

**THE ROLE OF FACULTIES OF EDUCATION IN THE PREPARATION OF
PRIMARY SCHOOL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS FOR INCLUSIVE
CLASSROOMS: A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT.**

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ABSTRACT: *Universities in South Africa are responsible for training primary school teachers. These teachers should be competent to teach learners with and without disabilities in the same classroom environments. With the exception of very few universities in South Africa, the majority offers courses that do not adequately prepare teachers for inclusive classrooms. This quantitative study was pegged on the literary debate and used the Modified Survey of Attitudes towards Inclusion of Learners with Special Needs to collect data from 149 primary school pre-service teachers. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers who took a module on Barriers to Learning have a good understanding of the teaching of learners with special needs, they possess appropriate skills to teach learners with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms and are confident that they have inherent qualities and mental temperament to deal with special needs learners.*

KEYWORDS: Inclusive Education, Pre-Service Teachers, Persons With Disabilities, Special Needs Learners, Teacher Knowledge, Teaching Skills And Dispositions.

INTRODUCTION

Faculties of Education in South African universities are responsible for teacher training for all levels of schooling. Teacher education has to embrace inclusive education in order to accommodate the learning environment and curriculum that meet the needs of all learners. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol (UN, 2006) states that teacher training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons or learners with disabilities. Ideally, teachers who emerge from faculties of education should be competent teachers who are capable to teach learners with and without disabilities in the same classroom environments. Of paramount importance is the fact that children with disabilities should be identified at their elementary school years. Early identification is necessary to enable teachers to develop educational programmes that allow for the inclusion of children with disabilities in the general classroom.

The Ministry of South African Education is committed to the provision of education opportunities, in particular for those learners who experience barriers to learning and development in an inclusive learning environment (DoE, 2001). In order to meet this mandate, the ministry intended to designate and convert a number of primary schools throughout the country to what are called “full service” schools, equipped and supported to provide a far greater range of learning needs, whose programmes are carefully “monitored and evaluated”. The lessons learned from this process would be used to guide the extension of the model to other primary schools as well as other high schools and colleges (DoE, 2001).

This position of the White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education is very noble in the creation of inclusive education. The ideology of inclusive education is about fitting schools to meet the needs of all learners. Any educational system is responsible for including learners with special needs for an appropriate education for all (Al-Zyondi, 2006). Inclusive education means that all learners within a school, regardless of their strengths, weaknesses or disabilities in any area, become part of the school community. In this context, learners with disabilities attend the same schools as their neighbours and peers without disabilities where they are provided with all support needed to achieve full access to the same curriculum (Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori & Algozzine, 2012).

Conceptualisation of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education refers to the practice of including another group of learners in regular classroom: learners with physical, developmental or social-emotional disabilities and those with chronic health problems. The philosophical basis of inclusive education rests on the principles that heterogeneity within a group is both unavoidable and desirable, and that differences in ability are not marks of greater or lesser worth. The idea of inclusive education is to provide whatever adaptations are needed as obtrusively as possible in an effort to ensure that all learners, regardless of their abilities, can participate as much as possible in all classroom experiences and in the same manner as everyone else (Hunter-Johnson & Newton, 2014). Inclusive education is an approach to education for all that is founded on the recognition that certain groups of learners such as children with disabilities, indigenous children, or girls have been directly or indirectly excluded from the existing system of education. Inclusive education requires that the framework within which education is delivered be broad enough to accommodate equally the needs and circumstances of every learner in society (Murungi, 2015). Inclusion entails the provision of educational services in the least restrictive environment, contingent upon learner strengths and needs and encompassing a substantive continuum of possible supports (Kitanowski-Press, Foots & Rinaldo, 2010).

According to Murungi (2015), it is important to consider the following defining statements in the planning and implementation of Inclusive Education:

- All children can be educated regardless of the settings or adaptations necessary, all students have access to a meaningful curriculum and outcomes;
- All children should be educated in regular classrooms with age appropriate peers, made possible by the removal of barriers to education through measures such as reasonable accommodation;
- Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all;
- All children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have; and that
- A child with disability should attend the neighbourhood school, that is, the school that would be attended if the child did not have a disability.

Article 24 of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol on Education requires State Parties to ensure that the following aspects are realized (UN, 2006):

- Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
- Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
- Persons with disabilities receive the support required within the general education system to facilitate their effective education;
- Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

Winter (2006) posits that inclusive education is both a process and an outcome for achieving social justice and equity in our society. A natural outcome of greater inclusion is that all teachers can expect to teach learners with a range of special educational needs (SEN) throughout their careers and all schools have a significant role in educating children from local community, whatever their background or ability. Inclusion is about the quality of the school experience and about how far learners are helped to learn in order to achieve and participate fully in the life of the school.

Teachers' Preparation and Roles

Reid (2010) documented teachers' roles and preparation for inclusive classrooms. Universities are compelled to provide pre-service and in-service training for teachers. In this regard, special education training is necessary. Special education prohibits the exposition of special needs learners to teachers who are not trained in the area.

With the exception of very few universities in South Africa, a majority offers courses that do not adequately prepare teachers for the daunting task of teaching in inclusive classrooms. Student teachers often graduate without gaining knowledge or experience of working in inclusive classrooms.

Successful inclusion requires teachers to modify the instructional setting, use effective instructional methods and strategies, adapt instruction and provide equal learning opportunities for all children. Teachers are expected to assess children's development, prepare an effective learning environment, engage all children in learning activities, use different instructional methods and strategies and work with families (Sucuoğlu, Bakkaloğlu, Karasu, Demir& Akalin, 2014).

Inclusive classrooms are often characterized by challenging learner behaviours which may lead to frustration for an unprepared teacher. The teaching style of teachers impact the effect created by the limits set. It has been found that a teaching style which is predominantly democratic is most effective in addressing challenging behaviour. The style allows learners to experience freedom within limits (Reid, 2010).

The ability of the teacher to promote social competence in an inclusive setting is of utmost importance for productive and successful life. Learners who possess social skills are resilient unlike those who are deficient in social skills and are likely to be delinquent, drop out of school and abuse substances. Social skills deficient in learners is considered to be the single best predictor of mental health problem in adulthood (Reid, 2010).

Learners are able to perceive a teacher's negative or uneasy feelings about differences, whether of language, skin colour, cultural mannerisms or disabilities. Teachers' unconditional acceptance of all learners has an essential role to play in the development of social competence. Learners can model respectful interactions by their actions, words, nonverbal gestures and tone of voice (Reid, 2010).

Learners need the ability to successfully and apparently select and carry out their own interpersonal goals. They need to focus on areas of independence, assertiveness, social sensitivity, friendship building and social problem solving. Independence helps learners to learn to direct their own activities, make decisions, and follow through on their own plans. Learners need to be given opportunities to accomplish tasks on their own in order to develop what Erickson calls "a sense of industry versus inferiority" (Reid, 2010).

Teachers should have good teaching practice based on the needs of learners. Teaching should have a foundation in real learning that is based on contextualisation or authentic examples. It should incorporate instances of which all learners are included in the lesson. The teacher should allow for longer wait response time for special needs learners. Special needs learners may need more time to respond to high-level questions. Extra classroom time should be considered to complete assignments. The expectation of the learner's performance should not be diminished (Reid, 2010).

Winter (2006) points out that many new teachers express apprehension about their ability to teach learners with Special Education Needs in mainstream classes and lament that their preparation for inclusion was inadequate. According to Winter (2006), researchers have found, more recently, that inclusion is inadequately addressed and often neglected in initial teacher education. In this regard, it would appear that where much has been achieved in our classrooms in relation to inclusion, gaps still exist in teacher preparation programmes. To this end, Reid (2010) purports that inclusion needs planning and preparation, appropriate communication, training and in-service of teachers, and a significant commitment by administrators to support the inclusive classroom. The idea is to ensure that learners receive the best service in a least restrictive environment. When teachers do not feel positive about learners with special needs and have not been involved in how services are to be delivered, when they have not been adequately prepared, this result in a less appropriate education with a more restrictive environment.

According to McCray and McHatton (2011), successful teaching and learning in the inclusive classroom is largely predicated on teachers' **knowledge, skills and dispositions (KSD)**, all of which can be undermined by a belief system that is inconsistent with an inclusive paradigm.

Loreman, Sharma and Forlin (2013) view KSD to mean, in practical terms, the development of cognitive knowledge and the theoretical basis of the profession (head), the development of ethical and moral attitudes and beliefs reflected in one's behaviour (heart) and the acquisition of technical and practical skills necessary to carry out the essential roles of the profession (hands).

When teachers and other staff are not provided the skills to implement inclusion successfully, this leads to their frustration and resentment towards inclusive education.

In a study conducted by Saidy (1977), Reid (2010) reports that the general education teachers do not feel prepared to meet the needs of learners with special needs, especially those with learning disabilities. Some pre-service student teachers revealed that they “felt scared” at the thought of having learners with disabilities in their classes.

Teachers must understand the most common types of learning and physical disabilities and the typical symptoms of manifestation. They must conceptualise individual differences among learners with learning disabilities and adapt curricular and instructional activities to meet the needs of all learners in inclusive classroom. They must understand how to implement inclusive practices, by teaching techniques such as hands-on activities, group work, and computer-based learning for all learners. They must understand the process of collaboration and team teaching with other teachers (Reid, 2010).

Inclusive and learning-friendly environments

Harris, Miske and Attig (2000) developed a toolkit for creating an inclusive learning environment. In advocating for this toolkit they conceded that changing from a traditional school or classroom to one that is inclusive and learner-friendly is a process, not an event. It does not happen overnight. It takes time and teamwork. Yet, it can yield many benefits for us professionally and most importantly for our children, their families, and their communities.

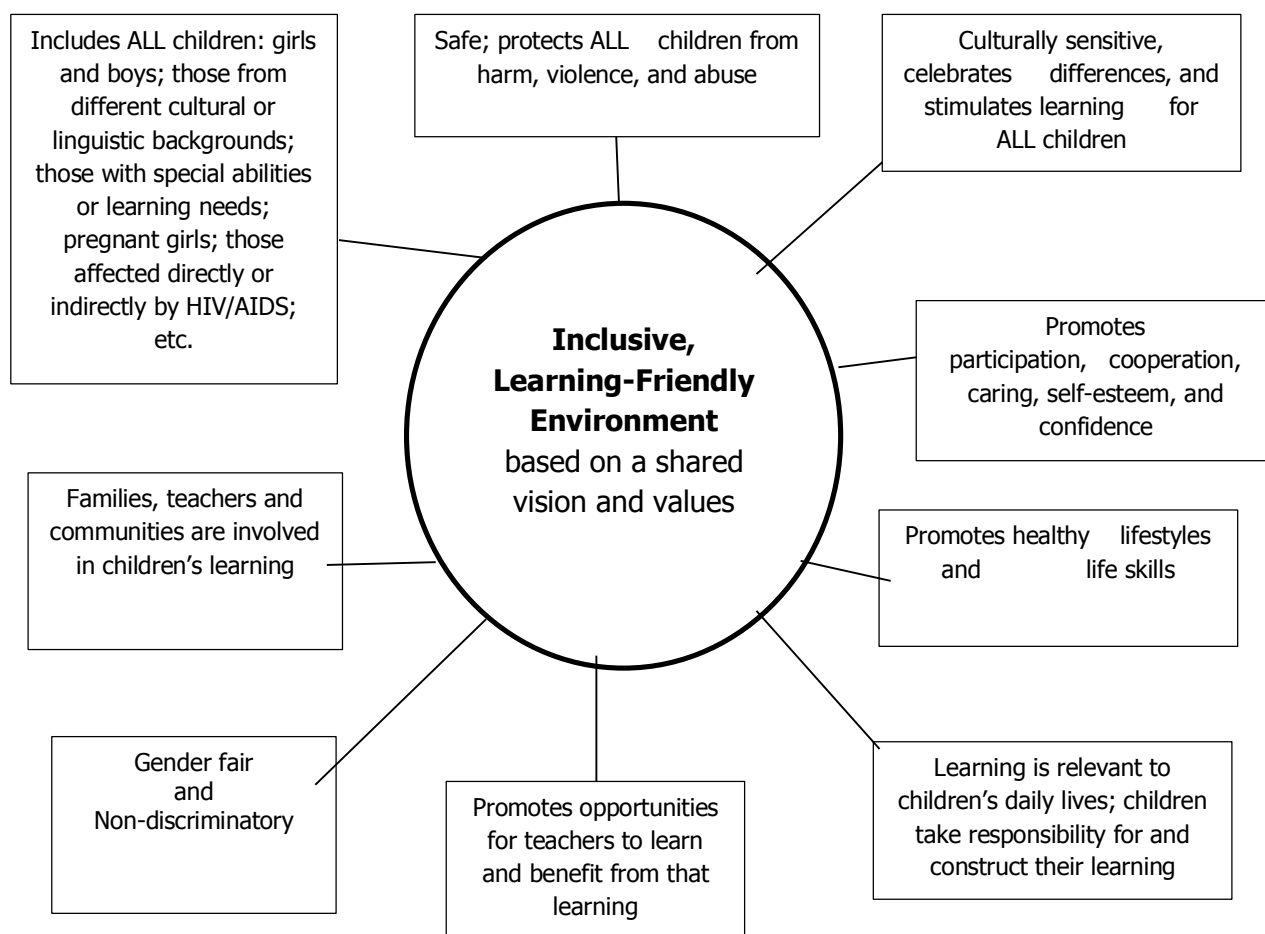


Figure 1: Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments. Adapted from Harris, R., Miske, S., and Attig, G. (2000). *Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments*. Bangkok: UNESCO.

Figure 1 above depicts what Harris, Miske and Attig (2000) propose to be what constitutes an inclusive and learning-friendly environment based on shared values. The environment is characterised by the following:

- Includes ALL children: girls and boys; those from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds; those with special abilities or learning needs; pregnant girls; those affected directly or indirectly by HIV/AIDS; etc.;
- Safe; protects ALL children from harm, violence, and abuse;
- Culturally sensitive, celebrates differences, and stimulates learning for ALL children;
- Promotes participation, cooperation, caring, self-esteem, and confidence;
- Promotes healthy lifestyles and life skills;
- Learning is relevant to children's daily lives; children take responsibility for and construct their learning;
- Promotes opportunities for teachers to learn and benefit from that learning;
- Gender fair and Non-discriminatory; and
- Families, teachers and communities are involved in children's learning

School Management Teams (SMTs) can play a significant role in the creation of inclusive schools. Black and Simon (2014) analysed the following seven intersecting arenas that SMTs should attend to in order to support the development of more robust and sustainable inclusive school practices:

Engaging Institutional Norms and Inertia

Persuasive institutional practices that provide separate space and support outside the general education settings remain a significant challenge for the education leadership and need to be fiercely confronted. Another challenge SMTs need to confront is the belief that inclusion negatively impacts typically performing learners in the general education programmes. Strong democratic leadership that institutes more collective advocacy for learners with disability, their families, district personnel and community groups is necessary to crack the ossified nature of non-inclusive ideologies and practices.

Developing Inclusive Practice as a Planned Organization-wide Reform

Inclusion is at its core, a planned organizational reform that requires substantial commitment on the part of SMTs. In planning for reform in support of inclusive practices, educational leaders are tasked with greater knowledge requirements, including knowledge of legal dimensions of practices that involve learners with disabilities, knowledge of collaborative teaching and support arrangements, and skills in leveraging accountability arrangements to develop professional development initiatives that support inclusive practices. Planned organisational change is sustainable in organisations if moral purpose and an express desire to alter the social environment underpin reform initiatives.

Making Meaning and Developing Purpose

SMTs play a role in initiating reforms and further sustaining practice through engagement with moral questions around them. They examine who they are, what they value, what they believe to be good and true and ponder over their ability to render decisions about human beings, consistently articulate for inclusive communities and highlight and celebrate inclusive practices as a means to work against differentiating norms constructed and maintained through the

duality of special education versus general education conceptualisations. Reform for inclusive practices requires understanding of inclusive theories in action. Often learners with disabilities are continuously constructed as academic burdens and are compartmentalised as “special education” learners. For this notion, there is a need to do the deep community-level work required to conceptualise the worth of all individuals as a moral stance in which all learners are recognised for the various ways they contribute to school communities.

Aligning Structures with Purpose

Consideration of who is responsible for teaching learners with disabilities and concurrently establishing equitable structures and routines for the location and delivery of educational services is centred to planning professional development for inclusive education. Most school variables have little effect on student learning serve for the leadership effect of pulling those variables together as a cohesive force. Successful inclusive programmes are characterised by changes in school and classroom structures and clever obtainment of alignment of resources with purpose in order to support diligent and consistent work towards full participation and membership by learners with abilities. Inclusive schools need to shift from bureaucracies to professionalised adhocracies capable of constructing fluid systems of support.

Developing a Culture of Learning as an Organisational Feature

Inclusive organisational practices position learning as a core activity. Critical reflection, self-evaluation, and individual and collective reflexiveness pervade learning organisations, as SMTs commit to strategically and continuously invest resources in cycles of problem-posing, decision-making, activity enactment and problem solving. Various stakeholders are sought out and engaged around the work of inclusion, as effective leaders of learning use networks to share information and build capacity. Risk taking is encouraged and failure that leads to deep learning is expected. SMTs should focus on the quality of the pedagogical interaction between teachers and learners.

Planning for Teacher Capacity and Professional Development

Many teachers do not feel equipped to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. SMTs should utilise professional development as a means to provide needed training for teachers, particularly in effective and behavioural intervention strategies and collaboration skills that address the diverse learning needs of learners with disabilities. General education teachers often have to first experience inclusive teaching in order to acknowledge and identify areas where they need professional development

On teacher capacity, these require procedural knowledge as well as craft knowledge that allows them to differentiate instruction in response to the variable learning needs among diverse learners. Even with high quality professional development, teachers vary in conceptions of self-efficiency and proficiency in adopting and adapting acquired knowledge and practices to their own context. High adapters and adopters could seem to be particularly suited for inclusive education. High adopters tend to have the most knowledge of curriculum and pedagogical approaches, learner-centred dispositions, managing learner behaviour and delivering instruction, and ability to deeply consider learners’ learning process.

There is a growing consensus that professional development should be on-going and should incorporate training in various contexts, including the classroom. Leadership role should be one of facilitation of embedded and practice-derived professional development that is on-

going, school-based, integrated with reforms and developed in a culture that encourages teachers to try new approaches.

Teachers need multiple opportunities to implement knowledge, strategies and skills. Leaders should design a support system that promotes consistent reflection and highlight material successes in order to produce change in teachers' beliefs and practices that will help facilitate academic success for learners with disabilities in inclusive settings.

Sustaining Commitment to Risk, Innovation and Learning

Reforms will not be sustained without substantial investment in capacity building. The implementation of professional development activities should be guided in a manner that allows for teacher voice and governance so that reforms can be purpose-centred, understood and owned rather than being perceived as resource debilitating, incoherent and distant top down mandates. For schools to become effective learning communities that sustain democratic principles, leaders and teachers should nurture scepticism and empathy.

In a nutshell, an inclusive practice needs to be conceptualised as a collective endeavour that requires leadership that plans and aligns developmental support in order to sustain organisational learning and commitment to inclusive educational practices.

The purpose of this article was to investigate the role of Faculties of Education on how they prepare primary pre-service teachers for inclusive classrooms. Teachers are expected to be prepared to teach learners with special needs in mainstream schools. The article intended to tap into pre-service teachers' perception on their knowledge, skills and dispositions to teach learners with disabilities together with other learners in the same classrooms.

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study on the preparation of pre-service teachers for the teaching of children with special needs in inclusive classrooms employed procedures and techniques as delineated hereunder:

Setting

The study was conducted at a historically disadvantaged South African comprehensive university. Participants were all third year pre-service teachers enrolled in a module on Barriers to Learning in preparation for teaching in general education setting. The module was taught for two hours per week during the course of the first semester. The intension was to introduce students to the concept of inclusive education and to impart the right skills and attitudes that would assist children with barriers to learning to achieve their full potential.

Participants

The sample was comprised of all third year pre-service undergraduate Foundation Phase pre-service teachers (n =149). Data were collected at the beginning of the second semester. The participants were predominately female (83.9%) with few males (16.1%) and ranged from 24 to 54 years of age.

Procedures

The *Modified Survey of Attitudes towards Inclusion of Learners with Special Needs* was administered to all the 149 students in a lecture hall within a period of 50 minutes. This instrument was a Modification of the Survey of Attitudes toward the Inclusion of Students with Special Needs that was developed by McCray and MacHatton (2013). The instrument consisted of 4 demographics items and 26 Likert-type items. The scale of the items ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree through to 5 as strongly agree, and a neutral middle category. All items addressed knowledge of inclusion, skills and dispositions as related to inclusion of children with learning differences main stream classes.

Findings of the study

The presentation of the findings consisted of descriptive statistics showing frequency percentages of each survey item relating to teaching of special needs learners. The 26 survey items were categorized into Knowledge, Skills or Competence and Disposition.

Knowledge of Teaching in Inclusive classrooms

The percentage of participants who perceived themselves as having good knowledge and understanding of teaching in inclusive classrooms ranged from 64% to 94.6%. This is an indication that participants had confidence in possessing knowledge in regard to the demands and requirements of teaching in inclusive classroom. The table below reflects the responses of participants on being empowered in the teacher training programme to teach in inclusive classes.

Table 1: Responses on knowledge to teach inclusive classes

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
	Disagree	Expected Count	0.5	2.5	3.0
		% of Total	0.7%	1.3%	2.0%
	undecided	Expected Count	1.3	6.7	8.0
		% of Total	0.7%	4.7%	5.4%
	Agree	Expected Count	22.2	115.8	138.0
		% of Total	14.8%	77.9%	92.6%
Total	Expected Count	24.0	125.0	149.0	
	% of Total	16.1%	83.9%	100.0%	

Table 1 above shows that 2% of the participants disagreed that teacher education training provided them with skills and abilities to teach effectively in inclusive classes. A total of 8% of the study sample was undecided, constituted by 0.7% males and 4.7% females. 14% males and 77% females, making a total of 92.6% agreed that the teacher training had empowered them to handle both children with abilities and disabilities. This was born out of a clear understanding of the concept of inclusive education which the participants demonstrated. 92.6% of the participants, made up of 14.1% males and 78.5% females reflected good understanding of what inclusive education entails, 4.7% lacked in understanding while 4.0 remained undecided.

Skills or Competence of teaching in Inclusive classrooms

64.8% to 95.1% responses were scored on the survey items on skills or competence to teach in inclusive classrooms. This was indicative that the participants perceived themselves as having acquired the necessary skills to teach disabled and non-disabled learners in the same inclusive classrooms.

Table 2: Responses on skills to teach in inclusive classrooms

			gender		Total
			male	female	
	Disagree	Expected Count	0.6	3.4	4.0
		% of Total	0.7%	2.0%	2.7%
	undecided	Expected Count	1.3	6.7	8.0
		% of Total	2.0%	3.4%	5.4%
	Agree	Expected Count	22.1	113.9	136.0
		% of Total	13.5%	78.4%	91.9%
Total	Expected Count	24.0	124.0	148.0	
	% of Total	16.2%	83.8%	100.0%	

Of the sampled participants, 13.5% males and 78.4% females, totalling 91.9% confirmed being provided with the requisite skills to address the learning needs of children with special needs. 5.4% were undecided on the matter while 2.7% were negative about their acquisition of appropriate competencies for meeting the needs of inclusive leaning contexts. The majority of participants registered confidence in adapting teaching strategies to suit the learning differences of children in inclusive classes. 86%, constituted by 13.4% males and 73.2% females expressed confidence in their ability to adapt teaching strategies, 6.0% disagreed, 5.4% were undecided while 2.0% non-response was recorded.

Disposition of pre-service teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms

The participant's scores on disposition on the survey items were ranked from 67.3% to 96% in agreement of having inherent qualities of mental aptitude and preparedness to teach in inclusive classrooms. Participants had the perception that they are well-prepared by the teacher training programme of the faculty of education to teach in inclusive classrooms.

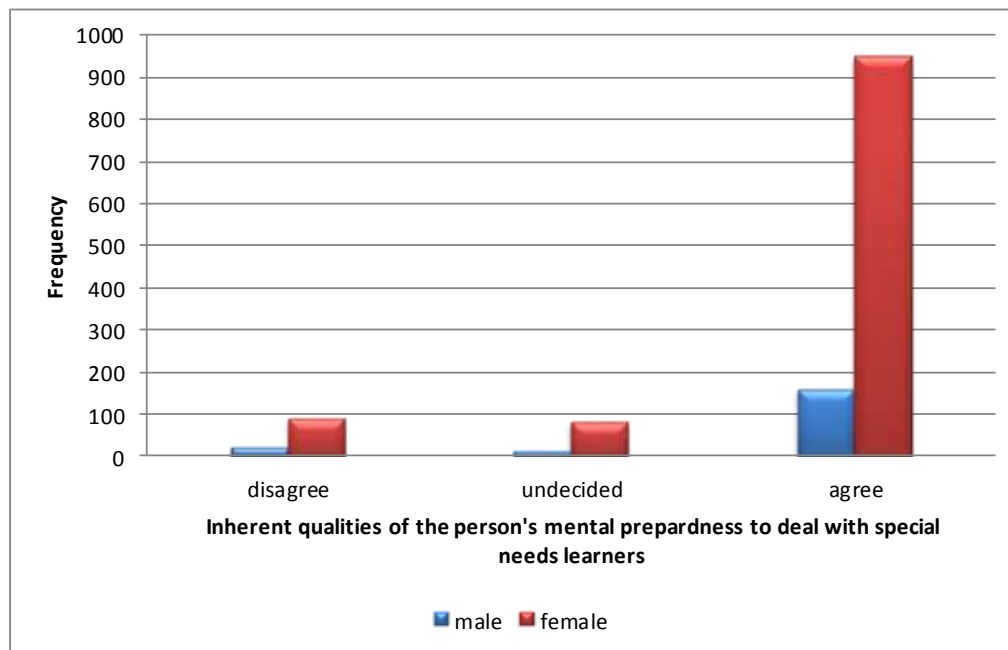


Figure 2: Disposition to teach in inclusive classes.

Figure 2 above shows that females agree more than males in all the categories of the distribution on the disposition to deal with special needs learners in mainstream settings. As an indication of their preparedness to deal with inclusive classrooms, 79.2% of participants consisting of 14.1% males and 65.1% females accented to the importance of engaging team work in efforts to deliver effective teaching to learners with differentiated abilities. 13.4% however, rejected the value of establishing and maintaining partnerships in the teaching and learning of children with special needs. 7.4% of participants were undecided on the use of team work in handling special needs learners. In total 20.8% of the sample refuted the essence of collaboration in the provision of learning to children with special needs.

The participants expressed their readiness to teach learners with various disabilities in their classrooms. 81.4% registered an ability to teach children with learning disabilities such as dyslexia. Those who remained indecisive totalled 10.7% while 7.9% judged themselves unprepared to handle such learners in their classrooms. A significant figure of 73% indicated an ability to teach learners experiencing behavioural deficits such as attention deficit hyperactive disorder. 27% however, denied a preparedness to manage such learners and these included the 14.9% who were undecided and 12.1% who disagreed. 78.7% confessed an ability to teach blind children while 8.5% disagreed and 12.1% remained undecided. 70.1% indicated their comfort in dealing with learners experiencing communication disorders. Altogether 29.9% suggested they are difficulties encountered in teaching inclusive classes that accommodate children with communication disorders. Striking revelations emerged in the category involving learners with mental impairment such as cognition and down's syndrome. 64.8% indicated they can handle such learners. 21.1% were undecided while 14.1% disagreed. these figures suggest that regular schools have limitations in including learners with mental impairments who ideally should be enrolled in special centres with suitable structures, facilities and staff to attend to their needs.

Chi-Square Tests

While the objective of the study was not to test the statistical significance between males and females in their disposition to teach in inclusive classrooms, the table below demonstrates the lack of a relationship between males and females in the readiness to teach in inclusive settings.

Table 3: Gender relationship to teach in inclusive classes.

	Value	do	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.87	2	0.235
N number of Valid Cases	1319.0		

The table 3 above tests if there is any relationship or association between gender and the disposition. We can see here that $\chi^2_{(2)} = 2.87$, $p = 0.235$ (the chi-square value with 2 degrees of freedom=2.87 and the p-value=0.235). This tells us that there is no statistically significant association between gender and disposition; that is, both males and females' feelings are the same when it comes to disposition.

DISCUSSION

The institution in which the study was conducted relied on the use of the Module on Barriers to Learning as a fundamental mode to prepare primary school pre-service teachers for inclusive classrooms. Instead of over-reliance on a particular module, it was imperative that inclusive practices be infused in every teacher pre-service programme. Much as the current debate on No Learner Left Behind is raging the debate must be equally matched up by practices that deal with No Pre-service Teacher Left Behind in terms of training and preparation to teach in inclusive classrooms.

This study evidenced the quest to develop understanding and skills to teach in inclusive environments among pre-service teacher trainees. This orientation is informed by an acceptance that the society is composed of people variously endowed with abilities and disabilities and whose survival calls for social justice and equality to take effect. Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori & Algozzine, (2012) argue that learners with disabilities should attend the same schools as their neighbours and peers without disabilities where they are provided all support needed to achieve full access to the same curriculum. Inclusive education requires that the framework within which education is delivered be broad enough to accommodate equally the needs and circumstances of every learner in society (Murungi, 2015). Teacher training is therefore used as a vehicle to ensure learners with special needs receive full participation and success in the provided curricula. Educational policies that are in line with millennium goals are crafted and reviewed as supports for the initiative. Reid (2010) states that universities are compelled to provide pre-service and in-service training for teachers to enhance their preparation and roles for inclusive classrooms. It is pivotal that the education system be able to churn out teachers with the right mindset so that the programmes and practises that are geared for learners with defined categories of disabilities achieve the required outcomes.

Successful inclusion requires teachers to modify instruction to suit the circumstances of individual learners. Teachers are expected to assess children's development, prepare an effective learning environment, engage all children in learning activities, use different instructional methods and strategies and work with families (Sucuoğlu, Bakkaloğlu, Karasu,

Demir & Akalin, 2014). They must basically understand how to implement inclusive practices, inclusive of the process of collaboration and team teaching with other teachers (Reid, 2010). Tsang (2013) concurs noting that more stress has been put in the area of teaching and learning with emphasis on differentiated teaching and cooperative learning. An attitude to create more time for co-teaching must be infused in teachers (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013).

It has been found that a teaching style which is predominantly democratic is most effective in addressing challenging behaviour. The style allows learners to experience freedom within limits (Reid, 2010). Engagement of democratic approaches can offset the traditional ideas and practices against inclusion (Skrtic, 2012). The ability of teachers to manage well the behaviour of learners is a catchy issue in this study as 27% of participants indicated having challenges in teaching classes devoid of normal behaviour. Professional development and instructional support can be handy for effective teaching of inclusive classes with learners of diverse impairments, including the learning, behavioural, physical, communication disorder and moderate mental problems (De Matthews & Mawhinney, 2013).

According to McGray and McHatton (2011) successful teaching and learning in the inclusive classroom is largely predicated on teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions. This relates to the possession of the necessary cognitive and theoretical knowledge, moral attitudes and beliefs and technical skills (Loreman, Sharma and Forlin (2013). Beattie, Jordan and Algozzine (2006) concur, noting that special education experience requires an understanding of special education concepts and skills and to apply them in general education classrooms. Teachers need to avoid being judgemental and to adapt teaching strategies to match the condition of the learner or learners in focus. They need to be skilled in understanding the emotional stresses faced by such children (Press, Foote & Rinaldo, 2010). In fact, to challenge the harmful attitudes towards individuals with disabilities is the most important step to achieve inclusion (Drane & Kamphoff, 2014).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the carrying-out of follow-up studies that track pre-service teachers and assess and evaluate their inclusive practices when they start their full-time teaching after employment. Case studies could also be conducted using mainstream classrooms in which there are learners with special needs in order to evaluate how newly employed teachers deal with the teaching and learning of children with diverse impairments in one setting. The Ministries of Basic Education and Higher Education should collaborate to find ways to introduce aspects of inclusive education in every teacher preparation module and programme.

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