

In-service Teachers' Knowledge of the Concept of Inclusive Education and the UNCRPD Principles - Zambia

Kenneth Kapalu Muzata

University of Zambia

Abstract

This study examined teachers' knowledge of the concept of inclusive education and the principles that guide its implementation. The study adopted a mixed methods approach in order to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data to assess teachers' understanding of the concept of inclusive education through their own definitions of the concept. One hundred and four (104) in-service teachers, who were learning on distance education mode in three universities, were randomly selected to participate in the study. Closed and open ended questions were used to collect data. Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 to obtain frequencies, percentages and differences in responses from the different provinces respondents came from. Qualitative analysis involved interpreting and describing the responses on the definitions teachers wrote on spaces provided on the questionnaires. Results revealed that teachers had sound knowledge of the concept of inclusive education by definition and identifying beneficiaries while they lacked knowledge of the principles of inclusive education. It was recommended that in-service teachers need capacity building in the principles of inclusive education.

Key words: *Teacher, Inclusive education, UNCRPD Principles, Disability, Zambia*

Corresponding author: muzatakenneth@gmail.com

Background Literature

Inclusive education is the most sought type of education today because it helps children to develop as a people with respect for one another, facilitating social, physical, cognitive and emotional development. In inclusive education, children learn to appreciate one another's strengths and weaknesses in the process of interaction, developing together a sense of humanness and support for one another. When such a virtue is practiced as children develop, it becomes part of their life. Zambia has committed to providing education of good quality to learners with special educational needs (Ministry of Education-MoE, 1996) as a fulfilment of being a signatory to many world conventions on education for children and learners with disabilities such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), and the 1994 Salamanca agreement on inclusive education (Ministry of General Education-MoGE, 2016). The country appears to have taken seriously the education for children with disabilities by adopting international frameworks on the rights of children through the enactment of the Education Act 23, 2011, Education Policy 1996, the Disabilities Act 6, 2012 and the Sixth National Development Plan 2011-2015 (MoGE, 2016). Further, the country is committed to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals specifically the one on inclusion, equity and lifelong learning.

The UNCRPD provides nations with guidance on the principles of inclusion in order to ensure learners with disabilities learn without discrimination. The eight principles are equality of opportunity, non-discrimination, full and effective participation, respect for differences and acceptance of the disabled as diversity, accessibility, respect for inherent dignity and autonomy to make choices, equality between men and women and respect for evolving capacities and identities of the disabled (Leonard Cheshire, 2019; UNCRP, 2006).

The concept of inclusive education maybe applied differently in different countries and contexts. However, the commonly used definition reflects the education of learners with disabilities within the mainstream classroom (Rastogi, & Kumar, 2016); Mugambi 2017; Paju, Kajamaa, Pirttimaa & Kontu, 2018). For instance, Rastogi, & Kumar (2016) define inclusive education as an approach where students with special educational needs spend most or all of their time with non-disabled students. The emphasis in the definitions appears to focus on the disabled learning together with none disabled. However, this maybe misapplied to disadvantage other learners with other conditions and circumstances who are equally vulnerable. The United Nations understanding of inclusive education encompasses four critical things (United Nations, 2006), that Inclusive Education is a;

- fundamental human right of all persons with disabilities,
- means to achieve the full realisation of the right to education and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights,
- principle in itself that values the well-being of all students, respects their inherent dignity and acknowledges their needs and their ability to make a contribution to society and
- process that necessitates a continuing and pro-active commitment to the elimination of barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to culture, policy and practice of regular schools to accommodate all students.

From this description of inclusive education, there is an acknowledgement that it involves children with disabilities and their right to education. We take inclusive education as movement for the rights of persons with disabilities. However, while the recognition is that children with disabilities should learn in the mainstream classroom, such an education should benefit all other learners.

There is a danger to overemphasise inclusive education as an agenda to promote the quality of education for learners with disabilities alone yet many other learners are vulnerable and disadvantaged. What should be realised is that inclusive education should not be used to disadvantage other children's access to education. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund - UNICEF (2017), explaining the United Nations position on inclusive education says;

Every child has the right to education. That includes children with disabilities. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities goes further to stress that inclusive education is a fundamental human right for every child with a disability. An inclusive education system is one that accommodates all students whatever their abilities or requirements, and at all levels – pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and life-long learning. (UNICEF, 2017, p, 3)

It is clear that education is a right for every child. Every child here means all children with different characteristics and circumstances including orphans, children from minority languages who may be neglected, those from low social economic status and so forth. Inclusive education may mean differently depending on context. For instance, in Nigeria, inclusive education includes children of nomadic pastorals, migrant fisher folks, migrant farmers and hunters whom the system follows to their places of migration to be offered education (Odetoro, 2014). In Kenya the concept of inclusive education embraces all children, youths and adults in need (Kenya- MoE 2008). Inclusive education is defined as a never ending process that aims

at increasing participation for everyone, and not limited to those with a disability (Guðjónsdóttir, & Óskarsdóttir, 2016).

In Zambia, following the guidelines for implementing inclusive and special education, the Ministry of Education defines an inclusive education institution as a place where a learner with special education needs receives education without discrimination or a special education institution where a learner perceived to have no special educational needs receives education without discrimination (MoGE, 2016). The same document classifies a child with special needs as one with a disability (MoGE, 2016). This appears to limit the understanding of inclusive education, thereby denying inclusive education services to all other children with different circumstances learning within the same classroom. The Disability Act of 2012 cautions against excluding persons with disabilities from accessing education in an inclusive institution (Government of the Republic of Zambia - GRZ, 2012). Zambia has several population characteristics which include persons with disabilities, refugees, street children, children of HIV/ AIDS deceased parents, pregnant girls that return to school, children from poor backgrounds and learners from minority groupings. If the concentration for inclusion is basically on disability alone, high drop outs from school maybe experienced from the other vulnerable categories without noticing. Thus, inclusive education must broaden its net to capture as many children as the rights demand to benefit from education.

There is a wealth of knowledge on the challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education in Zambia and other African countries. Zambia piloted inclusive education in Kalulushi- Copperbelt province of Zambia in 1997 and later in North Western and Western provinces in 2001 (Ndonyo, 2007). A study by Ndonyo (2007) on teacher perceptions of inclusive education in North Western province of Zambia found that there were many challenges that affected the implementation of inclusive education. Teachers preferred to have only learners with physical disabilities included and not others. Learners also teased their peers with disabilities. Mwamba (2016) identified insufficient teaching and learning materials and lack of training as factors that hindered the implementation of inclusive education in Kalulushi-Zambia. Many studies elucidate that inclusive education is hampered by lack of teaching skills among teachers (Ndhlovu, Muzata, Chipindi & Mtonga, 2016; Kasongole & Muzata, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2014), failure to align educational practices with the principle of inclusive education (Morina, 2017), lack of access to relevant Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) that facilitate inclusion (Simui, Kasonde-Ngandu & Nyaruwata, 2017; & Mtonga, 2013), lack of specialised materials for teaching and learning and unfriendly learning environment (Eunice, Nyangia & Orodho, 2015) and lack of knowledge in curriculum differentiation and adaptation (Dalton, Mckenzie, & Kahonde, 2012; Muzata & Mahlo, 2019), negative attitudes, stigma and discrimination among others (Ndonyo, 2007). There appears to be no mention of whether teachers themselves have knowledge about what inclusive education is, what it involves, its benefits and the principles that guide its implementation. This knowledge gap led to this study.

Statement of a problem

The implementation of inclusive education is to a large extent dependent on the teachers' understanding of the concept of inclusive education and the principles that guide its implementation. As a signatory to the United Nations (UN) conventions on the rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Zambia is party to the principles of inclusive education. While the country is making efforts to enact laws and policies on rights to education for children with disabilities (Chitiyo & Muwana, 2018, Johnson & Muzata, 2019, MoGE, 2016, MoE, 1996), it is not known whether teachers understand what inclusive education is, who it should cater for and what the principles of inclusive education as listed and explained by the

UNCRPD are. As the country spearheads the implementation of inclusive education, it is expected that teachers have full understanding of what inclusive education is and the principles that drive its implementation in schools. This study was therefore conducted to establish teachers' knowledge of inclusive education and the principles of inclusive education. Thus, it was assumed that there was no way teachers could effectively implement inclusive education when they do not know what it is and what it involves.

Research Questions

The questions that guided the study were;

- What is inclusive education according to in-service teachers studying on distance education mode in Zambia?
- Do in-service teachers on distance education understand the principles of inclusive education as outlined in the UNCRPD?

Theoretical Perspectives about disability and Inclusion

There are several theoretical perspectives of disability and inclusion serving a number of purposes such as providing definitions of disability, explaining the causes of disability and its perceived needs, and shaping the identity of disability in general. A review by Retief & Letšosa, (2018) found several models such as the moral or religious, the medical, the social, the identity, the human rights, the cultural, the economic, and the charity models. Figure 1 shows the core beliefs in each model;

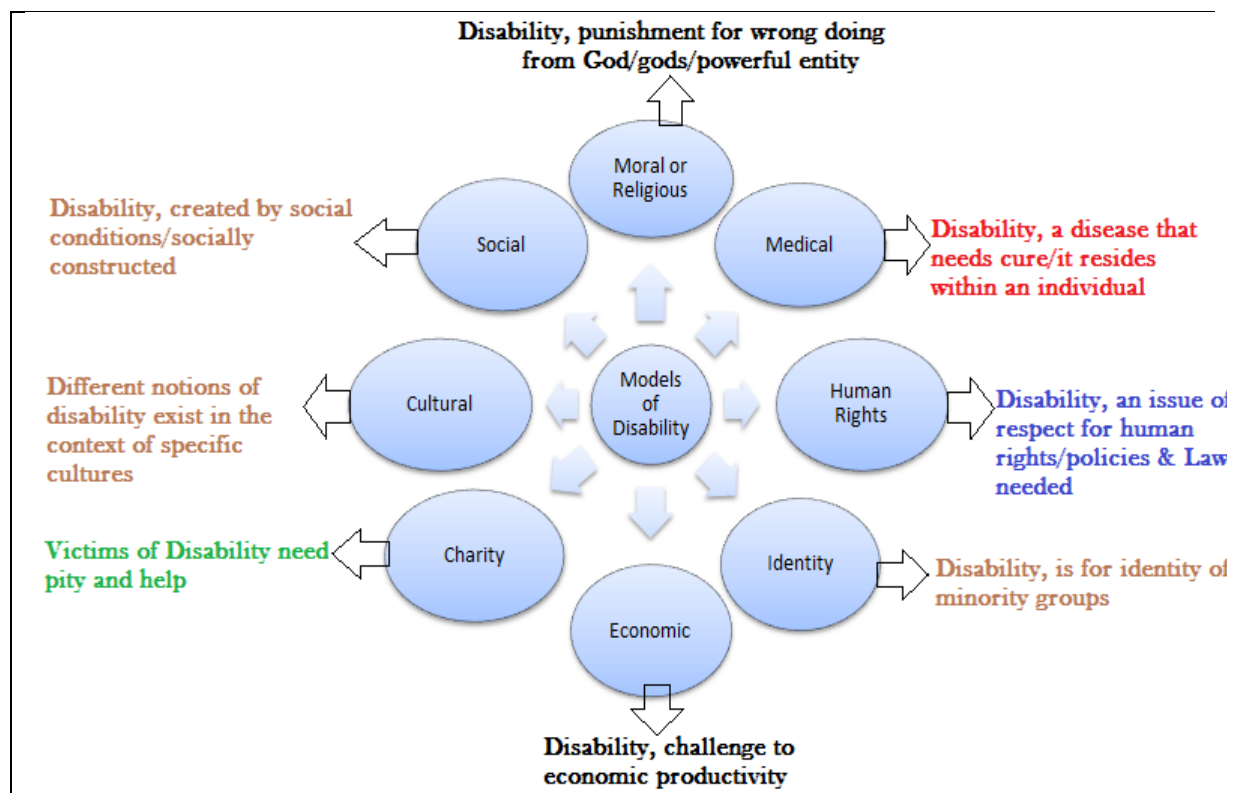


Figure 1: Theoretical Models adapted from Retief & Letšosa, (2018)

Basically, it appears there are two main models namely the medical and social models. Issues of morality vs religion, charity, economy, human rights and culture in the definition and explanation of disability fall in the social model of disability as much as they relate to the

critical disability theory. Thus, disability as a socially constructed phenomenon is more inclined to the social model because society is believed to create barriers. For instance, cultural barriers involve negative beliefs about disability and how they are treated in different contexts. Cultural factors are socially constructed factors just like economic, human rights, and charity and identity factors. People fight for identity because they think they have no identity from the wider community or society, that they are not respected and recognised, also a socially constructed phenomenon just like human rights for the marginalized. The concept of ‘Charity’ comes in because it is believed that people with disabilities are unable to live independently but dependent on others for survival.

The other emerging theory of inclusion is the Critical Disability Theory, which encompasses all the barriers that exist within the environment similar to the social disability model. The Critical Disability Theory encompasses different approaches in trying to understand or theorise disability from the cultural, political and social phenomenon perspectives and not solely as an individualized or medical issue (Hall, 2019). The Theory (CDT) provides a comparison of the norms in liberalism and value with how they are actualised in daily life of persons with disabilities (Hosking, 2008). To argue that those who are disabled are only those with physical deformities, or vivid disabling conditions does not present the reality of disability because everyone in one way or another is disabled and in life time becomes disabled, thus disability is universal (Hosking, 2008). Similar to social model of disability, the CDT posits that disability is a social construct; that there is a complex relationship between the impairment that causes a disability, how the individual responds to the impairment they have and their social environment and the disadvantages imposed by the environment. The environment includes physical, institutional and attitudinal disadvantages (Hosking, 2008). For inclusion to be real, society must be positively responsive. Positive response includes the medical responses to disability treatment, interventions and rehabilitation. Positive public policies should be seen to support the elimination of social barriers rather than to construe disability as a barrier itself. The fact that disability maybe a medical condition does not make it permanent and render the victims of disability as generally dysfunctional or perpetually needing cure, connotations which perpetuate negative attitudes towards disability.

For this study, any lack of knowledge and skills in the teaching of learners with disabilities in comparison to other learners maybe based on several factors that may be socially constructed rather than biologically inclined. Such factors lie in negative attitudes that affect service provision from policy formulation to service delivery, thereby disadvantaging persons with disabilities.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed methods approach. A convergent mixed methods design was used. Data were collected at the same time using the same instrument but analysed separately to confirm and disconfirm the results (Creswell, 2014). A questionnaire with closed and open ended questions was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. One hundred and four (104) respondents answered questions regarding their understanding of the concept of inclusive education and the principles as outlined in the UNCRPD. Respondents, N=104 (29; 27.9% males and 75; 72.1% females) serving teachers were conveniently captured from three universities namely Kwame Nkrumah University, the University of Zambia and Chalimbana Universities during a residential session of professional development. Simple random sampling was applied to select respondents that answered the questionnaires. This was done after purposively identifying only in-service teachers in the institutions to take part in the study. Respondents represented the 10 provinces of Zambia as follows; Lusaka (n = 15; 14.4%), Central (n = 13; 12.5%), Copperbelt (n = 19; 18.3%), Eastern (n = 12; 11.5%), Southern (n =

8; 7.7%) and Northern provinces (n = 2; 1.9%). Other provinces were North Western (n = 16; 15.4%), Western (n = 5; 4.8%), Luapula (n = 3; 2.9%) and Muchinga (n = 10; 9.6%). There was a missing system number of (n = 1; 1%). Although quantitative research allows for generalisation of results from samples of 30 for correlational studies and above 100 for survey studies (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011), the distribution of respondents in this study suggests that the results may not be highly generalisable to the whole country because some provinces were underrepresented.

The questionnaire used to collect data had three sections. The first section collected personal data about the respondents in order to obtain their characteristics to validate their participation in the study. Personal characteristics included gender, qualifications, experience in teaching, province where they were coming from and subject specialisation. The second section collected information on their understanding of inclusive education and the principles of inclusive education. On their understanding, respondents were asked to define the concept of inclusive education and list categories of learners that should benefit from the type of education. On their understanding of the principles, respondents were asked to state whether or not they were familiar with the principles of inclusive education. After this question, they were required to list the principles of inclusive education on spaces provided on the questionnaire.

Quantitative data were coded in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-version 16) and analysed to obtain frequencies, percentages and cross tabulations to obtain possible differences in data from the different provinces. The definitions which made up qualitative data were transformed into quantitative data to obtain a general picture in percentages about whether the in-service teachers understood the concept of inclusive education or not. This nature of analysis is supported by Connolly, (2007) who says,

There obviously be times when you need open ended questions (i.e. a question that is followed by a space where the respondent writes down their answer in their own words). However, you need to bear in mind that you will have to go back and translate these qualitative answers into codes at some point if you want to analyse them quantitatively (p, 16).

Overly, the definitions respondents gave made up the qualitative data for this study. Ibrahim (2012) argues that qualitative data is heavily dependent on interpretation and providing several explanations of the data collected because such kind of explanations act as evidence of the data collected. Creswell, (2014) places the description of qualitative research heavily on the meaning ascribed to it. Sample definitions were provided to provide the real picture of the teachers' understanding of the concept of inclusive education.

Every study that deals with humans requires considering ethics. Ethical considerations help to protect the privacy of respondents from unforeseen circumstances that may arise from the research findings. In this study, respondents signed consent forms as a way of agreeing to participate in the study. The first part of the questionnaire had information explaining the study and its significance. On it, respondents were advised to withdraw from answering the questionnaire if they felt uncomfortable. As a way of fulfilling anonymity, respondents were advised not to write their personal particulars such as names and addresses on the questionnaires.

Results

In-service Teachers' Understanding of the Concept of Inclusive Education

Teachers were asked to define the concept of inclusive education. A tallying count showed that there were three main types of responses from the respondents as shown in table 1:

Table 1: Teachers definitions of inclusive education grouped into 3 categories.

S/N	Response	Frequency	Percent
1	Inclusive is where the disabled and non-disabled learn together in the same classroom	95	91
2	This is where learners regardless of their abilities learn together	5	5
3	No response	4	4
	TOTAL	104	100

(N = 104; 100%)

From the definitions, respondents appeared to understand inclusion generally as education where learners with disabilities learn in the mainstream classroom where every other learner would learn from even when they have no disability. However, different terms were used to describe the inclusion of learners with disabilities

Inclusion as learning together of learners who are normal and those that are not normal

This is one form of understanding disability as demonstrated by a number of in-service teachers. For instance, one of the teachers said,

- Inclusive education is where the normal and special education children learn together (Teacher 11, Female; Lusaka Province).
- Putting learners with disability to learn with the so called normal (Teacher 100, Female; Central Province). This is where the so called normal and the disabled learn together (Teacher 102, Female, Central Province)
- This is where you teach the children with disabilities together with those who are normal (Teacher 104, Female, Copperbelt province)

Inclusion as education of learners with disabilities together with those without disabilities

This definition was equally popular among respondents where disability characterised the understanding of inclusion. This is depicted in the following sample excerpts:

- Inclusive education is the type of education that includes both learners with and without disabilities in the same learning setting (Teacher 12, Female; Lusaka Province).
- Teaching both the disabled learners and those who are abled in one class (Teacher 18, Male; Southern Province).
- It is education where all pupils with different abilities are found in one class (Teacher 16, Female; North Western Province)

Inclusion as integration

Another term that characterised the understanding of the concept of inclusion is the concept of integration. Some respondents defined the inclusion as integration of learners with disabilities in the mainstream classroom. For instance;

- The integration of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream (Teacher 24, Female; Copperbelt Province).
- It is the integration of children with special educational needs or disabilities in the regular classroom (Teacher 62, Female, Western Province).

Generally, in-service teachers had a mixture of definitions about what inclusive education is. The most popular definition was that inclusive education is the integration or placement of learners with disabilities in the mainstream classroom where they are expected to learn with learners without disabilities.

However, the results further revealed that teachers understood that inclusive education was not specifically about disability. Table 2 shows the results;

Table 2: Teachers responses as to whether inclusive education involves including the disabled only

		<i>Is inclusive education about disabilities</i>					
		Yes		No		Total	
Province			Percent		Percent		Percent
Lusaka		3	3	12	12	15	15
Central		2	2	10	10	12	12
Copperbelt		1	1	18	18	19	19
Eastern		2	2	9	9	11	11
Southern		1	1	7	7	8	8
Northern		1	1	1	1	2	2
North western		3	3	13	13	16	16
Western		1	1	4	4	5	5
Luapula		1	1	2	2	3	3
Muchinga		1	1	9	9	10	10
Total		16	16	85	84	101	100

Note: (N=104; Missing n=3)

From the results, (n = 85; 84%) believed that inclusive education was not about disability only but also other vulnerable learners. When the responses were compared using Chi square test of independence, it was discovered that there were no significant differences in the responses from the different provinces where respondents were drawn from, ($\chi^2 (9, n = 101) = 4.78, p = .884$). Monte Carlos confidence level of this result was 99%. The results were confirmed by another question which solicited responses about whether inclusive education should include other vulnerable learners. The table 3 shows the results;

Table 3: Teachers responses to whether inclusive education should include other vulnerable learners

	<i>Should Inclusive Education include other vulnerable learners</i>					
	Yes	Percent	No	Percent	Total	Percent
Province	15	15	0	0	15	15
Lusaka						
Central	12	12	1	1	13	13
Copperbelt	18	18	1	1	19	19
Eastern	10	10	1	1	11	11
Southern	8	8	0	0	8	8
Northern	2	2	0	0	2	2
North western	15	15	1	1	16	16
Western	4	4	1	1	5	5
Luapula	2	2	0	0	2	2
Muchinga	9	9	0	0	9	9
Total	95	95	5	5	100	100

Note: (N= 104; Missing n=4)

From the results, teachers understand inclusive education as education that should be inclusive of learners who are vulnerable other than learners with disability. There were no significant difference, ($\chi^2 (9, n = 100) = 4.90, p = .803$). The following Radar figure shows the other categories of learners that qualify for inclusive education according to the respondents.

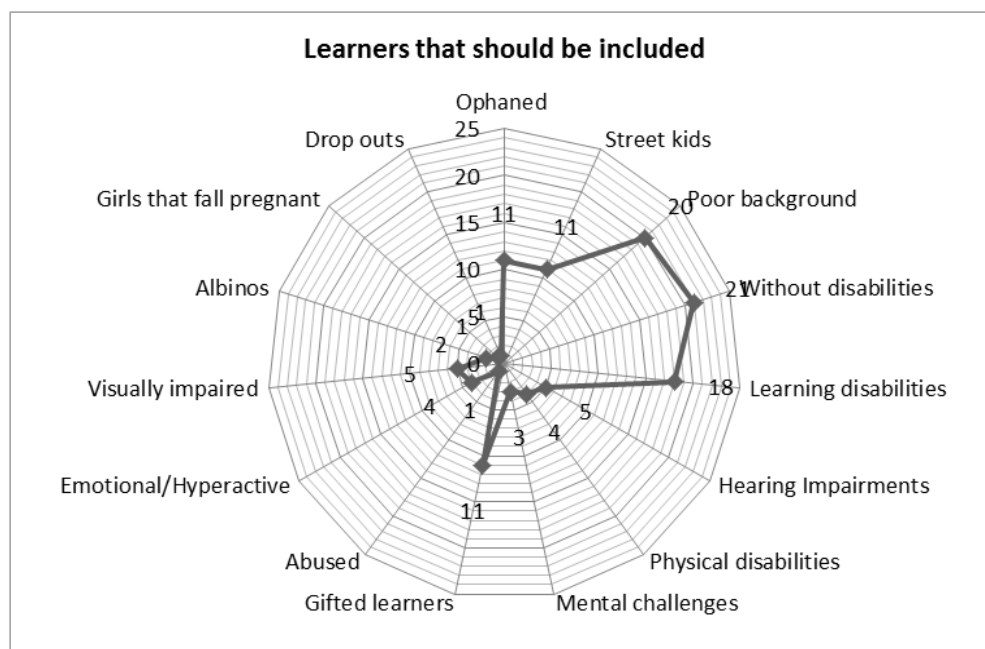


Figure 2: Radar showing teachers' responses of learners that need inclusion

From the radar figure 2, teachers appear to have adequate knowledge of which learners should be included in an inclusive classroom from a Zambian context. Despite having given

the definition of inclusive education as that education which includes learners with disabilities, respondents gave the ideal situation which should include other learners such as the orphaned children, children from poor families, street children, adolescent mothers, gifted learners, drop outs, learners that are abused either sexually or physically and learners with and without disabilities. The results show that teachers were aware that many learners from poor backgrounds, street children, orphaned, those with learning disabilities and the gifted learners were not mainly catered for in inclusion setting definition.

From the qualitative perspective, teachers were asked to explain why the concept of inclusive should include other learners from vulnerable background. The following verbatim excerpts are selected sample responses from respondents:

Discrimination

One of the respondents said everyone faces discrimination based on the circumstance they face and learners who are vulnerable in one way or another need inclusive education as well. He said;

- Any disadvantaging circumstance can bring barriers to learning together in the same classroom. So their needs need to be taken care off (Teacher 22, Male, Eastern Province).
- It will create positive attitudes in children to support each other as they are developing because everyone understands that they are unique in one way or another hence there will be discrimination (Teacher 78, Female, Copperbelt).

Vulnerability

Another theme that came out was that everyone has challenges and needs to be considered in their learning. The following excerpts allude to the theme;

- Inclusive education is not only about learners with disabilities because every learner whether disabled or not has challenges in learning unique to the individual (Teacher 24, Female, Copperbelt).
- Because vulnerable learners may also lack self-esteem so they need to be helped by including them in inclusive education (Teacher 6, Male, Southern Province)

Teachers Understanding of Inclusive Education Principles

Teachers were further asked to state whether they were aware of the principles of inclusive education as outlined in the UNCRPD or not. Table 4 shows the results:

Table 4: Are teachers aware of the Principles of Inclusive Education

		<i>Are you familiar with the principles of Inclusive Education?</i>					
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Province	Lusaka	7	8	5	5	12	13
	Central	4	4	6	7	10	11
	Copperbelt	9	10	8	9	17	19
	Eastern	6	7	5	5	11	12
	Southern	4	4	4	4	8	9
	Northern	2	2	0	0	2	2
	North western	4	4	12	13	16	18

Western	4	4	0	0	4	4
Luapula	1	1	2	2	3	3
Muchinga	3	3	5	5	8	9
Total	44	48	47	52	91	100

Note: N=104; Missing n=13.

From the results, more teachers (n = 47; 52%) said they were not familiar with the principles of inclusive education while (n = 44; 48%) said they were familiar. A further analysis to find out whether the awareness or lack of it was inclined to the provinces where teachers came from, the Chi square computation showed no significant differences, ($\chi^2 (9, n = 91) = 11.63, p = .235$). This means that what teachers in one province said was not different from what others said in other provinces, thereby giving a picture of validity and reliability in such a result. However, the difference between those who were familiar and those who were not was (n = 2; 2.2%) meaning that there was still a large number of teachers that were not aware about the principles of inclusive education.

A follow up question to assess the knowledge of the principles of inclusive education was given in which teachers were required to list the principles of inclusive education on the questionnaire. This question was critical to ascertaining whether teachers actually knew or understood the principles of inclusive education or not. The answers were entered in SPSS as correct or wrong. Table 5 shows the results;

Table 5: Whether the response was correct or wrong

Province	<i>List the principles of Inclusive Education</i>					
	Correct	Percent	Wrong	Percent	Total	Percent
Lusaka	1	1	14	14	15	15
Central	0	0	13	13	13	13
Copperbelt	3	3	16	16	19	18
Eastern	1	1	11	11	12	12
Southern	2	2	6	6	8	8
Northern	0	0	2	2	2	2
North western	1	1	15	15	16	16
Western	2	2	3	3	5	5
Luapula	0	0	3	3	3	3
Muchinga	0	0	10	10	10	10
Total	10	10	93	90	103	100

Note: (N=104; Missing n=1)

The results show that teachers did not have knowledge of the principles of inclusive education (n= 93; 90%). There were no significant differences, ($\chi^2 (9, n = 103) = 11.58, p = .238$). The results in table 5 show a very big difference with what respondents said in table 4, where (n = 44 48%) claimed that they were familiar with the principles of inclusive education. The interpretation demonstrates that it may be easier to agree that you understand something yet not. When the responses were compared against the eight principles of inclusive education, it was clear that in-service teachers were not familiar with principles of inclusive education. The following are some of the responses some teachers gave as the principles of inclusive education:

- Curriculum adjustment (Teacher 4, Male ; Muchinga Province)

- The curriculum should be fit for all children regardless of their condition (Teacher 5, Male; Southern).
- Use of different ways to teach a lesson and when carefully choosing questions and rightful material (Teacher 19, Copperbelt; Male)
- The learning environment should be modified to meet the needs of all the learners e.g. provision of large print to low vision or braille to the blind and sign language to the hearing impairment (Teacher 21, Western; Male).
- Mixing learners with disabilities together (Teacher 100, Central; Female).
- Interacting freely with the learners (Teacher 88, Central; Female).

To a number of teachers, the principles of inclusive education meant curriculum adjustment and modification, a view shared also by teachers 6, Male from Southern province. . The view by teacher 100 was also shared by a number of other respondents such as teacher 77, 44 and 37 from Luapula, Eastern and Northern respectively.

Even those who were familiar gave responses which were not correct but only close to the actual principles as outlined by the UNCRP and not exactly. For instance, the following examples were given as answers to the question;

- The principles include equality of all learners and also that teachers should be flexible and open to change. All children should attend regular classrooms in their local schools (Teacher 2, Female; Lusaka).
- The principles say that ordinary schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other requirements. Further, it states that all the educational policies should stipulate that children with disabilities attend their neighborhood school. All children have the right to learn together and that segregation teaches children to be fearful, ignorant and breeds prejudice (Teacher 3, Male; Copperbelt).
- The principles are accepting all children unconditionally and looking at what the children can do and cannot do (Teacher 20, Lusaka; Female)
- No child should be left behind (Teacher 78, Copperbelt; Female)

From teacher 2, 3, 20 and 78, the responses imply the principle of non-discrimination. Other teachers with similar understanding were teacher 63 from Western province, teacher 59, male from Western, and teacher 52 Male from North Western Province.

The results therefore show that even though teachers understand the concept of inclusive education as demonstrated from the definitions and further giving data on other categories of learners needing inclusive education, they were unable to tell the principles of inclusive education as enlisted in the UNCRPD. There was no difference in terms of their understanding of the concept of inclusive education and the principles of inclusive education.

Discussion of Results

This study has revealed the in-service teachers' understanding of the concept of inclusive education. The several definitions demonstrate the different orientations and contexts even within Zambia. Just as was noted in the background, the understanding of inclusive education may differ from one place to another. From the results of this study, we observe certain terms that are derogatory still being used to refer to persons with disabilities in the definition of the concept of inclusive education. For instance, the term 'normal' used to describe persons without disability denotes that those that are disabled are not normal. The term 'normal' is more of an exclusionary term as no one to some degree is normal and be happy to be called 'abnormal'. Muzata, (2019) noted that society should embrace inclusive language that depicts respect for other people who are differently abled. An inclusive school system

should equally address exclusionary and offensive language in reference to persons with disabilities. The interchange in the use of the concept of inclusive education to mean integration is outdated because integration and inclusion are not synonymous. It is however not surprising that a term like 'integration' is still being used interchangeably with inclusive education. Banja & Mandyata, (2018) in their article titled, '*Teachers' situational analysis of the Integration of pupils with disability in selected primary schools in Zambia*', have used the term 'integration' to mean inclusion. The Ministry of Education policy document of 1996 on education also used the word integration in reference to inclusion (MoE, 1996). Mwamba (2016) observed that what the Ministry of Education in Zambia practices is integration rather than inclusion. It therefore appears some form of confusion has ensued over the meanings of the terms 'integration' and 'inclusion' (Rodriguez & Garro-Gil (2014). Integration is placement of learners with disabilities in the same school or classroom but the children have to adjust to the conditions within the learning environment (Rieser, 2012) while inclusion is about a combination of the support provided to learners within the classroom to allow them to fully participate in learning. As was demonstrated by some respondents, inclusive education is more than placing learners in a school or classroom where those thought not to have disabilities learn from. Inclusive education brings to the classroom diversity based in individual differences and different support systems for all learners to allow for equal and full participation in learning. The product of inclusive education is a sense of positive achievement for all. Support services should allow access to the curriculum by all learners.

The results of this study reveal that Zambian in-service teachers studying through the distance education mode construe inclusive education as educating learners with disabilities together with learners without disabilities in the mainstream classroom. This is not different from the many scholars in the field of inclusive and special education and indeed the policy documents guiding education in Zambia (MoGE, 2016, MoE, 1996). However, teachers seem to observe a deficiency in the definition of inclusive education in that it only concentrates on learners with disabilities yet there are several other learners with different circumstances in the classroom. This realisation puts teachers' understanding of inclusive education well ahead of the policies and laws that exist, which view inclusive education as education for learners with disabilities in the mainstream classrooms. Inclusive education is 'bigger' than the definition itself, it's 'bigger' than placing learners with disabilities in the classroom. Much as it is accepted that learners with disabilities exist in inclusive classrooms in Zambia (Mwamba, 2016), it is not clear whether such learners benefit meaningfully from inclusive education provided in the country. Studies by Kasongole & Muzata, (2020), Kachong'u & Muzata (2020) suggest teachers' lack of understanding of certain disabilities such as the learners with learning disabilities included in the mainstream classroom has affected learners with disabilities placed in the classroom negatively. Such learners are placed in mainstream classroom perhaps unconsciously because it is ordinarily expected that teachers teaching in inclusive classrooms are well trained to teach all learners with different abilities. Full inclusion entails that learners have full participation and a feel of the sense of achievement in the learning process. It is true that Zambia has to some extent included learners with disabilities within the mainstream schools (physical access) but such learners do not receive attention and have no opportunity to fully participate in the learning process because of the several challenges such as lack of trained teachers, lack of teaching and learning materials, none-adaptable curriculum, unfavourable infrastructure and negative attitudes among others (Mwamba, 2016; Ndonyo 2007; MoE 2014; Muzata & Mahlo 2019, Wonani & Muzata, 2019). Beyond these challenges, this study established that even though teachers understand inclusive education by definition and by identifying extra categories of vulnerable learners that should benefit from the type of education, they do not understand the principles of inclusive education as enshrined in the UNCRPD. A question that arises then is, "how can teachers meet the needs of learners with

different special educational needs when they do not know the principles of inclusion?" The principles of inclusive education as enshrined in the UNCRPD are like a blue print manual that should be memorised and understood by inclusive teachers as they endeavour to teach all learners. Teachers are expected to have knowledge that learners require to be treated equally (equality of opportunity), without unfair treatment (non-discrimination) and by using pedagogies that encourage participation of all learners in the learning process (full and effective participation). Teachers' knowledge of the principles of inclusive education also entails that they should demonstrate behaviours and attitudes that portray respect and dignity for learners with disabilities that are included in the mainstream classroom and take the differences in learners as diversity meant to enrich the classroom learning environment (respect for differences and acceptance of the disabled as diversity). Once teachers have knowledge of the principles of inclusive education, it is expected that they provide access to the curriculum to all learners, and facilitate the development of children's self-esteem through demonstration of respect for inherent dignity and autonomy of learners to make choices.

Inclusive education is a social transformation issue that requires change in attitudes to embrace inclusion and inclusive education practices. For as long as negative attitudes continue to reside within the continuum of our traditional beliefs, full inclusion will be difficult to achieve. However, since social transformation involving the change of attitudes and beliefs is an on-going process, nations should endeavour to put in place social policies that encourage full inclusion. Guðjónsdóttir, & Óskarsdóttir, (2016) observe that teachers teaching in inclusive classrooms are faced with challenges of the search for pedagogy and approaches to meet diversity in inclusive schools. With knowledge of the principles of inclusive education, teachers would know the nature of support needed for learners with disabilities and those with other special needs. For instance, accessibility as one of the principles encourages teachers to create learning environments that have the resources to enable learners with different needs access the curriculum. Teachers would know the necessary ICTs for different learners to access content and educational assessment tasks. They also need knowledge and skills in ICTs. Teachers with the knowledge of the principle of accessibility should be advocates for learners' needs, soliciting and practicing inclusive assessment techniques to meet individual needs of learners.

A teacher who is well prepared in inclusive pedagogy and understands the principles of inclusive education has the abilities and skills to adapt the curriculum to the needs of learners with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Thus, such a teacher applies reasonable accommodations to ensure that each learner learns within their capabilities. If inclusive education is construed as diversity, teachers would use such an environment to enrich the learning experiences of their learners.

The wealth of knowledge teachers demonstrated through this study that inclusive education is beyond disability needs the support of policy makers and curriculum designers to take advantage of the results to empower teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills for meeting the needs of all learners. From the Critical theory point of view, the lack of knowledge on the principles of inclusive education suggests that little or no effort has been made to sensitise teachers on the principles, thus making society a barrier to the effective implementation of inclusive education. There appears to be silence in domesticating the principles in education. However, since social transformation is a gradual process, the results of this study contribute to the noble process of changing society so that barriers to the implementation of inclusive education are overcome through the introduction and subsequent implementation of sound social inclusive policies, where everyone will have an opportunity to participate in the development of themselves and their communities.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine in-service teachers' construction of the concept of inclusive education and the principles of inclusive education as enshrined in the UNCRPD. Results revealed that in-service teachers studying on distance were able to define inclusive education as education provided to learners with disabilities in the same classroom with other learners who have no disabilities. This understanding appears contrary to the Critical Disability Theory that argues that everyone has a disability of some kind needing specific attention at one point in a life time. However, the teachers' construction of inclusive education as education for learners with disabilities in the mainstream is not different from existent literature that associates inclusive education with disability. Respondents in this study demonstrated further that the manner of implementing inclusive education as an act to favour persons with disabilities entails that other categories of children disadvantaged by other circumstances may be excluded from learning in an inclusive education environment. Even though teachers understand inclusive education in terms of disability, they further understand that inclusive education needed to be broadened to include other children in different circumstances that negatively affect their learning. For instance, the results in figure 2 demonstrate that the Zambian school system has a responsibility to meet the learning needs of not only children with clearly defined disabilities but also street children, adolescent mothers, orphans, dropouts and sexually abused children. From such results, the need to redefine inclusive education in the Zambian context becomes eminent. Currently, the status quo in terms of understanding inclusive education in Zambia is that inclusive education is the education provided to learners with disabilities in the mainstream classroom (MoGE 2016, GRZ, 2012).

The results of the study therefore show that teachers are ahead of the policy documents in understanding the concept of inclusive education and how it should be applied. However, placing learners with disabilities in the mainstream classroom without allowing them to fully participate in the learning process leaves the practice of inclusive education in futility. Inclusive education should be seen to realise all children's potential in the learning environment. Inclusive education should be equally available and accessible to every person, while respecting individual differences in physical and cognitive abilities, various social, cultural and religious backgrounds (Čerešňová, Peňáz, & Di Bucchianico, (2018). The results of this study also show that teachers did not understand the principles of inclusive education as enshrined in the UNCRPD. The lack of understanding the principles of inclusive education means that while teachers understand the definitions, they may not be implementing inclusive education correctly. Teachers need orientation on the principles so that they know how to implement inclusive education to learners with various needs. Policy documents also need to be updated to include different categories of learners other than those with disabilities. Thus, learners from low social economic status, street children, those from minority languages, abused children and others need to be identified and provided with the learning needs within an inclusive classroom. The need for teachers to have profiles of every learner's background would help them know the needs of every learner in the inclusive learning environment.

In conclusion, as Johnson & Muzata (2019) noted, the success of inclusive education requires the adoption and application of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). In this design, learners with disabilities are taught by holistically prepared teachers that interpret the curriculum in a manner that is accessible to everyone. A learning environment that is tailored in a universal design format allows for access by all learners. Such an environment should have a restructured belief system where negative beliefs and attitudes are shelved out of society, and where inclusive assessment, assistive technologies, effective teacher preparation, restructured and flexible practices and policies are employed (Johnson & Muzata, 2019).

Conflict of Interest

There was no conflict of interest in this study. This study was self-funded as a contribution to the body of knowledge.

References

- Adetoro, R. A. (2014). Inclusive Education in Nigeria_A Myth or Reality?. *Creative Education*, 5, (0), 1777-1781). DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ce.2014.520198>.
- Anastasiou, D. & Kauffman. J.M. (2013). The Social Model of Disability: Dichotomy between Impairment and Disability. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 38: 441–459). doi:10.1093/jmp/jht026.
- Banja, M.K. & Mandyata, J. (2018). Teachers' situational analysis of the Integration of pupils with disability in selected primary schools in Zambia. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Language and Social Science Education*, 1 (1), pp. 175- 205.
- Čerešňová, Z., Peňáz, P., & Di Bucchianico, G. (2018). Inclusive Education. Čerešňová, Z., IN *Inclusive Higher Education*. GASSET; Prague.
- Chitiyo, M., & Muwana, F. (2018). Positive Developments in Special Education in Zambia and Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*. 14, (1.), pp. 93-115.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education* (7th Ed), London: Routledge Falmer.
- Connolly, P. (2007). *Quantitative data analysis in education: A critical introduction using SPSS*. London: Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.), London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Dalton, E.M., Mckenzie, J.A., & Kahonde, C. (2012). The implementation of inclusive education in South Africa: Reflections arising from a workshop for teachers and therapists to introduce Universal Design for Learning. *African Journal of Disability* 1 (1), Art. #13, 7 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v1i1.13>.
- Eunice,L.A., Nyangia, E.O. & Orodho, J.A. (2015). Challenges facing implementation of inclusive education in public secondary schools in Rongo Sub County, Migori County, Kenya. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*.20 (4), pp. 39-50.
- GRZ, (2012). *The Persons with Disability Act 2012 No 6, of 2012 67*. Available @ <http://www.parliament.gov.zm/sites/default/files/documents/acts/The%20Persons%20with%20disabilities%20act%2C%202012.PDF>.
- Guðjónsdóttir, H. & Óskarsdóttir, E. (2016). Inclusive Education, Pedagogy and Practice. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318775330_Inclusive_education_pedagogy_and_practice.

- Hall, M. C. (2019). "Critical Disability Theory", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/disability-critical/>.
- Ibrahim, A.M. (2012). Thematic Analysis: A Critical Review of Its Process and Evaluation. *West East Journal of Social Sciences*, 1 (1), pp. 39-47.
- Johnson, E. & Muzata, K.K. (2019). 'Inclusive Education: Implementing Universal Design for Learning'. In: M.K. Banja (ed.). *Selected Readings in Education*, 2 (pp. 1-22), Lusaka: Marvel Publishers.
- Kachong'u, Z.J. & Muzata, K.K. (2020). Understanding Dyslexia in the Mainstream Classroom: Voices of 8th Grade Learners at Sihole Combined School in Kalabo District. *Journal of Lexicography and Terminology*, 4 (1), pp. 87- 104.
- Kasongole, G. & Muzata, K.K. (2020). Inclusive Education for Learners with Learning Disabilities in Two Selected Primary Schools of Kabwe-Zambia: A Myth or Reality. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 7 (1), pp. 1-16.
- Kenya Ministry of Education. (2008). The development of education: National report of Kenya. *Report Presented at the International Conference on Education*, Geneva: 25–28 November 2008.
- Leonard Cheshire (2019). *The Disability Rights Advocacy and Campaign Project*. Leonard Cheshire.
- Leonard Cheshire (2019). *Understanding Disability: A training manual for communities on the convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Leonard Cheshire.
- Ministry of Education, (1996). *Educating our Future: National policy on Education*. ZEPH: Lusaka.
- Ministry of Education, (1996). *Education our Future*. Lusaka: Zambia publishing house.
- Ministry of Education. (2014). *Principles & practice: Teaching the deaf in schools; Teachers' guide*. Lusaka: Missionary Oblates Printing Press.
- Ministry of General Education. (2016). *Inclusive Education and Special Education in Zambia: Implementation Guidelines*. Lusaka: Ministry of General Education.
- Morina, A. (2017). Inclusive education in higher education: challenges and opportunities. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 32 (1), pp. 3-17, DOI: 10.1080/08856257.2016.1254964.
- Mtonga, T, (2013). A Situational Analysis on the Availability and Access to Computers for Educational Purposes by Learners with Visual Impairments in Zambia: A Case of Three Basic and Three High Schools' .IEEE.
- Mugambi, M.M. (2017). Approaches to Inclusive Education and Implications for Curriculum Theory and Practice. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and*

Education (IJHSSE), 4, (10), pp. 92-106, <http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0410013>.

- Muzata, K. K. & Mahlo, D. (2019). Teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation and adaptation strategies for learners with special educational needs in Zambia. *Journal of New Vision in Educational Research*, 1 (1), pp. 17 – 35.
- Muzata, K.K. (2019). Terminological Abuse versus Inclusion: An Analysis of Selected Terms Used to Describe Persons with Disabilities in Luvale, *Journal of Lexicography and Terminology*. 3 (1), pp. 1-32.
- Mwamba, P. (2016). An Evaluation of the Performance of Inclusive Education Programme In Kalulushi District. PhD Thesis- University of Zambia and Open University of Zimbabwe.
- Ndhlovu, D., Muzata, K.K., Chipindi, J.S. & Mtonga, T. (2016). Early childhood education in Zambia: inclusion of children with disabilities. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 3 (8), pp. 126-132.
- Ndonyo, T.M. (2007). Teacher perceptions of inclusive education: Case of Solwezi District Basic Schools. Masters dissertation- University of Zambia. Available @ <http://dspace.unza.zm:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/2066>.
- Paju, B., Kajamaa, A., Pirttimaa, R & Kontu, E. (2018). Contradictions as Drivers for Improving Inclusion in Teaching Pupils with Special Educational Needs. *Journal of Education and Learning*; 7 (3), pp. 11-22.
- Rastogi, S.K & Kumar.D. (2016). Inclusive Education: Changing Role and Responsibilities of Teachers. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305494453>.
- Retief, M. & Letšosa, R. (2018). Models of disability: A brief overview. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 74 (1), a4738). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4738>.
- Rodriguez, C.C. & Garro-Gil, N. (2014). Inclusion and Integration on Special Education. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 191, pp. 1323 – 1327.
- Simui, F., Kasonde-Ngandu, S. & Nyaruwata, L.T. (2017). ICT as an enabler to academic success of Students with Visually Impaired at Sim University: Hermeneutics approach.
- UNICEF, (2017). *Inclusive Education: Understanding Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Switzerland: UNICEF.
- United Nations (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol United Nations*.
- Wonani. L. & Muzata, K.K. (2019). Parenting and Educating Children with Autism: Lived Experiences of Lusaka Parents – Zambia. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)*. 48, (6), pp. 20 -36.