

Challenges faced in the implementation of the inclusive education policy in sport at four secondary schools in Masvingo district, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore challenges faced in the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy, with special reference to sport, at four secondary schools in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe. This qualitative study adopted a case study design. Semi-structured interviews and observations were used to collect data from purposively sampled school heads, team trainers, sports directors, pupils living with disabilities and a District Schools Inspector (DSI). Data were analysed through emerging themes. The study revealed that schools faced a number of challenges in the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy in sport, among them being lack of trained manpower. The researchers believe that such challenges could be overcome if the Zimbabwean government followed up on the policy of inclusion. The study recommends that government injects some funds if the challenges are to be overcome. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) is encouraged to enforce the said policy

Keywords: Inclusive Education, disability, mainstream schools, Physical Education

Introduction and background

The study explored the challenges faced in the implementation of Zimbabwe's Inclusive Education policy, particularly in sport. The study focused on four secondary schools in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe. The schools shall be referred to as School A, School B, School C, and School D.

Education and sport cannot be separated. As Mokoelle (2014) puts it, there is a general view that there is a close relationship between education and sport, and that sport is beneficial for learning and educational outcomes. It was crucial to undertake such a study in light of the current trends in inclusion. According to McMillan (2008), the world over, schools have had a long history of segregation, especially with regard to the education of students with disabilities. Teachers, parents and communities at large felt that those with disabilities were incompetent and they had nothing of value to contribute to society. The current study is a follow up to an earlier study by Musengi and Mudyahoto (2010), who investigated the quality of sports participation by pupils with disabilities in inclusive educational settings at selected Masvingo urban schools in Zimbabwe. Musengi and Mudyahoto (2010) revealed that in Zimbabwe, most learners with disabilities were being excluded in sporting activities by most

non-disabled peers and teachers. Hence, the current study sought to get further insights into the challenges of implementing the Inclusive Education policy in sport in four secondary schools in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe. Before Zimbabwe's political independence in 1980, there were no formal policies for the education of black African students with disabilities (Mukhopadhyay & Musengi, 2012). However, after independence the government adopted a formal policy to educate learners with disabilities in ordinary schools, providing for specialist teacher and resource instruction for the learners afflicted with significant barriers to learning (Mpfungu, Mutepfa, Chireshe & Kasayira, 2007).

According to Mapuranga and Nyakudzuka (2014), the 1987 Education Act of Zimbabwe (revised in 1996) stipulates that every child has the right to education. That Act has formed the basis for the increase in provision of Special Needs Education in Zimbabwe. The Education Act (1987) is backed by the Disabled Persons Act (1992), which is against the discrimination of people with disabilities (Mapuranga & Nyakudzuka, 2014). Ncube and Hlatywayo (2014) observe that 70% of learners with disabilities in Zimbabwe have been denied or are still being denied the right to education. This is despite the fact that Zimbabwe is signatory to many conventions that advocate inclusion. These include World Declaration for Education for All (1990), the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994), the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008). Thus, the present study sought to investigate the challenges to inclusion, focusing on sporting disciplines such as soccer, cricket, volley ball, hockey, and tennis among other team sports at four secondary schools in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe.

Statement of the problem

The Government of Zimbabwe, being a signatory to many conventions and treaties on Inclusive Education, came up with a policy that sought to eradicate segregation on the basis of disability. Thus, through the Education Act of 1987 (amended in 1996) and the Disabled Persons Act of 1992, the government spelt the need to embrace all learners and not to discriminate against any child from all the activities at school. However, from the researchers' observations and experiences, secondary school teachers in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe, continue to discriminate learners with disabilities, especially in mainstream sport. There are also indications from a study carried out by Musengi, Mudyahoto and Chireshe (2010), that teachers are not implementing the inclusive policy in sport. Hence, this study sought to explore the challenges that have made it difficult to implement the policy in sport.

Aim of the study

The study explores the challenges faced in the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy in sport at four secondary schools in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe, with the aim of possibly improving the participation of learners living with disabilities.

Objectives

- To determine the extent to which learners with disabilities participate in sports at the four selected secondary schools in Masvingo District.
- To establish the challenges faced in the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy in sport at the four secondary schools.
- To proffer suggestions for improving the participation of learners living with disabilities in sport.

Theoretical Framework

The study is informed by two theories, namely the Contact Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory. According to Roper (1990), the Contact Theory holds that positive contact between different groups of people can reduce negative biases, stereotyping, expectations, and discriminatory behaviours. The current study focuses on inclusion in the form of contact between disabled and non-disabled learners, hence, the study finds the Contact Theory relevant. The other theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, postulates that both cognitive and behavioural learning takes place through the observation, modeling and imitation of others (Hilbert, 2019). According to the author, inclusion classes capitalise on these theories because learners living with disabilities can observe their non-disabled peers and their teachers, as well as get in contact with them, then imitate them academically and behaviourally. Thus, the Social Learning Theory is also relevant to the present study.

Literature Review

The notion of inclusive sport falls under the domain of Inclusive Education (Mokoelle, 2014). Inclusion refers to the integration of students living with disabilities in regular classes so as to protect the right to education for all members of society, thereby ensuring that no child is left behind (Anati, 2013). Similarly, Lamport, Graves and Ward (2012) define educational inclusion as education that is geared to include all students, including those with disabilities,

in the same educational environment. UNESCO (2005:168) offers a more comprehensive definition of Inclusive Education as,

a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all learners (UNESCO, 2005:168).

Inclusion is an ongoing process whose aim is to offer quality education to all, respecting diversity and the varying needs and disabilities, characteristics and educational expectations of learners and communities as well as eliminating discrimination (UNESCO, 2008). At the centre of the definitions of inclusive education is, thus, tolerance of diversity and avoidance of discrimination on the basis of disability.

UNESCO (2009) offers a three-pronged justification for inclusive education. The first is the educational justification, whereby schools have to develop ways of teaching that cater for individual differences and benefit all learners. The second is the social justification, whereby inclusive schools can change attitudes towards diversity and form the basis of a just, non-discriminatory society. The third is the cost justification, whereby it costs less to establish and maintain inclusive schools than to set up a complex system of different schools for different groups of learners.

According to Allenby (2009:2) “Growing evidence suggests that acceptance of individuals with disabilities is facilitated when schools, social activities, and sports teams are inclusive”, that is, when individuals with and without disabilities participate together as equals. Kamens cited in McEarchem (2007) expressed the need for inclusive sport as the panacea to some societal misconceptions about learners living with disabilities. A study by Winter and O’Raw (2009) emphasises the need to equip teachers with information as well as tools that could be used to include learners with disabilities in mainstream sport. A study by Mukhopadhyay, Molosiwa and Moswela (2009) revealed that teacher educators were lagging behind in as far as information /knowledge on inclusive sport was concerned.

Various other authors observe a number of benefits of inclusive education. According to Hayden and Thompson (cited in Mapuranga & Nyakudzuka, 2014), apart from encouraging staff teamwork, inclusive education caters for individual learners’ rights, helps to eradicate

stigmas and provides opportunities for special needs learners to function in the real world and demonstrate their strengths. There are also social benefits as inclusive education fosters friendships and social interactions (Kalyvas & Reid, 2003). This would result in improved communication and social skills, thus, improving success in other social contexts (Floyd et al., 2009). Inclusive education also helps remove social prejudice as well as engender improvement in behaviour (McMillan, 2008). In relation to this, Devine and Lashua (2002) also posit that inclusive experiences debunk myths and stereotypes. In addition, there are academic benefits. According to McCarthy (2006:8) "...it appears that special needs students in regular classes do better academically ... than comparable students in non-inclusive settings."

However, there are several challenges or obstacles to inclusion. McMillan (2008) identifies lack of teacher training, teachers' negative attitudes to inclusion, lack of support staff, and lack of social acceptance as some of the obstacles to inclusion. In support to the above, a research study by Tantranont (2009) on how teachers felt about inclusion of learners with disabilities in mainstream sport indicated that inclusive sport in mainstream schools was found to be wanting. Teachers were not confident to teach inclusive sport in the mainstream. In their study on general education courses, Buell, Hallam, Gamel-Maccormick and Scheer (2001) concluded that teachers should be taught some components of inclusive sport during their training. Further to the above, Kempton (2013) stresses the importance of time allocation when including learners with disabilities in mainstream sport as time may adversely affect inclusive sport.

Mokoelle (2014) observes that while schools in South Africa have accommodated learners from diverse backgrounds as per the inclusion policy, few schools have considered how to make school sport inclusive to accommodate the diverse kinds of learners they have enrolled. This is an observation shared by the present researchers, hence, the current study on the challenges of implementing inclusion in sports at four secondary schools in Masvingo District, Zimbabwe.

Chireshe (2013) carried out a study on Bachelor of Education (Special Needs) students' perceptions on the state of inclusive education in Zimbabwe. The study revealed that the students found inclusive education to be beneficial but fraught with challenges such as, absence of a specific policy on inclusive education, inadequate human (teachers) and material resources, negative attitudes towards learners with disabilities, as well as poor

conceptualisation of inclusive education. The current study, however, focuses on challenges of implementing inclusive education in sport.

Methodology

The study adopted the qualitative approach, informed by the interpretivist paradigm and case study design, to give the researchers the chance to visit respondents in their natural settings as well as gather information on their experiences regarding the challenges faced in the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy in sport. Qualitative data were collected on views and situations pertaining to the issue under investigation.

Population and sample

The target population of the study comprised all the district education administrators (Masvingo District), all secondary school heads in the district, all sports organisers, team trainers and all the learners living with disabilities at the district's secondary schools. Purposive sampling was used to select 4 school heads, 4 sports organisers, 8 team trainers/coaches, 4 learners living with disabilities per school and a District Schools Inspector (DSI). The purposive sample was based on the presence of learners with disabilities at the schools. It was deemed appropriate to use purposive sampling as it involves drawing a number of participants from the population in a deliberate or targeted way, hence, selecting participants because of them being knowledgeable on the subject under discussion (Punch, 2010). In support, Maree (2007) posits that purposive sampling is mainly used so that individuals are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of data needed for the study. In this case, school heads were selected on the basis of being the heads of the respective schools and the DSI was selected by virtue of holding the highest post of authority in education at district level. Team trainers were selected on the basis of their knowledge regarding sport and disability as well as being coaches of various teams in respective schools, while learners living with disabilities got involved because of their hands-on experiences when it comes to taking part in sport with learners without disabilities.

Data collection instruments

Data were gathered through interviews and observations. Semi-structured interviews were held with school heads, team trainers/coaches, sports organisers, learners living with disabilities and the District Schools Inspector (DSI). Interviews were used to solicit information pertaining to participants' views, perceptions and experiences on challenges faced in the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy in sport. Interviews can yield

details and insights into the participants' experiences of the subject under study (Hoepf, 2009).

Observations were done on various aspects pertaining to sports at the schools. For instance, observations were carried out to determine whether learners with disabilities were practically involved in sports at the grounds and assess if the facilities and equipment were favorable to learners living with disabilities.

Findings

Findings from interviews

From interviews held with learners living with disabilities at the four schools to establish their involvement in sport, it emerged that such learners were largely being excluded from participating in sports. One of the major reasons given was that they were regarded as being incapable of taking part in sport. Another reason was that the facilities were not user-friendly for the learners. Lack of assistive devices was also cited as hampering the learners' involvement in sport.

A learner living with disabilities at School A lamented that,

...at times we are forced to remain in classes doing some odd jobs like sweeping or tidying up the classroom because our teacher says we cannot walk the long distances to the playgrounds or courts.

Another learner with a disability at School A said:

In most cases we are reduced to spectators as sports organisers and team coaches do not care about us. We also do not have proper equipment to use and nobody seems to know or to be concerned about us. Proper equipment is very necessary as it prevents us from being injured. Most of the mainstream games are rather too fast for us; hence, the coaches need to slow them down.

A learner living with disabilities at School B agreed with a learner at School A as she revealed that: *It is now a routine, as we don't have to be told every sports afternoon that I and a colleague remain behind sweeping and doing some corrections. After that we go home ahead of others.* A learner with a disability from school C said: *I for one can wheel myself to the grounds but at times am assisted by friends. However, there are certain areas where I can't get to. For example, getting to the rugby pitch would involve me being lifted.*

Another learner living with a disability at School C also said: *Most of the coaches are more concerned with competitive sporting activities; hence, they leave us out because they think we cannot make the grade. Even if we were to be part of the teams, the grounds and sporting*

rules are not favorable for us. A learner living with a disability at School D commented that: Our school has made some efforts to put some access ramps to get to the netball courts. They should do the same with other courts which are difficult to be accessed by us.

It also emerged from interviews with learners with disabilities that their main challenge was failure to know what they were supposed to be doing during sporting time during mainstream sport. Said a learner from School D: *We are not really sure of what we are supposed to be doing during sports time. Nobody seems to take note of our presence so we either laze about or read books.*

From the interviews with sports trainers/coaches of various sporting disciplines such as soccer, netball, hockey and cricket among others at the four schools, it emerged that learners with disabilities were largely excluded from mainstream sporting activities. One of the main reasons given was lack of adequate information on the policy of inclusion in sport. The majority of the trainers pointed out that although they were not specialist Special Needs Education teachers, they were yet to be work-shopped on inclusive education, and be given the policy documents and literature on inclusivity, especially in sport.

A soccer coach at School A had this to say on the challenge of lack of information: *Much as I would like to include learners with disabilities in football, I'm not quite sure of what form of inclusion to adopt, whether to separately involve them in soccer or to integrate them into the mainstream soccer teams.* The issue of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education not passing on information to teachers on how inclusive sport was to be carried out in mainstream schools was a challenge. Some team trainers indicated that they relied on the general knowledge that they had on inclusive education. When team trainers were asked about their interests in studying inclusive education on their own, some of them expressed that they did not like studying specifically about inclusive sport. Another coach from school D indicated that as coaches, they were not encouraged to study because having an extra qualification on inclusion did not reward them financially. Other team trainers from schools A, C and D indicated that schools did not have inclusive sport materials like books and magazines, which commensurate with sport for learners with disabilities in the mainstream. A coach from school B was honest enough to say, she had no interest in studying.

Another challenge that emerged from interviews with sport trainers was the pervasive negative attitude the trainers had towards learners with disabilities. Such learners were viewed as being too fragile and vulnerable to take part in the 'rigours' of sport. Learners with disabilities were thus viewed as objects of pity. Said a volley ball coach from School C: *I honestly don't know how to handle learners with disabilities in my volleyball team. I just have this feeling that volleyball being so physical, learners with disabilities may not cope or may be more prone to injuries than their peers without disabilities.*

Yet another challenge that was revealed by the sports coaches at the schools was the competitive nature of sports in the school systems, whereby marks, awards and trophies took centre stage, so learners with disabilities were seen as liabilities who could cost their teams the much-sought-after marks. Said an athletics coach from School D:

There is this spirit of wanting to win in athletics. So you find that learners with disabilities are shunned by both teachers and their peers. If sport was done for its intrinsic value nobody would have any issues with including learners with disabilities in athletics for example.

The fourth challenge that came out from interviews with sports coaches was lack of special facilities and equipment/assistive devices to enable learners with disabilities to take part in sports. A tennis coach at School B observed: *We don't have special facilities for learners with special needs here. The playgrounds, tennis courts and athletics fields are all designed for learners without disabilities as you can see.*

In interviews with sports organisers, it was gathered that they had not been work-shopped on inclusive education, let alone in sport. The very few chances that were availed for workshops were usually given to school heads, who at times failed to give meaningful feedback. At times, administrators chose to send teachers (mostly their friends) who were not involved in sport for such workshops.

All the heads interviewed acknowledged that learners with disabilities were largely invisible in sports. One of the reasons given was that there have not been funded workshops and in-service training courses for teachers on Special Needs Education; hence, there was a serious shortage of specialist teachers to cater for the needs of learners with disabilities. It was revealed that the few teachers, who embarked on SNE degree programs at the two

universities in the province had sponsored themselves, and on completion of their studies, were still too few to make any meaningful impact. In the words of the head of School A:

There is a serious lack of specialist teachers in SNE. At this school we don't have even one teacher who majored in SNE. I wish the government could convene workshops or in-service a number of our teachers in SNE because there is a deficit of information on how to handle children with special needs.

The other reason that the heads cited for the exclusion of learners with disabilities was lack of special facilities and assistive devices. *We don't have special facilities and equipment for learners with disabilities to take part in some of the sporting disciplines. Such facilities and equipment can be quite expensive* (Head, School C). In the interview, the District Schools Inspector (DSI) also articulated on the challenges faced by trainers/coaches regarding assessing information on the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy in sport. The DSI said:

The greatest challenge we face as a nation is largely lack of financial resources which, if available, would make it possible for the government to hire qualified personnel to generate pamphlets, books and other forms of literature that could be used by team trainers and sports organisers to get information on how to include learners with disabilities in regular school sport. Most of the teachers do not know what to do and how to include children with disabilities in sporting activities as they have never come across information on including children with disabilities in sport(DSI, Masvingo District).

Findings from observation

The researchers also collected data through observation from the four schools. The observation checklists at each school specifically sought to determine whether learners living with disabilities in various categories were included in mainstream sports. In situations where they were included or involved, observers were keen to see if there was team cohesion among players with and without disabilities. It was also of interest to the researchers to find out if facilities and equipment were available and suitable for both categories of learners. Lastly, it was important for the observers to see whether the rules of the games, grounds/courts were adapted to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. Of the four schools, school A did not involve learners with disabilities in sports at all. The few learners with disabilities that the researchers noticed were among the spectators. The situation at school B showed learners

with varying disabilities being grouped and playing some minor games such as draft/tsoro. However, no teacher trainer supervised or coached these learners.

At school C a learner who had a deformed hand participated in soccer, without any special considerations made for him. A learner living with albinism was sported playing volleyball. The difference from other learners was that he was wearing his sun hat. Team trainers at school D did not give any considerations to the aspect of including learners with disabilities in sport.

Discussion

From the interviews held with different categories of participants as well as from the observations made, the study revealed that learners with disabilities were largely excluded from sports. The exclusion was in spite of the myriad of benefits to accrue from inclusive education (Devine & Lashua, 2002; Kalyvas & Reid, 2003; McCarthy, 2006; McMillan, 2008; Floyd, Purcell, Richardson & Kupersmidt, 2009). Exclusion is also in apparent contradiction to the Contact Theory which avers that positive contact between different groups of people can reduce negative biases, stereotyping and discrimination (Roper, 1990). The sidelining of learners with disabilities from sports also disregards Bandura's Social Learning Theory which holds that both cognitive and learning behaviour occurs through observing, modeling and imitating others (Lamport, Graves & Ward, 2012). The exclusion of learners with disabilities from mainstream sporting activities also confirms McMillan's (2008) observation that schools have had a long history of segregation, particularly against learners with disabilities. This is despite the fact that the 1987 Education Act of Zimbabwe (amended in 1996) stipulates that every child has the right to education. Also, the Disabled Persons Act (1996) is against the discrimination of persons with disabilities (Mapuranga & Nyakudzuka, 2014). Thus, there is evident discord between policy and practice regarding the inclusion of learners with disabilities.

From the researchers' observations it emerged that team trainers in regular schools lacked knowledge and skills to teach learners with disabilities in mainstream sport. These observations agree with Carol, cited in Konza (2008) who carried out a survey in which most team trainers reported that they did not feel relaxed when interacting with learners who were mentally or physically challenged because of lack of knowledge. In relation to this, UNESCO (2009), and WHO (2011) stress the importance of both initial and pre-service training for the effective teaching of learners with diverse educational needs in regular schools. Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick and Scheer (2001) concluded, in their study at Transylvania

University in Lexington in the USA, that general education courses should include more information on disabilities and teaching of sport to learners with disabilities. In relation to this, a research report in Japan by Kanasori, Kai, Kondo, Hirai, Ichida, Suzuki and Kawashi (2012) revealed that there was hardly any feedback or evaluation on inclusive sport in schools. Further observations and interviews carried out indicated the need for information on inclusive sport. Team trainers, as well as learners with and without disabilities need some form of education in order for them to be able to interact comfortably and effectively with each other in mainstream sport.

Similarly, Tantranont (2009:2), in a study on how sports organisers felt about inclusion of learners with disabilities in mainstream sport in Thailand, reported that,

Inclusive sport in mainstream practices was found wanting in the majority of trainers due to lack of information...In schools in which this study was carried, coaches were not confident to teach students and expressed the need to gain greater expertise for training students in mainstream sport effectively.

Also, Patterson (2005) states that many general education teachers are limited in their knowledge of Inclusive Education, yet they play an integral role in educating learners with disabilities in mainstream schools. This points to the need for a reading culture among teachers. Ndege (2006:43) also observes that, "The reading culture has not been inculcated...since most training institutions across the continent still employ traditional teaching methods as opposed to the innovative approaches that ingrain a culture of self-directed learning." In this study coaches/teachers showed no interest in studying approaches that can be used to include learners living with disabilities in mainstream sport.

The findings of this study indicated that despite the presence of the Inclusive Education policy, the government has done very little, if anything, to empower the relevant stakeholders to be able to assist learners living with disabilities in mainstream sport. Both learners with and without disabilities as well as team trainers needed some form of education/awareness in order to enable them to interact effectively in mainstream sport. Participants interviewed in this study virtually showed no knowledge in terms of including learners with disabilities in sport. Team trainers disliked the idea of including learners with disabilities, as they viewed it as time wasting. They also felt that the government could have first and foremost in-serviced, work-shopped as well as supplied them with study materials on inclusive sport for them to gain knowledge. According to Rodriguez and McKay (2010), teachers gain new knowledge

through information from both electronic and print media to enhance their teaching profession. Teachers are expected to update their knowledge and skills through reading, seeing and hearing information on the current educational reforms and improve their practices (Radhakanta & Shushama, 2013). Mukhopadhyay, Molosiwa and Moswela (2009) conducted a study on teacher preparedness for Inclusive Education in Botswana schools and concluded that teacher educators were lagging behind in as far as having information on inclusive education was concerned. The solution in such a case would be to empower all stakeholders with information through in-service training.

In this study, the focus was on challenges in the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy in sport (Zimbabwe) in four regular secondary schools. The fact that the MoPSE enunciated the Inclusive Education policy in Zimbabwean schools calls for the full preparedness and intensification of information that would be used by both team trainers and learners with disabilities in a bid to overcome these challenges when it comes to the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy in sport. Team trainers are facing new challenges in their day-to-day coaching and teaching (European Commission, 2011). Among the most significant has been the unprecedented increase in the number of learners with special education needs in the mainstream.

Team trainers raised concerns that it was not easy to train or coach learners with and without disabilities in the same team. Coaches/ trainers may need well designed workshop programmes to update their knowledge and skills. This is in agreement to the NSSE (2010) which states that many teachers leave colleges and universities without adequate information and training as the curriculum is too wide, leaving them unable to teach sport to diverse groups of learners in the mainstream.

Another challenge to the implementation of the policy of inclusive education in sport that has emerged from this current study is lack of special facilities and assistive devices for learners with disabilities. Special facilities and assistive devices would enable learners living with disabilities to function well in environments where they might not function without them. This is contrary to the government of Zimbabwe's post-independence policy to educate students with disabilities in mainstream schools, a policy that undertook to provide specialist teacher and resource instruction to learners with significant barriers to learning (Mpofu et al., 2010). This finding of lack of material resources as an obstacle to inclusive education also came out of a study by Chireshe (2013).

One of the greatest challenges that emerged from this study on inclusive sport at the four selected schools in Masvingo was lack of knowledge by teachers, school heads and the DSI. Participants complained that the MoPSE enunciated the policy on inclusive sport without having undertaken awareness programmes to prepare teachers for its implementation. Further observations conducted at the four schools revealed that teachers neglected learners with disabilities during sporting times, as they believed such learners were prone to injuries. Lack of assistive devices and in some cases, inaccessible facilities, were major hindrances to inclusive sport.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study concluded that learners with disabilities were to a large extent being excluded from meaningfully taking part in sporting activities at the four selected schools in Masvingo District. This was despite the fact that Zimbabwe was a signatory to several international conventions that advocated inclusion, and also in spite of the numerous benefits of inclusion as espoused by the Contact Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory and by a whole gamut of scholarly sentiments. Some of the major challenges that were found to be hindering the implementation of inclusive sport at the four schools in Masvingo District included lack of information on inclusive sport, lack of specialist teachers, absence and/or inadequacy of specialist facilities and equipment, negative attitudes towards learners with disabilities, as well as the competitive nature of sport.

In light of the above findings, the study recommended the following:

- Stakeholders such as school heads, the DSI, team trainers/coaches as well as learners with and without disabilities be made aware that soccer, cricket, handball and basketball, among others, can be played by learners living with disabilities. Stakeholders should be in-serviced and reading materials on inclusive sport provided. With proper in-service training and resources, team trainers could encourage more participation of learners with disabilities in sport.
- School administrators and MoPSE should ensure that more stakeholders' workshops are held in order to sensitise and disseminate information on inclusive sport.

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