

Regular Teacher Preparation for Inclusion

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Abstract

The role of regular teachers is asserted as an integral component in the fruition or otherwise of inclusion in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Consequently, their preparation for inclusion is a cause for concern. An examination of regular teachers' preparation for inclusion in ECE in Zimbabwe revealed that they had tuition in characteristics, health, attitudes, education, inclusion, assistance, diversity and behavior management of children with disabilities. Regular teachers had also tutelage of social, physical and behavior management environment. They had further grounding in collaboration with peer regular teachers, teacher assistance teams, multi-disciplinary teams and parents. Inversely, regular teachers lacked training in instructional environment management, adaptive equipment, environmental adaptations, flexible working with individual children, collaboration with specialist teachers and content, process and assessment

modification. Attention to these issues as they relate to child diversity, curriculum differentiation, classroom and behavior management and collaboration would optimize regular teachers' preparation for inclusion in ECE.

Keywords: *Children with disabilities, early childhood education, inclusion, regular teachers, specialist teachers, Zimbabwe*

Introduction

In compliance with various international Human Rights Declarations, Conventions and Charters including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and the Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education (UNESCO, 1994), Zimbabwe adopted inclusion in Early Childhood Education (ECE) in 1994 (Chireshe, 2013; Mugweni & Dakwa, 2013; Musengi & Chireshe, 2012). As the paradigm shift from exclusion to inclusion in ECE picks up steam in the country, most children with disabilities who have been previously educated in special settings are now educated in regular classrooms (Majoko, 2005; Mandina, 2012; Mushoriwa, 2001), affecting all aspects of schooling.

In Zimbabwe, children with disabilities are learners with hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, mental retardation, visual impairments (including blindness), emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injuries, other health impairments or specific learning disabilities and therefore require special needs education services (Mpofu, Kasayira, Mhaka, Chireshe & Maunganidze, 2007; Musengi & Chireshe, 2012). These learners have developmental challenges as measured by diagnostic

instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas: physical development, communication development, cognitive development and adaptive development and social or emotional development (Chireshe, 2011; Mutepfa, Mpofu & Chataika, 2007; Mushoriwa, 2002). Inclusive education can be viewed as teaching and learning of children in classrooms they would otherwise attend if not identified as having unique needs (Chambers & Forlin, 2010; Hodkinson, 2005; Lambe, 2007). It constitutes several features including acceptance and participation of children with disabilities in the school and social community as well as provision of necessary human, material, financial, time and technological resources that afford these children least restrictive environments to succeed (Chambers & Forlin, 2010; Garman, 2005; Winch-Dimmitt, 2006). Inclusive education also embodies consultation and collaboration between regular and specialist teachers, provision of materials and curriculum adaptations and support personnel in regular education classrooms as well as social and academic interactions of both children with and without unique needs (Hodkinson, 2005; Jung, 2007; Voltz, 2003).

In pursuit of inclusion in ECE, the Government of Zimbabwe manages the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), a nationwide scheme which caters for the costs of core education such as levies, school and examination fees of children with disabilities in order to prevent families from resorting to coping mechanisms including withdrawing these children from schools in response to poverty (Mugweni & Dakwa, 2013). The government also passed and enforces pro-inclusion policies and legislation including the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013 section 75, Education Act of 1996, the Disabled Persons Act of 1996, the Secretary's Circular number 2 of 2000 and the Director's Circular number 7 of 2005. Among other rights, these policies and legislation mandates the rights of children with disabilities to care, health and education (Chireshe, 2013; Mandina, 2012; Mugweni & Dakwa,

2013). Consequently, a significantly increased number of children with disabilities are served in mainstream ECE settings the country over, pressurizing regular teachers to meet more diverse needs as mainstream classrooms now constitutes more heterogeneous mix of children with different backgrounds and with different levels of abilities and disabilities (Mpofu , et al., 2007; Musengi & Chireshe, 2012). Inclusive education requires regular teachers to acquire new competencies and skills as well as develop them continuously (Chireshe, 2011; Majoko, 2005; Mushoriwa & Gasva, 2008).

Since meeting the needs of diverse abilities and disabilities requires teacher professional competence that optimizes holistic development of children (Bassette, 2008; Pearson, 2007; Romano & Chambliss, 2000), the Zimbabwean teacher is thus, integral in the success or otherwise of inclusion in ECE (Chireshe, 2013; Majoko, 2005). Through having confidence in their teaching efficacy, being willing to shift in paradigm, having favorable attitudes toward children with disabilities and exhibiting attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, understandings, competencies and skills needed to meet the needs of all children, teachers can impact inclusion in education (Berry, 2010; El-Ashry, 2009; Ferreira & Graca, 2006). Educators who proactively accept responsibility to teach in inclusive settings are more likely to display receptivity toward inclusion as well as improve their quality of instruction, differentiated teaching practices and engagement in collaboration (Alghazo, Dodeen & Algaryouti, 2003; Elhowerise & Alsheikh, 2006). Professional competence of teachers to meet the diverse needs of children in inclusive classrooms constitutes expertise in the content areas from regular education and the ability to collaborate, develop, plan, manage and implement individualized lessons for children receiving special needs education services (Friend & Bursuck, 2012; Garman, 2005; Lambe, 2007), thus enhancing learning opportunities for all children. Resultantly, teacher education programs are the

foundation in preparing teachers to work in diverse pedagogical settings (Idol, 2006; Pearson, 2007; Sherill, 2006).

Teacher preparation programs for inclusion inculcate in future teachers competencies and skills to meet the full range of needs among children (Cooper, Kurtts, Baber & Vallecorsa, 2008; Hsien, 2007; Tait & Purdie, 2000). These programs equip teachers with knowledge of the characteristics of children with disabilities and a comprehension of their role and responsibility in special needs education (Harvey, Yssel, Bauserman & Merbler, 2010; Reinke & Moseley, 2002). According to Forlin (2010); and Mintz (2007), identification of disabilities including learning, mild intellectual and behavioral disabilities often occurs during school life. Since teachers serve children at risk of disabilities and provide inclusive practices to children with disabilities, they need expertise in special needs education process including pre-referral procedures such as assessments and individualized planning to differentiate between an educational disability and a child needing intensive or different instruction (Arndt & Liles, 2010; Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000). Student teachers require instruction on basic characteristics of each disability category so as to gain a general understanding of the disability as well as the inclusive practices to use in classrooms (Bassette, 2008; Brownell, Ross, Colon & McCallum, 2005; Campbell, Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2003). Because inclusive pedagogy entails teaching and learning of children with disabilities in regular education settings, it is imperative for teacher preparation programs to develop in student teachers an understanding of characteristics of various disabilities, their role in the processes by which to support children who may have a disability and a positive attitude in working with children with disabilities and their families and other stakeholders (Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello & Spagna, 2004; Carroll, Forlin, Jobling, 2003; Chong, Forlin & Au, 2007).

It is also fundamental for teacher preparation programs to develop in student teachers the professional competence to differentiate instruction for inclusion of children with disabilities in regular education classrooms (Al-Zyoudi, 2006; Ferreira & Graca, 2006; Romi & Leyser, 2006). As inclusive education exposes all children to regular education curriculum, the success of all children hinges on modifications and adaptations to the teaching and learning content and processes (Sharma, Forlin, Loreman & Earle, 2006; Sherill, 2006; Tubele, 2008). Teacher preparation programs therefore need to foster in student teachers professional competence in differentiation of instruction and universal design of learning for adaptation of instruction to the unique needs of children. Inclusive teachers differentiate teaching and learning so that all children have access to the curriculum (Arthaud, Arama, Breck, Doelling & Bushrow, 2007; Al-Zyoudi, 2006; Hodkinson, 2005). Because differentiation of instruction is not easily mastered and requires practice, teacher preparation programs need to provide student teachers with opportunities to learn and master how to differentiate their lessons in order to meet the needs of a variety of disabilities (Campbell et al., 2003; Kalyva, Gojkovic & Tsakiris, 2007). Courses on differentiation of instruction can embody theoretical and practical application of the strategies and techniques for modification and adaptation of the content for children with disabilities (Chong & Forlin, 2007; Shade & Stewart, 2001; Voltz, 2003).

Teachers further require expertise in classroom and behavior management in order to realize inclusion in education (Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, Hinkson-Lee, Hudson, Russel & Kleinke, 2012; Sharma, Moore & Sonawane, 2009; Wolyshyn, Bennett & Berrill, 2003). Issues related to challenging child behavior are the most stressful part of teachers' professional lives (Clunies-Ross, Little & Kienhus, 2008; Richards & Clough, 2004). Most teachers frequently request assistance related to behavior management because they feel ill-prepared to manage misbehavior

effectively (Elhowerise & Alsheikh, 2006; Idol, 2006; Shade & Stewart, 2001). Inclusion of children with emotional and behavioral disorders who often present multiple behavioral challenges exacerbates teachers' feeling of ill-preparedness (Allday, et al., 2012; Winch-Dimmitt, 2006). Children at risk of disabilities or who have other disabilities also engages in a wide range of challenging behaviours (Alghazo ,et al., 2003; Berry, 2010; Carroll et al., 2003).

Teachers' understanding of effective behaviour management techniques and multi-sensory systems of support is foundational in successful inclusion (Clunies-Ross, et al., 2008; Ferreira & Graca, 2006). Owing to the significant need to meet the requirements of inclusive practices for children with behavioral difficulties, adequate pre-service instruction in classroom management practices is critical (Friend & Bursuck, 2012; Harvey, et al., 2010; Mintz, 2007). Teacher preparation programs can develop in student teachers practical principles for teaching and strategies for addressing challenging child behavior to minimize disruptions (Renke & Moseley, 2002; Tubele, 2008).

The pursuit of increased achievement among all children has transformed educational practice, shifting teaching and learning from a solitary enterprise to one in which regular and special educators are mutually involved and collaboration is at the cutting edge (Burstein, et al., 2004; Chambers & Forlin, 2010; Voltz, 2003). Collaboration between regular and specialist teachers requires that they all work together to meet the diverse needs of children with and at risk of disabilities (Forlin, Loreman, Sharma & Earle, 2009; Jung, 2007; Richards & Clough, 2004). Collaboration constitutes a complex set of interpersonal and professional skills and competencies ranging from regular communication to co-teaching partnerships (El-Ashry, 2009; Van Laarhoven, Munk, Lynch, Bosma & Rouse, 2007). In co-teaching, a regular teacher and a special teacher share roles and responsibilities for planning, delivering and evaluating instruction for a

wide range of children, including those with disabilities (Romi & Leyser, 2006; Van Reusen, Shoho & Barker, 2001; Winch-Dimmitt, 2006). Co-teaching optimizes instructional equity for children with disabilities in heterogeneous classrooms (Arndt & Liles, 2010; Bassette, 2008). Owing to the currency of co-teaching, teacher education programs need to prepare student teachers to collaborate, write and implement lesson plans, manage and administer interventions and carry out differentiated instruction (Arndt & Liles, 2010; Conderman & Johnstone-Rodriguez, 2009; Voltz, 2003).

Rationale for the Study

A number of factors prompted the execution of the current study. Literature on regular teacher preparation for inclusion published since 1994 reveals researchers' worldwide concern (Allday et al., 2012; Forlin, 2010; Pearson, 2007; Sharma et al., 2009). Prior to the global adoption of inclusion in education, teacher preparation programs have been non-responsive to the philosophy (Hsien, 2007; Kilanowski-Press, Foote & Rinaldo, 2010; Mintz, 2007). There is also a dearth of studies on regular teacher preparation for inclusion (Chambers & Forlin, 2010; Elhowerise & Alsheikh, 2006). Regular teachers further reveal that their preparation is devoid of information and knowledge related to working with children with disabilities (Idol, 2006; Richards & Clough, 2004). Similarly, most regular teacher preparation programs related to children with disabilities include content on disability characteristics but little on methodologies for inclusive practices (Arndt & Liles, 2010; Tubele, 2008). Most regular teachers are also inadequately professionally prepared to implement inclusive education (Bassette, 2008; Chong, et al., 2007). Teaching in inclusive settings further demands a wide range of skills and dispositions to meet child diversity (Al-Zyoudi, 2006; Berry, 2010; Hodkinson, 2005). In consequence, teacher

preparation programs are obliged to equip student teachers with diverse range of skills and competencies before they enter the teaching profession.

Regular teachers need to have professional grounding in basic characteristics of disabilities, differentiation of instruction, classroom and behavior management and collaboration in order to realize successful inclusion (Allday, et al., 2012; Bassette, 2008; Harvey et al., 2010; Tubele, 2008). Currently, teacher education literature in Zimbabwe does not address the extent to which regular ECE teachers receive preparation in these critical special needs education areas. If the field of ECE is to continue to embrace inclusion, it is fundamental to examine the effectiveness of preparation of regular teachers. It is also critical to investigate practices and ascertain if teacher education programs are meeting the needs of teachers and providing safe learning environment for all children (Forlin, et al., 2009; Lambe, 2007). In view of the foregoing, the current study examined the present state of pre-service regular ECE teacher preparation for inclusion after two decades of adoption of the philosophy in the country. The present study attempted to ascertain whether changes have taken place regarding pre-service regular ECE teacher preparation for inclusion in the country. Specifically, the current study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are Zimbabwean regular teachers' perceptions regarding their preparation for inclusion of diverse children in ECE?
2. What are the perceptions of regular teachers in Zimbabwe about their preparation for curriculum differentiation in inclusion in ECE?
3. What are Zimbabwean regular teachers' perceptions regarding their preparation for classroom and behavior management in inclusion in ECE?

4. What are the perceptions of regular teachers in Zimbabwe concerning their preparation for collaboration in inclusion in ECE?

Methodology

In order to determine regular teachers' preparation for inclusion in ECE in Zimbabwe, a survey on their coursework instruction on basic skills and competencies needed for successful inclusion was conducted. The current descriptive survey involved a random sample of three hundred and eighty (n = 380) 2014 graduate regular ECE pre-service teachers, 211 females and 169 males, aged between 27 and 42 years. The sample was drawn from five randomly selected Zimbabwean public primary school teachers' colleges (76 from each college) using simple random sampling. Random sampling selects a sample in such a way that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected into the sample (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Random sampling guarantees selection of a sample that is truly representative of the population in order to use the results obtained from the sample to make generalizations about the population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). The respondents were given self-administered questionnaires in order to ascertain their preparation for inclusion in ECE. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages based on the three categories: Agree, Uncertain and Disagree. Three hundred and eighty out of four hundred and fifty-two self-administered questionnaires were returned which constituted 84% return rate. The findings were synthesized according to basic skills and knowledge needed for successful inclusion particularly knowledge on characteristics of various disabilities, differentiation of instruction, behavior management and collaboration.

Results

Table 1: Regular teachers' preparation for child diversity in inclusion in ECE (n = 380)

ITEM	Agree %	Uncertain %	Disagree %
1. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on basic characteristics of various disabilities	50.8	33.4	15.8
2. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on health related needs of children with different disabilities	66.3	10.5	23.2
3. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on the educational needs of children with different disabilities	69.5	7.9	22.6
4. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on adaptive equipment for children with different disabilities	29.7	23.4	46.8
5. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on environmental adaptations for children with different disabilities	26.8	31.8	41.3
6. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on inclusion of children with different disabilities	71.3	18.9	9.7
7. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on the importance of attitudes in inclusive education	69.7	13.7	16.6
8. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on process by which to assist children with disabilities	59.7	13.7	26.6

Table 1 depicts regular teachers' preparation for child diversity in inclusion in ECE. Overall, the majority of regular teachers had received instruction on child diversity in inclusive education. For item 1, 50.8% of the regular teachers agreed that they had received instruction on basic characteristics of various disabilities while the rest (33.4%) were uncertain and (15.8%) disagreed. Nevertheless, 69% of the respondents received instruction on health related needs, educational needs and inclusion of children with different disabilities (Items 2, 3 and 6). Items 4 and 5 reveal mixed feelings of regular teachers regarding instruction on adaptive equipment and environmental adaptations for children with different disabilities. In item 4, 29.7% of the respondents had instruction on adaptive equipment for children with different disabilities while the rest (23.4%) were uncertain and (46.9%) disagreed. A similar pattern emerged in Item 5 where 41.3% of the regular teachers disagreed that they had instruction on environmental adaptations for children with different disabilities while 26.8% of the regular teachers agreed and 31.8% were uncertain. Regarding Item 7, 69.7% of respondents agreed that they had instruction

on the importance of attitudes in inclusive education while the rest (13.7%) were uncertain and (16.6%) disagreed. In Item 8, 59.7% of the regular teachers agreed that they had instruction on the process by which to assist children with disabilities while 26.6% of the regular teachers disagreed and 13.7% were uncertain.

Table 2: Regular teachers' preparation for curriculum differentiation in inclusion in ECE

(n = 380)

ITEM	Agree %	Uncertain %	Disagree %
1. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on attending to child diversity in inclusive education	78.4	9.5	12.1
2. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on content modification in inclusive education	22.4	6.6	71.1
3. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on process modification in inclusive education	27.1	17.4	55.5
4. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on modification of assessment in inclusive education	22.9	15.5	61.6
5. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on flexible working with individual children in inclusive education	25.8	9.7	64.5

Table 2 illustrates regular teachers' preparation for curriculum differentiation in inclusion in ECE. Data for Item 1 shows that most of the respondents (78.4%) agreed that they had received instruction on attending to child diversity in inclusive education while the rest (9.5%) were uncertain and (12.1%) disagreed. However, approximately 71.1% of the regular teachers disagreed that they had received instruction on content modification in inclusive education while 22.4% of the regular teachers agreed and 6.6% were uncertain (Item 2). A similar pattern was seen in Item 3 where 55.5% of the regular teachers disagreed that they had received instruction on process modification in inclusive education while 27.1% of the regular teachers agreed and 17.4% were uncertain. With regard to item 4, 22.9% of the regular teachers agreed that they had received instruction on modification of process in inclusive education while 61.6% of the regular

teachers disagreed and 15.5% were uncertain. A similar pattern emerged in Item 5 where 64.6% of the respondents disagreed that they had received instruction on modification of assessment in inclusive education while the rest (25.8%) agreed and (9.7%) were uncertain.

Table 3: Regular teachers' preparation for classroom and behavior management in inclusion in ECE (n = 380)

ITEM	Agree %	Uncertain %	Disagree %
1. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on management of the social environment in inclusive education	83.4	5.8	10.8
2. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on management of the physical environment in inclusive education	57.1	28.4	14.5
3. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on management of instructional environment in inclusive education	8.4	22.4	69.2
4. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on behavior management environment in inclusive education	76.1	6.8	17.1
5. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on management of behavior of children with diverse disabilities in inclusive education	61.1	10.8	28.2

Table 3 illustrates regular teachers' preparation for classroom and behavior management in inclusion in ECE. For item 1, 83.4% of the respondents agreed that they had received instruction on management of the social environment in inclusive education while 5.8% of the respondents were uncertain and 10.8% disagreed. In Item 2, 57.1% of the regular teachers agreed that they had received instruction on management of the physical environment in inclusive education while 28.4% of the regular teachers were uncertain and 14.5% disagreed. Nevertheless, in Item 3, 69.2 % of the respondents disagreed that they had received instruction on management of instructional environment in inclusive education while the rest (22.4%) were uncertain and 8.4%

agreed. Regarding Item 4, 76.1% of the regular teachers agreed that they had received instruction on behavior management environment in inclusive education while 6.8% of the regular teachers were uncertain and 17.1% disagreed. A similar pattern was observed in Item 5 where 61.1% of the respondents agreed that they had received instruction on management of behavior of children with diverse disabilities in inclusive education while 10.8% of the respondents were uncertain and 28.2% disagreed.

Table 4: Regular teachers' preparation for collaboration in inclusion in ECE (n = 380)

ITEM	Agree %	Uncertain %	Disagree %
1. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on collaboration with specialist teachers in inclusive education	28.4	13.4	58.2
2. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on collaboration with peer regular teachers inclusive education	77.9	13.7	8.4
3. In my college coursework, I have received instruction on collaboration with teacher assistance teams in inclusive education	51.2	12.9	35.8
4. In my coursework, I received instruction on collaboration with multi-disciplinary teams in inclusive education	75.8	3.4	20.8
5. In my coursework, I have received instruction on collaboration with parents in inclusive education	69.5	16.3	14.2

Table 4 depicts regular teachers' preparation for collaboration in inclusion in ECE. For Item 1, 28.4% of the respondents agreed that they had received instruction on collaboration with specialist teachers in inclusive education while the rest (13.4%) were uncertain and 58.1% disagreed. Nevertheless, in Item 2, 77.9% of the regular teachers agreed that they had received instruction on collaboration with peer regular teachers in inclusive education while 13.7% of the regular teachers were uncertain and 8.4% disagreed. A similar pattern was seen in Item 3 where 51.2% of the respondents agreed that they had received instruction on collaboration with teacher assistance teams in inclusive education while 12.9% of the respondents were uncertain and

35.9% disagreed. For Item 4, 75.8% of the regular teachers agreed that they had received instruction on collaboration with multi-disciplinary teams in inclusive education while 3.42% of the regular teachers were uncertain and 20.8% disagreed. A similar pattern was observed in Item 5 where 69.5% of the respondents agreed that they had received instruction on collaboration with parents in inclusive education while 16.4% of the respondents were uncertain and 14.2% disagreed.

Discussion

Consistent with the international fraternity, inclusion in ECE is a philosophy of inspiration, passion and contention in Zimbabwe. Consequently, the country places children with disabilities in ECE classrooms with regular education teachers at high rates (Chireshe & Ndlovu, 2002; Mushoriwa, 2002; Mutepfa, et al., 2007). The present study examined regular teachers' preparation for inclusion in ECE. Consistent with previous studies which have found that instruction on special needs education issues significantly improves teachers' attitudes and instructional competencies and skills in inclusive education (Alghazo, et al. 2003; Campbell et al., 2003; El-Ashry, 2009), regular teachers had instruction on characteristics of various categories of disabilities. Although, instruction on characteristics of various disabilities may not be adequate to address all of the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, understandings, skills and competencies needed to teach children with disabilities in inclusive ECE settings, it may enhance regular teachers' preparation for inclusion. When regular teachers understand and accept children with disabilities, they feel more supportive in their role as a specialist educator (Reinke & Moseley, 2002; Romano & Chambliss, 2000; Tait & Purdie, 2000).

Regular teachers had instruction on health related needs of children with different disabilities. This finding concurs with previous research which has established that teachers need instruction on diverse needs of children with different disabilities as some conditions result in children requiring specialized attention from teachers (Chambers & Forlin, 2010; Shade & Steward, 2001; Woloshyn, et al., 2003). Consonant with previous studies which have found that regular teachers need professional competence in special needs education process in order differentiate between an educational disability and a child needing intensive or different instruction since they serve children at risk of disabilities and provide inclusive practices to children with disabilities (Arndt & Liles, 2010; Avramidis, et al., 2010), regular teachers had instruction on the educational needs of children with different disabilities. Such instruction can develop regular teachers' competencies and skills in designing and managing pedagogical content and processes that are responsive to child diversity. In order to realize inclusion, teacher preparation programs need to develop in student teachers an understanding of basic characteristics of various disabilities and their role in the processes by which to assist and support children who may have a disability (Harvey et al., 2010; Mintz, 2007; Renke & Moseley, 2010).

Regular teachers lacked instruction on adaptive equipment for children with different disabilities. This finding is inconsistent with previous studies which have found that inclusive education avails children with disabilities technological resources that afford them the opportunity to succeed in least restrictive environments (Chambers & Forlin, 2010; Garman, 2005; Winch-Dimmit, 2006). Adaptive equipment helps bypass, works around or compensates for individual children's learning deficits in inclusive settings (Majoko, 2005; Musengi & Chireshe, 2012). Thus, regular teachers' lack of instruction on adaptive equipment may interfere with inclusive education. Regular teachers also lacked instruction on environmental adaptations for children

with disabilities. This finding contradicts with previous studies which have found that teacher preparation for inclusion equips student teachers with competencies and skills in nurturing least pedagogical environments (Berry, 2010; Burstein et al., 2004; Hodkinson, 2005). In alignment with previous studies which have established that teachers' confidence levels are increased when they are taught techniques that address inclusion in the classroom (El-Ashry, 2009; Ferreira & Graca, 2006), regular teachers had instruction on inclusion of children with different disabilities. Instruction on inclusion of children with different disabilities can inculcate in regular teachers the expertise to accommodate child diversity in teaching and learning.

Consistent with previous research which has established that inclusive education demands a wide range of teacher skills and dispositions to meet a diverse child population (Friend & Bursuck, 2012; Garman, 2005; Lambe, 2007), regular teachers had instruction on the importance of attitudes in inclusive education. Similarly, Idol (2006); Pearson (2007); and Sherill (2006) assert that teachers require professional competence and the attitudes to collaborate, develop, plan, manage and implement individualized lessons for children receiving special needs education services so as to meet the diverse needs of children in inclusive classrooms. Regular teachers had instruction on process by which to assist children with disabilities. This finding is consonant with previous research which has established that teacher competencies and skills in special needs education process and content are integral in successful inclusion (Bassette, 2008; Brownell et al., 2005; Campbell, et al., 2003). In alignment with previous studies which have found that teacher competence in meeting the diverse needs of children is pivotal in successful inclusion (Cooper et al., 2008; Hsien, 2007; Tait & Purdie, 2000), regular teachers had instruction on attending to child diversity in inclusive education. Such instruction can assist teachers to be responsive to child individuality.

Regular teachers lacked instruction on content modification in inclusive education. This finding contradicts with previous studies which have found that inclusive teaching and learning content responds to the unique needs of children (Forlin, 2010; Mintz, 2007). Owing to lack of instruction on content modification in inclusive education, teachers may manage teaching and learning content that is non-responsive to the unique needs of children. Inconsistent with previous research which has established that process modification informs teaching and learning in inclusive education (Carroll, et al., 2003; Chong, et al., 2007; Voltz, 2003), regular teachers lacked instruction on process modification in inclusive education. Without instruction on process modification in inclusive education, teaching and learning strategies may be non-responsive to the individuality of children. Regular teachers lacked instruction on modification of assessment in inclusive education. This finding contradicts with previous studies which have established that since inclusive education assesses all children on a regular curriculum, teachers need to have expertise in assessment (Allday, et al., 2012; Idol, 2006; Tubele, 2008). Lacking instruction on modification of assessment in inclusive education, teachers may be incompetent in adapting assessment to the individual needs of children.

Inconsistent with previous studies which have established that inclusive education responds to children's individuality (Arthaud, et al., 2007; Sharma et al., 2006; Sherill, 2006), regular teachers lacked instruction on flexible working with individual children in inclusive education. By virtue of lack of instruction on flexible working with individual children in inclusive education, teachers may not tailor their pedagogical approaches and content to the unique needs of individual children. Inclusive teachers nurture social interactions between children with and without disabilities (Campbell et al., 2003; Kalyva, et al., 2007; Tubele, 2008). Regular teachers had instruction on management of the social environment in inclusive education. As a result of

such instruction, teachers can support the social acceptance of children with disabilities by their typically developing peers. Consistent with previous studies which have established that inclusive teaching and learning environments optimizes the unfolding of the unique potentialities of children (Chong & Forlin, 2007; Shade & Stewart, 2001; Winch-Dimmitt, 2006), regular teachers had instruction on management of the physical environment in inclusive education.

Regular teachers lacked instruction on management of instructional environment in inclusive education. This finding contradicts with previous studies which have established that the instructional environment of inclusive settings responds to child diversity (Berry, 2010; Carroll et al., 2003; Ferreira & Graca, 2006). Without instruction on management of instructional environment in inclusive education, regular teachers may not nurture pedagogical environments that optimize the unfolding of the unique endowments of both children with and without disabilities. Nevertheless, regular teachers had instruction on management of behavior of children with diverse disabilities. This finding is inconsistent with previous studies which have established that issues related to challenging child behavior are the most stressful part of teachers' professional lives and many teachers feel ill-prepared to manage misbehavior effectively and ultimately frequently request assistance related to behavior management (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008; Richards & Clough, 2004). With instruction on management of instructional environment in inclusive education, regular teachers may be competent in managing disruptive and challenging behavior. Inconsistent with previous studies which have found that collaboration of regular teachers and specialist teachers facilitate best practices in inclusive education (Burstein, et al., 2004; Chambers & Forlin, 2010; Voltz, 2003), regular teachers lacked instruction on collaboration with specialist teachers in inclusive education.

Central to successful inclusion is collaboration of regular teachers (Alghazo, et al., 2003; Elhowerise & Alsheikh, 2006; Chong, et al., 2007). Regular teachers had instruction on collaboration with peer regular teachers. Regular teachers had also instruction on collaboration with teacher assistance teams. This finding aligns with previous studies which have found that collaboration of teachers and their assistance teams is basic in successful inclusion (Forlin, et al., 2009; Jung, 2007; Richards & Clough, 2004). Collaboration of regular teachers with assistance teams can pool expertise for best practices in inclusive education. Consistent with previous studies which have established that multi-disciplinary approaches are pivotal in requisition of resources that are foundational in holistic development of children with disabilities in inclusive settings (Arndt & Liles, 2010; Bassette, 2008), regular teachers had instruction on collaboration with multidisciplinary teams. Teacher–parent collaboration is indispensable in successful inclusion (El-Ashry, 2009; Van Laarhoven, et al., 2007). Regular teachers had instruction on collaboration with parents in inclusive education. Collaboration of teachers with parents in inclusive education can facilitate the provision of comprehensive services for both children with and without disabilities.

Implications

The present study revealed that teacher preparation programs inadequately prepared regular teachers for inclusion in ECE. However, the researcher is presently unaware of the quantity of courses that would be definitive to adequately prepare regular teachers for inclusion in ECE. Nevertheless, the results of the current study revealed that the lack of some basic skills and competencies in teacher preparation programmes for inclusion contribute to practising teachers' feeling of ill-preparedness to meet the full range of needs among children in inclusion in ECE. In order identify specific topics that all regular teachers need to be taught for successful inclusion in

ECE, further study is needed. Fieldwork in inclusive settings with children with disabilities during teacher training can also enhance teacher preparation for inclusion in ECE. Guided field experiences optimize pre-service teachers' confidence in teaching children with disabilities (Chambers & Forlin, 2010; El-Ashry, 2010). Verification of the impact of fieldwork with children with disabilities would assist teachers' colleges to optimize regular teachers' preparation for inclusion in ECE.

The current study used self-administered questionnaires to collect data, future researchers can engage in document analysis particularly examining regular teacher preparation for inclusion in ECE in relation to course title, scope and description. These courses may be embodying basic skills and competencies for inclusion which regular teachers could not identify. Reviewing teacher preparation programmes for inclusion in ECE would augment the findings from regular teachers.

Limitations

The study sample inadequately represented the population of regular ECE teachers in Zimbabwe as it excluded graduates from private primary school teachers' colleges in the country. Regular ECE teacher preparation programmes were also not examined. There is a possibility that these programmes embodied some of the skills and knowledge bases addressed in the current study that the participants overlooked. Although the researcher acknowledges that regular teachers may have some instruction on the aforementioned skills and knowledge bases, exposure to such complex topics in broader teacher preparation programmes simply cannot provide practice to mastery.

Conclusion

Consistent with the international fraternity, inclusion in ECE is a primary service delivery option in Zimbabwe. The present study examined the possible dissonance between teacher preparation and regular teachers' pragmatic realities regarding inclusion in ECE. Teacher preparation needs to be responsive to the needs of both children with and without disabilities and their teachers in order to realize best practices in inclusion in ECE. To this end, the provision of on-going needs responsive support to both children with and without disabilities and their teachers is foundational in successful inclusion. Teacher preparation content and processes can influence teacher competence in inclusion in ECE. Developing regular teachers' professional competence in characteristics of children with disabilities and their role and responsibility in the special needs education process, differentiation of instruction, classroom and behaviour management and collaboration can optimize best practices in inclusion in ECE.

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