

Challenges School Management Experience with Inclusion of Learners with Visual Impairments: A Case of a Secondary School in Namibia

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Abstract

Background: The Namibian constitution declares education as a fundamental right for every child, regardless of their learning abilities. Pre-independence, Namibia adopted separate special schools for learners with visual impairments. However, after independence inclusion in mainstream education system became one of the significant changes in educational reforms. **Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to explore challenges facing school management of an inclusive school for learners with visual impairments. **Objectives:** 1) To assess the perceptions of members of the school management on the inclusion of learners with visual impairments in a mainstream school. 2) To identify challenges the school management encounters in facilitating the inclusion of learners with visual impairments. 3) To provide measures that school management should put in place to address identified social and academic challenges. **Methods:** The paper employed a qualitative design. A stratified-purposeful sampling technique was used to select sixteen (16) participants composed of a principal, three (3) heads of departments, six (6) teachers and six (6) learners who took part in this study. Interviews guide, still pictures and observation schedule were used as research instruments and a narrative analysis was used to analyse the data. **Findings:** The study reveals that members of the school management are faced with challenges ranging from negative attitudes towards inclusion of learners with visual impairments, unwelcoming infrastructure, large classes, and lack of skills and instructional resources, curriculum restrictions, lack of targeted measures to ensure social and academic inclusion. **Conclusion:** The paper concluded that there are structural,

cultural and agential challenges experienced by management of an inclusive school for learners with visual impairments. The paper suggested some remedies to these challenges. **Recommendations:** The paper recommended regular in-service training, budgetary provisions for redressing the infrastructural challenges, encouraging regular visits by inclusive education specialists, and strengthening the relationship between inclusive and resource schools. It is recommended that further study should be conducted to assess the post-policy social realist challenges to an inclusive school setting and use such studies to inform an improvement strategy.

Keywords

Inclusive Education, Instructional Resources, Namibia, Visual Impairments, Mainstream School

1. Introduction

In Namibia, special schools have been at the center of educating learners with special needs since the colonial times. However, the Namibian government ratified a number of international declarations namely: Education for All (1990), Inclusive Education (1995) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) (Erixon Arreman, University, & Karl-Gunnar Rehn, 2016). In the 1980s it was realized that special schools are not the only option to educate learners with special needs as they represented segregation which had serious repercussions for social development and cohesion.

In 1995, after the ratification of the Salamanca Convention, the Ministry of Education developed a pilot programme for the inclusion of learners with visual impairments. The pilot programme started with two schools: one in Windhoek and one in Ongwediva. Learners with visual impairments who completed grade 10 at special schools joined the mainstream education setting (Cloete, 2002). Unlike in the past when learners with severe to profound visual impairments would not have an opportunity to proceed to senior secondary school phase, and consequently to higher education, this inclusive practice offered an opportunity for them to proceed with their education up to higher education level. Learners with visual impairments shared the same classrooms with learners without visual impairments and their teachers were expected to render the necessary support they would need, with additional support of a resource teacher, in order to access all teaching and learning services (Asamoah et al., 2018; Josua, 2013; Korir, 2015; Ralejoe, 2021). The school management had the responsibility to oversee this process.

The Salamanca Conference adopted the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action was informed by the principle of inclusion. The signatories took the position that learners with special needs should be educated, as far as possible, with their

peers in regular education settings (UNESCO, 1994). The introduction of inclusive education is in line with Chapter 3 of the Namibian Constitution, Article 20 (1) that states, “All persons shall have right to education” (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1990: pp. 12-13). At the time of piloting the inclusion for learners with visual impairments, the Colleges of Education offered a section of Special Needs Education while the University of Namibia offered a specialization in special education and introduced inclusive education to students taking the Specialized Diploma in Special Needs Education. This implies that the teacher education did not sufficiently prepare teachers for inclusive education content and strategies for supporting the learners with visual impairments. This has since changed and the higher education institution curriculum prioritised inclusive education at undergraduate as well postgraduate levels.

Statement of the problem

In 1995 in Namibia, inclusion of learners with visual impairments in the mainstream school setting was piloted. The Ministry of Education made efforts to create the understanding among agents in the education fraternity about the essence of inclusive education through workshops and in-service training interventions. These interventions were important since principals, heads of departments and teachers play a pivotal role in managing inclusive schools. These interventions gave minimal preparation in terms of appropriate skills to manage schools that practice the inclusion of learners with visual impairments. Studies conducted in Namibia focused more on learners’ support and left a supportive gap between teachers and school management to perceive (Nghipondoka, 2001; Zulch-Knouwds, 2010). Cloete (2002) indicated that there has been a lack of broader consultation between management of the inclusive school and the decision makers in the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC). Since the ratification of international convention on Inclusive Education (Erixon Arreman et al., 2016) attempts have been made to provide inclusive education to all children including learners with visual impairments within the mainstream schooling system. In light of the perceived absence of skills needed for managing inclusive schools, the purpose of this paper is to explore the challenges facing school management of an inclusive school for learners with visual impairments.

Research objectives

The paper is based on the following objectives:

- 1) To assess the perceptions of members of the school management on the inclusion of learners with visual impairments in a mainstream school.
- 2) To identify challenges the school management encounters in facilitating the inclusion of learners with visual impairments.
- 3) To provide measures that school management should put in place to address identified social and academic challenges.

2. Literature Review

Academic results and good performance align with collaboration between members of school management (Chombo, 2020). Therefore, it is assumed that col-

laborative work between principals, heads of department, teachers and learners may raise the standard of academic performance at any school and an inclusive school for learners with visual impairments is no exception. The school managers should spearhead collaborative and teamwork by respecting employees as [Chombo \(2020\)](#) further posits that school leaders should be exemplary, which strengthen trust and working relationship among others. Members of school management are at the center of creating an enabling instructional environment by providing teaching and learning materials, funds and academic as well as social support.

Inclusive education dominated the discourses in the educational fraternity after the 1994 Salamanca Conference in Spain. Similarly, over the past years, instructional leadership also dominated debates in the educational context. Instructional leadership according to [Mestry and Pillay \(2013: p. S1\)](#), is about “leadership influencing the quality of education in schools, enhancing learner achievement, managing resources to effectively improve teaching and learning, pedagogic and curriculum management”. Also, managing the inclusion of learners with visual impairments is no exception. Inclusion of learners who are differently abled requires quality instructional leadership in order to improve their academic performance ([Bhengu & Mkhize, 2014](#)). In order for the school managers to enhance effective teaching and learning for learners with visual impairments in a mainstream school environment. School managers need to involve all stakeholders in the decision-making process while providing the necessary assistive instructional resources to effectively improve academic performance of learners.

Instructional leadership links to improved learners’ academic performance in schools ([Lumadi, 2017](#)). School managers should subscribe to collaborative, cooperative as well as democratic ways of running the school by involving the stakeholders in the decision-making process. [Bhengu and Mkhize \(2014\)](#) indicated that instructional leaders should promote teamwork, continuous learning, collaboration and cooperation among teaching staff to improve student learning and this assertion is applicable to schools that are practicing inclusion of learners with visual impairments. Instructional leadership place training and professional development at the center of education. There are studies that found that lack of training has a negative impact on effective teaching and learning ([Iita, 2014](#); [Lumadi, 2014](#); [Makunja, 2016](#)). It is up to the school managers to see to it that the training needs of the staff member are addressed through continuous professional development interventions to enable them to improve effective teaching and learning. Training capacitates and enhances teachers’ quality of teaching and learning which improves learners’ academic achievement.

In the case of inclusive school for learners with visual impairments, there should be a conducive setting for effective learning to take place by valuing teamwork among the staff ([Lumadi, 2017](#)). Every stakeholder’s voice should be heard and consensus should be reached. Stakeholders should be empowered to participate in effective teaching and learning through quality leadership and

placing importance on accountability in teaching and learning (Naicker et al., 2014). Instructional resources play an important role in academic achievement of learners. The management should ensure that the necessary teaching and learning resources are at the teachers' disposal. Lack of teaching and learning resources as well as accommodative infrastructure plays an important role in delivery of quality teaching and learning (Iita, 2014). These resources are integral part of learners' motivation and subsequent academic performance. If there are enough assistive devices and resources for learners with visual impairment in a mainstream setting, they get motivated to achieve academically.

Training needs, physical and other teaching and learning resources come at a cost. Therefore, lack of financial resources may be a hindrance to effective teaching and learning. The schools require money to procure educational materials without which effective teaching and learning could not take place. However, there may also be alternative resources that teacher can use without a budget. Teachers in Namibia are faced with high teacher-learner ratio which is found to derail good academic achievement (Nakale, 2017; Selepe, 2016). Other scholars in Namibia have linked high teacher-learner ratio to ineffective teaching and learning (Angula, 2015; Tubaundule, 2014). The negative attitudes and feelings towards inclusion of learner with visual impairments lead to low morale and have an impact on effective teaching and learning.

3. Methodology

The paper adopted a qualitative research approach using a case study design to appropriately address the purpose for which it was intended. Qualitative research is defined by Mills and Gay (2016: p. 25) as "the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insights into the particular phenomenon of interest". In this qualitative approach, a case study research design was adopted where the focus is on a unity of study known as bounded system, in this case, an inclusive secondary school (Mills & Gay, 2016), whereas the school was studied in depth (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

Using the stratified-purposeful sampling technique, a total of four (4) members of school management, which included a principal and three (3) heads of departments and six (6) teachers were selected to participate in the study. The sample, also, included four (4) learners without visual impairments and two (2) learners with visual impairments. The sub-groups within the sample were strategically chosen from each stratum (Brynard et al., 2014; Mills & Gay, 2016) to provide information from the perspective of multiple stakeholders that are affected by the inclusion of learners with visual impairments in a regular school with a focus of inclusion for learners with visual impairments.

An observation schedule and a semi-structured interview guide were used as data collection instruments. The observation notes were taken during or immediately after every observed activity had taken place. The field notes from the Observation Schedule were presented in reported form and in some cases, still-pictures were used to supplement the message. The data were clustered in

themes such as challenges regarding physical facilities/infrastructures, academic curriculum and social activities. A summary of implications was given at the end of every category and theme that are taken from the field notes. The data collected through observation was analysed using interpretations that relied on the authors' own insight.

The data obtained through one-on-one interviews with members of school management and two focused group interviews (one comprised of two learners with visual impairments and another of four learners without visual impairments) were presented and analysed as follows: First of all, the researcher listened to the interviews from the tapes and transcribed them one by one. The transcribed data were re-read several times. The important incidents from the responses were presented in report form and, in some cases, direct quotes were recorded and still-pictures are used to support some responses. At the end of the responses of every interview question a summary interpreting items that appeared more often in the responses was written. Responses for interview questions were analysed using narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is defined as "a process where the researcher collects descriptions of events through interviews and observations and synthesised them into narratives or stories, similar to the process of restoring" (Mills & Gay, 2016: p. 368). This process yielded themes and categories from which the meaning of the participants' views regarding challenges facing members of the school management of the inclusive school for learners with visual impairment were determined. The data generated from biographical information section of the interview guide were used to describe the participants and determine the distribution of variables (gender, age and years of teaching experience or serving at management level). The ethical consideration protocols were considered.

4. Discussion

4.1. Challenges on Inclusion of Learners with Visual Impairments

Firstly, the discussion and analysis of the perceptions or views on inclusive education are presented. Secondly, challenges that management of an inclusive school for learners with visual impairments face are discussed. Thirdly, measures put in place by school management to ensure that learners with visual impairments are accommodated in the social and academic environment of the school are explained. Finally, summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations drawn from the findings are presented.

4.1.1. Perceptions and Views on Inclusive Education

Judging from the responses, there were positive views from learners with visual impairments, some teachers and members of school management regarding the inclusion of learners with visual impairments in the mainstream school. One member of school management stated that:

"Learners with visual impairments have done the school proud by passing

with good points and went to different institutions of high learning”.

Participants perceived inclusive education as a positive development as it enables learners with special needs to be taught in the same class and be recognised without using the differences in their abilities as criterion. One participant indicated that:

“It is best to have everybody included, that is, when the visual impaired learners and the sighted learners are being taught together in an inclusive class group”.

The data revealed that exposure to inclusive education training of teachers as well as the experience of inclusive education seems to have contributed to positive attitudes towards inclusion. A teacher who was never trained on inclusive education despite more than twenty years of teaching experience was less positive and had more fears than those who had training on inclusive education. Similarly, teachers who taught students with special needs, irrespective of their inclusive education training, were also found to hold more positive attitudes towards inclusion than their peers who view inclusion from the position of outsiders. These findings are consistent with studies posited that teacher training has positive impact on effective educational policy implementation (Iita, 2014; Lumadi, 2014; Makunja, 2016; Morelle & Tabane, 2019).

Contrary to the positive attitudes, the findings of this study have provided some evidence that there were negative perceptions shown by teachers or managers regarding the inclusion of learners with visual impairments in a mainstream school setting. However, [Ralejoe \(2021\)](#) argues that learners without visual impairments possess mixed opinions about inclusion of learners with visual impairment in a regular school. The responses imply that teachers who hold negative attitudes towards the inclusion of learners with visual impairments seem to lack adequate skills to support learners with visual impairments. Referring to learners with visual impairments by othering them as “*these learners*” may arguably also imply a negative attitude, or non-acceptance and avoidance of responsibilities towards a particular individual or group, in this case, learners with visual impairments. These have implications for the challenges the school management may face in overseeing inclusive education amidst diverse opinions of key stakeholders.

The finding of negative attitudes, in this case, supports the position of the Ministry of Education regarding the barriers to inclusive education ([Ministry of Education, 2008](#)). [Sikanku \(2018\)](#) argues that negative attitudes towards inclusion of learners with visual impairments derail teachers from providing quality teaching and learning. Therefore, this is a challenge to the management of the school which has to work with teachers who hold negative attitudes. The members of school management are responsible for managing the overall activities in the school and ensuring that teachers do not pay lip-service to the education of learners with visual impairments. If any of the stakeholders embrace negative attitudes towards inclusion of learners with visual impairments, it is a challenge that may negatively impact the work of members of school management. The

following statement was made by a member of school management who discussed a challenge presented by inclusive education for learners with visual impairments:

“The time that a teacher takes in class to attend to learners with and without visual impairments at the same time poses a challenge. One would not finish the syllabus within the prescribed time because teaching an inclusive class slows the pace of teaching.”

Members of school management have to address these negative attitudes so that it does not affect effective learning of learners with visual impairments and their peers without visual impairment or other perceived disabilities. The implicit messages conveyed through these negative attitudes have an impact on the society’s vision to develop into an inclusive society, free from discrimination and stigmatization. It is worth concluding that training in inclusive education promotes positive attitudes towards social and academic inclusion.

4.1.2. Physical Environment

The observation made on the physical environment of the school revealed that it is not conducive to learners with visual impairments. The participants (heads of departments and a principal) have cited a number of reasons why the physical environment is not friendly to learners with visual impairments. This was said by a member of school management:

“The type of buildings in the school does not accommodate movements of learners with visual impairments”.

The literature showed similar results to the responses from members of the management supported by the observation, which revealed that the physical environment of the school is not friendly to learners with visual impairments (Morelle & Tabane, 2019; Ralejoe, 2021, 2019). The participants have cited problems such as the high corridors or “*stoep*”, with no protective metals or bars on the sides, the steep stairs and the steps, stagnant sewerage water ablution facilities, and the rough-bricks buildings (see **Figure 1**). A member of school management expressed that:

“They face dangers like injuries. There is so much chance that they could miss the corridor and fall. Also, the walls are constructed with rough bricks, which makes the buildings to be not accommodative at all; therefore, the physical environment is not friendly.”

These barriers related to physical facilities are an indication that the school is not entirely friendly to learners with visual impairments.

There are also a number of challenges related to physical structures which were identified through observation. They are such as, window frames pointing on the pathway when they are open, electric sockets mounted on the floor of the Computer Laboratory (see **Figure 2**), rough-bricks walls (see **Figure 1**) and high corridor pavements (see **Figure 3**). The challenge is that members of management are heading a school with a physical environment not conducive to learners with visual impairments. The current physical environment needs site-based



Figure 1. Rough-bricks wall.



Figure 2. Electric sockets mounted on the floor of the computer Labouratory.



Figure 3. High corridor pavements and obstacles.

management intervention to make the school disability-friendly, which address mobility and orientation problems faced by learners with visual impairments (Dakwa, 2014).

The situation of environmental unfriendliness may have resulted from the fact that the school was not initially constructed to accommodate learners with disabilities, specifically visual impairments. The findings discussed above agree

with (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). The management of the school has not done much to alleviate the situation due to costs and processes involved in applications for structural adjustment. At the time of this research, budgets of inclusive and special schools were managed from the Division Special Schools and Programmes at the Head office in Windhoek, and the process was experienced as both bureaucratic and cumbersome. Maintenance of all government facilities are the responsibility of the Ministry of Works and Transport, and this was another daunting task to get them to attend to all the issues. However, there is another external challenge as espoused in the response by a member of school management:

“Many times, management has asked the maintenance work to be done to the toilet facilities by the Department of Works. There are times when almost half of the toilet facilities are not in a working condition. The challenge has been that the Ministry division responsible for maintenance has its own shortcomings.”

Since the school was declared a pilot school for learners with visual impairments by the Ministry of Education in 1995, it ought to have been prioritized for transformation into a true inclusive school both in terms of structures and cultures (Dahre, 2010). It is a challenge that the school management does not have knowledge on the expected environment and procedures to request for infrastructural adjustments from the line ministry. The school was built in 1987/88, before the ratification of the 1990 Jomtien conference on Thailand Education for All (EFA) and the Salamanca Convention in 1994. This means that, at the time this and many other schools were built, there were no considerations for the inclusion of learners with special needs in a mainstream school setting. The authors believe that an intensified effort from school management and the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture is needed to ensure infrastructural adjustments of the school.

Haihambo Ya-Otto et al. (2009) found that students with disabilities were hindered from maximum participation in educational programmes by limiting infrastructures. Also, Ralejoe (2019) and Haihambo (2010) agree that infrastructural barriers are a main opponent of students with disabilities. In the same vein, findings of these studies are in line with those of the Ministry of Education (2008) that stresses that most of the schools' physical facilities are not accessible to persons with disabilities. The findings of this paper confirmed that the physical environment is a challenge to members of school management, because it makes learners with visual impairments dependent on the guidance of their sighted peers. School managers should ensure that no learner is excluded from mainstream schooling through inaccessible physical structures. The physical structures discussed can be adapted to suit learners with visual impairments.

4.1.3. Teacher Training

Out of the ten (10) participants which comprised six (6) teachers, three (3) heads of departments and one (1) principal, only three (3) teachers that did not receive training on inclusive education during their pre-service training. These partici-

pants cited some challenges related to training on inclusive education for learners with visual impairments in the school. Studies disclosed that a lack of training of staff was one of the major setbacks in any education policy implementation, including the inclusion of learners with visual impairments in a regular school system (Asamoah, Ofori-Dua, Cudjoe, Abdullah, & Nyarko, 2018; Human, 2010; Quest, 2014; Selepe, 2016; Sikanku, 2018). Management of inclusive schools will find it difficult to achieve the inclusive objectives if the staff members do not get continuous training on inclusive education and the obligation to support learners in participating and achieving their educational goals.

Although, the participants indicated a lack of training as a challenge, which agrees with Morelle and Tabane (2019), the problems lie in underlying beliefs that children with special needs should not be included in a mainstream school. Many role players in education have not yet made the shift from a strong special education system to an inclusive education system. Management should address this attitude by designing workshops to address attitudinal barriers and enhance the skills to teach inclusive class groups and address the problem. Teachers' reluctance to adapt the curriculum may be because of inadequate skills (Ralejoe, 2021). Management is challenged by the lack of capacity which may affect teachers' inputs and quality teaching of learners, particularly those that have visual disabilities. Despite some teachers having received training about general inclusive education during the professional teachers' training, they were of the opinion that such training was based on theories and has imparted no practical skills to read Braille as well as working with learners with visual impairments. A member of school management stated as follows:

“They could be put in categories according to visual acuity. Those who are partially sighted can be included in the mainstream while those who are blind could go to special schools because the mainstream school does not have enough teachers trained to take care of blind learners.”

The findings of this research are in line with Korir (2015), who argues that most teachers who are not trained to support learners with visual impairments are not in a position to give necessary support to learners. The research findings are thus demonstrating a common concern of teachers who were trained for general education and are expected to teach learners with special needs. It is, therefore, important for management of inclusive schools to invest in workshops that are likely to enhance teachers' confidence and skills in teaching learners with visual impairments. While it is true that the use of Braille is crucial for learners with visual impairments and teachers should be equipped with it, it is important to point out that the former special schools (now resource schools, have skilled personnel who could assist in skills transfer through collaborative approaches between and among schools). Teacher-education might not be the best place for teachers to acquire technical skills such as Braille. The management of inclusive schools could initiate such collaborations between themselves and adjacent resource schools to enhance skills transfer and reward such skills (both for the trainers and trainees) in non-monetary forms.

4.1.4. Class Size

Quality education can be achieved when a teacher is able to give differentiated attention to learners with diverse learning abilities. Therefore, quality of education may be hampered by the high learners-teacher ratio. In some classes, there were 35 learners, including three or four learners with visual impairments. In fact, one participant indicated how they were hampered by large class size to learn effectively. The study reiterates that the teacher-learner ratio may impact negatively on effective teaching and learning for all learners. The classroom and its social and academic dynamics should be adapted to allow the learner with visual impairment an opportunity for meaningful participation and interaction with their teachers and classmates. If this process fails, it leads to power imbalances in the classroom dynamics whereby learners with disabilities are reduced to defendants. The combination of lack of resources and large classrooms fuel this problem and pose a threat to social inclusion. Teachers may not be able to give individualised attention to learners with diverse abilities. In line with the findings of this paper, some studies confirm that a large class size always poses insurmountable challenges to effective teaching (Dakwa, 2014; Makunja, 2016; Ogunbiyi, 2012; Tubaundule, 2014). Similarly, Josua (2013) and Sikanku (2018) state that overcrowded class groups make it difficult for the general classroom teacher to cope with learners on a daily basis and to give individual attention to learners with visual impairments.

Studies reveal that education is likely to succeed in schools with small class sizes (Nakale, 2017; Selepe, 2016; Tubaundule, 2014). The findings revealed that learners with visual impairments experienced difficulties due to large class sizes in which teachers did not have the time or the correct positioning to thoroughly explain concepts to them. Therefore, management of the school is challenged to find alternative ways of teaching overcrowded inclusive classes.

4.1.5. Instructional Materials

For inclusive education to be fully realised, classrooms should have teaching and learning strategies and resources that can facilitate participation in learning for all learners. Emvula (2007) states that it is a challenge to acquire these assistive technologies because they are expensive. This paper confirms that school management found that assistive devices were expensive. The literature states that the cost involved in acquiring these assistive technologies for learners with visual impairments is more expensive than any other types of technology (Cloete, 2002; Emvula, 2007). The Ministry of Education (2008) cited economic barriers towards inclusion in education, arguing that all legislations and policies cannot be realised if there is no budgetary allocation for the specific inclusion reasons. The members of school management are challenged to find money to buy the instructional devices that can aid effective teaching and learning (see response from a member of school management):

“The management ends up frustrated, if the school wants to buy certain devices for learners the school is asked to submit three quotations. There are times

when the device needed is only provided by one organisation in the country.”

Challenges of school management in the process of procuring assistive devices is the standard procedure in which one is expected to provide three (3) quotations before the purchase is done. That process takes time and it affects the timely delivery of the much-needed devices. For example, when there is only one supplier of a device, the process of getting the other two quotations may be tedious. When management procures the devices, they were not timely delivered, subsequently impacting negatively on effective teaching and learning as well the progress of learners, leaving them frustrated.

The research observation found that the school library, although well-resourced for the ordinary learners, lacked sufficient resources from which learners with severe visual impairments could benefit maximally. This supports [Ralejoe \(2021\)](#), who argues that learners with visual impairments have inadequate resources at their disposal that impedes effective and quality teaching and learning. The lack of adequate resources for learners with severe visual impairments in the library impacts the learning. An observation made in the library confirmed that there was no learner with visual impairments found in the library. This could be attributed to the lack of resources and the lack of social inclusion in the library environment. For instance, a dictionary is a learning support tool; but if it is not available in Braille for blind learners (see [Dakwa, 2014](#); [Ralejoe, 2019](#)), they will struggle to find the meanings of words or definitions. However, the school at the time of the study only had two partially sighted learners and there was no immediate need to have brailled instructional materials. The challenge to management is to supply the library with various resources that academically support learners with visual impairments.

Although computers with Job Access With Speech (JAWS) programme are available at the school, these facilities are not accessible to learners with visual impairments all the time. The JAWS is a computer programme that gives voice-feedback when one types and also allows one to print in Braille. Management locks these facilities in a safe room as an effective monitoring strategy to keep the devices secured in the computer laboratory which is fitted with a security alarm system. This leads to a situation whereby learners with visual impairments have no access to these learning facilities and hampers effective teaching and learning ([Ralejoe, 2021](#); [Sikanku, 2018](#)).

An observation made on facilities in the resource room for learners with visual impairments found that only one of the two video-magnifying machines that enlarge print for people with low vision called Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) was available for use by learners with visual impairments. If one learner is using the CCTV the other one has to choose to do something else that does not require the aid of a CCTV. This negatively impacts their learning progress. This is a challenge to management, who should play a role of assets management, to see that the parts of the technological devices are kept safe and that learners benefit maximally from these devices.

4.1.6. Choices of Subjects in the Curriculum

It was found that some subjects in the senior secondary phase curriculum are not suitable for learners with visual impairments. Subjects such as Physical Science and Agriculture are not compatible because learners are expected to do observation from the practical assessment activities. Learners with severe visual impairments cannot make the observations because they cannot see, unless the activities are presented in audio-kinesthetic formats. Although partially sighted learners are able to do observations with the help of assistive devices, they too are often advised by their teachers to rather not venture into those subjects. This has a negative implication for their future careers. The school management can interrupt this generalization and facilitate the process of demystifying the perceptions that partially sighted learners cannot do Agriculture and Physical Science (Higher Level).

The restrictions of learners with visual impairments to so-called soft-subjects is confirmed by Human (2010) by stating that learners with visual impairments really struggle with subject choices especially subjects such as Science, Biology and other practical subjects. On the other hand, from a human rights and inclusive models of disability's point of view, persons with disabilities should be provided with a conducive environment to pursue any career they wish to follow, rather than being discouraged to do so. In a full-inclusion model, the needs of all learners should be met to ensure equity. The restriction of learners with visual impairments from taking some subjects is a challenge to management because the learners also have rights to choose which subjects could lead them to the promising careers that they may want to pursue. A member of school management said the following:

“Yes, there are restrictions in subjects such as those with a lot of drawings and sketches, are not really good for learners with visual impairments”.

Learners with visual impairments are currently restricted from taking some subjects because teachers cannot adapt the curriculum and the Directorate of National Examination and Assessment (DNEA) is equally rigid about the adaptation of the curriculum. Ralejoe (2019) observes, in Lesotho, the rigidness and ambiguous Braille question papers in terms of diagrams which learners with visual impairments struggle to read. The regulation from Directorate of National Examination and Assessment restricts learners with visual impairments from taking Physical Science (Advance Level) and Agriculture because it has the practical activities. Some restrictions are caused by a lack of properly trained teachers in teaching subjects such as Mathematics to learners with visual impairments in an inclusive classroom. The school management faces resistance from learners with visual impairments when they are trying to convince them to take alternative subjects.

4.1.7. Inclusion of Learners with Visual Impairments in Social Activities

Participation of children with disabilities in social activities such as sports programmes promotes physical, emotional, and social well-being (Ralejoe, 2021).

This paper found that some teachers felt that learners with visual impairments were not properly included in social programmes. It seems teachers are concerned more about academic inclusion of learners with visual impairments. Other studies support the finding that learners with visual impairments are often excluded from sport and other social activities (Dakwa, 2014; Zulch-Knouwds, 2010). One member of school management made the following comment:

“There is also a challenge of socialisation, because learners with visual impairments cannot really find friends, especially if one is not really active. For example, some girls with visual impairments only hang alone, while the boys that are talkative mingle very well with sighted learners.”

There is an indication from the responses in this section that some participants were not sure if learners with visual impairments have some social activities in the school. This implies that both teachers and members of management did not realize the importance participation of learners with visual impairments in social activities. While this is the case, responses from all six learners indicated that the learners with visual impairments are accommodated in social programmes of the school. While social inclusion is crucial for all children and youth, especially during adolescence, the management of this school would not be in a position to monitor, nor prioritize such process if they are not aware of the current status.

Learners with partial visual impairments were observed taking part in sport activities just like their peers without visual impairments. This seems to support the agency of learners regarding the social inclusion of learners with visual impairments. This could be attributed to the fact that learners seem to care more about the social wellbeing of their colleagues than teachers. Learners with severe visual impairments found it difficult to participate in games such as ball games as they did not feel safe. The issue of recreation provision, and specifically sport is one challenge that management has to address to ensure the social inclusion of learners with visual impairments. Management is expected to play a significant role in ensuring social inclusion of all learners at the school. Management can arrange with experts in inclusive education to train staff members. While the management realises these negative consequences, they have a challenge of changing people’s mind-set in order to increase their participation in making sport accessible to learners with visual impairments. This is a challenge that management should overcome because there are no teachers trained to handle sports activities for people with disabilities. Also, if the participation of learners with visual impairments in sport activities is not facilitated appropriately, it can exacerbate intolerance and divisiveness amongst peers (Dahre, 2010).

4.2. Measures to Address the Social and Academic Challenges

This part discusses the findings on measures put in place by management to accommodate learners with visual impairments in social and academic programmes of the school. The discussion starts with the measures put in place to accommodate learners with visual impairments in social and then academic programmes

of school.

4.2.1. Measures to Address Social Challenges

The study found that the school did not have specific measures in place to accommodate learners with visual impairments in the social programmes. It is found that participation of learners with visual impairments in social activities was voluntary because they have to choose which activities can accommodate them. The participation of learners with visual impairments creates interaction between learners with visual impairments and their peers without visual impairments. If this is neglected, it may lead to isolation of learners with visual impairments, which extends further to society.

The study found that there were a number of social groups and sport codes in the school. None of these social groups and sport codes is specifically tailored for learners with visual impairments. One of the two partially sighted learners was observed taking part in the choir of the Bible Study group while the other one was found playing football with the peers without visual impairments. Despite the fact that there are no social programmes specifically tailored for learners with visual impairments, the findings provided some evidence that the learners with visual impairments were accommodated in some of the social programmes of the school. The participation of learners with visual impairments is coincidental, unplanned and lacks support from teachers due to lack of skills to support learners with visual impairments in social activities. The coincidental participation of learners with visual impairments brings respect from their abled peers. A whole-school approach will be needed to redress this arrangement where the schools robe in services from multi-disciplinary agents to complement in terms of services and resources when the school lacks expertise.

4.2.2. Measures to Address Academic Challenges

The management of the school has a responsibility to ensure that all learners are included in the academic programmes of the school. This study found that measures have been put in place to address the academic challenges in an inclusive school. In an effort to address the shortage of expertise, the school management facilitated the recruitment of a resource teacher from a special school to support the teaching and learning of learners with visual impairments. The resource teacher was requested by the school to come on board after the expert who assisted with the piloting of inclusion left the school. This teacher transcribes and makes magnified copies of the notes, class tests, examinations, class-work, and homework exercises. The role of the resource teacher at the school enhances inclusion by ensuring that the activities of learners with visual impairments are timely prepared. If the resource teacher was not at the school, the situation would have been difficult, because teachers do not have the skills to use the assistive technology to prepare the activities of learners with visual impairments. What lacked in this process is the sharing of responsibilities and procedures of transfer of services from the resource teacher to the regular classroom teachers.

In addition, the school has acquired a number of resources ranging from hardware and software devices and equipment. This agrees with [Emvula \(2007\)](#), who listed the assistive devices acquired by the school. Some of the equipment and software were bought by the school, while others were donated. They are used to ensure that optimal teaching and learning for learners with visual impairments is taking place. Another measure to facilitate the inclusion of learners with visual impairments is the time for assessment activities of learners with visual impairments. The time should be double the normal time of the assessment activities for learners without visual impairments. For example, if learners with visual impairments are taking a listening assessment activity someone must be on standby to stop and rewind the tape. Learners with visual impairments are given the privilege to listen to the activity twice. According to Directorate of National Examination and Assessment regulations, writing a content examination paper additional time of up to 25% for most of the candidates with visual impairments is provided. In severe cases of visual impairments those learners with Braille papers may require 100% additional time. These regulations were not adhered to in the inclusive school. For example, when learners with visual impairments wrote a test during normal period, they were confined to write a test within the forty-five minutes of the lesson period. These findings necessitate that workshops regarding concessions for learners with visual impairments need to be arranged for teachers and learners.

5. Conclusion

The main objective of the paper was to explore the challenges facing members of school management of an inclusive school for learners with visual impairments. Regarding the perceptions and views of inclusion of learners with visual impairments, all learners, teachers with the exception of one, all heads of department and the principal have indicated that the inclusion of learners with visual impairments was a “good” practice. This indicates that some participants held positive views with regard to inclusion of learners with visual impairments in a regular school. Members of school management have to address these negative attitudes at the school level so that it does not affect learning.

The findings of this study concluded that the physical makeup of the school posed a challenge to the inclusion of learners with visual impairments. Buildings were not constructed to accommodate learners with visual impairments. Also, learners with visual impairments experienced difficulties due to large class sizes in which teachers do not have the time or correct positioning to thoroughly explain concepts to them. The management has to deal with the challenge of lack of trained staff in inclusive education. Some teachers had undergone training on general inclusive education at the time of their training for professional qualification. The training they went through was not specific to inclusive education for learners with visual impairments. The inclusive education course curriculum offered at teachers’ training institutions did not deal extensively with issues of

inclusion of learners with visual impairments such as in-depth skills development in Braille. That has resulted in teachers' reliance on the resource teacher who transcribes the activities into Braille and back to ordinary writing. The resource teacher does not find adequate time to transcribe the work of learners with visual impairments due to high demand and teaching workload. In-service training is crucial to upskill teachers in the education of learners with visual impairments in inclusive schools.

In order to have effective teaching and learning taking place there should be instructional materials accompanied by assistive devices. Most of these assistive devices are hard to get due to the high costs. Also, the research hinted at the fact that assistive devices are not readily available on the local market. Members of school management can arrange for exchange and sharing of instructional resources between mainstream schools and special or resource schools in the same circuit, constituency or region. This study found that there is a challenge related to restricting or barring learners with visual impairment from taking some subjects in the curriculum, which is subjected to lack of skills to teach subjects. The regulation from Directorate of National Examination and Assessment restricts learners with visual impairments from taking subjects that have practical examinations. Instead of developing resources that would enable learners with visual disabilities to access all subjects, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture resorts to exclusion. This matter needs further exploration and solutions are best found within the parameters of inclusive education and social justice.

This study had mixed findings regarding the inclusion of learners with visual impairments in social programmes. Teachers and members of school management felt that learners with visual impairments are not properly included in social programmes. On the contrary, learners believe that learners with visual impairments are fairly included in social activities. This could be attributed to the fact that learners see their peers participating in social activities more often than teachers or perhaps teachers seem to care more about academic inclusion than social inclusion. The study also found that there are challenges regarding academic inclusion. These challenges could be a result of a lack of skills amongst teachers, background of learners with visual impairments and Directorate of National Examination and Assessment regulation requirements. Members of school management could arrange for skills exchange with special and inclusive schools. They could also have in-house training conducted by the resource teacher to train other teachers on how to use the assistive devices.

6. Summary of Findings

In summary, this study unveiled some social realist constrains that are experienced by school management of an inclusive school for learners with visual impairments. The constrains range from negative attitudes among stakeholders, the infrastructures that are not accommodating learners with visual impairments and high teacher-learner ratio. The latter burdens teachers from providing indi-

vidual attention to learners. The lack of skills among teaching staff as well as teaching and learning resource deficiency hinders effective teaching and learning for learners with visual impairment in the mainstream school context. Lastly, the restrictions from accessing some components in the curriculum are academic exclusion. Furthermore, the study proposed some interventions to the identified hindrances in order to promote effective inclusion of learners with visual impairment in a mainstream school setting. The remedies are such as continuous in-service training, providing funds to address the infrastructural and instructional resources challenges, and encouraging visits and exchange of best practices by inclusive education specialists. Also, inclusive school should forge working relationship with resource schools. There is a need to review policies that guide inclusion to direct the effective inclusion improvement strategy.

7. Recommendations

The study found that the management of the school made a number of interventions to ensure full-inclusion of learners with visual impairments, what the school has achieved is more of an alternative to raising achievements in the learning and teaching environment. The school has achieved more integration than full-inclusion. The integration approach prioritises learners with visual impairments' access to education while in an inclusion approach, rendering of support to learners with visual impairments in mainstream settings is obligatory.

Based on the findings of this research, the paper made the following recommendations. First, the school management should liaise with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to ensure the implementation of low a teacher-pupil ratio in an inclusive class to guarantee optimal teaching and learning. Second, it is recommended that this situation calls for school management to explore other options to address infrastructural adjustment if they are to do justice to inclusive education drive in their school. Third, it is recommended that an intensified effort from school management is needed to ensure infrastructural adjustments of the school. Lastly, the school could foster interagency and cross-agency collaborations to help them in skills development as well as resource development, monitoring and collaboration of their inclusive education targets.

There are issues that arose from this paper that are not comprehensively addressed. Therefore, the paper recommended the following further research. First, research should be conducted to assess how the resources allocated by Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture impact effective management of an inclusive school for learners with visual impairments. Last, further study should be conducted to assess the post-policy social realist constrains and enabling mechanisms to an inclusive school setting to enable empirical data to speak.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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