Challenges Faced In The Implementation Of Inclusive Education In Teachers' Colleges In Zimbabwe

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Abstract: This paper sought to explore the challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe. The paper was focused on three teacher training colleges in Zimbabwe. The study used interpretivism paradigm, qualitative research approach and multiple case studies research design. The population of the study were college principals, lecturers and students. A sample of seventeen (17) participants and eight (8) key informants was selected using homogenous purposive sampling. Data were generated using face-to-face interviews and direct observation guide. The paper established that major challenges affecting inclusive education were absence of inclusive education policy, shortage of resources, lack of funding, lack of skilled personnel, attitudes of college personnel, inaccessible environment, rigid curriculum, work overload by lecturers, stigma and discrimination and lack of information by students with disabilities. It can be concluded that due to lack of skills and knowledge on inclusive education and disability by the lecturers, students with disabilities are not adequately catered for in teachers' colleges thus, affecting their professional development. It was also concluded that shortage of resources was affecting inclusive education in teachers' colleges. The paper recommended that the Ministry of Higher Education Innovation Science and Technology Development (MHTEISDT) and teachers' colleges' administrators should have a budget to support inclusive education in teachers' colleges.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is a current educational philosophy and a global trend which is meant to make education accessible to all people [1]. It is a standard that all educational managers should uphold for effective rolling out of all-encompassing educational programmes. The concept of inclusive education is anchored on the philosophy of Education for All people regardless of their individual needs and nature [2], [3]. Inclusive education is both a human rights and social justice issue which many societies are embracing as a way of meeting the demands of the cross-section of the society [2], [4]. There are a number of policies, frameworks and conventions that have been signed by the international community which inform inclusive education. Among them are the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on special needs education (1994) and others. Zimbabwe is a signatory to the various internal conventions and agreements that guide inclusive education. As such teachers' colleges are enrolling students with disabilities as a way of complying with the national and internal policies. The researcher also noted that there seemed to be a few students with disabilities in Teachers' colleges. Generally, the level of education achieved is higher among individuals without a disability. People with disabilities are less likely to attend school, thus experience reduced employment opportunities and decreased productivity in adulthood [5]. In Zimbabwe, UNICEF [6] reveals that

literacy among people with disabilities is lower than that of people without disabilities. The Zimbabwe state report of the CRPD [7] showed that only a few students with disabilities were enrolled in teachers colleges. Such low enrolment gave the researcher the impetus to conduct a study on the challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe. A study by Mafa and Makuba [8] investigated the extent to which inclusive education was being mainstreamed in teacher education on one primary teacher training college. They investigated the challenges faced by lecturers in mainstreaming inclusion and made suggestions on strategies to be adopted to enhance the mainstreaming of inclusion in teacher education programmes. The researchers found out that the lecturers were not quite implementing inclusive education due to a number of factors such as lack of knowledge, skill and lack of clear policies that guide inclusive education in teacher education programmes. In another study, Phiri [9] conducted a case study in Zimbabwe focusing on students' narratives on the services they were provided at the higher education level. The study revealed that inclusive education at a higher education level was not supported by proper attitudes, motivation and services. The study was focused on a university while the current study focused on teachers' colleges. The findings from studies by Mafa [10], Mafa & Makuba [8], Muyungu [11] revealed that teachers lacked the capacity to manage students with disabilities. This implies that there are knowledge and skills gaps that must be filled by teacher training colleges to ensure the successful

implementation of inclusive education in the nation. This perceived knowledge and skills gap guided the focus of the current study whose thrust is on the challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education at three teacher training colleges in the Harare Metropolitan Province in Zimbabwe with specific reference to students with disabilities.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teachers' colleges are enrolling students with disabilities. There is a possible risk that student teachers with disabilities could just be physically placed without being included, which could affect their effective development as professional teachers. Therefore, the study sought to answer the main research question which is; "How do challenges with respect to the implementation of inclusive education manifest themselves in teachers' colleges?"

3. RESEARCH QUESTION

The paper sought to answer the following research question:

How do challenges with respect to the implementation of inclusive education manifest themselves in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe?

4. METHOD AND PROCEDURES

The research was guided by the interpretivism paradigm on the understanding the challenges faced in the implementation of the inclusive education in teacher training colleges. In line with this paradigm, qualitative approach was adopted for the study. The approach enabled the researcher to solicit narratives of inclusive education from the participants in teachers' colleges. Multiple case study research design was adopted to understand the challenges in implementing inclusive education in teachers colleges. Data were generated using face-to-face interviews and direct observation guide. The participants were selected using homogenous purposive sample. Data were coded and analysed using NVivo analysis software. The codes generated from NVivo appear at the end of the direct excerpts in data presentation. Thematic analysis guided the data presentation, analysis and discussion.

5. DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The research sites were three teachers' colleges in Harare Metropolitan Province, Zimbabwe. The teachers' colleges are government institutions of which two of them train primary school teachers and the other trains secondary school teachers. These were purposively sampled due to their geographical location. Seventeen (17) participants of the study were college administrators and lecturers from the three teacher training colleges in Zimbabwe. Eight (8) students with disabilities were the key informants in this study. They provided in-depth information about their experiences in inclusive education which are critical to establishing challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive in Teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe. Participants and key informants were coded as Case 1 to Case 25 to protect their identities. NVivo software provided the links as coded during data analysis.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed several challenges in the implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges of Zimbabwe. These were discussed under the following; absence of inclusive education policy, shortage of resources, lack of funding, lack of skilled personnel, attitudes of college personnel, inaccessible environment, rigid curriculum, work overload by lecturers, stigma and discrimination and lack of information by students with disabilities.

6.1. Absence of Inclusive Education policy

One of the challenges that noted was the absence of the Inclusive education policy as noted by Case 1 and Case 19;

> *No clear policy on what is to be done (<Files\\interviews\\case 19 lecturer>). Currently, there is no policy in Teachers' College (<Files\\interviews\\case 1>). Absence of a policy makes it difficult (Files\\interviews\\case 18 lecturer>).*

From the foregoing excerpts, it was noted that there seemed to be no clear inclusive education policy on what is to be done in Teachers' colleges. This might affect the implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges as colleges lack cohesion. ADB had established that there were no clear policies and systems in Asia that ensure that vulnerable groups such as PWDs are admitted and managed in colleges [12]. However, there are other provisions and guidelines on including students with disabilities such as the Secretary's Circular No. 2 of 2000 and Director's Circular No. 24 of 2001, but they seemed not to be specific on inclusive education. Without a guiding inclusive education policy, there is a lack of uniformity of the roles and functions of personnel in Teachers' colleges. Hence, this might negatively impact the proper implementation and management of inclusive education in teachers' colleges. However, contrary to the views of Case 18 that absence of a policy makes the implementation of inclusive education difficult. Lopez-Gavira et al. propounded that regulations and statements are not adequate to ensure quality education and meet the rights of the students with disabilities [13]. Inclusive education is not only about access to education by students with disabilities but also about adequate support while there are in such institutions. Thus, policies and regulations should be available as well as adequate support to students with disabilities in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe.

6.2. Lack of funding

Lack of funding was identified as another challenge that was encountered in inclusive education implementation in teachers' colleges. Participants had this to say;

> *Lack of funding to purchase assistive devices and other equipment... Government should avail funds to colleges or to individuals for their support at colleges (<Files\\interviews\\case 10 lecture>).*

> *Major one (barrier) is to do with funding. Because of the economic environment in the country, there are no funds to buy necessary resources. I haven't seen any institution that set aside funds for IE. (<Files\\interviews\\case 5 Lecturer>).*

The sentiments by Case 5 show that there was no financial support that teachers' colleges were getting from the Government through the Ministry of Higher Education Innovation Science and Technology Development (MHTESTD). After probing Case 5, the researcher established that there was no clear budget on inclusive education yet the implementation of inclusive education has cost implications. Such funding could be used to assist teachers' colleges where they fail to acquire necessary materials and equipment to support students with disabilities. Lack of funding also affected students with disabilities in teachers' colleges. Key informants (Cases 11, 14 and 20) noted that some people were coming from challenging backgrounds. As such, some people wanted to come to college but, could not afford because they did not have funds. As echoed below;

> *My friends and I pay for our own tuition. It is difficult for us. If the economy is difficult for those who could run around, how about us who have challenges (Files\\interviews\\Case 14 SWD>).*

> *There are no adequate resources, we provide for our resources just like any other student, like paying for our own fees (<Files\\interviews\\Case 11 SWD>).*

The foregoing views implied that there were financial challenges which affected everyone but students with disabilities were the most affected due to their conditions. One key informant propounded that many students with disabilities came from disadvantaged families and therefore were likely to lack a lot of resources. Echoing these sentiments was Case 20 who explained;

> *Most PWDs portray they are coming from poor backgrounds...2014 and 2015- we applied for cadetship which was never realised. Most sponsors had withdrawn after hearing of the cadetship so most of us had not paid fees (<Files\\interviews\\Case 20.SWDdoc).*

The sentiments showed that PWDs face challenges in securing funding for their tuition fees which might deter many of them from attending colleges. As a result, it might be difficult to enroll them in numbers in teachers' colleges which might ultimately affect the effectiveness of inclusive education. Inclusive education is not effective if there are no students with disabilities in teachers' colleges. Disability is closely linked with poverty and therefore most of SWDs might fail to raise their tuition fees. Palmer cites Elwan noted

the interconnectedness of poverty and disability whereby one causes the other and could be an effect of the other [14]. On the issue of poverty, one participant posited;

> *In most African countries the problem is funding because most people live in poverty. To get money to buy a wheelchair is difficult considering there won't be any food on the table (<Files\\interviews\\Case 5 Lecturer>).*

From what the participant said, the level of poverty might lead to the deprivation of necessary services such as education to be able to provide for food. In such a scenario, paying fees would be out of reach for people in such a predicament. Households with a member with disabilities are more likely to experience hardships in providing material things such as food, housing, healthcare, safe water and sanitation [15]. Thus, most PWDs lacked financial resources to make them proceed to teachers' colleges which continued to undermine their representation in Teachers' colleges.

6.3. Shortage of resources

Linked to a lack of funding was a shortage of resources as one of the challenges that institutions encounter. It was revealed that colleges are affected by lack of resources. Participants (Cases 1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 15, 16, 17 and 25) noted that there were no adequate resources to cater for the needs of SWDs. As noted, there were no resource centres which further explained the lack of resources. One participant noted;

> *There are no adequate resources.We provide for our resources just like any other student, like paying for our own fees, nothing is provided by the college for special services. For our medical expense we pay for medical services as part of the fees structure and through amenities where we pay for clinic services (<Files\\interviews\\Case 11 SWD).*

The key informants (Case 6, 20) noted that the resources that they needed were not available. They explained that they had specific devices that were peculiar to their disabilities and these were not available. As such, they provided for themselves or they managed without these important resources. However, the researcher saw one wheelchair in the college clinics which was not adequate. This supports the findings of Reupert et al, [16], OECD [17] Nketsia [18] and Ngwenya [19] that there was a shortage of resources to effectively implement inclusive education in various institutions. This was evidenced by the failure to establish resource centres by the three colleges. Another challenge was that of services such as printing and photocopying which the students with disabilities complained that they were not at College C (Case 14). Student teachers had to go out of the teachers' college yet some of them have mobility challenges. Furthermore, one key informant (Case 6) noted that the computers in the library were not user-friendly and the seating position while using the computer or while reading affects them. Case 6 clearly stated;

In the library ... eyes get sore and end up being painful while working on the computer. I am blessed because I could use my laptop and could sit properly but some people have visual challenges and spend the whole day not seated properly and trying to see on the computers. Furthermore, there is need for some relevant software (<Files\\interviews\\Case 6 SWD>).

The sitting position derived from the set-up of computers would affect those with visual impairments and back deformities and would not be comfortable. Observations made showed that there were computers in the library and computer laboratories and the furniture catered for the needs of the general students and were not specific for those with special needs. They were not disability friendly. There were no special chairs and the computers did not have screen guards to protect eyes from the screen light. The key informant noted that she was fortunate that she could sit properly and had her laptop, but other students with disabilities have challenges. This implied that there was no proper furniture to make all students comfortable as well as relevant technology to suit all students.

Nonetheless, one participant noted
I haven't heard about a college with sufficient resources (Case 7).

This implies that resources were always scarce and the college leaders must put an effort to make them available. It was noted that financial barriers made it difficult to adjust the infrastructure in colleges as noted by some participants (Cases 4, 16, and 17). Provision of adequate resources was a challenge because some of them were very expensive that colleges could not afford. Importing software like Jaws was out of reach for the colleges since the foreign currency was needed for the importation. It was noted by a participant who asserted:

Most institutions preferred students to buy themselves. Some gadgets are personal like spectacles for VI and hearing aid for HI and they buy themselves. If the college buys them who will take them coz they are personalised. It depends with the condition of the student. Others resources like software and interactive boards could be bought in the institutions but, because they are very expensive, you find that in one or two colleges there are one or two of these (<Files\\interviews\\Case 5 Lecturer).

To support this, one participant (Case 4) explained;
Some of the equipment is very expensive and from my research we have limited companies that sell some resources and as such they are expensive because they don't have competition (in the market) (<Files\\interviews\\case 4 college leader>).

The excerpt shows that colleges cannot afford to purchase assistive devices from their budgets which affected the implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges. The researcher observed that there was no assistive devices and special equipment for SWD in the three teachers' colleges. Another participant added;

Whilst we agree that there are certain impairments which are so severe that the machinery, apparatus and materials to be used may be very specific and difficult for schools and colleges to provide. They have become so expensive and at the same time the material only applies to only one student. It is expensive to buy equipment to be used by only one or two students and thereafter, it may become redundant (Files\\interviews\\Case 17 manager>).

The foregoing views implied that it is a waste of resources to purchase expensive equipment that might be used by a few people and might be unused until a student with the same condition enrolls. The excerpt implied negative attitudes towards disabilities might be the contributing factor in failing to purchase relevant equipment and assistive devices for SWD. Ngwenya and Chabwera found out that polytechnic colleges may go without SWDs and would find it as a waste of resources to adapt to the environment which does not have SWDs [20]. However, it should be noted that what is good for PWDs is good for everyone. Changes that benefit students with disabilities are beneficial to all students [21]. This might mean that all students benefit from the changes that would have been made to accommodate students with disabilities. As a result, a conducive environment would exist in educational institutions for all students with or without disabilities.

However, one participant explained;
Some gadgets are personal like spectacles for those with visual impairment and hearing aids for those with hearing impairment and they buy themselves. If the college buys them who will take them since they are personalised? It depends with the condition of the student (<Files\\interviews\\Case 5 Lecturer).

The foregoing views showed that personalised gadget cannot be shared by students. This was because of the type and class of disability that the student had. Students with disabilities have individual needs which require individual assistive devices.

6.4. Lack of skilled personnel
With regards to human resources, participants established that there was a shortage of lecturers in teachers' colleges. Another participant propounded;

Another challenge is on number; student- lecture ratio is overwhelming considering that there is marking to do,

planning for the lecture, teaching practice, and having time to sit down with a student with disabilities who may need more time with you. It becomes difficult (<Files\\interviews\\case 5 Lecturer>).

Having large lecturer-student ratio was an indicator of a shortage of lecturers. Shortage of lecturers could affect the implementation of inclusive education because it was the lecturers who are key implementers of inclusive education. The researcher observed that there were no adequate lecturers when mass lectures were conducted with many students in lecture theatres or halls. This concurs with the findings by Deng and Poon-McBrayer who noted that there was a shortage of quantity and quality of teachers in China despite the training of teachers for inclusive education [22]. Such shortages impacted on the workload of lecturers as well as their motivation and how they discharge their duties. Once lecturers are not motivated, they may fail to adequately meet the needs of students with disabilities and would ultimately affect the implementation of inclusive education in Teachers' colleges. Valliant argues that the lack of motivation among teachers who were poorly paid affected the implementation of inclusive education in Latin America [23]. The foregoing results might lead one to support Siddiqui that there was a lack of preparation by the government to implement inclusive education in India [24]. The lack of preparation in implementing inclusive education could be in terms of resources such as human, financial, material and facilities may be detrimental to the effectiveness of inclusive education in Teachers' colleges. It might seem as if the idea of inclusive education was just thrown to colleges without adequate preparation. The participants (Cases 3, 5, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19) noted that educators (lecturers) did not have skills to handle such learners (SWDs) in the college. They were not empowered and equipped to handle severe cases of disabilities. One participant stated;

Most of our lectures' background has a separation on those that are disabled and those that are not. In as much as they may want to embrace inclusivity, they lack skills. For many of us, it is the case of how to handle that variation because we didn't have that background (Files\\interviews\\Case 17 manager>).

The views of the participant implied that the background of the training that the lecturers got as teachers during their time did not include inclusive education and special education. Thus, they tended to view the education of people with disabilities as separate from that of other people without disabilities. Hick et al. revealed that teacher educators in Ireland were supportive of inclusive education but highlighted their lack of confidence and expertise in implementing inclusive education in teacher education programmes [25]. Inclusive education as a new phenomenon requires the lecturers to be staff developed. Also, another participant revealed:

We are dealing with a community that is coming up with new understanding.

In terms of training we haven't done much… Most programs tend to fail because not everybody understands what is to be done. We have a challenge in trying to incorporate everyone on what is supposed to be done. At time, we find that we only have 10 % of the staff that seem to be accommodating these individuals with challenges, while others are saying, no we are not specialised to handle this extra task and yet we are saying society is very inclusive in nature(Files\\interviews\\Case 3 college leader>).

The foregoing sentiments showed that most of the lecturers were not equipped with skills and knowledge to handle students with disabilities. Therefore, most of the students were left alone to handle most of the work with very little assistance. Another participant (Case 5) revealed that most of the lecturers were not equipped to handle inclusivity. There were only a few members who were concerned about students with disabilities because they had done special education and had some knowledge of inclusive education. Otherwise, the rest of the staff was not well versed with handling students with disabilities. The sustained use of the traditional lecturing and assessment methods was evidence of the lecturers' inability to recognise the needs of students with "varied abilities". Inclusive education could not be effective if lecturers failed to recognise diversity among students and give individual attention. This brought up a major gap in implementing inclusive education in teachers' colleges since lecturers were major stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education. Participants noted that there had been workshops to equip lecturers with skills and knowledge about inclusive education, but they were not adequate. As stated;

It has been a long time since the college has carried out capacity-building to equip lecturers – only two workshops (on inclusive education) have been carried out. It is not enough. The speed is slower than what is supposed to be done (<Files\\interviews\\Case 19 lecturer>).

The views of the participants implied that teachers' colleges were not doing much to equip lecturers with skills and knowledge about inclusive education. Having a few workshops may mean that teachers' colleges were focusing on producing competent inclusive teachers but were not prepared to invest much on the lecturers who train the teachers. The views of the participants appeared to be in line with the revelations by Forlin who said that in Australia, there was little emphasis on preparing teacher educators (lecturers) who should be adequately equipped to train student teachers in an inclusive setting [26].

In terms of workshops, another challenge was identified by one participant;

Some go for workshops and they do not give feedback from the workshops.

Usually, it is the people who do not have passion for inclusive education who go yet they don't bring any positive feedback. They go to workshops for money not for passion (<Files\\interviews\\Case 19 lecturer>).

The participant referred to the practice by teachers' college administrators of sending some people who might not be interested in inclusive education and might not be involved but would attend the workshops for monetary gains. As a result, such people may not bring feedback from the workshop which is helpful to inclusive practices in colleges. These results were supported by another participant (Case 20) who noted that there were conflicts in the college when they requested to have lecturers who understood students with disabilities to be included in their programmes and educational trips. The authorities would not allow that and this ended up with some staff members who are included yet they did not understand and care for students with disabilities. The issue was about benefits for being included and not the heart to help students with disabilities. Those lecturers often attend workshops would feel that it was their duty yet they were not passionate about disability.

6.5. Attitudes of college personnel
Central to inclusive education is the issue of attitudes and these presented a gap in the implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges. One participant (Case 5) noted the lack of support from the college managers which negatively affected the effective implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges. This is especially so where resources are needed and are not availed.

…Because of financial barriers, it is difficult to adjust and due to attitudes, it not a priority to college leaders considering other developments being made in the college (<Files\\interviews\\case 5 Lecturer).

The sentiments showed that due to negative attitudes, renovations on the infrastructure are not a priority considering that other developments are being made in the college. Negative attitudes led to inadequate provisions of resources to adapt to the environment. Central to the implementation of inclusive education are positive attitudes by stakeholders [27]. Another important challenge in the implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe is the attitudes of the lecturers. There is a significant relationship between teachers' attitudes and their commitment to work [28]. It was revealed that the attitudes by lecturing and non-lecturing staff toward inclusive education were negative. Some did not accept having students with disabilities in the teachers' colleges (Case 10).

The attitudes of all personnel in the college are negative. They do not understand the concept of inclusive education….They say that they are not trained to handle such student with disabilities. In one college in Mutare, where they attempted to secure some

resources for students with disabilities, the problem is with the lectures that are not able to use the technology. They are not moving with the pace of technological advancement lecturers are not able to use the technology and yet we are saying in the 21st technology is moving fast and if you are not able to move fast you are not relevant. Such technology becomes white elephant. Here, we have an interactive white board and only few lectures use it and more students, only lecturers from the ICT department see the board (<Files\\interviews\\Case 5 Lecturer).

This brought up the issue of technology literacy and the ability to handle students with diverse needs. Failure to embrace technology might make the lecturers irrelevant in terms of assisting students with diverse needs. The new technology is vital in accommodating students with diverse needs. Hence, negative attitudes are shown when lecturers lack interest in adapting to new technology that would enable them to address the need of all students. As such, the attitudes and willingness of academic staff to adapt their curriculum to the needs of students and to implement changes are crucial in including students with disabilities [29].

Another participant commented on negative attitudes by saying:

Attitudes of lecturers… have negative attitudes towards disabilities. They see a student on a wheelchair inquiring about enrolment, they turn them away and refer them to Daniko where there are PWDS, we don't want them to be alone in such places but should come here where we mix and mingle with them. Some lecturers could even highlight that they will give us problems. As a lecturer who is interested in Paralympics, one year I failed to attend games in Bulawayo when the organisers said that these people (those with disabilities) will give us problem in ferrying them from one place to another. They don't understand that if a person is partially visual impaired it doesn't mean that they cannot walk. That attitude shows that people don't understand the plight of PWDS (<Files\\interviews\\Case 7 LWD>).

One issue that came up was that some negative attitudes were a result of lack of knowledge by the lecturers which might change once lecturers are knowledgeable and skilled. Despite the lack of knowledge which might influence the attitudes, some people are just negative. As noted by one participant:

…. we cannot rule out the question of attitudes because people have their feelings and perceptions due to various

pressures which is normal (Files\\interviews\\Case 17 manager>).

Such negativity might be attributed to societal and cultural values that an individual had been exposed to in terms of disabilities. However, some participants showed that they were very positive about inclusive education and they were committed to working with vulnerable groups such as those with disabilities. In as much as there were various perceptions and attitudes from participants, inclusive education demands positive attitudes from key stakeholders to be effective in Teachers' colleges.

6.6. Inaccessible environment
With regards to the physical environment, participants and key informants established that the environment was not accessible and user friendly to SWDs. One key informant explained;

> *In terms of physical set-up, a person using a wheelchair for example, might want to use the library, that person cannot go to the library, the same applies to hostels, they are also not accessible because there are stairs and no ramps. College authorities should look into the infrastructure (<Files\\interviews\\Case 2 SWD).*

The excerpt reveals mobility challenges to students with physical disabilities. In support of the inaccessible physical environment, Case 1 revealed;

> *No facilities for those with disabilities to move freely in terms of classrooms, library, lecture room and also no restrooms for people with disabilities (<Files\\interviews\\case 1>)*

The informant had leg deformities and felt that the environment could not be easily accessible by those using wheelchairs considering the challenges he was facing with leg deformities. The physical environment presented the inadequacies of the infrastructure in terms of effective inclusive education. Ngwenya and Chabwera had revealed that the infrastructure in colleges does not support students with special needs [20]. To show how serious the issue of environment is, the participant (Case 17) explained that sometimes they failed to enrol some students because they could not accommodate due to lack of facilities and resources relevant to their needs. Morgado had revealed that in Spain learning facilities like lecture rooms, projectors and chalkboards might not be accessible to students with special needs [30]. In agreement, Siddiqui established that there was poor infrastructure (buildings, classrooms, toilets, playgrounds, library facilities) in most Indian schools which affected the implementation of inclusive education [24]. Besides the physical environment, the social environment was also a cause for concern in implementing inclusive education. It was revealed that the social environment was still hostile to students with disabilities. The college social environment was also likely to prevent SWDs from disclosing their disability for fear of being stigmatised and

discriminated. This revelation resonates well with the findings made by Morina that some students who had invisible disabilities did not want to disclose them except to those who were close to them or when they wanted assistance [31]. Usually, they were high chances that students with disabilities felt embarrassed when they were asked to bring records to prove their disability. Even after students with disabilities graduated from Teachers' colleges, the environment outside the college remains a challenge in terms of accommodating teachers with disabilities (Case 10).These revelations were tallying with the Social model of disability[32], Social Learning Theory [33] and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory [34] which content that relationships with the people in the immediate environment were important in implementing inclusive education. Thus, relationships with those in the environment influenced the learning and development of students with disabilities. However, from the interactions that the researcher had with participants, it was noted that participants (college leaders and other students) were welcoming to students with disabilities and willing to accept them despite their various conditions. Case 23 (SWD) highlighted;

> *When l came (to college) the principal and the dean of students asked me of my special needs (<Files\\interviews\\case 23 SWD>).*

The gesture offered by the Principal and Dean of students showed how the administrators had accepted diversity and were willing to assist the student. The informant's case was exceptional in that the impairment was visible but there could be challenges when the disability is not visible, like partial visual impairment or partial hearing impairment.

6.8. Rigid curriculum
Another challenge is the rigid curriculum which is not flexible and inclusive. Some participants highlighted the lack of inclusivity by a rigid curriculum which colleges have to implement.

> *Curriculum is not really inclusive (<Files\\interviews\\case 19 lecturer>).*

> *Curriculum is the same for all students. Same expectations (for all students)from the curriculum. Curriculum is rigid (<Files\\interviews\\case 1>).*

The inflexible curriculum posed a threat to the inclusivity of teachers' colleges. The sentiments support revelations by Zwane that failure by the curriculum to be flexible and inclusive might not meet the needs of the students with diverse needs [35]. Not all people are the same and that should be considered in the curriculum. The researcher observed that teachers' colleges had many programmes and activities which take up most of the time. As a result, there might be less time to attend to students with disabilities.

6.7. Work overload by lecturers
Participants revealed that work-related issues of lecturers presented a gap that affected the implementation of inclusive education in Teachers' colleges. They established that

lecturers were overwhelmed with their duties of marking, lecturing supervision of curriculum depth studies and research among other duties. Lecturers managed large classes of students and this affected their effectiveness with students with disabilities. One participant propounded:

> *Another challenge is on student- lecture ratio which is overwhelming considering that there is marking to do, planning for the lecture, teaching practice, and having time to sit down with a SWD who may need more time with you. It becomes difficult. Time factor is a challenge (<Files\\interviews\\case 5 Lecturer).*

The participant showed that there was limited time to attend to the needs of individuals with diverse needs. Lecturers were overloaded with various tasks as their work demands. As such, they failed to have adequate time to cater for those with diverse needs. This finding concurs with Mandina who posited that those large classes among other factors are a challenge in effective implementation of inclusive education [36] The researcher observed mass lectures and noted that lecturers could notice individual differences among students unless the case has been presented earlier on. Linked to the curriculum is the structure of the Ministry (MHTEISTD) which one participant (Case 18 and 19) noted as hierarchical.

> *Another challenge is the hierarchical structure of our institution and ministry. The structure is top down does not consult the implementers on what should be done (<Files\\case 19 lecturer>).*

Despite its' effectiveness, the hierarchical structure may present challenges in implementing inclusive education. This could be because of the top-down approach to the implementation of IE which might limit creativity among lecturers. Also, it appeared as if the lecturers were not educated on what is to be done in inclusive education. These sentiments were in line with the findings in South Africa by Donohue & Bornman that the top-down approach presents a challenge to inclusive education [37]. Thus, educational personnel might not know what really should be done in the implementation process.

6.9. Stigma and discrimination

Stigma and discrimination were identified as one of the challenges faced by students with disabilities. It was noted that there was stigma and discrimination among students.

> *Discrimination from various groups in the college, some are discriminatory and others are not… here it's a big institution, some people do not hide their feelings, they do not act out but show you that they don't want you. So you are forced to stay alone…. sometimes you are left out by some other students especially in group work…. Other lectures can call other students and leave me*

(<Files\\interviews\\Case 6 SWD>).

The foregoing excerpt showed that students with disabilities were stigmatised by other students as well as by lecturers. The stigma was evident when other students did not include the key informant in some class activities. The case at hand was a student with a disability who felt there was some segregation due to the condition. The results are in tandem with the revelations by Ajisuksmo that some lecturers did not want to teach students with disabilities and that some students without disabilities showed gestures that they did not want to communicate with students with disabilities [38]. Ramakuela and Maluleke found out that students with disabilities feel rejected by other students without disabilities, staff and the institution [39]. Issues to do with disability have been perceived negatively by the society hence, the prevalence of stigma and discrimination. When probed on how the key informant had addressed this challenge, the response was;

> *Generally, you know the people you want to associate with; it's almost 3 years now. You know those who want to and those who don't want to associate with you. At time we get to situations which are difficult<Files\\interviews\\Case 6 SWD>).*

The participant showed that they have learned to adapt to the stigma and discrimination by relating to those students who showed positive attitudes. However, form the views of the key informant, it can be deduced that students with disabilities could stigmatise themselves as well. Just the thought of being different from others might make one to stigmatise themselves thinking that others would be stigmatising them. Going further on stigma and discrimination, one participant explained:

> *It is a challenge when some do not want to disclose their impairments and as a result the admin may treat them as other general students which results in many challenges. For those who disclose, the college is trying to accommodate them. They call them and say if you have any problem come and be assisted. They cannot be helped because they have not requested for such help (Files\\interviews\\Case 13 SWnD>).*

From the participant's view students with disabilities might fail to come and disclose their disabilities due to fear of stigma and discrimination. Therefore, it was difficult for college personnel to give them the necessary support if they did not come up and identify themselves. As a result, the college could not be blamed for failing to meet the needs of students with disabilities if they are not aware of their presence. Thus, there might not be any stigma or discrimination from the administrators who might not be aware of the presence of SWD in the colleges. Ngwenya had revealed that college administrators do not seem to discriminate PWDs [19]. Similarly, another participant added:

Those PWDs also need to be very confident, some of them shun from communicating in class and to communicate with lecturers to show their problems. They just stay away… they discriminate themselves. There is need to make them confident and feel part of the community as well as part of the institution. Much as we might want to help, some might be reluctant to adjust. They should be able to do whatever they want to do and we give them the chance (Files\\interviews\\case 4 college leader>).

SWDs were encouraged to be confident and identify themselves so that they were given relevant assistance where possible. Usually, SWDs did not want to identify themselves because they were afraid of being discriminated by lecturers and by the other students. Liasidou established that some students do not want to disclose their disabilities and thereby forfeit their support entitlements [40]. Non-disclosure has been attributed to stigmatisation associated with disabilities (Habib et al., in Majoko [41]). Some were afraid of being withdrawn from the college so they tried to work within their limits so that they were not identified. This could be due to lack of knowledge and societal influence and how PWDS were treated in the community. From another perspective, the excerpt shows some negative attitudes by the administrator participant who sounded radical. Such an attitude might fuel discrimination of students with disabilities. The participants show that students with disabilities should make their way and fit in the system of the college. Nonetheless, the background of the SWDs determined their conduct and how they interacted and it was important to understand them from such perspectives. A key informant revealed:

I started college at 34 and now I am 38. This was because I had low self-esteem. I lacked information. The family would not release us and overprotected us... (Case 20).

Some students do not know the benefits of disclosing their disabilities. Their behaviour could have been influenced by the way they were brought up, the parenting styles and the surrounding they grew up in. Such issues are also derived from how the microsystem of the Ecological Model influence the development of individuals especially those with disabilities [42]. What happens at home directly affects the individual at school/Teachers' College [43]. Therefore, as indicated by Case 20, how an individual was brought up determines the interactions at college.

6.10. Information dissemination
Another challenge revealed by key informants was lack of information about inclusion and disability rights by PWDs. A key informant (Case 20) noted that PWDs lack information on how to access services. The participant confessed;

I only got to know about social welfare after the first part of my course. I later

on realised that some institutions like University of Zimbabwe and National Rehabilitation Centre offered free tuition for courses to PWDs (Case 20).

However, it was also revealed by the same key informant (Case 20) that some SWDs are aware of their rights and would want them to be met at all cost.

There are two types of students at college – students with disabilities who are from general schools…I was introduced to rights issues at college. The other group are those from special schools who have been exposed to rights issues… were very combative and want things to go their way. Some would create more rules on top of other rules. They have to do things their way and being protected by the human rights. As a result, some would have more advantages.... (<Files\\interviews\\CASE 20.SWDdoc>).

The excerpt showed that the ability to complain of mistreatment and to defend himself/herself depended on the background of the student and the knowledge they had about how they should be treated. If one is not knowledgeable one might remain quiet and be afraid of the unknown. If one is knowledgeable, one could complain and have his or her protection rights awarded. SWDs would not participate effectively if they were not empowered. To show how the participant lacked information about inclusive education, the same participant confessed that he had never heard about inclusive education while he was in primary and secondary schools (Case 20). As a contemporary issue, inclusive education might not have been talked about during the time the informant was in primary school. However, there were other provisions on special education which could have enlightened the PWDs about their rights and provisions. Further, it was noted by one key informant that there was a barrier in communication. The key informant noted;

My major challenge is communication with other lecturers and other students. Announcements are said and l rely on my friend to tell me (<Files\\interviews\\case 8 SWD).

The key informant had a hearing impairment and the foregoing sentiments showed that students with hearing impairment were mostly affected due to language barrier. Students with hearing impairments could move around the college without much difficulty, but failing to communicate with colleagues and lecturers was a major challenge in teaching and learning. In most cases, few people could use Sign Language which posed a communication gap. Having hearing impairment on its own makes one to lack a lot of information which could be acquired through various channels of formal and informal communication. Adding to these challenges was the lack of a link person for SWDs in colleges. It was worth noting that key informants had no clear link person who understood them. Despite having

students' representative in the SRC, the lack of a patron was a challenge to SWDs. In the words of one of the key informants;

> *We don't have a "Patron" for PWDs – the Dean is overwhelmed with large numbers of students and should have patrons such as male and female lecturers who would take care of us. These should not be appointed by the Principal alone but should be appointed with consultation with PWDs (<Files\\interviews\\CASE 20.SWD doc).*

The idea was that of having skilled personnel who were accommodative in terms of disabilities. Such an individual could assist in meeting the special needs of various students with varied abilities. Teachers' colleges had the Dean of students who seemed to be overwhelmed with large numbers of students to be catered for. This showed that the Dean of students might not adequately respond to the needs of students with disabilities in colleges considering the numbers he or she had to cater for. Case 25 supported that the College Dean of students was overwhelmed by the number of students they attended to and could not adequately respond to the needs of students with disabilities. Case 20 suggested that the patron could be a lecturer or manager whom the students with disabilities felt might be chosen from among staff members who understood them better.

7. CONCLUSIONS
Basing on the findings established on challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges, it was concluded that;
- ❖ The absence of the inclusive education policy from the MHTEISTD affected the implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe.
- ❖ As a result of a rigid curriculum, teachers' colleges were not able to adequately accommodate diversity and this affected the implementation of inclusive education
- ❖ The hierarchical structure of the Ministry might have paved the way for a top-down approach which posed as a challenge in implementing inclusive education.
- ❖ The implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges was affected by lack of financial support from the MHTEISTD and Government for the acquisition of relevant resources and assistive devices. Students with disabilities faced financial challenges when they failed to pay for their tuition and materials required.
- ❖ Shortage of financial, material, infrastructure and human resources greatly affected the implementation of inclusive education in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe. As such, colleges had failed to establish resource centers.
- ❖ The partially accessible physical environment resulted in teachers' colleges failing to accommodate all students thus affecting the implementation of inclusive education. Also, the hostile social environment affected inclusive practices to some extent. Stigma and discrimination in one way or the other from their colleagues as well as their stigmatisation and discrimination still made the social environment hostile for students with disabilities.
- ❖ As a result of negative perceptions by administrators that perceived enrolment of SWDs as a waste of resources, there were few students with disabilities in teachers Colleges in Zimbabwe.
- ❖ Due to lack of skills and knowledge on inclusive education and disability by the lecturers, students with disabilities are not adequately catered for in teachers' colleges thus, affecting their professional development.
- ❖ The work overload by lecturers at teachers' colleges impedes the implementation of inclusive education to the extent that there was no time to attend to individual needs of students.
- ❖ Lack of information by students with disabilities on their rights and services that they could get made students with disabilities susceptible and less empowered.
- ❖ Failure to use Sign Language by lecturers and other students presented communication barriers for students with hearing impairmnt in Teachers' colleges. SWDs with hearing impairment were the most affected in colleges when they faced communication barriers. Hence, students with hearing impairment were placed and not adequately included in teachers colleges in Zimbabwe.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS
Basing on the findings and conclusions made on challenges in implementing inclusive education, the following recommendations were made;
- ❖ The MHTEISDT and teachers' colleges' administrators should have a budget to support inclusive education in teachers' colleges. They could liaise with NGOs and other organisations that could assist them with various resources. Teachers' colleges can introduce an inclusive education levy to help in funding inclusive education in institutions.
- ❖ The MHTEISDT should have a flexible structure to accommodate ideas from the implementers of inclusive education in teachers' colleges.
- ❖ College administrators and lecturers should speed up the process of establishing resource centers so that they support inclusive education programmes.
- ❖ The MHTEISDT should employ more lecturers so that lecturers are not overburdened by many duties and to reduce the lecturer-student ratio. This would enable lecturers to give individual attention to students.
- ❖ College administrators should orient SWDs so that they become confident and participate in all activities.
- ❖ Teachers' colleges should provide practical training to college personnel in Sign Language and Braille so that they can accommodate those students with hearing and visual impairment respectively.
- ❖ Teachers' colleges should have patrons for students with disabilities whom they relate to and interact with. This would enhance their representation in decision-making processes of the colleges.
- ❖ Government through the MHTEISDT should provide grants to help students with disabilities to pay their tuition fees and other services at teachers' colleges.

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Author 1 Profile
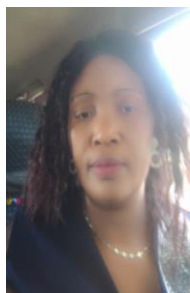
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