UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE

THE ZIMBABWE BULLETIN OF TEACHER EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

The Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education

CONTENTS

Pages

Chivore, B. R.S. (1995) *Educational administration and management,* UNESCO, Harare.

Day, C. Johnson, D. and Whitaker, P. (1990) *Managing primary schools in the 1990s (2nd ed),* Chapman, London.

Everand, B. and Morris, G. (1990) *Effective school management (2rd ed),*Longman, London.

Farwell, G. Burnett, G. W. and Peters, J.H. (1963 *Introduction to teaching,* Mac Millan, London.

Hatford, J. and Taylor, D.(1983) "What Teachers wish parents know about school." *The plain truth,* pp 5-6, 41-42.

Lareau, A. (1989) *The home advantage,* Falmer, East Sussex.

Mac Donald, C. York, J. and Rainforth, B. (1992) *Collaborative teams for students with severe disabilities,* Brooks, Baltmore.

Machinga, G. (2000), "Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe"_*Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research,* Vol 12, No 3, pp 3-26.

Musaazi, J.C.S. (1982) *The theory and practice of educational administration,* Mac Millan, London.

Muzambi, M. A. T. (1993), "A model school"_*Teacher in Zimbabwe,* Vol 17, Number 6, pp 29.

Vashist, S.R. (1993) *Encyclopaedia of educational administration,* Vol 4, Anomol, New Delhi.

Attitudes of Secondary School Pupils Towards the Inclusion of Educable Mentally-Challenged Pupils in Harare.

Taruvinga D. Mushoriwa
University of Swaziland
Douglas Gasva
Women's University in Africa

ABSTRACT

This study explored the attitudes of mainstream pupils towards the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged pupils in regular classes. Specifically, the study intended to determine and assess whether mainstream pupils accepted the inclusion of educable mentally-challenged pupils in regular classes. A questionnaire survey supplemented by interviews was conducted on hundred secondary school pupils. Percentages were used to report the research findings.

The study established that the majority of mainstream secondary school pupils hold positive attitudes towards the inclusion of educable mentally-challenged pupils in regular classes. The study recommended that policy-markers and educationists in general should ensure that mentally-challenged pupils are included in regular classes since research with primary school pupils (Peresuh, 1996) and with secondary school pupils (current study) has suggested this.

INTRODUCTION

The current study investigated the attitudes of mainstream secondary school pupils towards the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged pupils in regular classes. While there has been rather sporadic research (the research does not seem to cohere neatly because of lack of co-ordination) on inclusion in primary schools, to the authors' knowledge, very little research on inclusion in secondary schools has been conducted.

A study on the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged pupils at secondary school is perhaps important in two main ways. First, it helps us to see whether attitudes towards disability changes with maturity.

Second, many secondary school pupils now know and realise the value of education in their personal lives and as such, they may also see peers with disability as interfering with their learning and passing; hence, may reject them. Thus, findings from this study are also likely to shade more light on the argument often described in literature that the success of inclusion heavily depends on the nature and degree of disability and the maturity of mainstream pupils.

Mushoriwa (2001) argues that the study of attitudes is critical because attitudes influence how we view and interpret issues and consequently whether we accept or reject them. Thus, in this sense, attitudes influence the success or failure of a programme. In this study, it was assumed that mainstream pupils hold certain attitudes towards the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged pupils and that these attitudes greatly influence the extent to which mainstream pupils are willing to learn together with educable mentally-challenged pupils.

Additionally, a study of this nature takes lofty significance given that the issue of inclusion is still fraught with controversies, because research (for example, Mushoriwa, 2001, Peresuh, 1996, Zindi, 1996) especially in developing countries, has tended to produce discrepant findings. For example, while Mushoriwa (2001, 2001) found that both blind children and primary school teachers were rejecting to the idea of inclusion, both Peresuh (1996) and Zindi (1996) found accepting attitudes. Thus, given these conflicting research findings, surely there is a case for a better understanding of the extent to which inclusion is in line with the views of those who are directly involved in inclusive settings.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The Concept and Rationale for Inclusion

Mushoriwa (in press) argues that inclusion is a term often used but largely misunderstood by many, including those in the field of Special Needs Education. For Mushoriwa (in press), many people have the erroneous notion that inclusion is the placement of children with special educational needs into regular classes or schools in order to provide equal educational opportunities. He contends that such a view is very limited since it ignores

important issues relating to resources, facilities and acceptability which are critical for meaningful and successful inclusion. Following the above arguments, inclusion suggests securing appropriate opportunities for learning which result from full and effective participation and involvement of all pupils in the learning process. This view implies that inclusion is more than physical placement, it should also be concerned with academic achievements. "Inclusion is about more than access; it is indicative of a more informed approach which will help and raise standards for all children." (Wade, 1999: 81). For Mushoriwa (in press:), current practice in most inclusive schools falls far too short of this call.

Educable Mentally-Challenged Children

The notion of educable mentally- challenged children stems from the idea and long standing belief that some of the children with disabilities are educable while others are ineducable depending mainly on the nature and severity /profoundness of the disability. Bennaars et al (1994) see educable mentally- challenged children as those individuals with relatively limited intellectual .functioning who may be able to make meaningful social adjustments and benefit from learning in a regular class. Thus, these children have reasonable social capabilities and cognitive potential to somehow meaningfully interact and learn together with their peers who have no intellectual deficits, despite the fact that they are usually slow in comprehending and are therefore often behind others. It is for this reason that the present study focused on these children to see if mainstream children do not view them as interfering with and retarding their learning progress and academic achievements.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Heward and Orlansky (1992) argue that the education of children with disabilities presents a complex and difficult challenge given the current trend of inclusion. In the present authors' view, this challenge is complex mostly because the value that inclusive education must promote have not been adequately identified and articulated. In non-inclusive settings,

most education systems tend to emphasise academic achievements, values that cannot and should not be a major focus under inclusive settings considering the range of mental, social, physical etc differences and diversity in an inclusive class.

Emerging research evidence (e.g, Florian et al, 2004; Audit Commission (2002) cited in Florian et al, 2004) indicates that even in developed countries such as Britain, widespread fears that inclusion lowers the academic achievements of pupils in the mainstream have begun to show. "Many... schools... now resist the pressure to become... inclusive because they are concerned that to do so will have a negative effect on the academic progress of other pupils and lower academic standards." (Florian et al, 2004:115). Indeed this is surprising, given that Britain is among the first piloters in inclusive education.

The above may suggest inadequate and insufficient groundwork to assess the workability or feasibility and acceptability of inclusion before putting the concept into practice. The present study is therefore an attempt to avoid such pitfalls, by assessing the attitudes of mainstream pupils towards the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged pupils.

As already noted, some studies (e.g., Mushoriwa, 2001, 2001) found negative attitudes by teachers and pupils towards inclusion. The chief argument against inclusion was that not only does inclusion interfere with the learning of mainstream children but also that inclusion accentuates or highlights the children's disabilities as some of the children will have problems in performing some of the activities of the regular class. In fact, Reezig and Jan Pul (1988) cited in Booth and Ainsow (1998) found in the Netherlands, that many children who had been included in regular classes wanted to go back to their special schools after suffering stigmatisation and isolation. The present study is therefore an attempt to extend investigations on inclusion to secondary school pupils with mental challenges to see if acceptance is by category and degree of disability.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey was conducted on one hundred (100) secondary school pupils. For Mushoriwa (in press) survey manipulations allow the systematic collection of data that can be generalised to the wider population. According to Van Dalen (1979) and Leedy (1980), surveys permit the collection of and detailed descriptions of existing phenomena, trends and practices with a view to justifying or improving them. It was the intention of the present study to tape the attitudes of mainstream secondary school pupils towards the inclusion of educable mentally-challenged pupils with the ultimate aim of assessing the extent and degree to which mentally-challenged children are accepted into mainstream classes.

Sample

One hundred (N= 100) Forms 1 to 4 pupils, (25 from each form) were involved in this study. The sample subjects were randomly selected from two secondary schools (fifty subjects from each school) in Harare where educable mentally- challenged children are included.

Instruments

A questionnaire developed by the investigators and follow-up interviews were the instruments used to collect data in this study. The two instruments were considered facilitative in that (a) the sensitive and personal nature of the topic under investigation required anonymity so that subjects could provide information freely and honestly. This is where a questionnaire becomes handy (b) follow-up interviews probed into subtle issues, which the investigators felt could not be revealed through the questionnaire.

The reliability of the questionnaire was established by involving four experts in the field of Special Needs Education, to rate the questionnaire (out of 10) as a measure of attitudes towards the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged children in regular classes. Inter-rater reliability

analysis yielded a very high co-efficient (0,8), indicating that to a very large extent, the raters agreed that the questionnaire was very reliable, hence, suitable for the task. The questionnaire was then piloted and neither amendments nor modifications were made.

Procedures

The likert type-ten item questionnaire used Agree (A), Undecided (U) and Disagree (D) as the response format. The questionnaire, which was personally delivered by the investigators, required respondents to tick Agree, Undecided or Disagree against a given attitude statement. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with forty (N= 40) of the subjects.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

As already indicated, respondents were required to indicate their feelings by ticking Agree (A), Undecided (U) or Disagree (D). Data obtained were presented and analysed per attitude statement. The analysis of data item by item gave the advantage of observing the specific aspects of including educable mentally- challenged pupils, which the respondents were either in favour of or against.

'Agree' responses were taken to mean positive attitudes while 'Disagree' responses were taken to mean negative responses. The neutral point (Undecided) was not considered for purposes of analysis in order to make the results directional (Fishbein, 1975). Table 1 below shows the results.

Table 1: Mainstream Pupils' Attitudes Towards the Inclusion of Educable Mentally- Challenged Pupils. (N= 100).

Item	*A*	*U*	*D*
1. I view educable mentally- challenged pupils in my class just like any other peers.	52 (52%)	26(26%)	2 (22%)
2. I have no problem learning together with educable mentally- challenged peers.	48 (48%)	6 (6%)	6(46%)

3. I have no problem sharing material resources with educable mentally-challenged peers.	59 (59%)	8 (8%)	3 (33%)
4. I do not mind playing with educable mentally- challenged peers at my school.	52 (52%)	34 (34%)	1 (14%)
5. I like assisting educable mentally-challenged peers with their academic work.	60 (60%)	20 (20%)	2 (20%)
6. Any differential attitudes I display towards educable mentally-challenged peers negatively affects them	59 (59%)	16 (16%)	2 (25%)
7. My attitude towards educable mentally-challenged peers is a result of my personal feelings towards them.	63 (63%)	25 (25%)	1 (12%)
8. Including an educable mentally-challenged pupil in a regular class will develop a stronger feeling in the child of confidence in his or her academic ability.	64 (64%)	21 (21%)	1 (15%)
9. Including an educable mentally-challenged pupil in a regular class will make him or her less well-adjusted socially	28 (28%)	4 (4%)	6 (68%)
10. Overall, I think that the inclusion of mentally-challenged pupils in regular classes is a noble idea.	78 (78%)	15 (15%)	7 (7%)

DISCUSSION

In item 1, slightly over half the subjects (52%) said that they view educable mentally- challenged pupils in their class just like any other peers. Thus, despite intellectual differences between mainstream pupils and the educable mentally- challenged pupils, generally the majority (52%) of mainstream pupils have accepting attitudes towards the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged pupils in regular classes. Peresuh (1996) in a similar study conducted among seventh graders in Harare, found

that the subjects were also accepting to the integration of mild mentally-challenged pupils. Zindi (1996) also found that the majority of mainstream children did not mind being in the same class or school with peers with disabilities.

In the present study, 22% of the respondents indicate that they viewed educable mentally- challenged peers as a different category of pupils while 26% were undecided over the issue. The relatively high percentage of pupils in the "Undecided" category suggests that the issue of inclusion is a dicy one; many people still have to make up their minds about the issue. One interviewee commented, "Educable mentally- challenged children should be on their own. Since they will be few, they will receive special individual attention from teachers and are therefore likely to learn and make meaningful progress. Equal treatment of unequals is discriminatory in itself since some children will obviously learn and achieve less than others." Such sentiments are indicative of some of the key issues and controversies that frame the concept of inclusion.

The above views find support in item 2 where respondents were required to indicate whether they had no problems learning together with educable mentally- challenged peers. Forty-eight percent (48%) of the respondents said they had no problem, six percent (6%) were undecided while forty-six percent (46%)indicated that they had problems learning together with educable mentally- challenged peers. The marginal difference (0,02) between those with positive attitudes (48%) and those with negative attitudes (46%) suggests that the issue of inclusion, as already pointed out, is still fraught with controversies, though attitudes seem to be gradually shifting in the positive direction.

Interview data revealed that educable mentally- challenged pupils are viewed by some as interfering with their learning since they often ask for help from mainstream pupils and that they are generally slow in grasping concepts. These results tend to confirm the often disputed view that children with disability usually remain token friends because when it

comes to issues that really matter (in this case, academic achievement) mainstream children go back to their friends without disability. Thus, while they may be accepted socially (item 1; 52%) academically there tends to be some resentments (item 2; 48%). This also finds support in item 4, where fifty two percent (52%) of the pupils indicated that they did not mind playing with an educable mentally- challenged child while only fourteen percent (14%) said that they minded. However, from the interviews, it was clear that even those who had accepted to learn together with the educable mentally-challenged, would not accept if these children were severely mentally- challenged. This suggests that the degree of disability influences attitudes of mainstream pupils.

Item 3 required respondents to show whether they have problems sharing learning resources such as textbooks with educable mentally- challenged pupils. Results indicate that fifty nine percent (59%) of the respondents said that they had no problems sharing learning resources with educable mentally- challenged peers, eight percent (8%)were undecided while thirty three percent (33%) said they were not happy to share learning materials with educable mentally- challenged pupils. Those who accepted sharing resources (59%) with them, argued that educable mentally- challenged pupils were capable of benefiting from learning in inclusive settings. There was a strong feeling among some of the interviewees that institutionalisation (placing them in special schools) was socially and culturally wrong and inappropriate because not only does it cut these children off from their social origin, but also that this isolation seriously impacts on their self-concept and consequently on their achievement in life. One of the interviewees commented, "Differences are good and should be appreciated. Imagine a world in which everyone was like everybody else."

Many of the subjects (59%; item 6) were aware that any differential attitudes they display towards educable mentally- challenged peers have negative effects on them. Perhaps this is in line with Salisbury et al's (1995) assertion that many children without disability generally have a

sense of responsibility towards their peers with disability. Given that a number of the respondents (63%; item 7) indicated that those attitudes towards their peers with mental challenges were their own (not originating from parents, teachers etc), one hopes that this increased understanding of disability among secondary school pupils may form a springboard for the acceptance and therefore the inclusion of many children with different types and perhaps degrees of disability.

Item 5 required subjects to show whether they like assisting educable mentally- challenged children with their academic work. Sixty percent (60%) expressed acceptance, twenty percent (20%) remained neutral while the other twenty percent (20%) expressed rejection. Just like in "social" inclusion, the majority (60%) of subjects involved in this study do not have problems with "academic" inclusion of educable mentally-challenged pupils. So, if educable mentally- challenged pupils are accepted both socially (items 1, 4, 6, and 9) and academically (items 2, 3, 5, 8, and 10) by mainstream pupils, the present study results seem to provide evidence that suggests that mainstream secondary school pupils are accepting to the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged pupils.

In item 8, sixty- four percent of the respondents indicated that including an educable mentally- challenged child in a regular class develops a stronger feeling in the child of confidence in his or her ability. Many argued that this is so because the child comes to realise that he or she is just like anyone else. In line with this view, the majority of the respondents (68%; item 9) felt that inclusion will not make the educable mentally-challenged child socially less well adjusted since he or she comes to realise that he or she is an equal of his or her peers.

Item 10, which basically required respondents to give their overall opinion regarding the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged pupils in the regular classes, overwhelmingly, (78%) the respondents felt that the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged children in regular classes was a noble idea. Only seven percent (7%) did not think so while fifteen

percent (15%) was undecided. Interview data revealed that those who overall supported the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged children felt that since society is an inclusive setting, so must schools and classrooms.

CONCLUSION

The key priority of the present study was to explore the attitudes of mainstream secondary school pupils towards the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged pupils in regular classes. The research results indicated that the majority of mainstream secondary school pupils hold positive attitudes towards the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged pupils. If these results are anything to go by and basing on research evidence from primary school pupils (Peresuh, 1996) who have shown an accepting attitude towards the inclusion of educable mentally-challenged pupils in regular classes, then policy markers and educationists in general have all the reason for implementing the inclusion of educable mentally- challenged pupils in mainstream classes.

REFERENCES

Bennaars, G. A.; Otiende, J.E. and Boisvert, R. (1994) *Theory and Practice of Education*. Nairobi. East African Educational Publishers

Booth, T. and Ainscow, M. (ed) (1998) *From Them To Us*. London. Creative Print Design.

Fishbein, M. (1975) *Belief, Attitudes, Intention and Behaviour*. Philippines. Addison Wesley.

Florian, L.; Rouse, M.; Black-Hawkins, K. and Jull, S. (2004) "What can national data sets tell us about inclusion and pupil achievement?" *British Journal of Special Education* 31(3) 115-121.

Heward, W. L. and Orlansky, M. D. (1992) *Exceptional Children*. New York. Merrill.

Leedy, P. D. (1980) *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. London. Mcmillan.

Mushoriwa, T. (2001) "The views of blind students towards inclusive education." *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*. 13 (3) 302-315.

Mushoriwa, T. (2001) "A study of the attitudes of primary school teachers in Harare towards the inclusion of blind children in regular classes." *British Journal of Special Education*. 28 (3) 142-147.

Mushoriwa, T. (In press:) "How compatible are they?" *Zambezia*.

Peresuh, M. (1996) "Grade sevens' attitudes towards integration of their peers with mild mental retardation: A case study of Harare. (Zimbabwe). *Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education*. 4 (3) 39-70.

Salisbury, C.L.; Galluci, C.; Palombaro, M. and Peck, C. A. (1995) "Strategies that promote social relations among students with and without disabilities in inclusive schools." *Exceptional Children*. 62 (2) 125-137.

Van Dalen, D. B. (1979) *Understanding Educational Research: An Introduction*. New .York. McGraw-Hill.

Zindi, F. (1996) "Mainstream children's attitudes towards integration with the disabled in Zimbabwean secondary schools." *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*. 8 (1) 1-11.

Institute of
Development Studies