

The State of Inclusive Education in Zimbabwe: Bachelor of Education (Special Needs Education) Students' Perceptions

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ABSTRACT The study sought to establish the current state of inclusive education in Zimbabwe. Focus was on the perceived gains of inclusive education, challenges in its implementation and how the challenges could be addressed. A survey design which was fundamentally qualitative in nature was used. Forty-two Bachelor of Education (Special Needs Education)(BEd SNE) purposefully selected students from Great Zimbabwe University participated in the study. The data were collected using an open ended questionnaire and were content analysed. The results revealed that the participants perceived inclusive education as having resulted in social acceptance of children with special educational needs. They perceived inclusion as having promoted positive attitudes among children without disabilities and in communities. Stigmatisation and discrimination were perceived as having been reduced. The challenges that were still perceived to be experienced included: lack of specific policy on inclusive education; scarcity of resources such as special needs education trained teachers and assistive devices; existence of negative attitudes among some stakeholders and lack of understanding of the meaning of inclusive education. The participants suggested several ways to address some of the above challenges. These included enacting a specific policy on inclusive education, training more teachers in special needs education, implementing more community awareness programmes, having itinerant specialist teachers, sufficient funding of the education system as a whole and availing more resources for inclusion.