



## Experiences of School Administrators in Providing Support for Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Regular Schools: A Case of Livingstone District, Zambia

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### ABSTRACT

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This study was located in the interpretive paradigm. Interpretive research paradigm involves a qualitative approach to inquiry that seeks to understand and interpret the meanings individuals ascribe to their lived experiences, interactions and social phenomena. The study investigated administrators' practices towards the inclusion of learners with special education needs in three selected regular schools of Livingstone district. The objective of the study was to establish school administrators' practices employed to promote the inclusion of learners with special education needs in regular schools. A qualitative case study design was used. The sample comprised 14 participants; 3 head teachers, 3 deputy head teachers, 3 senior teachers and 5 class teachers. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions and observation check list. Participants were selected through use of homogeneous and expert purposive sampling technique. Analysis of data was done thematically. The study revealed that the most common school administrators' practices were monitoring, coaching, sensitization and enrolling of learners with special needs in the schools. Through monitoring, the administrators made sure that teachers used the right pedagogies in order to meet individual learners' needs. Administrators ensured that all learners were treated in the same way regardless of their individual differences. The school administrators sensitized the school community on matters concerning different disabilities. Coaching was done regularly after every monitoring. It was evident that enrolment of learners with disabilities in regular schools was done without following the rightful procedures leading to wrong placement of such learners. All learners were expected to move at the same pace to achieve the set objectives of the lesson which often disadvantaged the learners with disabilities. The study recommends that school administrators should continue sensitizing the school community on matters of disabilities. School administrator should be trained in special and inclusive education. Ministry of Education should provide necessary equipment and materials needed by learners with disabilities in schools.

### KEYWORDS:

School administrators, Inclusion practices, Special education needs, Learners, Regular schools.

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### INTRODUCTION

The global view of learners with special needs is somewhat complex and multifaceted. An estimated 240 million children globally have disabilities, with 150 million of these being children under the age of five with developmental disabilities (UNICEF, 2023). These children face significant barriers to accessing education, healthcare and other essential services which could exacerbate their disabilities and limit their opportunities for growth and development (Olusanya et al, 2022).

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Zambia has made significant strides in ratifying international human rights instruments. In 2021, the country ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), a pivotal step in promoting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. This development underscores Zambia's commitment to the principles of the CRPD which include ensuring access to justice, dignity, autonomy, non-discrimination, equality and mobility for individuals with disabilities. The ratification of the CRPD is particularly important as it formally acknowledges the significance of these principles and calls for urgent action to address the barriers faced by persons with disabilities. This move aligns with Zambia's broader efforts to enhance human rights and inclusivity within its legal and social frameworks, further solidifying the country's dedication to creating an equitable society for all its citizens (Mtonga, Kalimaposo & Mandyata, 2021; Kasongole & Muzata, 2020).

Mandyata (2001) examined the practices and opportunities for inclusive education in Kasama, Zambia emphasizing the need for more comprehensive and inclusive approaches. This study highlights the importance of addressing the diverse educational needs of learners in Zambia. Mtonga, Kalimaposo & Mandyata (2023) argue that inclusive education is fundamental to addressing the needs of diverse learners and that it requires extraordinary commitment from all stakeholders including teachers and policy makers. The Ministry of Education in Zambia has also stressed the importance of inclusive education, advocating that all schools should cater to the diverse needs of all learners (MoE, 1996). In Zambia, the landscape of education for learners with special needs has undergone significant transformation in recent years, aiming to foster inclusivity and provide tailored support systems. Recognising the fundamental right to education for all, irrespective of abilities or disabilities, Zambia has embarked on a journey towards inclusive education within mainstream educational settings. This shift is guided by a commitment to acknowledging and addressing the diverse learning needs of every learner (MoE, 1996; Mtonga, Kalimaposo & Mandyata, 2023; Kalimaposo, Muzata & Brango, 2025). In spite of these strides, challenges persist in fully realizing inclusive education in Zambia. Resource constraints, inadequate learning and teaching infrastructure and social attitudes towards disability among others continue to pose significant obstacles. Addressing these challenges necessitates collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions and civil society organisations to comprehensively meet the multifaceted needs of learners with special needs.

As already pointed out, learners with special needs face numerous challenges and barriers in accessing education and other essential services, significantly impacting their development and integration into society (Mtonga,

Kalimaposo & Mandyata, 2021). One of the most pervasive issues is stigma and social exclusion where children with disabilities are often marginalised and discriminated against (Mahlo, Muzata & Kalimaposo, 2021). This exclusion not only deprive them of educational opportunities but also affects their emotional and psychological well-being, reinforcing a cycle of disadvantage and low self-esteem. Social stigmatization can lead to isolation, with these learners missing out on critical social interactions and support systems essential for their overall development (Mtonga, Kalimaposo & Mandyata, 2021; Kalimaposo, Muzata & Brango, 2025).

Another major challenge is infrastructure and accessibility (Mandyata, 2001; Kasongole & Muzata, 2020; Kalimaposo, Muzata & Brango, 2025). Schools lack the requisite facilities and resources to accommodate learners with disabilities. Architectural barriers such as stairs without ramps, inaccessible restrooms and lack of adaptive learning materials hinder the physical access of these learners to education (UNICEF, 2023). This lack of accessibility in physical environments underscores a broader issue of inadequate infrastructure that fails to support inclusive education effectively. In addition, the lack of awareness and training among teachers and service providers poses a significant barrier (Mtonga, Kalimaposo & Mandyata 2021; Kalimaposo, Muzata & Brango, 2025). Teachers seem not to receive adequate training on how to support learners with special needs, leading to ineffective teaching methods and insufficient support within the classroom. This gap in knowledge and skills can result in an unsupportive learning environment that does not cater to the diverse needs of children with disabilities and thereby limiting their educational outcomes and opportunities for personal growth.

Poverty and socioeconomic factors further compound these challenges. Children from low-income families often have limited access to education and essential services, as financial constraints can restrict their ability to afford specialized care, adaptive equipment and transportation to accessible schools (Mahlo, Muzata & Kalimaposo, 2021). This socioeconomic disadvantage can exacerbate the impact of their disabilities, creating additional barriers to their overall development. The intersection of poverty and disability often leads to a vicious cycle of exclusion and limited opportunities, perpetuating inequality and hindering the potential of such learners.

Learners with disabilities might confront many other obstacles during the transition and adaptation processes in regular school settings and may need special care and treatment as well as modified curriculum and instructions resulting in several challenges for them. Therefore, school administrators are the most influential persons in making sure that education for all learners is achieved in the school regardless of the different disabilities. School administrators are responsible for identifying and articulating a philosophy

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or vision that reflects the beliefs that all children can learn and have equal rights to be educated with their peers in age – appropriate general education classrooms (Marzano, 2003). However, there can be a disconnect between educational policy, research based practices and the implementation of these policies and practices in the work that school administrators do in supporting learners with special education needs in their school environments (Jahnukainen, 2015). Further the very ways in which school administrators support learners with special needs often serve as a key factor in determining how well teachers engage learners in inclusive classrooms (Howell, 2016). As instructional leaders of their schools, school administrators should be key players not only in restructuring regular programmes but also on leading special education initiatives for inclusion. Against this background this study explored the experiences of school administrators in providing support to learners with disabilities in selected regular schools of Livingstone district, Zambia.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In spite of advances made in promoting inclusive education in Zambian schools, learners with disabilities still appear to face significant barriers to accessing education and other essential services. Learners with disabilities are often stigmatized and excluded from schools leading to limited access to schools (Mtonga, Kalimaposo & Mandyata, 2022). Schools also lack the requisite facilities and resources to support learners with disabilities as school buildings are not often designed to be accessible. School administrators are obliged to take a leading role in ensuring that inclusive education becomes a reality in their schools. School administrators are expected to ensure that education for all learners is achieved in their schools regardless of the class, ability, culture or learning needs. They have a key role in establishing the vision of the school and in developing the organisational culture and managing structural and material conditions of inclusive education (Ricci, Scheier-Dolberg, and Perkins, 2020). It has been observed that the administrator's role and attitude toward inclusive practices is key to the success or failure of inclusion in schools (Algazo and Naggar, Dukmak, 2013, Hussain, 2017, Badr, 2013, Fakin, 2019). This study, therefore, explored the experiences of school administrators in providing support to learners with disabilities in selected schools of Livingstone District in Zambia.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

School leaders are critical contributors to fostering inclusive school contexts where learners with special education needs are enabled and supported (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). The school administrators' administrative practices on inclusion of learners with special needs in regular schools includes,

instructional supervisory, communication, co-ordination of donor support services and creation of conducive learning environment.

School administrators in schools supervise all the activities in the school. Supervision is a process of inspecting both what the teachers are teaching and what the learners are learning. Those in instructional supervision include head teachers, deputy head teachers, mentors, curriculum specialists and administrator (Douglas and Bents, 2013; Namunga, 2017) which is referred to as administrative monitoring. Omogbehin (2013) defined monitoring as the process of systematic, purposeful observation, gathering and recording information about a program or project with the intent of using that data to refine the learning process. To this effect the administrators make sure that teachers prepare fully for them to be able to deliver their lessons effectively in their teaching as it derives towards the improvement of instructions and professional development of teachers. Omaali (2021) posit that instructional supervision practice improves teaching effectiveness and that administrators have a variety of instructional roles to fulfil and make inclusive education a reality in regular schools. This becomes a reality when the school administrators become proactive in their monitoring in their schools.

Within the school there could be differences between the academic and administrative functions of supervision. Academic goals of instructional supervision include tasks such as monitoring of institution, guiding teachers to improve the teaching and learning process, assessment of learner's learning outcomes, or evaluating objectives of programmes, the administrative goal of supervision geared at good administrative of the school facilities and resources (Thankral, 2015). During the supervision the school administrators determines the need to foster supportive environments for inclusion such as staff training, continuing education, ongoing professional development opportunities and need for in-service training that addresses teacher's need for inclusive education. In every institution, it is the duty of the school administrator to develop and maintain the competence of the teachers.

Charles, Chris and Kosgei (2012) observed that poor results amongst the learners can be due to ineffective instructional supervisory practices. They suggest that school administrators need to effectively supervise to ensure that they observe teachers regularly, lessons are prepared promptly, there is assessment and remedial teaching, lessons have impressive beginnings, use of appropriate learning and teaching, aids, individualised educational programmes are appropriate and that there is good rapport between learners and the teachers.

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Neves et al (2023) conducted a study on head teachers and inclusion: Setting the tone for an inclusive school. Their findings were that, administrators can support their teachers and other staff to move towards inclusion by fostering new meanings about diversity, promoting inclusive training practices within schools, communities and developing inclusive sustainable projects. They also noted that, administrators' attitude is influenced by the knowledge and training they have obtained about inclusion and the best ways to implement it. The visible presence of the school administrator in schools is correlated with smooth running of institutions and they reveal the administrators in high performing schools check lesson books, schemes of work, records of work, attendance registers, class attendance records and clock-in clock-out books frequently (Douglas and Bents, 2013; Marecho, 2012; Panigraph; Thakral, 2015; Kalimaposo, Chidakwa, Mubita, Mulubale & Kaumba, 2023). If supervision is done effectively, it enhances the school administrators' skills in coordinating and maintaining high teaching and learning standards in regular primary schools that she or he leads (Sule, 2015).

Poor supervision of instructions by administrators leads to laxity amongst teachers at work, and results to poor performance from learners in examinations leading to low self-esteem and might result into school dropouts in school stages. Administrator's classroom visitation and inspection enhances teacher's job performance and further motivates the teachers. More research work was done by Alimi and Akinfilarin (2012) on the impact of selected models of instructional supervision actions on learners' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. They found out that there was significant relationship of checking of learners' notes, class visitation or observation, checking of teachers' punctuality and attendance as well as moderation of examination questions and marking schemes on learners' academic performance in schools.

Instructional supervision of educational administration should concentrate on enhancing effectiveness, as both the teacher and learners strive to get service both as individuals and groups. It is also important to note that feedback from instructional supervision practices is used to help teachers gain and apply modern teaching pedagogies, innovations and technology in and out of their classrooms. Communication being one of the practices required by every administrator in any school is the act of conveying information and ideas through writing, speaking and gesturing. Reyner (2007) concludes that inclusive educational management is praxis-oriented in that communities do need to deliberate about the ideas behind inclusion and the means appropriate to a particular context. The administrators in this study should hence take decision, influence people and get inclusion done

smoothly, since the success of a leader, teacher or any professional depends on ability to communicate effectively. International cooperation among government and non-governmental, regional and interregional organisation can play very important roles in supervising the move towards inclusive schools. Donor support services are the types of aids and assistance that organisations can donate to the needy or institution. Donors do not locate themselves to institution but they are invited by stakeholders and partners hence the administrator is responsible for coordinating the parents, stakeholders and interested partners to locate the donors available and solicit for support in funding to renovations, adaptations and implementation of inclusion programmes among others.

Eleweke and Rodda (2000) and Bayat (2014) express insufficient achievements in inclusion programmes in most developing countries as they depend much on donor support for effective implementation of inclusive education.

Ministry of Education (1996) has shown commitment to the education of children with special needs and its policy states that children with special needs shall be mainstreamed to the largest extent possible and provided for within the mainstream of education. The schools administrator, therefore, has the responsibility to coordinate the donor support services from willing organisations to support the inclusion of learners with special education needs in schools. The school administrator must uphold this trust through coordination.

Parent's involvement in planning of the special education decision making process is virtually important. The creation of effective inclusive schools requires a combination of teachers' and parents' knowledge and skills on instructional strategies and assessment practices (Friend & Cook, 2007; Kampwirth, 2003; Mtonga, Kalimaposo, Mandyata, 2023; Muyabi, Kalimaposo, Mubita, Mulubale, Haambokoma, Milupi & Mundende, 2022). According to EADSNE (2010), the school administrator should appreciate that the crucial area for the success of inclusive strategies is the role played by parents. Therefore, parents of public schools should not only be seen as clients but as partners in the inclusion process. The parents provides essential information regarding child's strengths, weaknesses, needs, preferences and interests crucial to developing effective transitional components. According to Sumane (2012) & Mtonga, Lungu, Kalimaposo & Mandyata, (2021) the learning environment is a purposefully organised physical, social and informative set of circumstances, in which a learner forms and implements his or her experiences; knowledge, skills and attitudes towards himself or herself and surrounding world.

An appropriate learning environment would not be complete without other support services. These may include the services of the trained special education needs teachers since the success of inclusion of learners with special education

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needs requires the involvement of professionals who can assist in identification, referral, diagnosis, treatment and provision of other appropriate educational and related services (Mutisya, 2004). The school administrator should therefore at all times make sure that the school environment is conducive especially for learners with disabilities. The school administrator should use local artisans to make and repair the devices that can help minimise shortage in schools.

Stigmatisation, like stereotyping disability or any illness degrades one's morale to participate in education (Mahlo, Muzata & Kalimaposo, 2021). The school administrator is required to sensitize the other 'normal' learners to provide peer support such as peer tutoring, pushing wheelchairs and sighted guides. This is most worrying because most of the so called normal learners are never sensitized to make them aware of the conditions of the other learners in the school which makes them very difficult to socialize with them and because of this the learners with special education needs tend to be withdrawn and mostly have low self-esteem.

The school administrator should organise for awareness and sensitization of the community to make them help in adapting the environment, people, financial support as well as transport of the learners with disabilities to and from school. Creation of conducive learning environment may be impeded by factors such as poor time management, technological difficulties, missing social interaction, need for self-discipline, and lack of teacher contact, among others. This study is made to establish the administrators' practices employed to promote the inclusion of learners in regular schools of Livingstone district, Zambia.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study used a descriptive case study design in its approach. Keeves (1997) says, the term case study is a generic term for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon and highlights that while the techniques used in investigation may be varied and may include qualitative. The distinguishing feature of the case study is the belief that human systems develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity and not simply a loose collection of traits. This study is qualitative. Jones and Bartlett Learning (2017) and Kalimaposo (2010) explain that qualitative research is a systematic and subjective approach used to describe the life experiences and give them meaning. Qualitative study means that the kind of information collected is not numerical but words that express feelings, perceptions and attitudes of the participants. This study was conducted in selected regular primary schools of Livingstone district of Zambia.

The study sampled 3 head teachers, 3 deputy head teachers, 3 senior teachers and 5 class teachers. Head teacher 1 (HT1) was male, fifty two years old, twenty eight years in service and a holder of special education degree. Head teacher 2

(HT2) was male, fifty years old, twenty eight years in service and a holder of master's degree in applied psychology. Head teacher 3 (HT3) was male, fifty five years old, thirty two years in service and a holder of a secondary degree.

Deputy head teacher 1 (DHT1) was male, forty three years old, nineteen years in service and a holder of a secondary degree. Deputy head teacher 2 (DHT2) was female, fifty years old, twenty three years in service and a holder of a primary degree. Deputy head teacher 3 (DHT3) was male, fifty seven years old, thirty two years in service and a holder of secondary degree.

Senior teacher 1 (ST1) was female, fifty three years old, twenty five years in service and a holder of a primary degree. Senior teacher 2 (ST2) was female, fifty years old, twenty five years in service and a holder of a special education degree. Senior teacher 3 (ST3) was male, fifty three years old, twenty seven years in service and a holder of a special education degree. The five class teachers' ages were between forty three years to fifty four years and they all received a shorty training in inclusive education.

The rationale for selecting these participants was that the researcher believed that head teachers, deputy head teachers, senior teachers and class teachers had sufficient knowledge and experiences in handling learners with special education needs in regular primary schools to support the study.

The sampling procedure used was purposive knowing that the participants had the desired information. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003), qualitative researchers are likely to choose purposive sampling to yield the best understanding of whatever they wish to study. Purposive sampling is known to be very useful in qualitative research because of the detailed descriptions of data it brings from the field. Purposive expert sampling was used to identify the participants. Participants were interviewed in their natural settings through face to face interviews and focus group discussions as well as an observation check list. The researcher used an interview guide to collect data from head teachers, deputy head teachers and senior teachers. A focus group discussion guide was used for selected class teachers who teach learners with special education needs in their classrooms to collect in depth data on the practices of school administrators towards the inclusion of learners with special education needs in their schools.

Qualitative studies must ensure trustworthiness to enhance credibility of the study. Trustworthiness was ensured by conducting a pilot study and member checking for feedback and confirmation of the findings by the participants. Their views were incorporated in the report. According to Williamson, Radford & Bennetts (2003), trustworthiness requires that the argument is complete, allowing the reader (or reflective designer) to follow and understand it without unexplained leaps from argument to conclusion.

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In qualitative research, generalizability is not the aim, what is important is to enhance the trustworthiness (Mashele, 2003). Collection of data from various categories of participants further enhanced dependability of the data that was collected. Data analysis was done in themes. Thus, similar aspects of the data from different participants were grouped together while noting the differences as well. Codes were used to identify participants in the presentation of verbatim excerpts. Upholding ethics is a serious requirement in any research. First, the researcher explained the nature of study and its significance. At the time of conducting the interviews participants were assured of confidentiality so that genuine results were collected for the study. Further, at report writing, all participants were not identified by their actual particulars in the report. During data collection, assurances were made on the need for anonymity and the right to withdraw from the study at any given time was explained to participants.

### FINDINGS

The findings and discussion section highlights the practices school administrators use to enhance the implementation of the inclusion of learners with special education needs.

#### School Administrators Practices towards Inclusion Monitoring

On the school administrators' practices towards the inclusion of learners with special education needs, the findings of this study reveal that the head teachers, deputy head teachers and senior teachers do monitor the teaching and learning of learners with special education need in their classrooms. Monitoring was done regularly and the areas of focus were to check the teacher's preparedness, pedagogies used, whether the learner's needs are met as well as the conduciveness of the classrooms. In support of this finding, one head teacher said that.

*'When I go to monitor, I look at a lot of things. First of all I monitor academic delivery and through that I have to monitor the pedagogy, how do they apply their methodology, how do they do syllabus interpretations and how do the individual special needs get met, I look at their preparedness, I look at just the environment in the school and the class, the teachers' state of being, I monitor all that.'*

From this excerpt the administrators made sure that the teachers always used the right pedagogies to make sure that the learners with special education needs are not left behind as they strive to achieve the set objectives of the day. They also made sure that the environment of the classrooms were user friendly catering for all disabilities in the classroom.

In another revelation one head teacher said he does monitor the teaching and learning process of learners with special education needs but with no consideration of their special needs. In support of the finding the head teacher said:

*'Yes and again without special interest. We don't go to them as special children. We monitor them like any other child because the learning in classes is based on objectives and so when we go to class we try to see whether these children meet the objectives that the teachers would have stated in their lesson plans and if they are responding then we are okay with that.'*

This clearly shows that the learners with special needs are treated the same way without discrimination although there was a concern of learners with special education needs being neglected as they might not be able to grasp the concepts at the same pace with their peers as they may need more time. As much as they are considered to be the same as the so called normal learners there are areas where they should be given extra attention for them to be moving at the same pace with their peers in the classrooms.

In a related response another head teacher said his main interest was to make sure that the learners with special needs are progressing academically and to see whether the learners with special needs are covered during lesson planning knowing that they use the same materials and pedagogies as their peers without special needs. In line with this he had this to say,

*'We do monitor them knowing that the type of children that we have are not those with severe problems. The type of materials that they use come from the mainstream and they use the same curriculum. Our areas of concern are to see how teachers prepare, or how they plan for these children with disabilities. We would want to see the progress of our learners whether as teachers, as they prepare there is progress in our learners with disabilities.'*

This clearly showed that the head teachers had keen interest in making sure that the learners with special needs move at the same pace with so called normal peers in class.

In another interview with deputy head teachers it was also established that they also monitor the lesson preparation of the teachers, their pedagogy, conduciveness of the environment and whether the teachers have the materials required to use. In support of this one deputy head teacher had this to say,

*'Not often but we make sure once in a while. We look at the preparedness of a teacher, is the room conducive for the learners, do they have the materials to use, we do also assess the books where the learners write and ask if at all the learners with special needs are progressing to higher grades.'*

From this finding the researcher feels it is not enough to do the monitoring once per term as the main concern is with the progression of the learners with special education needs in regular classrooms. Another deputy head teacher (DHT3) indicated to say his main interest was to see whether the learners with disabilities such as spinal bifida were

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comfortable sitting on the chairs since they are expected to be in class from 08:00 to 12:00 hours. He also mentioned that his interest was to see whether the content was appropriate for the learners with special education needs. In support of this he had this to say:

*'Basically I look at whether the content that the learner is taking up appropriate for himself or herself. I will mention the environment for example, a child with spinal bifida you know they will stretch their back like that and expected to be seated on these usual desks that we have and I don't know how they manage to sustain themselves from 08:00 to 12:00 hours. So all that we check and sometimes demand that teachers do alternative sitting arrangements where the children move away from the floor and go outside so that they are not in one position for a longer time.'*

In a focus group discussion one teacher confirmed to say the head teacher goes to monitor regularly but with no special interest to say this one is a special need learner but expects every learner to move at the same pace since it is in an inclusive school. In line with this the class teacher had this to say,

*'Maybe I can simply say here at this school we don't have the profound but we have those with mild disabilities in-cooperated in the mainstream. So that means these learners are treated like any other child because here we treat every child the same. There is nothing like this one has this unless where the child has visual problem that's when maybe the teacher may say you sit in front and so forth. We don't have any machinery which a disabled child can use and we don't have expert teachers that can handle the profound so now even when they do the monitoring they monitor like any other classroom. Maybe they may point out to say that child was not paying attention and this one did not write very well.'*

This shows that the disabilities that are being taken care of during motoring are those with hearing and visual impairments and for the other disabilities there is no special attention given to them by the teachers and the school administrators.

From these findings, the study revealed that to enhance the implementation of inclusion of learners with special education needs in regular schools, administrators monitor the teaching and learning process although not often but there is monitoring. Most participants indicated that during their monitoring they check for the teachers' preparedness, pedagogies, whether the content is appropriate for the learner and the conduciveness of the environment.

It was also revealed from the study that the administrators' do monitor the leaning and teaching of learners with special education need by making sure that they include these learners during their lesson planning and making sure that the

environment is conducive. Their main interest was to make sure that the learners with special education needs are also progressing at the same pace as their so called normal peers although one of them indicated that he took no special interest regarding those with special needs as inclusiveness is all about treating all learners equally regardless of their disabilities. These findings were in line with Douglas and Bents, (2013); Marecho, (2012); Panigraph; Thakral, (2015) who said that the visible presence of the school administrator in schools is correlated with smooth running of institutions and they reveal that the administrators in high performing schools check lesson books, schemes of work, records of work, attendance registers, class attendance records and clock-in clock-out books frequently.

Further the findings are also in line with Alimi and Akinfilarin (2012) who found out that there was significant relationship of checking of learners' notes, class visitation or observation, checking of teachers' punctuality and attendance as well as moderation of examination questions and marking schemes on learners' academic performance in schools. Furthermore, Omaali (2021) and Kalimaposo, et al (2023) posit that instructional supervision practice improves teaching effectiveness and that administrators have a variety of instructional roles to fulfil and make inclusive education a reality in regular schools.

### Coaching

The study also revealed that after every monitoring followed coaching sessions where administrators would call the teachers and discuss how the lesson went on. In line with this, one head teacher (HT1) had this to say,

*'Every monitoring is followed by a talk. After monitoring we make appointments because I cannot interrupt them from teaching. I have monitored, I've seen what I have seen then take note. I make an appointment at an ideal time when they are not in class and when I am also free. We go through what we saw together. Some of my observations which I think are also areas of concern the teachers clarifies it and I understand why they did what they did, why I think I need to advise in terms of what should be done I dispense that myself.'*

In another version one head teacher had this to say, *'Coaching the teachers we do it with these other teachers because they are already other coaching programmes that are in school. So when we see the ailments from our teachers we do advise, we do tell them what is expected of them so we do coach them.'*

This was supported by one class teacher 1 (CT1) who also had this to say:

*'The one on one coaching, the person who has monitored you will call you to the office after the lesson and talk about the weaknesses and strength of the lesson. After that they give you a critique*

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which is then filed in the teacher's file but the one whereby it's spontaneously there is nothing written and there is no verbal warning and maybe they would just say I wish you could improve here.

These findings clearly shows that there is always some discussions to try and clarify what transpired during the lesson in case there are some hiccups. Administrators would ask the teacher why he or she taught in a particular manner and the teachers are given chance to explain to their administrators where they didn't understand. These findings are in line with Thankral, (2015); Mtonga, Kalimaposo & Mandyata (2023) who observed that academic goals of instructional supervision include tasks such as guiding teachers to improve the teaching and learning process as well as assessment of learner's learning outcomes.

### Enrolment of Learners

When enrolling learners with special education needs it is important to consider following the rightful procedures of enrolment because if not, the child may end up being placed in a wrong grade or level. It was established that when enrolling learners with special education needs some administrators do follow the rightful procedure of getting recommendations from health personnel allowing the child to be in an inclusive school while others just enrolled them as they come because their schools lack teachers who are trained in special education. In line with this one head teacher had this to say,

*'I will be sincere with you because you are a teacher of special needs. That is one area we need to properly attend to. Currently we just enrol them as they come. Sometimes when we refer them to the hospital, the information that come from the hospital has very little information to do with placement. So our placement is based on the availability of the candidate basically that is if we were to assess from our own rough assessment. If it's the child we can handle and we have a place then we go ahead and enrol otherwise that rigorous procedure of assessment, making recommendations, advice on right placement levels that one is not there.'*

Another head teacher also said,

*'Grade one we do oral interviews with the parents. Then apart from that we also carry out just interviews with the child to see if they are responding to certain stimuli, then they also bring the under-five card which shows their growth and what could have been happening to their critical years of their early years of their life. So that gives us information of how we can enrol but then besides that there is a form that we send to other institutions for example ministry of health, they do a thorough check and make recommendations whether a child fits in inclusion or should go to a special school. We also collaborate with the other teachers in other units to also write*

*something and recommend the child that we could take him or her as an included child with a disability.'*

In another revelation one deputy head teacher had also this to say,

*'I think to start with we have a criteria where we need to have assessment*

*documents that comes from the hospital. That is our first thing that we look at before we can subject the child to preliminary educational assessment.*

*This is done so that we are able to determine the level at which the learner is or which level the learner can fit in well and we pick it up from there.'*

In a related response another deputy head teacher said,

*'Things that we consider when enrolling learners is the appropriate age. The learner should have an appropriate age. We also consider maybe the history of a learner if at all that learner has got a problem so that we know how to handle that learner. And also we consider the vulnerability of a learner so that we see how we can come in as a school to help such a learner because we have vulnerable children like the orphans.'*

One senior teacher also had this to say,

*'The procedures we normally follow are, the parents will come here and I would assess the learners and then tell them to formalise with the head*

*teacher. But what we follow normally as a school, we do assess whether the child is able to read for example a grade 5 book and then place that child in grade 5. Will give them depending on how they read or how they answer questions orally.'*

A class teacher in a focus group discussion also had this to say,

*'Any way I can simply say general assessment is done and even when a new pupil has just entered the school, we do general assessment. So we may not maybe call for practitioners but just the general assessment is done. A certain procedure which we carry out whenever we are enrolling a new pupil in classes is, there is a form where we just make a follow up to find out how many have disabilities and how many have no disabilities.'*

Another class teacher also said,

*'No for the other grades the administrators don't use that tool where they go to the hospital but they only administer that tool for the pupils who are*

*already in school who they already know. In some cases you know we have had issues where pupils are enrolled in grade one maybe not knowing that they have this disability and they identify that as they go along then they administer to those particular pupils.'*

The study revealed that, when enrolling learners with disabilities in the regular schools some administrators just



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enrolled the learners as they came because the schools do not have specialised teachers in special education who can assess them. Other administrators asked for recommendations from the health personnel allowing the child to be enrolled in regular schools. This finding was in line with Mutisya, (2004) who observed that learners with disabilities may need the services of the trained special education needs teachers since the success of inclusion of learners with special education needs requires the involvement of professionals who can assist in identification, referral, diagnosis, treatment and provision of other appropriate educational and related services.

In most cases, for the learners with learning difficulties, the chronological age does not much with their mental age and if the administrators just focus on the physical appearance of the child then they risk placing that particular child in the wrong grades. It is most ideal for the learners with special education needs to pass through the hospitals so that they are fully assessed and be able to be placed in the correct grade.

### Sensitization

On the issue of stigmatization it was established that the administrators do sensitize the teachers, learners and the whole school community on the issues of disability. In support of this one head teacher had this to say,

*'We sensitize the learners, sensitize the teachers, sensitize the community, so that all of us can attain some levels of acceptance and know that these are*

*our children, our brothers, sisters and also know that anyone can be in the same state at any time. Our state of being right now is temporal because the causes leading to special needs are many and they can manifest any time so sensitization is key.*

Another head teacher said,

*'We talk to the pupils during assemblies and you know most of these when they report for school they are assisted. So normally we ask the parents to*

*leave them by the gate as some of them would want to bring them up to the door step so we advise them no leave them up to the gate so that we see how free they are in school. Sometimes we would ask these other learners to escort them up to the rooms where they are supposed to be so like that we eliminate stigma. From these other pupils of course stigma would be there but we always talk to them.'*

One deputy head teacher had also this to say,

*'We do sensitize everyone from the mainstream that do not segregate those because they are just learners like you. If you see somebody has been beaten come in and help and where they need help also help. We also send them at times if we need something so that they feel loved. They also do activities like raking, watering and sweeping.'*

Another deputy head teacher had this to say,

*'Teachers have a task and have been talked to embrace learners with disabilities. So our pupils from the mainstream have accepted these pupils*

*as part of this school. So really the issue of stigmatization to me I don't really see it because they are friends at the same time. Children are always*

*sensitized about their friends that it's not their fault that they are like that and they understand.'*

Another deputy head teacher said,

*'We don't entertain stigma by making sure that our teachers are alert, the pupils themselves whether special or not special are alert that anybody who bullies them, anybody who speaks malice to them or about them they report.'*

A senior teacher also had this to say,

*'Especially those that we have re-integrated in the mainstream I think the message has been heard. We are one when we talk about inclusiveness and we are not supposed to look at our different abilities so what we need to focus is to focus on what one is able to do. If one is able to write within five minutes and achieve then let the five minutes be availed to them so that they too can be given that opportunity to learn.'*

A class teacher also had this to say,

*'So also on the education we have talks within the classrooms. Sometimes just by the parade and sometimes we speak as departments. We would pick a topic that would involve everyone. So when we are talking to the learners it means we are trying to educate them on knowing that everyone has rights*

*just like they do. Everyone whether disabled or able bodied should be able to enjoy the rights and no one should segregate each other based on their*

*condition. We are happy because our learners have time to engage in sports where they also participate at that level. So the school actually has been sensitized at different times to educate them on issues of disability and on how best we can be inclusive to our friends.'*

Another class teacher said,

*'Sensitization is actually done in many ways. There is a first place where sensitization is done during PTA meetings when we talk to the parents. Another place is at assemblies where the learners are taught and the guidance teacher hold talks with them. We have a policy where every Wednesday is a tutorial Wednesday where class teachers are given 30 minutes before teaching time to just talk to the pupils about challenges and many other aspects that actually they cannot find in normal teaching. So in those same tutorials that's where such matters of disabilities are actually talked about to sensitize the pupils. So it has become a school policy to sensitize the pupils every Wednesday.'*

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The study revealed that there are usually talks about different disabilities during assemblies and during parents and teachers' meetings where the parents are also talked to about issues of disabilities and inclusive education. It was also established that some schools have some deliberate policies where teachers take some few minutes before they start teaching just to talk about disabilities. The findings are in line with Reyner (2007) who concludes that inclusive educational management is praxis-oriented in that communities do need to deliberate about the ideas behind inclusion and the means appropriate to a particular context.

### **CONCLUSION**

It was evident from the study that school administrators in regular schools helped learners with special education needs excel academically through their daily instructional practices in the schools in terms of regular monitoring. This is in agreement with Omaali (2021) who posit that instructional supervision practice improves teaching effectiveness and that administrators have a variety of instructional roles to fulfil and make inclusive education a reality in regular schools.

During their monitoring sessions they made sure that the teachers included the learners with special education needs in their planning and teaching although some administrators did not regard the learners with special needs as being special but rather treated them the same way as the so called normal. They have also demonstrated that they enrol the learners with special needs in numbers although they do not follow the right procedures of going to the hospital but just rely on the information availed to them by the parents.

The school administrators demonstrated that they do not tolerate stigma through sensitization as it makes the learners with special education needs have low self-esteem and fail to participate fully in the activities of the school. This finding agrees well with Mahlo, Muzata & Kalimaposo (2021) who noted that stigmatisation, like stereotyping disability or any illness degrades one's morale to participate in education. The parents have embraced inclusive education because they feel their children are not being stigmatized as they are not segregated in the special units.

It was also evident that there was need for more sensitization in the school community as some teachers still have mixed feelings about including learners with special education need in their classrooms. Some administrators and teachers feel they are less competent to handle learners with special education needs because they were not trained in the same field. This finding is in line with Yell et al., (2004), who also noted that many teachers do not feel equipped to meet the needs of learners with disabilities therefore having short trainings within the school would enhance the teaching and learning of learners with special needs in regular schools.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study made the following recommendations:

1. Government through the Ministry of Education should ensure that all school administrators are trained in special and inclusive education.
2. All teachers in the regular schools should be trained in special/inclusive schools for them to be competent when it comes to teaching learners with special education needs.
3. School administrators should ensure that school communities are sensitized on matters concerning learners with special education needs.
4. During planning of lessons teachers should always prepare to meet the needs of different categories of disabilities in their classrooms.

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