

# Issues Affecting the Implementation of Inclusive Education Practices in Primary Schools of Ward 9 in Lupane District

**Bhiri Kuziwa**

Lecturer Zimbabwe Open University

## Abstract

This study sought to investigate issues affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices using evidence from selected primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District, Matabeleland North Province. It was largely prompted by an increase in the drop out of school by learners with disabilities as well as poor performance for those who remained behind during progress assessments. Objectives of this study included evaluating the level of inclusive education in primary schools in ward 9 in Lupane District; identifying factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices in primary schools in ward 9 in Lupane District; and suggesting strategies that can help minimize the challenges faced by primary schools in ward 9 in Lupane District in implementing inclusive education practices. To achieve these objectives, the study adopted a mixed research approach whereby the researcher combined elements of quantitative and qualitative research in order to answer a research question. A total population of 100 participants comprising 30 teachers and 70 learners with disabilities was identified. This was narrowed to a sizable sample of 25 respondents who were purposively sampled. 10 teachers and 15 learners with disabilities were sampled. Through questionnaires and focus group discussions, the study revealed that primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District have learners with disabilities but not implementing inclusive education practices. The majority of schools do not have working policies on the implementation of inclusive education including lack of funding, shortage of resources and lack of skilled personnel among others. In light of these findings the study recommends budgets to support inclusive education practices; coming up with a flexible policy structure, provision of grants, employing more trained personnel and establishing cluster resource centers.

**Keywords:** Issues, Implementation, Inclusive, Inclusive education practices

## Introduction

This study sought to investigate issues affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices using evidence from selected Primary Schools of Ward 9 in Lupane District, Matabeleland North Province. Inclusive education is a new concept that was introduced in the education system so that special needs learners are integrated into the same classrooms and schools with their counterparts. Given this scenario and considering that most schools were built long back without the concept of inclusion, will most if not all of the schools be able to adhere to this new concept? Do schools have the adequate resources both materially and human. Its against this background that this study intends to investigate the

issues that are affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices in primary schools of Ward 9 of Lupane District in Matabeleland North Province of Zimbabwe.

### **Background of the study**

The movement towards inclusion continues to dominate educational discourse the world over. According to Ainscow (2010), inclusion refers to the process of integrating learners with special needs into the least restrictive environments as required by the United Nations declarations that give all children the right to receive appropriate education. However, over the last two decades, the concept of inclusive education has evolved towards the idea that all children and young people, despite different cultural, social and learning backgrounds, should have equivalent learning opportunities in all kinds of schools (Ainscow, 2010). According to UNICEF (2013), the objective of inclusive education is to generate inclusive settings, which should include, respecting, understanding and taking care of cultural, social and individual diversities; providing equal access to the quality education and close coordination.

However, despite the need for the implementation of inclusive education, in response to the recommendations of the United Nations, most of the schools, globally, are facing challenges of implementing inclusive education practices (UN, 2019). Thus, studies conducted on challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education suggest that very few schools have since implemented the inclusive education practices, although Mafa (2012) claimed that more than 50% of schools in the developed world have since implemented the inclusive education practices with United Kingdom about 63% Forlin (2013), Italy and India 67% (Liasidou (2014) and Germany and Canada reported same levels respectively, (Donohue and Bornman (2014) and Morgan (2016).

However, in the developing world, studies have revealed that the majority of learning institutions have not implemented inclusive education practices yet. For example, a study by Zwane (2016) claimed that in Nigeria, only a paltry 22% of the learning institutions have implemented inclusive education practices. Ramakuela and Maluleke (2011) also reported that in South Africa, very few schools have implemented inclusive education practices. Kenya and Uganda have been ranked among the lowest in terms of implementing inclusive education practices (Muyungu, 2015). In Zimbabwe, inclusive education has been actively considered since 1994 (Hlatywayo and Mapolisa, 2020). However, the same scholars assert that there is still a lot of skepticism and ambivalence towards the implementation of inclusive education in Zimbabwe, as in a number of sub-Saharan African countries. Thus, their study claimed that majority of learning institutions are failing to implement inclusive education practices. Therefore, this study sought to investigate issues affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices using evidence from selected primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District, Matabeleland North Province.

### **Statement of the problem**

Primary schools in Lupane District are enrolling learners with disabilities, yet the implementation of inclusive education has not been standardized due to the absence of fundamentals relative to inclusive education. Given the shortage of basic fundamentals in the schools, how then are learners with disability accessing education in these institutions? Are the learners being adequately catered for? Is their basic right to receive proper education not being violated? Is the government supplying the basic learning

materials for this special group of learners so that they are at par with the other learners? Are the teachers adequately trained to cater for this special group of people? Several studies by Deluca et al., (2014, Samkange, (2013) and Shadreck, (2012) have shown that teachers in Zimbabwe are not adequately trained to meet the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Given the extra needs that learners with disabilities need, are schools adequately catering for these needs? Lupane district being a rural area with schools struggling to offer basic facilities, it is therefore against this background that this study seeks to explore the various issues affecting the effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools and suggest some strategies that can be implemented by schools in order to mitigate on these challenges.

### **Purpose of the study**

This study sought to investigate issues affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices using evidence from selected primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District, Matabeleland North Province. The study is also to come up with strategies that can be adopted in order to mitigate challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education in schools.

### **Research objectives**

The study is under pinned by the following objectives. Firstly, the study is to assess the level of inclusive education in primary schools of Ward 9 in Lupane District. The second objective is to identify factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices in the primary schools. Lastly, the study sought to suggest strategies that can help minimize the challenges faced by primary schools in ward 9 in Lupane District in implementing inclusive education practices.

### **Significance of the study**

This study sought to investigate issues affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices in selected primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District, Matabeleland North Province. Therefore, the study is of significance to a number of stakeholders including the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, teachers, the university, the researcher and other researchers. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is responsible for formulating policies that seek to improve the implementation of inclusive education practices in schools. Therefore, this study serves as a reference document for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in formulating policies on the implementation of inclusive education practices in primary schools. Teachers are responsible for the implementation of policies formulated by the Ministry. Therefore, this study will assist teachers with information on how to mitigate challenges faced by schools in implementing inclusive education practices. This study also adds knowledge on issues affecting the implementation of inclusive education that already exists in the academic field. Thus, this study sought to prompt more researches on issues affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices in primary schools; thereby stimulating scholarly debate and interrogation by other researchers.

### **Research methods**

This study adopted a mixed research approach which Yim (2013) posits that it is process whereby the researcher combines elements of quantitative and qualitative research in order to answer a research question. The questionnaires are to be administered to educators whilst focus group discussions were done with the learners.

### **Research design**

Kabir (2016) defines research design as a framework of research methods and techniques that are chosen by a researcher. This study adopted a sequential explanatory research design. As Creswell (2018) asserts, sequential explanatory research design is a two-phase research design where quantitative data is collected and analyzed first, and then qualitative data was collected and analyzed based on the quantitative results. Thus, qualitative data is used to explain the quantitative data. According to Kabir (2016), explanatory sequential research design has two distinct strands that are implemented consecutively namely; a quantitative strand in which numeric data is collected and analyzed, followed by a qualitative strand in which textual data is collected and analyzed.

### **Population**

Maree (2007) defines population as any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common who are of interest to the researcher. Therefore, in this study the target population was 100 participants comprising 30 teachers and 70 learners with disabilities from selected primary schools in ward 9 of Lupane District, Matabeleland North Province. However, this target population was scaled down to a considerable and accessible number of participants. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants both for teachers and learners. The sample was purposively selected from the schools offering inclusive education. For the teachers only those teaching learners with disabilities were selected for the study. A sample of twenty-five participants was drawn from the population.

### **Research instruments**

Drost (2011) define data collection tools as instruments used to collect data during research. These are used in research to obtain standardised information from all elements in the sample. Therefore, for purposes of this study, a questionnaire and focused group discussion guide will be used as data collection tools. Thus, a questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data with teachers while an interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from the learners with disabilities in order to solicit information on issues affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices in their schools. To validate the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted with 2 primary schools in ward 12 in Lupane District, Matabeleland North Province. Thus, the researcher randomly selected 5 teachers and 5 learners with disabilities to evaluate the quality of the possibly obtainable responses from research instruments,

### **Data collection procedure**

Therefore, for purposes of this study permission was sought from the relevant authorities. The questionnaires were dispatched to the sampled schools for those teachers who were teaching the learners with disabilities. Three focus group discussions were held with learners with disabilities in order to solicit for their views on issues affecting their education in the mainstream schools where they were

learning. The participants were briefed about confidentiality and other ethical issues related to this study before they participated in study

The researcher used descriptive statistics in analyzing quantitative data; hence data presentation was done in form of tables, charts and graphs while data collected through focused group discussions was presented in form of narratives. Resultantly, having analyzed the two sets of data, the findings were compared and contrasted to deduce similarities and differences, for purpose of making informed conclusions.

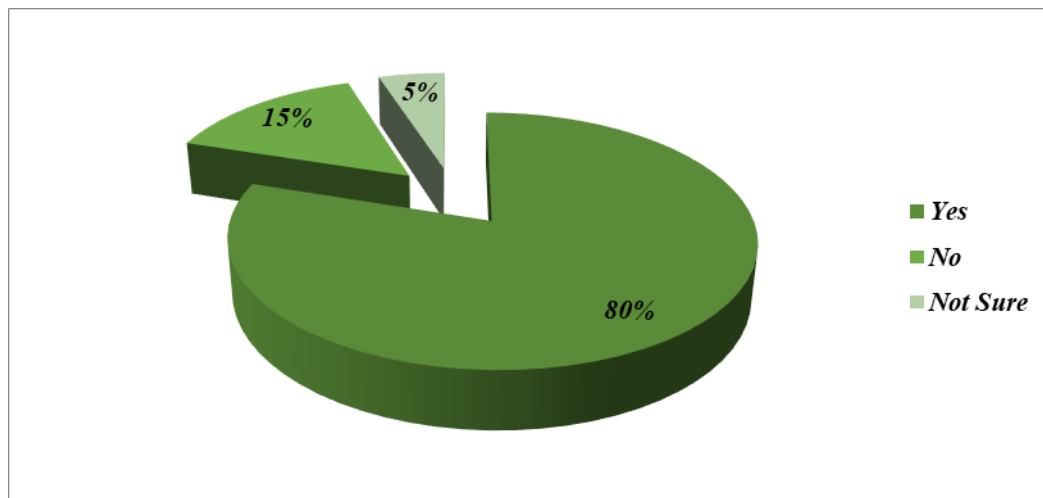
## Study findings

### Level of inclusive education practices in primary schools of Ward 9 in Lupane District

The first objective of this study was to assess the level of inclusive education practices in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District. Therefore, this section presents results from the study on the level of inclusive education practices in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District.

#### Do you have any learners with disability at your school?

This study sought to find out if primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District had learners with disabilities. Therefore, results from the study are presented in Figure 4.1

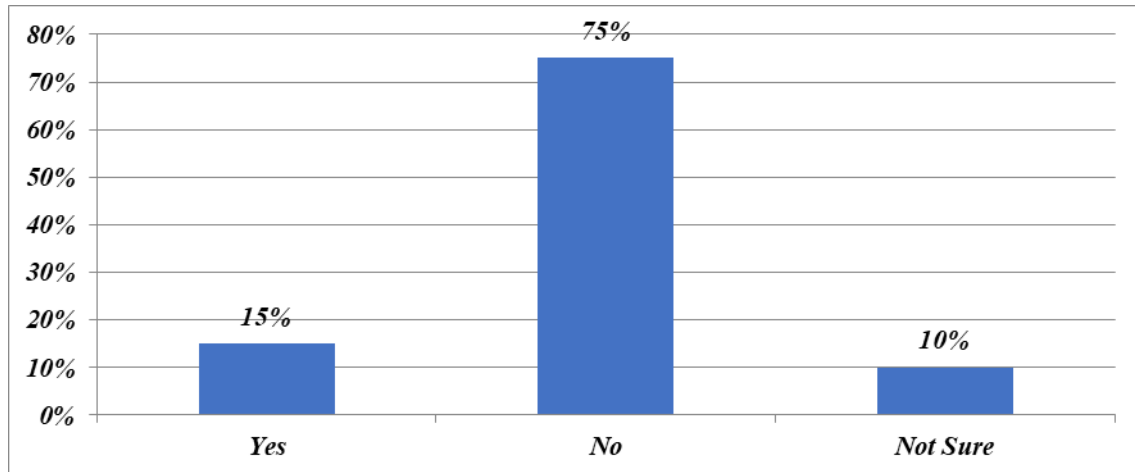


**Figure 1 Do Primary Schools of Ward 9 in Lupane Have Learners With Disabilities**

As depicted in Figure 1 above, results from the study suggest that majority of primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District have learners with disabilities. Thus, 20 of the respondents indicated that they have learners with disabilities at their respective schools while 4 of the teachers who participated in the study stated that they do not have learners with disabilities. However, 5% were not sure if there were learners with disabilities at their respective schools.

#### Is your school implementing inclusive education practices?

This study sought to find out if primary schools of ward 9, in Lupane District were implementing inclusive education practices. Thus, results from the study are depicted in Figure 4.2 below.



**Figure.2 Are Schools of Ward 9 in Lupane District Implementing Inclusive Education**

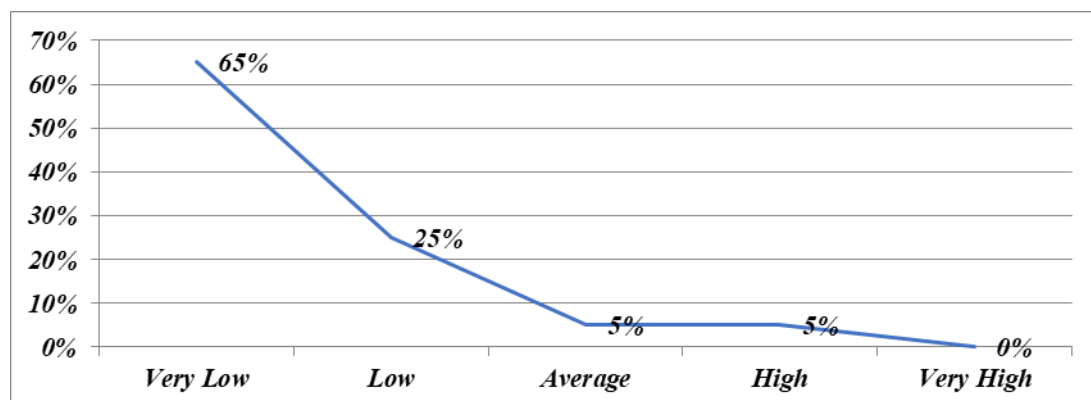
Results from the study suggest that majority of primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District are not implementing inclusive education practices. Thus, 15% of the respondents claimed that they were implementing inclusive education practices while 75% indicated that their respective schools were not implementing inclusive education practices. However, 10% of the respondents were not sure if their respective schools were implementing inclusive education practices..

Also, during interviews, similar responses were echoed by participants who said:

*‘Our school is not implementing any inclusive education practices so far even though we have learners with some disabilities. There are no signs of intending to implement the same.’*

### Level of inclusive education practices in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District

This study also sought to assess the level of inclusive education practices in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District. Therefore, results from the study are depicted in Figure 4.3 below.



**Figure 3 The Level of Inclusive Education In Primary Schools Of Ward 9 in Lupane District**

As depicted above in Figure 3, results suggest that the level of inclusive education in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District is very low. Thus, a combined 90% indicated that the level of inclusive education practice in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District were very low while 5% indicated



that the level was average. However, 5% of the teachers who participated in the study claimed that the level of inclusive education practices in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District was high. Also, the same sentiments were echoed by learners with disabilities who participated in the study who indicated that the level of inclusive education practices in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District was very low.

Furthermore, the learners revealed that their respective schools were facing challenges regarding the implementation of inclusive education practices. Thus, interviewee 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15 said:

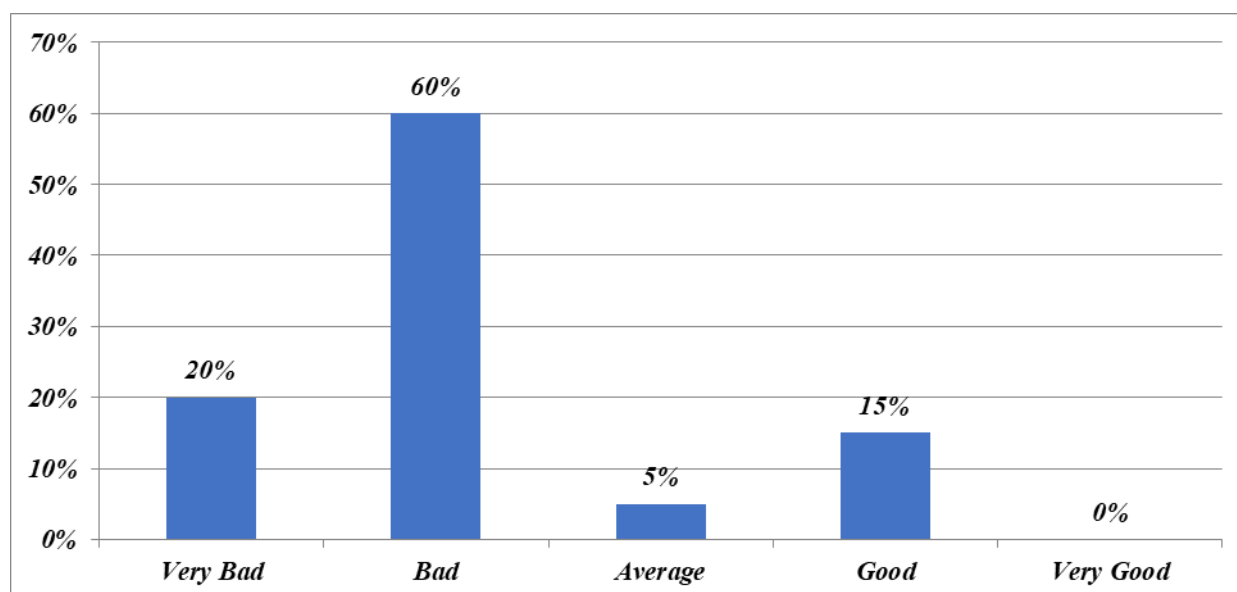
*'Our schools are facing a number of challenges regarding the implementation of inclusive education practices; hence the low level of inclusive education practices in our schools. These challenges are making it very difficult for teachers to implement inclusive education in their classes.'*

## Factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices

The second major objective of this study was to identify factors which are affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices. The first factor identified was the negative attitude of teachers towards the implementation of inclusive education practices. All the learners from the focus group discussions echoed the same sentiments that their teachers had a negative attitude towards learners with disabilities thus affecting the implementation of the practices in the schools. This is what they echoed:

*'Despite the challenges schools face regarding the implementation of inclusive education practices, the attitude of teachers is very bad. Thus, teachers feel bad when the issue of inclusive education is talked about. They believe that they are being given a lot of work to do. Teachers at our schools have a negative attitude towards disabled learners. They treat learners with disabilities as outcasts who do not deserve to learn; hence they treat the implementation of inclusive education practices as a waste of time.'*

Therefore, results from the study are depicted in Figure 4.below.



**Fig 4 The Attitude of Teachers on The Implementation of Inclusive Education Practices**

As indicated in Figure 4 above, results from the study suggest that the attitudes of teachers towards the implementation of inclusive education practices are bad. The study, reveals that 80% described the attitude of teacher was bad while 5% described the attitude of teachers as average.

Secondly, the availability of policies on inclusive education was also dealt with. About 80% of the teachers were positive that policies from the ministry were there but lack proper follow up due to lack of both material and human resources. The other 20% was not sure if such policies were there.

During the study participants also highlighted some other factors that were hindering the implementation of inclusive education practices. The results from the study are depicted in table 1 below

**Table 1 Other Factors Affecting the Implementation of Inclusive Education**

Responses	Number of Respondents	Frequency	Response Rate (%)
Lack of funding	4	7	20%
Shortage of resources	2	9	10%
Lack of skilled personnel	3	12	15%
Inaccessible environment	1	14	5%
Rigid curriculum	1	15	5%
Stigma and discrimination	2	20	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>100%</b>

As presented in Table 1 above, a number of factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education in schools were identified. Thus, both from the questionnaires and focus group discussions, the factor of funding was highlighted as being the other major contributing stumbling block. Schools are not being funded adequately for the provision of the various resource materials that are wanted to effectively teach the learners with disabilities. The learners have various disabilities implying that each disability type needs to be catered for at each and every school. The other factor that was highlighted was the shortage of personnel to cater for the various disability needs. Schools do not have the specialist teachers for each disability type resulting in some learners to dropping out of schools as they perceive it to be a waste of time. Finally, work overload while and stigma and discrimination are the other factors impeding the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District in Matabeleland North Province.

## **Strategies for resolving issues affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices in primary schools**



Finally, this study sought to suggest strategies that can be adopted by primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District in order to solve issues affecting the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District in Matabeleland North Province. Therefore, results from the study are presented in Table 2. below.

**Table 2 Strategies for Resolving Issues Affecting The Implementation of Inclusive Education Practices in Primary Schools**

Responses	Number of Respondents	Response Rate (%)
Availing funding	10	100%
Establishment of resource centers	10	100%
Recruitment of more teachers	10	100%
Orienting learners with disabilities	10	100%
Introducing patrons for learners with disabilities	10	100%

As indicated in Table 2 above, all the educators were in agreement that the strategies in the table above maybe utilized so as to mitigate the factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices in the schools. The government needs to fund this programme as schools alone do not have the capacity to do so. The establishment of a ward resource center is very important as learners with disabilities may come to access their education at this center since it will be properly and adequately resourced.

Similar responses were suggested during focus group discussions as participants echoed these sentiments.

*'In order to curb the phenomenon facing schools regarding the implementation of inclusive education practices there is need for the government to avail funding needed for the implementation of inclusive education programs, establishing resource centers and introducing patrons for learners with disabilities.'*

In addition, the others also added that:

*'Recruitment of more teachers is a key strategy that can help implement inclusive education in schools. Besides, there is need to orient learners with disabilities'*

## Research findings

The study established that majority of primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District have learners with disabilities. Thus, despite some respondents being not sure if primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District have learners with disabilities, results from the study are consistent with the United Nations

report which noted that most of the schools, globally, are enrolled with learners with disabilities (UN, 2019),

Also, the study revealed that majority of primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District are not implementing inclusive education practices. This was confirmed by 75% of the respondents who indicated that their respective schools were not implementing inclusive education practices in their respective schools. These results are in tandem with Hlatywayo and Mapolisa, (2020) whose study reported that there is still a lot of skepticism and ambivalence towards the implementation of inclusive education in Zimbabwe.

Apart from that, inclusive education in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District is very low. Thus, a majority of respondents indicated that the level of inclusive education practice in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District was very low. Thus, this was also confirmed by Hlatywayo and Mapolisa (2020) whose study reported that very few schools in Zimbabwe have embraced inclusive education practices.

The study also established that the attitudes of teachers towards the implementation of inclusive education practices are bad; hence this was deemed as one of the factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District. These results are in tandem with Nyaigoti (2013) who noted that the implementation of inclusive education in schools was being hampered by the negative attitude teachers. The scholar argued that teachers are a key stakeholder in the implementation of inclusive education practices in schools; hence their attitude towards the implementation of inclusive education was deemed as a serious challenge.

In addition to that, the study established that the majority of primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District do not have working policies on the implementation of inclusive education. Thus, 75% of the respondents indicated that their respective schools have policies on inclusive education; hence these results are synonymous with Zungu (2014) whose study established lack of clear policies and systems in Asian schools. However, the study argued that without a guiding inclusive education policy negatively impacts the implementation of inclusive education in schools. This is supported by Hlatywayo and Mapolisa (2020) who argued that absence of a policy makes the implementation of inclusive education difficult.

Further, the study established that there were many other factors which were hindering the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District including; lack of funding, shortage of resources, lack of skilled personnel, inaccessible environment, rigid curriculum, work overload to teachers as well as stigma and discrimination. These factors were mentioned in several studies (Adebayo and Ngwenya, 2015; Diego, 2015; Onyango, 2014; Zungu, 2014).

Finally, in light of these factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education, a number of strategies were suggested by respondents including availing funding, establishing resource centers, recruitment of more teachers, orienting learners with disabilities as well as introducing patrons for learners with disabilities. Thus, these suggestions were also echoed by Thwala (2014) whose study concluded that if implemented, challenges faced by schools in the implementing inclusive education can be minimized

## Conclusions

Basing on the findings established on issues affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District, the study concluded that the absence of the inclusive education policy in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District is affected right from the implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe. Also, the rigid curriculum in the primary schools in the area under study does not adequately accommodate diversity, thus, affecting the implementation of inclusive education. Lack of financial support from the government in order to acquire relevant resources and assistive devices is a major concern to learners. The shortage of financial, material, infrastructure and human resources is greatly affecting the implementation of inclusive education practices in primary schools of ward 9 in Lupane District resulting in these primary schools failing to establish resource centers. The partially accessible physical environment is also a challenge that needs attention. The hostile social environment has affected inclusive education practices to some extent. Thus, stigma and discrimination in one way or the other from their colleagues as well as their stigmatization and discrimination still make the social environments hostile for learners with disabilities. Due to lack of skills on inclusive education and disability by teachers, learners with disabilities are not adequately catered for; hence, affecting their education. The work overload by teachers in primary schools impedes the implementation of inclusive education practices to the extent that there is no time to attend to individual needs of learners, particularly those with disabilities and that Lack of information by learners with disabilities on their rights and services that they could get make learners with disabilities susceptible and less empowered.

## Recommendations

Basing on the findings the study recommend that the government should set aside budgets to support inclusive education practices in primary schools. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary must ensure that the inclusive education policy is adhered to provided schools are adequately funded Besides, they can liaise with NGOs and other organizations that can assist them with various resources. Also, primary schools can introduce an inclusive education levy to help in funding inclusive education practices. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) should come up with a flexible policy structure to accommodate ideas from teachers who are the implementers of inclusive education in schools. Primary schools and teachers should speed up the process of establishing resource centers so that they support inclusive education programmes. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should employ more teachers so that teachers are not overburdened by many responsibilities. Heads of schools should orient learners with disabilities so that they become confident and participate in all activities. Also school administrators should provide practical training to teachers in sign language and braille so as to accommodate those learners with hearing and visual impairment respectively. Schools should have patrons for learners with disabilities whom they relate to and interact with as this would enhance learners with disabilities representation in decision-making processes of the in schools. The government through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should provide grants to help learners with disabilities to pay their school fees and other services at their respective schools.

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