The understanding of inclusion in education of pre-service primary school teachers who graduated from a public university in Zimbabwe

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Since the universalisation of inclusive education in 1994 at the United Nations Salamanca Conference in Spain, teachers globally have been grappling with how to implement it. Inclusive education calls for adoption of inclusive pedagogical approaches that are learner-centred. In order to do justice to diverse learners in today's heterogeneous classroom populations, a solid and in-depth understanding of the philosophy of inclusion is a pre-requisite for all classroom practitioners. This qualitative study therefore aims to examine the understanding of inclusion in education of pre-service primary school teachers who graduated from a public university in Zimbabwe as the context for proposing strategies to enhance their professional preparation. Sixteen graduate pre-service primary school teachers who were purposively sampled from Masvingo province's selected university that proffers pre-service teacher education. A triangulation of data gathering instruments of face-to-face individual interviews, document analysis and non-participant observation complemented by a follow-up discussion was adopted. Data gathered was thematically analysed and established several findings. The chief finding was that, university graduate pre-service primary school teachers had differing and inadequate understandings of the philosophy of inclusion in education that culminated into haphazard implementation of inclusive education as they had various practices.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations' Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education can be regarded as the global descriptor of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2004). It culminated into the international fraternity shifting from exclusion to the inclusion of learners with diverse and unique educational needs (Eunice et al., 2015; Majoko, 2017a). This statement reaffirmed the basic right to education of every person as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1949). This statement also reiterated the promise offered by the international community at the Jomtein World Conference on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) to guarantee that right for all regardless of personality differences (Donnelly & Watkins, 2011). These three macro-policies are in alignment with civil rights movements as articulated in several other global and African human rights instruments that are associated with inclusion in education. These include the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Organisation of African Union [OAU], 1990) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 1989).

Despite the adoption of these global and African human rights instruments on or related to inclusion in education, several factors have negatively influenced its practice including "insufficient collaboration, lack of awareness and knowledge, teacher responsibility, tension among authority figures, large class sizes and teacher attitudes towards inclusion" (HuiNg, 2015). Several other factors hindering quality inclusion in education include the lack of policy and legal support, school resources and facilities, teacher training in inclusive thinking and techniques, poor pedagogical techniques, rigid curriculum, unsupportive school and district leadership as well as socio-cultural attitudes towards school and disability (Schuelka, 2018). Since 1994, several countries have institutionalised measures including the adoption of relevant policies, legislation and guidelines on or related to inclusion in

education to advance education especially for people with disabilities. Zimbabwe is no exception. It is critical to mention at this juncture that, the passing and enactment of these policies and legislation does not necessarily warranty full inclustion in education as the foregoing factors including inadequate collaboration, large class sizes (HuiNg, 2015) and lack of supportive policy and curriculum rigidity (Schuelka, 2018) among others influence its implementation and success. Previous studies (Chitiyo et al., 2016; Majoko, 2017b, 2019; Masuka et al., 2012; Musengi & Chireshe, 2012; Wadesango et al., 2012) have established that, in alignment with the foregoing international human rights instruments and examples from various countries, Zimbabwe adopted several policies and legislation to advance inclusion in education since 1994.

Several policy circulars inclusive of the Director's Circular Numbers 1 and 2 of 2001, 1 of 2004, 7 of 2005 and the Secretary's Circulars Number 2 of 2000 and 14 of 2004 underpin inclusion in education in Zimbabwe (Jenjekwa et al., 2013). These circulars mandate teachers to practice inclusion in education and provide guidelines on its practice. Unlike several other countries including South Africa, the UK and the USA, Zimbabwe lacks clear and specific policies and legislation on inclusion in education. According to Soneni (2016), the above mentioned Zimbabwean polices and legislation among others lack specificity and clarity as to who, where, when and how provisions for learners with disabilities should be implemented to realize the inclusion of these learners in education. This can prevent the provision of appropriate services to learners with diverse and unique needs to be meaningfully included in education because of the lack of legal accountability of the stakeholders including the government, parents and teachers. The permanent secretary of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) of Zimbabwe also imposes the Directors' circulars on teachers since a top-down approach is applied in the management of education in the country. This can compromise ownership of the circulars as teachers ultimately disassociate themselves with their implementation.

Despite the promulgation of the above mentioned policies, legislation and circulars on inclusion in education in Zimbabwe, its practice is far from being a reality because of various factors including the lack of appropriate teaching and learning resources and inadequate levels of funding more generally (Chireshe, 2013) and teachers' failure to design and deliver lessons and select suitable objectives, materials and pedagogy that addresses the diversity of learners (Majoko, 2018).

As long as teachers have sound knowledge of inclusion, incidences of exclusion by discrimination against learners with disabilities can potentially be eradicated (Forlin et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2009). Against this background, Forlin et al. (2013) observed that inclusion in education lacks clear conceptual definition, a situation which leads to haphazard practice at the expense of quality education for all learners. The lack of a universally accepted definition has led to multiple competing definitions and plurality of views on how inclusivity can be practiced (Ainscow et al., 2006; Allan & Slee, 2008; D'Alessio, 2011). The difficulty in reaching a universally accepted definition of inclusion in education arises from the many similar and related terms that have been used in special needs education. Such terms include integration, least restrictive environment, mainstreaming and deinstitutionalisation that have been in use long before the inception of inclusion in education (Armstrong et al., 2011; Forlin et al., 2013). While the terms are used interchangeably, they refer to different concepts.

Furthermore, inclusion in education is distorted in the developing world which lacks a history of institutionalisation and industrialisation as it faces economic challenges that hinder the development of an educational system suitable for learners with diverse needs (Armstrong et al., 2011; Singh, 2009). Above all, different global cultures define inclusion in education differently depending on its purpose such as social, historical, political or economic use (Landin, 2010; Malinen, 2013). Different technological levels of development between the developed and developing world has also led to different practices of inclusion in education. In 1997, the new Labour-led government in the UK closed down special schools, replacing them with mainstream schools, to gain political mileage. In the UK, their political and socioeconomic issues are interwoven. To this end, inclusion in education has been associated with school attendance and behaviour, thereby deviating from its reference to learners with disabilities or special needs. In addition, the term inclusion in education has been used in England to refer to what happens in special school settings (Ainscow et al., 2006;

Spurgeon, 2007). There is therefore conceptual confusion in defining and practicing inclusion in education across the globe.

In the post-Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 2004) period, inclusion in education has taken on a multitude of meanings across different continents (Miles & Singal, 2010; Slee, 2011). The term has lost its original meaning that went against medical and psychological explanations for the difficulties encountered in education. The debate on inclusion in education can be considered along moral and ideological lines where the argument is how to make mainstream classrooms accessible to learners with disabilities (Charema, 2010; Sharma et al., 2009). Such a view tallies with that of the EADSEN (2010) which acknowledged that, inclusion in education is a basic human right pivotal to the attainment of more just and equal society. While one view of inclusion in education is that it is a disability issue, another view is that it as a human rights issue. Yet another view considers it as a mere Western ideology (Forlin et al., 2013; Johnstone & Chapman, 2009).

When considered a disability issue, inclusion in education concerns itself only with children with disabilities in need of special education. Hence, it becomes a code for special education and its definition should be viewed as a continuum rather than a static condition (D'Alessio, 2011; Forlin et al., 2013). In light of the universally binding nature of international agreements, UNESCO (2009) defined inclusion in education as teaching and learning that is alive to the identification of barriers and obstacles encountered by learners as they attempt to access quality education and which makes efforts to eradicate those obstacles that lead to exclusion. Inclusion in education further embraces participation of all children including those who may be socially discriminated against due to gender, disability, religion, ethnicity or any other inequalities in mainstream school classes (UNESCO, 2005). Inclusion in education therefore, is not only centred on access to schools by those marginalised, but goes further to include barrier identification and removal for quality education.

Inclusion is not only a process but also a goal to ensure the education of all children including the vulnerable, the marginalised and those with disabilities so that they become participants who are valued and respected members of the society with a sense of belonging and acceptance (Hodkinson, 2009; Omidvar & Richmond, 2005; Thomas, 2013). This view is philosophically a departure from admitting learners with special needs into a 'normal' system, but moves towards seeing every leaner as 'normal' and strives to cater for the needs of all (Hodkinson, 2009; Konza, 2008). Thus, inclusion in education seeks to merge special and regular education. Inclusion in education is part of a wide social justice drive which proposes that equality for all has to embrace rights, opportunity, belonging, acceptance, participation, achievement and access for all learners to their local school (Ashman & Merrotsy, 2008; Foreman, 2011; Woodcock et al., 2012). This trend finds support in policies of the UN concerned with children's rights such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 1989) and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (Konza, 2008; UNESCO, 2004).

Inclusion in education entails participation and reduction of the culture of exclusion of learners with diverse and unique needs in communities (Mittler, 2012; Omidvar & Richmond, 2005). Furthermore, inclusion in education is a process that involves a break with the norm and radically transforming the school curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and grouping of learners (Mittler, 2012) (Armstrong et al., 2011; Konza, 2008). Such transformation seeks to enable access for all learners and participation in all educational and social opportunities the school offers (Chitiyo & Chitiyo, 2007; Mittler, 2012). The aim is the restructuring of schools so that they are able to cater for needs of all learners including those with disabilities in a manner where they experience full membership and unconditional belonging to the regular school and community (Antia, 2002; Mittler, 2012; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2012).

Inclusion in education provides the most effective way of eliminating exclusionary practices against learners with disabilities hence it is crucial that regular schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their individual differences (UNESCO, 2004, 2009). It is therefore important that all teachers receive training and continuous professional development so that they are able to

attend to the needs of all learners. In Western societies, according to Vislie (2003), inclusion in education was originally equated to meaning integration as it was a yard stick of the quality of education that was provided for children with disabilities enrolled in integrated educational settings. Thus, inclusion traditionally entailed schools addressing individuality, reconstruction of curricula, effectiveness in teaching and learning and addressing the diversity of children (Sebba & Ainscow, 1996). The idea of measuring what constituted inclusion in education is consistent with the foregoing literature (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Echevarria et al., 2006). This study examined the understanding of inclusion in education of Zimbabwean university graduate pre-service primary school teachers in view of its different and divergent meanings.

The present qualitative study was deep-rooted in the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT which is premised on explaining the nature of human activities in social, cultural, historical and educational contexts (Van der Walt & Wolhuter, 2018). In this framework, these activities in educational discourse are regarded as activity systems where an activity is defined by Shepel (2008) as a social construct that is mediated by culture. CHAT therefore situates action in context as it believes that an individual's actions cannot be understood in isolation of the environment in which they are practiced (Jones et al., 2016). Similarly, society without its individual members who design, produce and make use of tools can also not be understood (Engeström, 2001). From Vygotsky's perspective, all social action is seen as mediated action premised on the idea that humans are not passive participants but act within a shared social environment that is characterised by interactions towards meaning-making (Jones et al., 2016). In this case, CHAT views the understanding of inclusion in education of pre-service primary school teachers who graduated from a public university in Zimbabwe as an activity that constitutes varied elements. According to Foot (2014), in an activity system, there is collective activity of different actors. In this study, understanding of inclusion in education of pre-service primary school teachers who graduated from a public university in Zimbabwe is a collective and multi-dimensional object (Lund & Eriksen, 2016). This object occurs in an educational setting with many actors who mediate it using different tools to realise its practice.

According to Van der Walt & Wolhuter (2018), practices differ from subject to subject since the different subjects possess diverse mediating inputs including the quality of teachers, instructional methodology, human, material and financial resources, motivation and infrastructure. Central to an activity system is the object or purpose of the activity which is also regarded as the deed or what is being done by the subject (Abella, 2016) and the outcomes which could be intended or unintended (Dolonen, 2014). The main idea of CHAT is that all human activity is mediated (Hardman, 2009; Jones et al., 2016) Mediation, which is the interaction taking place between the subject and the object through the use of tools. From a CHAT perspective, human actions are mediated by cultural tools as interaction occurs in social activities (Abella, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, individual action of graduate pre-service primary school teachers is socially mediated as their consciousness and meaning-making are constructed in social activities.

Zimbabwe's adoption of inclusion in education was in tandem with international human rights macro policies set by the United Nations. To this end, Zimbabwe has an international and national lawful directive to guarantee the inclusion of diverse learners in education notwithstanding their discrete backgrounds. In alignment with other UN member states, Zimbabwe professionally prepares pre-service teachers for inclusion in education in its teachers' training colleges and universities (Majoko, 2018). Yet, even after the completion of the professional preparation for inclusion in education, pre-service teachers in Zimbabwe are seen demonstrating a serious deficit of information and pre-requisite competencies to cater for uniqueness of diverse learners (World Report on Disability, 2011). Such a scenario is costly for nothing as national resources are wasted in teacher education institutions which do not equip them professionally for inclusive education. This is against a background that, most of the contemporary classrooms are characterised by learner-diversity that calls for teachers with full understanding of inclusion in education.

In order to establish a detailed report of how pre-service primary school teachers who graduated from a public university in Zimbabwe understand inclusion in education, the following objectives served as its framework. These include to:

1. establish graduate pre-service primary school teachers' perception of the concept of inclusion in education
2. identify inclusive practices that graduate pre-service primary school teachers use in regular classrooms
3. propose strategies that could enhance inclusion in education

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative methodology. The study population, participants, procedures, and data analysis are presented in the following sections. This qualitative research was entrenched in a single case study design. Qualitative methodology entails the search for meanings instead of experimentation or search for quantities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Vohra, 2014), hence meaning of the term 'qualitative'. However, this is not to suggest that qualitative research is based on an individual's point of view only but rather, its findings are rigorous and dependable (Hogan et al., 2009). Since the study required participants' perceptions of inclusion in education, it was grounded in phenomenology that, according to Pierce (2008) seeks to understand participants' subjective perspectives of their direct experiences and situations.

There are three universities offering pre-service teacher education in Masvingo province. In order to have an in-depth understanding of graduate pre-service primary school teachers' understanding of inclusion in education, one university was purposively sampled, whose 16 graduates where individually interviewed face to face and observed while teaching diverse learners. Document analysis and a follow-up discussion complemented data collection. Selection criteria was that, one should be: in possession of a pre-service undergraduate teaching qualification; at least a year of teaching experience; currently teaching in a general education school classroom in Masvingo province; and be a graduate from the selected university. The sample had two males and 14 females whose age ranged from 24 to 36. Codes were assigned to each (T1 to T16) in sync with ethical considerations of confidentiality and anonymity of participants. The right to anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants should be respected and maintained (Leedy & Ormrod, 2009).

The ethical clearance to carry out the present study was obtained from the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science, Innovation and Technology Development (MoHTE,SITD) Head Office; culminating into accessing and securing further permission from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) of Zimbabwe, Masvingo provincial office, district education offices of Masvingo district and school heads of the selected teacher participants. Prior to executing the study, teachers who volunteered to participate signed consent forms. Hays & Singh (2012) concur that informed consent is obtainable through the researcher highlighting issues that may affect participants. All participants were furnished with a clear-cut and brief study profile to accelerate entry into general education primary schools, sampling, establishing and sustaining rapport and upholding research ethical considerations.

In order to establish the understanding of inclusion in education of pre-service primary school teachers who graduated from a public university in Zimbabwe, there was verbatim transcription of individual interviews guided by Braun & Clarke's (2006) stages of data analysi. They were later sorted and categorized according to emergent themes. Data analysis commenced by reading through each one of the individual interviews, the document analysis and the nonparticipant observation field notes repeatedly to identify major themes that emerged grounded in patterns of commonalities. A constant comparative approach of organization of data with the assistance of a critical reader, was employed in data analysis so as to make certain that codes captured participants' variety of views (Pierce, 2008; Silverman, 2021), hence adding to credibility and trustworthiness of the study results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings obtained through analysis of data solicited from interviews, document analysis, observations, and follow-up discussions, four major sub-themes emerged. These are: Adoption of updated curriculum; Meeting diverse abilities and socioeconomic statuses of learners; Meeting diverse

disabilities, abilities and educational backgrounds of learners; and addressing diverse abilities and disabilities of learners. In light of the wide array of aforementioned sub-themes, university graduate pre-service primary school teachers demonstrated the lack of a universal and comprehensive understanding of inclusion in education. The subsequent section presents these sub-themes:

Adoption of updated curriculum

One university graduate pre-service primary school teacher understood inclusion in education as the adoption of an updated curriculum in response to changing needs of society. This entailed fostering in learners the knowledge, skills and vocational careers to cope with their future life, as reflected in the subsequent quote:

> *Inclusion is to make them [learners] learn about the new curriculum. In this case we have a new curriculum issued by Dr Dokora [Former Minister of MoPSE of Zimbabwe]. So, the implementation of the new curriculum makes them to grasp the new concept that helps them in future life and to grasp the skills from, especially the hands-on skills. For example, the Visual and Performance Arts Studies that was introduced in the New Curriculum (Tr7).*

In Grade 4, Tr7 was observed opening and copying a list of Mathematics problems on a topic on Measurement of the Area of a Rectangle drawn from the Curriculum Framework for Zimbabwe Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022. Thereafter, Tr7 discussed with the learners the significance of Mathematical concepts of accurately measuring, drawing and calculating in the life after school to ensure their appreciation of the practicality of such concepts. One gifted, talented and creative learner was seen pointing out that such concepts were practiced by designers and builders during construction of physical structures inclusive of houses. In a follow-up discussion with Tr7, it was revealed that the Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022 of Zimbabwe requires teachers to equip learners with practical skills for use in future life and careers, hence the setting of pathways that learners should choose as they further their education. Analysis of this curriculum framework revealed that it is life-skills oriented and guided by a generic principle of inclusivity defined on page 15 as: "an education system that takes into account and addresses the different learners' needs and abilities without disadvantaging any group or individual". Thus, the graduate pre-service primary school teachers' understanding of inclusion in education was based on the mere association of the inclusive curriculum implemented in primary schools instead of formal training hence lacked its conceptual understanding.

Meeting diverse abilities and socioeconomic statuses of learners

Embedded in religion and human diversity, two university graduate pre-service primary school teachers understood inclusion in education as teachers' response to the diverse abilities and socio-economic statuses of learners in regular classes to facilitate their understanding of taught concepts. This constituted the process and the methods of teaching that meets the individuality of learners that manifests from individual and systemic factors, as illustrated in the following selected excerpts:

> *Inclusion in education is how a teacher takes learners of different abilities and the method that he or she uses to teach these children for them to understand the taught concept. God created everyone. Some are from poor families. Others are from rich families. Some have enough materials while others lack resources. In inclusion in education, a teacher should teach these learners accordingly (Tr1).*

> *Inclusion in education is having different pupils in the classroom. For example, some of them are less able; more able. As a teacher, you have to cater for all the differences. When you are teaching, they need time and they need more media for them to understand something. As a teacher, you have to understand them first for you to teach them. You have to understand their differences as most are from poverty stricken homes (Tr12).*

Thus, university graduate pre-service teachers' understanding of inclusion in education only addressed some unique needs of learners that are expected to be addressed in inclusion in education rather than the various categories of human diversity. In teaching Shona, a learning area, Tr1 was observed using pictures of animals including an elephant, hyena, cow, goat, cheetah and jackal to teach Shona proverbs on wild and domestic animals in Grade 6. The teacher was observed asking questions related to the chart and learners not raising their hands as they seemed not to have knowledge of some animals displayed. Two learners were seen taking turns to write with one pen as they were completing proverbs on wild and domestic animals that were written on the chalkboard. A follow-up discussion with the teacher revealed that learners who were not participating in the lesson lacked exposure to wild animals that were displayed as they were found in national parks and game reserves that they never visited.

Analysis of the basic terminology of the module TDEFP 403 outline revealed that "inclusion in education" is not among the terms such as disability, impairment and special needs education that are taught to graduate pre-service primary school teachers during their professional preparation. Analysis of the Shona lesson plan of Tr1 revealed that learners were assigned the same written work regardless of their diverse abilities as they wrote 10 problems as the written exercise for the lesson. Analysis of the TP supervision file of the university, from which the graduate pre-service teachers who participated in this study were drawn, revealed that it focused on using general teaching methods for typically developing learners without any mention of methods that meet the diverse abilities and backgrounds of learners in mainstream classes. For instance, its section on teaching procedures outlines that lesson development is achieved through clear explanations, demonstrations and questioning, among others.

Meeting diverse disabilities, abilities and educational backgrounds of learners

Three university graduate pre-service primary school teachers understood inclusion in education as teaching methods that meet the individuality of learners with diverse abilities, disabilities and educational backgrounds in the mainstream classes. This entailed identifying and understanding barriers to learning of children to provide them adequate time, remedial work, extension work, appropriate teaching and learning media and strategic sitting positions to equally participate in the classroom, as shown in the following statements:

Inclusion involves the way you teach in the classroom whether all children are being catered for in whatever you are doing. They have differences including delayed enrolment in schools. Those unable need more attention and appropriate sitting positions while those who are able, understand quickly, despite the fact that you are using relevant media or you are not using relevant media (Tr11).

Inclusion in education is how you teach when you are in a classroom with learners with different learning abilities. As a teacher, you have to take on board each one of them in your teaching. When those slow learners fail the exercise I give them, I remedy them. And those, the fast learners, I will give them extension work so that they won't play (Tr9).

Inclusion in education is accepting all the learners, their different abilities and disabilities. You accept them as they are and you can handle them with their differences. The other child has the problem of the eyesight problem. So I changed his sitting position. I changed him from the back and put him at the front so that he can see what is written on the chalkboard (Tr13).

University graduate pre-service primary school teachers' understanding of inclusion in education was short of addressing most of the components of the philosophy, including teaching and learning assessment that responds to the individuality of learners with diverse abilities, disabilities and educational backgrounds. In a Grade 5 Mathematics lesson, Tr11 was observed teaching calculation of the area of a triangle. She handpicked learners to demonstrate the correct calculation of such an area on the chalkboard. After successful demonstrations by these learners, Tr11 asked volunteers to calculate the area of the same triangle again on the chalkboard. Except for the three learners who had initially demonstrated on the chalkboard, none of the learners volunteered to do so. Two learners who were selected to calculate the area of a triangle failed to follow the specified steps for the calculation

of the area of a triangle. Learners with low-vision were observed seated closer to the chalkboard to facilitate correct perception of the work written on the chalkboard.

Participant Tr11 was observed explaining how to calculate the same area of a triangle using wooden blocks to illustrate to learners dimensions considered in calculating the area of a triangle. Tr11 was further observed shoulder marking other learners' progress. She also assisted a learner who had no pen to write with her own pen. Learners were observed taking turns to use rulers as the culture of sharing seemed to permeate the class. Analysis of the module TDEFP 403: Special Needs Education Section 3.3 reveals that graduate pre-service primary school teachers were taught strategies for the inclusion of children with disabilities in education during their professional preparation. Analysis of the Circular Minute Number P36 of 2006 on Curriculum Access for All Learners which graduate pre-service primary school teachers were taught on strategies for the inclusion of children with diverse abilities, disabilities and backgrounds in mainstream classrooms in module TDEFP 404: Educational Management in Section 2.10 in their initial teacher professional training demonstrated that teachers should provide equal access to education for all learners including those with disabilities.

Addressing diverse abilities and disabilities of learners

Four university graduate pre-service primary school teachers understood inclusion in education as a teaching method that facilitates the meeting of the individuality of learners with diverse abilities and disabilities including those with learning difficulties and the gifted, talented and creative in mainstream classrooms. This involved addressing of individuality including the provision of non-discriminatory social interaction between learners with and without disabilities in mainstream classrooms, as shown in the following statements:

Inclusion in education is teaching every pupil in the lesson. Every pupil must participate in the lesson. He or she might be disabled or might have some problems or might be so talented. All of them must be treated equally when learning. So those pupils must mingle with those who do not have disabilities when learning (Tr2).

Inclusion in education is how the teacher meets each and every strength and weakness of the learner. We were taught about learners who are slow and those who are fast in learning. I start with the lower level learning and then go to the concrete learning. Lower level explanation going to the concrete one, that's how l do it with the slow learners so that they understand each and every step, where we are coming from. For the gifted, I use abstract teaching (Tr6).

These university graduate pre-service primary school teachers had a narrow understanding of inclusion in education since it was based on addressing diverse abilities and disabilities of learners. Inclusion in education addresses the diversity of learners that manifests from diverse individual and systemic factors beyond abilities and disabilities. These include sexual orientation and poverty of learners and extend beyond their participation in mainstream classes to include their access, success and acceptance in these settings. In a Grade 4 English lesson, Tr2 was observed differentiating reading comprehension tasks. He instructed learners to choose types of punctuation marks they wanted to use from a list of six provided. Learners who were gifted, creative and talented were seen punctuating a play-based story extracted from a newspaper while the rest of the learners punctuated a simple paragraph written on the chalkboard. The teacher was then seen following up with all learners, shoulder-marking in order to provide support where a need arose. This resulted in most learners successfully completing the assigned written exercise on the use of punctuation marks. A learner with Spina-Bifida and another with low vision were seen being called individually by name and relocated from their near the door and near the chalk board sitting positions respectively for paired-group work.

From a follow-up discussion, the participant revealed to me that a learner with Spina-Bifida was usually seated closest to the door to allow a quick exit to the toilet because of the problem of incontinence. Analysis of the Disabled Persons Act [Chapter 17:01] (as amended) 2001 of Zimbabwe which is a component of the course Module TDEFP 403: Special Needs Education taught to graduate pre-service primary school teachers under item 3.4: Legislative dimensions, prohibits the discrimination of people with disabilities in public premises, services and amenities. Analysis of the

Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act 2013, Section 56, which graduate pre-service teachers were taught, showed that it enshrined equality and non-discrimination of people on the basis of abilities, disabilities and any other basis.

Previous research (Frankel et al., 2010; Hu et al., 2017; Kim & Rouse, 2011; Pantić & Florian, 2015) has established that, significant statistics of learners with disabilities are enrolled in mainstream classrooms in many countries including Zimbabwe (Chireshe, 2013; Majoko, 2005; Mandina, 2012). This has been necessitated by the said countries' adoption and ratification of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 2004).

Graduate pre-service primary school teachers who trained at the same university in the same cohort, studying the same compulsory core module on Special Needs Education and thirty-seven generic modules in their B.Ed Honour's Degree in Education specialising in primary school education, revealed divergent understandings of inclusion in education. This is consistent with the CHAT principle of multi-voicedness of an activity system, which advances that an activity is usually a community of multiple points of view, traditions and interests as its participants carry their own individual diverse histories and views (Hancock & Miller, 2018). Similarly, Frambach et al. (2014) postulate that multi-voicedness of an activity system is a collective interaction of individuals and communities who share different views and interests. In the same vein, Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares (2008) assert that an activity system is often a community of multiple interests, perspectives and traditions as participants carry their own different histories and views.

The foregoing finding aligns with previous studies which established that, worldwide, there is no single universally accepted definition of inclusion in education because of several and related terms such as integration, least restrictive environment, mainstreaming and deinstitutionalisation that have been institutionalised in Special Needs Education before the adoption of the philosophy (Armstrong et al., 2011; Forlin et al., 2013). In the same vein, previous studies found that both developed and developing countries define inclusion in education differently (Donnelly & Watkins, 2011). Similarly, Roth et al. (2012) study established that Irish primary school teachers understood inclusion in education differently as some perceived it as schools' success in promoting a change in learners' academic and social experiences while others viewed it as teacher responsiveness to learners' needs and learning styles. University graduate pre-service primary school teachers' divergent understandings of inclusion in education may result from their lack of comprehensive formal teaching and learning on it in their training which reveals a lack of their professional preparation with respect to the conceptual understanding of the philosophy. The divergent understandings of inclusion in education of university graduate pre-service primary school teachers resulted in their divergent practices of it. Similarly, Voss & Bufkin (2011) postulate that the international lack of a single comprehensive meaning of inclusion in education results in misconceptions and confused practice of it (Voss & Bufkin, 2011). In the same vein, previous studies found that, while the phrase inclusion in education is used internationally, it could be distorted in developing countries that do not have a history of institutionalisation of learners with disabilities and industrialisation because of their economic challenges that hamper the development of education systems that address the diversity of learners (Armstrong et al., 2011; Singh, 2009). Previous studies also reveal that the differences in meaning of inclusion in education in different countries manifests from their diverse historical, political and social contexts (Norwich, 2008; Stubbs, 2008).

Positive dispositions, knowledge, and skills gleaned from one core Special Needs Education module, thirty-seven generic modules and the social-cultural-religious space of the university graduate pre-service primary school teachers informed their understanding of inclusion in education. This aligns with CHAT that postulates that individuals cannot operate independently from their social, historical, and cultural settings (Wilson, 2014) and their development is entrenched in the social, cultural, and historical contexts of their countries and the global world (Holzman, 2006). Similarly, Yang & Rusli's (2011) quantitative study in Singapore found that the discrete model of professional preparation of pre-service teachers for inclusion in education taught these teachers child-centred pedagogy that fostered in them appreciation of the value of it since they could accommodate learner diversity in their classes. In the same vein, Pitner et al. (2018) study in the USA established that the discrete model of professional preparation of pre-service teachers for inclusion in education fostered

in these teachers cultural responsiveness in their classes. All university graduate pre-service primary school teachers revealed the lack of a comprehensive understanding of inclusion in education.

CONCLUSION

While the graduate pre-service teachers who participated in this study lacked the theory on inclusion in education since they revealed divergent understandings of it, it can also be concluded that, the lack of theory on inclusion in education does not guarantee failure to practice it in regular classrooms since university graduate pre-service primary school teachers had positive attitudes towards inclusion in education and practiced it based on theory of regular education.

The recommendations below relate to policy, practice and research. Because university graduate pre-service primary school teachers revealed divergent and limited understandings of inclusion in education, education policy makers in Zimbabwe could consult and partner with other stakeholders, including individuals, organizations and institutions to develop a common national definition of inclusion in education in the country that could improve the delivery of services. Because most university graduate pre-service primary school teachers revealed limited and divergent understandings of inclusion in education while some university graduate pre-service primary school teachers revealed a total lack of understanding of inclusion in education, reviewing the core module on special needs education could ensure that pre-service teachers have a comprehensive understanding of the philosophy.

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