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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Perceptions of Zimbabwean trainee/educational psychologists regarding the training on their support roles and responsibilities in inclusive education

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Abstract

The study used focus group interviews at three administrative
offices (provinces) that house trainee/educational psychologists in
order to explore their experiences on how they learn about their
support roles and responsibilities regarding the implementation of
inclusive education. 13 trainee/educational psychologists from these
provinces volunteered to participate in the study. The study used
a qualitative design based on a phenomenological perspective and
inductive thematic content was used to analyse data. The results
indicate that trainee/educational psychologists had known their
support roles through master's degree programmes, a single 2016
workshop, personally guided reading and collaborative work with
workmates. Their views indicated inadequate training and supervi-
sion, and negative feelings towards internship after master's pro-
gramme, payment of supervisors, continuing professional develop-
ment points, lack of degree programmes in Master of Science in edu-
cational psychology, and location of conferences. The results provide
important information about educational psychology in Zimbabwe
with important implications for training and policy making.

KEYWORDS
educational psychology, inclusive education, internship

This article focuses on how trainee/educational psychologists learn about their support roles and responsibilities
regarding the implementation of inclusive education. The article will initially provide a brief history on inclusion in
special education in Zimbabwe, the treatment of students with disabilities, and the role of educational psychologists in
addressing these problems.

Prior to independence in 1980, school psychological services were available to White, Asian/Indian, and Coloured
students only (Mpofu & Nyanungo, 1998; Mukhopadhyay & Musengi, 2012). Charitable organizations and churches,
complemented by missionaries, provided education to a few Black children with special needs in rural boarding schools
where they were taught practical skills such as basketry, woodwork, sewing, and cookery (Peresuh & Barcham, 1998).

The education of these children was viewed more as a moral and religious obligation rather than as a right (Peresuh & Barcham, 1998, p. 75). Lack of national policy on special education resulted in lack of coordination among the different service providers such as churches and nongovernmental organizations, resulting in a compromised quality of services (Chireshe, 2011; Chitiyo & Chitiyo, 2007; Kabzems & Chimedza, 2002).

People with disabilities did not command respect in Black African society (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2004) and were considered burdens to the family and community (Kabzems & Chimedza, 2002). Many Zimbabwean families believed that spiritual forces caused disabilities and therefore sought services from traditional healers (Mpofu, Mutepfa, Chireshe, & Kasayira, 2007). When families could not raise money for school fees, children with disabilities were the first to stay at home (Kabzems & Chimedza, 2002). If such children had the opportunity to go school, the pedagogical environment ignored their views and opportunities to participate because most teachers were unqualified in special education.

After independence in 1980, school segregation was abolished, and school psychological services were extended to Black students (Mpofu et al., 2007). The government of Zimbabwe introduced the Education Act of 1987, which required all children to have access to basic education at their nearest school (Chitiyo, Odongo, Itimu-Phiri, Muwana, & Lipemba, 2015; Mukhopadhyay & Musengi, 2012), and the Disabled Persons Act of 1992, which was intended to remedy inequalities in the provision of social services, including the provision of education services (Mpofu et al., 2007). These major milestones in advancing school psychology resulted in increased enrollment of children with special needs from 2,000 in 1979 to 4,000 in 1980 (Peresuh & Barcham, 1998).

Oakland and Jimerson (2007, p. 1) define the role of an educational psychologist as one who collectively provides individual assessment of children who may display cognitive, emotional, social, or behavioral difficulties; develops and implements primary and secondary intervention programs; consults with teachers, parents, and other relevant professionals; engages in program development and evaluation; and conducts research and helps prepare and supervise others. To address some of the problems stated above, Zimbabwean educational psychologists focused on assessment to routinely screen for any form of disability, and admit any school-age child, regardless of ability (Mutepfa, Mpofu, & Chataika, 2007). Such children were placed in special classes, resource units, and special schools depending on the level of disability and home environment. Students with severe disabilities were placed in resource units within ordinary schools or residential special-needs education schools as special classes were meant for students with mild-to-moderate intellectual challenges.

Educational psychologists engaged in in-service training of teachers and administrators for teaching students with disabilities. During consultancy and advocacy, they worked with parents, learners, educators, social workers, physicians, and rehabilitation technicians. They educated communities about the availability of special education programs and assistive devices for learners with orthopedic and sensory disabilities from the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare and nongovernmental organizations. International aid agencies (e.g., the Swedish International Development Agency, Canadian International Development Agency, and the Norwegian Psychological Association) funded outreach activities, continuing education for educational psychologists, transportation, test procurement, and test development (Mpofu et al., 2007). Educational psychologists carried out research on how best to assist teachers, parents, and schools regarding the effective delivery of special-needs education programs (Mpofu et al., 2007).

Inclusive education entails that schools ensure that all learners, including those with disabilities, are welcomed, valued, and learn together in regular education classrooms, regardless of their particular learning characteristics, with appropriate supports provided so that they succeed (McGhie-Richmond, Irvine, Loreman, Cizman, & Lupart, 2013). Inclusive education is a key policy in many countries because the rights of learners are compromised by special education, which segregates them from their "non-disabled" peers, including mainstream curriculum and educational practices (Lindsay, 2007). Zimbabwe is a signatory to both regional and internal instruments, which include the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child. Zimbabwe ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in September 1990 and national responses are guided by the following core principles of the convention: nondiscrimination (article 2), right to education (articles 28 and 29), and rights of children with disabilities (article 23) (UNICEF, 2011). Inclusive education in Zimbabwe is associated with disability and the school (Chireshe, 2011).

TABLE 1 Legislation/government policy statements and roles of educational psychologists

Legislation/Policy Statement	Role of Educational Psychologist
Zimbabwe Education Act of 1987	Right to education for all learners: Outreach programs and in-service training of teachers and administrators on special needs education and programming
The disabled Person's Act of 1996	Advice on attitudinal and physical-structural barriers to educational opportunity for learners with disabilities
The Education Secretary's Circular Minute No. P.36 of 1990	Provides guidelines for placement of learners in special classes, resource units, and special schools
The Secretary's Circular No. P.12 of 1987	Provides guidelines on remedial programs for learners with specific learning disabilities at both primary and secondary levels
The Education Secretary's Circular No . P.5 of 2000	Provides guidelines for counseling abused learners and their families
The Secretary's Circular No. 2 of 2000	Inclusion of learners with albinism with reference to meaningful inclusion in schooling and co-curricular activities
The Education Secretary's Circular No. P.3 of 2002	Provides guidelines on inclusive education and education for community participation and provision for guidance and counseling services for high-school students
The children's Protection and Adoption Act of 1990	Promote the acquisition of behavior-management skills at rehabilitation facilities for child offenders
The Sexual Offences Act of 2001	Provision of counseling services to sexually abused children and expert testimony to courts on the intellectual functioning of abused learners with intellectual handicaps
Director's Circular No. 7 of 2005	Offers guidelines for the inclusion of learners with disabilities in all school competitions

Educational psychology is dynamic and continues to evolve to better accommodate the needs of learners, parents, and teachers (Wnek, Klein, & Bracken, 2008). It is, therefore, important that educational psychologists engage in continuing professional development to facilitate the adoption and evolution of high-quality service provision (Swerdlik & French, 2000; Wizda, 2004). Provision of direct and indirect services entails that the nature of educational psychological services is determined by preparation of educational psychologists and societal needs for services (Oakland & Jimerson, 2007). Pillay (2003) identified some reasons why the training and supervision of psychologists is important. These include testing theory in practical situations and engaging in action research.

The legislation and policies that influence educational psychologists' work, their professional associations, preparation, and issues impacting educational psychological services are discussed below.

1 | INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICIES IN ZIMBABWE

Inclusive education in Zimbabwe involves the identification and minimization or elimination of barriers to learners' participation in schools, homes, and communities and the maximization of resources to support participation (Mutepfa et al., 2007). Mpofu (2004a, 2004b) and Chireshe (2013) indicate that there is no specific legislation for inclusive education in Zimbabwe, but there are various government policy statements that promote and support the inclusion of learners with disabilities and broader barriers and they influence the activities of educational psychologists in schools and communities. Table 1 provides a summary of the policy statements and educational psychologists' roles. The policy statements are given to school head-teachers by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and then cascaded to teachers through staff development training in their respective schools and then to students via workshops by the School Psychological Services and Special Needs Education Departments and other governmental departments (e.g., Social Services and Health and Child Welfare).

2 | INFRASTRUCTURE OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY IN ZIMBABWE

Organizations that service the interests of educational psychologists include the Allied Health Practitioners Council of Zimbabwe (AHPCZ) and the Zimbabwe Psychological Association (ZPA) (Mpofu et al., 2007). The AHPCZ sets the standards for training and education of psychologists in collaboration with the Health Professions Authority and Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (AHPCZ, 2016). The AHPCZ has a psychology education committee whose responsibility it is to evaluate undergraduate and postgraduate university programs for possible accreditation and maintains a register for educational psychologists, licenses the premises for practice, and regulates their practice (AHPCZ, 2016; Chireshe, 2005; Mpofu & Khan, 1997). The AHPCZ 2016 regulations have stringent professional training criteria. The current way of registration differs from the previous two-tier system wherein the registering of psychologists involved a Bachelor of Science Honors degree in psychology and a full-time 3-year internship program under the School Psychological Services and Special Needs Education in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, and a Master of Science degree in educational psychology at the University of Zimbabwe (Mpofu & Khan, 1997). The current registration criteria is also a two-tier process that involves a Bachelor of Science Honors degree in psychology and a master's degree plus 1 year internship, and a Bachelor of Science Honors degree in psychology plus 3 years internship, which should include a Master of Science degree in educational psychology before applying for the final registration (AHPCZ, 2016). All persons need to pay $50 annual registration and are required to pass the oral and written board examinations before registration. In addition, practicing psychologists and interns are required to have a continuing professional development (CPD), wherein a minimum of 50 points per year is required to renew practicing certificates. The CPD categories include lecturing, attending conferences or presentations, publishing in peer-reviewed journals, and community service, among others.

The ZPA provides a professional identity and training of psychologists. The ZPA is currently launching regional chapters in the country's 10 provinces to make psychologists participate in its activities after the economic meltdown of 2006 to 2008. Trainee educational psychologists need to have a Bachelor of Science Honors degree in psychology before being recruited by the Public Service Commission and then work for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education. They then register as an intern psychologist with the AHPCZ after gaining employment.

3 | PREPARATION OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN ZIMBABWE

The Master of Science degree program in educational psychology was discussed in an earlier section. There are no local universities currently offering the program, and interns are doing master's degrees in community psychology offered by Midlands State University and counseling psychology offered by Great Zimbabwe University. Currently, there are few senior educational psychologists in the department of School Psychological Services and Special Needs Education to supervise trainees in the 10 provinces. The AHPCZ now allows trainees to be supervised by registered psychologists in private practice or at universities at a cost of $100 per month. The cost is provided by trainees.

All psychologists are required to hold an Honors degree in psychology, which is achieved after 4 years at university (Mpofu & Khan, 1997) and a Master of Science degree in educational psychology (AHPCZ, 2016). A master's in educational psychology degree for teachers is not required although a teaching qualification is a desirable quality (Mpofu et al., 2007). Trainee educational psychologists taking internship with the School Psychological Services and Special Needs Education department have internship experiences that include child assessment, report writing, teacher, school, and parent consultation, child advocacy, and legal aspects of school psychology practice (Mpofu et al., 2007, p. 444). The trainees have fieldwork placements at institutions that serve children with disabilities, mainstream settings, and outpatient psychiatric settings (Mpofu et al., 2007). The prevailing socioeconomic conditions in the country result in some of these placements not being done, leading to an erosion of quality training.

Trainee educational psychologists are required to produce an internship portfolio for evaluation by the AHPCZ, which includes assessment reports, professional seminars, workshops attended, and research reports (Mpofu et al., 2007).

4 | ISSUES IMPACTING EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES IN ZIMBABWE

Challenges facing the provision of educational psychological services include underfunding by the central government, high job attrition, and, consequently, the erosion of quality training (Mpofu et al., 2007). The declined economy may be a result, in part, of the political sanctions by the Western countries after the land reform and economic mismanagement by the central government.

The number of educational psychologists per province has remained at between five and six since 1980 despite the increased enrollment rates of learners from early childhood education up to high-school level. The high case loads resulted in educational psychologists focusing on assessments rather than consultative work. The shortages of senior educational psychologists to supervise trainees could result in frustration and high attrition rates. According to Kasayira (2005) and Mnkandla and Mataruse (2002), the Department of School Psychological Services has a history of neglecting trainees in their professional development needs. Recruitment of more trainees might alleviate some of these problems, but the government has since frozen all public service posts because of financial constraints.

The University of Zimbabwe was the only institution offering a Master of Science degree in educational psychology and had its last intake in 2012 because of a lack of qualified lecturers. Other universities need to introduce this program if they have lecturers with requisite qualifications. Educational psychological services are provided for free, and Mpofu et al. (2007) recommended that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should levy private schools for educational psychological services to overcome resource scarcity.

5 | STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The high job attrition rates at senior levels in Zimbabwe impacted negatively on the quality of training and on the availability of school psychological services (Mnkandla & Mataruse, 2002; Mpofu et al., 2007) and the AHPCZ has new stringent regulations on the training and registration of psychologists. Oakland and Jimerson (2007) indicate that a sufficiently large workforce precedes the development of professional associations and that a discipline evolves over time. There are few licensed educational psychologists in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education because of the prevailing socioeconomic conditions. The Master of Science degree in educational psychology was offered at the University of Zimbabwe and the program used to take 10 students every 2 years (Mpofu et al., 2007). Because of a shortage of lecturers with requisite qualifications, the program was last offered in 2012 and no other institution is offering the program. The above conditions make it necessary to understand how trainee/educational psychologists learn about their support roles and responsibilities regarding inclusive education practices in Zimbabwe.

6 | AIM OF THE STUDY

The study aims to understand trainee/educational psychologists' experiences and how they learn about their support roles and responsibilities regarding the implementation of inclusive education.

6.1 | Research questions

1. Which documents (policies) guide your support roles and responsibilities in schools and communities?
2. How have you learned about your roles and responsibilities regarding inclusive education?
3. What are your views regarding the training you get?
4. What are your views regarding the AHPCZ 2016 regulations?

7 | METHOD

7.1 | Design

The study used a qualitative design based on a phenomenological perspective (Bogdan & Biken, 1998), which seeks to understand the meaning of lived experiences, events, and interactions of people in particular situations. Focus groups were used within this paradim to produce data via group interactions and dialogue around trainee/educational psychologists' experiences on their preparation for support roles and responsibilities regarding the implementation of inclusive education. This implies that phenomenological research takes the position that the facts of a situation are but one way of understanding it; uncovering the beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives related to a phenomenon provide another mechanism for understanding its occurrence (Sansosti & Sansosti, 2012, p. 919).

7.2 | Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select 13 participants who volunteered to participate in the study. One trainee educational psychologist with less than a year's experience was exempted from participating because she was presumed not to have adequate experience and one male trainee psychologist refused to participate. Three focus group interviews were conducted in three administrative offices (provinces) that house trainee/educational psychologists and were formed using pre-existing groups. Table 2 provides characteristics of participants in each focus group. The very small focus groups were necessary because participants have specialized knowledge (Morgan, 1997) on inclusive education practices. Krueger (1994) and Morgan (1997) suggested that three different focus groups are adequate to reach data saturation and/or theoretical saturation with each group meeting once.

7.3 | Procedure

After ethics approval was obtained from the university ethics committee from which the researcher is a doctoral student, permission to carry out the research was first sought from the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and then from provincial education directors from each of the three provinces. A preliminary meeting with research participants prior to the actual interview was carried out a week before the interview. Such a meeting provided an opportunity to establish trust with participants, review ethical considerations, complete consent forms, and also to review research questions, hence giving participants time to dwell and ponder on the experience. Focus groups interviews with trainee/educational psychologists were conducted in large quiet offices in each of three administrative offices. The researcher acted as a moderator and was responsible for facilitating the discussion, prompting members to speak, requesting overly talkative members to let others talk, and encouraging others to talk. He presented the focus group participants with questions. A workmate (lecturer) was concerned with audiotaping, verified data, and assisted the researcher in analyzing and interpretation of data (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The same interview guide was used for the three focus groups that were audio recorded with consent from participants. These were then transcribed verbatim.

TABLE 2 Characteristics of participants in focus groups

Participants	Highest Education	Registered/ Unregistered Psychologist	Gender	Years of Experience
Focus group I				
003	Bsc psychology	Unregistered	Male	7
004	Msc Community psychology	Unregistered	Male	6
005	Msc community psychology	Unregistered	Male	9
006	Msc child and family studies	Unregistered	Male	8
007	Bsc psychology	Unregistered	Male	4
Focus group II				
008	Bsc psychology	Unregistered	Male	7
009	Msc community psychology	Unregistered	Male	8
010	Bsc psychology	Unregistered	Female	3
011	Bsc psychology	Unregistered	Female	4
Focus group III				
012	Msc educational psychology	Registered	Female	8 (including 2 years registered)
013	Msc counseling psychology	Registered	Male	9 (including 1 year registered)
014	Bsc psychology	Unregistered	Male	6
015	Bsc psychology	Unregistered	Male	4

Note: Total participants = 13.

7.4 | Data collection

According to Englander (2012), phenomenological research aims to encounter the phenomenon via the participant's description. Therefore, questions that are part of a phenomenological interview should meet the criteria of description (Giorgi, 2009). Such questions need to focus on participants' descriptions of the situation in which they experienced the phenomenon.

The data-collection methods were similar to what Englander (2012) specified. A preliminary meeting with research participants prior to the actual interview was done a week before the interview. Such a meeting provided an opportunity to establish trust with participants, review ethical considerations, complete consent forms, and review research questions, hence giving participants time to dwell and ponder on the experience. This assisted the researcher to obtain a richer description during the focus groups without having to ask too many questions (Englander, 2012).

Three focus groups were held in three administrative offices that house trainee/educational psychologists. Focus groups have the advantage of a sense of belonging in a group and increase participants' cohesiveness, thereby making them feel safe to share information (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

7.5 | Data analysis

Inductive thematic content (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyze data. This process identifies and analyzes patterns and themes that are consistent with the phenomenological approach. Each focus group transcript was, initially, independently analyzed to determine reoccurring themes and then followed by identification of themes across transcripts, so that unique and common themes are identified (Padgett, 2008). Direct quotes were used to ground findings and interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and these were tagged in terms of focus group number (i.e., FGI, focus group I; FGII, focus II; and FGIII, focus group III).

7.6 | Trustworthiness

Triangulation, which this study used to focus group discussions and documents, ensured that these collaborative different sources shined a light on a theme, and thus located evidence to document a theme from these sources. Any documents referred by participants during focus groups were examined to explain the behavior and attitudes of participants. Site triangulation was achieved by purposeful sampling of three provincial offices so that maximum variation of participant characteristics in terms of gender, ethnicity, and time served in School Psychological Services would aid in achieving the greatest diversity of comparisons of the phenomenon. This decreased systematic bias if a single provincial office was used. Similar results emerged at different sites, suggesting greater credibility.

To also achieve credibility of the findings and interpretations, a focus group was convened with participants in August 2017 at each of the provincial offices so that they reflect on the written preliminary analyses comprising themes so that their views were solicited, and what was missing would be added. Participants indicated that the analyses reflected their experiences.

7.7 | Ethical considerations

Voluntary participation entailed that participants were genuinely willing to participate in the study and thus ensuring they were honest. One participant refused to participate in the study because of audio recordings. Participants were encouraged to be frank and were told that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions so that they freely contributed ideas and experiences. Participants were told that they can withdraw from the study at any time and they need not disclose the reason for doing so to the researcher.

8 | RESULTS

There was diversity in trainee/educational psychologists' views on how they learn about their support roles and responsibilities in implementing inclusive education practices. However, the following common themes were identified across focus group interviews:

- Documents that guide trainee/educational psychologists in their support roles.
- How they learn about their support roles.
- Views about the training.
- Views about Allied Health Practitioners Council 2016 new regulations.
- Perceived solutions.

Table 3 shows themes and subthemes identified across focus group interviews.

8.1 | Documents that guide trainee/educational psychologists' inclusive education practices

Education circulars and the Education Act of 1987 were experienced as guiding trainee/educational psychologists in their roles in implementing inclusive education. Major circulars were viewed differently by different focus groups. The Education Secretary's Circular Minute No. P.36 of 1990, which provides guidelines for placement of learners in special classes, resource units, and special schools, was seen as a major circular by FGII while FGI specified the Zimbabwe Education Act of 1987, which proposes that the right to education for all learners is viewed as major. The following extracts indicate their experiences:

> "The Education Act which guides education for all is the pillar to all inclusive activities and all policies come in now to augment what the Act provided" (FGI).

TABLE 3 Identified themes and subthemes emerging from the data

	Documents Guiding Trainee/Educational Psychologists	Learning about Support Roles	Views about Training	Views about AHPCZ new regulations	Perceived Solutions
Themes	Major documents	In-service training workshops	Inadequate workshops	Master's degree in education	Internship after foundation degree
Subthemes	Education policy statements	Supervised training	Shortages of senior psychologists in the Ministry	Internship after master's degree	Decentralized workshops
		Collaboration	Ongoing training	Payment of external supervisors	Self-motivation
		Informal		Continuous professional development points	Information dissemination by AHPCZ

"P36 is major one. It talks about the establishment of special classes and resource units in mainstream schools. It states that there should be psycho-educational assessments to be carried out and classify children according to their need" (FGII).

"We have the P.36 which provides placement procedures for special classes, resource classes and special schools. This is done in order to implement The Education Act of 1987 which states the right to education of all children. It is the instruction of the Ministry that all special needs children shall participate as full as possible in the national curriculum. It addresses the procedures on identification and placement of special needs children" (FGIII).

"The Ministry has a number of circulars that support inclusive education. One of them is Director's circular No. 3 of 2001 on equal access to all learners" (FGI).

"Director's Circular No. 24 of 2001 on examinations of students with disabilities for example sign language interpretation, extended examination time. The circular addresses some of the issues that have adversely affected the performance of candidates with disabilities for example the use of sign language during the process of writing examinations" (FGI).

Some experiences indicate that there is no specific policy for inclusive education and the roles of educational psychologists are not outlined in these policies. For example:

"There is no policy specifically for inclusive education" (FGII).

"All circulars do not specify the role of psychologists and are not specific on inclusive education" (FGII).

Other circulars experienced include The Secretary's Circular No. P.12 of 1987, which provides guidelines on remedial programs for learners, The Secretary's Circular No. 2 of 2000 focuses on inclusion of learners with albinism with reference to meaningful inclusion in schooling and co-curricular activities; and Director's Circular No. 7 of 2005 offers guidelines for the inclusion of learners with disabilities in all school competitions.

These experiences and analysis of circulars indicate that Zimbabwe does not have a specific inclusive education policy but education-related policies that have tended toward inclusive education. In addition, these circulars do not specifically state the roles of educational psychologists.

8.2 | How trainee/educational psychologists learn about their support roles

Trainee/educational psychologists across the three focus groups appeared to have different training experiences, which included one in-service training workshop, supervised training, informal training, and collaborative work among themselves. The following extracts indicate their experiences:

"We had a national training workshop last year 2016 in Masvingo…. (FGIII).

However, another participant indicated resource constraints in workshops,

"Basically we cannot say we have them annually. If resources are permitting engagements are done" (FGI).

Several participants experienced their support roles during master's degree programs:

"I learnt my support roles and responsibilities during my master's (FGIII).

"To me it was some form of in-service training through my supervisor whom I meet maybe once a year or so and through this community psychology programme" (FGII).

The importance of collaborative work between psychologists was highlighted in the following experiences:

"If we know someone's strengths we then give each other assignments and then discuss these issues" (FGIII).

"At the office we share information amongst ourselves" (FGIII).

"We also do personal research when we receive a case we do not really know how to best manage it in inclusive settings" (FGI).

The following experiences indicate informal training experiences:

"I was exposed to my job description which details what I am expected to do as an educational psychologist. In terms of training, it was an informal one meaning to say there was no deliberate programme of training educational psychologists" (FGII).

"My training was informal. Someone trained me at home on assessments and about my job description. It was like getting way down alone" (FGII).

The above experiences indicate that participants had known their support roles through master's degree programs, a single 2016 workshop, personally guided reading, collaborative work with workmates, and informally.

8.3 | Views about the training

The views on inadequate training and supervision were pervasive while one participant indicated regular training through his supervisor. The following descriptions indicate inadequate training:

"I think the training is inadequate and lack regularity. Sometimes it's held once a year then after maybe two or three years before you have training. There is need for regularity in training so that we become equipped" (FGII).

"The training is not adequate. Something needs to be done so that we are fully equipped to offer a meaningful service to our clientele" (FGII).

"Sometimes when we get national workshops, the period itself will not be enough to cover the ground and content" (FGI).

"Those who have been registered cannot supervise because of the two year probation period" (FGIII).

"There was a situation when there were two registered psychologists; one at head office and the other in Manicaland. The magnitude of the workload was maybe one supervisor to 15 trainees. So the quality of supervision was compromised" (FGIII).

One participant voiced supervised training whereas another indicated that they can consult anyone who is a registered educational psychologist:

"The training of psychologists is covered because we consult our supervisors. You can use emails or Skype to consult your supervisors which is quite okay. The national workshops are done once a year but for individual training you can always consult your supervisor" (FGII).

"In terms of consultations, we are free to consult anyone who is a registered professional including our supervisors and director at head-office" (FGIII).

These experiences indicate lack of systematic training of psychologists because of a shortage of senior psychologists in the Department of School Psychological Services.

8.4 | Views about the Allied Health Practitioners Council's new regulations

Analysis of the AHPCZ 2016 regulations indicates a two-pronged approach to registration, the payment of a $100 for practicum supervision at master's degree and monthly payments of $100 for an internship. The CPD points covered areas in lecturing (given 2 points), attending and presenting at conferences (5 and 10 points, respectively), publishing in a peer-reviewed journal (20 points), attending and presenting at professional group meetings (2 and 4 points, respectively), attaining extra degree or certificate qualification (10 and 5 points), registration with a professional board (2 points), supervision of interns (3 points), community service (2 points), and in-service training activities for 2 days (5 points). To renew practicing certificates and registration for the year 2017 and 2018, trainee/educational psychologists should accrue a minimum of 40 and 50 points, respectively.

The experiences of participants indicate positive views about the requirements of AHPCZ but with negative feelings toward internship after master's program, payment of supervisors, CPD points, lack of Master of Science degree program in educational psychology in local universities, and location of conferences. The following are some of the positive views experienced by participants:

"It is a noble gesture because it protects the clients…they want the very best from us" (FGII).

"I think to maintain quality standards; we should marry theory and practice. So a master's degree should be one of the prerequisites, so that what you have learnt will have to be applied" (FGII).

"The CDP points encourage us to read and publish because as psychologists we might stay here for 10 years doing the same things without growth" (FGII).

"After acquiring an honours degree which is general but you need to take up the Master of Science in educational psychology which gives you the theoretical ground in one's practice. I support this aspect. However without adequate supervised practice then a practitioner won't be useful in society. So after a master's degree one has to undergo a supervised internship so that the theory is complemented with practical aspects of the profession. So I feel that a master's plus supervised training is good" (FGI).

"The issue of training is crucial in any profession. So to me despite shortages of educational psychologists, I think the professional training standards have to be upheld because if the professional standards are relaxed at the end of the day we are going to produce professionals who will be of more harm and danger to society. So all who want to be psychologists should follow those standards" (FGI).

The following views indicate lack of Master of Science degree programs in educational psychology at Zimbabwean universities:

"There is no university offering Msc in Educational Psychology in Zimbabwe. There is nowhere to go and get that qualification" (FGIII).

"We do Msc Community Psychology and Msc Child and Family Studies. We have no option but to take what is there, what is available" (FGII).

"A person is now forced to do master's degree in any area of psychology but is it that which is expected of educational psychology?" (FGII).

The internship after the master's degree program was viewed as unnecessary as it was done during master's degree levels.

> "We have a challenge with this regulatory body because even if after the master's they require you to do an internship again for a year which is not necessary, as most of the master's programmes have got the practicum aspect whereby you produce a file. So I think it is duplication. So I think after doing a practicum for a year and then you are going to get a master's and then do another year internship for you to get registered, I think it is asking too much" (FGII).

The following extracts indicate views on payment of supervisors:

> "So this aspect of internship of supervision has been motivated by self aggrandisement. It is now required that you pay your supervisor a minimum of $100. So they tell you after finishing your master's, you should go for a year paying….which amounts to $1200" (FG11).

> "Supervisors are required to have a maximum of six trainees. The ministry of Education supervisor has six trainees and it means that 40 trainees do not have supervisors and automatically it means you have to look for an external supervisor which becomes expensive" (FGII).

> "Even if you have the Ministry supervisor, she only supervises those in Harare. All trainees in Harare have been registered" (FGII).

The following are the views on CPD points:

> "There is this thing that has been introduced to us - CPD points - you won't renew your internship before you acquire 40 points. At the same time it is a noble idea but the way it is cascaded to us is not fair. The ministry supervisors are not communicating to us directly. We do not know what is happening only that we need this and that from Allied" (FGII).

> "There is no study leave given to us to do research in the Ministry" (FGI).

> Trainee/educational psychologists indicated that the workshops organized by the AHPCZ occur in Harare, are expensive, and that there is short notice.

> "They communicate within two days that we are having a workshop, which has a conference fee of $40. Looking at our salaries, you can't garner that amount and bus fares included. I think it's a challenge for us" (FGII).

> "The conferences are in Harare; at night between 7 and 8pm for 30 minutes and you pay $40" (FGII).

> "You pay $100 to your supervisor; you are expected to pay $50 registration fees to AHPCZ, bus fare to and from Harare. That's impossible from a salary of $300" (FGII).

> "Where these workshops are done is a limiting factor for those outside Harare. If you are outside Harare you need to attend these workshops at night and travel back to your base the same evening and want to be at work the following morning without any reimbursements" (FGIII).

The positive experiences indicate that psychologists need grounding in theory at the master's level, which will then be augmented by practice. The CPD points were positively viewed as they prevent knowledge and skills from becoming obsolete. However, psychologists faced challenges in that there is no university in Zimbabwe offering Master of Science degree programs in educational psychology, resulting in interns doing a master's program in any psychology field. The AHPCZ communicates directly to psychologists concerning CPD points, whereas the employer (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education) is not knowledgeable about it, resulting in having no study leave to do research. Other concerns centered on centralized location of workshops, timing and short notices of such workshops, and payment of supervisors.

8.5 | Perceived solutions

The following experiences indicate that the internship after a basic degree is adequate to provide services to clients. In addition, information about AHPCZ should be pervasive to all stakeholders, workshops need decentralization, and trainees need to be self-motivated to achieve their goals.

> "There is need to register a person after three years internship in the School Psychological Services department. This is a thorough supervised training. What is important is not a master's but the actual training you get. So I think a person should be given a chance to be examined to prove that he has received adequate training than just to stick to the master's programme" (FGI).

> "The assumption has to be proven scientifically by the Board of Examiners and not assumptions about adequately or inadequately trained" (FG1).

> "The regulatory body need to improve in terms of information dissemination. They need to make sure that all stakeholders are aware of what is supposed to be done in terms of registration. I did some informal research with students on attachment. They do not know what's awaiting them. So as a regulatory board they can improve on that part" (FGII).

> "Those under training should push themselves not the supervisor to push you and motivate you to train. So it's an issue about self motivation. To me the standards are not stringent because I joined this department in 2009 and in 2017 that is when I submitted my file. So I do not blame anyone for taking so long. So to me it is not AHPCZ but it is with those who are being trained. Standards should remain. They are good for us" (FGI).

> "The AHPCZ which facilitates workshops need to decentralise these" (FGIII).

9 | DISCUSSION

The experiences of trainee/educational psychologists indicate that Zimbabwe does not have a specific inclusive education policy, but rather education policies that show intent toward inclusive education. In addition, the education circulars do not specify the roles of educational psychologists. Lack of policy framework is a barrier to quality education and support for all in an inclusive education system (Porter & Smith, 2011). The lack of an inclusive policy results in educational psychologists not having a framework and guidance for the implementation of inclusive education practices. In contrast, South Africa has a policy on inclusive education. *Education white paper 6*: *Special needs education* (Department of Education, 2001) outlines the roles of educational psychologists. In the United States, the No Child Left Behind Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides guidelines regarding the education of children with disabilities, and such legislation has important implications for the preparation and practices of educational psychologists (Oakland & Jimerson, 2007).

Trainee/educational psychologists across the three focus groups appeared to have different training experiences, which included in-service training workshops, supervised training, informal training, personally guided reading, and collaborative work among themselves. The ZPA provides a professional identity and education and training for all psychology specialities (Mpofu et al., 2007). The ZPA is currently launching regional chapters in the country's 10 provinces to make psychologists participate in its activities after the economic meltdown of 2006 to 2008. The professional body therefore lacks financial resources for the continuing education of psychologists.

According to Oakland (2000), the country's gross national product influences school psychological services. Shortages of senior educational psychologists in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Department of School Psychological Services and Special Needs Education results in a few interns getting adequate and quality supervision. Informal training at home, for example, is not allowed as the AHPCZ allows training at institutions that are accredited or approved by the board (AHPCZ, 2016). The board allows a ratio of one senior psychologist for six interns, resulting in a majority of interns seeking services from private registered psychologists at a fee. Trainee/educational

psychologists indicated collaborative work among themselves and this is consistent with Moloi (2005) who indicated frequent collaboration because problems cannot be solved in isolation.

The experiences of participants indicate positive views about the requirements of AHPCZ but with negative feelings toward internship after master's program, payment of supervisors, CPD points, lack of a Master of Science degree in educational psychology in local universities, and location of conferences. According to Pillay (2014), some African countries legislated the requirements of educational psychologists to have a minimum of a master's degree qualification and a license to practice. The AHPCZ is clear about psychologists' training, registration, and practice, but Oakland and Jimerson (2007) indicate that a sufficiently large workforce precedes the development of professional associations and that a discipline evolves over time.

There are few registered psychologists in Zimbabwe because of high job attrition rates (Mpofu et al., 2007) and the prevailing economic conditions. The preparation of educational psychologists is labor-intensive (Daniels, Collair, Moola, & Lazarus, 2007), and acute shortages of senior educational psychologists resulted in Donald (1991) recommending shorter programs that emphasize community and family interventions, intersectorial collaboration, and proactive, preventative, and consultation work with teachers and schools.

Payment of external supervisors is a form of incentivizing supervision but at a cost to interns. The formulation of 2016 AHPCZ regulations appears to have had minimal consultations with stakeholders on an internship program. According to Mpofu and Khan (1997), after independence in 1980, there were few licensed psychologists and two programs were used to prepare educational psychologists: a full-time, 3-year internship program for those with Bachelor of Science degrees in psychology under the School Psychological Services and Special Needs Education Department in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, and a Master of Science degree in educational psychology at University of Zimbabwe, which led to automatic registration. These conditions were waived and more stringent conditions were put into effect. The two-way process of registering psychologists now involves a Bachelor of Science Honors degree in psychology and a master's degree plus a 1-year internship and a Bachelor of Science Honors degree in psychology plus a 3-year internship, which should include a Master of Science degree in educational psychology before applying for the final registration (AHPCZ, 2016). Such stringent conditions need to be effected when there are adequate numbers of licensed psychologists.

The Master of Science degree in educational psychology was offered at the University of Zimbabwe and used to take 10 students every 2 years (Mpofu et al., 2007). Because of shortages of lecturers with requisite qualifications, the program was last offered in 2012. Intern psychologists in the department of School Psychological Services are now doing any master's degree with a major in psychology. For example, a Master of Science degree in community psychology offered by Midlands State University and counseling psychology offered by Great Zimbabwe University and such qualifications are not recognized in the department of School Psychological Services. Such a scenario results in demotivation of interns who are required to have a Master of Science degree in educational psychology. Also, registration with AHPCZ is not a prerequisite for employment in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

In South Africa, the minimum qualification to work as a school psychologist in a school or district is registration as a counselor or psychometrist (Daniels et al., 2007). Clinical psychologists, educational psychologists, counseling psychologists, psychometrists, and counselors work as part of district support teams (Daniels et al., 2007). Such a scenario needs to be adopted in the Zimbabwean context wherein different specialist areas work collaboratively in the same department.

CPD is a means by which members of the profession broaden the expertise required in their professional lives (AHPCZ, 2016) and prevents knowledge and skills from becoming obsolete. The minimum required CPD points per annum is 40 to renew certificates for practicing psychologists and interns. For example, on-site CPD activities such as workshops, conferences, and presentations have lower points than publishing in a peer-reviewed journal. The CPD does not include consultation, assessment, intervention, and program planning and evaluation.

In South Africa, the system of continuous professional development applies to registered psychologists who are compelled to engage in a minimum of professional development activities annually to remain registered with the Health Professions Council (Daniels et al., 2007). Psychologists need the CPD as a professional and ethical

requirement (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010) to develop competencies, meet certification requirements, cope with professional isolation, and maintain current knowledge in a rapidly changing field (Tysinger, Tysinger, Diamanduros, & Smith, 2015). Educational psychologists are therefore motivated by certification requirements to engage in professional development throughout their careers (Armistead, Castillo, Curtis, Chappel, & Cunningham, 2013).

Trainee psychologists though competent in the provision of school psychological services are novice practitioners (Tysinger et al., 2015) and hence view CPD negatively, maybe because they have inadequate time at work or as a way of resisting change. Research indicates that psychologists' CPD is often self-directed (e.g., Neimeyer, Taylor, & Philip, 2010; Snyder, Lionetti, & Christner, 2010), and CPD that is not considered stimulating may actually impair professional growth (Macklem, Kalinsky, & Corcoran, 2001). Fowler and Harrison (2001) found that psychologists learn best when they have control over CPD selection, particularly when the CPD includes an experiential learning component (Daniels & Walter, 2002).

The negative attitudes of trainee/educational psychologists on CPD are that they are prescribed by AHPCZ. The findings of this research indicate lack of financial reimbursement and study leave. Fowler and Harrison (2001) who found that compensated leave, financial reimbursement of expenses, perceived need, and personal interest increase the likelihood that educational psychologists will seek CPD. Although Fowler and Harrison (2001) found that the most frequently reported CPD activities were workshops, in-service training, and self-study, Zimbabwean educational psychologists indicated difficulties in attending workshops, which are centralized in Harare, and the costs that go with such workshops. Armistead et al. (2013) found that educational psychologists had positive attitudes toward CPD and they frequently engaged in response to intervention, academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions, and academic screening and progress monitoring.

It is therefore crucial that educational psychologists engage in continuing professional development to facilitate the adoption and evolution of high-quality service provision (Swerdlik & French, 2000; Wizda, 2004) because they are engaged in independent practice. However, initial professional training of trainees should be under the supervision of a senior educational psychologist who has the full responsibility for trainee vis-à-vis the client (Roe, 2002). The broader implication here is that CPD should focus on those in independent practice, and there is a need to continuously review training from the perspective of the trainee educational psychologists.

9.1 | Recommendations

There is need for Zimbabwean educational psychologists to advocate for training initiatives through ZPA. The use of Skype is one such method. However, CPD points should focus on registered educational psychologists with graduate qualifications so that they acquire advanced levels of practice (Armistead & Smallwood, 2010) and not intern psychologists. Continuous professional development needs to focus on diverse areas such as psychoeducational assessment, consultation, intervention and program planning, and evaluation, and has to be self-directed. Therefore, the CPD needs to be valued by both clients and professionals. Moreover, it is important that psychologists identify those past professional development opportunities that have contributed to the improvement of their day-to-day practice (Wnek et al., 2008).

Zimbabwe has a low gross national product entailing weak economic resources (Oakland & Jimerson, 2007); therefore, there is a need for a minimum qualification of an undergraduate degree for one to train as an educational psychologist and get registered. Interns with different master's degrees in counseling psychology and community psychology need to be recognized by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Department of Schools Psychological Services so that they work collaboratively. Universities having lecturers with requisite qualifications need to develop educational psychology programs in their institutions.

The AHPCZ needs to work in collaboration with the Public Service Commission and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education so that those people with a master's degree can register with the AHPCZ as an intern before being able to work.

9.2 | Further research

Qualitative further research on educational psychologists' perceptions on AHPCZ 2016 regulations with a particular focus on payment of supervisors, CPD points, and board examinations is critical. Research questions should include barriers and enablers to CPD points, payment of supervisors, and board examinations. Such information could then be used to improve regulations by the AHPCZ.

Trainee educational psychologists are recruited by the Public Commission without consideration of AHPCZ requirements for registration. Further research is needed to determine the implications of not renewing practice certificates or failure to accumulate the minimum number of CPD points for their jobs.

10 | IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

First, the study demonstrates the importance of stakeholder consultations and the country's needs and economy in determining training needs of psychologists rather than adopting models from developed countries. Trainee/educational psychologists indicated inadequate training as a result of few licensed psychologists. For example, there is a need to have a minimum qualification of a basic degree and internship training for one to be a registered psychologist so that there is an adequate number of registered psychologists.

Second, there is a need for CPD training for registered psychologists as this is a new concept. Trainee psychologists or interns do not have adequate practical experience for them to have CPD for renewal of certificates or registration. The psychology board examination needs to give trainees with adequate internship a chance to write and determine their suitability for registration. Also, interns should be aware of AHPCZ requirements before appointments in public service. The implication is that developing countries need to develop a realistic vision that takes into account the resources available so that they develop practical inclusive education practices in their schools and communities.

Third, there is a need to recognize graduate qualifications of community and counseling psychology in the Department of School Psychological Services. Without these considerations, the department will continue to have a critical shortage of educational psychologists.

The education policies are outdated and need renewal in the face of changes in educational psychology. In addition, a specific policy on inclusive education that outlines the roles of educational psychologists needs urgent attention.

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