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# Inclusion in Early Childhood Development Settings: A Reality or an Oasis

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## Abstract

Inclusive education within the Early Childhood Development settings has been identified as the most equitable practice for children with disabilities and is based on acknowledging it as a fundamental human right and a foundation for life-long learning for all children. Based on the concept of human rights, inclusion has been viewed as an ambiguous and imaginable consequence of excessive promise, which does not refer to early childhood; hence, practitioners have challenges in its applicability. This chapter aims to unravel the mysteries behind inclusion in early childhood, exploring the realities of what works and what does not work to inform policy making mechanism. Literature from renowned published work that focuses extensively on various countries across continents is reviewed. Local recently published and unpublished studies that scrutinise the association between practitioner qualification and quality of the ECD centres; those that have explored the success and challenges of inclusion in ECD will be examined. It is envisaged that this chapter would come up with best practices in the implementation and assessment of inclusive education in the ECD settings that will benefit children with disabilities, their parents or caregivers, and stakeholders.

**Keywords:** differentiated learning, emotional disturbances, inclusive education impairment, vulnerability

## 1. Introduction

Globally, governments who are signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [1] have produced several policies meant to provide equal educational opportunities to all children nationwide. As advocated through the Salamanca Statement in 1994, inclusive education is the central principle to ensuring equal educational rights for children with varied disabilities and special educational needs [2]. The principle of inclusive education has been merged into the legislation and policy in many countries and visible in numerous international organisations' statements and programmes such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) [3, 4] the Council of the European Union Council [5], the European Commission [6], as well as the UNESCO (70). It was even incorporated into The Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) [7] was more vocal on inclusivity in education. The principle of inclusivity has however over the years, lost much of its initial approach of having clear-cut

outcomes, to an ambiguous “procedure” [8] or has been vaguely defined, for example, the issue in the CRPD [7].

It entails that schooling of children, inclusive of those with severe disabilities, have admittance to regular classrooms with the assistance of suitable support. The initiative towards inclusive education is engrained within the principle of human rights, the preferment of social justice, the delivery of quality education, equality of opportunities and the right to basic education for all [9]. Such revolution in philosophy has brought about the new models of education that are more multifaceted and often entail diverse vicissitudes in the way schools function and in the expectations for teachers [10]. The principle introduced a new way of thinking turning the old one upside down. The change predestined that children’s own readiness as obsolete and only concerned with their acceptance into mainstream education as required by the drive towards what is terms of “integration”.

The analysis of practitioners’ practice and early interferences for actual identification and screening children with disabilities for designing acceptable-quality education has overshadowed much research that is predominantly associated to early childhood education [11]. In this tactic children’s learning outcomes have been adopted as indicators of quality [12], indicating the efficiency of preschool education on the progression of children socially and cognitively [13–15]. Lately, the interest of researchers has centred on examining how children’s participation influences the development of school events and architecture, viewing children’s perception as self-confident learners and debating on the need to integrate children’s perspectives in institutional organisational development [16, 17].

However, the studies undertaken by academics to scrutinise children’s partaking revealed the importance of bearing in mind the child’s voice and contribution in social situations. This idea is confirmed by Souza [18] who asserts that children can actively participate in the construction of knowledge. Notwithstanding evidence from extensive research showing competency and agency of children’s participation in creating culture of their own learning, and the preceding knowledge on instructional practice of practitioners and the interaction between children, promoting involvement of children with disabilities in inclusive environments is still a challenge that requires further research. In their previous studies Ferreira et al. [19] assert that it is essential to deliberate on the complex of human development when dealing with the development of children with disabilities in inclusive school environments. Inclusive education includes espousal of human diversity, appreciation and supporting full participation of everyone perpetuating the rights of all children and the provision of education that is free from all forms of discriminatory beliefs and attitudes [20]. This notion came from the thought-provoking statements from Dewey as early as [21], and Freire et al. in [19] who claimed education as a political act that is never neutral which required the engagement of education as social justice and democracy, with emphasis on plummeting or eradicating oppression within and beyond educational practises and organisations.

## **2. The concept of inclusion in early childhood development**

Inclusion in Early Childhood Development (ECD) is a concept that has gained momentum in government settings and increased the zeal among educational researchers worldwide. It is a concept that has been complexly defined based on the vision. Internationally recognised definition of inclusion came from the outcome of Return to Salamanca Conference [22] which states that:

*We understand inclusive education to be a process where mainstream school and early year's settings are transformed so that all children are supported to meet their academic and social potential, and which involves removing barriers in the environment, communication, curriculum, teaching, socialisation, and assessment at all levels [22].*

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), [23] also describes inclusion as,

*Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports.*

Inclusion in ECD programmes signifies including children with disabilities in children's early learning setup, together with their peers who do not have any disabilities; with great expectations and purposefully promoting involvement in all learning and social activities, enabled by adapted accommodations; and by means of evidence-based services to encourage all-round (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioural, and social-emotional) development of friendships with peers, and increasing the sense of be in the right place. This pertains to all young children with mild and severe disabilities inclusively with those without any disabilities. According to NAEYC [23] the dream for inclusion in ECD agendas and endorsements provided in the policy statement is based on the principles and definition set forth in their joint position statement with the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood (DEC).

Inclusive education means that different and diverse learners are taught side by side in the same classroom, enjoy field trips, engage in extra-curricular activities, and participate in the same sporting games together. Inclusive education upholds diversity and the distinctive contributions brought by every child to the classroom. In a genuinely inclusive setup, every child enjoys the safety and acceptance with parental participation in decision-making and setting learning goals that affect them. It is essential though that school personnel are afforded the relevant training, support, suppleness, and supplies to nurture, inspire, and react to the needs of all children. For decades, children with diverse special needs were secluded in separate institutions which fostered stigmatisation.

### **3. The human rights' perspective on inclusion**

Worldwide, governments and their citizens have come to appreciate human diversity and embrace the need to develop inclusive societies particularly in the face of increasing recognition of the adverse influences of ingrained structural inequities that undermine social unity and the gratification of human rights and freedoms. The World Declaration on Education for All in 1990 affirmed a devotion to "education for all" with explicit allusion to people with diverse disabilities, and the Salamanca Statement, that was adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education [24]. An inclusive society according to UNESCO [25] is a society for all, in which every individual has an active role to play. Such a society is based on

fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity [26].

Inclusive education is a rights-based approach that creates prospects to go beyond a charity perspective, towards social justice. As write, Inclusive education is based on the philosophy of acceptance and is about the provision a framework within which all children, irrespective of their ability, gender, language, or cultural origin, can be respected equally with admiration and afforded equal opportunities' [27]. Based on the human rights there was need for cultural and educational revolution to eradicate all forms of prejudice and discrimination of children with disabilities [28]. Hence, inclusive education is viewed as a process that transpires on a daily basis within every educational set-up and as mentioned above, requires continuing dedication and contemplation of all professionals in children's early years.

Besides recognising the rights of people with disabilities to education, Article 24.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) [1] which forms the foundation of this discourse provides that:

*State Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, State Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning.*

In realising this right, Article 24.2 enforces State Parties to ensure that:

1. The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and human diversity;
  - a. The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents, and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
  - b. Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.
2. Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability.....
  - a. Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality, and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live.
  - b. Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided.
  - c. Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education.
  - d. Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.
3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:

- a. Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative, and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;
- b. Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;
- c. Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximise academic and social development.

The chapter highlights essential arguments on the importance of implementing inclusive education in the best interests of the child throughout the Commonwealth based on the Convention and explores the challenges experienced in the adhering to Article 24 of the UNCRPD [29].

#### **4. The context of early childhood development**

Globally inclusive education is viewed differently by nations. For instance, in Ontario, Canada, Early Childhood Education (ECE) and intervention services are offered through health care, education, such as childcare and preschool facilities, and through social service agencies. Underwood [30] observed the challenge in understanding inclusive practice in early childhood as caused by the fragmentation of services and the funding that comes through government, private, or a mix of funding from both.

In the context of Finland and Brazil, both countries are committed to children's rights as they are signatories to the Salamanca Statement (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation [2, 31], or the Statement of the World Conference on Education for All [2], resulting in a set of inclusive reforms based on similar grounds [32–34]. Special education in these countries has been conducted in special classes or schools that turned to be a specialised service substituting for mainstream schooling. Mazzotta [35] observed that the belief in the medical perception of normality/abnormality enforced segregation of children with disabilities as a goal to specialised assistance. In the 1970s access to education became a right for all children in Finland and Brazil followed suite in 1988, with the recognition of a clear orientation of inclusive learning organised in the mainstream system [34, 36]. Following the set goals and agreements at the World Conference of Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) and the World Conference of Education Special Needs (Salamanca, Spain, 1994), Brazil and Finland interpreted and embraced inclusive education aligning it in their national educational policies aiming for access and quality as proposed by UNESCO's [25] social justice agenda [37].

In England, children with disabilities are classified and defined as persons with special educational needs. According to Britain [38] (Children and Families Act, 2014):

1. A child or young person has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.
2. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she—

- a. Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- b. Has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools.

Children with disabilities have access to learning in the mainstream schools in the United Kingdom (UK), even though there are specifically resourced and special schools, mostly for the blind and partially sighted children [39]. Parents have a choice to send their children to privately owned institutions that offer residential facilities.

There are six democratic assertions that underpin inclusive education in South Africa which state that: (a) all children and youth can learn under conducive learning circumstances and need unwavering, ongoing support; (b) there ought to be relevant support structures, ideal systems and methodologies that enable such support in the education system; (c) learners are different and the differences must be both acknowledged and respected; (d) learning does not only take place in the formal school, but also at home and in the community; (e) changes have to be made to attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curriculum and environment to meet the diverse and sometimes complex learning needs of all learners; and (f) all such efforts ought to be aimed at minimising barriers to learning while maximising the participation of all learners in the curriculum and culture of their educational institutions [38, 40]. Based on these assertions McConkey [41] added that inclusive education encourages 'full participation and equality' through enabling children with disabilities from obstructive family backgrounds a chance to interact with others and participate in the communal life activities. Consequently, inclusive education is a human right change agent which is used in a democratic way to understanding values that form beliefs in embracing human diversity [42, 43].

In South Africa (SA), in the United States of America (USA) as well as in the United Kingdom (UK), it is the democratic right for every child to access educational facilities that are in the vicinity of his or her home. There is a variation in SA due to limited full-service schools that can house learners with diverse disabilities and special learning needs, giving mainstream schools the leeway to refuse admission of learners with special learning needs (possibly because they feel they are inadequately equipped to offer unique learning needs to children). The other challenge is that there no clarity and step-by-step guidance to help parents choose suitable mainstream schools for their children. Without adequate education, parents cannot actively participate and select appropriate programmes and schools beneficial to their children.

Practically, the right to education in SA is not equivalent to having the right or freedom to choose an explicit school within the child's home area. Consequently, children may have the right of admission in schools within their environment, school personnel may deny them. This is a contradiction of education and human rights policies which impede the implementation of inclusive education [44]. This is a distressing fact showing that fight for education as a human rights agenda is still a far-off dream. Hence, according to Pather [45] there is need for continual policy revisits in order to fine-tune mechanisms for the implementation of inclusive education.

In Zimbabwe, inclusive education has been well-thought-out after the awareness that approaches such as integration and institutionalisation of special needs children did not yield desired outcomes [46]. The previous tactics were plagued by a plethora of implementation problems such as: lack of resources, lack of properly spelt out policies to guide practice, social consequences such as segregation and

stigmatisation of children with disabilities and the teachers' detrimental attitudes. Despite the desire and designed policies, inclusive education has not been fully embraced in Zimbabwe. Notwithstanding this development, inclusion in Zimbabwe has not been fully embraced. A minute number of children with disabilities and special educational needs in Zimbabwe have been included in special units or classes in the mainstream public schools, with the majority of them segregated in specialised institutions. Clearly, inclusivity in Zimbabwe is still a far-off dream for children with diverse disabilities and special learning needs and their parents.

## 5. Inclusive models

The strategies and the development of inclusive education systems in different countries are influenced by factors such as their educational policies, the political opinions, socio-economical conditions and their cultural-historical factors [4, 47, 48]. Hence, it has been observed that students with 'special educational needs' in many countries are still educated in separate classrooms according to their disability within schools or are separately grouped in so called special schools sometimes without special guidance from specifically trained teachers [49]. There is a noticeable discrepancy occurring between the philosophical and practical dedication to inclusive education in various educational systems due to a lack of collaboration between politicians, scientists and school professionals [50]. Consequently, in order to adhere to policies, schools are accepting the challenge of teaching students with diverse special needs by just integrating them within the regular classroom contexts or by simply postulating what constitutes 'good education for all children' [51].

Due to lack of clarity in the philosophical foundations of inclusive education, a commonly understood and unambiguous interpretation of what signifies 'inclusive special needs education' makes it difficult to come up with widely accepted models of inclusive education. Hence, models are designed according to the political will to prioritise inclusion, learning environment and teacher preparedness in each country.

Griffith et al. [52] developed a '3-D' Model giving emphasis to the four elements of learning which are, knowledge, aptitudes, temperaments, and emotions, that are essential to the implementation of this model. These elements were merged into a three-phase instructional structure of activities starting with the development of a personality for caring.

### 5.1 Phase 1-D

The main emphasis in **phase one** is to inspire students' temperaments of sociability and caring which is the cornerstone of the application process. The major element in this phase is to ensure students enhance their knowledge and develop skills to have empathetic concern and dispositions of caring for students with disabilities.

### 5.2 Phase 2-D

In this phase the focus is on helping students to have a better understanding of those differences that are inclined towards alienating and separating classmates from one another. Griffith et al. [52] observed that what learners know and have experience is related to the attitudes they have towards peers who are alienated because they have certain mental, social, and/or physical differences from them. It is then essential to increase the knowledge and understanding concerning those students likely to be alienated to lessen some of this interruption among peers.

### **5.3 Phase 3-D**

The final phase of intervention in this model is skill development. There is need to develop interaction and communication skills so that learners effectively interact with their peers prone to alienation due to their disability. Skill development is essential because caring and understanding may not logically convert into their capability to communicate and interact efficiently with disabled classmates. There are some conditions that have a tendency to strain relations and hinder effective dialogue, hence the need to develop the skills that enable communication.

The introduction of inclusive education was an effort to promote social recognition of and acquaintance with children with special needs and ultimately progressively more accepting them in regular schools. However, “a one size fits all” model may not work since disability comes in various degrees with some requiring personalised attention; environments vary and the level of understanding is different sometimes based on the political will and acceptance. Nevertheless, schools should be reconstructed such that they are proficient in educating all children, with educationalists advocating for the right to education for all children in response to the basic right and a human right that every single child, despite their disability are entitled to equal treatment with human dignity, thus, the emergent of inclusive education.

## **6. The role of the families in inclusive education**

Active parental involvement in all children’s lives cannot be downplayed as research has proved that issues of diversity are best dealt with in the family [53]. Families are very important as they are viewed as change agents in the educational process where attitudes are built, norms and standards are set [54]. It has been argued that families of children without learning difficulties or any disabilities may not be keen to let their children mix and mingle with learners with disabilities and special educational needs because of the perception that these conditions may affect their own children’s learning [55]. At the same time, informed parents who understand the actual meaning of inclusive education, have positive viewpoint, not only embrace inclusion but become advocates for it [56] and experience drives parents to ensure the improvement of children takes place and foster their personal and social development [57].

However, research has established that parents with children with disabilities and special educational needs are divided into two sets who are likely to take different positions. Some families are not keen to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools [58] while other families of children with SEN or disability, through research embrace inclusive education model identifying that social and emotional effects as one of the main benefits of inclusive education [59–61]. Some positive effects realised in an inclusive educational set up are that there is greater acceptance and sensitivity to individual differences from the schoolmates.

Children with disabilities and their families endure substantial barriers in accessing inclusive high-quality Early Childhood Development programmes. A substantial number of preschool children with disabilities are mostly offered education in segregated special schools isolated from their peers without disabilities [62]. Neuroscience and research has established that early years of all children’s lives are crucial in the construction of early foundations of learning and well-being essential for later success in school and in life. It is in these early years that the children’s brains need more nurturing as they develop rapidly, more so the experiences they share with their families, teachers, peers, and in their communities are influential to their development. It becomes crucial for families to expose a wide variety of rich

experiences to children with disabilities and special educational needs where they can learn through play, interacting and engaging daily with their peers with and without disabilities. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that children with disabilities are not segregated or stigmatised so that they build self-confidence to mix and mingle freely with other children without disabilities.

## **7. The role of the school in inclusive education**

Schools are expected to play a crucial role that ensures equitable practices in inclusive education for all school age children, yet, to this day, in spite of several well-known proclamations inclusive practices in the early years have not been as clearly correlated to an equity discourse. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [1] clearly identifies the right of all children to ‘access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live’ (Article 24, Section 2.b). However, reference to early childhood is silent in this right to inclusive education. In recognition of the anomaly, the Division for Early Childhood (DEC), of a US based organisation the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) [63], released a joint position statement that describes early childhood inclusion as:

*Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports.*

In collaboration, Nutbrown and Clough [64] contend, ‘respectful educators will include all children.’ Nevertheless, the majority of early years professionals are still not sure about what inclusive involves and frequently misinterpret the concept. Evidence that comes from research suggests that inclusive education is better for everyone in that children learn and grow in ways that cannot be achieved when they are segregated institutions. Professionals in the early years need to be confident, competent, more flexible, and skilled, when dealing with inclusive education as they have the potential for positive social change including transformation for the lives of children. It is evident that the professionals in the early years play an influential role in bringing about genuine inclusion. Nevertheless, inclusion is a complicated and continuing process, that takes long a period and commitment working towards the development of a clear understanding of inclusion so that it can be implemented into practice.

A major responsibility of all professionals in the early years is to continuously reflect critically by vital engagement with inclusion through a process of examining views and practices [65]. This chapter intends to give support to the professionals and researchers in the early childhood years as they continuously mature in confidence and understanding and embark on the trek of becoming inclusive. Evidence from numerous studies show that inclusive education entails an incessant commitment to eradicating barriers that impede on the valued full participation and having children in the right place [66–68]. A critical fact to consider is that inclusive

education is not the domain of charitable 'do-gooders', but preferably an indispensable facet of a dynamic society. Inclusive education is not about awarding 'special favours', nor about modifying someone to match the obscure 'norm' so they can be allowed to participate in the communal activities. Inclusion, therefore, is about acceptance and recognition of every child as a valuable member of the society.

## **8. Preparation of teachers for inclusion in early years**

Teachers are important catalysts who can ensure that the philosophical orientation to inclusive education and its practice is accepted and practised in every department of education and by all learners. The preparation of highly qualified early childhood development (ECD) teachers has gained momentum globally in the twenty-first century era [59]. The apposite training of ECD teachers influences the quality of ECD provision. Studies have shown that the quality of ECD programmes improved with better-educated teachers. The ECD teachers who had a higher educational level provided high or moderate quality in their classrooms, more appropriate practices, better instructional activities, and positive response to families. They believed in providing instructional activities that were more developmentally suitable to young learners. Furthermore, it has been found that early childhood teachers with a higher educational qualification used easy-to-follow directions and innovative and high-level activities to motivate learners. This resulted in learners developing better social, language and cognitive abilities [69]. Hence, the early childhood education teachers' professional development should be considered as key constituent in the education of young learners.

In preparation of ECD teachers it is important to consider the philosophical approach such as inquiry-oriented teaching. Reflective inquiry accompanied with action is central to the preparation of teachers and the basis for their decision making. The level of reflectivity is a necessary element to teacher preparation and a significant aspect of quality in teacher education [65]. Accordingly, there is need for extensive training to equip the teacher to prepare ECD learners for a more structured learning. The ECD teacher should possess extensive knowledge of how young learners learn, the processes it involves and how human knowledge is structured [70].

Research studies in United States of America have indicated that a bachelor's degree and specialised early childhood training improved teachers' performance and the quality of early childhood programme. It was found that teachers with a bachelor's degree were more responsive to learners and provided more activities that promoted language development and emergent literacy than did teachers without a bachelor's degree. Teachers who had a bachelor's degree and some additional specialised content in child development or early childhood education were found to perform better and were considered to be qualified teachers [69].

Likewise, a study conducted in Britain revealed that learners who had highly qualified teachers also had high educational and social outcomes whereas those whose teachers were paraprofessionals showed low educational and social outcomes. Thus, globally, it is widely recognised that highly qualified personnel are a vital component of ECD programmes that result in improved quality of outcomes for young learners [70]. As a result, ECD teachers that are qualified and trained would be in a position to provide quality education and care. Consequently, the ECD learners who are taught by teachers with specialised ECD training have been found to be more sociable, exhibit a developed use of language and perform at a higher level on cognitive tasks than children who are cared for by less qualified teachers [70]. It is, therefore, evident from literature that teacher preparation predicts the quality of teaching to ECD learners.

There has been some sceptics who have queried the success of the inclusive education drive since its establishment in 2001, primarily for the reason that the teachers are not adequately trained [71, 72], and the trained still do not have confidence that they have grasped the content of their training in inclusive education [30]. Consequently, there is need for teachers to engage in a continuous training to accomplish efficacy and confidence, [73] by engaging strategies that could bring about effective implementation of inclusive education. The apathy experienced in the prevalent implementation of inclusive education has increased the cynics in the current approaches of educating people to develop a conviction in inclusive education as they are not changing people towards voluntary participation in the process.

## **9. Challenges in inclusive education**

Despite the years of implementation, barriers to inclusive education are still experienced worldwide. These barriers include inadequacies in policy and legal support, insufficient resources and facilities, lack of specialised staff, lack of effective teacher training, scarcity on pedagogical techniques, inflexible curricular, dearth of supportive leadership, and cultural attitudes.

Teachers as the main catalyst in inclusive education can be worst barricades through lack or inadequate training, their attitude and misinterpretation of policy. It is improbable that someone would intentionally aim to dehumanise people, but dehumanisation happens when some people are considered as 'other' to we and in that process 'them' and 'us' are created in which 'us' is perceived as more desirable or deemed 'better'. Thus, ensuring the success of inclusion is essential in order to understand the dehumanising practice of exclusion. However, ablism prejudice, chauvinism, classism, discrimination genderism, homophobia, and transphobia, are all central to the involvement of a process of dehumanisation. While racial segregation was earlier justified on the foundation that it was better for the 'them' (the oppressed), but concurrently preserving the superiority of the 'us' (the oppressors). Likewise, segregation that is based on impairment or 'disability' worldwide also frequently emanates from the assumption that it is better for 'them'. Dehumanisation, which is often subliminal, inadvertent, and enculturated, happens through a progression of stigmatisation.

## **10. Strategies for inclusive education**

Successful inclusive education implementation strategies have been categorised as the school and classroom level which encompass school structure and culture, teachers, and school leadership, and policy and national level implementation strategies which involve strengthening education management information systems (EMIS), encouraging curricular flexibility, and strengthening learning outcomes and promoting inclusive societies and economies [74]. Understanding the definition of early childhood inclusion should assist in creating high expectations for all child, regardless of ability, to enable them to reach their full potential.

## **11. School and classroom level implementation strategies**

Literature suggests that the first step in inclusive education implementation is to help schools understand their own challenges, assets, resources, value frameworks, stakeholders, and where to locate data and evidence. It is important for teachers to

have the knowledge and skills to create inclusive classrooms, as well as for school leadership to provide an inclusive and innovative environment for teachers to flourish. More sustainable inclusive education implementation would put more emphasis on inclusive pedagogy in pre-service teacher training for all teacher trainees, as well as sustained and continuous in-service development. This also positively affects teachers' attitudes towards inclusion by emphasising that it is within their professional role to include all children in their classroom and is not just the domain of specialists and special curriculum. Teachers can also be motivated to be more inclusive by providing more structured and supported expectations as to how they teach and as to what inclusive education 'looks like' in the classroom. There is evidence that inclusive teaching practices raise the achievement of all children in the classroom [74]. Furthermore, school leadership is crucial for the successful implementation of inclusive education. Thus, leaders should demonstrate positive values. Often the most inclusive and high-quality schools are those that have school leaders who lead with vision, inclusive values, motivation, autonomy, and trust in school staff [74].

## **12. Policy and national level implementation strategies**

It is vital that there should be national policy which clearly states that inclusive education is a right for all children. Strengthening education management information systems (EMIS) is important as it helps in providing a detailed and up-to-date school and student information that will support educational systems in understanding where and when children are not being fully included [74]. It is essential to have accurate data because it assists in finance and resource distribution, to identify barriers to inclusion and 'at risk' children, raise awareness of marginalisation, and facilitate communication between national and local levels. Encouraging curricular flexibility and strengthening learning outcomes is a critical strategy in implementation of inclusive education. It is evident that an increase in the diversity and breadth of learning outcomes, coupled with an increase in the variety of means that a student can achieve these learning outcomes, will facilitate successful implementation of inclusive education [74].

Promoting inclusive societies and economies is another important strategy in implementing inclusive education. Hence, including all children in schools leads to significant national economic gains, provided that there is a continuum of inclusion that bridges the transition from school to post-school activities (higher education, vocational training, work). Inclusive education is only successful as long as there are clear opportunities to benefit from learning and apply them to post-school outcomes and is especially important in rural and low-income countries [74]. It is important therefore, to establish a system where there is shared understandings about the meaning of inclusion and the creation of a system that supports for children with disabilities and their families.

## **13. Methodology**

Research methodology is how the researchers navigate the jungle of questions and queries to reach a conclusion. In this chapter a desk-based research that is also termed the systematic autopsy was adopted. It relies mostly on empirically researched secondary data which is collected devoid of extensive fieldwork. Preferably, published articles and data are used as important sources to the

inquiry [25]. In assembling this chapter, the researchers used information sourced from trustworthy journals, manuscripts and distinctively published articles that did not require a fieldwork survey. A desk-research is a method which is mainly developed by collecting data from existing resources while sitting at a desk. It is frequently believed to be a low-cost and effective technique when equated with field research. However, money and time are saved when researchers have the appropriate knowledge that can be applied as the benchmark of their research procedure. The other advantage to this method is that while it is economically in terms of time and money it has less bias and breach of ethics as there is no human interaction in data collection. Furthermore, in accumulating information for this chapter the researchers used knowledge related to the phenomenon from a broader global community. However, like all techniques it also has constraints, like the inability to authenticate on the stated facts, strict controls in accessing some publication that have pertinent material.

## **14. Discussion**

Empirical studies indicate that educators understand the concept of inclusive education at ECD level as that which is entrenched in education for all learners, including those with disabilities, through institutionalisation of learner responsive pedagogy. There is evidence from stakeholders that inclusive education at ECD level facilitates implementation of equitable and quality education for all, social cohesion, social acceptance of learners with disabilities, early acculturation to live and function in mainstream societies and exposition to mainstream careers and professions. This has been revealed by the findings of the study conducted in Zimbabwe [75]. In agreement, the results of the study conducted by Adewumi and Mosito [76] in South Africa showed that some schools exhibited good practices of inclusion of learners with disabilities during the teaching and learning process despite difficult working conditions as the schools were located in remote rural areas. It came out that teachers gave learners much support as they played the role of social workers and used innovative ideas to improvise inadequate learning materials.

However, Wanjiru [77] found that in Kenya there were numerous challenges that hindered the implementation of inclusion at ECD level. It came out that teachers were not well capacitated to teach learners with diverse needs in ECD classes as they lacked sufficient knowledge and skills. This was due to inadequate pre-service or in-service training to prepare teachers for inclusive education at ECD level. The results also revealed that teachers perceived the inclusion of learners with disabilities as a burden on them as it increased their teaching workload and delayed the completion of the syllabi, hence, negatively impacting on academic performance of learners without disabilities. Similarly, in their study in Zimbabwe [78] found that ECD teachers lacked competencies to understand the needs and scope of learners with diverse needs. The results indicated that teachers could not identify traits associated with special education needs in ECD learners as they had not done inclusive education during their pre-service training.

Nonetheless, Wanjiru [77] recommends that for inclusive education to be successfully implemented at ECD level, there is need for teachers to change their attitude towards learners with diverse needs, schools should provide adapted teaching and learning materials which responds to the needs of such learners, the curriculum needs to be flexible, and infrastructure should be modified to accommodate learners with special needs.

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