ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PROGRAMS FOR OUT OF SCHOOL FEMALE YOUTHS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN ZAMBIA

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Abstract

School related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV) is said to be psychological and is also gender based discrimination. To enhance inclusivity and reduce on violence, schools at all levels need to be accessible, learners need to participate in the school system and learners need to benefit from the school system in order for them to function positively and contribute to national sustainable development. Female youths with intellectual disabilities in Zambia faced many barriers to educational achievement. To date data was unavailable in the Educational Statistical Bulletin on what the out of school were doing. This cohort in the American education system include learners who take alternative assessment, exit secondary education with an alternative diploma or certificate of attendance and qualify to receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) until they are 21. In Zambia the situation is not the same; the majority of female youths with Intellectual Disabilities end up on the street after attaining age 16. Of all learners with disabilities those with Intellectual Disabilities have the poorest tertiary education outcomes. Until recently the opportunity to participate in typical course work has not been available to the majority of learners with intellectual Disabilities. The usual options have been limited to segregated life skills or community- based transition programs. Recommended options include; Mixed/hybrid model, substantially separate model and Inclusive individual support model. Inclusive tertiary education programs are beginning to replace such programs and have the potential to improve learner outcomes.

This case study therefore used a desk review to come up with literature that will support the topic. Reference was made to policies, legislation, Zambia’s experiences and articles from
Kenya, Uganda and South Africa. From these documents it was concluded that Zambia was inadequately providing alternative learning programs to the majority of out of school female youths with intellectual Disabilities thereby making them irrelevant to sustainable national development. A few who were provided for had acquired competencies and values to contribute to the human resource pool.

Key Concepts: Alternative Learning Program, Intellectual Disability, Out of School, Youth

1.0 Background

The alternative learning programs for female youths with Intellectual disabilities are either segregated models or Inclusive models. This is so because the policy on educating persons with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities embraces a twin track model. Learners in these programs are taught Health and Sexuality, Home Economics and Hospitality, Catering, Design, Cutting and Tailoring, Doormat making, House Keeping and Gardening. These courses are taught after the learners complete a primary course from Level 1 to Level 3. It is assumed that at the end of level 3 these learners have attained the age of 16 and this was called the 16+. Basically skills and values are taught. Currently there are 232,731 females aged between 16 and 18 years who are out-of-school in Zambia (Ministry of General Education, 2015). It is not clear how many of these are youths with Intellectual Disabilities. They needed skills training to empower them for independent living. The Persons with Disabilities Act number 6 of 2012 stipulates that pre-vocational and vocational training for persons with Intellectual disabilities should be provided in vocational and skills training institutions (Republic of Zambia, 2012). Therefore several institutions were providing this alternative learning program. The Ministry of Education, Science , Vocational Training and Early Education(2013) postulates that an alternative curriculum be developed for learners with Intellectual Disabilities in order to impart life long and survival skills. Furthermore, the training provides relevant and inclusive education and skills that will provide the youths with occupational skills for independence or employment within their community. Concerning accessibility, the United Nations Convention on Rights for Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Article 24 (5) (1998) states that; “states parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.”
Despite Zambia being a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities, the statistics show that, the majority of out of school youths with intellectual disabilities are still without training and employment. Education and training of persons with intellectual disabilities is supposed to be done both at primary and tertiary levels in trades training institutions. Unfortunately most trades training institutions mandated to offer vocational training were closed down when they were transformed into Education Management Boards. The reason advanced was that persons with intellectual disabilities were not able to meet training costs thereby rendering the vocational training programs not viable (Ndhlovu, 2010). However, even with the close down of Trade Training Institutions the Government of Zambia has established the National Vocation and Rehabilitation Center to train female youths with Intellectual Disabilities in Food Production. In addition, several vocational centers were doted around the country to offer similar skills. Among them are those run by Faith Based Organizations and other Civil Society organizations. The training considers reasonable accommodation and instead of 6 months it takes 3 years in an inclusive setting. Training is done in an individualized manner and one is assessed continuously until it is certain that they have mastered the skills. The youths that graduate but are not in employment go back to the institution to continue with the training as ongoing. Others have opened businesses with the support of parents who help them to market the products and others are employed by the same institutions. In addition the Ministry of youth and Sport offers youth empowerment funds to help the youth utilize their skills. In one institution they were under the sheltered workshop and Supported employment supported by the Finish Association on mental retardation (FAMR). The Ministry of Higher Education was piloting Inclusive Vocational Training in five Trade Training Institutions. There were 64 females in the program. Once evaluated, the program will be scaled down to all Trade Training Institutes throughout the country. The graduates from the alternative learning programs performed satisfactorily in the job market. It is a collaborative approach to making sure that no one is left behind.

2.0 Objectives of the study
i. To find out whether alternative learning programs were accessible to female youths with Intellectual Disabilities.
ii. To identify alternative learning programs for female youths with intellectual Disabilities in Zambia.

iii. To determine the effectiveness of the alternative learning programs on female youths with Intellectual Disabilities.

3.0 Implementation strategies

i. Ensure that youths with Intellectual disabilities are able to access inclusive vocational training without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.

ii. Use alternative learning programs to train female youths with Intellectual Disabilities in inclusive vocational training.

iii. Conduct monitoring and evaluation on alternative learning programs targeting vocational skills training for persons with Intellectual Disabilities.

4.0 Analysis and interpretation of results

4.1 Access to alternative learning programs by female youths with Intellectual Disabilities.

The case study was conducted in 7 institutions and the following were the enrolments for female youths with Intellectual disabilities only;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
<th>NUMBER ENROLLED(FEMALE)</th>
<th>COURSES OFFERED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bauleni</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Catering, Knitting and Weaving, General Agriculture, Tailoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Cheshire Home</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Home Economics and Hospitality, Design, Cutting and Tailoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Gelophina</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Catering, Home Economics and Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Muchinshi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gardening, Doormat making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>NVRC</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Food Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>SANI Foundation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Home management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>UTH Special</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Design, Cutting and Tailoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>134</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering the total number of out of school youths in Zambia, the figures in the table above are very small. This shows that the majority of female youths with Intellectual Disabilities were not accessing alternative learning programs after school. The few who are accessing this service are in urban areas and were progressing well
to the extent that they were employed and contributed to sustainable national development in an inclusive society.

4.2 Identified alternative learning programs for female youths with Intellectual Disabilities.

These programs were in inclusive settings practicing reasonable accommodation and positive discrimination. Below is the identified list of alternative learning programs:

- Fading support
- Individualized Education Program
- Integrated Supported Employment
- Internship
- Job Coaching
- Peer tutoring/tutorials
- Sheltered workshop

These programs begin in school were the curriculum allows for a two tier system, the academic and vocational career path way. The transition rate in this regard was low that is why the majority of females with Intellectual Disabilities were out of school. The out of school female youths in these programs were those with mild to moderate Intellectual disability and the twin track model was followed. Some were following the Inclusive model while others were in a segregated model like sheltered workshops. In the 7 institutions visited the programs listed above were identified. These programs were used to impart skills in the youths. The Technical Vocation and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) conducted alternative assessments and certification. Youths with Intellectual Disabilities had significant learning, cognitive and other conditions whose disability impacts their ability to access course content without a strong system of educational support services. These learners would not access tertiary education in a typical manner rather they require significant planning and collaboration to provide them with access, participation and benefit. With the above alternative program female youths with Intellectual Disabilities were able to acquire skills, values and morals on an equal basis with others without discrimination. The vision is to establish centers of excellence that create an enabling environment for young people, especially those with Intellectual Disabilities, provide holistic
education and life skills training, and so empowering them to take up a meaningful place in society.

4.3 Effectiveness of the alternative learning programs for female youths with Intellectual Disabilities.

Female youths with intellectual Disabilities need support since they can literally do nothing in a competitive setting. The alternative learning programs improves employment outcomes over 1-2 years by; improving the self-esteem, developing hope, creating relationships and controlling substance abuse. It is more effective over the long term benefits lasting beyond the first one to two years. The programs augment Individual Placement and Support. Learning becomes a continuous process. A collaborative Inclusion model was ideal in that parents, community and the female youths were involved in the training. The support in this collaborative arrangement was ideal. In the end the female youths access quality skills training, participate in the training and economic growth and benefit as individuals, family and community. This qualifies the alternative Learning programs to be effective.

5.0 Lessons Learnt

5.1 Policy reform

The Education and Skills development legislation and policies of Zambia should reflect what is in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Persons with Disabilities Act number 6 of 2012 and the National Policy on Disability of 2015. It is from these documents that the Education Act and the National policy on Education should get its strength.

5.2 Strategic Planning

Following the Sustainable Development Goal number 4 which stresses inclusivity, it should be clear that this is an inclusive society and no one should be left behind. The Seventh National Development Plan for Zambia demonstrates this inclusivity in the following; no one left behind, equality and inclusive education enhancement, Centers of Excellence establishment, inclusive Vocational training promotion, alternative training mode promotion and access to inclusive education is paramount.
5.3 Implementation
The Ministries responsible for education shall facilitate the provision of education and skills development for all at all levels for youths with Intellectual Disabilities. Furthermore the Ministries responsible for education shall ensure that the learning institutions were provided with human, financial and material resources to make teaching and learning effective and of good quality. Alternative Learning Programs need to be incorporated in the teacher education curriculum for all teachers to be familiar with teaching according to learner needs.

6.0 Conclusion
The number of female youths with Intellectual Disabilities accessing Inclusive Vocational Training was very small meaning that the majority were out of school and unemployed. Despite inclusive education policies it is not known why the transition rate to tertiary education was low. A few who accessed vocational training were progressing well and they were contributing to sustainable national development. The alternative learning programs identified were effective and were facilitating reasonable accommodation to enable female youths with Intellectual Disabilities acquire vocational skills without discrimination.
References


