many educational and rehabilitation centres. Involvement on the part of families and/or communities, however, continue to fall into insignificance, whereas several studies tend to highlight their value as covertly pivotal to all formal services for children and youths with disabilities in all communities of the African sub-region (Ingstad 1997, Kisanji 1993, 1995, Vanneste 1997, Karangwa 2014).

The current Rwanda education sector, for example, increasingly hinges its design of inclusive education policies and strategies on cultural values of '*Uburezi Budaheza*' or '*non-exclusionary services*', and ingrown initiatives such as '*Imboni z'Uburezi*' or 'community eye on quality education'. The strategy that seems to explain the slow, but steady increase of youths with disabilities in basic and secondary education (6 to 18 years of age) is discussed in the next section.

Accordingly, the inclusive education policy strategies (Republic of Rwanda 2018) cited above, increasingly feature as a response to the higher levels of illiteracy among people with disabilities (50%) compared to the population without (28%), and to the relatively large proportion of the population without education (41%), especially women (51%) with disabilities (Republic of Rwanda 2012, p. xvii). The same survey reveals that strategies are yet to be found for people with hearing and speaking disabilities

who continue to feature among the least educated with 69% having had no education and 25% having attended only primary education (Republic of Rwanda 2012).

Inclusive education policy frameworks

As underlined in the introductory section, the post-genocide Rwanda policy frameworks also offered renewed opportunities for equal participation and inclusion to all marginalised groups (women, people with disabilities, the disadvantaged, and the minority). The current inclusive education definitions are thus explicitly derived from the contexts characterised as "*the process of addressing all learners' educational needs in the mainstream education setting*" and builds on the government's commitments to empower, support, and promote inclusion across the country and through community inputs (Republic of Rwanda 2015, 2018). The policy frameworks include among others, guaranteed access to free basic education services (Republic of Rwanda 2009), acknowledgment of the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) duly signed on 15th December 2008, and other legal instruments that emerged with the post-genocide constitution of 2003, and reiterated in the reviews of December 2015 (Republic of Rwanda 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015).

For the first time, e.g., Law No. 01/2007 of 20th January 2007 proclaimed exclusive services for citizens with disabilities, and included rights to education services in its Articles 11, 12 and 13. Subsequently, the five years Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2013–18) pledged expansion of disability-friendly facilities, and training of teachers in all relevant skills (Republic of Rwanda 2013, pp. 38–43). As a result of these policy initiatives, the Nine Year-Basic Education (9YBE) programme of 2009 won the Commonwealth award on 29th August 2012, for according nine (9) years of free schooling to all disadvantaged children, which was subsequently upgraded to twelve years of free education (12YBE) in 2012 (Republic of Rwanda 2009).

The inclusive education strategic plan (2019–2024) further pledges community and family involvements, via enhanced empowerment and increased participation in community-based educational programmes. Implicit in this statement is the perception that it is the primary responsibility of the parents to provide basic needs for their children and the community has the cultural obligation to complement with relevant facilitation (Republic of Rwanda 2019b, p. 12). The following sections will therefore examine these strategic goals on which the current inclusive education landscape in Rwanda is based and developed.

Inclusive Education Landscape

The ongoing Rwandan inclusive education policy strategies (2019 to 2024) recognise that learners with disabilities continue to represent a disproportionate minority in Rwandan education, especially girls and those from disadvantaged families and communities (Republic of Rwanda 2019a, p. 15). Accordingly, the policy is designed to curb "inequalities on the ground of disability, gender and rural-urban dichotomies" that persist despite government efforts to address community-based barriers through its Nine (9) Year Basic Education (9YBE) strategy since 2009 (Republic of Rwanda 2009, 2018, 2019a).

According to the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2019–2024), experiences in some Rwandan communities affirm that good results are observed when innovative partnerships between community actors and local education establishments are enhanced at all levels, such as early community-based childhood centres, parent schools, faith-based education initiatives, and others. Home de la Vierge de Pauvres (HVP) centres, for example, initiated by Fraipont in 1960s, remaining a charitable educational and rehabilitation initiative for over 40 years, has expanded to five centres since 2005, three of which were supported by the government and upgraded to both 9YBE and 12YBE (Karangwa 2014) to respectively support inclusion of youths with visual, hearing, physical and cognitive challenges in inclusive educational settings wherever possible.

The current inclusive education landscape, motivated by the current policy framework therefore seems to portray a blend of ingrown existing formal education systems and community-based solutions. It increasingly reflects a synergistic approach for achieving improved quality education for all learners who may have temporary or permanent needs for adjusted educational services (Republic of Rwanda 2019b, p. 11). Schools with the 9YBE and 12YBE programmes, for example, are expected to progressively alleviate all barriers to participation in the learning and teaching of all learners with disabilities, through a focused development of alternative resource provisions, improved access to curriculum and learning environments, and equalisation of opportunities to complete at least 12 years of basic education for all learners (Republic of Rwanda 2018).

Inclusive Education contexts in schools

Since 2016, Rwanda's Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) has consistently reported a minimal percentage rate of ca. 0,8% of pupils enrolled in primary schools as having disabilities (17.133 recorded in 2018 and 16.021 in 2019). As reported in the RPHC4 survey, mild physical disabilities appear to make

up the largest group (5.163 or 32,2%), followed by those with cognitive challenges (3.967); those with visual and hearing difficulties accounted for 558 only. Further, the enrollment of pupils with disabilities declined disproportionately in the grades echelon, with high enrollment in primary (grade) one (1) and much lower at secondary and higher education levels (Republic of Rwanda 2019a, b).

Likewise, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2019–2024) reveals that disability is still a major factor affecting children's access and progress in Rwandan schools; since, e.g., out of 185.666 children enrolled in pre-primary education in 2016 only 1.545 children with disabilities (often physical and mild) were identified, whilst only 0,75% of the total number of children in primary schools had disabilities (a percentage maintained over the next three years). Additionally, students with a disability accounted for just 1% of total enrollments in secondary education in 2016, whilst just 432, or 0,48%, of all students enrolled in tertiary education had some form of disability (Republic of Rwanda 2019a, p. 14).

As noted above, despite the renewed post-genocide legal frameworks offering unprecedented opportunities to marginalised groups (women, children, people with disabilities, and minority groups) and articulated commitments to international conventions (UNESCO 2015), factors leading to school dropout and stagnation for adolescents with disabilities persist. According to Karangwa (2018) and Republic of Rwanda (2019a, b), not all schools and learning institutions are adequately equipped with barrier-free and/or assistive facilities, and ensuring that all schools in Rwanda are Child and Disability-friendly continues to be a challenge. Accordingly, a Rwandan youth with a disability is three times less likely to have started school at the right age and has an 18% greater probability of repeating basic school classes with a dropout probability which is four times higher than that of a child without a disability.

Although Rwanda had joined the rest of the world to endorse the international commitments to inclusion, including the Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education (UNESCO 1994), the Dakar declaration on Education For All, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO 2015), and its constitution (Republic of Rwanda 2015) articulating the country's commitments to the inclusion of all marginalised groups, the country's fee-free 9 Year and 12 Years Basic Education (9YBE & 12YBE) that has indeed improved access to education for disadvantaged youths is yet to become fully inclusive (Russell 2016, Karangwa 2018). In the context of the status of disability in Rwandan education as discussed in the previous sections, the next section examines the country's future prospects for inclusive education.

Future Perspectives of Inclusive Education in Rwanda

Investigations on the implementation status of the Rwanda five year (2019–2024) inclusive education policy strategy (Republic of Rwanda 2018) seem to concur with the more recent World Bank and USAID study on Inclusive Education in Rwanda (and other countries in the region). The latter concludes that the educational resource provisions and structures accommodating children with disabilities are still so inadequate that they appear to bemisplaced in the national policy strategies and visions (World Bank 2022, Republic of Rwanda 2018, 2019a, b). Accordingly, the successful future of inclusive education in Rwanda, will possibly depend on how seriously the statements outlined in the strategic policies are put into action to meet the set targets within the specified periods.

So far, actions taken by the Ministry of Education are so widely encompassing that the results generated seem indirectly linked with the set Inclusive Education Targets. For example, the number of learners with disabilities is still quite low, and the percentage rate (0,6%) is almost the same as that reported by the Ministry of Education three years earlier (Republic of Rwanda 2019a, b). Besides, the articulated commitments to ensure improved accessibility for over 90% of learners in all 9YBE and 12YBE in goal 1, plus the timely identification of all learners with disabilities (in Goal 2) to enable early planning of support provisions (Republic of Rwanda 2018, pp. 21–29) are yet to be achieved.

Rwanda's status is apparently shared by several other African countries (Pather & Slee 2018, UNESCO 1994). Their struggles to understand and respond to the challenging needs of their children with disabilities seem to resonate with Obanya's (2007) portrayal of Africa's education reforms since the independence era of 1960s. He argued that African policy frameworks are often characteristically *'mere transactional (routine) change and not necessarily system-wide with positive impact*'. He advocated a profound change in the educational system, targeting structures, inputs, and processes, and emphasised that both local and global influences are key players in the future orientation.

Global Influences

Whilst the previous sections focused on the national educational context (Rwanda), inclusive education has its origin in global concerns (UNESCO 2015), and its contextualisation seems a national imperative as it is a commitment (Republic of Rwanda 2015, 2018), with practical demands that cut across political, social, and economic implications (Barton & Armstrong 2007). The future of inclusion in Rwanda is possibly yet to be learned

through future studies (Hammad 1999, Kerzner & Gartner 1999), which position inclusion within the global move towards equal citizenship, or a means of responding to the growing world of numerous diversities and marginalisation, strongly mediated by rapidly advancing communication technologies. Accordingly, prevailing or ever shifting global and sub-regional conditions may also lead to disruptions, or push and pull factors within Rwanda's course of inclusive education developments (Karangwa 2018).

Local inputs

Despite numerous political, economic and social disadvantages, there appears to be sufficient potential available for initiatives that support inclusion of citizens with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups in under-resourced communes of Africa, such as in related contexts (Barton 2001, Stubbs 2002, Vanneste 1997). Community members, close and extended family members (siblings, grandmothers, neighbours), still count as readily dependable support resources for the members with disabilities in many African societies (Stubbs 2002, Vanneste 1997). These had been disregarded by the socially disintegrated Rwanda of the colonial period and currently, by international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working in disability inclusion.

Advocates of indigenous solutions attest enormous socio-economic advantages, and propose these as antidotes to the ills of powerful globalization trends (Karangwa, Ghesquire & Devlieger 2007, Stiglitz 2002, Van de Walle 2001). When post-genocide Rwanda braved Western critics to exhume its long lost indigenous solutions that include *Gacaca'* or 'community-based reconciliatory justice' for example, the country was able to re-establish unity, reconciliation, and inclusion among its post-genocide communities. Besides, its success revealed that home-made solutions are also key components of '*Ndumunyarwanda*' or 'Rwandanism' initiative (Muzungu 2003, Nothomb 1965, Kagame 1954), the basis on which the country's record socio-economic development is founded today.

Inspired by studies on disability inclusion in disadvantaged communities of the south by Ingstad (1997), Jones & Vetermeyer (2002), and Vanneste (1997), Karangwa et al. (2007, p. 623) contended that '*poverty is seldom a key barrier to inclusion*'. They add that the most positive resources are those already existing in the hearts and minds of African mothers, sisters, grandparents, neighbours, disabled persons themselves, with which a small amount of input can bring into play a much larger amount of latent energy (Vanneste 1997). The argument is based on the culture and spirit of mutual support and interdependence that is still omnipresent in rural

communities of the sub-region (East Africa). The post-independence '*Harambe*'(community-based development programs) in Kenya, for example, was a source of support for disadvantaged communities; while "*Ujamaa* na *Kugitegemeya*" in Tanzania or '*Bulungi Bwansi*' community services in Uganda led to considerable rural development during the difficult post-independence periods (Nyerere 1978, Sabiti 2020).

On the other hand, the political contexts prevailing in many African countries seem to propagate inherent dependence on foreign support and ideas rather than tapping the readily available indigenous potentials and/or locally conceived strategies. Teacher education in the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) was developed through Danish (DANIDA) funding and expertise in the 1980s, and the same support was extended to Uganda National Institute of Special Education (UNISE) in 1990s; their programmes running into problems when DANIDA funds was eventually withdrawn (Eron 2018, p. 118, Kavua 2018, p. 107).

Clearly, the challenges to inclusion in the context of Africa's precarious socio-economic conditions and the emphatic global pressure for internationally creditable standards seem unrelenting. In fact, through Christie's (2008) lesson on post-apartheid South Africa we learn that inclusive education reforms are not just about legal and policy frameworks, but also a complex, contradictory, and often an unpredictable process, mediated by socio-economic and political influences. Obanya's (2007) earlier studies on Africa's post-independence education reforms, commended a paradigm shift that goes beyond high sounding strategic documents, and from '*stakeholder neglect*' to '*stakeholder involvement*'.

Conclusion

In the context of Rwanda's inclusive education developments, disability inclusion, as in similar contexts in the sub-region of Africa is not only constrained, but plausibly disoriented by its heritage of a rigidly maintained education system, as well as the powerful global influences. Accordingly, the way forward for inclusive education in Rwanda can be viewed from the Ministry of Education's inclusive education strategic plan (Republic of Rwanda 2018, p. 43), which envisions that inclusive education policy reviews conducted at 5-year intervals will ensure that the policy remains relevant to changing national and international contexts, incorporating emerging issues and trends (local and global) that impact special needs, inclusive, and mainstream education services. Further, Rwanda's policy strategies and practices with disability inclusion perspectives possibly reflect

a characteristic identified in the studies of Metz (2020) as '*Africa's Complex Path to Disability Justice*'.

The message to be learned from this article is that successful development of inclusive education in Rwanda will also depend on the realisation of inherent potentials and power to support disadvantaged people, identifiable within the cultural way of life at every grassroots community level. However, emphasising the idea does not rule out the existence of limitations; rather, it warns that sociopolitical challenges are daunting, and successful inclusive education projects cannot be realised without mobilising, contextualising, and enlisting the latent support of those who have always been willingly there for children with disabilities. Given the persistently large prevalence of disability among Rwandans therefore, it is quite evident that the success of future disability inclusion in education will have to take thoughtfully planned strategies, with aptly identified and contextualised global and local inputs into consideration.

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Ildephonce Mkama

Inclusive Education in Tanzania

Inclusive education in Tanzania has sustained several stages of development as well as conflicting debates amongst education practitioners and policy-makers, resulting in complicated learning situations experienced by students with disabilities. Available policies and guidelines, even if articulated rather than implemented, advocate equal and equitable education for all learners with or without disability. Several factors, including, among others, negative attitudes, communication and language barriers, as well as a lack of proper inclusion models, have been attributed to inconsistencies in the provision of education to learners with disabilities; hence a high degree of educational failure is observed. Recent developments in Tanzania anticipate brighter prospects for access to inclusive learning spaces for students with or without special learning needs.

Educational Access for Students with Disabilities

Education for students with disabilities is currently mandatory at all levels of education in Tanzania. In 2020, the Presidential Regional Administration and Local Government launched a campaign to identify and assess all children with disabilities for primary education enrollment. This was one of the greatest attempts ever made by the government of Tanzania to enable children with disabilities to have access to education in an inclusive setting. The campaign is however challenged by the lack of current statistics as most children with disabilities are not enrolled at schools and/or no reliable admission records are available in schools (Mkama 2021a). However, available national statistics show that there is a huge difference in school enrollment numbers and percentages between students with and students without disabilities.

According to the National Basic Education Statistics, a total of 4.178 (0,3%) students with disabilities are enrolled in pre-primary education; 55.458 (2,5%) in primary education, and 10.325 (0,4%) in secondary education (URT 2020). Despite these high figures, the percentage of students with disabilities, calculated at below 1% of net student enrollments in pre-pri-

mary and secondary education, is extremely low, whereas in primary education, the percentage rate, at slightly below 3% of net student enrollments is higher. Whilst the national data yields a low quota of students with disabilities in the education system, global reports indicate a population of more than 1 billion (almost 15%) world-wide living with disabilities (WHO 2021). This data discrepancy suggests that a large number of children with disabilities in Tanzania do not have access to education despite the various government efforts.

The low student enrollment figures provide considerable opportunities for maintaining the curriculum 'status quo' in schools, hence restricting the establishment of responsive learning spaces for minority groups of students with disabilities. These data align with research which has shown that less than 9% of students with disabilities in Tanzania have completed secondary education whilst more than 80% drop out and/or fail due to inappropriate school support structures and systems creating barriers to secondary education access and participation (Okkolina, Lehtomäkia & Bhalalusesa 2010, p. 67). The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has continuously struggled to establish supportive school systems for equitable learning spaces for every child. Such efforts include the drafting of inclusive education strategies for phases II and III and other policies as explained in the next section.

Inclusive Education Development and Policy Context

Inclusive education in Tanzania can be traced back to a project 'Special Needs in the Classroom' which was conducted by the Ministry of Education in partnership with UNESCO in 1998, to identify possibilities for the implementation of inclusive education. The pilot project involved seven primary schools in Temeke Municipality in Dar es Salaam. Activities included inclusive education seminars for teachers and parents. The project contributed to the launching of the first strategy for inclusive education in 2009, which came into effect in 2010 (Mkama 2021a). The introduction of the inclusive education strategy in 2010 formed an agenda that obliged both students with disabilities and students without disabilities to learn together in a regular classroom, to be taught by the same teacher, and to be assessed in the same examination, despite the absence of specific guidelines for such inclusion.

One of the ideological underpinnings of inclusive education in Tanzania is the right to education (URT 2009, p. 11), as pronounced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949). According to the Inclusive Education Strategy (NSIE) 2022–2026, inclusive education acknowledges personal

diversity as a human reality (URT 2022, p. 35). However, the push towards inclusive education in Tanzania has been attributed to various international protocols that were signed by the country and some acts and policies which were ratified by the government. The National Strategy for Inclusive Education (URT 2022, p. 75) has outlined these protocols which include:

i. The UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child (1989) which stipulates the right to education, with the aim of achieving a degree of self-reliance and social integration,
ii. The Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (1990), which highlights the commitment to a child-centred pedagogy and where individual differences are welcomed as challenges rather than problems,
iii. UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) which reinforces the obligation for schools to accommodate all children regardless of their disabilities,
iv. The Dakar World Education Conference (2000) which establishes a framework for the inclusion of children with various educational challenges,
v. Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) which requires members of the UN to organize and provide education to persons with disabilities, and
vi. Goal number 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals – 2030 Agenda on the equalisation of education access for all.

At the national level, various Acts and policies ratified by the country established a foundation for the implementation of inclusive education. The NSIE 2009–2017 (URT 2009, pp. 12–13) outlined some of these Acts and policies which include:

i. The Education Act (1978) which enforces compulsory attendance at the primary level of education. It states, "no person may be denied an opportunity to education… irrespective of his race, religion, political or ideological beliefs",
ii. The Education and Training Policy (1995) which places emphasis on the right to education to all persons,
iii. The Child Development Policy (1996) which protects the rights of the child, including access to education,
iv. National Policy on Disability (2004) which requires the government, in collaboration with stakeholders, to provide an education conducive to the special needs of children with disabilities, and
v. The Education Sector Development Programme 2008–2017 which underpins access to basic education for all persons.

These policies directed the world and Tanzania, in particular, to set targets for the provision of human rights to every individual, regardless of disability status. An analysis of four key documents governing inclusive education in Tanzania (NSIE 2009–2017, NSIE 2018–2021, NSIE 2022–2026, and the Education Policy of 2014), has standardised the documents to provide a common backbone for inclusive education as diagrammatically represented in Figure 1 below.

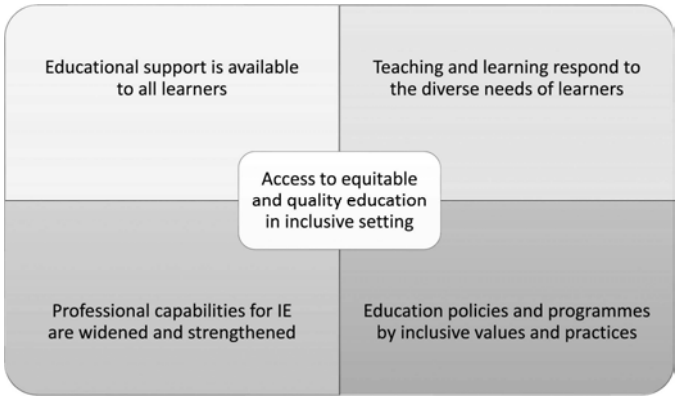

Figure 1: Set goal for inclusive education in Tanzania adapted from Mkama (2021a, p. 173)

As outlined in the diagram above, four issues emerged from the analysis of the aforementioned four documents. These topics, together with their status of implementation, are discussed in the next sections.

Education support for students with disabilities

According to the National Policy of Education, the current system of education in Tanzania aims to provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to learn and acquire adequate knowledge, thus enabling them to contribute to national development (JMT 2014, p. 20). The anticipated acquisition of knowledge is paralleled with the elimination of all types of barriers that might affect such students in their efforts to attain adequate knowledge and skills (JMT 2014, p. 22). In support of this principle, the strategy establishes a need to provide adequate resources that will transform schools to become more responsive to the needs of learners and teachers (JMT 2014, p. 2). To this end, the provision of adequate resources aligns with the identification of barriers to presence, participation and learning that learners may experience. The role of identification of barriers and de-

veloping the means to overcome these barriers remain the school's specific responsibilities (ibid. p. 4). However, the analysis of school observations in Tanzania does not reflect any significant efforts to reduce these barriers (Mkama 2021a) and this has contributed greatly to inhibiting learning space for students who have serious learning needs. Consequently, as mentioned earlier, students with disabilities have become most vulnerable to these situations and most of them have failed to proceed with learning at both primary and secondary education levels.

Teaching and learning in diverse inclusive schools

Inclusive education in Tanzania is a systemic change that requires the development of new knowledge and relevant skills for teachers, students, and administrators (URT 2009, p. 5). This has required the Ministry of Education to propose and develop an inclusive curriculum (ibid. p. 4) which, to date, has not been attained. The analysis of the syllabus, official directives and the Education Policy has suggested that the available standard curriculum is still in use; it falls short of accommodating the learning needs of students with disabilities. Classroom observation and teacher preparation of the lesson shows that the teaching and learning practices align with this mainstream standardised student curriculum. Hence, students with disabilities have a hard time coping with the inclusive situation in a setting using standardised learning materials.

Professional skills for inclusive education

The provision of quality education in an inclusive setting depends on an interplay of many subsets of the school system including (but not limited to) the quality and implementation of curricula, education leadership and supervision, learning context, assessment criteria and resources available (JMT 2014, p. 25). Likewise, inclusive education articulations in Tanzania demand the expansion and reinforcement of professional skills of all education practitioners (URT 2009, p. 38); these include the involvement of various stakeholders such as teachers, school boards, parents and inspectorate departments (JMT 2014, p. 26). Placing more emphasis on teacher training, the National Policy of Education (2014) highlights that teacher training needs to be supervised to ensure that these training colleges turn out high-quality teachers with adequate skills and expertise for handling diversity in inclusive settings (JMT 2014, p. 26).

In reality, however, the translation of these articulations portrays quite a different picture. Teachers have inadequate exposure to the learning needs relevant to specific disabilities; having been brought up against a background of rigid conceptions, most teachers are still bound by the belief that students with disabilities are intellectually and academically incapable, and this has adverse effects on the development of a strong, inclusive culture in the schools (Mkama 2021b). This argument is consistent with that of Storbeck & Magongwa, (2006, p. 120) who found that "Culture is affected by a plurality of individual culture"; a valuable argument in its capacity for instilling the need to understand the complexities of inclusion and handle diverse learning paths in inclusive schools (Alexander, Schallert & Reynold 2009, p. 176).

Education policies and programmes that reflect inclusive education values

Policies and programmes play an important role in the effective implementation and running of an education system. Inclusive education is unlikely to be realised without inculcating the necessary clauses throughout all principles, policies and cultures within the education sector (URT 2009, p. 23). Students with or without disabilities need a sense of belonging to the environment, i.e., a feeling that they are part of the entire school community. Hence, the formulation of mutually inclusive education policies is the task of the school, community, councils and regions and all education stakeholders (URT 2009, p. 34). To this end, several strategies have been established.

In an effort to raise awareness of inclusive education, the strategies clearly state that there is a need to develop a common vision and language for inclusive education (URT 2009, p. 43). To this end, the strategies identify several activities including (but not limited to) i.) sensitisation workshops on inclusive education which will be designed for communities and all administrative levels of education, ii.) a welcoming school approach to all learners regardless of their disabilities, in the context of which, the school staff will be engaged in the wider scope and understanding of inclusive education, iii.) the promotion of collaborative relationships between the school, parents and community. These activities are designed to promote mutual respect.

In some instances, for example, collaborative relationships among inclusive education professionals, audiologists, speech therapists, counsellors, itinerant teachers and specialists for each kind of disability are seen to have positive outcomes on students' learning (Adoyo 2007, p. 10). This kind of

working web provides students with disabilities with adequate services for their learning climate in an inclusive setting. Nevertheless, research reveals that teachers have limited exposure to inclusive education, and therefore struggle with ways to include students with disabilities; very few teachers possess these necessary skills (Mkama 2021a). Apart from such workshops, the scrutiny of official documents has evidenced that there had not been any capacity-building training in inclusive education for specialist/regular teachers since 2010 – a fact that further complicates the implementation of inclusive education. In this regard, teachers were not equipped with the required competency and skills to accommodate students with disabilities. This is evidenced by the fact that most teachers (75%) felt that accommodating students with disabilities in regular secondary schools is a burden to their careers. This attitude is typical and contrary to the process of building an inclusive community.

Mobilisation of community resources for inclusive education

Community engagement in inclusive education plays a vital role in the success of mobilisation of resources. The National Strategies for Inclusive Education (URT 2009, 2022) have consistently highlighted this aspect. Since it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to ensure appropriate resources for education are available in schools, it is consequently the role of school communities to identify and mobilise these resources for inclusive education. Mobilisation of resources helps to develop responses to barriers to attendance, participation and learning through collaborative work between students, parental involvement and teacher problem-solving strategies, mutual support and co-teaching (URT 2009, p. 45) at all school levels. The Ministry of Education, through various directives, has suggested the need for schools to carry out activities for parents using the language and culturally appropriate methods in specific regions (URT 2009, p. 46). These outreach programmes, ultimately, are anticipated to give more skills to parents of children with disabilities on how to assist their children at home. Furthermore, the strategy encourages the following undertakings i.) promoting a culture of problem-solving and identifying existing resources with schools and communities ii.) developing guidelines on building school communities and iii.) developing opportunities for schools and educators to share their innovations in inclusive education development (URT 2009, p. 46). In reality, however, there is a huge discrepancy between policy articulation and practice. For instance, it is clear that no schools have enhanced the culture of problem-solving among their students (Mkama

2021b). This has greatly impacted the inability of students to interact with each other; hence the continuation of exclusive tendencies.

Future Perspectives of Inclusive Education in Tanzania

Tanzania has ratified various global and regional policies and articulations which aim to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, education being one of the key rights underscored by such policies. Since its inception in 2010, Tanzania has strived to ensure an equitable inclusive education for all students, regardless of their disabilities. In recent developments, the country has inaugurated the new National Strategy for Inclusive Education (2022–2026), among others, to build an inclusive culture for all-inclusive schools. This is the first time national documents recognise 'school culture' as a key component of inclusive education. Building an inclusive culture implies respect for diversity, respect for others, and acceptance of such individual diversities. Inclusive culture promotes togetherness and sense of belonging – an aspect that has long been missing in inclusive schools in Tanzania.

Inclusive culture respects diverse learning pathways in the sense that every student has his or her best learning approach. There are those who learn more visually, others learn more in discussions, others learn more in more independent situations and others learn more when they concentrate on listening, to mention just a few. These learning styles are irrespective of disability status. Teachers need to understand each student's learning style for easy classroom and learning control. As stated earlier, the adoption of inclusive education in Tanzania implied that all learners, including those with disabilities, study together in one class. However, the inclusion of students with disabilities in such schools has not produced good learning results. The challenges centuring around the inclusion of these students include low school enrollment rate, large classes, high disability prevalence, and challenging geographical environment to mention just a few (URT 2020). These challenges have resulted in a high dropout rate (50%) in primary education with a low rate of child enrollment (2,5%) whereas in preprimary education the enrollment rate represents 0,3% (URT 2020).

Children with disabilities are among those most likely to be out of school due to widespread stigma and discrimination which is currently the case. For instance, the National Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania indi-

cate that in the Mwanza and Shinyanga regions* alone, the enrollment rate of children with disabilities is low (Mwanza yielding 3.419 out of 65.158 and Shinyanga 1.785 out of 39.696) (URT 2020). These data suggest that a large percentage of children with disabilities are still denied their right to education.

Tanzania is a multicultural nation with over 120 ethnic languages and diverse cultural backgrounds. Traditionally, most cultural practices regard persons with disabilities as 'unwanted' and these persons often face segregation and discrimination as a result. There are many instances of persons with disabilities killed or thrown into bushes. In the context of education, such attitudes are mild albeit harmful. Despite available policies (Policy on

Disabilities 2004) and regulations (Disability Act 2010) and inclusive education strategies, which advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities, learning spaces for such children in schools is quite limited (Mkama 2021a).

Much needs to be understood in the education of children with disabilities, not only their 'disability', but also their strengths and unique learning styles and different cognitive capacities. Each disability heralds a new learning style quite different from others. Marschark & Knoors (2014, p. 1) e.g., in a detailed introduction, made it clear that deaf children are essentially visual learners. This assertion brings us to the understanding that deaf students are not ordinary students who do not hear, but rather visual learners whose learning ought to be visual as well. And this contention takes us to the challenge put forward by Marschark & Knoors (2014) in that if we want to teach deaf learners effectively, we really need to learn from our teaching and base our teaching on the grounds of what we know about learning in general and about teaching in relation to learning in particular. The assertion draws us to rethink the need to distinguish between teaching and learning on the one hand and to brainstorm the relationship between the two concepts. The planning and establishment of the responsive learning space align with the adoption of appropriate inclusive education models, one of which is represented in Figure 2 below.

* These are areas around the Lake Victoria mostly settled by Sukuma people. It is in these areas where massive killing of persons with albinism has been dominant, hence the riskiest areas for persons with disabilities.

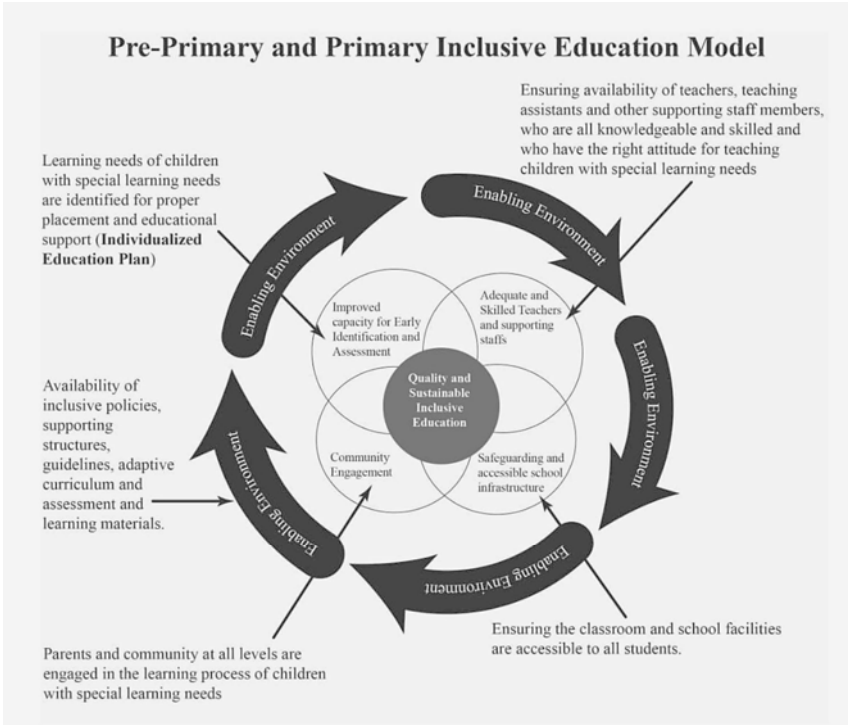

Figure 2: Inclusive Model adapted from TO51 (2021, p. 27)

In the last five years, as well as launching a free education agenda at all primary and secondary education levels, Tanzania has strongly campaigned for an inclusive education agenda in the country. Recently, Tanzania has allowed several projects to push the agenda from pre-primary and primary schools to higher education. Task Order 51 – one of such projects – enables equitable learning for boys and girls with disabilities in the Mwanza and Shinyanga regions – data of which, however, show a high prevalence of school dropout rates. Such projects bring in new innovations and models as suggested in Figure 2 above. In the project TO51, we are promoting equitable access to education and enabling learning environments through the creation of School-Based Inclusive Teams, and the application of Universal Design for Learning, among others, to ensure that a school is well-informed concerning inclusive culture.

To this end, it is important to remember that most children with or without disabilities, are born to nondisabled parents; thus their intellectual and socio-emotional development grows in regular stages. Learning begins with conception and the foetus begins to learn to communicate with its mother and respective environment. This is the stage when the brain begins

to develop and the growth of the brain allows it to control other body functions. Several scholars have accounted for how learning is a complex interlocking process. Jean Piaget has elaborated on six stages of sensory-motor development from 0–24 months. In such stages, Piaget identified three learning styles of a child:

i. Adaptation: this accounts for a large part of learning, whereby a child will use past experiences for solutions to new problems. Sucking chocolate e.g. is an extension of breastfeeding. Three main processes are involved at this stage:

assilimilate	→	accommodation	→	equilibrium
(old behaviours)		*(learn new ways)*		*(decision)*

ii. Imitation: a child imitates adults and/or neighbouring environments in behaviour. The whole learning process is through imitation, hence the parent is expected to transfer all desirable behaviours to a child.

iii. Reinforcement and reward: this happens when a child does something that brings results and is rewarded; this encourages repetition.

Generally, just like their non-disabled peers, children with disabilities progress through similar stages. However, the lack of early identification mechanisms in low-income countries – *such as Tanzania* – contributes to complicating their learning environment. Delayed interventions affect all other areas of development e.g. socio-emotional, conceptual and mental, a result of which leads to failure to cope with their peers in inclusive education settings, which further results in self-segregation.

Conclusion

Inclusive education generally means creating a unit of diversity. The National Strategy for Inclusive Education in 2022 established a Whole System Approach towards the effective implementation of inclusive education (URT 2022). This approach enables an investment of sufficient resources for the advancement of inclusive education and the incorporation of the required adjustments into the institutional culture, policies, and practices. There is, however, no specific model for its implementation; hence there is a vacuum that might inevitably hinder the translation of the approach into practice. Teaching learners with disabilities cannot be taken for granted and not every mainstream teacher is able to cope. As argued right from the start,

students with disabilities present a unique group of learners whose learning attention and pathways need to be well understood by the teacher prior to lesson preparation. The adoption of inclusive education in Tanzania and the lack of a specific model for its implementation means that several schools have ended up admitting students with disabilities to their schools, without adjusting their school structures. As a result, learning progress is stagnated, leading to continuous failure and/or dropout from school. Most education systems and structures have ended the dreams of many learners with disabilities, who tend to opt for career paths which do not match their aspirations. Inclusive education needs a renewal of course, which essentially involves a positive attitude towards both diversity of learning and inclusive education itself; implementation does not happen automatically. Due to persistent negative attitudes towards inclusive education, most countries have failed to attain the highest level of achievement.

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Beatrice Matafwali

Inclusive Education in Zambia: A Situation Analysis

The idea of education for all, outlined in the Sustainable Development strategy, promotes the concept of inclusive and equitable education. The Zambian government has reaffirmed its commitment to transforming the educational system by targeting the most vulnerable learners, especially those with impairments and children from disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as girls. Four strategic indicators are prioritised in the education policy: access, quality, equity, and efficiency. With a focus on the prevalence of disabilities and access to education within the context of the national policy and strategy framework, this article examines the state of inclusive education in Zambia. Progress is reflected in policies, strategies, and access in general. However, there is a need for improved funding, consolidated data on prevalence, increased accessibility at early childhood, secondary, and higher education levels, and strengthening of systems.

Introduction

The term inclusive education has many definitions and is viewed from complex angles. Rapp & Corral-Granados (2021) defined inclusive education as encompassing all forms of learner diversity, including disability, gender, socio-economic status, and cultural background. This paper adopts the definition from UNESCO (2008) which defines the concept as providing quality education for all whilst respecting the diversity and different needs and abilities, characteristics, learning expectations of students and communities, and elimination of all forms of discrimination. The UNESCO (2008) definition builds on the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (UNESCO 1994, 2020) which identified key normative principles for inclusion: learning institutions to include all learners; learner diversity to be considered as an asset; efforts to support learning for all; and responsiveness to individual needs. Mitchell (2015) identifies inclusion as "*education that fits all or rather a school for everyone*".

This definition particularly exemplifies learner diversity in terms of ethnicity and social background, thus imploring the school system to be responsive to diversity. The United Nations Committee on Persons with Disabilities 2016 has highlighted three aspects in the definition of inclusion, i.) a fundamental right to education, ii.) a principle that values diversity, human dignity, and acknowledges individuals' contribution to society, iii.) a continued process to eliminate barriers to education, curriculum, and policy reform.

Inclusion aims to increase participation in learning for all and remove barriers that perpetuate exclusion in the education system. Thus, inclusive classrooms offer all learners, regardless of ability, the opportunity to be placed in age-appropriate general education classrooms and receive quality interventions, instruction, and support (Bui, Quirk, Almazan & Valenti 2010, Alquraini & Gut 2012). In the Zambian context, inclusion is seen as the process of integrating learners with disabilities into regular classrooms as highlighted in the National Policy on Education under the Ministry of Education (MoE) (Ministry of Education 1996). Other scholars define inclusion as an ongoing process of improving access, participation, and performance for all learners in mainstream education, focusing on those at risk of marginalisation and exclusion (Simui, Waliuya, Namitwe & Munsanje 2009). From a human rights perspective, inclusion is seen as a matter of justice and equity and encompasses all vulnerable groups: girls, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and other minority groups. This paper provides an overview of inclusive education in Zambia with a focus on policy background and future prospects.

Zambia's Education Sector and Institutional arrangements

Zambia's education sector follows a three-tiered system of primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Primary education spans 7 years, secondary education 5 years, and higher education 4 years (Ministry of Education 1996). In recent years, primary education has expanded to include Early Childhood Education. The Ministry of Education has primary responsibility for the provision of educational services from early childhood through higher education, including special education. This Ministry is also responsible for designing and implementing curricula and developing appropriate teaching and learning materials (Ministry of Education 2018). Other sectors, such as the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, are also responsible for developing disability policy and administering social protection-related support services, such as determining eligibility for grant schemes and social cash transfers for persons with disabilities. The Ministry

of Health also plays a central role in identifying and assessing learners with developmental delays for appropriate school placement.

Prevalence of disability in Zambia

It is estimated that around 240 million children worldwide live with a disability (UNICEF 2021). Data on the prevalence of persons with disabilities in Zambia are sparse, and prevalence rates recorded from censuses and other surveys vary dramatically. The 2010 census estimated that about 2,7 million people, i.e., 2% of Zambia's population live with a disability (Central Statistical Office 2010). The categories of disabilities identified in the census report are: physically disabled (33%); partially sighted (25%); other disabilities (13%); hearing impairment (9%); visual impairment 5%); speech impairment (4%). The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately 1,3 million men and women in Zambia have a disability (WHO & World Bank 2011). A UNICEF study (2015) estimated the prevalence in adults over the age of 18 at 10,9%. The National Disability Survey undertaken by the Central Statistical Office in 2010 estimates prevalence at 7,2%. From the various data sources presented in this section, it is clear that Zambia lacks consolidated statistics on the prevalence of disability, especially among school-age children. The available data does not subdivide the information into categories of disability and age group. A consolidated database of disability prevalence by age is key to resource allocation, planning, implementation and monitoring; the lack of a database can adversely affect the efficacy of implementation of inclusion-related activities.

Review of national policies, legislation, and Strategic guidelines

Zambia has good laws, policies, and guidelines providing for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, dating back to pre-independence times. The Blind Persons Ordinance was enacted in 1961 during the pre-independence period under the Northern Rhodesian Government providing professional services to the Blind and establishing the Northern Rhodesian Council for the Blind (Snelson 1970). Following independence, the Handicapped Persons Act was enacted in 1968, facilitating the establishment of the Zambia Council of Disabled Persons. The Council was tasked with considering ways to improve access to professional services for people with disabilities. From a policy perspective, the first educational reform was the 1977 Education Reform Document which recognised the education of persons with dis-

abilities as a right (Ministry of Education 1977). The 1977 Education Reform Document particularly recognised categories of disability such as the Blind, the Deaf, the Mute, the Physically Disabled, the Mentally Challenged, and the Speech Impaired. Whilst the policy did not specifically provide for inclusive education, it strongly states:

> *"All Persons with Disabilities, like any other children, are entitled to an education. They should receive basic and further education full-time or part-time as any other children. Further, since Persons with Disabilities are a special case, there should even be positive discrimination in their favour in the provision of facilities and amenities for purposes of education" (Ministry of Education 1977, p. 23).*

The 1977 policy was fundamental to the development of disability education in Zambia. This policy emphasised the need for curricula to accommodate learner diversity and encouraged differentiation in terms of materials and methodological approaches. Equally important was the realisation that the education of persons with disabilities should take place in more regular schools, provided that special schools or special classes are offered according to the degree of disability. But even if another school or class is an alternative form of education delivery, the policy emphasises that "learners with disabilities should attend regular schools and classes" (Ministry of Education 1977, p. 26). As already mentioned, this policy advocated for all learners, including those with disabilities, to study in mainstream schools and classes, with separate schools or special schools for learners with severe disabilities.

A 1992 policy dubbed Focus on Learning replaced the 1977 Education Reform Document in an attempt to accelerate access through infrastructure development (Ministry of Education 1992). The policy also recognised the right to education for all children and promoted free primary and compulsory education for all. This was inspired by global interest following the 1990 Education for All World Conference in Jomtien, Thailand (World Conference on Education for All & Meeting Basic Learning Needs 1990) which adopted an inclusive policy strategy to promote integration into the wider society and to remove barriers, as highlighted in the following policy statement:

> *"It is desirable on education and social grounds to integrate children with disabilities into normal schools and classes, where this is possible. In this way, they will be better prepared for integration into the various aspects of the society later in life, while the non-handicapped in whose company they learn will come to accept them and their disabilities in a non-judgmental way" (Ministry of Education 1992, p. 26).*

In 1996, a new education policy was ushered in. The national education policy of 1996 entitled 'Educating Our Future' is still in force today. The policy sees education as a human right and inclusive education as an area of special concern. Perhaps the most progressive aspect of this policy is that it reflects a rights-based approach to education. According to this policy, the Ministry will strive to ensure equal opportunity in education and provide quality education for all. The policy particularly promotes access, equity, quality, and efficiency as key education pillars. Regarding institutional arrangements, the policy guidelines are clear that "the principles guiding the education of learners with disabilities should, wherever possible, be integrated into the programmes offered in mainstream schools" (Ministry of Education 1996, p. 67). The revised 2013 curriculum recognised the following categories of learners with special educational needs: Hearing, Visual, Physical, Intellectual Disability, Talented/Talented for the purpose of curriculum accommodation (Ministry of Education 2013). Additionally, the National Policy on Disability 2016 acknowledges access to education as a human right and calls for a comprehensive and equitable approach to service delivery. The National Youth Policy (2016) further aims to align the goals of engaging young people in mainstream programmes.

In addition to supportive policy measures, a strong legal framework for the rights of persons with disabilities has been put in place (Matafwali 2013). Before delving into the legal framework for persons with disabilities within the Zambian jurisdiction, it is important to note that Zambia is a party to various international human rights instruments aimed at promoting equality for all. These international instruments are referenced in this section and reflect national efforts to comply with international obligations. First, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), to which Zambia is a party, is fundamental to the promotion of human rights. In particular, Article 1 of the UDHR recognises the principles of equality and human dignity that apply to all persons, regardless of gender, ability, social or cultural background. Article 26 recognises equal rights to education consistent with the principle of inclusion. The United Nations Standard Regulations on Equal Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities (1993), although not legally binding, advocates a moral and political imperative for governments to take action to ensure equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognises education as a human right for all children based on equal opportunities. Perhaps the most progressive development in disability law was the passing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006, which Zambia subsequently ratified in 2010 and adopted into the 2012 Disability Act.

The CRPD codifies a global consensus on the nature and extent of the rights of persons with disabilities. The core principles of the CRPD include autonomy, non-discrimination, equality, and accessibility and reflects a paradigm shift from the medical model to the social model; the Rights Based Approach is a fundamental approach to the disability sector and particularly advocates seven core principles: indivisibility; interdependence and reciprocity; equality and non-discrimination; participation and inclusion; empowerment; accountability and respect for the rule of law. This provides legal rigor to encourage policy decisions and practices. In this regard, States parties are encouraged to make transformative approaches across curricula and school environments to improve the accessibility of children with disabilities. Zambia is also party to regional human rights instruments. The African Individual and People's Charter provides for the right to education in article 17(1). Article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child further recognises the right to education, whilst Article 13 requires State parties to take special measures to protect children, especially children with disabilities.

Several laws and guidelines, inspired by international obligations, have been enacted: Education Act, 2011 and the Disability Act, 2012. Article 23 of the Education Act 2011 aims to promote the right to education of persons with disabilities. Specifically, section 23(5) stipulates that "wherever possible, learners with special educational needs should be integrated into mainstream education" (The Education Act 2011). Arguably the most significant disability-related legislative change in Zambia was the enactment of the Disabilities Act of 2012, which adopted the CRPD. Section 22 advocates a comprehensive education system at all levels, from early childhood through higher education. Article 23 of the Act recognises the right of children with disabilities to receive special care and support. Article 28 provides for the right to education and emphasises free education at primary school level. In addition, the Children's Code Act of 2022 recognises the right to education for children with disabilities. The Constitution of Zambia, which is the Supreme Law of the country, promotes equality and non-discrimination. These policies and laws are aligned with the global goals of the 2030 Agenda. Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 10) (reduce inequality) are directly related to the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Furthermore, Zambia's Vision 2030 emphasises the development of quality human capital, including investment in quality education and skills development (GRZ 2006). Improving education and training was identified as a key human development strategy of the 7th National Development Plan (7NDP 2017–2021, GRZ 2017). Of particular relevance to the special education discourse is Strategy 1 focusing on improving access to quality, eq-

uitable and inclusive education, including those with disabilities. The recently launched 8th National Development Plan (8NDP 2022–2026, GRZ 2022) further prioritises education and skills development as a strategic pillar.

Disability Education Landscapes

The history of special education in Zambia can be traced back to missionary activity (Mwanakatwe 1974). In 1905, the first effort to provide special education was made and is accredited to Issie Hoffmeyer, the wife of a missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church. Since the main goal was to spread the gospel, the curriculum consisted of Bible study, reading and writing, and basic crafts (Kalabula 1998). Then, in 1914, Ela Botes opened a separate class for the Deaf in Madzimoyo, which was expanded to Nyanje school in 1923, and moved to Magwero in the 1930s (Snelson 1970, Kalabula 1998). During this time, educating learners with disabilities was viewed as a missionary responsibility. Suffice it to say that before missionaries arrived in Zambia, children with disabilities were unable to receive a formal education (Chitiyo & Muwana 2018).

Although Zambia became independent on 24th October 1964, the Government only assumed responsibility for Special Education in 1971, following the Presidential Decree. In the same year, the Lusaka College for the Teachers of the Handicapped – currently Zambia Institute of Special Education (ZAMISE) – was established as an in-service college to train teachers in Special Education, with a specialisation in teaching children with visual impairment, hearing impairment and the Physically Challenged (Ministry of Education 1977). Previously, there had been no teacher training institution in Special Education in Zambia. Other developments included the establishment of the Inspectorate of Special Education within the Ministry of Education and an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on Special Education. These early developments undoubtedly represented significant milestones in the field of Special Education in Zambia. Subsequently, special schools were constructed across the country.

From the policy perspective, the 1977 Education Reform Document was the first post-independence education policy to support the establishment of special schools. Several special schools were established for the Blind, Deaf, Physically and Mentally Challenged. A series of policies, e.g., the 1992 "Focus on Learning" and the 1996 education policy document, built on this policy foundation. Whilst inclusive classrooms are the preferred placement option, the policies state that some learners with severe disabilities should

seek alternative placement options in schools, such as special schools, special units, and resource centers, as highlighted below:

Regular classes: According to the 1996 Education Policy Guidelines, learners with mild disabilities receive the majority of their education in regular classes. The policy encourages the children with disabilities, wherever possible, to be taught alongside their peers in regular classrooms in order to stimulate cognitive, academic, and social development.

Special Units: Learners with moderate disabilities may be placed in special units. Special units are typically mainstreamed to provide the learner with the opportunity to receive at least 60% of his/her school day in special education and related services outside the regular classroom. The child may also from time to time receive lessons in regular classes. The rationale behind the special unit is that as learners progress, they have the opportunity to transfer to regular classrooms.

Resource Centers: Resource Centres are specialised units within mainstream schools that provide support services. They serve as hubs for providing professional services to learners with disabilities, regular teachers, families and communities.

Separate Special Schools: The 1996 policy provided separate special schools for children with severe disabilities that regular schools could not adequately cope with. These schools are either boarding schools or day schools and may be of a disability-specific nature. The curriculum is tailored to the needs of learners. Students receive special education and related services outside regular school. Examples of such special schools are presented below: Ndola Lions for the Visually Impaired, Magwero School for the Deaf/Blind, Mpolokoso School for the Blind, Sefula Special School, Munali Secondary School, St. Marys School for the Blind, Chileshe Chepela School, Mambilima Special School, Cheshire Homes Kabulonga, Dagama School, Kabulonga Boys Secondary School, etc.

At any rate, the number of special schools in Zambia increased from 24 in 2014 to 50 in 2018.

As for enrollment rates, statistics show a significant drop in numbers of SEN learners as they progress from primary to secondary school. For the years 2014, 2015, and 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020, the numbers of learners enrolled into primary schools yielded 89.134, 89.646 and 103.218, 110.320, 113.698, 106.606, 96.115 respectively, while those progressing to secondary school had declined to 7.471, 17.369 and 20.092, 20.072, 23.804, 21.885, 17.598 respectively (see details in table 1).

Table 1: Enrolment of Learners with Special Education Needs at Primary and Secondary School levels

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Primary Schools							
Male	**46.322**	**42.955**	**53.035**	**56.907**	**58.614**	54.600	49.109
Female	**42.818**	**46.691**	**50.183**	**53.413**	**55.084**	51.464	47.006
Total	**89.134**	**89.646**	**103.218**	**110.320**	**113.698**	106.064	96.115
SecondarySchools							
Male	**3.797**	**9.090**	**10.609**	**10.330**	**12.034**	11.017	8.985
Female	**3.674**	**8.278**	**9.483**	**9.742**	**11.770**	10.868	8.613
Total	**7.471**	**17.368**	**20.092**	**20.072**	**23.804**	21.885	17.598
National Total	**96.605**	**107.014**	**123.310**	**130.392**	**137.502**	**127.949**	**113.713**

Source: Ministry of Education (2020): Education Statistical Bulletin

The national enrollment of learners with disabilities at secondary school level reveals a steady increase from 96.605 in 2014 to 113.713 in 2018, whereas a downward trend was seen in 2019 and 2020. National statistics reveal that 1.725 (male: 871, female: 854) learners with disabilities reached their 12th grade (last year of secondary education) in 2020. And unfortunately, only a neglible proportion managed to secure enrollment into university. This problem is exacerbated by limited opportunities for skilled training. At all grade levels, the proportion of boys appears to be slightly higher than that of girls.

The status of inclusive education in Zambia

Inclusive education is developing in Zambia. Steady progress has been made in policy development, supported by a positive legislative environment. Education is recognised as a human right in the Constitution of Zambia, the Education Act (2011), the Disabilities Act (2012), and the Education Policy 1996. The Strategic Guidelines (Education Sector Skills Plan – ESSP 2017–2021) adequately provide for inclusive education. Additionally, the revised 2013 curriculum focuses on addressing learner diversity and providing appropriate teaching and learning materials (Ministry of Education 2013). Special education is incorporated into the teacher education curriculum to provide future teachers with an inclusive pedagogy. Supervision and monitoring are decentralised and governed at provincial and district levels, in order to make the delivery of services more efficient. Additionally, national examination guidelines allow an additional 25% time slot to accommodate the special needs of learners with disabilities. As men-

tioned earlier, enrollment has increased at both the primary and secondary levels. However, the number of children with disabilities in early childhood and higher education is disproportionately under-represented.

Challenges and opportunities

Despite a favourable legal policy environment, effective implementation of inclusive education is hampered by inadequate resources, lack of qualified staff, limited infrastructure, lack of appropriate learning materials, and regular policies are constrained by the lack of adequate monitoring and assessment, and the unavailability of data on the prevalence of disabilities among school-aged children with disabilities as discussed below:

Inadequate financial resources

Effective implementation of inclusive education requires sustainable funding mechanisms. The Dakar Call to Action 2000 pointed out the need to address corresponding learner diversity. It particularly notes that governments must take action to transform funding mechanisms and education system governance so that they are responsive to the needs of disadvantaged children, including children with disabilities (World Education Forum 2000).

Financing is a key issue in the implementation of inclusive education, requiring governments to take action to transform funding systems. Tony Booth's analysis paper found that countries with the best inclusion practices tended to have highly decentralised funding systems, budgets dedicated to support inclusion, and sustainable budgetary allocation (Booth 2005). In Zambia, there has been a move towards a comprehensive policy, but it has not been coordinated with a budget allocation to the education sector to support effective implementation. Allocations to the education sector decreased from 16,1% in 2018 to 15,3% in 2019, with individual benefits accounting for the largest share (UNICEF 2019). Nevertheless, the Zambian government has renewed its commitment to ensuring quality education for all. For example, the education sector budget allocation is expected to increase by 32% to K 18.1 billion ($1.11 Billion) in 2022, which is 10,4% of the National Budget, compared to the allocated 13.8 Billion ($8.5 billion) in 2021. Notwithstanding, challenges related to lack of funding affect the quality of education delivery, availability of appropriate learning materials, continuing professional development, early detection and intervention, monitoring, and evaluation. The problem is compounded by the fact that the Special Education section is bundled under technical services and

therefore does not have a dedicated budget allocation. A dedicated budget for the special education sector would greatly enhance the realisation of inclusive education in Zambia.

Inadequate infrastructure and large class size

The ESSP 2017–2021 notes that the lack of school infrastructure, especially classrooms, leads to school overcrowding (UNICEF 2021). This affects the quality of education delivery. A performance audit of special education performance in primary schools in Zambia, by the Auditor General's Office, showed high teacher-student ratios of up to 1:80, in contrast to recommended ratios 1:45. Large class sizes negatively impact the provision of supportive learning environments and the implementation of inclusive teaching methods for learners with disabilities. This means, e.g., teachers may not be able to accommodate the diversity of learners. This is further exacerbated by the inability of teachers to accommodate large classes due to an insufficient knowledge of large class size pedagogy.

Lack of appropriate teaching and learning materials

The availability of appropriate teaching and learning materials is an important feature of quality inclusion. Teaching and learning materials in inclusive environments include teaching materials for teachers and learning materials for learners such as: textbooks; reference materials; visual and tactile materials; posters; video and audio materials; and computer software. The availability of appropriate teaching and learning materials for quality inclusive education complements the implementation of the curriculum. However, in the Zambian context, reports consistently highlight the lack of appropriate teaching and learning materials (Chitiyo & Muwana 2018, Office of the Auditor General 2018). The Auditor General's audit on Special Education in primary schools in particular reported that the 2013 revised curriculum implementation was not accompanied by appropriate teaching and learning materials to support the participation of learners with disabilities. Efforts have been made to integrate special education into teacher education curricula, but the content of special education curricula does not adequately provide the necessary special education pedagogical skills, such as differentiated teaching, scaffolding, and large-class strategies.

Inadequate number of qualified personnel

Under the 1996 Education Policy, the Ministry of Education emphasised its commitment to ensuring that the educational needs of learners with dis-

abilities were met through the training of adequate numbers of special education teachers. Weeks (2000) notes that teachers play an important role in fostering effective learning environments that promote Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) principles in policy design and implementation. Mutanga (2022) further points out that teacher expertise and competence in inclusive education are important determinants of inclusive classroom responsiveness to learner diversity. Based on available evidence, Zambia's education sector is challenged by an insufficient number of professionally trained teachers (Chitiyo & Muwana 2018). This is evidenced in the Auditor General's report on special education which notes that the number of teachers in special education at the primary school level declined from 1.308 in 2014 to 1.284 in 2016.

The steady increase in learners with disabilities at the primary school level (see details in Table 1) is, therefore, not matched by an increase in the number of teachers. It has been estimated that current teacher quota at the primary school level could result in a teacher-student ratio of 1:80, which does not comply with the recommended teacher pupil-ratio provisions (1:45) in the standard guidelines (Ministry of Education 2015). From the quality point of view, a severe shortage of special education teachers contributes to the underperformance of learners with special education needs. Joint Annual Review Report (JAR) (2017) notes that high teacher-student ratios prevent teachers from adequately meeting the diverse needs of learners with special educational needs in inclusive classrooms.

The University of Zambia, ZAMISE, and Kwame Nkrumah University, teacher training institutions that offer degrees and diplomas in special education, have over the years produced many graduates in the education sector, but there is no coordination in their deployment. The majority of teachers with special education credentials are placed in mainstream schools and their subject-specific and special education expertise instrumental to the promotion of inclusive education practices in mainstream classrooms is simply not exploited. The Auditor General's Report on Special Education in Primary Schools (Office of Auditor General 2018, p. 24) found that the 2017 Employment Guidelines for Educational Institutions did not include specific criteria for the required qualifications and placement of special education teachers. Effective inclusion requires teachers who can apply appropriate teaching skills to accommodate the diversity of learners. Furthermore, inadequate training of teachers, especially in Braille and sign language, is apparent simply because the current curriculum for special education teachers is more general and less disability-specific.

Non-availability of reliable data on disability prevalence rates among school-age children

Equity, quality, and inclusion are at the heart of SDG 4. Realisation of SDG 4 indicators is largely dependent on the availability of data on the eligible learners. In the context of learners with disabilities, therefore, the availability of reliable data on the proportion of children with disabilities is, on the one hand, fundamental to the accountability of the system, enforcement, planning, and funding, and the lack of this data is a major factor that represents a bottleneck in the education system. Previous research in the Zambian context acknowledged the lack of population-level data on the proportion of school-age children with disabilities (Chitiyo & Muwana 2018). Data-driven decision-making is key to informed policy-making, resource allocation and advocacy. As is the case in Zambia, the lack of reliable data can have serious implications as learners with disabilities are likely to be excluded from the education system and wider mainstream society.

Limited access to assessment services for early identification and intervention

Assessment, monitoring, and evaluation are central to the effective implementation of inclusive education. In general, child assessment provides a window for timely intervention to reduce secondary effects and provides an opportunity to early identification of children at risk for developmental delays (Matafwali & Serpell 2014). Assessments also facilitate proper placement, and data generated from assessments can inform teachers how to plan a child's learning experience and identify areas of potential need. In the US, the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC 2003) i.) specifically identifies the benefits of child assessment, ii.) potential problem areas that may warrant targeted intervention, and iii.) improves curriculum planning and responsiveness to learner diversity. Unfortunately for Zambia, assessment services are inadequate and early detection and intervention options for children with disabilities are limited. Currently, there are only three assessment centres: University of Zambia Assessment Centre, University Teaching Hospital Screening Centre, Zambia Institute for Special Education (ZAMISE) Assessment Centre which are all located in Zambia's capital, Lusaka, and covers all 10 provinces of Zambia. The non-availability of assessment services may negatively impact the institutional capacity to identify learners with developmental delays and ensure appropriate placement. Children experiencing learning difficulties such as in reading and maths, as well as those with autism, do not often benefit from early intervention. Although formative and summative assessment has been

emphasised in the curriculum, implementation mechanisms need to be strengthened to ensure quality learner outcomes. This is key, especially in ensuring the early identification of children experiencing delays in the development of literacy skills. Previous research has shown gaps in learning achievement in literacy particularly at primary school level (Matafwali & Bus 2013). Unfortunately, the majority of the children at risk of poor reading ability goes unnoticed in the education system due to limited opportunities for early identification and intervention. This gap is further exacerbated by a lack of developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive assessment tools to facilitate early identification and intervention (Matafwali & Serpell 2014).

Inadequate mechanisms for the monitoring and enforcement of policies/laws

Zambia has a comprehensive policy and legal environment that provides an appropriate framework for addressing the educational needs of learners with disabilities. However, a clear disconnection between policy aspirations and practice persists. Mechanisms have been put in place to monitor and evaluate special education services, but closing the gap between policy and practice will require greater accountability in the provision of special education services. Suich & Schneider (2022) emphasise the need for comprehensive disability monitoring, preferably at the three levels of policy, structure, and individual-level outcomes. At the policy level the focus is on the extent to which the policy is addressing inclusion at the development and implementation stages. At the structural level, the focus is on supervision of the implementation process to ensure adherence to minimum infrastructure, curriculum, and pedagogical standards. Individual monitoring aims to address individual perspectives and experiences regarding the degree of participation over a lifetime (Suich & Schneider 2022, p. 2). An inclusive approach would therefore require reinforcement systems to ensure successful planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Hearst et al. 2022).

Lack of coordination across sectors

Intersectoral coordination is essential for promoting inclusive education (Kodner & Spreeuwenberg 2002). Although the 7th National Development Plan promoted a multisectoral approach, the delivery of special education services remains fragmented. Improved cross-disciplinary collaboration among the key Ministries: Education, Health, Community Development

and Social Services offer the potential for improved health surveillance, early detection, assessment and interventions.

Future perspectives of Inclusive Education in Zambia

Addressing the diverse needs of learners with disabilities is not only a policy imperative but a human rights issue. SGD 4.1 aims to ensure that "*all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes by 2030*". This has resulted in a clear government commitment to achieving the global agenda. Zambia has undergone three political changes since independence. All three policy areas have consistently emphasised inclusion as the most effective approach to achieving equity in education. Further training of teachers, development and adaptation of teaching and learning materials, expansion of infrastructure, entry into force of the 2012 Disability Act, and increased advocacy for inclusive education are among the positive measures taken. The declaration of free education for all also provides an opportunity to improve access to education in Zambia. Despite significant improvements over the years, equity gaps still persist and vary widely depending on level of education; e.g., children with disabilities are underrepresented, especially at early childhood, secondary and tertiary education levels. That said, the future outlook looks very promising. This is evidenced by the political commitment and favorable policy and legal environment in favor of inclusive education. However, effective implementation of inclusive education requires improved funding, investment in pre- and in-service teacher education to improve inclusive education pedagogy, and the development of appropriate teaching and learning materials. In addition, we need to build systems and decentralised structures for early detection, assessment and intervention.

Conclusion

Zambia has demonstrated commitment by highlighting the need and urgency of providing education to children, adolescents and adults with special educational needs within the context of regular education. Infrastructure expansion through construction of special classrooms in mainstream schools across the country is seen as a strategy to integrate learners with disabilities and to realise this policy objective. Other improvements include curriculum development, teacher training, efficiency in special education delivery through decentralised systems and improved enrollment particu-

larly at primary school level. Gaps in budgetary allocation, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate appropriate teaching and learning materials, inadequate qualified personnel, limited specialised services for early identification and assessment, and inavailability of consolidated population – based data for school age children are potential barriers to inclusion. Effective implementation of inclusive education would require higher investments in teacher training, systems strengthening, improved funding, and coordination across sectors. Moreover, the core values of inclusion – acceptability, accessibility, availability, and adaptability – should be used as performance descriptors to determine the extent to which the education system is responsive to learner diversity.

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