



Theoretical and Conceptual Framework for Challenges which Learners with Physical Disabilities Face in Schools in Zambia

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ABSTRACT

This manuscript is an extract of a theoretical framework and conceptual framework from a master's an on-going study on the challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools in Zambia. the frameworks suggests that, among the challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools in Zambia are the environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges and financial challenges. It is argued that if challenges are identified and addressed learners with physical disability can benefit a lot from education system and participate in society on equal basis with others.

Keywords: Physical Disability, Challenge, Environmental, Attitudinal, Institutional and Financial.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

There are challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in schools. This is supported by Mcleod (2014) who stated that learners with physical disabilities experience personal limitations in school environments that affect their social and psychological spheres that likely affect their academic performances at school.

There are various supports given to learners with physical disabilities at international level. For example, there is legal support of learners with physical disabilities in America. This is according to Bright Hub Education (2016) who noted that learners with physical disabilities who enroll in public schools have many services available such as the special education laws in the United States which ensures that the appropriate accommodations is made for learners with physical challenges. Although the study by Bright Hub Education did not point out the challenges which learners with physical disabilities faced while learning in schools. There is also a lot of support towards learners with physical disabilities in Africa. For instance Thompson (2017) reported that there is evidence of support of learners with disabilities in terms of

accessing education and achieving of measurable learning outcomes in Tanzania. The study by Thomson highlighted the educational support learners with physical disabilities receive in Tanzania but the study did not bring out the challenges learners with physical disabilities face in schools.

Learners with physical disabilities are supported in a number of ways in Zambia. For instance, the Ministry of Education (1996) states that the Ministry of Education will ensure equality of educational opportunity for children with special educational needs including learners with physical disabilities. There is policy support towards learners with physical disabilities in Zambia in its policy document of Educating our Future. However, the policy document did not bring out the challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in schools.

There have been various support towards learners with physical disabilities at international level for instance in America, there is also support in Africa for instance in Tanzania and Zambia. Despite the support being given to learners with physical disabilities at international level, Africa and Zambia, the challenges being faced by these learners in schools have not been identified. Therefore, this ongoing study will aim at investigating the challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools.

2. Statement of the problem

There are challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in schools. There have been various support towards learners with physical disabilities at international level for instance in America, also there has been support in Africa for instance in Tanzania and Zambia. Despite the support being given to learners with physical disabilities at international level, Africa and Zambia, the challenges being faced by these learners in schools have not been identified. Thus this ongoing study will investigate the challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools.

2.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the ongoing study is to identify the challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools and also to find out how these challenges affect their academic performance.

2.2 Objectives of the study

The ongoing study will be guided by the following objectives:

- To identify the challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools.

- To establish how the challenges affect the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities.
- To identify measures to be put in place to address the challenges affecting the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities.

2.3 Study Questions

- What challenges affect the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities in schools?
- How do the challenges affect the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities?
- What measures should be put in place to address the challenges that affect the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities?

2.4 Significance of the study

This ongoing study is significant because it might help identify the challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools. Secondly, it is also hoped that the findings of the study may add to the general body of knowledge on the challenges learners with physical disabilities face in schools.

2.5 Limitations of the study

The limitations will border on the data analysis. This is where the researcher will use descriptive statistics with the use of SPSS package to analyze data particularly through the use of mode and the use of tables and graphs. The limitation will be that when presenting the analyzed data, the researcher will use tables, graphs and charts which on their own may not present full information to the reader. However, this limitation will be addressed by describing data such as putting notes under each table, graph and chart to make sure the data is clearly understood by explaining the issue of the modes.

2.6 Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework

The framework and conceptual framework would be used while investigating the challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools in Zambia.

3. LITERATURE SURVEY

Theoretical framework

The study will be guided by the social model of disability by Rieser (2002). The social model sees disability as the result of the interaction between people living with impairment and an environment. This model encourages the society to view the issue of including persons with disabilities from a human right and equality perspective rather than a focus on the persons with disabilities from participating in any situation.

It therefore carries the implication that the environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges and financial challenges must change to enable people living with physical disabilities to participate in society on an equal basis with others. The model will provide an analytical framework for the current study because it will assist in identifying the challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in schools by taking into account the following: the environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges and financial challenges highlighted in this model. The subsequent paragraphs therefore, try to explain how involving environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges and financial challenges derived from the social model could be used in identifying challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in schools.

The issue of environmental challenges is understood in the following manner in the social model of disabilities. According to Rieser (2002) the model states that environmental challenges are understood as challenges that are caused due to the natural surroundings and the infrastructure that affect mobility of learners with physical disabilities. The natural surroundings and the infrastructure may lack inclusive design features such as the natural environment that have passages for learners with physical disabilities to pass without problems, infrastructure that have ramped building with double door entrances and the infrastructure that have terrains that may not hinder participation of learners with physical disabilities in academic activities.

In the school environment natural surroundings and the infrastructure are supposed to be accessible to learners with physical disabilities and especially those in wheelchairs or those using other mobility aides. It will also mean that learners with physical disabilities need to be provided with elevators in upstairs buildings, ramps and paved pathways in all buildings. In the infrastructure there is need of having double doors.

The other issue which the social model of disability took into account is the attitudinal challenges. Rieser (2002) stated that according to the social model of disability attitudinal challenges are understood as negative attitude toward certain mental traits or behaviors, or underestimating the potential quality of life of those with disabilities. In the case of learners with physical disabilities the negative attitude towards mental traits implies that others will not accept these learners by not being with them, studying with them, eating with them, learning with them and playing with them and this type of attitude affects their academic learning because being together is one channel in which learners would learn many things from friends including academic work. Another meaning of attitudinal challenge concerning underestimating the potential quality of life of those learners with physical disabilities is that others at

school understand them as people who can perform below the standard level. For this reason they may be looked down upon and despised.

Institutional challenge is another issue discussed by the social model of disability. Rieser (2002) pointed out that according to the social model of disability institutional challenges are understood as those which involve legislation and related regulations and policies. Rieser (2002) went to say that relevant legislation affects individuals with disabilities by requiring access to key rights such as education. Legislation and policy maybe present but if they are not implemented it may affect learners with physical disabilities in schools. If the curriculum for learners with physical disabilities are not fully implemented, infrastructure are not modified, trained teachers to handle these learners are not enough, the teaching and learning materials are inadequately provided because it is not mandatory for the providers to do so learners with physical disabilities may be affected academically. This also may result in challenges that learners with physical disabilities may face at school.

The issue of financial challenges is understood in the following manner in the social model of disabilities. According to Rieser (2002) the model states that financial challenges are understood as inadequate funding and lack of fundraising activities to run these schools. Rieser (2002) added that teaching learners with physical disabilities takes specialists and additional staff to support the learners' needs, coordinating services and offering individual supports to learners with physical disabilities and requires additional money from fundraising activities to run the schools effectively, particularly in a tight economy. Therefore, inadequate funding hinders the education of learners with physical disabilities.

In the case of learners with physical disabilities, adequate funding is required in order for teachers and support staff to give effective support to learners with physical disabilities. Secondly, inadequate funding to schools will result in challenges learners may face at school such as lack of funds to procure physiotherapy materials, additional materials such as calipers, electrified beds, artificially made shoes, crutches and computers for those who are unable to write.

In terms of individuals offering support, in this case parents may fail to support their children financially because of their socio-economic status. This may results a huge challenge on their children. The social model of disability fitted well with this research to be carried out which is focusing on investigating the challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools because it will help the researcher in identifying these challenges in schools. This is because the social model of disability focuses on

the environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges and financial challenges which act as a framework for this study.

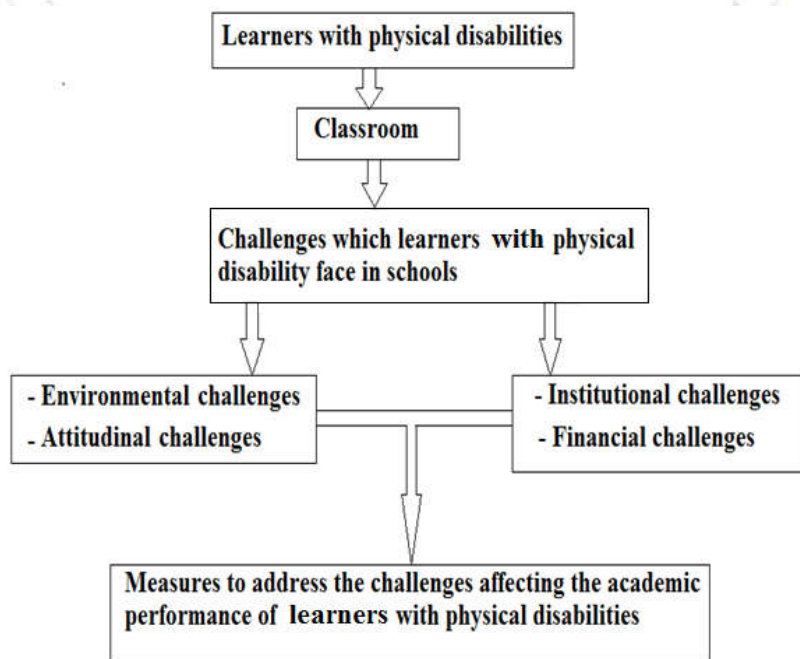
4. PROPOSED WORK

4.1 Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework is on understanding the challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools. The arrows show a reflective path that the researcher will adopt throughout the research process. The framework starts with an explanation of the concept of a learner with physical disability, followed by the issue of classroom. Thereafter, the challenges which learners with physical disability face in schools are also explained which include environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges and financial challenges. The framework ends with the measures to address the challenges affecting the academic performance of learners with physical disabilities.

4.2 Learner with physical disability

The term physical disability is broad and covers a range of disabilities and health issues, including both congenital and acquired disabilities (Mifflin, 2003).



Source: Researcher

Figure 4.1: A diagrammatic representation conceptual framework of challenges for learners with physical disabilities

A learner with physical disabilities is a learner who has a physical impairment which has a substantial and long term effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities such as learning. Someone with a moderate physical disability would have mobility problems, for example, inability to manage stairs, and would need aids or assistance to walk. Someone with a severe physical disability would be unable to walk and dependent on a care for mobility. Learners with physical disabilities need to be placed in a conducive learning environment or classroom for them to perform effectively.

4.3 Classroom

The classroom is a physical learning environment in which a learner with physical disabilities learns from and it must be conducive. In other words it is a learning space or a room in which children learn and sitting arrangement is taken into consideration. For example, a learner on a wheel chair will need enough space and a table in which a wheel chair can fit in well as well as modified entrance doors and ramps. In the event where the classroom is not well arranged, learners with physical disabilities may face challenges. The subsequent paragraphs therefore, try to explain how involving environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges and financial challenges can be used in identifying challenges faced by learners with physical disabilities in schools.

4.4 The challenges which learners with physical disability face in schools

Challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools are difficulties or problems which they encounter in the learning environment. Anderson (1996) points out that in reality learners with physical disabilities are more likely to face a lot of challenges in their daily academic life than a learner without any disability. These challenges include environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges and financial challenges. These challenges come as a result of those physical problems which they have such as joint movement limitation, lack of muscular control in some parts of the body, problems of accuracy due to poor motor coordination, small or missing limbs, communication problems and muscle degeneration which reduces the physical stamina of an individual, disruption of consciousness in the case of those with seizure disorders.

4.4.1 Environmental challenges

Environmental challenges are difficulties or problems that are caused by the natural surroundings and the infrastructure that affect mobility of learners with physical disabilities. The natural surroundings and the infrastructure may lack inclusive design features such as the natural environment that have passages for learners with physical disabilities to pass without problems, infrastructure that have ramped building entrances and the infrastructure that have terrains that may not hinder participation of

learners with physical disabilities (Savolainen and Kaikille, 2000). It also applies that if the school environment is not conducive it contributes to the challenges which learners with physical disabilities face in schools.

4.4.2 Attitudinal challenges

Attitudinal challenges are negative attitude toward certain mental traits or behaviours, or underestimating the potential quality of life of those with physical disabilities. This means that others do not accept these learners by not being with them, studying with them, eating with them, learning with them and playing with them. Other people understand them as people who can perform below the standard level. This is in line with this Loreman and Deppeler (2002) who stated that the attitudes and abilities of general education teachers and para-educators in particular can be major challenge to these learners. If educators have negative attitudes toward learners with physical disabilities or have low expectations of them, this can affect their academic performance in schools.

4.4.3 Institutional challenges

Institutional challenges are difficulties or problems that may cause a risk on learners with physical disabilities at an institutional level. Howell (2000) stated that these challenges include curriculum for learners with physical disabilities that might not be fully modified and implemented, the infrastructure that is not modified, inadequate trained teachers to handle these learners, the managers who may not understand and plan for these learners and inadequate teaching and learning materials such as computers for the learners with physical disabilities in schools.

4.4.4 Financial challenges

Financial challenges are difficulties or problems that come as a result of inadequate funds to run the schools which may come from the government, school fundraising activities and school fees. Rieser (2002) added that teaching learners with physical disabilities requires specialists and additional staff to support the learners' needs, coordinating services and offering of individual support to learners with physical disabilities which require additional money to run the schools effectively. Therefore, inadequate funds hinder the education of learners with physical disabilities. Secondly inadequate funds at schools may result in challenges learners may face at school such as lack of funds to procure physiotherapy materials, additional materials such as calipers, electrified beds, artificially made shoes, crutches and computers for those who are unable write.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion, the paper concludes that the social model and conceptual-framework can be used in identifying challenges affecting learners with physical disabilities in schools in Zambia. The two frameworks involve environmental challenges, attitudinal challenges, institutional challenges and financial challenges. Thus the aspect of environmental challenge will be a guide in identifying difficulties or problems that are caused by the natural surroundings and the infrastructure that affect mobility of learners with physical disabilities. The aspect of attitudinal challenge will be a guide in identifying if others such as pupils and teachers do not accept or accept these learners' physical disabilities. Furthermore, the aspect of institutional challenge will be a guide in identifying difficulties or problems that may cause a risk on learners with physical disabilities at an institutional level. Finally, the aspect of financial challenge will be a guide in identifying difficulties or problems that come as a result of inadequate funds to run the schools which may come from the government, school fundraising activities.

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