

TOWARDS PUBLIC POLICY REFORM IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION INVOLVING CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND OTHER LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

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The paper reviewed on the challenges associated with the delivery of education to students with special needs with a particular focus on students with intellectual disability (ID) and other learning difficulties (LD) in Zimbabwe. The area of special needs education had been neglected by government since independence in 1980 as the review shall demonstrate. Emphasis was focused on mainstream education which registered phenomenal growth in quantitative and qualitative terms. Although the Zimbabwe Education Act provides for the right of every child to school education in line with the Constitution of Zimbabwe, there were many limitations on government which prevented the implementation of this noble national objective. The new Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act, 2013 under Chapter 4, section 75 prescribes a basic right to state-funded education, including adult basic education but the letter and spirit of this constitutional provision had not been implemented with respect to the education of disabled children. Education of persons with disability had been addressed by a general education law, that is Education Act(Chapter 25:04) which applies to mainstream education and the Disabled Persons Act (Chapter 17:01) in the absence of a Special Needs Education Act. Although the Zimbabwe government adopted and implemented a policy of inclusive education, in reality the policy was inclusive by default, rather than by design due to limited human, material, financial and infrastructural resources to cater for children with special needs. This article explores the current state of special needs education in Zimbabwe as the basis for policy intervention.

Keywords: Policy reform, special needs education, intellectual disability, learning difficulties

The challenges involving special needs education (SNE) in Zimbabwe are overwhelming and the study explored the shortcomings with a view to recommending policy reforms in line with regional and international best practices and the letter and spirit of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The review was carried

out over four months in the Harare Metropolitan Province of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Using questionnaires and interviews as review instruments, the researcher collected data from education policy implementers, academics who train teachers at teachers' training colleges, teachers involved in special needs education at primary and secondary levels, headmasters/school administrators, parents of children with special needs and support groups and volunteers involved in sport development programs for children with special needs. Secondary sources of data on special needs education in the region and internationally were also used with a view to integrating and broadening the knowledge base on SNE from other countries and how such knowledge may be used to enhance analysis of collected primary data as a strategy to tackle policy interventions and planned change. The overall aim of such a review strategy was to ensure that whatever public policy reform recommended for Zimbabwe's SNE is not only rooted in structural changes involving changes in structures, policies, principles and procedures but also regenerative values that promote interaction, inclusivity and attitudinal change between children and adults with different learning abilities.

In order to contextualize the review, key concepts are defined to illuminate the study. Special needs education, in a general sense, is that education which is meant to meet the learning needs of children with various types of learning difficulties (LD). The Ireland White Paper (1993) argued that special needs may emanate from general learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disturbances, language and communication difficulties and disorders, and physical and sensory disorders. Choruma (2007) categorised the types of disabilities which need to be factored in SNE as those children with speech impairment, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical impairment, mentally challenged, polio victims, amputees, paraplegia and albinos.

The aim of SNE is to ensure that children with learning difficulties realise their full potential as unique individuals by accessing appropriate curriculum which gives practical effect to their constitutional rights. Inclusive education was defined by Rogers (1993, p. 1) as "the commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child...and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students)". The idea of inclusive education is to ensure that students with special needs will be placed in the same classroom environment as other students of their age who do not have special needs (Smith, Polloway, Patten, & Dowdy, 2011). The rationale is to ensure that children with special needs may, through inclusion, develop friendships with peers, belong to a group which increases their self-esteem than those isolated and reduce tension and stereotypes about their disability.

REVIEW OUTCOMES

Special needs education in Zimbabwe is managed by a section within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the section has a national mandate. SNE section is poorly manned and inadequately resourced. The section falls under a department headed by a director who is deputised by two deputy directors responsible for psychology services and special needs. Above the director is a principal director with a broad integrative mandate in quality assurance, infant education, learner welfare services, psychological services, special needs education and junior education. The structure outlined above does not give special needs education the national focus envisaged in constitutional provisions. In fact, the configuration of special needs education in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's organisational structure has the effect of trivialising its national mandate. The degree to which attention is given to problems, ideas, innovations and decision making relating to special needs education (SNE) is highly compromised due to fragmentation of organisational units and the low ranking of SNE in such a structure. Therefore, instead of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education attending to the several challenges relating to SNE, a lot of attention is spent on hierarchy serving in line with role-boundedness. For example, the principal director responsible for SNE has a multiple mandate which overshadows the SNE mandate and in an effort to fulfil the assigned organisational responsibilities, the principal director is likely to dilute or neglect core competencies of SNE at the expense of the public interest as defined by the constitution.

SNE in Zimbabwe does not have a legal framework or Act of Parliament guiding its operations. Most of the practices relating to SNE emanate from the Constitution of Zimbabwe which does not specify SNE as such but articulates the rights to education for every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe. Chapter 4, part 2, section 75(1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No.20 Act, 2013 stipulates that 'every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has a right to a basic State-funded education, including adult basic education'. The constitution under section 75, subsection 4 stipulates that 'the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within the limits of the resources available to it, to achieve the progressive realisation of this right'. The education rights in the constitution are also reinforced by the right to human dignity in section 51 and the right to equality and non-discrimination in section 56. Chapter 2, section 22, subsections 1 – 4 of the constitution obliges all state institutions and government agencies at every level to recognise the rights of persons with physical or mental disabilities and to assist such disabled people to achieve their full potential and to minimise the disadvantages suffered by them. Chapter 1, section 6(4) of the constitution also promotes the advancement and use of sign language and the creation of conditions for its development. The Education Act (Chapter 25:04) which is a general education law and the Disabled Persons Act (Chapter 17:01) had also been incorporated to guide SNE in the absence of a

specific legislation on SNE. The Education Act (Chapter 25:04) allows every child a right to education whereas the Disabled Persons Act (Chapter 17:01) is a “claim rights” to non-discrimination of disabled persons. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education had also contributed to the administrative framework of SNE by developing a plethora of circulars which were used to manage SNE. They include the following:

- CEO’s circular no.12 of 1987 on Remedial Programme
- CEO’s circular no.3 of 1989 on Curriculum SPED
- Secretary of Education circular no.36 of 1990 on Special Class Placement
- Secretary of Education circular no.2 of 2000 on inclusion of Albinism
- Director of Education circular no.24 of 2001 relating to examination considerations for learners with disabilities
- Secretary of Education circular no.7 of 2005 relating to inclusion of learners with disabilities
- ZIMSEC Examination circular no.21 of 2014 relating to language modification for Grade 7 candidates with deafness

The picture emerging from these various policy directives is that of an institutional framework which lacks clearly laid out policies for use in administering SNE. This haphazard approach to policy making which utilises a reactive rather than a proactive approach to problem identification and resolution does not help society to understand the various activities involved in policy making concerning SNE and whether such policies are legitimate or popular. In the absence of a proper public policy framework involving aspects such as problem identification, agenda setting, formulation, legitimisation (through parliamentary approval and the courts in some cases), implementation and evaluation, it becomes difficult to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of such policies and their universal acceptance by the beneficiaries and society at large.

A proper policy framework will help to address the ill-defined model of inclusive education in Zimbabwe especially in terms of its formulation and implementation. A national policy on SNE should also specify what constitutes inclusive education and the criteria to be used by education authorities to place disabled children in special classes since not all disabled children should be placed in special classes.

The review also discovered that there was no curriculum specific to SNE in Zimbabwe because such an approach is considered exclusionary and defeats the inclusive approach. Various methodologies are used as part of individualised education plans with more practicals in some cases. The general curriculum used by all children, which is targeted at average students, is watered down to suit the needs of disabled children. Children with intellectual disability are expected to do more practical subjects and less theoretical subjects. However, the practice in some schools in Harare is to teach all subjects (8 – 9 subjects at high school) which is really an exercise in futility as most children will be unable to cope.

There is too much emphasis on academic improvement at the expense of training and development programmes for a life-time career.

Experience elsewhere in the region and internationally show that most countries have curriculum specific to SNE while at the same time implementing inclusive education programmes. For example countries such as South Africa and Kenya have demonstrated that Zimbabwe is lagging behind in terms of developing an appropriate curriculum for SNE. The two countries have clearly defined policy guidelines and standards on SNE curriculum. Zimbabwe does not have a policy framework which guides curriculum development for SNE and any reform agenda should look at that as a matter of urgency. The Zimbabwe government must provide a general standardised curriculum for SNE which would form the basis of modifications to suit the peculiar needs of learners. Such an arrangement would help in supervising schools, teachers, administrators and volunteers in pursuit of quality assurance.

A major disturbing feature of special classes is some areas is that children with different disabilities like intellectual disability, autism, cerebral palsy, and epilepsy are put in the same class due to lack of special facilities for the different categories. The Schools Psychological Services and the Special Needs Education Sections which are represented at Head Office, Regional and District levels of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education are involved in providing services for learners with disabilities. The sections also diagnose conditions of such children and refer them to appropriate schools depending on the severity of their conditions. However, in practice, parents may fail to enrol their children at schools referred due to the long distances involved and in some cases due to the high cost of facilities at such schools. Parents end up placing their children in inappropriate classes due to these challenges which may be beyond their control. A good example is St Giles School which has a special class backed by physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, doctors and nurses but parents find it difficult to access those services for their children because they are expensive.

Another challenge is that teachers in classes having children with different disabilities are overwhelmed by some students who require a lot of attention especially those suffering from autism. An SNE teacher in a government school may have between 17 – 20 students with different conditions and this could complicate the learning process. Private schools like Gateway are more resourced and they have teachers and assistants who help them to deliver learning processes in their small classes and resource centres. Private schools are generally doing better than government schools in terms of delivering SNE because they are more resourced in terms of teachers, teaching assistants, materials and infrastructure. However, the provision of SNE in private schools need to be regulated to contain greedy educationists who may capitalise on the desperation of parents to charge exorbitant fees which may not be in line with the services provided.

The other shortcoming of SNE in Zimbabwe is that there are no formal national examinations specific to children completing grade 7, Form 4 or Form 6 as they are expected to sit formal examinations which applies to children in mainstream education. Due to the academic or intellectual limitations of some of the children, they write those formal national examinations for the purpose of continuation to the next level and fail all the subjects. Other children will simply ignore the examinations as a way of managing a potential life-time embarrassment and withdraw from the school. Some students apply to the national examination authority, the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC), for examination consideration so that they get extra time, rest and sign language facilities to enable them to participate in formal examinations. The objective is to ensure that these examinations are accessible to SNE children without compromising the quality of examinations. This examination system should be revisited to establish whether it is appropriate for SNE in the twenty-first century. Many SNE students who graduate from these schools with no academic national certificate find that the exit strategy from the school system is painful with no certificate to show for the several years in the primary and secondary education system. Future SNE policy reviews should focus on how students in this category could benefit from skills training and development programs which lead to national certification through practice, without necessarily involving academic assessment especially in cases of intellectual disability.

A key area for urgent reform established by the review is that SNE was offered mainly at primary level up to Grade 7 and at very few secondary schools thereafter. The effect of this set-up is that many children with special needs drop out of school after completing primary level due to lack of access to secondary places. Those who manage to go beyond primary level have to join secondary school SNE classes which may be far removed from their neighborhood and this defeats the purpose of inclusive education which involves bringing support services to the child, in a school or classroom he or she would not otherwise attend. Children who fail to secure appropriate secondary SNE facilities for their needs end up enrolling in some of the least performing classes at secondary schools near them. Such classes are considered “de facto” special classes because the majority of the children will be struggling to master academic studies. Teachers of such classes do not apply themselves fully due to the weak academic performance of the children. The government should roll out a network of SNE schools at secondary level to overcome this national problem.

The other shortcoming of the current SNE is that there is only one teacher’s college-United College of Education (UCE) offering a diploma in SNE. The diploma does not have a component of secondary education training. The implication is that most SNE teachers in Zimbabwe who teach in secondary schools are from this primary education program and they are expected to teach all the academic subjects offered in secondary school special classes. In contrast, teachers in the secondary mainstream classes are subject specialists who teach only those subjects they will have specialized in at teachers colleges. It is

imperative for government to look at this area of apparent neglect. In addition, teachers with SNE diplomas are specialists who study an extra one year specialization in SNE after the three year teacher's diploma qualification. For this extra effort, SNE teachers used to get a professional allowance for this qualification but it has since been removed by the government. The consequence of this government move caused teachers to shun this SNE training program thus compounding an existing shortage of teachers in this area at primary and secondary levels. At other teachers colleges there is a casual component of SNE in their programs which may or may not be examinable. Since a college system is examination oriented, anything not examinable is given least priority.

The review also established that most headmasters/education administrators at schools do not have the competencies to supervise SNE teachers because they lack the academic and practical knowledge to do so. As a result, SNE teachers can neglect their duties and the administrators will not be in a position to establish cases of dereliction of duty. Parents and children will be the victims of such neglect. Administrators do not appreciate the magnitude of the challenges and when SNE teachers ask for support or assistance in their areas they may be asking for trouble. Administrators therefore need appropriate in-service training to enable them to supervise their subordinates efficiently and effectively.

Furthermore, the Schools Psychological Services (SPS) are not being adequately funded to enable implementation of outreach programs in communities, schools, colleges and rehabilitation centers. SPS has a critical role relating to in-service teacher training, teacher assessment and making relevant recommendations and providing guidance and counselling to teachers and parents of children with special needs. Additionally, SPS needs to be empowered to assess various types of disabilities and to be able to recommend appropriate deployments and to follow-up such deployments to ensure the children are coping with the environment before it is too late to overcome learning difficulties. Furthermore, educational psychologists in some cases lack teaching qualifications and experience which is crucial in managing SNE teachers and this could easily be addressed by in-service training and development programs. Unless adequate government budgetary support is provided, it would be very difficult to respond to the diverse needs of SNE.

The review also established that there are no funds earmarked for SNE in the national budget. Although the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) funding used to provide money to assist some aspects of SNE, this has since stopped since government ran out of money from Treasury for the purpose. Due to the strained political and economic relations between Zimbabwe and key western countries and international financial institutions and NGOs who have traditionally funded BEAM, it has been difficult for government to get funding for such a worthy cause.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

SNE in Zimbabwe had been neglected since independence and government should take a proactive approach to ensure that disabled children enjoy their rights as enshrined in the constitution of Zimbabwe. The government of Zimbabwe should acknowledge, in words and deeds, that something fruitful can come out of these children if a national education, training and development strategy is developed for them. The following measures are being recommended to the government of Zimbabwe to address the several challenges identified in this review:

A strategy for policy reform should be a priority in order to establish an all-inclusive, competent, accountable SNE strategy for Zimbabwe. A strategy on SNE should aim at introducing the required structural changes and the implementation mechanism that should be guided by SNE policy, principles, procedures and the regenerative values of inclusivity, interaction and attitudinal change. Such a strategy should be in line with the requirements of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No.20 Act, 2013; the Education Act (Chapter 25:04), the Disabled Persons Act (Chapter 17:01), Child Protection and Adoption Act (Chapter 5:06), Social Welfare Assistance Act (Chapter 17:06) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which Zimbabwe ratified in 2013. All these legal instruments aim at promoting an inclusive society and how to serve children with learning difficulties. A strategy for policy reform should therefore emanate from the legal framework of the country on disability issues. Furthermore, a national strategy should also be informed by a national survey on the nature and extent of SNE that needs to be addressed. The formulation of strategy on SNE should include disabled people, especially at planning level, to ensure that the strategy is properly targeted in terms of issues at stake especially the appropriateness of education, training and development programs.

A legal framework of SNE should be drafted by government following consultations with SNE practitioners, education administrators, lecturers, teachers, educational psychologists, students, parents and community volunteers. The legal framework should address issues of inclusiveness, human rights, accessibility, affordability, accountability, negative attitudes from institutions of learning and work, family and community stereotypes, anxiety of educators, students and parents, curriculum development and review, issues of management and co-ordination, support, leadership, financing, the use of information and communications technology (ICT) by children, and capacity building for SNE at local/ward level, district level, provincial level and national level. The framework of partnerships and collaboration with various stakeholders in educating children with special needs must be outlined for the sake of role clarity. Specifically, SNE policy which is codified in the legal framework should outline the following issues which are critical in any policy making process; how SNE policy is made, problem identification and agenda setting using the bottom-up or top-down approach, how the policy is formulated, the policy legitimization

process through parliament, policy implementation and policy evaluation processes. The legal framework of SNE should emanate from the constitution and reinforce other legislative frameworks on disability issues. The SNE legislation should also be in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which Zimbabwe ratified in 2013. Regional and international best practices should also be incorporated subject to Zimbabwe's capability to follow such practices.

Zimbabwe must amend the Disabled Persons Act (Chapter 17:01) so that it goes beyond its "claim rights" mandate by giving it an overhead policy mandate to guide and monitor for compliance with the law by numerous national actors involved in disability issues. For example, in China, government had established a quota system that requires all public and private employers to reserve no less than 1.5% of job opportunities for people with disabilities. Those companies failing to meet the quota system are required to pay a fee to the Disabled Persons Employment Security Fund which uses the money to facilitate vocational training and job placement services for the disabled persons (Zhang, 2007). Organizations can also be given tax incentives for employing disabled persons and in all cases, Disabled Persons Authorities and Tax Authorities can be used to monitor compliance with the law and to recommend appropriate measures were necessary.

SNE should be upgraded from a section to a division headed by a principal director to reflect its national mandate and to facilitate the various critical reforms which must be implemented at local, district, province and national levels in response to the neglect of SNE mandate since independence. Such reforms can only take place when national structures are strategically in place in conformity with the expectation of the constitution of Zimbabwe. A change program of this nature requires national support in material, financial and human resource terms backed by strategically placed change agents. The Zimbabwe government is advised, therefore, to overhaul the structure of SNE management at national level in order to realize the expectations of the constitution with respect to the education, training and development of children with special needs. Government could borrow from the experiences of some countries in the region such as South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Kenya who have positioned SNE at a strategically high level in the education sector. For example, Botswana has a Special Education Division which plans and oversees education of people with special needs.

A curriculum specific to SNE should be designed following wider consultations to fill the existing gap. A strategy on integrating such a curriculum to mainstream curriculum should be spelt out to ensure an inclusive, integrated system. The curriculum should articulate the content, structure, processes of learning and teaching and the expected knowledge and skills that children should acquire at the end of their studies. A curriculum development should also be linked to the professional development strategy of all educators and inspectors/supervisors to ensure that they are proficient in curriculum development, assessment, supervision, curriculum modification to suit the learning style of children and quality control.

Besides that, a funding strategy should be designed to ensure that special needs education is adequately funded through Treasury and donors. For example, Treasury may designate a certain percentage of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's annual budget towards SNE to ensure that resources for SNE are not diverted. This could be done for a specified period of say 20 years to ensure capacity building in areas such as the access and expansion of provision of SNE at local, district, provincial and national levels, and capacity building in all SNE national departments, advisory bodies, teachers' colleges and the upgrading of skills for current teachers, administrators and volunteers. In terms of donor funding, the government could negotiate with organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and other UN agencies, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), Germany Foundation for International Development (DSE), and Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Such organizations have played a very important supportive role during the post-war reconstruction of the education sector after independence and during the Government of National Unity in Zimbabwe between 2009 -2013. A framework of direct funding to SNE projects by donors could be an attractive proposition to donors until such time government is able to do it on its own. Government could play a co-ordinating role by identifying priority needs for funding.

A human resource development strategy for SNE practitioners should be designed. Such a strategy should ensure that Zimbabwe has all the professionals it needs in the country to tackle different types of disabilities. The specialists would then be used by the country to train the trainers and to implement quality assurance programs in public and private schools and institutes of training and development. Human resource development centers could be opened up in every province before being spread to all the districts to facilitate staff development at local level, development of techniques in screening, assessment, career guidance, and other general SNE skills which may be required. SNE specialists should be recognized and registered as practitioners and given an allowance as a way of attracting, motivating and retaining them in the profession. This is one way of luring back those practitioners who had relocated out of the country in search of greener pastures.

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, and Science and Technology in conjunction with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the Ministry/Department of Psychomotor Services, the Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Sports and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce should co-ordinate SNE education, training and development programs leading to vocational skills certification and employment creation or placement in public institutions under affirmative action programs and in the private sector where this may be possible. Government guaranteed soft loans could be given to successful students to start their businesses.

Programs on SNE should be introduced at all national universities and teachers' colleges to enable most schools and colleges, especially those in the

rural areas to access special needs education. Currently government is concentrating on providing SNE at primary level but only privileged students access it at secondary level due to lack of nation-wide facilities. Children in rural areas are being forced by lack of facilities to migrate to urban centers. The government should ensure that SNE modules in colleges and universities are not just taught but are examinable as well to ensure nation- wide application at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

A code of conduct for schools should be adopted to ensure that children are not unreasonably denied access to education due to their disability. The code should spell out the penalties applying to practitioners who wilfully discriminate and deny such children an educational opportunity. Such a code could be drawn up by the Zimbabwe government in conjunction with representatives of school administrators, lecturers and teachers, and parents. The Zimbabwe government should also contain the professional insensitivity of some schools who were attracting students with high grades in order to reflect their schools as centers of academic excellence at the expense of average or poor academic performers. Such schools deny poor performers the opportunity to develop their academic and practical skills according to their own intellectual capabilities. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's Secretary Award should also have a category for schools with a balanced curriculum, like Prince Edward school, that prepare students to excel in various disciplines such as art, music, sport and not just academic excellence alone as in many other schools. The Ministry of Education should, therefore, find a way of rewarding those schools contributing significantly to uplifting academically challenged children. A school's purpose, especially a public school, should be to educate all students regardless of their intellectual capabilities. A code of conduct could enforce this principle especially in public schools to ensure children with special needs are not left out of the education system.

Government should consider removing duties or taxes when SNE children buy or import learning equipment for use. This has the effect of removing the cost burden on parents and motivating them to educate such children. Some parents especially in rural areas prefer to hide their disabled children at home because of the stigma and discrimination associated with such children and more importantly due to the cost involved. Government could also consider subsidizing school fees for certain categories of disability such as intellectual disability, the blind, deaf and so forth because, in most cases, such children exit the school system with nothing to show for the fees they were paying which are the same as those of typical students. Value for money considerations should be factored in SNE. The primary responsibility for SNE should be that of government and where it is helped by private stakeholders, its role should be to provide standards and supervision to ensure value for money (Mutepe, 2007).

Government should create an institutional framework to allow parents to participate in the education and training of their children. Liaising with teachers, administrators, educational psychologists and volunteers, on a structured basis,

will help parents to plan for the education needs of their children. Parents lack basic knowledge about the condition of their children that may require regular monitoring by teachers and other experts in the education sector and how to access community or governmental resources to assist their children.

The review concludes by pointing out that the Zimbabwe government should chart a new way forward by supporting disability empowerment through SNE. The starting point for government is to come up with a well-structured and targeted public policy which addresses SNE challenges and creates equal opportunities for disabled children to have access to education, training, development and employment. The government of Zimbabwe also needs to appoint people with disabilities in positions of authority to facilitate focused planning, implementation and evaluation of SNE programs and projects at local, district, provincial and national levels. Above all, the strategies to address the shortcomings of special needs education in Zimbabwe will require the commitment of all stakeholders to succeed. Government as the leading stakeholder should provide decisive leadership, direction and the highest level of commitment, through public policy, to achieve the intended results. Funding is critical in realizing a nation- wide SNE application at all levels and the commitment of adequate financial, material and human resources from all sectors will facilitate this national objective. Special needs education for Zimbabwe should be crafted around the values of inclusivity, accessibility, affordability and human rights in line with the letter and spirit of the constitution of the country.

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