

PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: A CASE OF DONATA, MALAIKHA AND SHALOM COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN ZAMBIA.

Dr. Mwenya N. Mwamba

Directorate of Teacher Education and Specialized Services
Special Needs Education Unit
Ministry of General Education

Community schools appeared in Zambia in 1992 beginning with Lusaka and they quickly spread to other parts of the country. The Ministry of General Education recognizes its obligation to provide education of good quality to all children in response to national and international protocols to which Zambia is a part. The creation of Community Schools was an initiative to increase access to basic education but they required exceptional attention from government. Since their inception Community Schools have played a critical role in meeting education demands for marginalized children. According to the Ministry of General Education 2013 statistical bulletin there were 2,896 Community Schools offering primary and secondary education. Though the Community Schools were making education more accessible they had scanty information and data on children with special educational needs. This study identified three Schools teaching children with special educational needs these were; Donata Community Special School in Mkushi district of Central Province, Malaikha School for the Blind in Mazabuka district of Southern Province and Shalom Community School in Lusaka district of Lusaka Province. These Schools provide special education to children with various disabilities though they have varied challenges which make the provision and management of special education not entirely successful.

Background

Community Schools were established to meet the educational needs of children in a particular community who were marginalized in terms of; long distances to public schools, high school user fees, and high cost of uniforms. This was before the Education for All strategies were implemented in 2002. Among the strategies pronounced were: free basic education up to grade 7, uniforms were no longer compulsory and massive infrastructure development was embarked on in increasing classroom space and reducing distance to government schools. Some of the Community Schools were also up graded in terms of infrastructure and staffing. At this point what was not coming out clearly were the statistics of learners with special educational needs in these schools. From the data in the Educational Statistical Bulletin from 2002 to 2013 no statistics show the number of learners with special educational needs in Community Schools. This can be attributed to lack of knowledge on identifying learners with special educational needs in community Schools by the untrained teachers there. In 2011 some Community Schools enrolled learners with special educational needs and these registered themselves with the Ministry of General Education. It is through this initiative that Community Schools were making education for children with special educational needs accessible within their communities. It is a very welcome initiative since learners will not be excluded and segregated from their communities.

Statement of the problem

It is governments' wish to educate learners with special educational needs in schools nearest to their homes within the community. To the authors' knowledge it is not known whether the provision and management of special education in Community Schools responded to the needs of learners with special educational needs. The community schools generally had no trained personnel to move special needs education forward.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to; establish whether the provision and management of special education in Community Schools responded to the needs of learners with special educational needs. Community schools in

Zambia were poorly serviced with financial, human and material resources. This made them provide an education which was considered second class. The specific objective of the study was to: establish the factors affecting Community Schools in providing and managing education to respond to the needs of learners with special educational needs.

Significance of the study

The findings of the study may be used by the Ministry of General Education. This is to strengthen Community Schools in the provision and management of special education and Inclusive Education. In turn the Ministry will be responding to the needs of learners with special educational needs in the communities.

Review of related literature

There is a worldwide concern about education of children with special educational needs in inclusive settings. This is a realization of the fact that all children have a fundamental right to education. Children with special educational needs, girls and the rural child were most marginalized in terms of education. According to Zambia Open Community Schools (2012), austere poverty and untold social dejection faced many a child of school going age by 1992. Many children dropped out of the formal school system due to the introduction of segregative user fees, unaffordable school uniforms and long distances to school. Furthermore there were massive job cuts due to closure of mines and companies resulting in major social upsets including HIV and AIDS. This resulted in a general economic meltdown driving the country into low income levels.

Community Schools mushroomed from a single school under a tree in Misisi compound of Lusaka district initiated by the Sisters of Charity. It started with out of school girls but by 2015 all children denied education in public schools attends lessons in Community Schools. For 23 years now the schools have continued to play a critical role in making education for all a reality by including learners with special educational needs. The Ministry of General Education recognizes Community Schools as an integral part of the education system. It has pledged to support the schools in a number of areas (MOE, 25th March, 2011). In addition the Zambia Open Community Schools is a prominent defender of children's rights to education. The vision of the organization is: every orphan and vulnerable child in Zambia (especially the girl child and children living with a disability) receives quality education, which enables him or her to build a sustainable livelihood (Zambia Open Community Schools, 2012). It is unfortunate that government support to community schools remains limited to date. However with many achievements scored the Zambia Open Community Schools feels there was need to work extra hard especially with regards to girls and children with disabilities (special educational needs).

Literature shows that despite all the efforts to make school accessible and participatory a number of children particularly children with special educational needs still remain out of school. Simui and Mtonga (2012), state that in the World 72million children currently out of school have a disability and 90 % of children with disabilities in developing countries do not go to school. According to World Bank (2008), disability has more impact on participation in education compared to gender, rural residence or house hold economic status. If Millennium Development Goals have to be met, responsiveness to needs of children with special educational needs was a must. Once children with disabilities were educated, poverty is alleviated and they were empowered with lifelong skills to be independent to fulfill their community's drive for development. Though children with disabilities were a target for community schools their plight has not been catered for effectively due to economic, physical and social barriers. This has been so because of inadequate awareness among teachers and parents in communities. There was also inadequate capacity to respond to the needs of children with disabilities among the volunteer teachers and the Parent Community School Committees. This negatively affected the accommodation of children with disabilities in Community Schools.

ZOCS (2012), postulates that, including children with disabilities increases the opportunity for their presence, participation and achievement in the local schools. Simui and Mtonga (2012), acknowledge that there was the presence of children with special educational needs in Community Schools. The other Community Schools which did not enroll children with special educational needs must have referred them to Public or grant aided Special Schools. The children in Community Schools were learning under difficult conditions. Despite this there was willingness on the part of the parents, pupils and teachers to support the inclusion of learners with disabilities in Community Schools. A study carried out in Western Province by Simui and Mtonga in 2012 revealed that some factors that enabled learners' access schooling in community Schools include:

Accessible school grounds, accessible classrooms, inclusive teaching methods, welcoming infrastructure, positive attitudes among teachers, learners and parents, supportive communities, accessible clean toilets and use of Braille and sign language.

In all the factors above nearly all community Schools did not meet the minimum standard for providing and managing learners with special educational needs effectively. There was need to adapt and modify the Community School system to accommodate learners with special educational needs. Mwansa (2006) conducted a study on the quality and relevance of educational provision in community schools in Mkushi district and concluded that most community schools lagged behind in teacher qualifications, educational supplies and staff professional support and instructional supervision and professional guidance.

According to Nsapato and Chikopela (2012), the enrolments of children with special educational needs in Community Schools were at 2.4 % which is less than the national average. About 19.6 % of children with special educational needs were excluded from school. This was attributed to lack of child friendly facilities to motivate learners and parents to attend and send children to school on regular basis.

The literature review has shown that Community Schools were placed in communities and could be better places to enroll learners with special educational needs since they were close to the learners' home. The only thing was that the Ministry of General Education should improve the schools in terms of staffing, teaching and learning resources, sanitation, zonal collaboration, supervision and infrastructure. The Ministry of Education (1996), indicates that under the liberalized education system, the right of local communities to establish and control their own schools and other educational institutions was recognized and welcomed. The provision and management of special education in Community Schools was frustrated at district level though it was supported by policy.

Methodology

A case study was conducted on three community schools and both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms were used to collect data. The following components were prominent in the methodology: - Target population, Sample size and selection of the sample.

Target Population: This included all Community Schools in Mkushi district of the Central Province, Lusaka district of the Lusaka Province and Mazabuka district of the Southern Province. Specifically all head teachers and all chair persons of the Parent Community School Committee were included in the population.

Sample size and sampling procedures: - The purposive sampling procedure was used on the identified districts and schools this was because of the limited number of such schools in Zambia. These schools were exclusively for learners with special educational needs.

Table 1: Captured Sample size

RESPONDENT TYPE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Head teachers	3
Parents	3
TOTAL	6

Table 2: Captured Community Schools

SCHOOL	DISTRICT	PROVINCE
Donata Special Community	Mkushi	Central
Malaikha school for the Blind	Mazabuka (Magoye)	Southern
Shalom Community	Lusaka	Lusaka

Data Collection: - The study employed the following data collection methods, interviews with parents, questionnaire for Head teachers, observation protocol to observe for environment that facilitates for special needs education, document analysis on Community Schools and disability and talk with learners.

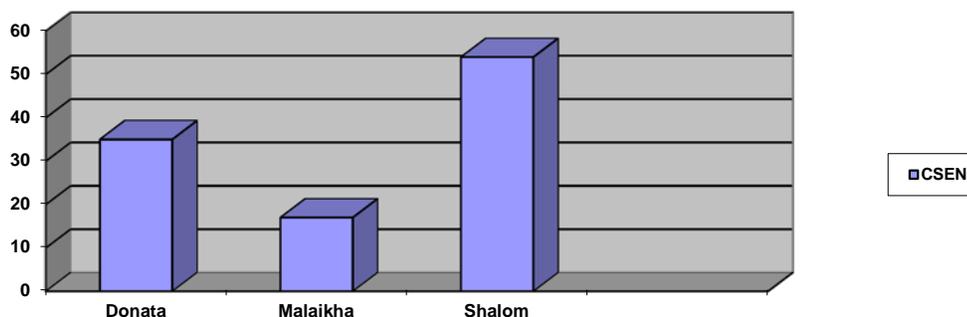
Data processing and Analysis: - Qualitative data was analyzed using themes while the statistical data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings

Table 3: Enrolment of CSEN in the Community Schools

SCHOOL	ENROLMENT		TOTAL
	BOYS	GIRLS	
Donata Community Special	25	10	35
Malaikha School for the Blind	10	07	17
Shalom Community	33	21	54

The number of learners with special educational needs in the three schools is shown in the table above. The three schools were established to be special schools. Nsapato and Chikopela (2012), observed that enrolment for learners with special educational needs in Community Schools were below the national average. This was attributed to lack of child friendly environments to motivate learners to be in school. Simui and Mtonga (2012), also had a similar conclusion that most Community Schools had not met minimum standards to respond to the needs of learners with special educational needs. There were more learners with special educational needs in Shalom Community School than in Donata Community Special School and Malaikha School for the Blind. The reason could be that Shalom was in a densely populated urban area than Donata and Malaikha which were in rural areas. This shows that there were more children out there still out of school.

**Figure 1: Learners with special educational needs in the three schools**

The graph clearly shows the differences in enrolment in the three schools. It may also be certain to conclude that some children were referred to public special schools. The other group may be in the homes since Donata and Malaikha had no trained teachers in special education. It was evident from the study that there were inadequate teaching and learning resources in the schools, this can affect the enrolment negatively since children will not be learning appropriately.

Table 4. Staffing

SCHOOL	TEACHERS		TOTAL	SUPPORT STAFF		TOTAL
	M	F		M	F	
Donata Community Special	3	2	5	3	1	4
Malaikha School for the Blind	1	1	2	1	1	2
Shalom Community	1	1	2	1	1	2

The Pupil- Teacher ratio was a big concern. The enrolment and the staffing on an average made 1: 13 in Donata Community Special School, 1:9 in Malaikha School for the Blind and 1: 17 in Shalom Community School. In special education that was inappropriate since the individual attention will be difficult to practice. Managing such big classes reduces on learner performance and teachers will not teach effectively. The support staff in the table above were cooks who prepared food for the learners and not teacher aides. This scenario was not conducive especially that teachers were not trained in special education. Simui and Mtonga (2012) concluded that despite

having trained teachers in Community Schools they had no confidence to effectively meet the needs of learners with special educational needs. The schools were also understaffed to manage special education and other activities.

Table 5.Special Educational Needs in the School

SCHOOL	TYPE OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED						
	CP	DB	DS	HI	LD	PD	VI
Donata Community Special				*	*	*	*
Malaikha School for the Blind		*					*
Shalom Community	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

KEY: CP- Cerebral Palsy
 DB- Deaf Blind
 DS- Downs Syndrome
 HI- Hearing Impairments
 LD- Learning Disabilities/Difficulties
 PD- Physically Disabled
 VI- Visual Impairments
 *- Present in the school

Processes for assessment in Zambia were inadequate and most learners with special educational needs in rural areas were in school un assessed. Therefore the types of special educational needs listed above were just suspected unless where one has an assessment record from registered assessment centers which were only found in Lusaka. Some hospitals gave the medical assessment which may not be very useful in schools. Teaching such children by untrained teachers was not yielding intended results (Simui and Mtonga, 2012). This is also in a situation where these teachers and schools were inadequately supervised by external monitors. Some cases, for example Cerebral Palsy (CP) and Down syndrome (DS) needed a multi-disciplinary committee to be working in the school.

Table 6.Inclusion of average children in the school

SCHOOL	YES	NO
Donata Community Special	*	
Malaikha School for the Blind		*
Shalom Community	*	

The three Community Schools under study were established exclusively to teach learners with special educational needs. In the study two schools included average learners (learners without special educational needs) while one was exclusively for learners with special educational needs. Such an inclusion was encouraged so that learners can help each other. ZOCS (2012) confirmed that including children without special educational needs to learn together with those with special educational needs increases opportunities for presence, participation and achievement for all learners within a similar educational setting and in their local schools.

Table 7.Availability of Teaching and Learning resources

SCHOOL	AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	INADEQUATE
Donata Community Special		*	
Malaikha School for the Blind	*		
Shalom Community			*

Teaching and learning resources were a vital component in the education of learners with special educational needs. Malaikha had materials while Donata and Shalom had inadequate resources. Though malaikha said they had, it was not all that was needed to teach effectively. Simui and Mtonga (2012) expressed concern on the inadequate teaching and learning resources in Community Schools. This was said to be a serious challenge and was identified as an area of immediate support. Mwansa (2006) concluded that Community Schools lagged behind in terms of school supplies, infrastructure and staffing.

Table 8. Training in Special Education for Teachers

SCHOOL	YES	NO
Donata Community Special		*
Malaikha School for the Blind		*
Shalom Community	*	

Special Education and Inclusive Education cannot succeed without a trained teacher as a major resource and driver. The Ministry of Education (1996) formulated strategies to implement special education and one of them was to train an adequate number of teachers in special education. The Ministry realized that unqualified teachers in special education were liabilities who could not drive the programme efficiently. As shown in the table above, there were no trained teachers in two schools. Simui and Mtonga (2012), also observed that such teachers exposed their deficiencies in the use of Braille and Sign Language. These teachers cherished the opportunity for capacity building in special educational needs management.

Table 9. Infrastructure

STRUCTURE	SCHOOL		
	DONATA	MALAIKHA	SHALOM
Number of classrooms	3	2	3
Number of toilets for Learners	2	2	1 adapted
Number of staff toilets	1	Nil	1
Source of water	Mono pump	Mono pump	Piped
Number of Desks	20	Nil	33 & 1 adapted for CP

Community Schools have struggled to put up recommended infrastructure and equipment. Mwansa (2006), revealed that Community Schools did not provide the minimum standards required for a conducive learning environment. Water, toilets and classroom facilities were a problem. In some instances these were temporal arrangements. The table below shows that the infrastructure was not adapted to meet special needs in the two schools while one school had adapted infrastructure for being in the urban it was assumed. It was concluded that lack of these facilities greatly affected the provision and management of special education in the Community Schools (Mwansa, 2006).

Table 10. Availability of adapted Infrastructure

SCHOOL	AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE
Donata Community Special		*
Malaikha School for the Blind		*
Shalom Community	*	

Adapted infrastructure was expensive to be developed in Community Schools where funds were a problem. Only Shalom Community School had adapted infrastructure because it was in an urban area where information could easily be accessed. The two schools Donata and Malaikha had no features of disability friendliness. Nsapato and Chikopela (2012) shows that from the total of 61 schools they studied 78.5% had no disability friendly features while 21.5% had. The schools under study had no staff houses and staff rooms.

Table 11. Support received

SCHOOL	SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM				
	ZONE	DISTRICT	PROVINCE	NATIONAL	OTHER
Donata		*			*
Malaikha		*			*
Shalom				*	*

According to Ministry of Education (1996), Community Schools were expected to be supported by communities as well as other stakeholders like government, NGOs, Cooperating Partners and the Private sector. In particular government made a special commitment that it would contribute to the running costs of Community Schools through provision of teachers and teaching supplies or through the system of capitation grants. Community Schools were supposed to benefit from equity funds at the District Education Board Office were even upgrading of infrastructure could be funded. The table above shows sources of resources in Community Schools. The three schools depended on cooperating partners more than government.

Table: 12.School inspections/ monitoring

SCHOOL	SCHOOL INSPECTIONS/MONITORING BY		
	ZONE	STANDARDS OFFICERS	TESS
Donata	*	*	
Malaikha		*	
Shalom			*

Even if there were inspections and monitoring these were inadequate. Mostly these schools were monitored once in many years. Lack of supervision impacts negatively on the provision and management of special education in schools.

Conclusion

Community Schools were not exempted from providing special education to learners of varied special educational needs using any management practice suggested by the education policy. Since the policy strives to practice inclusion they are also compelled to move in that direction. The factors affecting Community schools in providing and managing education to respond to the needs of learners with special educational needs were many. It is evident that special education is being provided in Community Schools but the management of the program lacks in many ways such as teaching and learning resources, qualified teachers, suitable infrastructure and adequate support from stakeholders. The community was a major stakeholder but it needed to be supported by government as stipulated in the Education Policy and the Operational guidelines for Community Schools. Therefore these factors affected the provision and management of special education in Community schools negatively. Quality was compromised.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of the study; The District Education Board Secretary to take cognizance of all Community Schools in the District in order to support them in all areas to enable them provide quality and relevant education to all learners including those with special educational needs. Communities to be proactive and seek for support where they fail and should link Community Schools to Zonal centers or nearby public schools. Furthermore all stakeholders should stop looking at children as having problems, the problem was with the system which has failed to provide facilities and manage special needs in Community Schools effectively. All children can learn given appropriate facilities.

References

- Ministry of Education (1996), Educating our future: National Policy on Education. Lusaka: Institutional Suppliers Limited.
- Ministry of Education (2011), Ministry of Education collaboration in the monitoring and evaluation of standards: a letter addressed to the Coordinator, ZOCS: Lusaka MOE.
- Mwansa, A (2006), An assessment of the quality and relevance of education provision in community schools of Mkushi District. Un published Dissertation: Lusaka. UNZA.
- Nsapato, L and Chikopela, M (2012), Access to Basic Education in Community Schools in Zambia: Lusaka. PAF.
- Simui, F and Mtonga, T (2012), A baseline study on mainstreaming disability rights in Community Schools in selected districts of Western and Southern Province: Lusaka. DANIDA,
- Zambia Open Community Schools (2012), ZOCS News: ...in the footprints of 20 years community education: Lusaka. ZOCS.
- World Bank Report (2008), Statistical facts about poverty levels among people with disabilities: Washington D.C. World Bank.