Disability and disadvantage

The educational access and participation for students with disabilities

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Autumn 2010
Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate into the constraints that hinder the access and the participation for students with disabilities in Zimbabwe. The research question which guided the study was formulated as follows: How do contextual constraints impact on the educational access and the participation for students with disabilities? The sub-questions tried to specifically look into a) which constraints hinder meaningful access and participation? b) in what ways do these constraints influence academic performance? c) how can the constraints be mitigated? d) what has been done so far to mitigate the obstacles? and e) to what extent have these strategies been successful?

A qualitative research approach was used with a multiple case study design. Reaching out for real life experiences from the affected individuals landed the researcher to have four cases. Students with disabilities as the core of the study formed one case, parents of children with disabilities formed another case, teachers who teach students with disabilities were also reached to give their views and the policy implementation officials also formed another case.

Some similar views were raised across the four cases on the issues that hinder the access and participation for children with disabilities. Some constraints were raised unique to one or two cases. Results of the study revealed that economic constraints as of the time of the study were a menace to the access and participation of students with disabilities. Due to the unavailability of economic support, children could not afford to procure the necessary resources, parents, teachers and even the government found it hard to provide and enhance the education of people with disabilities. It was also revealed that social constraints that came out in form of attitudes that had deep roots from the cultural belief were found hard to leave the people’s reactions towards people with disabilities. Behaviours like exclusion or ill-treatment revealed such failure to include people with disabilities. Policy constraints that include the failure by the responsible authority to mandate and enforce commitment to enhancing the education of people with disabilities were also labelled as insurmountable.

Suggestions on how the constraints can be mitigated were forwarded; preliminary efforts to improve the education were also enumerated, however all noble ideas seemed to hit the hard ground due to poverty, latent attitudes and inconsistencies in doing things. The study suggests that commitment should begin with the responsible authority by enforcing the laws and policies, as well as making follow-ups within the schools and the society. Collaboration work
would also help to reduce the constraints and to bring in new ideas that can enhance the learning of students with disabilities.
Dedications

A special dedication goes to the children with disabilities in Zimbabwe whose desire to learn is constantly thwarted by constraints left, right and centre. To the dedicated teachers who teach students with special needs, I say, forward ever.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I convey my deepest gratitude to my Lord the Almighty for the life and opportunity to study and the capability to produce this piece of work.

My sincere thanks go to the Government of Norway for everything. I also take this opportunity to thank my supervisor, Wim Hoppers for the guidance that he offered during the time that I wrote this paper.

To the participants of this study, I say thank you so much for sparing your time, sharing your experiences and your determination even in difficult times.

To my family, I would like to thank you all for the support. To my mother Juliet Bhiza, your intercessions became my pillar of strength, thank you indeed. My brother in-law, Harry Mambo Rinashe, thank you indeed for the foundation that you laid in my educational life, I will never forget this. I also want to express my sincere thanks to my sisters for the support and encouragement to continue.

I also want to thank my beloved husband Joseph and our children, Ronald, Rossette and Rachel for the support and encouragement. I would like to say that all the support and encouragement from all the people mentioned above was made possible by the Grace of the Lord. Thank you indeed.
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Abbreviations

CWD……Children with disabilities
SWD……Students with disabilities
PWD……People with disabilities
BEAM.....Basic Education Assistance Module
UN.........United Nations
UNICEF...United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
DPA........Disabled Persons’ Act
ILO.........International Labour Organization
NASCOH... National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped
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Chapter 1: Background

1.1 Introduction

Education has been proven that it improves the lives of people, including those with disabilities. By educating an individual, foundation stones of one’s future and fate is laid. Denying opportunities for education to other people for reasons that they have disabilities or that they are counted as incapable will just be denying them their rights which other citizen enjoy. The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) set some global guidelines on how member countries can address the issues that concern people with disabilities. Specific reference was given to matters of equal opportunities in accessing education and removing the barriers that militate against the equal access and participation opportunities for persons with disabilities in education. As stated in the overview of the Standard rules, the Rules are not compulsory; however, they imply a strong moral and political commitment to take action for the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, United Nations, (1993). So with Zimbabwe as a member country of the United Nations, the society is obliged to break the barriers, which might in some ways limit the access and participation in educational activities by people with disabilities with equality. As an experienced educationist for students with disabilities and today a researcher, the present situation on the education of people with disabilities in Zimbabwe attracted me to carry out a research to reflect on what is exactly happening at the grass root levels as far as the education for people with disabilities is concerned. The motivation is to yield lasting solutions, a positive development and an improvement in their learning. The study specifically investigated and reflected on the constraints and hindrances that impact on the educational access and participation for people with disabilities. Stakeholder groups that were believed to have the power to influence the education were chosen as the subjects to the study’s main respondents.

1.2 Research Problem

From time immemorial, people with disabilities in Zimbabwe have been regarded as a useless lot, who are believed just to receive benevolent treatment while nothing meaningful or productive is expected from them. Neither education nor participation in societal activities was regarded beneficial neither to PWD nor to the society in which they live. Today, the tides have turned direction, government and society have accepted to consider educating people
with disabilities, to improve on their lives together with the improvement of their families’ lives, communities and the government at large. Surprisingly, even with noble ideas and favourable conditions set in the education today, government efforts to provide basic requirements towards improved education for PWD, these endeavours are continually frustrated by latent attitudes and innumerable hindrances to the access and participation in educational activities, leaving the people with disabilities, disadvantaged. Whereas policy planners and advocates may condemn segregation and propound inclusion, the real situation on the ground sweeps dust under the carpet and let’s go issues of access and participation for people with disabilities. Marschark (2008) referred to education loopholes as a menace to the past, present and future. There have been innumerable obstacles to the physical, social and cultural, economic environments and the legal provisions, to the access and participation for people with disabilities. The desire would be to find possibilities on how to eradicate such obstacles and enhance as well as widen access and participation. In light of such problems, the research questions in this study have been stated as below:

### 1.3 The Research question

How do contextual constraints impact on the educational access and participation by children with disabilities?

#### 1.3.1 Sub-questions

1) Which constraints hinder meaningful access and participation?

2) In what ways do these constraints influence academic participation?

3) How can the constraints be mitigated?

4) What has been done so far to mitigate the obstacles?

5) To what extent have these strategies been successful?

### 1.4 Justification for the study

The education of people with disabilities is a cause for concern in Zimbabwe. There exists a wide discrepancy between policy, intentions and real practice. For many years now, there has been a lot of underrepresentation and inadequate guidance for people with disabilities on where and what is in place for them. There is also too much lip service in contrast to practice on the education of people with disabilities. As an experienced specialist teacher who has chosen to work with people with disabilities and possibly become an advocate for PWD in all circumstances and spheres, advocating for their access and participation as well as giving
awareness to the educational facilities and laws that guide their education I believe, would be justified. Some of the obstacles in the education of people with disabilities are being perpetuated by latent attitudes within people and are also a consequence of social constructions from societal beliefs, and norms, which can be corrected if issues are raised, through advocacy. If advocacy issues are left out, this can in turn preclude and decrease the possibilities of students with disabilities accessing and participating in activities that are planned for them and which PWD have to claim their rights for. Carpenter (2004) asserted that such observations can be viewed as opportunities to address (maybe through advocacy), the needs of the under-represented groups. It is hoped that through a lot of advocacy and awareness more vulnerable children might benefit instead of a few. Advocacy and awareness programs are hoped that they hold the capability to improve access and participation for people with disabilities. Carpenter (2004) affirmed that if targeted initiatives exist, they should focus on the intended areas to increase the representation of those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, for instance people with disabilities.

The researcher feels that a research in the educational access and participation of people with disabilities would enlighten the people with disabilities to reflect on obstacles that hinder their meaningful participation thereby will be like advocating for the opportunity to provide support for such students. Gliedman and Roth (1980) found out that advocates that were sought for students with disabilities and for the status of some minority groups that was widely disenfranchised and discriminated against; some solutions to access into general education classrooms and schools got improved learning and also that social outcomes followed. In the same vein, it is also believed that the same can happen to the people with disabilities in Zimbabwe.

1.5 Significance of the study

It is hoped that findings from this study, recommendations, some suggestions and intentions forwarded by the participants will be summed up together then forwarded to the responsible authorities for the improvement and provision of education for people with disabilities. It is also hoped that the above contributions will consequently be of some practical use and be of benefit to prospective researchers, teachers and parents for pupils with disabilities, relevant stakeholders and more directly, to children with disabilities who were at the centre of this study.
1.6 Organization of the thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the general introduction to the study, highlighting that the study takes roots from the Standard rules on the equalization of opportunities set by the United Nations. Chapter 2 gives the background information of the context of the study and highlights the present situation. Chapter 3 tackles the theoretical framework and the related literature on the access and participation of people with disabilities. The fourth chapter gives the methodology that was adopted for the study. Chapter 5 presents the data and in chapter 6, the analysis and discussion, recommendations conclude the thesis, of course with references and appendices at the end.
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Significant prior researches

2.1.1 A global overview on the access and participation for pupils with disabilities

Globally, there have been innumerable propositions by renowned international writers about enhancing access and ensuring equity as well as widening participation for the previously under-represented groups of the society. Within a European context, facilitating the increased participation of marginalized groups within society has become a cornerstone of social policy, as highlighted by Hanafin, Shevlin, Kenny and Mc Neela (2007). Hanafin et al (2007) articulated this point in their report on possibilities to include young people with disabilities in higher education in Ireland. The research overly showed that much focus tended to be put on the physical access issues and some technical supports. These authors admitted that access issues within higher education had been inadequately conceptualized and as a result had failed to address fundamental issues for students with physical disabilities.

In the United Kingdom, May (2005) contentedly announced that attention to pupil participation within the education system had undoubtedly increased of late. May highlighted that there had been an increasing number of public actions promoting the participation rights of the child. The participation rights of the child had even been established in law, the Children Act (DoH, 1989), which was derived from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) as advised by May (2005). It was also striking to note that in the United Kingdom, pupil participation is strongly considered. May (2005) also postulate that, as a signatory to the United Nations, the United Kingdom is bound by the law to implement the rights of the children and to make child participation priority.

Likewise, Carpenter (2004) enlightened on the Irish government’s position that it established an Action Group on Access to ensure and to develop a co-ordinate framework to promote the access and participation for the disadvantaged members of their society and students with disabilities. In such a move, Carpenter highlighted that some Universities and College Acts were enacted which required them to prepare and implement policies in furtherance of the objectives set and which also managed to drive the access agenda. With such good...
government intentions, one would expect to read that all implementation processes became flawless. However, Carpenter forwarded three major obstacles that hinder meaningful implementation of the equity to access as; economic constraints, institutional constraints specific to the educational system and also some social and cultural constraints. Arguably, Ireland is rated among the top ten richest countries in the world, but conversely reported to be failing to satisfy the needs of its vulnerable group members of society.

The United Nations set some global guidelines for people with disabilities like the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (2006). Member countries are tasked to adopt and formulate laws and policies in pursuance of these international human rights instruments. UNESCO (1988), called for a review and amendment of laws persisting in many countries affecting disabled children which are not compatible with the Convention, particularly in regard to the right to life, survival and development, the right to education or which segregate disabled children in separate institutions for care, treatment or education.

In Asia, the International Disability Rights Monitor (2005), made a report about some countries of Asia, they discovered that the legal protections in the region were quite fair. It was also reported that there are a variety of national laws, in as much the same is a widespread regional support for an International Convention on the Rights of people with disabilities. Governments of the countries in Asia that were included in their report had expressed support for the development of a United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities. A number of the countries studied except Cambodia had passed some type of legislation specifically dealing with people with disabilities. Even in Cambodia, there had been seen several laws that refer to the rights of people with disabilities; however it did not have a specific disability law. Many of the countries studied had also been reported to have laws that had some loopholes for the provision of special education. It was then argued that in Asia, throughout the whole region, there was an overall lack of educational opportunities and rights for people with disabilities despite the fact that all countries guarantee access to education for all. Hanafin et al (2007)’s report also documented the experiences of two groups of students with disabilities in two higher education institutions and saw some discrepancies that despite anti-discrimination legislation and pro-inclusion government policies the persistence of attitudinal barriers had been cited as a major inhibiting factor in the participation of people with disabilities in educational programs. Other cited
contributory factors to the lack of participation included pervasive difficulties such as physical access, lowered expectations and poor levels of awareness among people with disabilities. In terms of physical access, Priestley (2001) spoke against hindrances to easy access to education which he termed inequitable social structures within society that disadvantage people with disabilities in The United Kingdom and in Australia.

Full access demands that students get engaged with courses for instance in classroom activities like writing, reading, or doing some science experiments. To ensure that disabled students can engage, they require adequate assistive technology, for example Braille machines for those with visual impairments, crutches for the physically disabled and maybe holders or page turners for those with cerebral palsy. Errickson (2005) carried out a research in Sweden where he aimed to investigate the relationship between participation in school activities of students with disabilities and their school environment. Errikson (2005) found out that the physical environment was inadequately adapted to ensure full inclusion and also that the ways in which activities were organized and carried out created barriers. Errikson (2005) then commented that exclusion from some and different activities could lead to less diversity in the opportunities for participation, thus creating a restricted niche potential for students with disabilities. It is undeniable that the environment can present constraints that can limit active participation in daily life to the extent that children’s daily activities become less varied than the activities of their peers without disabilities.

It is quite noticeable that different countries around the world have addressed the issue of disabilities in different ways and at different levels. It is also quite interesting that almost all countries of the world have adopted a portion of some policies from the global guidelines. In terms of policy intentions and implementations for people with disabilities, some countries give substantial emphasis on serving their population with disabilities while others, still leave a lot to be desired. Some countries give greater emphasis to combating social discrimination and increasing physical access; while others continue to deal with disabilities within a medicalized framework, emphasizing treatment and rehabilitation, Savedoff, (2006). A medicalized framework in this context would represent treating the people with disabilities as sick people who require treatment and care. It has also been discovered that public policy in wealthy countries tends to focus on income support, labour placement, and remediation, relying more on professional support services and technology, while however the low-income countries still struggle with basic preventive measures like the vaccines for diseases, treatments and physical access, Savedoff (2006) added. It is however striking that, despite
strides that have been taken in creating opportunities for equal access and participation for people with disabilities, constraints still exists in form of environmental, economical and even attitudinal.

2.1.2 The regional and national level position of the access and participation for pupils with disabilities

Literature from Africa shows generally that the development and implementation of disability policies within government settings are started very nobly but seem to remain or lay dormant in the very early stages. As will be shown in the reviews below, Laws, Acts and policies exist in almost all countries of Africa, however they are generally not backed up by any funding strategies, which eventually leads to no meaningful implementation of these Laws and policies. In South Africa, Peters, (2009) reported that in 1994 after the end of the apartheid regime, the first steps taken by the new government were the adoption of a philosophy of one education system, with a resultant move towards equity, access, redress and quality education for all learners irrespective of race, religion, gender, or special needs. Peters (2009) postulated this viewpoint in her report on the inequalities in education for people with disabilities among the Southern African countries. She believed that the adoption of the laws implied the acceptance of differences and diversity of population of South Africa. Peters added two other issues of interest that were done by the government of South Africa as: the accessibility issues that emphasized the identification and removal of barriers and issues of social protection for the people with disabilities which put emphasis on education rights. Peters articulated the intentions of the government to consider prerequisites that include adequate health care, family welfare, and basic needs of food and shelter. Likewise, in Zimbabwe, after the attainment of independence in 1980, the government made efforts to increase the access to education for its population groups that have previously been marginalized. Chirimuuta, (2006) purported that the government enacted The Education Act (1987) which stipulates that: Every child in Zimbabwe shall have the right to school education, it also declares that: No child in Zimbabwe shall be refused admission to any school on the grounds of race, tribe, colour, religion, place of origin, political opinion or the social status of his/her parent.

In contrast to the good intentions noted by Peters (2009), Matschedisho (2007) carried out a research which focused on the support provisions for disabled students in South Africa and compared the different paths taken by South Africa and the developed countries in general towards disability rights. Matschedisho (2007) commented in his analysis that most institutions said in the interviews that their physical assets such as equipment, resources and/or buildings
had been provided through donations, especially from the private sector. The research clearly articulated that grants from the government were very minimal.

In Possi’s (1996) study in Tanzania about the conceptual issues regarding gender and disability, as well as to look at education of people with disabilities in a gender perspective, Possi found out that even though Tanzania ratified and adopted the global guidelines into law, many children with disabilities in general, and particularly girls, do not get equal access to education. Possi reiterated that people with disabilities are failed from the enrolment and are sidelined even in participation even if they get enrolled.

In 2009, the International Labour Organization reported that in Zambia, a higher percentage of people with disabilities live in rural areas where access to basic services is limited. ILO (2009) confirmed that the Government of Zambia has adopted a number of laws and policies pertaining to people with disabilities; however SINTEF (2006) reported in their survey on the living conditions for people with disabilities in Southern Africa that, in Zambia, despite the legal guidelines adopted, many children with disabilities live in the rural areas and do not attend schooling, rather, they do household chores, look after livestock and plough in the fields. Meredith (2009) carried out a research and found out that overworking children can have an adverse effect on their learning because overworked children can be resultantly tired to do any school work effectively after working hard at home.

In the same year, 2006, in Malawi, Namibia and Zimbabwe, The Southern African Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD), the Norwegian Federation of Disabled People (FFO), and the Health Research Department of Living Conditions and Health Services (SINTEF) carried out a joint survey on the Living conditions among people with disabilities in Southern Africa. These non-governmental organizations reported that the studies which they carried out in Namibia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia have demonstrated that the level of living conditions among disabled people is systematically lower than among non-disabled people. To them, this implied that people with disabilities are denied the equal opportunities to participate and contribute to their society. In their survey, these organizations reported that among those few who had access to education, people with disabilities have achieved lower levels of education than their non disabled counterparts. This they meant that very few disabled people go beyond primary level of education. The few people with disabilities who had access to education were segregated into institutional homes, where they learnt together with other people with disabilities. SINTEF (2006) reported that inclusion of PWD was still a
long way to be achieved. According to Wilson (2000) students who are educated in separate classrooms often feel unmotivated, rejected, worthless, inferior, frustrated and isolated. Wilson (2000) added that isolation has the power to cripple a child’s mind socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically in development.

Additionally, in Zimbabwe as the context of the study, UNICEF (2001) reported that children with disabilities in Zimbabwe live under especially difficult circumstances and are vulnerable as they live with negative attitudes, beliefs, labels and stigmas that militate against them. They have limited access to facilities and their fundamental rights, such as education and health, are often compromised. UNICEF regularly carries out some surveys in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, and in their 2001 survey, an evaluation report was given on the Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children and Adolescents in Zimbabwe. In response to such discriminatory practices that have been noted above, people with disabilities in Zimbabwe remain largely invisible, hidden within families or in institutions, as a way to fight or forge ahead, they and their parents know that they are vulnerable to neglect. In terms of schooling, it has also been noted that PWD actually prefer to learn in Special Schools were they experience less segregation. Parents of children with disabilities struggle to access places for schools for their children in special institutions. It is also believed that the facilities for PWD are available in Special schools than in regular education settings. Gray (2005), Shah (2005) and by Shah and Trave (2004) reported similarly in their studies that students regarded special schools as safe, supportive and with the appropriate resources that they needed. Also because of the discriminatory practices, children with disabilities find it hard to get included in the regular classrooms. School heads refuse them entry; teachers refuse to include them into the regular classrooms because they feel that the CWD should be served in the special classes. Such a situation is similar to the findings by Burnstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cabello and Spagna (2004) that the average teacher feels unprepared to serve students with disabilities, has little time available to collaborate with others and makes few accommodations for students with special needs.

Peresuh and Barcham (1998) however purported that serious concern for the education of children with disabilities and learning difficulties began at independence (in 1980), with the adoption of a national policy of Universal Primary Education. Peresuh and Burcham (1998) added that the Government of Zimbabwe enacted The 1987 Education Act which made education a right for all children; including those with various disabilities and also that several subsequent education policies addressed specific issues in special education. Mutepfa et al
(2007) shared similar sentiments with Peresuh et al that, a number of government policy issues drawn are consistent with the intent of inclusive education. Chirimuuta (2006) postulated that Circular Minute Number 1 of 2003 Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) was specifically put in place for the purpose to assist vulnerable people in the country that included CWD to access education with the assistance from the government by the way of paying for their tuition fees. The Secretary’s Circular Minute Number 3 of 2002 directs on the set adjustments that can be made during the national examinations to accommodate CWD and give them extra time to enable them to finish writing the examination. Even though Mpofu, (2004) agrees with all the above authors, he added that there is no specific legislation for special needs education in Zimbabwe.

Even though legislation exists to uphold the right of every child to attend school, children with disabilities remain excluded, Kabzems and Chimedza, (2002). It is quite regrettable that discrimination in the lines of disability remains all too prevalent in spite of the fact that discriminatory practices are illegal. Unfortunately, the legal instruments fail to protect people with disabilities from discrimination and to enhance access and their participation. UNICEF (2001) in the same survey as above reported that in Zimbabwe, the Shona people and the Ndebele people’s cultures hold negative beliefs on the causes of disabilities. For instance, disability was associated with witchcraft, promiscuity by the mother during pregnancy, punishment by ancestral spirits or evil spirits or even by God. It is difficult to change established mind-sets around traditional notions like the ones extended above. Pang and Richey (2005) highlighted that, it should be realized that growth takes place in a social milieu, and it will, therefore, be influenced by a person’s interactions and transactions with that milieu, as well as by within-the individual organismic factors. These negative attitudes from the social and cultural beliefs handicap further the people with disabilities and their families. Consequent to cultural beliefs, society reacts with horror, fear, anxiety, and distaste, hostile towards people with disabilities. This usually leads to isolation, discrimination and prejudice against some of them. Some of the reactions could lead to denial to enroll the children in schools for the fear that disability is contagious or just for the latent attitudes that exist in people as a result of the traditional beliefs. A result of such reactions can lead people with disabilities to the reaction that if they continually receive negative and disheartening responses from the people of their own community, they eventually give up and if it is in school, then the children may drop out of school. It cannot be denied that rejection is catastrophic; it provokes despair and retreat, UNICEF (2001).
Choruma (2006) carried out a survey in Zimbabwe under the International Cooperation for Development, it is presently known as Progressio-Zimbabwe. The organization operates under the guise that it funds and places development projects for people with disabilities. In her survey, Choruma found out that generally, people with disabilities are ignorant of the legislation and policies due to limited exposure to and education on these instruments. Additionally, she commented that disabled people’s organizations in Zimbabwe are not carrying out awareness campaigns to raise awareness among and educate their constituencies and communities. In the same survey, Choruma also looked at disability, gender and poverty and their relationship. She found out that, girl children in Zimbabwe are poorly served at the expense of their male siblings due to cultural beliefs, and reported that the situation was even worse for girl children with disabilities. She also discovered that almost all people with disabilities in Zimbabwe live in poverty and this affects their level of literacy. Overall, Choruma (2006) commented that people with disabilities face numerous challenges in achieving equality of opportunity due to environmental and access barriers, legal and institutional barriers, and attitudinal barriers that cause social exclusion. Kabzems and Chimedza (2002) also criticized the Zimbabwean government for its failure to reinforce law and noted that policies without commitment serve to reinforce existing social attitudes. It is undeniable that barriers to the educational access and participation for pupils with disabilities exist. However, the writer notes with scrutiny that, in Africa, there is a shortage of native researchers who probably can report truly to the real situations on the ground. The reports above show that most researches have been done by external, non-governmental organizations or expatriates. It is also unfortunate that some of the native researchers team up with the expatriates and end up writing in favour of their fellow writers. This action was argued against by Morgan (2003) that some indigenous people, as with others from more holistic/contextual cultures, have little choice but to participate in research and teaching programs that either devalue or do not recognize their cultural identities. Morgan wrote against foreign researchers who used native researchers, only to appropriate the ideas in their own favour in the end. The argument against having foreign researches lies in the factor that, viewpoints of outsider may never match those of insiders’ experiences; outsiders usually have their own agendas for the researches, so they may not report truthfully. Kabzems and Chimedza (2002) highlighted this anomaly that in times immemorial, ‘services to individuals were provided in exchange for adopting Christianity. Even today, services and development aid are contingent on adopting the philosophy of the donor or service provider, otherwise they
pull out. Many development agencies and charitable organizations tend to emphasize their own agenda, which may not necessarily be that of the local people with disabilities. As a result, the anticipated impact of development assistance in the region for people with disabilities has not been realized’. One other anomaly pertains to inadequate representations of the disabled population as the foreign researchers usually do not reach the far rural population as it is normally inaccessible. In the end they use the same, few people that they can reach in the urban areas, which is quite unrepresentative of the true population of a country. Despite these barriers however, a remarkable number of programs in countries of Africa have begun to effectively address exclusion from education for people with disabilities.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The systems theory shall be adopted for this study to reflect and explain the complex systems that exist in human life, that interrelate on a daily basis and consequently produce results. Wikipedia (2009) described the systems theory as an interdisciplinary theory that looks at the nature of some complex systems that are found in nature and society. Wikipedia added that the systems theory can also be seen as a framework by which one can investigate and/or describe any group of objects that work together to produce some result. Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory in particular will be used to guide the study as well as to interpret the data.

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory views development (that includes behaviour of individuals) within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment. The theory recognizes that environmental events and conditions outside any immediate setting containing a person can have a profound influence on behaviour and development within that setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005). The theory emphasizes and brings out how a person’s biological characteristics can in some way interact with some environmental forces that relate with him/her to shape their development and ways that an individual can behave. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory spotlights four nested structures that include the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem.

2.2.1 The microsystem

According to Bronfenbrenner, in the microsystem, there exist some activities and interactions between an individual and its closest environment. The closest environment includes the
family, the neighbourhood, the school and any immediate organizations that offer facilities like care giving. Since there is interaction between the individual and the immediate environment, there is no doubt that the interaction can have an impact to both parties. The impact can either be positive or negative, and it definitely produces results depending on the kind of impact that it has had. Paquette and Ryan (2001)) noted a point that the way a child acts or reacts to the people in the microsystem will affect how the same people treat him or her in return. Engler (2007) propounded a similar viewpoint that it should be born in mind that all relationships are bidirectional and reciprocal meaning that both parties affect and influence one another’s behaviour towards the other.

2.2.2 The mesosystem

The second level is classified as the connection of the structures of the microsystem, as postulated by Berk (2007). In the mesosystem, the different parts of a child's microsystem work together for the sake of the child. An example of this could be the school and the family working together for the development of the child, meaning that support for the individual is important especially from all the connections among the mesosystem for the purpose to foster development/progress in an individual. EDFD127 (2009) gave an example of the mesosystem in function that a note should be given to the fact that a child's education and learning does not only depend upon the teachers' knowledge, but also the parents of the child, as they have an equal responsibility to assist the child in learning and education.

2.2.3 The exosystem

As described by Bronfenbrenner, the exosystem refers to some social settings that cover both the mesosystem and the microsystem. In this level, Bronfenbrenner cited in Paquette et al (2001) explained that these settings might not directly affect the individual even though in some way, the individual gets affected in one way or another. EDFD127 (2009) confirmed that the social settings may not contain the developing person but nevertheless affects experiences in their immediate settings. Examples that can be given for this exosystem include country’s bureaucratic system and policy implementation personnel who work for the government in education or even the working environment for the parents of the students. What happens at the parents’ workplace can in some way affect the learning of a student in class or vice versa. If a child with a disability gets sick in school, the parent may fail to perform his /her duties properly at work as they fear for their child, while in a similar fashion, if parents of the child with a disability gets laid off from work, that may negatively affect the child if her parents are unable to pay her school fees, rent or to support the family financially.
In the case of the bureaucracy or personnel in education, well planned and fully implemented policies may benefit students in schools while on the other side of the coin poorly structured, non functional policies as a result of a country’s bureaucratic system can affect the students negatively.

### 2.2.4 The macrosystem

The macrosystem is the outermost level/circle of this theory which Bronfenbrenner said that it contains a variety of influences to the individual such as laws, customs, resources and cultural values, EDFD127 (2009). Boyd and Bee (2006) also highlighted that this macrosystem level contains the values and beliefs of the culture in which a child is growing up. Every society is formed /filled with some cultural norms, values and beliefs which bind the members of the society. The members conform to the values and beliefs even though in some way, some of the members get affected by such beliefs, norms and values. This also happens in a similar way that the environment in which the individual lives can also be affected whether positively or negatively by people who live in it. It can then be said that, it is not only the individuals who are shaped by their environments, but also, too, are environments shaped by the individuals within them (Rutter et al, 1995). The priority that the macrosystem gives for example to people with disabilities in its entity, say if they are valued, listened to, this definitely affects the support they receive at lower levels of the environment. It then follows that the exosystem, mesosystem and the microsystem are all affected by the macrosystem.

### 2.3 Obstacles to the educational access and participation of pupils with disabilities

#### 2.3.1 Physical/ environmental constraints

Conducive environments are critical in enhancing students’ access and participation in educational activities. Inaccessible environments can hinder the active and effective participation for students with disabilities. According to Bronfenbrenner, a person’s own surrounding has the capability to affect the individual at different levels of interaction. Taking for example between an individual and the environment in the micro-system level, participation can be observed in the interaction processes that go on, like attempting to access inaccessible buildings by students with disabilities. Also, in the mesosystem level, as different groups of the micro-systems interaction amongst one another, this interaction can affect the individual. In schools, some students with disabilities can be having physical disabilities and can be wheelchair users. Wheelchair users can only access high storey buildings by using
elevators or ramps. Infrastructure which has not been updated to accommodate wheelchair users and all the other students with disabilities can hinder their access and participation in educational activities. Most social and public structures that were constructed a long time ago have not been upgraded to accommodate people with disabilities. Generally, the buildings have steps, we could actually say that steps are very popular and yet some people might be using wheelchairs, or crutches. Buildings with stairs are not wheelchair-user friendly. They can block access to many activities that can be going on inside the buildings for the people with disabilities.

In a research that was carried out by Hanafin et al (2007), reports from their participants indicated that they encountered access difficulties at every level in their college life, especially on physical access. It can be said that the physically disabled people experience harder times from the infrastructure and the physical environment. Choruma (2006) expressed it like; accessibility is a problem, particularly for those with reduced mobility or in wheelchairs. Fichten (1988) argued that people with physical disabilities may only be able to access a fraction of the housing that people without disabilities may access. NASCOH (2009), in support of the same viewpoint affirmed positively to the point that when investigating important environmental factors related to participation, students’ own perceptions of one’s own niches is important to investigate. It is important in that; the relationship between the school environment and the participation for students with disabilities is important to consider as they affect each other. Etscheidt (2006) and several other researchers speak strongly on the importance of putting consideration into the least restrictive environment versus the learning of students with disabilities.

Full participation of students with disabilities may not be achievable when there are obstacles that hinder it. Fanelli and Mushunje (2007) purported that by the scope of child participation, we mean the range of mechanisms available to enable the participation of children. If inaccessible environments prevail, then they become further deterrents to the access and participation for students with disabilities in schools. Fichten (1988) noted that educational institutions and administration procedures have also been found to be potential barriers to enrolment. In institutions where a child will not be able to participate in many activities due to a disability, it becomes difficult for the child to enroll in that school. Fanelli and Mushunje (2007) reported that in Zimbabwe, several people with disabilities have been unable to attend secretarial colleges because they were situated upstairs, where they could not access because the buildings were inaccessible.
Chimedza (2008) brought out another kind of an inaccessible environment to people with disabilities which can also hinder their access and participation. Chimedza (2008) remarked that toilets that are not updated to accommodate people with disabilities can also further deter the access and participation for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities in Zimbabwe who attend school are expected to be able to use toilets on their own for they cannot afford to pay assistants in regular government public schools. Those who are not toilet trained have no other option than to attend residential schools where such facilities are provided. Chimedza (2008) highlighted that the situation is worse in rural schools where they use pit latrines. These are very difficult to use for children with physical disabilities. It follows then that only a toilet in the school can hinder the access to education for a student with a disability. When the school can deny a student access to education due to inaccessible infrastructure, this will be an interaction within the mesosystem that affected the student in his access and participation. Inaccessible social structures have the strength to inhibit the participation of people with disabilities and can also exhaust students’ ability to succeed academically and otherwise maneuver freely on campus.

2.3.2 Economic constraints

Financial strength of a family can be quite influential in their child’s ability to access and participate in educational activities. In circumstances when financial shortages occur, students may fail to access or to participate in education due to failure to get financial resources to pay for their education. Parents have got some obligatory duties to fend for the livelihoods and education for their children. Usually, most parents are willing to educate their children but in certain circumstances they may fail to do it due to poverty. Other parents might also hold the feelings that the child is incapable of learning so they might believe that it could be a waste of resources. In instances when an individual is stricken by both poverty and disability, usually the individual experiences double disadvantage, his access and participation into educational activities is even more threatened.

According to Paquette (2001), in the exosystem, the child is not part of the system, even though he/she gets affected by the system. The exosystem involves parents’ position like getting a job or being sacked away from work, getting salary increments of being retrenched from the job. This has got the power to affect the child’s participation in educational activities for example when parents can afford the child’s education or when they fail to afford. To the child, the role of the family is crucial to their education even though there can be some
increased stress that go on within the family. In circumstances when students face the
problem of being unable to purchase the many important educational aids which can assist
them to learn, this can affect the child’s participation in many activities in school. The aids
may include education-related resources such as calculators, Braille machines, spectacles,
computers just to mention a few. The situation gets definitely compounded in such
circumstances. In fact, Choruma, (2006) cited the cost of specialized equipment as the most
frequent reason for non-participation especially for those who use the specialized equipment
like hearing aids or spectacles for those with low vision. In a situation as the one explained
above that the parents fail to support the education of their child with a disability for one
reason or the other, the progress on the part of the child is disturbed. Practical experiences as
a specialist teacher has also shown that how well a child does in school is dependent not only
on how well the child functions in the classroom but also on the support of his parents in these
academic activities at home.

Home-academic support can include helping the child with homework or supporting the child
financially with the needs at school. The connection between the child with disabilities and
the school is quite pivotal to the development and participation for the child in school. Parents
who support their children in their schooling also enhance their learning. Unsupportive
parents may reduce the desire for their children to learn. Noonan, Gallor, Hensier-McGinnis,
Fassinger, Wang, and Goodman (2004) carried out a research the issues that influence
achievement in career with women who lived with disabilities. The above authors found out
that the highly achieving women with physical and sensory disabilities enjoyed support from
their parents. Some of the participants of the study reported that they enjoyed encouragement
form their families. It can then be said that support and encouragement are crucial in the
education of children with disabilities.

Choruma (2006) also thought that poverty affects the chances of the children with disabilities
to attend school, and participating as equals in society. She expatiated her point by giving a
summary of views from her respondents in her survey which she carried out in Zimbabwe.
She indicated that boys with disabilities are valued more than girls with disabilities within
family settings. Boys are sent to school and girls are denied access to education. This could be
a result of inadequate resources for the family to fend for all their children’s education. It can
also stem from the traditional stereotypes that are held by people, that it is not worthy or not
an investment to send a girl child to school as she will get married and leave the family (with
the wisdom), while boys get the opportunity because they remain in the family with the
wealth attained. Choruma (2006) added that the girl child is exposed to poverty at a tender age and that failure to attend school impacts on the girl’s lifelong health and survival. Such impartialities can be described as the lack of positive expectations for disabled young people in their learning.

In Zimbabwe, the severity of a child’s disability determines the placement position that the child gets for the school he/she has to attend. Those with severe disabilities are placed in residential schools which can afford to offer teaching assistants. Residential schooling facilities may definitely charge substantial amount in fees, so then some parents may not afford to pay such fees. Failure to afford schooling for the child with a disability results in keeping the child with the disability at home, and eventually to do the household chores. It cannot be denied that in an economically torn country like Zimbabwe, the few parents who sacrifice to help their children by sending them to such schools becomes extremely expensive and usually their money is swept away for it is costly. It may then become overwhelming for the families, which, the provision may also be abandoned before the intended results are achieved. Drew (2009) espoused a point that in more financially desolate sectors, children are counted out before they are even given a chance, which might not be the best for them.

Research has also shown that families with children with disabilities might be finding it hard to cope with the demands of educating and fending for their children.

Pang and Richey (2005) postulated that families of children with disability found it hard to cope with the discrepancy between the demands of a situation and their ability to meet these demands. It can be most probable that most parents who struggle to make ends meet are less likely to actively help their children get into the best schools, meaning that they often just put up with what they are given; neither do they struggle to work collaboratively. It can also be assumed that they could be shy of their situation of failure to provide the best for their children. Pang et al (2005) added that poverty could be one of the contributory factors since most families cannot afford specialized services for their children with disabilities. Supportive parents who work together with the school help both the school and their child to succeed while the opposite can be true. McGivney, (1993) asserted that the parents’ relationship with the school can make or break their child's education.

2.3.3 Social and cultural constraints

It can be hard to imagine that the problems faced by families with disabled children are greater than what most people think. When people plan to have children, nobody ever puts to
thought having a child with a disability; neither can anybody buy a one sleeved shirt in preparation for a child without both arms. Not even in societies that have accepted disability as something that comes naturally, can one take it so simple to have a child with a disability. This means that any arrival of a child with a disability is received with shock, disbelief, denial or even anger. In the early days of the child’s arrival, parents get filled with an almost angry resistance to the situation. On the other side of the coin, the neighbourhood also receives the news of the arrival of the disabled child with shock and mesmerism. The truth of the matter lies in the fact that what worries the family about having a child with a disability is about the people who surround them. The gist of the matter is that no man is an island, so acceptance for both the child with a disability and for the parents from the people whom they live with can be the source of the problem to them. Science Daily (2009) asserted that the family can be puzzled about how difficult it will be for them to get support, feeling supported and social acceptance into their new/ differentiated parenting journey. They may then have to cope up with problems that come with the child. The family will need to adjust their lifestyle in order to accommodate the child with the disability, who is part of the family. McGivney (1993) purported that parents usually have to come to terms with a significant ‘loss’ of an idealized child; the denial that can ensue for them to be able to proceed with the parenting journey.

In Zimbabwe, as the context of the study, people with disabilities have a long history of persecution, rejection, segregation and a lot of differentiated treatment as compared to their non disabled counterparts. Research sheds light that this usually results from the cultural beliefs of a community like taking disability as a punishment as has been earlier alluded to. Shaw (2009) propounded that most families that have children with disabilities face problems such as being isolated from their circle of immediate family and friends, then they don't go out to socialize for fear of how their child will be treated, and how they will be viewed by the ones they love while dealing with their problem. The reactions that come from the people may also affect the family in many ways as they are torn between two worlds, love for their disabled child and the society against them. Shaw (2009) remarked that the isolation from friends and family, the change in routine and emotional dealings with siblings give them challenges at each stage of their child’s life. Shaw (2009) added that families with disabled children together with the child knows grief, sadness, fear, worry and more love than most families. This is because what affects one member of a family cannot fail in some degree to affect the others. This can cause the parents to pull inward and lock up any possibilities to
share or open up on their experiences even when researches are been done to correct the prevailing situations.

In relation to the ecological theory, the interaction of the family and the society in which it is situated will definitely have an effect of the future life of the child with the disability. In this case it will be the macro level that would have brought the societal attitudes towards people with disability to see them in a compromised way and leading to their rejection. The impact could be that the child may not be accepted by the society in which he/she lives, which in turn will affect the child’s access and the participation in the educational activities in the child’s near future. In other instances however, if the macro system, the society or the school sooner or later, show positive attitudes to the family and become positive and supportive, other children/ the peers will also accept the child with a disability as a normal part of their community, and all the times possible may well include the child with disabilities in their activities. This will be excellent for the disabled child. Social acceptance is typically/particularly important within one’s environment. It may never be easy to the family who may already be trying to keep their heads above water due to parenting a child with a disability.

Usually the first action that the parents might take in the course of the denial or in the way to acceptance can be self withdrawal from the neighbours and the society. It cannot be denied that ones the family is withdrawn, or isolate themselves from the society, the society also isolates them in reciprocation. Additionally, in the course of the time that the parents grapple with coming to terms with/ accommodating their child with a disability, time runs out for them to give the basic and very important tender love and care for their disabled child, like any other child. So when parents take long to accept their child with a disability, often blaming each other, even when one parent decides to abandon the family, or when the step-parents takeover or get reluctant to take on a disabled child, it will be precious time that is lost for the child with a disability which might never be gained again. If a child misses out on parental love, this might have a negative effect on the child that he/she may in future, fail to give love in return or even to do any activities in the rest of his/her life lovingly. Shaw (2009) forwarded a view that during the denial period, the parents are likely to subject the child with a disability to neglect, abuse and not give the child parental love which is essential for any child’s psychological development.

Another possible reaction for the parents could be overprotection for the child with the disability. One action into overprotection can be that the parents may pull inwards and block
any communications with the outsiders, or to develop an attitude like ‘the skeleton in the cupboard’, which maybe trying to hide the disability and to just treat it as a family issue. Pang et al (2005) remarked that in many cases, parents feel shame toward their children with disabilities so much that they seldom bring them out to introduce to friends, or attend any activities, let alone providing them with appropriate education. This action can be both detrimental to the rest of the family and to the child him/herself in the sense that the rest of the family members can be forced to give up all their needs for the sake of the child with the disability or that the child with a disability may never learn to be independent as everything maybe done for him/her in a bid to cover up for him/her. Overprotection can also lead to failure to trust anybody outside the family to be responsible for their child. A result of such mistrust may lead the parents to simply choose not to send their child to school because they develop an unwillingness to trust leaving their child with a disability with someone else. When a person with a disability is kept from attending school, they tend to become worse with their conditions because they don't acquire any skills, for they are overprotected.

In some instances after the acceptance, many disabled children are left out in the communal lands under the care of maternal grandmothers while the parent seeks employment elsewhere (Devlieger, 1998), as is usually the situation in Zimbabwe. This situation can be described as a step forward and two steps backwards as, after accepting the child, the child takes even longer time to begin schooling. This can be true since the situation in developing countries’ communal areas is mainly residential and farming, far away from the schooling facilities for students with disabilities which are mainly situated in urban areas. For the family, it is true that each milestone like achieving acceptance, each step taken toward the future is a positive one, but each step back, although a heartache at times, is a challenge to be conquered, (Science Daily, 2009).

The other factor that in the rural areas, there usually exist only regular education schools which might not accommodate the child with a disability, this may mean that the children may have to move to special schools or institutions that are located far away from where the child lives. Public schools those are accessible to all rarely accommodate people with disabilities. It may then mean that the child with a disability might have to be sent to a special school, for people with disabilities, which in turn become costly, (Devlieger, 1998). The special schools maybe few, as noted by Dakwa (1985), and only found in other districts which can be far away from where the pupil with the disability lives. Given such scenarios where the child has to compete for the few places that may be available in the few schools, then their
access to education is compromised. The other issue that the schools for the students with disabilities maybe situated in a different area from where the child grew up in, might also mean that the child and the parents move backwards again to struggle with acceptance in a new community. Research has also shown that negative cultural attitudes persist not only in the community, but also among family members, fathers and paternal relatives in particular (Chimedza, 2000).

2.3.4 Policy provisions and practice

Even though special needs education is still held captive by negative attitudes of people due to cultural beliefs in Zimbabwe, it has garnered support from the politicians in parliament to ensure the government’s responsiveness to have public laws and policies that can address the concerns of people with disabilities. Laws are passed in parliament in Zimbabwe and the laws are named by the years in which they were passed for instance The Education Act of 1987. Students with disabilities in Zimbabwe are served under The 1987 Education Act which states that it is committed to provide for the fundamental rights for all children. It states that “every child in Zimbabwe shall have the right to school education.” No child shall be refused admission to any schools on the grounds of discrimination, Government of Zimbabwe (1986). It is however assumed that students with disabilities are covered in the ‘all children’ phrase and that everyone could be assured of the same opportunities, even though the wording does not include people with disabilities.

In Zimbabwe, the Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs Department is one department in the Ministry of Education which is responsibility for the identification, assessment, and placement of students with disabilities in schools. The government directs the enrolment and oversees the education of such students through this department. To date, Zimbabwe has adopted the policy of inclusive education and thus it is hoped that schools have to provide equal access to education for learners with disabilities. Any school-going age child, regardless of ability or disability has the right to access education at a school of one’s choice (Mutepfa, Mpofu and Chataika, 2007). It is against the law for any school to refuse to enrol a child on grounds of disability, it is in violation of the Disabled Persons Act (1996) and one is liable to face disciplinary action. The legislation is in place, what remains are to see whether the real situation on the ground tallies with the law. Another issue of concern is whether the people with disabilities have knowledge of what is in place for them, and also to see if just putting a law is enough to improve the educational access and participation of people with disabilities.
In Zimbabwe also, policies are also recognized instruments just as the laws even though they still have to be passed as laws in future. The Secretary’s Circular Minute Number P36 of 1990 is a policy which directs that children with special needs can be placed in regular education schools and learns in integrated settings or they can learn in special education institutions depending on the severity of the child’s disability. The secretary’s circular intention was to mandate on the integration of students with disabilities into regular schools which were believed to be the least restrictive environments for the students. McGivney (1993) argued however that in practice though, many children with disabilities are still institutionalized in special schools. Educational Psychologists are the professionals responsible who work under the Schools’ Psychological Services and are responsible for the assessment and placement of the children into Special Classes, Resource Units or Special Institutions depending on the operational level of the child.

The Schools Psychological Services co-ordinates special needs education and implements the decisions taken at national level through the education offices. The government is also committed to providing extra funding on top of the government grants that every child is entitled to. The extra funding is eligible to vulnerable children so that they can access schooling with ease. The program pays levies, school fees and examination fees for children from disadvantaged families. Children with special needs as well as those with barriers to learning and development also fall under the vulnerable group. Circular Minute Number 1 of 2003 Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) was specifically put in place for that purpose. Chitiyo and Wheeler (2004) content that these policies of the early years of independence, sought to enhance access and participation in the education system of the previously denied and deprived members of the society. It cannot be denied that through sound funding, quality education is enabled. Stubbs (2002) believed that it should be the state’s duty to supply support services at affordable prices including assistive devices for people with disabilities to assist them and increase their independence and participation in educational activities.

Good intentions are observable in widening the access and the participation for students with disabilities. However, Mavundukure and Thembani (2000) cited a discrepancy that there is no specific legislation on special needs education. The writer agrees with the above authors that a specific legislation for special needs education other than operating under another policy would help mandate the sound provision of special needs education for instance the updating and amendments of inappropriate curriculum. Chitiyo and Wheeler (2004) argued that
although Zimbabwe has initiated some legislation and developed policies to stimulate the teaching of pupils with special needs, the government fails to implement these legislations and policy plans, probably due to the reason that there is no specific legislation on special needs education.

Dakwa (1985) spelt out the factor that the Zimbabwean policy encourages pupils with special educational needs to use the general education curriculum with minor modifications to it. The curriculum in a school is what is learnt and what is taught (context), also how it is delivered (teaching \ learning methods), the resources used as well as the support teaching and learning given to the beneficiaries, (UNESCO 2005). UNESCO added that the curriculum needs to be flexible enough to provide possibilities for adjustment to meet individual needs. Like in the case for enhancing participation for students with disabilities, aspects like Daily Living Skills, Braille typing or sign language may need to be incorporated in the curriculum. Mobility and Orientation Skills, Sign Language and many other fundamental skills may need to be flexibly included into the students’ curriculum. Stakes and Hornby (1997) are against a situation where teachers attempt to fit students into a rigid curriculum rather than designing a curriculum that fits children’s educational needs. Inadequate curriculum preparation, lack of programs that foster creativity in young minds; outdated textbooks have the capacity to hinder student participation in many ways. Chimedza (2008) remarked that the curriculum can enhance or hinder participation and noted that in the classroom, embracing pupil participation originated in attempts to make the curriculum and teaching and learning processes more child-centered.

In Bronfenbrenner’s theory, provision of a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the students is done at macro level. If at macro level, a curriculum provided does not address the individual needs of students with disabilities, it then will affect their participation. Johnsen (2001) remarked that the content provided for at macro-level needs to provide flexibility at micro-level. Chimedza (2008)’s observation was noble when he commented that the school curricula should be inclusive as well, failure which it becomes difficult for students to participate fully in the educational activities that are planned for them. A curriculum’s flexibility, adaptations and adjustments to accommodate the learning needs of students with disabilities are critical for effective participation to succeed. In situations where participation is compromised, students miss out and become passengers in their learning, rather than participants in the education process. Accessing the curriculum with some constraints can
affect students with disabilities even more harshly, and may see them dropping out as they may see the curriculum as irrelevant to their needs.

Participation has also been frequently mentioned as an important outcome in school for children with disabilities, Chimedza (2000). In the context of this study participation will refer to the process of involving the students in the educational activities, and more so, considering the fact that the children with disabilities are taking part independently in the activities that would have been planned for them. As earlier noted, students with disabilities may sometimes fail to make full use of the general educational facilities provided for pupils of their age. It then may mean that special arrangements for people with disabilities need to be set up to ensure that they are not left out to participate in the activities that maybe planned for them. Some important considerations may include individual paces of learning, individual child motivation, child involvement in all learning, individual interests, group work and individual self management. Johnsen (2001) supports this notion as he stated that, when students are active participants in learning they can assume a growing degree of responsibility. It can be probable that when an individual views an activity as coming from his own initiation and as his effort, his participation in learning and strengths may give the student full responsibility for the learning. This means that child participation is an indispensable component of children accessing their right to education. Participation in the educational activities also gives students experience. It cannot be denied therefore that students learn best through participation and experience. There should also be consideration of the level of child participation, where a depth of children’s engagement in participation should be considered, not to consider part participation as full participation. In order to consider the participation of the children as full participation, the involvement of children in education programs must go beyond their participation as recipients of services but as partners. This means that participation is the key to increasing children’s confidence and ability. What the students need would just be the support, from both the teachers and from the parents.

Education in earlier years, schools used to operate on the basis of the child viewed as a passive recipient of adult expertise. This meant that, children in school would just be expected to ‘receive’ education from the knowledgeable teacher, without contravention or questioning. Today, renowned writers and experts in quality education advocate for student centered education, which Ments (1983) purported that it is the kind of teaching that involves the student in activities that relate learning to practice. Ments (1983) added that students should
be viewed as partners in the learning journey. Citing a situation where because of a disability, some children are not allowed to participate in some activities in school for the reason that they have a disability can be very disheartening and sound unfair to them. It is when the child with a disability sees himself/herself as different from his own peers. McGivney (1993) hallmarked the point that to the student, the shock of finding out how one is different from others through being told, mocked, teased is crippling to a young mind. This may give a picture to the pupil of being outside the 'in' group, and can also be detrimental to the mental health of the child and can affect his or her school performance. The resultant reaction to such treatment can be retreating in many situations because they have no capacity to help themselves in such circumstances. In a report by Fanelli and Mushunje (2007) it is noted that the students unfortunately accept that they will not be fully participating members either in the school or in their families. Fanelli and Mushunje (2007) added that in most instances, disabled children are excluded from most inter school events because of the problems of access, in most instances due to simply an unwillingness to allow such children to participate with ‘normal children’! Such scenarios are just unfortunate in that the truth of the matter lies in the fact that there is a growing body of evidence indicating that where children are given opportunities to participate in the development and fulfillment of their own capabilities, they acquire greater levels of competence, which in turn enhances the quality of their participation, UNESCO (2001).

Fanelli and Mushunje (2007) echoed the same sentiments that when opportunities for real participation are provided, children with disabilities like all other children, are able to benefit from the experience. Darkenwald (1980) propounded the same point in a similar way that the more opportunities children have for participating in their own education, and in decisions and actions which affect them, the greater their competence even though McGivney (1993) discovered that children with disabilities are largely denied any real opportunities for meaningful participation.

2.4 Summary

As has been reviewed by significant past research, obstacles and constraints to the educational access and participation of people with disabilities are prevalent in almost all countries of the world. The efforts that the concerned governments, societies and people put to improve on the situation are crucial as globally people are now committed to widening and improving the access and participation for people with disabilities.
Chapter 3: The context of Zimbabwe

This chapter contains short descriptions of the different issues that are related to the education for pupils with disabilities with specific focus on the issues that are possible hindering factors to their access and participation. Zimbabwe, the study arena is a developing country which lies in the southern part of Africa. In terms of the population, the latest census that was carried out was in 2002. It contains that in Zimbabwe, twelve million people are recorded as the official population of Zimbabwe. This could be subject to have a difference as of the present situation because of a variety of reasons, for example that the census records are almost a decade old, big changes could have taken place, and also many things have happened between the period of the census to date which can make the record different or unreliable. Of the twelve million people, Choruma (2006) reported that the Zimbabwe Inter-Censal Demographic Survey of 1997 recorded a total of 218,421 people with disabilities in the country which is about two per cent of the total population, whereas, five years later, Zimbabwe’s 2002 Housing and Population Census presented a national disability prevalence of 2.9 per cent.

In terms of the religious beliefs of the people of Zimbabwe, half the population is classified as syncretism (part Christian; part indigenous beliefs), 25% as Christians, 24% as indigenous, with Muslims and other minor religions making up the remaining 1% (Census of Zimbabwe 2002). This is worth noting since, Caine and Caine (1991) expressed the view that religion and culture can have an influence on education. Because of some traditional and religious beliefs, people with disabilities have been experiencing inconsistent treatment, even though the situation is moving from bad to better.

Caine and Caine (1991) added that the environment can also influence learning. Economically, Zimbabwe is mainly agro-based. Until recently however, drought has unfortunately been persistent in Southern Africa, leaving the once viable economy shattered since there have been not enough agricultural produce to sustain the economy. UNESCO (2001) expressed the sentiment that economy is the basic determinant of the people’s lives and education. In the past decade as well, Zimbabwe was severely hit by an economic downturn due to the negatively affecting high inflationary environment that also negatively affected all sectors including education. In 2008, Chidindi reported that Zimbabwe had experienced a serious negative economic decline with inflation rate of 165,000% and had
quoted (Manwere 2008). Hanke and Kwok (2009) propounded that Zimbabwe experienced the first hyperinflation of the 21st century, which was a record high and the second highest inflation in the world history. This high inflationary environment has negatively affected all sectors including education. The effects were and are still seriously felt in the provision of quality education and special needs education has not been spared either. Budgets on teaching /learning materials and provisions as well as the infrastructural development have drastically fallen over the years.

3.1 The education system of Zimbabwe

The system comprises of a four tier educational model whereby a pupil spends seven years in primary, four in lower secondary, two years in advanced secondary level before tertiary and/or university education. After the seven years primary course, there is a mandatory terminal examination which determines the entry into secondary education and also gradesstreams pupils according to their passes into the type of school one enters the secondary education. All pupils are automatically promoted to secondary school but graded into good and high performing schools depending on the pass rate at grade seven. Pupils with disabilities follow the same trend, write the same national examination and are also graded the same way into secondary school despite their functional limitations.

Explicitly, Zimbabwe uses a national curriculum. Curriculum Development Unit is a body under the Ministry of Education that is responsible for the development of the national curriculum content that is taught in schools. The curriculum is expected to implement goals of education set by the government. In general, the school curriculum comprises subjects matter and co-curricular activities. At primary level the pupils are supposed to take all the ten subjects without choice. Emphasis is put on the four basic subjects; Maths (basic numeracy) English and Shona /Ndebele (basic literacy) and all the other subjects are combined as content subjects. UNESCO (2001) highlighted the fact that the existing curriculum for Zimbabwe is outcomes based. Students learn to produce an outcome, for instance they learn and they are expected to pass an examination. It is hoped that by the end of primary course, the pupils would have acquired the skills in basic literacy and numeracy, language and communication, science and technology, ethics and citizenship and in practical skills.

Special Needs Education is coordinated under the Department of Schools’ Psychological services and is run by the Ministry of Education. Zimbabwe has adopted the policy of inclusive education; however few schools have officially begun to implement full inclusion.
Some of the educational provisions that are in place for people with special educational needs include inclusive education, locational and functional integration as well as segregated learning settings for those who are profoundly disabled. Chidindi (2008) asserted that the Secretary’s Circular Minute Number P36 of 1990 directs on the procedures to be followed in the placement of students in Special Classes, Resource Units and in Special Schools depending on the severity of the child’s disability. The most common provisions are especially locational integration where pupils with disabilities are taught at the same location as the regular students, but in separate units or schools. Locational integration allows little contact between students with special needs and regular students and also particularly, the programs differ in the different set-ups.

Integration is mainly found in the urban set-ups, whereas residential areas are common in the rural areas. Functional integration is also common in Zimbabwe. With functional integration, children with special needs attend the same classes as the regular students and partake in other activities as well. The main point about functional integration is that the curriculum is shared between the special education students and the regular students (Williams, 1988). Such is the situation in Zimbabwean special needs classes that, students learn using the prescribed National curriculum. The students have to learn the subject matter like mathematics, languages and sciences irrespective of their capabilities, disabilities or inabilities.

The students with disabilities are also expected to sit for the same National examinations with regular education students at the end of the Primary School course. The examinations are academic oriented, challenging and they do not cater for students with disabilities, for example there is no translation of the same examination in Braille or Sign Language. Individual schools organize for the translations for the students with disabilities.

Education is not free ever since the program of Structural Adjustment Program was introduced in 1990, students pay school fees and parents provide their children with writing books, writing equipment and also reading material in some circumstances.

3.2 The present situation in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, as the study arena, so many things have happened in the past two decades. It is pretty vital to mention some of the events that have happened because some of the events can make changes to some findings that have been proven or recorded to be null and void, or they can be taken with relative contextual meanings. As alluded to earlier, the economy of Zimbabwe has dropped drastically. This situation has changed the lives of almost all people,
including people with disabilities. Poverty has raised so much and unemployment has also risen. Qualified personnel have migrated to other countries, leaving gaps in almost all sectors, including the education sector. People/ the working population have migrated to greener pastures and this has left incomplete families, where one parent families or child headed families now exist. The few elite families who previously afforded sending their children to school or providing them with the necessary requirements probably can no longer afford. People are living on alternative options unlike the ideal ones. Some children are left with the extended family members in circumstances when the biological parents seek employment or livelihoods elsewhere. In many circumstances such situations are not the best, especially that the children lack the basic parental love and care, and especially that, biological parents are the best caregivers especially with children with disabilities.

In circumstances as the one described above that parents get unemployed, some may even fail to afford basic requirements like food so much that some children go to school on empty stomachs. Richards (2005) believes that if children consistently go to school hungry, in the long run their grades are going to suffer because he said that very little learning and studying takes place since the primary focus or goal is for the hungry child is to get something in his/her stomach to ease the hunger pangs. It is agreeable that children may fail to concentrate full time on their studies while hungry. In terms of provisions of necessary school requirements like writing/reading books, pencils and others, the children usually just go without. Everybody is expected ‘to understand the situation.’

In terms of government providing the ideal for the pupils in schools, this has also been affected by the economic downturn. In terms of provision of qualified human resources, today it fails because the qualified personnel are leaving for greener pastures since the government cannot pay them satisfactorily. Such situations result in serious brain drain, leaving the government with no option but to employ non qualified teaching staff, who cannot give the best especially in teaching students with disabilities. The once set budgetary plans for providing government grants for individual pupils have been frozen due to the unavailability of the funds. Parents and pupils are left with the responsibility to meet the bills which many usually cannot afford. Parents’ failure to afford usually just leads to second options like withdrawing the children from school. The situation is worse with children with disabilities who are usually thought to be unproductive in return. Life in general is typically hard for all the people, it is worse with people with disabilities. UNICEF (2001) reported that children with disabilities in Zimbabwe live under especially difficult circumstances that also include
negative attitudes from the people without disabilities. UNICEF added that they have limited access to facilities and their fundamental rights such as to education and health are often compromised.

In terms of policy provision, implementation, evaluation and follow-up, the government also fails to afford following up for example that they cannot afford transporting the responsible staff who can do such duties. On the upgrading and maintenance of suitable infrastructure, it has also been severely hit for people cannot afford to upgrade infrastructure without food on the table, leaving every sphere a disadvantage for people with disabilities. On the whole, the whole spectrum is left affected and, it is not easy to heal wounds, for every day another wound opens up.

Access to schooling is a nightmare for people with disabilities. The available provisions like special classes are few; they do not manage to cater for the growing numbers of students with disabilities. Children with disabilities move from one school to another, in search of places for the schools which offer special needs education. In Chitungwiza District for example, as the study arena, the District had records that there were thirteen primary schools that offered special needs education. Three of them offered Hearing Impairment; ten of them offered Mental Retardation, and there was no Visual Handicap Unit in the whole District. The whole District has forty primary schools and ten secondary schools. Below is a breakdown of the schools that offer special needs education and those that offer only regular education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of school</th>
<th>Primary/ Secondary</th>
<th>Type of disability catered for</th>
<th>Type of facility offered</th>
<th>Number of classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seke 1 High</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Mental Retardation</td>
<td>Special class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zengeza1 High</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Mental Retardation</td>
<td>Special Class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zengeza 8</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Hearing Impairment</td>
<td>Resource Unit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shingai</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Hearing Impairment</td>
<td>Resource Unit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudzai</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Mental Retardation</td>
<td>Resource Unit /</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon Cohen</td>
<td>Primary&amp;Vocational</td>
<td>Mental Retardation</td>
<td>Special school</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary’s</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Mental Retardation&amp;Hearing</td>
<td>Special class /Resource Unit</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zengeza 4</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Mental Retardation</td>
<td>Special class /Resource Unit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaminuka</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Mental Retardation</td>
<td>Special class /Resource Unit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Aidens</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Mental Retardation</td>
<td>Special class /Resource Unit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Chitungwiza District provision for special classes and resource Units record. Data sourced from document analysis during data collection, Chitungwiza District Office
At Provincial Level, data was available but it was outdated, it was recorded over a decade before. Updated data was anticipated to come out from the upcoming National Census which is due to come in two years time. It was reported that it was hard and unaffordable to find updated data due to the hard economic situation that prevailed during the time of the study. Below is the breakdown of the recorded prevalence of PWD in Zimbabwe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of disabled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visually impaired</td>
<td>10,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability of lower limb</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability of upper limb</td>
<td>6,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental retardation and behavior disorders</td>
<td>6,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impaired</td>
<td>5,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech impaired</td>
<td>7,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurological impairment</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinal impairment</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory impairment</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardio-vascular impairment</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin impairment</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other impairments</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of disability</th>
<th>Special Schools</th>
<th>Resource Units</th>
<th>Individual Integrated</th>
<th>Multiple handicap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impairment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive disabilities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Impairment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Special education services available. Source: Chitiyo and Wheeler (2004).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1266</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>2089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>6490</td>
<td>10368</td>
<td>16858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>8877</td>
<td>6964</td>
<td>15841</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.3 Clarification of concepts

3.3.1 Access

Is to have the ability to enter and enjoy the provision without constraints. In terms of access to educational facilities, access will entail the children’s capacity to make use of the educational facilities, without many problems or without some closer of such opportunities. Access can be denied in different ways for example through inadequate availability of assistive resources or technology, so anything that barricades in the way of access will be noted as barriers to access.

3.3.2 Participation

It entails being included in the activities that have been planned for the rest of the group without exceptions for some students, maybe because they have limitations. When pupils in school get opportunities arranged for them to enhance their participation and also when they get fully engaged not partly engaged that signifies the level of participation that is expected of in this study. This also includes children not only attending classes but taking part and action being involved in the activities rather than simple presence in the school.

3.3.3 Barriers

Barriers can mean blockages to possible accessibility or probably the closer of opportunities. So anything that can be natural planned or unresolved to ease the access and participation for students with disabilities in school will be a barrier. Some barriers can work to restrain or obstruct progress, the participation or access.

3.3.4 Students with disabilities

A person with a disability shall in this study refer to a person who is limited in the kind or amount of activities that he or she can do because of ongoing difficulties due to a long-term physical condition, mental condition or health problem (United Nations, 1998). In other words, people with disabilities can be found to possess reduced functioning in selected circumstances which in a way could have been caused by some disability. The disability may bar them full participation in activities which they might wish to participate in. Given such
scenarios, students with disabilities usually fail to compete equally in educational activities with their non disabled counterparts in schools, thereby rendering them incapable of accessing school or participating in school similarly as their non disabled peers. People with disabilities in quite numerous societies are defined usually by what they lack, not by what they are. A result of such definitions will lead the students with disabilities nowhere else other than in discriminated settings both in society and schools.

### 3.3.5 Disadvantage

The Free Online Dictionary (2010) defined disadvantage as an unfavorable condition or circumstance or something that places one in an unfavorable condition or circumstance. In terms of possibilities for access and participation for people with disabilities, there can be some things that create inability to access and participate and these will be counted as disadvantages.
Chapter 4: Methodology

In this chapter, we find the research approach and design, the methods that have been used to collect data, a clarification of the population, the sample and the sampling procedure that was used in this research. The chapter also highlights the procedures of data collection, data interpretation and analysis, validity, ethical consideration, and limitations of the study for instance some challenges encountered during the data collection that may have affected the research process and how they were overcome. The main research question investigated was: how do contextual constraints impact on the access and participation for students with disabilities, and the sub questions sought to find out which constraints hinder meaningful access and participation and also how the constraints can be mitigated?

4.1 Research approach and design

Yin (2003) says that a research approach is a plan that guides the one carrying out the study in the process of collecting data, analyzing it, the interpretation and its conclusion. As this study aimed at excavating the constraints that impact on the access and participation for students with disabilities, so was the intention to reach out to the informants for first hand information. The plan to get data from the people who have the real life experiences of living with a disability was found to be the best way to get the most reliable information about the constraints that impact on the access and participation for students with disabilities. The first hand information from the informants themselves about the phenomena and its influence on the access and participation for students with disabilities is just at the heart of what the study yelled for. Strauss and Corbin (1998) articulated that qualitative research concerns people’s lives, social interaction and relationships. Lofland (1984) added that qualitative research involves an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern the human behaviour.

In relation to this study, the factors which impact on the access and participation for students with disabilities can best be described by students with disabilities themselves, their parents and by the teachers, basing on their practical experiences. In light of that clarification, the researcher chose to use the qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach permitted the researcher access and direct interaction with the informants involved in a bid to unearth the constraints that impact on the access and participation for people with disabilities. The qualitative research approach that was employed is exploratory and it comprises of a multiple
case study design. The choice to use a multiple case study aimed at, and was hoped to give an in-depth search on the judgments by the participants or informants' concrete experience on their perspectives about their access and participation opportunities in educational activities. The obstacles which hinder the access and the participation for students with disabilities were explored through the research questions, interviews and consultation of documents. The choice of the qualitative approach made it possible to use the instruments that facilitate interaction with the informants and probing the informants to express their personal experiences. So interviews, as the instruments, facilitated interaction and rapport between the investigator and the informants. From the capture of their voices and body language and their descriptions of their experiences, a clear perspective was expected to come out on how the students are disadvantaged in education, maybe as a result of disability.

An added advantage that prompted the choice of the qualitative research approach was that the participants would express their views in a relaxed atmosphere as they were studied in their natural environment, not in a secluded, foreign working, learning or living environment. A natural conversation puts the respondent at ease, and then he or she generates information in a tension free atmosphere and may sometimes not even realize that he or she is being interviewed. Yin (2003) postulated that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context. The informants were interviewed in their natural and real life context, which were their classrooms, their homes, their workplaces, the participants felt that they were safe, at ‘home’, relaxed and they could express their experiences and opinions with strength and at length. Patton (2001) also hallmarks case studies that they are particularly useful in that they depict and portray the whole or particular aspects of a client's experiences.

In addition to the interviews, the researcher used the observation as another minor method to collect the data. When the participants were interviewed in their natural environments, like their homes or schools, the researcher used this opportunity to observe the environment and compared it with the constraints that were brought forward by the informants. It was natural/unavoidable to observe the participants’ learning or living environments and confirm with what the participants reported. This multiple case study consists of four cases; which comprise the Case of Students with disabilities, the teachers who taught students with disabilities, the parents of children with disabilities and the policy planners who are the responsible authority in the provision of education for students with disabilities. The total
number of the informants was twenty one. The number of the informants in each of the cases varied due to their availability and willingness to take part in the research.

**The phenomenon under investigation**
The study was based on unearthing the constraints that hinder the access and successful participation of students with disabilities into school and in their learning.

**4.2 Methods of data collection and instruments**

Interviews were used as the main method to collect data for this study. The researcher also saw it necessary to consult documents as a supplementary method of collecting the data. By using different methods of collecting data, triangulation of the data sources was utilized and this also strengthens the validity of the findings.

**4.2.1 Interview**

Interviews were used as the main instruments to collect the data. An interview is a conversation between two or more people with the aim of obtaining information from the interviewee(s). Kvale (1996) defined an interview as a conversation that has a structure and a purpose that goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views in everyday conversation because an interview involves careful questioning and listening with a purpose. Silverman (2000) highlighted that qualitative interviewing enables the participants to describe the social world in their own terms/words and give their experiences and interpretations of the social world around them. However, Kumar (1999), reflected on some disadvantages of interviews in the context of research, as he noted that the quality of data depends on the quality of interaction between the interviewer and interviewee; the interviewer’s skills, commitment and experience; quality of data may vary when many interviewers are used; and, the researcher may introduce his or her bias in the framing of questions.

In this study, some aspects of the disadvantages of interview were realized with the students with disabilities as some of the informants. Some of the students could not articulate themselves clearly due to the problem of speech deficits. The researcher also assumed the students with disabilities as informants with speech problems may also have left out some information due to failure to express oneself. It would then be argued that the view by Silverman (2000) that the respondents can describe their experiences in their own terms/words would to some extend be unachievable given such circumstances. The researcher also felt that this might have affected the quality of the data collected. It was however prudent
that the researcher rectified this issue by having more respondents from the case of the students, to have varied responses to cover up for facts that could have been left out.

**4.2.2 The interview guide**

Efforts to ensure that respondents answered the research questions completely stirred the researcher to set down semi-structured interview guides for the four different groups of informants. An interview guide serves as a checklist during the interview and ensures that basically the same information is obtained from a number of informants. Four interview guides were developed for the four different groups of informants. All the four different interview guides were prepared in a similar fashion even though they contained different items but they all basically ensured a comprehensive coverage of access and participation related issues. Generally, the guiding questions were prepared in a way to allow open-ended responses from the informants. This was done with the presumption that there can be emerging questions, and then it had an allowance for new questions to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee would have said. Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) forwarded the fact that interviews assist the researcher to probe more deeply using open ended questions and also to make follow up to the respondent’s answers to obtain more information. The students with disabilities had problems in understanding the questions from the interview guide in English so the researcher translated the questions into their mother tongue. It was fortunate that the researcher spoke the same language with the participants, so the researcher carried out all the interviews by herself. For the full report of the interview guides, see Appendices 6-9.

**4.2.3 Document analysis**

As postulated above, it was thought to be necessary to collect more data for the study through document analysis in addition to the interviews. Documents about assessment records for students with disabilities that document their kinds of disabilities and their functional abilities in school were consulted to give the researcher the additional information about the students. Other documents that were consulted were the documents on the policy regulations that guide the teaching, financial provisions and examinations procedures for students with disabilities. Yin (1993) supported the use of document analysis as a supporting data collection method as he stated that the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other data sources.
4.3 Population, sample and sampling procedure

The population of this study consisted of children with disabilities, the teachers in schools in Harare Province, the parents who have disabilities and all the Harare Provincial Education staff at the policy implementation stage. Purposive sampling was used to select the cases and participants. Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) postulated that the goal of purposive sampling is to select cases that are likely to be information rich. In addition, Robson (2002) asserted that the principle of purposive sampling is the researcher’s judgment as to the typicality. With the help of the Ministry of Education’s Office, using their official records, five schools were purposefully selected to participate in the study due to the typicality that they were believed to be information rich. Students with disabilities who learnt in those schools would automatically take part in the study. Parents for the students with disabilities who learnt in the schools also got automatic eligibility to participate in the study. The main site of the study was chosen due to its accessibility and availability of the intended respondents.

4.3.1 Criteria for selecting the students. This was done purposefully by the teacher due to the typicality that one should be eloquent in speaking and also posed interest to participate in the study. The students who qualified to be my informants had to possess documents of assessments from the Ministry officials (Psychologists) and documented as disabled.

4.3.2 Criteria for selecting teachers. For the selection of the teachers, the criteria was that the teachers had to have a teaching experience in teaching students with disabilities for a minimum of five years.

4.3.3 Criteria for selecting the parents. This was due to their availability and also their interest to participate in the study as a parent of a child with a disability.

4.3.4 Criteria for selecting staff at the policy implementation stage. This was done with the help of the Higher Education office, and we chose those with the highest working experience for individual staff and also their availability as most of them were almost always out of office with some other business.

Data triangulation was used to add validity to the data. Triangulation improves the internal validity of a study as different data collection methods allowed for comparison of information and also adds to the sufficiency of data as strengthened by Schmuck (2009). Robson (2002)
supports the use of more than one source of information, as he noted that this provides a means of testing one source of information against the other. Yin (2003:97) also argues that ‘a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence’. Parents, teachers and policy implementers therefore validate the worthiness of data from students, thereby improving the quality of data and consequently the accuracy of findings.

4.4 Data collection procedure

Firstly, permission was sought from the gatekeepers that included the Ministry of Education’s Head Office, The Regional Office, The District Office, also from school heads and participants of the study. Permission was granted without any problems since I had all the necessary documents that they required. Armed with all the necessary permission documents, I set on my data collection journey, moving from one school to the other, conducting the interviews. I interviewed one informant at a time because that gave freedom to informants to express one’s feelings, thoughts, and intentions, without being heard by others. I recorded the interview sessions with a video recorder but I had to seek permission first from the respondents. The intention was to ease my transcription and analysis later when I would be able to observe and interpret the body language and facial expressions as the respondents clarified their points. The use of the recorder was also intended to later on employ the re-reading strategy for meaning. It meant that it could be easier to refer to specific parts of the sessions during the transcription process. Recording usually reduces the tendency of interviewers to make an unconscious selection of data favouring their biases (Gall, Gall and Borg 2003), especially when taking down some notes. Recording helped me to be more attentive to the interviewees, thereby making follow-up questions.

It was later discovered that some of the respondents were very particular about being video recorded, especially due to the prevailing political instability in the country, for they feared victimization in any circumstance. The researcher did not have a voice recorder at hand, but quickly thought to turn away the camera and only record the voice. Fortunate enough, the respondents agreed to this option. However there was one of the respondents who opted to write down the answers instead of having her voice recorded because said that she was not sure who would read or listen to the responses that she had supplied. Interviews went on concurrently with document analysis as the researcher would check on the documents after the interviews. Before starting interviews, informants were informed about the purpose of the
study and the interviews. Clarifications about the choice to take part in the study or to pull out at any stage were given to the informants at the time they signed their consent forms. All confidentialities and anonymities were assured to the informants to avoid harming them.

Below is a table that summarizes the Cases and the respondents of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Number of informants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students with disabilities</td>
<td>Bria1, Brie2, Brii3, Brio4, Briu5, Briø6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parents for students with disabilities</td>
<td>Cria1, Crie2, Crii3, Crio4, Criu5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teachers for students with disabilities</td>
<td>Dria1, Drie2, Drii3, Drio4, Driu5, Driø6, Driæ7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Policy implementation staff for students with disabilities</td>
<td>Fria1, Frie2, Frii3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Summary of Cases and the respondents

### 4.5 Pilot study

Robson (2002) describes a pilot study as a mini-version of the study and he explained that it should be conducted before the researcher engages on the main study. A pilot study helps the researcher to refine data collection plans with respect to both the content of the instrument and the procedures to be followed (Yin, 2003). For instance, since I mostly designed my own instruments, pre-testing them enabled me to make necessary changes, before embarking into the main study. After the pilot study, I realized that I needed to translate the questions for the students into their mother language so that they could understand them more clearly. I also realized that I needed a second battery for the camcorder as electricity was generally unavailable during school hours. I carried out the pilot study with participants with the same characteristics as those that were not involved in the main study, but from a different District.

### 4.6 Organization and analysis of data

Yin (2003) pointed out that analysis of data involves examining, categorizing, tabulating or otherwise combining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study. The interpretational analysis method was chosen to guide the analysis of the data. Gall et al. (2007) stated that interpretational analysis is a process of examining case study data closely in order to find constructs, themes, and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon under study.
Firstly, interview files on my video recorder were coded with pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and to mask the identities of the informants. Transcription and translation from the language of the interview to English supervened. After the transcriptions, I then sorted my data from all the different informants into themes and categories. The idea of using themes and categories was advised by Charmaz (1983) who purported that categories serve to pull together and give meaning to a series of otherwise discreet events, statements, and observations in the data. With lots of data at my disposal, categorization was the only option that I had to organize and make meaning to it. I read through all the transcribed data, several times before I started arranging it in order to get a whole picture.

Preset categorization was adopted for this study. Earlier on, when I worked with the research literature for this study, I identified some burning issues of the research that I intended to know about, in this study. These aspects were decided upon to be adopted as the preset categories of the study. Preset categories were decided upon because they were can guide the data collection. Preset categories can guide and direct the researcher on what one looks for, in the data. It becomes much easier afterwards as the researcher just searches the data that matches the categories in the end.

The study aimed at exploring into the constraints that hinder access and participation for CWD, the researcher chose to look into the four categories of the constraints. The constraints were divided into physical constraints, social constraints, economic constraints and policy provision constraints. Simple abbreviations were given for the categories as follows; Physical Constraints was abbreviated as PC, social constraints =SC, economic constraints=EC and policy and provision constraints =PPC. These were treated as simple and temporary labels.

The simple temporary labels were changed to colour highlighters. The labels were matched to the colour markers that highlighted different categories. Differentiated categorized data were highlighted by different colour markers for easier identification and interpretations when needed. This process also aided the organization of the data into categories. The highlighted segments also led to identification of patterns within the data as well as differences within and across the categories, from the responses given by the informants.

After the categorization of the data, development of the themes supervened. I chose to develop descriptive themes from the summaries of my transcribed data. Since the research focused on the lived experiences of people with disabilities, their parents and the teachers on their access and participation in educational activities, descriptions of their experiences were
vital. Attention was therefore focused on the participants’ expressions about their feelings, their perceptions and possibly their reactions to these. Giorgi (1970) asserted that descriptive themes are formed from the summarized meaning units of the transcribed interviews. In the same vein, the themes were developed from the characteristics of the phenomenon that was being studied. As alluded to above, the phenomenon under investigation was the constraints that hinder the access and successful participation of students with disabilities into school and in their learning. With advice from Meier, Boivin and Meier (2008), I stated my themes in bi-polar terms with one end on the continuum representing the problem and the second end representing that toward which the client wants to strive. My participants’ words and expressions prompted me to develop the themes below:

a) Being denied opportunities versus equal treatment  
b) Being abused and being cared for  
c) Being undermined versus being respected  
d) Feeling discouragement versus support  
e) compulsion to work versus own choice  
f) Being segregated versus being included  
g) Neglect versus protection /overprotection  
h) Fear versus assurance  
i) Suppression versus being submissive  
j) Rejection versus acceptance  
k) Being deprived versus provision  
l) Poverty versus access to the basic needs.

I then searched data that matched the themes and thus divided the data. I used various coloured highlighters to mark relevant segments of concepts pertinent to the study. I found this pattern of analysis to be especially useful in the identification of commonalities as well as uniqueness within and across the cases. This meant that responses were also contrasted within the categories and sub-categories unlike just treating each case individually. This helped me to focus on data that was relevant to the study, while leaving out other data which I didn’t need for this particular study. I then used quotations from participants in the study as the excerpts. Strauss and Corbin (1998) purported that this process of analysis which is related to category and subcategories helps the researcher to identify similar data as well as that it gives possibility to identify similar conceptual labels.
Presentation of the results was chosen to be descriptive. The choice of a descriptive presentation was influenced by the factor that I needed to air out the informants’ responses, sometimes with their original words, which I found to be difficult if data would have been presented graphically. In that way, excerpts of interesting sections of the data are given, in a bid to illustrate the evolution of a theme. Richards (2005) advised on focusing on interesting sections of data. In addition, due to the reason that the study consisted of different / varied informants, I decided to present my data case by case and according to the subjects with their associated themes. The subjects in this study are the individual students with disabilities themselves, the parents, the teachers for the SWD and also the policy planners.

4.7 Efforts made to enhance validity and reliability

Gall et al. (2003), purports that triangulation refers to any attempts made to strengthen the credibility and secure validity of the research data. For this study, generating more evidence to validate the research findings was decided upon by the researcher. According to Gall et al (2003), triangulation offers ample opportunity to examine and cross examine evidences gathered during data collection process in order to establish hidden values which may not be realized if one method and single data source is used. Multiple sources of data and methods to collect the data was utilized, through interviews and also through document analysis and this was believed would minimize the element of bias that may arise from relying on only one data collection method or data source. Pilot-testing helped to identify threats to the validity of the study or aspects that could otherwise affect the credibility of the research findings and susceptibility to bias. The pilot study helped to make necessary adjustments on the instruments, for example I had to translate the interview guide for the children into the children’s mother tongue for the children to understand the questions better in a language they were familiar with.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Considering the fact that I was dealing with human subjects in my study, I was obliged to respect their rights, dignity, privacy as well as other sensitive issues. In order to conform to acceptable ethical standards I cleared off official channels by formally requesting permission (Bell, 2003), and before embarking on the main study. I sought permission from the Ministry of Education. In possession of the permission from the ministry I thereafter sought permission from the District that I carried out my study and from the participants that were the teachers, the students, the parents and the schools psychological services.
Volunteer participation was clearly explained to the participants before they signed in their consent forms. Participants had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any stage. Cohen and Marion (1994) suggest that informed consent is an important issue that one has to consider. I also explained the purpose of the study to the participants so that they could make their own informed choices. I promised full disclosure of the findings of the study to the participants as suggested by Kvale (1996). Additionally, I guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity to the participants. Since I was aware of the cultural norms of my study arena, I made sure that words and language that seemed to be sensitive to religion, disability, age, marriage status or tribe were avoided. Before embarking on the interviews, I requested all my informants to allow me video-record their responses. It later came out that not all the informants were free to be video recorded. Their reasons were that they feared victimization since it was rampant at the time of the study due to politics. The names of all informants were coded to conceal their identity and to maintain confidentiality. I used pseudo names as I believed that to be ethical for the reason to mask the identity of the empiri and the informants involved in the study.

As a token of appreciation to all my informants, I wrote a letter of appreciation to the Ministry of Education that issued me with the permission, expressing my appreciation for their co-operation and the support accorded to me by all the informants and the responsible authority during the study period, hoping that an acknowledgement circular would be sent to the participating schools and the informants.

4.9 Limitations related to the study

The findings from this study apply only to the five schools that were studied and to the parents of children with disabilities that were studied. Even though the results cannot be generalized to apply to all people with disabilities as in the whole country, they can also be used to understand the issues that surround compromised access and participation for students with disabilities and their inclusion into everyday school activities.

4.10 Challenges met during data collection

Interviewing children was not an easy job especially that the children had disabilities, some had speech problems, so they needed somebody to be very attentive and very patient. More time was spent with the children to establish rapport, explain to them about the study and avoided prizing the children since it would be ethically sensitive. Further explanation and simplification of the questions was provided when need.
Getting hold of parents was not easy as most of them were busy with their business, to make sure they had food for the children, they went to the market as they noted. Many of the parents made empty appointments, only to fail to be available. This was due to the harsh economic situation that prevailed in the country at the time of the study.

When some participants refused video recording, it was difficult as the researcher had to persuade to capture just the voice. It was even more challenging to make sure the recorder was always away from their vicinity but near enough to capture the voice while the interviews went on.

Due to the economic hardships prevailing in the study arena, it was sometimes visible and spoken out that some of the participants expected payment for the ‘services’. I could not do that, since I knew the repercussions it had to my study. It was peculiar with one official in the policy implementation stage, who clearly said that he could not give his knowledge before I sought for a vacancy for him to also get a place to study abroad, at the university where the researcher was also studying, or he could block my data collection at once. To the participant (who in the end dropped) being only shown the internet pages of the University so that he would apply on his own was not enough. His intention was that everything be done for him.

Threats to life were also received since it was known that the researcher was studying at a European University, which politically posed as an enemy to the country. Threatening statement held that if I ‘sell out’ confidential information to my University in Europe, I would receive my price when I returned home. This was only due to the political tension prevailing in the country at the time of the study. In response to this problem, I made sure that I never reported on any of the sensitive issues since I knew that I would sent a report to the Ministry as per our agreement, after the completion of the study.
Chapter 5: Presentation of data

This chapter presents the findings of the study. This study aimed at exploring into the obstacles that hinder the access and the full participation of students with disabilities into educational activities and how the obstacles can be mitigated. The study tried to answer this research question: How do contextual constraints impact on the educational access and participation by students with disabilities?

The sub-questions that the study also attempted to answer were:

1. Which constraints hinder meaningful access and participation?
2. In what ways do these constraints influence academic participation?
3. How can the constraints be mitigated?
4. What has been done so far to mitigate the obstacles?
5. To what extent have these strategies been successful?

Exploratory data presentation was employed in this research whereby useful information in relation to the present study is extracted out of the main data. Data is presented case by case and thematically. The data is also presented according to the subjects of the study with their associated themes that have been identified and developed from the phenomenon that was being studied. The main themes that have been developed are concerned mainly with the experiences encountered by the children with disabilities in the homes/family, in the society and at school. As alluded to earlier in the methodology chapter, the main themes of the study were:

a) being denied opportunities versus equal treatment b) being abused and being cared for
c) being undermined versus being respected d) feeling discouraged versus support
e) compulsion to work versus own choice f) being segregated versus being included
g) neglect versus protection /overprotection h) fear versus assurance
i) suppression versus being submissive j) rejection versus acceptance
k) being deprived versus provision l) poverty versus access to the basic needs.

The study also looked at the effects that the experiences have on the children’s education. The experiences of the students with disabilities in their families, the relations of the family to the school and community and the impact that the relationship has on the children’s schooling activities is the core of the analysis. Perspectives of the parents, the teachers and the policy implementation officials were found to be indispensible about the effects to the education of
the SWD. A cross case analysis of the data will also be presented after the individual cases are presented.

In an effort to maintain confidentiality and anonymity for the participants, the data is presented using the usernames that have been allocated to each participant. The use of the pseudonyms also gave way to free and deep scrutiny of the experiences shed by the informants without any fear of identification of the participants. This is also in line with the ethical standards in performing social research as advised by Gall et al (2007). Additionally, confidential information was not included in the background information so as to protect real identities.

5.1 Case 1

Case 1 consists of six participants, who were students with disabilities. The students had varied disabilities which included physical disabilities, brain damage, hearing impairments, albinism and general mental retardation. According to their assessment records, all the students who participated in the study have been diagnosed as living with mental retardation. Documents for the students were also consulted. The documents contained the information about their home background, their disability assessments, their enrolments into school and their strengths and weaknesses in school. All the students were enrolled into special classes and they had times that they used to join the mainstream classes for integration. The students came from varied home backgrounds. The researcher had an opportunity to visit their home places and observed their kind of living conditions, met their parents or guardians. Some of the students lived average or standard lives whereby the parents could afford a home of their own, were employed and could look after their children despite the factor that the economic hardships of the environment hit everybody. Other children lived with guardians, some of them were not employed, and some just earned a living from selling small things on the market, which also explains why some of the parents could not be reached. Some families lived in poverty, they could not even manage to afford decent accommodation, and some families were single parent families. The education level of the parents or guardians for the students also varied, some were professionals, some had basic education while some had not had the opportunity to attend any schooling at all, and they were old and just lived with their illiteracy.

5.1.1 Bria1

a) Being undermined versus being respected
Bria1 is the eldest child in a family of three boys. He lives with both of his parents. His father is employed, the mother is self employed. His father owns a car; sometimes the father accompanies his children to school. Bria1 said that he is not allowed to sit in the front seat of the car because he has a disability. His younger siblings sit in front while he sits in the back seat of the car. He said that it pains him to be denied equal treatment like any other child in his family. He expressed that he felt that there should not be such discrimination in the family only because he has a disability. Bria1 also expressed that his siblings look down upon him; they do not respect him as the eldest child in the family because of the disability that he lives with. One other issue that Bria1 marveled at was about failure by his family members to separate between him and the disability. He accentuated the point that his siblings get pocket money to buy some snacks at the school tuck-shop but he is not given. He said: I ask for money to buy some snacks at break time, my parents always say that they cannot give me the money because I will lose it before I use it. They think that I cannot use money because I have a disability.

b) Being denied opportunities versus equal treatment

Bria1 enlightened the researcher that in their home, he is left out in all daily household chores. He does not cook, clean the house or wash clothes as his siblings do. The reasoning behind his exclusion from participation in home chores was that he is believed to be unable to do anything significant because of the disability. His siblings get the opportunity to learn to be independent in their future lives but he cannot. He caught the drift of the conversation that he also realized that some day he will need to be able to be self-reliant if at one time his parents are not home; he needs to prepare his food and continue his everyday life normally. Bria1 vociferated that all the family members do not trust that he can do things for himself because he has a disability, so they keep doing things for him. He commented that there was a time that his mother was away and nobody could prepare his lunch pack, so he went to school without food and he was hungry the whole day. Bria1 added that at the end of the day he could not concentrate in any class activities because of hunger pangs in his stomach.

c) Being segregated versus being included

Asked about his experiences in the community and in school, Bria1 commented that peers do not want to play with him. Bria1 said; When we play football with other boys, nobody chooses me to be in their team. When they pick me to play with them, they are always calling me with bad names if I don’t play well, but all the others will also be failing to play well, nobody calls them with those bad names. I really hate those names which they call me! Sometimes I feel I would be out of their team.

When Bria1 talked about his experiences in school, he expressed sympathetically that he is much more comfortable in the Special Class where he learns with other pupils with
disabilities than to learn in the regular classroom. He said that when the teacher sends him for integration, (that is when he goes to the regular classroom for some specific lessons) he feels like a fish out of water, he does not participate in the class even when he sometimes knows the answers to the questions which the teacher in the regular class will have asked. Bri1 said that the reason why he did not participate freely in the integration class was that the fellow classmates laughed at him. He added that when the teacher gave them group activities, nobody wanted to work with him. He enjoys playing together with other boys who learn in the special class, who do not call him with names. At the school, he does not have any other friends besides those who also learn in the special class. The most challenging times that he experiences are the times that he has no other opportunities than to work with fellow students who do not have disabilities, for instance in organized play activities during integration periods.

d) Deprivation versus important provision

Bri1 thought that the subjects which they manage to do in school are not fully provided for. He insinuated about a selection of practical subjects which he thought are manageable for students with disabilities. He mentioned subjects like Art Education, Physical Education, Home Economics, Agriculture, Metal Work and Woodwork. He mentioned that in practical subjects, much of the practical activities include individual talents unlike academic excellence. He said: "there are pupils with some talents in this class, like drawing, like gardening, it would be good if they are provided with necessary tools/equipment to help them to achieve better life through their talents.

Many times the children do not do the subjects since there would be not enough materials to use, so the lessons are either cancelled or taught as any other academic subjects, taking down some notes. Bri1 said that he missed a lot in failure to have these subjects in school, he felt that something needed to be done about this loss.

5.1.2 Brie2

a) Being denied opportunities versus equal treatment

Brie2 is aged sixteen. He was diagnosed with Hydrocephalus. Hydrocephalus is a medical condition in which there is an abnormal accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid, which may cause increased and a progressive enlargement of the head, convulsion, and mental disability (Wikipedia, 2010) and is also known as "water on the brain’. Brie2 lives with his grandmother, on the maternal side. His parents divorced when they experienced problems about parenting a child with a disability. Brie2’s mother lives and works in the neighbouring
country, and that is how she gives a livelihood to the family. At home they also live with a housemaid who helps in the home. Brie2 does not do any household chores. Especially when his grandmother is at home, everything is done for him by the housemaid. Brie2 does not prepare any meals so until at his age now he cannot make food for himself. The reason for his denial to participate in the home chores was that his grandmother fears that he might be attacked by epileptic seizures while he is cooking and get hurt. Brie2 thought that it was denial of chances to learn to be independent because his grandmother will not live with him forever.

b) Discouragement versus support.

Brie2 spelled out how people reacted when they met him for the first time, because of hydrocephalus. He expressed that some would come to touch his head; others would ask if it was not painful. Others would call him ‘the big head that does not think’ He mentioned that at one time he became very rude and nasty to anybody who called him with names that he didn’t want. Brie2 feels relieved now that he is learning with other children with disabilities. Bria1 said that there is no more name calling, no more surprises, the people are friendly. Brie2 felt that it was better to learn in the special class until he finishes his ordinary level. Brie2 reiterated that in all the schools that he had learnt, he had failed to make friends as he found it very difficult to associate children without disabilities.

5.1.3 Brii3

Brii3 lives with his mother and his other siblings. His father deserted the family when Brii3 was still a little boy. He is the eldest child in a family of four children. He is fifteen years old now. His other siblings do not have any disability. Brii3 has speech problems and is almost always drooling.

a) Suppression versus being submissive

Brii3 lacks confidence in many things. The researcher observed that Brii3 lived a difficult life with his mother and siblings but it was difficult for him to tell about his problems. There seemed to have been threats that were made to him to make sure that he does not divulge to people the kind of life that he was living. He could not even express his experiences clearly, he would be seen cutting short his answers as if he was not stable or that he thought he would be reported. Brii3 was very careful not to say much against his mother. Further probing revealed that he was trained and drilled never to say anything about what happens at home. It was also discovered that the mother threatened him with abandonment in the street or can be
forsaken out of the home if he was known to report anything bad about the mother. The researcher did not manage to meet Brii3’s mother when she visited their home place. Brii3 lives very far away from school. He said that most of the time he will be tired by the time school begins because he wakes up very early to be able prepare and to be in school in time. At times he does not come to school when his mother does not have money for the bus fare. There was a time that he walked to and from school and found out that it was not feasible, so he just stays at home when they do not have the bus fare. The reason why Brii3 could not learn in schools in the suburb that he lives were found to be that it was a ploy by his mother to hide away from her own community. Brii3 could not complain even though the school was far away because he feared abandonment by his mother. He said that he just had to follow what she says to him.

**b) Discouragement versus support**

Brii3 was finding it very hard to make friends within the school or the community. He said that he has friends only in the special class that he learns. He has given up playing or looking for friends in the wider community as they continually mock him because of his drooling. He said: *They always laugh at me whenever saliva drools out of my mouth. I always stoop very low when they laugh at me.*

**c) Compulsion to work versus own choice**

At home Brii3 is responsible for the garden. He has to make sure that the family does not run out of vegetables as they are the source of the family food. Brii3 washes clothes for his siblings, prepares meals, irons and cleans in the house. Brii3 is overworked at home. From his facial expression, it showed that he was tired and yelled for relief from the hard working program at their home.

**5.1.4 Brio4**

Brio4 is a girl aged fifteen. She lives with both her parents. In her family, she has three siblings, one sister and two brothers. The relationship among the family members at home with her siblings is not good. She expressed that they are always shouting and fighting with her siblings. Even with her own mother, she expressed that the relationship is not all that good.

**a) Compulsion to work versus own choice**

Asked about what duties she partakes at home, Brio4 reflected that when she was young, she didn’t do any household chores. Her mother thought that she was clumsy and her work was not worth being proud of. She also explained how bitter her mother was when she was being
trained in doing the home chores. Now she is the only one who is doing work at home, all the cleaning, the washing, the plates, the cooking for the family while all her other siblings do not do much. Brio4 noted that: Every day when I go home I find dirty dishes waiting for me. In very few occasions my mother does the cleaning when I am in school. Most times my own mother will just be home and she does not do any work, she just waits for me to come back from school and do the cleaning.

b) Discouragement versus support

Brio4 unhappily asserted that: My own mother calls me with names which I do not like at all. She calls me ‘special class.’ In the traditional context this means somebody who is dull, hopeless and disabled. When the researcher asked Brio4 to explain what kind of feelings she had when she is called with names like that she just said that: I get angry! I get frowned! It is worse that they are my own siblings and mother who tease on me.

She was also asked to expatiate on what reaction she usually took when they begin teasing on her, Brio4 said: I have learnt to just keep quiet. I just leave them like that; I withdraw from the situation and sometimes go to sleep. Sometimes I just cry to myself. At other times I used to fight for my defense but I see even my mother is just laughing at me. She just says I am mad, so I just suffer inside burning, because I am not as strong as the boys, nobody takes me seriously.

c) Segregation versus inclusion

In school Brio4 is happy with friends in her class. She expressed that she does not have any friends both at home, at school and in the community. She felt that her peers without disabilities did not want to play with her. Brio4 expressed that it is difficult for her to make friends for the reason that many people look down upon her. She also thought that the reason why she could not manage to make friends was that her mother blocked her from making friends when she was still a little girl. She said that: It just started with my mother who could not allow me to go out of the gate to play, so now I have no friends.

In the school’s co-curriculum activities Brio4 takes part in athletics and netball. She expressed that it was the only time that she remembers hearing people cheering in support of her when they have competitions with the other schools, otherwise the rest of all the communication is just negative. In the neighbourhood, Brio4 thinks that all the people also have the same reaction towards her, now she even fears to mix with non-disabled counterparts. She even inferred that after all she never got the permission to go out to play.

5.1.5 Briu5

Briu5 is a girl aged sixteen and she lives with her aunt, the sister to her mother. Her biological parents passed away when she was very young. Her aunt is married and they have their own children. In the whole family now they are three girls. Briu5’s aunt sought financial support
from the Girl Child Network Centre for Briu5 and it is the one that is responsible for paying her school fees and things like buying her uniforms.

**a) Compulsion to work versus own choice**

Asked about her participation in doing home activities like the chores, Briu5 responded with amusement about how the researcher could fail to know something that everybody knew. She said with a sad voice that: *At home all the home duties are set for me because they say that I am the eldest, so they say that I should be working for the younger ones.*

She conveyed her message plainly that every day when school ends, she starts worrying about going home because she knows that all the work will be awaiting her. She said that her young sisters do not do any duties, but they are slightly younger than her, so they could also do some household chores. She added that: *It pains me that most of the time that those who do not clean up, mess up more because they have the conviction that I will always clean for them. Most of the time I have to do the job twice, it is painful and disheartening, I do not rest!*

**b) Being abused versus being cared for**

Briu5 expressed bluntly that her aunt is cruel to her and she does not show politeness when she relates to her. She said that she is beaten up almost on daily basis. Asked about what happens when she is beaten up, whether she continues to come to school or not. She responded that she preferred to come to school even with tears running on her cheeks because at school that is where she only got time to rest. She however expressed with a sad face and a lower voice that even though she decides to come to school, she unfortunately usually spends the whole day thinking about the abuse from home, in school. She added that usually the teacher queried her moods and tries to find out what would have happened. She said that she usually covers up, and does not tell the teacher because she is afraid of drawing the attention of many people.

She also expressed how in some cases she is beaten up for other people’s faults when they are just clever enough to deny and falsify accusations against Briu5. There was a time that her aunt got mad about Brio4 that she once thought of killing her. She was discovered mixing rat killer with water to give her to drink. She was later reported to the police and was given a strong warning against such behaviour. Briu5 expressed with distrust that there was a time that she feared that her aunt could kill her at any time. To Briu5, such action was horrific.

**c) Neglect versus overprotection**

She also expressed concern about the overprotection that her auntie has for her over speaking with strangers. She acknowledged the importance of the matter but however thought that it
was just overdone. Sometimes people who pass by and ask questions, if I am caught speaking to them then I can also be beaten for that.

Briu5 expressed how her aunt was always lying that she saw her, that Briu5 has boyfriends, that she has had sex with the boyfriends and yet she said she doesn’t have any boyfriends at all and that she has not had sex with anybody. Briu5 indicated that: *It pains me because she has even gone to the Police to report me that I am having sex with people. I have been beaten by the police twice when they try to force me to accept that I have had sex. They beat me up for absolutely nothing!* I remember there was a time that they beat me until my right hand was swollen and I could not go to school for two months. After she was beaten, she was not going to school, but she was doing household chores.

**d) Deprivation versus important provision**

Briu5’s aunt doesn’t supply her with any school requirements because she said that it is the responsibility of the Girl Child Network that helps her as an orphan. She was disgusted since she could not get small things like ballpoint pens form the organization. She said that her friends and the teacher usually gave her otherwise she does not write when she does not have the pen. She also expressed with horror how she spend the winter months going to school barefooted, without tennis shoes.

*I didn’t have any shoes and it was very cold, I felt all the cold penetrating my whole body. Then I could not even concentrate in class. It was the time that I really wished if my mother had not died.*

She also complained about the quantity of food that she is given after all the hard work that she does at home. She felt that she was being starved; she needed more food than what she was getting. Briu5 said: *She doesn’t give me enough food, I feel hungry after eating the day’s supper even when I am the one who would have prepared the food.*

She regretted the situation that she is entangled in that she doesn’t have anywhere else to go, otherwise she could have disappeared a long time ago to another relative.

**5.1.6 Briø6**

She is seventeen years old. Briø6 is paraplegic and is a wheelchair user. Briø6 earlier lived in the rural area with her grandparents. Her mother left her in the custody of her grandparents when she went to seek for employment. Afterwards, she then found a Good Samaritan who offered to take her to attend school in the city where she has just attended for one school term. She has now been adopted into a family who live in the city. She liked it so much, there but the problem of mobility to school was still prevalent as the guardian was just an old woman who could not accompany her to school everyday. She explained how grateful she was to a well wisher who bought her a wheelchair. One problem that was left was that she was struggling with servicing it as at times it frequently broke down.
a) *Neglect versus care*

Briø6 had a long and sad story to tell about how she found life to be rough during her childhood when her mother could not afford to give her childhood care. She was left under the guardianship of her grandparents. Briø6 told about how she was mistreated and how she had to work on household chores in the home. She said that she started working at a very early age but was not given the opportunity to attend schooling. She added that she grew up with her old and sick grandparents and she had to work for them, prepare food, fetch firewood, fetch water, and do the laundry and almost all home chores. Her experiences about her childhood were miserable as she put it herself. Briø6 also cited a story that she was almost deserted when she was born because her mother refused her infanticide by the elderly women of the community, who thought that her disability was too profound that her mother would have problem to raise her up.

b) *Being denied opportunities versus equal treatment*

Briø6 didn’t have the opportunity to attend school until she was fourteen years old. She went to the primary school in the village for the first two years. She explained how difficult it was for her to use the toilets which were pit toilets. She exclaimed that: *Every time I felt like visiting the toilet I felt terribly embarrassed, I didn’t get any assistance from anybody, I usually wetted my panties because I took very long to find a way to relieve myself.*

c) *Segregation versus inclusion*

Briø6 didn’t have friends in the neighbourhood, even when she still lived in the rural area she did not have friends. She thought that it was because she didn’t get the time to play with all the other children as she was almost always busy. She also feared that other children teased her especially for the way she walked on her knees. She then explained how she was shunned by fellow classmates after they smelt of urine soon after she had visited the toilet. She said that she had no other option but to drop-out of school in the rural area because the pressure was too much for her in the school.

5.2 *Summary for Case 1*

Significant findings show that there exists a lot of exclusion for the children with disabilities. Ironically, the exclusion begins in the family and is also found in school and the community. Students reported exclusion from family duties in the home. This could be a result of their parents undermining their potentialities. This could also explain why some parents kept on doing things for their children even though they were grown up. Other findings show that
there also existed undervaluing of the education for children with disabilities. This finding is connected to the above finding that the parents undermined the potentialities of their children with disabilities. As a result of undermining their potentialities, they subsequently did not expect their children with disabilities to perform well in school, thus they undervalue the effort which they put in school. There also existed lack of support from the parents to children in school work, in provision of the things that can enhance their learning et cetera. Probably the parents did not see any future benefits of educating children with disabilities. Another finding shows that the home was not a very enjoyable place for the children with disabilities. The school was reported to be more enjoyable than the home. This could have been the results of children being overworked, teased, undermined, and abused or being mistreated.

5.3 Case 2

Parents of children with disabilities constitute the informants of Case 2. Informants who participated included couples, guardians and single parents. The educational backgrounds of the parents or guardians varied, some were professionals, and some had attended schooling while others had not had the opportunity. Some parents were employed while some were self employed for example like selling things on the market. Most parents were interviewed at their home places except for two parents who chose to come to the school and were interviewed in the headmaster’s office. Not all of the parents who participated in the study were the parents of the children who also participated, some parents participated while their children did not or that some children with disabilities participated while their parents did not. The researcher made an effort to visit the home places for the parents to get a real view/picture of their family lives, some parents were reached while others could not be reached.

5.3.1 Cria1

a) Acceptance versus rejection

Cria1 was deserted by her husband when she gave birth to a child with albinism whom she also discovered later that she was also deaf and dumb. She explained how she found it very hard to cope with her situation. After giving birth to a child with a disability, the extended family members responded with shame and denial to her born child. Her husband bowed down to pressure from the extended family members and deserted the family because of failing to decide to parent a child with albinism and mental retardation. Cria1 loved her child, so she adamantly raised her child amid calls to ‘break down the curse within the family’ as
they called it. Breaking down the curse meant that the elderly community people had to practice infanticide to the disabled child. Particular challenges that she faced were that she experienced rejection from all the people around her even from the few that she thought would never leave her. She broke down and her life stagnated, together with the life of her children. She said: At first, when my situation begun I was even sent to the hospital with stress. Later on, I accepted my situation and regained my composure.

After she regained her composure, she then started moving forward, looking after her children and working to support them as a single parent.

b) Segregation versus inclusion

When Cria1 talked about her daughter’s first time access to school, she spelt out that:
I had big, big problems when I tried to get a place for my daughter to be in school for the first time. I almost lost hope before I got her a place in school until I was referred to Zengeza 8 Primary School, where they have a special Class for children with Hearing Impairments.

She reiterated that when she was looking for a vacant place for her daughter in the schools, she got almost the same responses in all the schools that she went to. The responses were that they could not enroll her daughter since they could not communicate with her. The schools also gave another excuse that the child herself could not mix with the other children. The issue of failure to have specialized teachers who could communicate and teach the child was also cited as another hindrance to enrolling the child who is deaf and dumb into ordinary schools.

She didn’t cite any problems that she finds when the child is in school now. She appreciated the good effort that the teachers are doing. She gave examples like the effort to help her to mix with others, the toilet training and that her toilet system had vastly improved since she began school. She said that: it showed that teachers worked on it, they tried to help her go to the toilet with the others and they are achieving. Also, she is now able to smile, to show a happy face, at first my daughter didn’t know how to smile but now she can! Because of school there is improvement.

c) Fear versus assurance

Cria1 felt that probably her child now needed reassessment since there are signs of improvement. She felt that if she is reassessed probably she could be placed in a more advanced class where she could learn more advanced activities. She believes that her daughter would do better if she manages to get some hearing aids, which she said she cannot afford to buy herself. Talking about how she sees on her child’s school work at home, Cria1 expressed that it was difficult for them to check on what the child is doing in school since there was no
written evidence of what they do in school. The teacher said that she has not yet managed to achieve pencil handling skills, so they say that they teach her orally, mixing with others and also some Daily Living Skills. At present we do not have any home help that we offer. She even wished if they could get a specialized teacher like a sign language interpreter to help them with the communication between them and their child.

d) Deprivation versus important provision
Cria1 purported that she discovered that in most schools for children with disabilities they concentrate on indoor training and they focus on the classroom environment, not by choice but by the structure of the curriculum. She said that she knew about the situation because she is also a teacher herself. She proposed that if only the curriculum could expose the children to the outside world, which would prepare the children for their future life so that they could also be self reliant in future. She was talking in terms like training the children in vocational subjects which can open doors to the world of employment after the school life.

She reiterated that: only classroom environment does not fully give the children enough capacity building for their future life. They need practical training for example horticulture; by this the children with disabilities can learn to prepare for a self sustenance life. Cria1 mentioned sports training as also possible to open doors for a life for children with disabilities. She stated that disability is not inability, so some children may get an opportunity to cultivate their talents in sport, they may also excel and earn a living despite having a disability.

To the responsible authorities in education she recommended a commitment to providing the Basic Education Assistance Module (financial support for the disadvantaged population as explained in the literature review) and stressed that even if it is little it is very important. She said: children with disabilities are born into poor families, at the end; the cycle of poverty goes on and on. I suggest that if possible, projects could be set up that can help them to sustain their educational requirements, thus, this can break down the chain of miserable lives, and help them to be happy just like any other child. In this way the children will not see any difference in them and the other children, so they can grow up with the acceptance and belief that disability is natural.

She was dismayed in the way the society sees people with disabilities. She explained that disability is not by choice, so it would be unfair if members of their own community shun them, reject them, and block them from accessing education and all other facilities that are easily accessed by the non-disabled. She expressed that negative reaction that go on between the able bodied and the disabled just destroy the self esteem, self worth and the rest of their
lives. She said that she anticipated for change the acceptance of people with disabilities in all disciplines.

**5.3.2 Crie2**

Crie2 is an old woman who looks after her granddaughter with a disability. She took over the responsibility of looking after the child when her old elder brother was just left alone to take care of the orphaned child. The grand daughter is often attacked by epileptic seizures. Crie2 is a widow and is not employed.

*a) Discouragement versus support*

When asked to explain how she saw through her granddaughter to this day, Crie2 revealed that the experiences that they go through as parents of children with disabilities are huge and unexplainable. She stressed that she just put her hopes unto the Lord, that He is her strength in everything that she does for her granddaughter.

She said: *I never thought that I would see my granddaughter one day sitting and talking to me alive like this. One good thing that I did was to pin my hope to the Lord my God. Today here I am with my hope, she is here with me, we talk, we laugh and today I have a friend in the home.*

She explained how she grew her up, that she tried to talk to her politely all the time because she didn’t know whether she was hurting her because she was not talking, she was weak also that she thought at some stage that she could also be deaf. She has now increased hope for her granddaughter now that she sees that she is growing up well. She said that she is teaching her life skills for her own benefit. From what she was, outward appearance until now there is quite a big difference.

*b) Fear versus assurance*

Crie2 spoke about how she feels about her granddaughter in school with other children. She said that she is now ready to go out to school with other children.

*At first I could not release her to go to school even when she was at the age of going to school because I feared that she was not yet ready, she could mess up with others.*

Crie2 was positive that her granddaughter is quite competent with the others but her problems come when she is sometimes attacked by the epileptic seizures, and then she tends to forget quite a lot of the things.

When she was asked to talk about how difficult it was to get a place for the grand daughter to begin schooling, she mentioned that she prayed to God before she went out to the schools. She strongly believed that it was due to God’s interference that she managed to get a place for her granddaughter in school without strain. She cannot read or write herself but she has a wish
that if the grand daughter would just manage to read and write, her life would never be the same as her own.

c) Deprivation versus important provision

Crie2 wished if the government would continue to provide the Basic Education Assistance Module to children who are vulnerable, like the orphans, the disabled, and the underprivileged so that they could at least have an opportunity to go to school without the obstacles of stressing for school fees. She feared that many disadvantaged children missed the opportunity to get government support like the BEAM if they lack the knowledge and the information about how to access it.

5.3.3 Crie3

Crie3 is a single mother with a son with albinism. She was deserted by her husband who failed to accept the situation that they had a child with albinism.

a) Rejection versus acceptance

When Crie3 gave birth to her son, she entered into a world of confusion. She said that she believes that this was because she was just young and could not judge situations or to think competently on how she could relate to people when they ask about her son. She described how she armed herself with defense mechanisms such as withdrawing herself into a nutshell, hiding her child to all the people and being rude when people asked about the child. She described how family members pulled out of her life, rejecting her and her son. She explained that the situation was worsened by her husband who also failed to accept the reality about their situation and began nagging on her. Crie3 thought about how her husband’s parents tried to help counselling him but he failed to accept. They at least tried to counsel both of them to come to terms with their situation but the husband could not stand it, he has moved out in search of another child without albinism. She noted that: My husband failed to accept the whole situation and he deserted us.

On the part of her son, Crie3 said that her son was experiencing problems in making friends. She purported that there was a lot of rejection, ostracism, shunning and exclusion. The peers tell him off, they give careless remarks about his skin colour. He explained how now as a grown up boy he gets disturbed by some of the comments and their ostracism. She unhappily said that he gets withdrawn and sometimes reacts by refusing to go to school or to go out to play.

In relation to the issue of shunning people with albinism, Crie3 proposed that if it were possible the schools would arrange awareness campaigns to enlighten all people that people
with albinism are just like other people, it was just the pigmentation of their skin. She added that acceptance for all people with albinism should not be a problem, accepting them into school in all other areas that need their integration should be easy. In addition to her proposition, she thought that people with albinism should also be not a problem themselves to mix with other children since this can also affect their learning together with other normal children.

**b) Poverty versus access to the basic needs**

Crii3 expressed that as a single parent she found it quite a challenge to raise her son the way it would have been in a two parent family. Her major problems today are financial resources. She expressed that she unfortunately sometimes finds it hard to meet the basic needs and the educational requirements for her son. She mentioned problems like that she could not afford the special lotion that people with albinism need in order to protect her son’s skin from the hot weather. She said that she eventually just lets her son use the ordinary lotion and she said that it is not good at all for the skin. Crii3 added that failure to afford the special lotion also impacted on her son’s school work as he sometimes fall sick, miss school or fail to participate in some activities when it becomes very hot. She said that she is aware that her child is short sighted because of albinism but she cannot afford to get spectacles that enhance the learning of her son. She articulated that: *So my son cannot do all the activities in school because of his short sightedness.*

On the issue of tuition fees, Crii3 thought that the Government should be conscious of the plight of the people, especially in hard economic times. She mentioned that the school fees that are high in the schools needed to be reduced, it has to be affordable to all.

**5.3.4 Crio4**

Crio4 is a married woman with three children. Her eldest child is the one who has behaviour disorders. Crio4 lives in the rural area with her family. At the time of the study she had visited her husband who lives in the city for employment. She described how her son grew up with endless and uncontrollable hallucinations.

**a) Rejection versus acceptance**

Crio4 postulated that so far she had had what she termed enough of rejection and overreactions by their relatives, friends and almost everybody in the community. She gave examples of incidents that she saw herself left out of community programmes that went on, which she said she used to attend before she got a child with a disability. Asked to elaborate
on what could be the reasons for her exclusions now, Crio4 remarked that the community thinks that I should be giving my disabled child a twenty-four – seven attentions.

**b) Poverty versus access to the basic needs**

Crio4 finds problems to pay school fees for her son. Her husband does not want to give her money to pay the school fees. The reason behind his refusal to pay school fees for his son is that he says openly out in the family that he cannot waste his money paying for somebody who can be unprofitable in future. Crio4 struggles to make ends meet from the little that her husband gives her. She vowed to continue sourcing funds until her son completes his education.

**c) Fear versus assurance**

Crio4’s was not happy with the relationship between her son and his peers. Crio4’s son was constantly being bullied by others, they teased him and they mocked him on their way home from school as the mother reported. She thought that probably that peer relationship could also affect her son’s learning in that he might be afraid of them. Crio4 also thought that such a relationship can instill fear in her child even to learn with freedom in school. They were worried that one day they could harm him.

**5.3.5 Criu5**

Criu5 is a mother of two children with microcephalus. According to the Wikipedia (2010), microcephaly is a neurodevelopment disorder in which the circumference of the head is abnormally small and contains an underdeveloped brain. Criu5 is a widow, and two of her eldest children have since completed schooling. After having two children with microcephalus her husband died. She expressed that she lacked the information that was important when she had the first child with microcephalus. She later knew that she had to stop giving birth as she later learnt that she would continue to give birth to children with microcephalus. Much of her regret lies in the factor that she now faces the trouble to look after her children on her own and that the husband is late. She wished if she had only one child with a disability.

**a) Rejection versus acceptance**

Criu5 described how difficult it was for her to try to fit into her community when they all seemed to ignore her. She purported that she did not understand the reactions from the members of her community. Some families seemed to ignore, some tried to prescribe what they think that they know yet many just pass reckless comments to her children. She said that she managed to deal with the community and her relatives by staying away from them,
withdrawing from them and closed any opportunities that they could interfere with their life. She said that she sometimes also feels isolated so much even though she was the one who created the gap. She was afraid that she was getting old and feared that since she created a gap between her family and relatives, one day the children would need their relatives. In a bid to keep her family isolated from the rest of the community, Criu5 drives her children to school and takes them back home on her own. She was explaining how she had to develop a strong charisma at work with her workmates so that she would manage to deal with her problem with her children. She said that she worked out that she needed to have time to accompany her children to and from school as they cannot go by themselves. Her children are socialized in a way that they shun strangers; they cannot go out into the community to make friends. They just go out of their home when they go to school.

**b) Discouragement versus support**

When she was asked to comment about the challenges that she has so far experienced with the children in school she commented that her children were left out in many activities for the reasons that the mother was overprotective of the children. She believed that the teachers had agreed to avoid confrontations with her because she said she was too overprotective and did not want her children to be abused. Her major problem was that the children had also begun to be reluctant in school; nobody gives them a firm hand in school, which she said backfired in the children’s performance in school.

**5.4 Summary for Case 2**

Findings reveal that all the parents who participated in the study experienced rejection by their community in one way or another. It also shows that the parents of children with disabilities found it hard to get included again when they got excluded for the reason of parenting children with disabilities. This experience could have been a nightmare to the families because living an individual life or excluded life in Zimbabwe as the context of the study is untraditional. Life in Zimbabwe is communal and families are a part of the community. In light of that point, the parents expected support and empathy for parenting a child with a disability, which turned out to be rejection and stigmatization. Implications behind similar rhetoric expressions by parents about rejection were interpreted by the researcher as pain or failed effort to be part of the larger community.

Observations by the researcher when she visited the homes revealed that poverty, which was aggravated by the hard economic downturn in the country, was rampant in the families.
Observations also revealed that even the employed families also experienced hardships in providing for their families. That situation seemed to make families prioritize work at the expense of education. Parents went to the markets to work, children were burdened with work, no time was committed to helping children with schoolwork due to work, children subsequently got exhausted due to work and could not get time to do homework. Findings also show that girls were the most overworked except one boy who also reported being overworked. This could be the result of the factor that in traditional Africa, girls are often considered the source of household labour.

Another finding shows a lack of support by parents on their children’s schoolwork. Parents did not visit the schools where their children attended, even to find out how their children are doing, or how they could help also et cetera. These could be put across as poor bilateral relations between the home and school. Such could be a result of a culture that exists within the country, that parents and teachers do not have well developed relationships because the researcher also did not find teachers visiting the children’s homes.

5.5 Case 3

Seven teachers were available to participate in the study. All the teachers had a teaching experience of five years and above. The teachers who taught the children with disabilities were all specially trained teachers for children with disabilities except for one who taught the Hearing impaired. She was only qualified to teach in the regular classroom but she had no qualification to teach children with disabilities. The teachers operate under the Ministry of education, they are government employees. Due to the hyperinflationary environment, their salaries were deeply eroded by the inflation, the teachers had had endless industrial action to try and force for the improvement of their working conditions to no avail. Teachers looked burnt out, others said it out while others just operated with a very low mood, not motivated and had a carefree attitude towards their work.

5.5.1 Dria1

a) Discouragement versus support

Dria1 has a teaching experience of ten years, five of which she has been teaching students with disabilities. She enjoys teaching students with disabilities. Following up her interest in teaching students with disabilities, Dria1 said that she likes particularly the achievement that they make, and then she is contented that it is purely her effort. When she was asked to talk about achievements that she has experienced so far, Dria1 gladly mentioned that she has had
students who pass some practical subject at the Ordinary Level (that is the acceptable National Secondary School Qualification) and they proceed to Vocational Colleges. She however sadly acknowledged that students with disabilities experience countless problems in their education and in general life spectrum. She mentioned that the children get no support on their education. She had this to say about her point: Nobody acknowledges their success in school; they believe it was not their sole effort, some of them think that they got help from the teacher or somebody else. That behaviour from their parents disheartens most pupils and they do not make efforts to do better because it is not recognized by anybody.

b) Deprivation versus important provision

As a teacher, Dria1 was not happy with the content of the syllabus for the students with hearing impairments. She asserted that the syllabus content is not different from the regular education stream’s syllabus. She explained the possible reason why the content is similar; it was because they teach the same similar concepts to the ones which are taught in the mainstream since the children write the same public examinations when they complete their four year course in secondary school. She said that the other disadvantage with the syllabus is the big discrepancy between the Primary school matter and the Secondary school content. Dria1 purported that it usually becomes overwhelming for the students and it is usually difficult to catch up as they are already disadvantaged by the disability. Dria1 explained that:

In primary school the content is just simple, and it just concentrates on basic numeracy and literacy while in secondary they meet challenging calculations and abstract reasoning, those two do not tally at all.

Dria1 thought that it was necessary for the Ministry of Education to make an effort as the responsible authority and provide sign language dictionaries which are very important in the teaching of the students with hearing impairments, which can also enhance their learning. She also suggested for an improved and detailed dictionary which is better than the one that they use at present which they say is shallow. She said: In making the dictionaries, I suggest that it is important to work with teachers who teach the students with hearing impairment on a day to day basis, for they are the ones who have the real students’ need at hand. They can contribute and assist with what is more important in the syllabus.

c) Being abused versus being cared for

Dria1 postulated the point that in the community, people keep abusing people with disabilities, verbally, physically or psychologically. She said that she viewed as if people with disabilities are seen as less human than the non-disabled. Very few people or even none is willing to incorporate them in activities that go on in the community. She added that:
The students with disabilities know that they are looked down upon, sidelined and they do not want to make an effort to force themselves into programs for people without disabilities. Many of them who have tried to be part of the larger group have experienced frustration, so many of them just sit back and pretend to be idiots.

5.5.2 Drie2

She has had experience in teaching both in the primary school and in the secondary school. Drie2 conveyed how difficult it is to begin with new students with disabilities at school. She expressed that it is more challenging to teach students with disabilities in the primary school than in the secondary school. When she was asked to expatiate what she found as more challenging, she stated that in the primary school, the teachers teach all the skills like toilet training, hygiene which the students usually outgrow when they are at the secondary level.

a) Poverty versus access to the basic needs.

Drie2’s perspective about how she viewed CWD was that the students show that they have problems from home, specifically economic problems. She stated that the problems also affect them in school. She gave an example of the payment of the students’ tuition fees which she said it is almost always unpaid up to the end of the term. She added that some parents sadly say out openly that they will not benefit anything in future for educating a disabled child, it is better with a non-disabled child who can look after them when they get old. She remarked that: due to poverty, most of the things which teachers require the parents to do for the students in school, parents usually do not respond, they just choose to keep silent about it.

b) Being abused versus being cared for

Drie2 raised an issue that some children are abused either physically or sexually, and they are traumatized with such treatment. She added that the children also carry those burdens to school and it affects their learning. She commented that: The children show that they are disturbed mentally and they show emotional instability in school. She also enlightened that many of students with disabilities do not live with their biological parents. Some children are orphans; others come from single parent families, others from extended family guidance. She stated that these children with disabilities are usually badly treated in those homes. She added that these children cannot help it but to carry the burden even to school. She cited an example of a certain family who bit a child until the child pulled out of school and went to live in the streets.

c) Deprivation versus proper provision

She cited a lack of resources that enhance the teaching of students with disabilities. She extended that in many circumstances the teachers end up omitting what they would have planned when they do not have resources. She cited an example that she had planned to have
gardening for the semester, but the school could not afford to have water, hoes and the seeds to plant in the garden. The teachers had no other option but to cancel the planned lessons. She however added that they have now learnt to plan their activities only according to the resources which they are sure they have.

Drie2 wished if by any means possible the Ministry of Education could help with upgrading the infrastructure according to the type of the disabilities. She cited a problem in their school that the classroom for the students with Hearing Impairment needed to be acoustic free. The classroom in which the students learnt in was noisy and inappropriate for students who use hearing aids. At the same school, the physically disabled students needed ramps at their doorways to ease their access into classrooms. The classroom which they used had steps and yet there was a wheelchair user in the class, who had to leave her wheelchair outside and proceeded into the classroom with crutches.

d) Discouragement versus support

Drie2 thought that support for the students in their participation in sporting activities lacked. In a few weeks that had passed, the students with disabilities had had their annual Paralympic games. Drie2 noted that there was very little support from the ordinary people. There was no support for example in form of cheering. She proposed that the students need moral support, appreciation when they do something like in the sports, it would be good to reward them with small things. She said this can also boost their moral for future participation either in class or in sport.

5.5.3 Drii3

Drii3 held a Bachelor of Science Degree in Special Needs Education. She has been working with students with disabilities for five years which just emanated from the desire to help children who are disadvantaged.

a) Segregation versus inclusion

Drii3 expressed the fact that: Many teachers do not like to work with these children with disabilities because of their nature, they are just sidelined, so personally I just felt for them. She noted that even if she likes working with these children, at times it becomes very strenuous. She noted that one has to be extremely patient in order to be able to work with some of these children.

Due to the mental disability that they have, some of them become very violent, others have the problem to control their bowels, so sometimes it becomes very challenging.

She also noted with deep sorrow that students with disabilities will take ages to be accepted in their communities and in the schools even though the law propounds their inclusion. Drii3
added on her point of segregation of children with disabilities and noted that: There are students who passed their 'Ordinary Level' just like any other normal children but the students with disabilities are denied access into higher institutions of learning and yet their non-disabled counterparts get easy access.

5.5.4 Drio4

Drio4 had worked with SWD for five years. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Special Needs Education. She had worked with different children with disabilities, some of them who had multiple disabilities, others who had severe disabilities and also those with mild mental retardation. She calls it quite an experience to work with CWD.

a) Acceptance versus rejection

Drio4 purported that in the society, people with disabilities have problems of rejection by their close relatives, friends and even their parents. She explained how the students and their families struggle with ostracism, rejection and how they struggle to move on with their lives amid the rejections. Drio4 explained how some parents fail to find support from their close friends and relatives, and that they end up leaning on the shoulders of the few teachers who show a little understanding of their problems. She added that even in the school, fellow teachers who teach in the mainstream classes even look down upon the teachers who teach students with disabilities. She added that they see them as less human, less teachers while they see themselves as superior than others. She expressed the fact that if the situation could be that bad with the teachers who are not even disabled, she presumed that the situation could be even worse with the people with disabilities themselves.

b) Being denied opportunities versus equal treatment

Drio4 alluded about how children with disabilities are denied opportunities to participate in school activities which they enjoy most. She noted that many CWD like sport very much. She added that the children do not bother whether they perform badly or well, what matters to them is participation. She said that when SWD are given the opportunity to do something they really work whole heartedly. She however regretted that the SWD are not accorded the opportunity to participate in sport; they are left out of the sporting activities because their competence is outdone by other non-disabled students. She claimed that:

So participation is really important to them, when they do not participate in activities which they would have wanted to, they really feel they have missed out, or that they have been let down.

c) Deprivation versus proper provision

Drio4 spoke against the curriculum that they use to teach CWD. She mentioned that the students are faced with the dilemma that they have to learn using the prescribed national curriculum. The curriculum that they use is an academic oriented curriculum which stresses
on academic excellence. She stated that the problem lies in the factor that the curriculum is too demanding for SWD compared to their academic potentialities. She expatiated that teachers for students with disabilities struggle to water the curriculum down to the level of individual students, which she said is a job plus. She then added that the students’ biggest problem comes when they have completed a seven year primary or a four year secondary course when they are also expected to write a terminal, national examination. She said that with the level of the content that the students will have learnt, it is unfortunate that they cannot compete in any way with the examination or the other students. She also implied that: 

*The examination itself is not watered down, so there lies a big gap between what they would have learnt and the examination content, not by choice but by their nature, they are completely disadvantaged.*

Driu4 also thought that it was quite necessary that the teachers should lower the level of the content to be taught to the level of operation for individual students so that they could meet individual needs for the students with disabilities. Driu4 suggested that it was very important that the curriculum designers needed to design a curriculum that is meant specifically for students with disabilities. Likewise, a terminal/ national examination for the students with disabilities that would enhance teachers to find easy ways to help students with disabilities, would better be set, unlike to struggle with watering down the curriculum. She added that as of now, many teachers just teach randomly, that would not help many students with disabilities; they do not benefit much from that.

### 5.5.5 Driu5

Driu5 taught children with mental retardation. She holds a Bachelor Degree in Special Needs Education. She said that she is committed to help students with disabilities. She has had experience working with parents for children with disabilities. She expressed that it is a job plus to work with the parents of children with disabilities.

#### a) Poverty versus access to basic needs

She mentioned a problem that children with disabilities have problem with payment of their school fees. Driu5 explained that parents of CWD find it hard to pay the tuition fees. She added that when the payment is overdue, the children are sent to collect the school fees. She said that the children usually spend long periods out of school as their parents look for money to pay for their school fees. She added that the children miss out a lot as they usually do not do any school work but home chores only, so it gets difficult for them to catch up when they return.
From Driu5’s perspective, the students’ major hindrance in their learning is poverty. She noted that due to poverty, some of the parents cannot even afford to buy a ballpoint pen, writing books or anything that the children require enhancing their learning. She also purported that it was just unfortunate that education is not free or subsidized by BEAM in the secondary sector as it is in Primary school. So students with disabilities who will have reached secondary school level have to pay for their own tuition fees. It is unlike in the primary sector that students with disabilities are considered as the vulnerable group and subsequently receive assistance from the government. Driu5 proposed that it would be quite helpful to consider students with disabilities as vulnerable children until they finish their schooling.

**b) Deprivation versus important provision**

Driu5 aired one other hindrance to access, which she termed an acute shortage of secondary schools that offer special needs education. She indicated that it could be one of the hindrances for children to proceed to secondary level. She emphasized her point with the factor that in their District there were only three secondary schools that offered special needs education at secondary school as compared to ten primary schools that offer special needs education in the same district. She expressed with wonder that:

*I mean, one wonders where all the other children go after primary school, they just turn their backs to school because of obstacles that they experience in looking for schools and go home forever, it is sad!*

Driu5 wished if she could make an official appeal to the Ministry of Education to enforce or ensure that children with disabilities have access into schools that offer them special needs education without obstacles as they have already had enough life obstacles. In addition she had this to say: *I propose that the policy itself should be specific so that it can have the strength to mandate the provision of special needs education. As of now there is no mandate that is why there is no progress at all.*

**5.5.6 Driø6**

Driø6 is a specialist teacher for students with mental retardation. She has attained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Special Needs Education and she has been working with students with disabilities for six years, her total period of teaching experience is twelve years.

**a) Being abused versus being cared for**

Driø6 thought that the major obstacles for the student with disabilities emanated mainly from their homes and their families. She noted that some of these children are abused at home, some physically, some sexually, mainly because they usually live with guardians, not their biological parents. Driø6 said that the children entrusted in the teacher so much that they confidently reported their problems to the teacher with the hope to get exoneration from the
problem. Driø6 said that: *When the children report to us their problems, the problems also become our problems, they also affect us in many ways as we are also human, not just their teachers.*

She also expressed the fact that she takes on the duties of being a parent even when she is a teacher, and that the problems that the children face also affect them every day.

*We act in loco parentis, when you teach students with disabilities you are more of a teacher, you are a parent, a mother, we also have to solve a lot of problems for the students for them to continue in school.*

Driø6 talked about the issues that befall some of the students at their homes, that they are abused by their parents or guardians to the extent that sometimes they fail to come to school or they come to school in a very low mood that they fail to learn.

**b) Fear versus assurance**

Driø6 said that some of the parents for students with disabilities over entrust teachers with responsibilities for looking after their children with disabilities when they are in school. She said that some of the parents tell the teachers almost all the problems that they go through with their children with disabilities. She added that the parents also usually expect help because they believe that as teachers, we can give them professional help, so she said that sometimes the teachers also act as counsellors.

She also talked about the problems of poor self image within the students themselves. She added that the other contributory factor to a poor self image is that the children are underachievers. If they compare themselves to the others they stoop very low. The situation is worsened by their peers when they laugh at them for their poor performance.

**c) Poverty versus access to basic needs**

Driø6 also noted another obstacle that hinders the students’ full participation in school as poverty in their families as she put it. She also mentioned that one other problem that hinders the students’ participation in school is poverty. The major problem related to poverty is that the children’s school fee is almost always not paid. They cannot afford the school fees. On the other hand the school has to press on the issue of school fees because it is important for the school to function. She postulated that: *To the parents, the school fees are unaffordable and the economic situation in Zimbabwe this time is quite harsh.* She then clarified the gist of the problem that the parents really and genuinely struggle to get the money for the school fees. She also added that it was common that the children who would have been sent home, it is usually very difficult for them to come back to school.

*Due to poverty, the children’s school fees is almost always not paid. Nobody bothers to pay for their school fees in time. They end up being send back home to collect the school fees when the school needs to use the money.*
She noted a dilemma that, the school fees are unaffordable for the parents due to the prevailing economic downturn which is currently prevailing in the country. She mentioned the factor that any moment the students are send home for school fees, coming back to school would be the biggest problem.

d) Deprivation versus important provision

In school, Driø6 also pointed out that they had problems, such as the problems of insufficient resources or inappropriate books. She said that they did not manage to get books that directly cater for the students’ needs. She cited an example that many students sometimes fail to write exercises in class because they do not manage to buy some writing books, then we usually have to adjust our teaching for that individual student.

e) Discouragement versus support

She was also worried about some parents who lacked seriousness and who possess latent attitudes within themselves. Driø6 said: the other problem is attitudes, some parents do not positively encourage their children to go to school, and they are the ones who say negative comments about their children and their poor performance in school. Some do not send the children to school every day, others are not very serious about time conscious training in their children. Given such scenarios when the parents lack seriousness, they will not work hard to instill positive feeling about the importance of schooling.

Driø6 raised a point that even though teachers are trained, they still needed workshops that can help them to refresh their minds and share some experiences about the teaching of the students with disabilities and probably to ponder on how some problems could be resolved. She added that workshops help to improve and enhance the teaching of SWD and added that after all learning never ends.

In an effort to show support for people with disabilities, Driø6 caught the drifted of the conversation when she highlighted about how the minister of education could take advantage of political campaign rallies that are taking place, so that they could also use them as opportunities to give awareness to all people about people with disabilities. They could talk about how PWD need acceptance and accommodation within the society as they are just our own people. She added that The School Development Associations could also be invited to speak during the Political rallies and spread the awareness about children with disabilities and their schooling. Driø6 thought that without the awareness campaigns, probably that explains the reasons why we still have people who constantly call people with disabilities with names that pull them down with low self esteem.
5.5.7 Driaø7

Driaø7 is a teacher for the Deaf. She has been working with students with Hearing Impairment for seven years now. She got connected to teaching students with Hearing Impairment through the Schools’ Psychological Services and the fact that she herself had her biological child with a disability. She is trained as an ordinary classroom practitioner; he still has to train as a specialist teacher. Driaø7 didn’t find anything that she thought would be difficult in teaching students with hearing impairment; she conversely expressed wonderful moments she cherishes all the time.

a) Deprivation versus proper provision

Driaø7 feels that there is need for a standardized sign language in school. She added that most children come from different schools where they would have been attending Primary school, where they learnt using various signs in school. The use of a standardized sign language would help to curb the problem.

When she was asked to elaborate on the hindrances that students had she cited an alarming lack of educational facilities that enhance the teaching of students with hearing impairment, she spoke against subserviced hearing aids which she said that they usually make noise instead of assisting with the hearing, thereby standing as an obstacle in the full participation of students with hearing impairment.

Driaø7also cited the unsuitability of the available materials that are available for use to students with disabilities. She talked about the machines that the students use for sewing during fashion and fabrics. She expressed that the machines are unsuitable because they are almost heavy duty machines and are not suitable for use by students with disabilities, because they always get hurt. She added that some of the students fear the machines and refuse to use them, thereby failing to participate in the activities which the other students participate in. Driaø7 suggested that free education for students with disabilities would enhance the access and participation for students with disabilities. In addition, she proposed for the provision of the relevant facilities (like Hearing Aids for the hard of hearing) that are aligned with their disabilities and their educational needs by the responsible Ministry of Education.

Another observation that Draø7 forwarded was that for teachers for students with disabilities, it is necessary that one gets counselling training because the students whom we deal with almost always have issues that break them; they need a counsellor most of the time that is not available.
5.6 Summary for Case 3

The issue of poverty within families had been trodden down by teachers as one big constraint that reduced the participation for SWD. Poverty seemed to have had a strong effect on the education of the CWD in that no material support was realized from the parents and the government. Findings show that poverty sparked inadequate financial resources for parents, forcing them to fail to afford the cost of the tuition for their CWD. Poverty at the level of the government also sparked inadequate financial aid or inadequate level of government funding. It can be said that the harsh economic environment had caused a very harsh impact on the education and participation of CWD.

Findings also reveal that there is a culture of physical or verbal abuse used as method to correct children when they do wrong. Teachers confirm and concur that students were abused physically and verbally. Physically abusing children is disrespect to their human dignity. Children also showed that they were dissatisfied by such treatment. This finding is also inline with children who were abused in guardian families. The end result of abuse impacted on the participation of the children in school in that the children developed a low moral and that affected their learning. The factor of living with unloving guardians who abuse children makes the unfavourable living conditions for children which in turn are detrimental to their participation in school.

Another finding reveals that the curriculum that the teachers used to teach was not suitable for the daily life of CWD. Interpretation by the researcher was that the syllabus content is too hard as compared to the level of operation of the children with disabilities. Teachers found it hard to be teaching concepts that were not understood by CWD at the expense of simple Daily Living Skills which they found CWD trainable in. Research findings indicate that the inappropriate curriculum decreased the participation of children and also the quality of education for SWD.

5.7 Case 4 Policy implementation officials

Three informants were reached in this section. The three officials held Bachelor Degrees in Special Needs Education. The officials have teaching experiences; they worked with students with disabilities and also with the parents of the students with disabilities during the assessment and placement into the schools. The officials work under the Provincial Office and they are posted to different districts as the program co-coordinators who work in collaboration with the psychologists. The officials are the arm of the Ministry of Education who get
information, circulars and convey it to the different districts. They are also responsible for the evaluation of the programs, evaluating the teaching programs at the end of the year, which was the time that coincided with the time for data collection.

5.7.1 Fria1

a) Provisions for special needs education and the present situation

Fria1 mentioned a number of provisional policies that are available for people with disabilities. She mentioned that there was recently an emphasis on the policy of accommodation for all, to make sure that students with disabilities have access into education without strain. In relation to the Education Act, she however mentioned that there wasn’t any specific law for people with disabilities in relation to their education. She stated that they had set some strategies that helped them to monitor the implementation of the intentions of the government in educating students with disabilities. They had deployed manpower at the national level, in all provinces and in all districts to reach out and monitor the education of students with disabilities.

Before she enunciated the challenges that they have had so far, she made a positive comment that it was good that at that time there were more teachers who had gone an extra mile in their education and studied special needs education, and noted that there was especially an increase in teachers for students with Mental Retardation and in Hearing Impairment. She regretfully commented that there was a critical shortage of visually handicapped units in the whole Province of Harare. Fria1 said: Visual handicap is hard hit in the provision of schools and teachers. Statistics also reveal that there are many students with Visual Handicaps in the Province of Harare, which means that they are not fully accommodated in schools.

b) Deprivation versus proper provision

Asked to clarify further where the children with visual impairments then go to school to, if there is such critical shortage as she stressed, Fria1 said that the students usually have to move to other districts where they can find such provisions. She gave an example of a school called Jairosi Jiri school in the Midlands Province which lies about 300 kilometers away, and she stated that it is the nearest from Harare Province. She also explained that the school is a private and residential school, it is expensive and that many parents do not afford the tuition fees that are charged there for the services that they offer. In pursuit of her point on the residential schools, Fria1 mentioned that the residential schools are also few and they also have little capacity. The schools had begun experiencing challenges that the facilities are also even overburdened now because of overuse, because they cater for large numbers which they
were priory not meant to accommodate. The schools had reported that they had begun to experience health problems due to overcrowding, she asserted.

In response to the request to identify the achievements they had had by then, Fria1 happily enumerated them. She mentioned that there was a remarkable improvement in the access into Higher Education Institutions than it was before. She gave an example of improved access into Universities and into Colleges. She even compared the access to the education by people with disabilities as even lower at the lower levels than at the upper levels. At higher levels, the people with disabilities are utilizing the opportunities.

c) Obstacles to educating people with disabilities from the view of the Policy implementer

Fria1 agreed that there are some innumerable obstacles that hinder full access and participation for people with disabilities in the whole country. She stated that: *because in the past, the policy was set to isolate people with disabilities generally, they were institutionalized.* She added that the biggest problem today is that, when the policy has liberalized and emphasizing on acceptance and accommodation for people with disabilities, the society is dragging its feet to accommodate them fully. She added to the point of society’s refusal to accommodate people with disabilities and said, *The situation is the same in the schools that teachers in the regular schools think that they do not have anything to do with children with disabilities in the school. They believe that it is only for the special needs teachers, not for every other teacher.*

Fria1 added that: *Acceptance for participation for students with disabilities may need to go all the way back to the teacher training colleges so that the teachers are conscientised about the prevalence of students with disabilities in schools before they are sent out into the field to work.*

In the same vein, attitudes of people have to change, they need to accept that people with disabilities are part of their society, not to think that they are doing like a particular favour for the people with disabilities. She expressed that as of now it is just like sort of left to individuals with pupils with disabilities. She also emphasized that the organizations that deal with people with disabilities should kind like have an important role to play in giving awareness to people to accept the people with disabilities.

Fria1 proposed that there was need that organizations that deal with people with disabilities to lobby for representation at national level so that when we the academics talk about policy, and forward it to the member who will be responsible for people with disabilities, the government may consider a respectable person like the Minister rather than us the academics, they just take us as ordinary people. She explained further that at present the Ministry of disabled persons is manned by the able bodied people. Fria1 cited a problem that when the able bodied
representatives report on issues that concern PWD, they are just reporting on behalf of the people with disabilities, as if they are not present, and yet they are there. If the people with disabilities represent themselves, then they can talk from their own experiences. If they take up such positions, there will be true representation other than a situation whereby able bodied people represent the disabled people.

Fria1 mentioned one other obstacle that hindered the participation of children with disabilities into education as poverty within their living cycle and in a country. From the position of the policy official, Fria1 commented that, the country was critically hit by the wave of hyperinflation. The result was that the government as the responsible authority failed to set up a budget that could enhance the participation for students with disabilities. She alluded that: *if both the parents and the government fail to find the means to sustain and support special needs education, the situation becomes very difficult.*

When she was asked to highlight the way the responsible authority reacts to the grievances that are forwarded to them by the stakeholders, Fria1 explained that all grievances are dealt with at the District Level, and she added that if there is need they could then be passed on to the next level, which is the Provincial Office. She also commented that it was both good and bad that due to bureaucracy, some issues take long to be handled so in the end if issues are solved at the District level it saves a lot time and urgency of the matter. She gave an example of a certain incident that was forwarded to the Provincial Office and it took long time before it was handled. It was later known that the parents when they failed to get responses, they withdrew and kept the problem to themselves. She then emphasized that that showed the bad side of bureaucracy. In this instance she was also criticizing her own position as a policy implementer, that the system was somewhat blocking and disadvantaging its own members. She also enlightened that the District Office was also responsible for making decisions, solving problems as well as giving feedback and evaluation.

Fria1 also talked about the changes that the policy hoped to see. She mentions such things as the need for a change in the evaluation of the programs. She gave examples of the evaluation of the National Association of Handicapped that she discovered that they had their statistics way back in 1980 and that they had not updated their records. Fria1 commented that: *That alone for example impacts heavily on all the things that pin along their statistics, even the policy, and the provisions. The numbers, the need for more or less provision is affected for example, large numbers of children who are in need may fail to be provided for or accommodated in the schools with the misconception that there are still few people with disabilities as they were in 1980, no new schools can be built and many other things.*
5.7.2 Frie2

a) Provisions for special needs education and the present situation

Frie2 alleged that policies that direct the education of students with disabilities exist and then she enumerated them. She also added that Special Needs Education operates under the Education Act of 1987. Frie2 admitted that there are no specific policies that have been passed in parliament so far to mandate the education of people with disabilities.

In response to the question about how the Ministry of Education runs special needs education, Frie2 noted that recently there has been decentralization of powers to district level. She added that all matters of directing, supervision and organization have been diffused or sheded down to personnel who have been appointed at District level to see to the running of special needs education in schools. So she mentioned that all problems, all assessments of children and placements are dealt with at district level.

b) Obstacles to educating people with disabilities from the view of the policy implementer

Frie2 agreed that there existed various challenges in the implementation of the planned programs, she purported that there were quite numerous problems indeed. She noted that one of the problems is that they plan programs which people with disabilities do not take serious about. She assumed that probably it was because at home, CWD are labelled that they cannot do anything sensible they carry those labels with them even in school. The children then do not take education seriously, they miss the lessons, and they drop out of school any time. It then becomes very difficult for the teacher to make the child turn their thoughts around to think positively and be able to happily participate in the class and operate just like any other student in class. She said:

Because of these labels from society, the children do not put much effort into schoolwork. They would rather go back into the society to beg than to struggle to succeed and be self reliant.

She explained how she believes in situations where children are just groomed in situations of just receiving handouts and she said that the students would want those handouts to continue until they die, they will not put effort to change their status as beggars. She asserted that:

As the responsible authority in education, we know of such situations that even if the children with disabilities are accorded the opportunities into education, some of them would rather run away from the opportunity and go back to begging, even though some of them would be quite capable.

One other hindrance is that the parents themselves also have the attitude that their children with disabilities cannot do anything substantial in their lives. Parents just see the disability first in their child then the human being later. For that reason, nothing positive is expected
from the child. She added that due to this reason we find that the parents usually would not want to ‘sacrifice’. She gave an example that in times when in real life situations some parents sacrifice the very little money, time and effort to educate their children. Fríe2 sadly stressed that unfortunately that never happened with parents to their children with disabilities, she said that: The reason is that they believe that these children are useless and that if they sacrifice they just waste their money for nothing. Sometimes these parents they don’t value their children with disabilities, they would rather respect a stranger or to get money than their own child with a disability.

Strange reports have been coming to the district office that there are parents who starve their children especially those with disabilities, and that is very difficult to deal with. The teachers and other anonymous people sent reports that some children come to school on empty stomachs, some children faint, some leave when they cannot stand the hunger. As the government, we find it hard to decide what to do; the government does not have money to feed these starving children. Some teachers believe that some parents thought that the government could feed the children just what the donors used to feed children in schools. It is an unfortunate situation because as the government we do not have any authority to coerce donors to come into our community to feed the children and yet at the same time we can not afford those ourselves.

One other big problem is that most teachers have no knowledge on how to handle children with disabilities. When ordinary classroom teachers were assigned to teach students with disabilities, they do not have the knowledge because that was not included in their teacher training during their time. It is just now that teachers are coming up to train as specialist teachers who can teach children with disabilities. The gist of the problem lies in the factor that teachers who lack the knowledge do not know what do when they are given to teach children with disabilities. They do not know that it is important to work with the attitude of the child first so that the child accepts his condition and that he/she can operate just like any other child.

She also added that the most difficult thing is that sometimes we deploy teachers who already hold strong negative attitude towards teaching children with disabilities. The other problem is that they just take up the assignment to teach even when they are not committed and they later destroy the intended idea by neglecting the children in class, not teaching, not putting effort, giving a disadvantage to the children with disabilities and the children also do not benefit academically.

Because of the issue of the prescribed curriculum which they should follow, Fríe2 said that they received problems that teachers rush the children so much and leave them before they
fully master the set concepts for the reason that they want to complete the set syllabus within the stipulated period of the year. The teachers therefore do not consider that the children have special problems; it might then imply that the children’s individual needs are ignored and are never met. Frie2 claimed that they also find challenges that teachers complain about their remuneration which is seriously low due to the prevailing economic hardships in the country. Their grumbling is felt down in the children as they usually do not want to work extra time or hard, which in contrast is what it entails to be a teacher for children with disabilities. Even in certain instances when they really see the need to give extra help to the children, they just ignore.

On the introduction of inclusive education, Frie2 said that the new reforms that are being tried to include all people with disabilities into the mainstream are failing. She said that because teachers who teach in the mainstream do not want, they are not willing, they just accept just to follow orders but they do not give any help to the children. So in many instances most noble ideas are thwarted by individuals who just downplay the whole issue. She added that all the problems unfortunately fall back to the children with disabilities as disadvantages.

She also mentioned that peers also show rejection, they also have pressure from their own families not to associate with people with disabilities because of traditional beliefs that do not die in the people that probably disability could be contagious. She said: *To the child with a disability it becomes like a mountain to climb if they continuously experiencing rejection everywhere.*

Another constraint that Frie2 expressed was disheartening; she postulated that those who are in dire need are the ones who fail to get it while the opposite is true. She mentioned sad issues that donors who sponsor children in school usually prefer to sponsor children who give them some retain like the children without disabilities. She stressed her point that: *They come with conditionalities, they only want to sponsor bright children, not slow learners. They just politely say that they are not looking for those groups of children at that moment. In such instances, they are ‘left out again’.*

c) Poverty versus access to basic needs

Still in the same line with obstacles, Frie2 noted poverty as one other menacing hindrance that she knew to have strength to impact on the education of the students with disabilities. She commented that because there are hindrances like finances which are barricading almost all children into schools, they do not go very far with their education. She admitted that the Ministry officials were aware that the present Zimbabwean economic difficulties really affected everyone in the society and it has been worse with people with disabilities.
Frie2 commented that when the economic hardships worsened, the result was that most children with disabilities had fallen back into the society, they withdrew from education. In a bid to try to assist the vulnerable children in Zimbabwe including those with disabilities, the government had introduced financial assistance for students that covered their tuition fees, so that they would enhance their learning. It is just now that efforts are being made to call them back into school. She added that it was really a pity that even the national BEAM assistance for the vulnerable children does not cover all the disadvantaged children because some of the children are in special private schools which are not covered, some are in secondary schools that are also left out, because the assistance only covers children in primary schools for the reason that they just want to promote basic literacy and numeracy. She commented that the situation had changed from that when special needs sprouted in the early years of independence, much of the financing came from donors and now that the donors had withdrawn, the situation was just tough even to plan for the programs that they intended to be done could not be started because of the shortage of finances.

5.7.3 Frie3

a) Provisions for special needs education and the present situation
Frie3 stated that the education of children with disabilities is run and guided by the Education Act of 1987. He added that the policy stipulates that all children have the same rights to access education at schools of their choices and added that those who are denied have the right to sue the concerned schools.

In response to question on which the strategies that they use to implement the policy, Frie3 postulated that they actually enforce the establishment of special classes and resource units in different schools. Through the official district records the qualified teachers are identified and they are appointed to teach the Special Classes and the Resource Units.

b) Obstacles to educating people with disabilities from the view of the Policy implementer
In response to the question about what have been the challenges in implementing the policy, he mentioned the resistance that comes from the school heads who resist the establishment of special classes at their schools. Some people believe that it is not their responsibility to include people with disabilities in their school set-ups. School heads do not want to lower the pass rates at their schools by including children with disabilities as there is a lot of emphasis on examination orientation and pass rates.

Frie3 also noted that teachers resist integrating children with disabilities in their classrooms with the reasons that the children disrupt the teaching and learning process. He added that
there is resistance form the people who have the responsibility to work with the children. Frii3 remarked that the resistance was a result of the negative attitudes that some teachers hold. It cannot be denied that if somebody is forced to teach he/she can sabotage thus give disadvantage to the children with disabilities. There is also resistance from the parents in some instances where they complain about children with disabilities being included in the same classroom with CWD. The official thought that this was a result of the fear that disability could be contagious, which emanates from some traditional beliefs.

Frii3 also mentioned the problem with insufficient and inappropriate infrastructure to accommodate the children with disabilities. He mentioned the problem that in the schools there is over enrolment and usually there are no extra classrooms left for students with disabilities. He said: *Sometimes we resort to hot seating whereby some children use the buildings in the morning while others come later in the afternoon.*

One other obstacle in the implementation of the policy is the failure to provide the trained teachers who can teach them effectively. The few teachers whom we get usually do not stay long as they quickly look for greener pastures as the government does not manage to pay them well, this being a result of the economic hardships in the country.

One other hindrance is that there are some reports that have also been coming to the office that parents find it hard to pay for the education of their children. The gist of the problem lies in the factor that the government sets tuition fees, the parents find it hard to manage to pay the tuition fees. The children then usually spend more time at home trying to look for money while they are away from school. As the ministry officials we also find it challenging since the government is bankrupt, it can not afford to give education for free. Frii3 added that almost all the obstacles that children with disabilities experience all revolve round the resource provision, like the provision of qualified teachers, enabling materials that they need to enhance their learning. With a lower voice, Frii3 reiterated that: *As the responsible authority, our major problem is financing of education especially as of today that we are still recovering from the hard hit economy due to hyperinflation.*

**c) Discouragement versus support**

In response to the question about what has been done so far to improve the situation, Frii3 said, a lot of encouragement and awareness campaigns have been held to improve on some of the people’s attitudes towards people with disabilities. The ministry has managed to hold staff development meetings that help improve on the treatment of people with disabilities in their access and their acceptance into the school system. One other pleasing achievement is that the
ministry has managed to enroll as many people with disabilities as possible and made sure that their access to education is not strenuous at all.

When Frii3 was asked to comment on what the policy hoped to achieve he noted that they hoped to see and achieve a society that is non segregator at all, a welcoming society that is able to welcome everybody as equal partners including people with disabilities equally accessing education.

When asked to comment on how they respond to grievances that come from the stakeholders, Frii3 said that they try to educate the people to hold awareness campaigns with the intention to give knowledge to people about the policies so that they come to understand and eventually they will come to accept. As of how they get feedback from the stakeholders, Frii3 noted that schools have to make end of term reports so they evaluate from the reports. Frii3 admitted that as the responsible authority in education they should respond to the grievances that have been send to the government through the reports and from the workshops that have been carried out. He noted that there is a big need that the government sets up a budget that can enhance the access, participation and the teaching of people with disabilities.

He also noted that it is important for the responsible authority to ensure that better programs replace the poor ones that are being complained about. There is need for the government to train more teachers who can teach children with disabilities so as to enhance the teaching of the children with disabilities. It is also vital that the responsible authority improves the infrastructure in the schools according to the need.

5.8 Summary for Case 4

Responses from Case 4 hold that Education for people with disabilities is directed under the Education Act of 1987. Supporting policies that work together with the main Act were enacted to enhance the access and participation of CWD. The decentralization of power to the Districts was also mentioned as one way that the ministry official used to implement their policies to enhance the access and participation of people with disabilities.

Basing on the responses from the ministry officials, results show that there have been frantic efforts that have been made by the government to enhance the access and participation of students with disabilities. The only worry is the factor that the efforts have not achieved the intended level of achievement that is anticipated. This also posed as hindrances for the ministry as the responsible authority. As the ministry officials report, the drawback was a
result of a negative response from the lower levels of administering special needs education and also from the stakeholders themselves.

The ministry officials thought that their planned strategies to enhance the learning of students with disabilities have no progress because of poverty which blocks the intended provision of the necessary requirements that can enhance the learning of SWD. The officials also saw a lot of negative attitudes that force the people to downplay the education of SWD. Due to the negative attitudes, schools, heads of schools, parents, and the whole community create hindrances for example through resistance to the access and participation for SWD.

Results also reveal that the government has not been able to provide equal opportunities for the able bodied and the CWD. It could be argued that there exists a lack of integrity on the part of the government that Laws and Policies are enacted, intentions circulated but the real situation on the ground depicts a completely different situation, like no mandate, no follow-up and no enforcement. Given such scenarios, it could be said that the government of Zimbabwe has not been very successful in providing improved education for SWD since very little change was realized in the teaching, access and participation of CWD in schools.

5.9 Cross Case Analysis

In an effort to provide further insight into the obstacles that hinder the access and participation of people with disabilities, a cross case analysis is given here. Yin (1993) and Miles and Huberman (1994) thought that studying multiple cases makes it possible to build a logical chain of evidence. Yin (1994) added that a multiple-case or cross-case study strategy explains the causal links in real-life situations that are too complex for a single case study. In a similar vein, the cross-case analysis here aims to seek a chain of evidence for the relationships studied, by offering similar results from different data sources and also by offering interesting and important contrasting or rival results that may be useful and salient, that have the capability to raise change for the better. The analysis is given in two parts as below.

5.9.1 Constraints reported that stand unique to one case

One obstacle reported by the students which hinder their easy participation and accommodation into the society was isolation of SWD by their own parents from mixing and making friends with other children in their communities. An observation made by the researcher was that, to an extent, families of CWD excluded themselves from the community. It also followed that the parents passed on the self exclusion from the community to their children by denying them opportunities to mix with other children. A result of such seclusion
would also mean that CWD fail to make friends as they grow, they also fail to build the basics of fitting into an existing group, even when they go out to the people, they remain secluding themselves because they are not used to making friends and collaborations. It is thus apparently possible for the CWD to grow to like secluded environments, secluded learning and life at the expense of an inclusive one which the world propounds to be the best for them today.

Some CWD reported that they were being overworked by their family members and guardians, which in many cases interfered with their easy participation into school activities. When children are overworked, they get tired and lose focus about what they are doing as they concentrate to work and trying to please their parents. It can be assumed that the parents, the teachers and the policy implementation staff did not report the issue of overworking CWD because they did not notice the anomaly. One other reason why parents and teachers did not perceive working in the home as a constraint could be that they considered it as part of bringing up of children in a traditional way. The CWD, who felt that they were overburdened, reported it. If CWD constantly get tired and lose focus on their studies, they are absolutely disadvantaged.

In one case, (the teachers) raised the issue of overprotection of the children and sometimes of the situation that the family with a CWD stands in. Parents have been reported to be covering up many issues and pretending as if things are next to normal when they are not. In actuality, overprotection and hiding the truth would be put in the same bracket. When the teachers reported overprotection and hiding, they also implied that some important information that would be vital was left out and probably that CWD are overprotected when they could have benefited better. There is reason to believe that parents do this for their own benefit, but disadvantaging their own children instead.

One important issue that enhances the participation for CWD is support by their parents and all the other family members. It was unfortunate that results indicated that the case of parents reported that they did not seem to know or to follow what went on in the education of their own children; they did not give much home-school help. With regard to the issue of a poor home, school and child relationship, wise minds can clearly see the discrepancy and this can be termed a living disadvantage to the CWD.
5.9.2 Constraints reported that cut across two or more cases

Across all the four cases, poverty was reported as a big hurdle that hinders meaningful access and participation for CWD. Poverty entails failure to secure sufficient resources for basic needs. Poverty also leads to failure to pay the tuition fees for the children, to afford to have basic resources for their learning and many more. Results hold that as a result of poverty, children were drawn backwards, and it impacted on their participation in school.

Abuse of CWD in different ways has been reported across all the four cases. Abuse hurts; it disturbs and has the capacity to kill the spirit/moral of an individual. Abuse breeds differential treatment, wherein ostracism, teasing and denial of opportunities has also been reported across three cases, yet they also come out from abuse. Related to this is, it has been noted with concern from the four cases that rejection of CWD is rife in all sectors of the community in which they live in. Parents noticed that the segregation begin from the family being sidelined, the students themselves experience segregation, in school, in play and elsewhere, teachers reported similarly about segregation within the school. An analysis of situations that abuse, segregation, ostracism, name calling is rife, CWD have very limited options than to suffer or drop out.

Provision of a suitable curriculum that includes subjects which CWD have the opportunity to enhance the participation of CWD with success was also reported across the cases. In relation to situations such as these that have been reported across the board, that of a prescribed curriculum, CWD get disadvantaged in situations where they could have benefited from programs that are meant for them.

Two of the cases reported incidents where teachers denied teaching students with disabilities, in the case for the teachers and the policy implementation staff. Considering the factor that teachers are crucial figures in the education and participation of CWD, there is reason to believe that if such incidents are reported that teachers seem like they are forced into teaching CWD, the situation and the results are not preferable.
Chapter 6: Discussion

In this chapter, a discussion of the findings that have been presented in the previous chapter is given. The discussion is developed in relation to the previous researches, theoretical framework, and the current Zimbabwean context and it adopted the sequence of the categorization of data. The research aimed to explore into the obstacles that hinder the access and participation of students with disabilities through the research question stated as follows: How do contextual constraints impact on the access and participation of students with disabilities? The sub-questions sought to find out about:

1) Which constraints hinder meaningful access and participation?
2) In what ways do these constraints influence academic participation?
3) How can the constraints be mitigated?
4) What has been done so far to mitigate the obstacles?
5) To what extent have these strategies been successful?

6.1 Case by case discussion

6.1.1 Individual students’ experiences in the families and their immediate surroundings

The main research question for this study sought to explore into how contextual constraints impact on the access and participation for SWD into their educational activities. With specific reference to sub-question 1, the study tried to find out which of the constraints hinder the access and participation of CWD into their educational activities. Individual students reported for themselves here. Findings show that within the families, family members have not managed to separate between the child and the disability. There is belief that the disability overrides or cripples the individual. This was evident in that CWD were denied opportunities to practice in household chores; thereby they eventually fail to manage to do things independently. One reason could have been that family members looked down upon the potentialities of CWD. The researcher implied such action of viewing disability as causing inability as just living by the stereotypes about disability as causing inability. Such a situation is unfortunate because in real terms, CWD are denied the opportunities to practice self-reliance, thereby perpetuating the stereotypes.

Relating this point to the ecology of human development theory, Bronfenbrenner (2005) discovered that environmental conditions (for example those of denying opportunities) can
have profound influence on the behaviour and development of an individual. The profound influence on the development of the child can be seen when the CWD lacks self sufficiency, or when the child develops dependency syndrome or lacks the confidence to endeavour to attempt new things as a result of previous exclusions from the participation in household chores. In a way, the child remains dependant on the family. This can in turn affect the freedom of both the family members and the child from working for the child. This according to Bronfenbrenner is a typical interaction within the microsystem, between the individual CWD and the family which is also the closest environment for the child.

The influence can also be recognized in school (which is also a micro-system) when children who have been raised with the belief that things have to be done for them, things can be initiated for them or those children who lack the confidence to participate independently in school. The children may just wait for guidance and approval while independent functioning becomes very minimal. A similar viewpoint was also forwarded by Errikson (2005) in his research in Sweden. Errickson commented that exclusion from some activities could also lead to less diversity in the opportunities for participation, thus creating a restricted niche potential for students with disabilities. McGivney (1993) similarly purported that CWD are largely denied real opportunities for meaningful participation. The unfortunate situation was that children without disabilities were accorded opportunities to learn in the very early stages of their lives, a situation which could be termed as giving an upper hand to the non disabled while disadvantaging the CWD.

Overprotection was rife in a number of families with CWD that were studied. It was also striking that on the other side of the coin, other parents overworked their CWD more than what they did to their non-disabled siblings. From the researcher’s observations, guardians particularly overworked CWD, while two parent families overprotected their children with disabilities. One other observation was that educated/learned parents raised their children with disabilities in fairly acceptable standards; in as much the same was observed in families that adhered to Christianity religious beliefs.

One point that SWD reported was that being overworked was very tedious. The researcher clearly understood the plight of the students. The students’ concerns about being overworked seamed genuine in that, children who are overburdened with work at home, they may fail to enjoy their childhood. This could be so because Meredith (2009) said that overworked children can be resultantly tired to do any school work effectively after working hard at home.
Meredith (2009) found out that all children who were overworked, they got tired and could not perform well in school.

The researcher also observed that some of the children who were brought up by guardians, they were overworked and abused in different ways, sometimes verbally, sometimes physically. This situation was unlike children who were brought up by their biological parents, the parents seemed to have affection for their CWD irrespective of whether they were single parents or living as two parent families. The researcher wondered about the effects of being a child with a disability in a single parent family, a two parent or a guardian family. It is a fact that living with unloving parents or guardians creates unfavorable living conditions for CWD. Like in the case of the affected children, they felt unhappy, crying and most times they were off their mood when they were in school. Such conditions are unfavourable for an individual to be ready to learn because the child is either low or absent minded. The researcher believes that these obstacles can reduce the concentration span for the learning child. This can also affect the child’s active participation in school. Similar results were also found in Meredith (2009)’s research that CWD reported feelings of depression and they suffered from stress and anxiety. This is a home -school interaction (micro system) which is negative to the CWD. Such negative interaction also causes a negative impact to the learning of the CWD. Examples of the impact include child losing concentration due to fatigue, poor participation following child being overworked at home.

In the contrary, families that adhered strongly to Christian religious beliefs were more accepting of CWD. Even Christians from the community also showed a positive reaction when they dealt with PWD. It was also interesting to note that all the teachers who taught children with disabilities were Christians. In relation to the Ecological systems theory, in the macro-system which is the outermost level, there exists a variety of influences to the individual such as the beliefs and customs. In this regard, the Christian beliefs within the society and within people could be labelled as the beliefs within the macro system that influence the acceptability of the PWD within the society in which they live in. Given such a scenario, it can be said that religion plays a part in the acceptability and segregation of people with disabilities. McGuivney (1993) had a similar thought that individuals are affected by the kind of beliefs and practices which they live by. Similar position was also observed from the data of this research that Crii3 was an old granny who believed that all her life and the way she raised her granddaughter was through the Grace of The Lord, which was a belief in the unseen powers. Boyd and Bee (2006) forwarded a similar viewpoint that members of a
society usually conform to the values and beliefs and some of the people get affected by such beliefs either positively or negatively. In this respect, Christian beliefs could have influenced positively the acceptance of CWD.

In a classroom situation as well as in the community, children who are accepted for instance by their peers, or by the school (probably due to the religious beliefs), they enjoy a number of benefits and outcomes out of such a healthy accepting environment. Those CWD that are rejected suffer a lot of negative consequences like stigma, ostracism, shunning and isolation. The result of such a distasteful interaction in a school (micro system), can yield low self esteem, depression and it has the capability to rob children of their confidence. On the other side of the coin, acceptance by the peers and the community can yield learning together without segregation in school. Acceptance can also yield living together and can lay the foundation for a perfect socialization.

In the Zimbabwean situation, results show that Zimbabwean community has not yet fully accepted to include PWD as equal partners in their community. It was evident from the interview conversations that CWD are rejected, by their own people, excluded from many day to day functions, and also they are shunned and isolated. As alluded to above, PWD who are rejected suffer a lot of negative consequences like stigmatization, ostracism and shunning. Other behaviours that show the negative feelings towards PWD include denial of opportunities that are available for all. An example of such denial could be denial to participate in sporting activities. Faneli and Mushunje (2007) reflected on the Zimbabwean situation that CWD are excluded from most interschool events sometimes due to the simple reason that other people are not willing to allow them to participate together with the ‘normal’ children. It then follows that CWD get disadvantaged in many ways, either by being overburdened within their families or being denied opportunities. This lays a baseline of an array of disadvantages within their life spectrum.

6.1.2 Individual experiences in school, the access and participation

In the schools, results showed that the students who were interviewed all felt insecure about being included in the regular classroom. The children preferred segregated learning better than inclusion. They preferred to learn together with other students with disabilities. This was evidenced by sentiments from the students who expressed that they felt uncomfortable to participate in the regular classroom even when they had knowledge about what was being taught. Such fear and discomfort shows that there lies a reason behind the students’ feelings. Further probing into the students revealed that SWD were laughed at by their peers when they
tried to participate in the class. The researcher also found out that students without disabilities laughed at the SWD’s speech problems not other things like the wrong answer. To the affected CWD, this was horrible and undesirable. In response to what action the students took, it was revealed that the SWD opted out of the regular classroom inclusion and preferred segregated learning. It can then be argued that when the CWD then opt for segregated learning, withdrawal, dropouts and clinging to the other students with disabilities, opportunities for inclusion are diminished, degraded and lessened. In addition, such an unfriendly learning environment has the potential to lessen the motivation to learn within CWD. It can also reduce peer interaction as well as friendship relationships within the growing young children.

Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggested essential factors in the development of children which include communication, interaction and relationships within children as they grow. In circumstances when all the important factors are missing in the development of CWD, it becomes a poor interaction in the micro system and yet it is the very basic environment in the development of the child, laying a poor/ weak baseline of interaction and communication in the CWD. Pang et al (2005) noted that it should be realized that growth takes place in a social milieu and it will, therefore it can be influenced by a person’s interaction and transactions with that milieu as well as that it can influence individual organisms. Hanafin et al (2007) concluded their research in Ireland with the point that their participants with disabilities reported against persistent attitudinal barriers from their non disabled counterparts as the major inhibiting factors in the participation of PWD in educational activities. Similar findings were reported by Gray (2005), Shah (2005) and by Shah and Trave (2004) that students regarded special schools as safe, supportive and with the appropriate resources that they needed. These findings together with the findings from this research are however contrary to Wilson (2000)’s idea that, students who are educated in separate classrooms often feel unmotivated, rejected, worthless, inferior, frustrated and isolated. Wilson (2000) added that isolation has the power to cripple a child’s mind socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically in development.

The researcher believes that in a similar fashion, CWD in Zimbabwe could also suffer similar consequences due to the reactions that they receive from their non-disabled peers. Arguably, nobody would deny the factor that if CWD are given the opportunities, they would have loved to work together with their non-disabled counterparts unlike opting for withdrawal due to the embarrassment of being sidelined.
6.1.3 Family experiences with a child with a disability and the community

From the perspective of the parents, results show that families that have children with disabilities experienced rejection from their close relatives, friends and from their community. Parents thought that the rejection which they received from their community had an impact on the educational access and participation for their CWD, especially in the society in which they lived as well as in school. Parents cited behaviours like receiving comments from the community about their CWD suggesting on what they thought would be better for the families with a CWD. Most of the parents thought that it depicted rejection and segregation. They cited that in normal circumstances, people do not suggest for an adult on how one should run his/her own family. Such a communication between the families and the community seemed to hold within it some kind of hidden connotations for the future access and participation for the CWD both in society and in school. Some parents thought that such an interaction was a result of negative attitudes that the community has about PWD, that they are probably less human or just a useless lot. If such behaviour persisted, one participant alluded, that would affect CWD’s acceptance in the community as well as in school. In most cases, such situations bring about dilemma on which action or side the parent should take. Paquette and Ryan (2001) described a similar situation that parents get faced with a dilemma of what to do, between turning to the community and what to do with their child with a disability. In this study, families consequently turned to their CWD rather than to make an effort to fit into the society.

Friction between the family and the community has the possibility to arise, friction of who should give in to who, family or society. This kind of interaction is typical of an interaction in the mesosystem where a connection of the structures or the different parts of a child’s microsystem interacts. In this regard, the interaction is not positive for the benefit of the child, but it is negative and detrimental to the CWD. The interaction is a struggle between the family with a CWD and the community. Such a negative interaction leads to parents turning to their child in a bid to protect the child. Such interaction could be the one that eventually creates a situation that locks up the child in the home with the fear and mistrust on anybody to be given responsibility of the CWD in the parents’ absence, thereby leading to a delayed accessing schooling or worse still total failure for the child with the disability to be sent to school. In such circumstances, parents of CWD also keep to themselves or usually never share their experiences of parenting CWD.
This also could be in another way, a result of the parents’ struggle to come to terms with their new journey of parenting CWD, so in the process, some of them kind like bury their past, or simply sweep every past detail under the carpet. They usually hide their past, and try to focus on the present. This was found out by the researcher in the way the parents narrated their past history on raising their CWD. Paquette et al (2001) reported similar findings that showed that parents of children with disabilities have a tendency to cover up; they do not want to be reminded about experiences that they went through and which they think that they have overcome, so they leave out stories that might revive such memories back.

In relation to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory, such situations affect the family, the child and the community bidirectionally. An example of such a bidirectional effect could be represented by how a child’s parents may influence their child’s behaviour, his beliefs and reaction or conduct, towards the people who make up their community. The child ends up seeing the community as people who hate, who are unfair or segregatory. In the same way, the child also affects the behaviour and beliefs of the parents, in that they end up judging situations with bias, for example seeing their child as right and the community as wrong. Even in situations when the family is wrong, they overprotect their child and work against the norms of their community as they used to do before the arrival of their CWD. Such interaction is a typical bidirectional effect because it can be seen that, the child, the parents as well as the community all get affected by the interaction.

Cultural beliefs, traditional practices and societal norms have the strength to influence the acceptance of people with disabilities as well as their access and participation into educational activities. In a society where disability is believed to be unnatural, or if the etiology of the disability is viewed in a way that blames the individual with the disability or their parents, people are bound to curse, look down upon or to reprimand the concerned people with disabilities. Such situations lead people to degrade or to diminish rather than to enhance the inclusion of people with disabilities. Like in Zimbabwe, Devlieger (1998) reported that people with disabilities live in extremely difficult conditions as a result of cultural beliefs that perpetrate on the segregation of people with disabilities. In a Zimbabwean situation, based on my own experience as a citizen, the communities in rural and urban areas are closely-knit and based on a clan living together. Traditional beliefs hold that disability is unnatural; it can be caused by promiscuity of the parent, avenging spirits or evil spirits as result of the wrong doings of the parents of CWD. With development, today some people have accepted that disability is natural and that it has other causes other than those constructed by cultural
beliefs. It is however unfortunate that traditional beliefs and cultural practices are usually latent within people, they take long to be abolished. The treatment of people with disabilities seems to be affected by the cultural beliefs and practices.

A practical example could be given from the real situation on the ground, as reported by one of the participants, that people without disabilities make comments that SWD have no option but to live by the spirits that poses them, while others pass comments on how families with CWD could do better with their CWD. Such communications between families and community can hurt, dishearten and belittle PWD. It can be said that the cultural beliefs would have influenced the community people to make such reckless comments to the PWD. Faneli and Mushunje (2007) reflected on situations in Zimbabwe that PWD are left out to participate in many sporting activities simply because there are some people who do not want them to participate together with the normal children (the non disabled). The author assumed that if some common identity of a clan would provide negative attitudinal barriers to CWD, such an environment would be more negative to people with disabilities in areas where CWD attempt to access. Given such a scenario, efforts to include CWD, accessing and participation are limited or even thwarted by the negative attitudes.

In reference to the Ecological theory of development, such is an interaction at macrolevel which contains a variety of influences to the individual such as laws, customs and cultural values. The influence is bidirectional in that, the community people get influenced by cultural beliefs to react in a certain way, while at the same time their influence by the cultural beliefs affects PWD. The cultural beliefs influence the people to take PWD with little seriousness when they do not see anything good in educating them. In this circumstance, CWD get disadvantaged by the cultural beliefs, traditional practices and their participation in educational activities is also affected. The families with CWD are then left out by the community to raise their own CWD, without any support.

This situation is different from an accepting community where the community might make efforts to embrace PWD by creating programs that help the easy access and participation of people with disabilities. In a similar manner, in the Ecological theory of development, Berk (2000) cited by Paquette et al (2001) noted an example on the macro level that if it is the belief of the culture that parents should be solely responsible for raising their children, that culture is less likely to provide resources to help parents. Choruma (2006) found out similar results that in Zimbabwe, the responsibility of educating CWD is solely left on the shoulders
of the families. Choruma (2006) added that the cultural practice within Zimbabwean families favours sending boy children than girls with the reasoning that boys remain home with the wisdom while girls take the wisdom to their new marriage homes. It is worse with educating non disabled children at the expense of their disabled siblings. The non-disabled siblings are believed to return the benefits of the education which they get unlike the disabled children who are believed to just waste away resources as they usually fail to succeed in their education in any way. Given such circumstances, no efforts are made to endeavour to educate CWD.

6.1.4 Family, child and school experiences

The first sub question focused on trying to establish which constraints hinder and in which way they hinder the access and participation into their education. Below are some of the constraints which hindered access into educational activities. When parents spoke about their children’s first time access into schools, results hold that it was very difficult for many of the parents to secure places for their CWD even though some parents reported that they did not find any problems. The parents who experienced obstacles in securing places for their CWD in school thought that probably the problems emanated from rejection of PWD by the community or the segregation between the able-bodied and the disabled. According to the assessment made by the author, quite a number of the reasons caused access problems for PWD.

One of the reasons could be that the provision of special needs facilities was inadequate. As alluded to earlier, in the study arena, records show that there are only a few schools that offer special needs education like the Special Classes, Resource Units and Special school. In the few schools, the enrollment of the CWD did not exceed seven children in a Resource room and nineteen children in a Special Class. Such data depicts a very limited service offered for the CWD. The gist of the problem lies in the factor that the facilities are inadequate; they cannot adequately cater for the large numbers of students with disabilities as shown by the record of prevalence for PWD in the country. This prevailing problem of access into schools is not in agreement with what Dakwa (1985) reported about Zimbabwe, that special needs facilities sprouted around the country. It could be argued that if special needs facilities had sprouted enough to accommodate all students with disabilities, there could be less access problems for PWD. In the United Kingdom, Priestly (2001) however admitted that there existed a problem which he termed inequitable provision of social structures in the society which disadvantage PWD. In Tanzania, Possi (1996) reported similar problems to those that
are encountered in Zimbabwe, he said that PWD are failed from the enrolment and are sidelined in participation even when they are enrolled. Similar to the inadequacy of facilities is the finding by Errickson (2005) that in Sweden, the physical environment was inadequately adapted to ensure full access.

In relation to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of development, Lewis and Morris (1998) cited in Paquette et al (2001) discovered and provided a list of the basic needs for the positive development of children which include a personal relationship with an adult, a safe place to live, a healthy start towards their future, a marketable skill to use after graduation from high school and an opportunity to contribute to their community. In the context of this study where CWD experienced constraints in the access into schooling, it could be argued that the children with disabilities experience a bad, instead of a healthy start towards their future, which in this case is their schooling. It cannot be denied that if children experience access problems, they have a bad start in school, which may also lead to a bad schooling life, which is unfortunate because it is their future.

Participation into educational activities for SWD was also hindered by numerous obstacles. Insufficient economy within the families made it hard for the parents to afford to provide the basic educational requirements for their CWD that could enhance their participation. Due to insufficient economy, parents failed to support the educational needs of their children with disabilities. Some parents could not afford to purchase necessary gadgets like hearing aids, and for those who had the hearing aids, their parents could not afford to service them, and thus they were underserviced. Students raised problems like failure to get much support from their parents in terms of schooling requirements, equipment that they needed to enhance their participation into educational activities. The students cited things like failure to get ballpoint pens, writing books and almost all basic needs in their education. In many circumstances, children are sent to school without the basic requirements that have the capability to enhance their learning. Also, due to the insufficiency of the economy, the biggest problem that faced the parents was the payment of the school tuition fees for their children with disabilities. When the families fail to pay the tuition fees, the schools are forced to send the children home to go and collect the money; thereafter the children miss out in their education when they are away from school, subsequently being disadvantaged.

The economic strength of a family or country is very important as it can give people the opportunity to purchase the required gadgets that can enhance learning. During the harsh
economic environment, parents’ prioritize food at the expense of education. In some circumstances when parents are stricken by poverty, they fail to take care both of themselves and their children. One actually becomes economically, ideally and emotionally bankrupt, in many cases worsening the situation further. Drew (2009) espoused a point that in more financially desolate sectors, children are counted out before they are even given a chance. Poverty is really a huge constraint that hinders easy access and participation for students with disabilities, which could be argued that it is an article that has been created by political instability, leading to economic downturn, but in effect the disadvantage is finally felt by the CWD in their learning when they fail to access what they would have wanted to.

UNESCO (2001) purported that economy is the basic determinant of the people’s lives and education. Debatably, it could be arguably asserted that the prevailing harsh economic downturn/hyperinflation in Zimbabwe worsened the plight of the CWD and their families. The harsh economic environment caused people to fail to afford the cost of living, causing families to fail to pay the tuition fees that have been set by the government to run the education, which ironically it is officially responsible of. This was quite contrary to Stubbs’ (2002) suggestion that it should be the state’s duty to supply support services at affordable prices including assistive devices for people with disabilities to assist them and increase their independence and participation in educational activities. In such a given situation, there has been excessive interaction within the different systems, like the families, the schools, the government and the interaction eventually disadvantages the CWD.

Findings also revealed that families with children with disabilities are mainly one parent families following separations, deserting spouses and divorces between the parents as a result of having a CWD. The burden of raising the CWD is eventually left on the shoulders of the mother as she is usually the one who bears the pains from childbirth that they cannot leave their children with disabilities, unlike men who just desert and forget about their children because of having a disability. It is an undeniable fact that experiences in single parent families can never be comparable to those in two parent families which can pull up resources together for the betterment of the children. It was found out that most single parent families found it hard to provide for their children with disabilities especially in school. In this study, the breaking away of families was also reported to be influenced and perpetuated by the extended family members like the in-laws and relatives. The in-laws would be encouraging their son, (father of the CWD) to look around and elsewhere for a better child without a disability. It could be argued that the disadvantage is finally laid on the CWD when in fact the
parents, the community and even the government participate to break the marriage. The participation of the parents and community in breaking the marriage is when they influencing the father of the CWD to look around for a better child. This could be a typical interaction among different systems that eventually lay the disadvantage on the CWD.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1990), divorce is one excellent example of the type of interaction between systems that he wrote about. Bronfenbrenner said that, the divorce arrangement can have a profound effect on the family and the development of the child, while it should not be forgotten that it is often a product of society, decided by a judge, enforced by social services. Divorce affects the family, the school planning for the child and also the society, the effect is actually bidirectional since more divorce affects both parties. Bronfenbrenner (1990) added that the family can affect the community through its need for services. In this instance, this level of interaction could be equated to the exosystem whereby some social settings that cover both the mesosystem and the micro system interrelate in the larger social system. In the exo-system, the child does not function directly. Bronfenbrenner, cited by Paquette et al (2001) explained that these settings might not directly involve the individual even though in some way, the individual gets affected in one way or another. In the same vein, divorce between parents does not directly involve the child but it affects the child when the parents cannot work together to provide what the child needs.

6.1.5 Perspectives from the teachers about the family lives and their immediate surrounding

From the perspective of the teachers, one of the disadvantages that befall children with disabilities is a lack of moral support from their families on their education. It was the view of the teachers that most family members did not take the education of their children as important; they do not see a future in their education. There lacked home support in terms of moral support, encouragement or even appreciation from the family members and the CWD. It is critical that people should realize the importance of moral support, appreciation and recognition including reward of what somebody has done. All this seemed not to exist in the families of the children in this study. Teachers showed that there existed a poor and unhealthy communication between the parents of CWD and the teachers about the education of their children.

Research has proved that, how good a child performs in the classroom also depends on how much support that child gets from the parents. McGivney (1993) forwarded similar sentiments
that parents’ relationship with the school can make or break their child’s education. In the same vein, Berk (2000) hallmarked the connection between the child’s teacher and his parents. Similarly, in a research by Noonan et al. (2004), it was found out that those highly achieving women with physical and sensory impairments enjoyed support and encouragement from their parents with some reporting more support from their mothers. In addition to this observation, research studies on parents of children with disabilities therefore recommend that there is need to help parents to develop expectations that are likely to have positive outcomes so as to avoid disappointment for themselves and their children (Russell, 2005).

In relation to the importance of moral support in the education of CWD, in the ecology of human development, EDFD127 (2009) gave an example of the meso-system in function that, a note should be given to the fact that a child's education and learning does not only depend upon the teachers' knowledge, but also the parents of the child, as they have an equal responsibility to assist the child in learning and education. Increased collaboration between parents and teachers was also recommended by Rye (2001) as crucial for the well being, social adjustments and learning of the child with special needs.

All the observations alluded to above, are in line with Bronfenbrenner’s theory (1979, 2005) that stresses the direct and indirect role of contextual factors on a developing individual. In situations whereby such support lacks from the parents to the child, temptation to believe that some parents just sent their CWD to school to while up time, and do not expect anything good out of their learning might loom. In relation to the ecological theory, the interaction between the family and the school which the child attends is very important because it will definitely have an effect on the child’s proceedings in school, be it behaviour, learning, beliefs and the entire development. Communications between home and school are typical interactions within the micro system which in turn affect both parties bidirectional. The influences of the family extend to all aspects of the child’s development; the confidence, security and beliefs, they all develop through the input and behavior related feedback within the family (Bronfenbrenner 1990 cited by Russell, 2005). This means that if a child grows up with low self esteem in the family or a highly motivated spirit developed or built by the family that will definitely set a base in their child’s future life with the outside world.

On the part of the CWD themselves, when the children experience underachievement due to the lack of support from their parents, the children develop a poor self image, they also put themselves to a disadvantage that they lock themselves in a nut, they withdraw and pull out,
and worse of all, they accept that they are defeated to do or to compete with the non-disabled counterparts. If CWD are raised with some misunderstandings and misconceptions about their own disability, this may also lead them to give in and give up even when they know that they can do better than what people say about people with disabilities. This explains what Farnelli and Mushunje (2007) ascribed as the unfortunate situation that CWD find themselves in a position that they tend to accept that they will not be fully participating members due to their disabilities instead of fighting for what belongs to them.

6.1.6 Teachers perspectives about the children in school

From the perspective of the teachers, the curriculum also stood as a hindrance to the full participation of SWD. As alluded to earlier, Zimbabwean schools follow a prescribed curriculum which is mainly academic oriented. The teaching matter is basically a classroom bound curriculum that mainly concentrates on book knowledge. Teachers thought that such is a regular education curriculum and did not suit the needs of SWD. Findings also showed that the teachers struggled to water down the teaching units to the level of operation for the children. This idea to water down the teaching content could have emanated from the problem of children with disabilities that lack academic excellence, so the teachers worked in their capacity to reduce the teaching units to the manageable units for the SWD. UNESCO (2005) supported the idea of watering down the curriculum when they stated that the curriculum needs to be flexible enough to provide possibilities for adjustments to meet the individual needs for various learners. The situation of using the regular education curriculum without adjustment is what Stakes and Hornby (1997) propounded against, whereby teachers attempt to fit students into a rigid curriculum, unlike designing a curriculum that fits the students’ educational needs. Chimedza (2008) said that the curriculum can enhance or hinder the participation of CWD and that in classroom situations, embracing pupil participation originates from attempting to make the curriculum, the teaching and learning process more children centered. This could be true in that, inadequate curriculum preparation, lack of programs that foster creativity in young minds; outdated books have the capacity to hinder student participation in many ways.

In relation to Bronfenbrenner’s theory, provision of a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of its beneficiaries is done at macro-level. If at macro-level, a curriculum provided does not address the needs of its beneficiaries, it then will affect their participation. Johnson (2001) agreed to such observation and commented that the content of the curriculum provided for at macro-level needs to provide flexibility at micro level. Chimedza (2008) had the same
observation that the school curricula should be inclusive as well, failure which it becomes
difficult for students to participate fully in the educational activities that have been planned
for them.

Teachers also revealed that within the communities and within the families, there existed a lot
of physical abuse, stigmatization, threatening, and name calling to the people with disabilities.
Findings revealed that abuse is rampant, in many ways, on a daily basis, verbally, sexually,
physically. Abuse of any kind, hurts and demoralizes the students in many ways. When
students who are constantly abused in any form of abuse come to school, it is clearly visible
because the child will not have a stable mind. The children carry the burden to school, which
eventually affect their learning. That burden does not affect the child alone; it also affects the
teacher, who has to adjust the planned teaching to accommodate the mood of the child.
Adjustments can include loss of time in allowing the child to cool down, could also include
unplanned counseling so that the child can be ready for normal learning. Abuse is detrimental
to the learning of children because it damages the self worth of the CWD. Experiences which
kill the moral and self worthiness in children include worries, anger, trauma, fear, distress,
misery, the torture, agony, the list is endless. That feeling has no doubt can affect the free and
confident participation of an individual in situations where an individual experiences abuse
when one expects to be understood and to be accepted. Abuse is an enormous obstacle to
access and participation; in actuality it is insurmountable for CWD because they cannot
protect themselves from it.

6.1.7 Perspectives of the policy planners as the responsible
authority bin education

Sub question 4 attempted to search for what has been done so far to enhance the access and
participation of CWD. Also, sub-question 5 attempted to search for the extent to which the set
strategies have been successful. In line with the findings, representatives from the policy
implementers consensually agreed that the Zimbabwe 1987 Education Act is the law that
guides the education of children with disabilities and that it adequately serves people with
disabilities and also that it is inclusive and accommodative of all. The Education Act (1987)
stipulates that: Every child in Zimbabwe shall have the right to school education, it also
declares that: No child in Zimbabwe shall be refused admission to any school on the grounds
of race, tribe, colour, religion, place of origin, political opinion or the social status of his/her
parent, (Chirimuuta, 2006). Several subsequent education policies were put up to address
various specific issues in special needs education. The supporting policies that enhance the
access and participation of CWD were also enumerated by the participants. Policies that were put in place to enhance the access and participation for people with disabilities include the Secretary’s Circular Minute Number P36 of 1990 which is a policy article that directs the placement procedures for CWD in regular education schools, their integration procedures into regular education settings and that they can also learn in special education institutions depending on the severity of the child’s disability. Circular Minute Number 1 of 2003 Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) was specifically put in place for the purpose to assist vulnerable people in the country that included CWD to access education with the assistance from the government by the way of paying for their tuition fees. The Secretary’s Circular Minute Number 3 of 2002 directs on the set adjustments that can be made during the national examinations to accommodate CWD and give them extra time to enable them to finish writing the examination. Chitiyo and Wheeler (2004) happily asserted that these policies of the early years of independence, sought to enhance access and participation in the education system of the previously denied and deprived members of the society.

Through these policy provisions, the Secretary for Education gave some directives to enhance inclusive education and guide people on what the schools require, to provide equal access to education for learners with disabilities, and also to guide the procedures to be taken for screening for any form of disability, and on admitting school-age children into schools, regardless of ability. These actions are clear efforts made by the government to enhance the education of CWD. Mutepfa, Mpofu and Chataika (2007) stated that the government strengthened the point that any school that refuses to enroll a child on grounds of disability is in violation of the Disabled Persons Act (1996) and faces disciplinary action from the District Education Office.

Such effort and commitment shown above is quite admirable. Zimbabwe’s efforts to embrace people with disabilities is in line with what Hanafin, Shevlin, Kenny and Mc Neela (2007) reported about Ireland that, facilitating the increased participation of marginalized groups within society has become a cornerstone of social policy. In the United Kingdom, May (2005) contentedly announced that attention to pupil participation within the education system had undoubtedly increased of late. May highlighted that there had been an increasing number of public actions promoting the participation rights of the child. Similarly, in Asia, the International Disability Rights Monitor (2005), made a report about some countries of Asia, they discovered that the legal protections in the region were quite fair. It was also reported that there are a variety of national laws specifically dealing with people with disabilities. In
South Africa, Peters, (2009) reported that in 1994 after the end of the Apartheid Regime, the first steps taken by the new government were the adoption of a philosophy of one education system, with a resultant move towards equity, access, redress and quality education for all learners irrespective of race, religion, gender, or special needs.

Regrettably however, results show that even though some effort and adjustments have been put in place to enhance the learning of students with disabilities in Zimbabwe, students still find it hard to manage themselves through. Students still experience hindrances and obstacles despite the set policies. The real situation on the ground shows that, even though the law and policies stand to protect the rights of people with disabilities, the society still drags its feet to accommodate people with disabilities. The author believes that this could have emanated from previous law that segregated people with disabilities by institutionalizing them in the early years of the century. Such could also explain why until today special classes and resource units are still prevalent in the days of inclusive education. Attempts to include PWD in integration settings also prove to be failing since the students report unbearable experiences that force them to opt for segregated learning.

Such a situation is not unique to Zimbabwe alone, in Ireland, Hanafin, et al (2007) documented the experiences of two groups of students with disabilities in two higher education institutions and saw some discrepancies that, despite anti-discrimination legislation and pro-inclusion government policies, the persistence of attitudinal barriers had been cited as a major inhibiting factor in the participation of people with disabilities in educational programs. It is unfortunate that the betterment and improvement of the education for people with disabilities makes one or two steps forward while at the same time it makes three or longer strides backwards, regression is more imminent than progress.

In addition, the author discovered that obstacles emanate from the placement of CWD into regular classrooms, which participants in this study reported that some teachers refused to integrate them. Some teachers thought that it was not their responsibility to accommodate CWD, probably some other teachers could, whom they perceived as less teachers, since they dealt with children whom they also considered as less human than others. Results also hold that there were many teachers who did not like to work with children with disabilities. This finding is consistent with the comment that the average teacher feels unprepared to serve students with disabilities, has little time available to collaborate with others, and makes few accommodations for students with special needs, Burstein, et al (2004).
Similar discrepancies were reported in this study that, there is a lot of resistance from the teachers who fail to accept the responsibility to teach students with disabilities, extending the responsibility to some others to accommodate them. In practical situations, teachers who hold negative attitudes towards people with disabilities are never the right choices to entrust with CWD. In the truest sense, if such teachers teach CWD, there is a probability that the CWD either may not benefit academically, waste their time or are just abused for no reason.

Differential treatment can be found within such integrative settings and such differential treatment and realization that one gets differential treatment due to a disability can be crippling itself. Devlieger (1998) stressed that when students with physical disabilities are treated differently in the classroom, and thus receive a different level of education, this may add additional stress levels for students with disabilities.

It can be argued therefore that the efforts and the strategies that the government put to enhance the learning of SWD have not been very successful if they are overridden by obstacles on a daily basis like that. Even with the goals that were set, that the government hopes to see changes in that society, that on someday, the society would become non-segregatory, and become welcoming through the encouragements, awareness campaigns, and teachings and also become inclusive of people with disabilities, seem to be hard to achieve considering the resistance that they get from all sectors that are involved in the education of PWD.

On another note, the author observed that the non-existence of a specific law that can mandate the provisions of special needs can be one other hindering factor. Mpofu, (2004) acknowledged that there is no specific legislation for special needs education in Zimbabwe. Mavundukure and Thembani (2000) cited the same discrepancy that there is no specific legislation on special needs education. Kabzems and Chimedza (2002) also criticized the Zimbabwean government for its failure to reinforce law and noted that policies without commitment serve to reinforce existing social attitudes. Elsewhere in the world, Cambodia has also been documented by the International Disability Rights Monitor (2005) that it did not have a specific disability law. In addition, it has also been proved many of the countries studied had also been reported to have laws that had some loopholes for the provision of special education, leading to an overall lack of educational opportunities and rights for people with disabilities despite the fact that all countries guarantee access to education for all, (International Disability Rights Monitor, 2005).
It can then be argued that intentions can be set-up, but without commitment to implementation, the noble ideas become futile. Chitiyo and Wheeler (2004) argued that although Zimbabwe has initiated some legislation and developed policies to stimulate the teaching of pupils with special needs, the government fails to implement these legislations and policy plans. In the absence of any mandatory order stipulating the services to be provided, and by whom, how, when, and where, there could be no meaningful educational services for learners with disabilities in Zimbabwe, (Mutepfa, et al, 2007). One would find situations where laws and policies gather dust on the office shelves while the real situation on the ground goes completely the opposite. According to Miles and Huberman (1985), successful implementation of mandates (rules and regulations or orders governing the actions of individuals and agencies which are intended to produce compliance) require some administrative pressure, lack of serious local resistance and levels of assistance adequate to bring about stabilized use of the innovation by a large percentage of the eligible users. When policy provides for the education of people with disabilities, for example curriculum or opportunities that do not directly meet the needs of all its recipients, the provision becomes futile as it fails to save the intended beneficiaries. Nortey (2009) strongly supports the above notion as she noted that the effective implementation of any policy depends on the clarity of implementation strategies and evaluation modalities at all levels of society. It is important therefore that policies and laws are actually implemented to see their desired effects.

On another note, it should be born in mind that effective change occurs in any given situation when the environment is conducive for the expected change to occur/ thrive. The hyperinflationary environment could have caused many of the hindrances that drew back the efforts by the government to enhance the learning of PWD. When the hyperinflation causes poverty into the society, people get stressed out and work to find food for themselves at the expense of putting effort to work for others. Schools drawback, teachers migrate or get burnt out, no support comes to them in their teaching job, society acts with resentment. It can be said that all things come to a standstill when the economy is shattered. McGivney (1993) thought that probably it could be a direct reference to inconvenient schedules, lack of appropriate course offerings, and policies and procedures that impose inconvenience, confusion or frustration. UNESCO (2005)’s observation then holds water that, economy is the basic determinant of people’s lives and education.

Relating the prevailing economic hardships in Zimbabwe to the Ecological theory of human development, Bronfenbrenner thought that if a person grows up in a high risk environment
(like the environment with the risk of confusion, no mandate as stated above), that person’s development will be strongly influenced in a negative way by that environment, causing that person to potentially lead an unhealthy, unfulfilling life, Engler (2007). In any positive view, legislation should be able to mandate the requirements such as the access to facilities and activities, children’s admission policies and practices that do not discriminate on the basis of disability as well as total support for people with disabilities. Bronfenbrenner (1990) asserted that the effective functioning of child-rearing processes in the family and other child settings requires public policies and practices that provide place, time, stability, status, recognition, belief systems, customs and actions in support of child-rearing activities not only on the part of parents, caregivers, teachers and other professional personnel, but also relatives, friends, neighbours, co-workers, communities, and the major economic, social and political institutions of the entire society.

6.2 Conclusion

This study focused on investigating the contextual constraints that hinder the effective participation and learning for children with disabilities from their families, into the immediate community, in the schools and in the wider community as they would hope to. The study also attempted to look into the constraints in relation to the ecology of human development, with the view that growth takes place in a social milieu and that life of an individual is affected by the environment than improved. Results of this study revealed that the CWD as the centre of the study, get affected by their personal daily surroundings and vice versa. Their day to day life at home and in the community, their future aspirations, social relationships in the school, and the community, all play a part in building the quality of their life in general. Key barriers to the access and participation of CWD identified include latent negative attitudes within people who surround them, too much stereotyping of the difference between the disabled and the non-disabled; an inflexible curriculum; inappropriate and unsafe environment; inappropriate and inadequate support services; inadequate policies, legislation and the mandate to implement them; the non-recognition of the needs of the CWD and a very minimal involvement of parents into the education of their CWD; inadequate and inappropriately trained education organizers and educators, but most of them all is poverty. In an effort to mitigate the constraints, a call for a collaborative approach to doing things is called upon, a strong and serious mandate of the planned policies and legislation would do better and of cause the ways to eradicate poverty within the life of people with disabilities through projects that can evoke self sufficiency and self reliance among people with
disabilities. In a nutshell, children with disabilities experience disadvantages in all everyday happenings despite the fact that the winds try to change direction of their blow to their favour.

6.3 Recommendations

As discussed above, the education of children with disabilities in Zimbabwe has not yet reached satisfactory levels. So, in relation to the findings from this study, some recommendations are forwarded to whom they may concern so as to improve the access and participation for children with disabilities and reduce the constraints as much as possible. Some of the recommendations may be of importance to children with disabilities themselves, some to the parents, to the schools, to the ministry of education as the responsible authority, more specifically to those in the field of special needs education and also to the whole community at large. The author recommends that:

1. The government should address the issue of a specific legislation that pertains to special needs education.
2. There should also be close monitoring in the way teachers support learners with disabilities so that these learners get to benefit from the instructional programs set for them, rather than to entrust everything to the teachers.
3. Those observations and concerns voiced by the learners, teachers and parents should perhaps serve as a wake up call to the planners of special needs education.
4. Another important proposal is made around the need for the transformation of limited number of special schools and other specialized settings so that learners who experience mild to moderate disabilities can be accommodated within general education settings.
5. A re-evaluation of the programs that have been started more than two decades ago and are still operating without improvement would better serve the people with disabilities than the present one.
6. While it is acknowledged that the Disabled Persons Act (DPA) has mostly enabled people with disabilities to access education (and acquire some form of accommodation in educational settings) and to attain high-level positions in decision-making boards, a lot still needs to be done, otherwise Zimbabwe’s education sector that was once revered to as one of the best in Africa, is today and may remain a shadow of its former self because of a severe economic crisis over the past decade.
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Appendix 1: Letter of my Introduction from the UIO

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Save the Children

Institute for Educational Research
NO-1359 Blindern
N-0317 Oslo

Visiting address:
Kommandantens gate, Det Steenberg Building, Oslo
Telephone: 17 22 46 50
Fax: 17 22 44 50

Executive officer: Kristi Børven, secretariat@education.uio.no, 17 22 44 51 98

Date: 25th-10-23

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Kristi Børven
Senior Executive Officer
17 22 44 51 98

Approval of Project Description

This letter is to confirm that the Zimbabwean student, Fideli Chidziko, born 01.07.23, is a second-year student in the Master’s programme in Comparative and International Education at the Institute for Educational Research in the University of Oslo, Norway.

In the second year, our students are required to write a Master thesis of 80 to 110 pages. This thesis should preferably be based on field studies conducted in the student’s country of origin. The fieldwork may incorporate interviews with educational practitioners and decision-makers, data collection through qualitative interviews and documentary analysis. The type of data gathered should be discussed with the student’s advisor. Ms. Chidziko’s research topic has been approved by the Institute of Educational Research and is conducting the research with our support.

We kindly ask you to support Ms. Chidziko in any way possible.
Appendix 2: Application letter to Ministry of Education to carry out research

4801 Manyame Park
Post Office Zengeza
Zengeza
Harare
15 October 2009

The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education Sport and Culture
Post Office Box CY 121
Causeway
Zimbabwe

Dear Madam

Re: Application for permission to carry out research in the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture

I am applying for permission to carry out a study/research in your Ministry, within the period 20 October to 20 November 2009. I wish to carry out the study in the Province of Harare and particularly in the District of Chitungwiza.

I am a student at the University of Oslo. I am studying for a Master of Philosophy Degree in Comparative and International Education.

My area of study is special Needs Education. The topic for my thesis is entitled:

The Educational Access and Participation for Students with disabilities

For more details, please see the attached letter from my University.

I am looking forward to your urgent response.

Yours sincerely

Ethilda Chidindi
Appendix 3: Permission to carry out research from the Ministry of Education

Ref: C/426/3
Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture
P.O Box CY 121
Chitungwiza
Zimbabwe

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

Reference is made to your application to carry out research in the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture institutions on the title:

T.A.K.E. MURUMBA
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NUST)

Permission is hereby granted. However, you are required to liaise with the Provincial Education Director responsible for the schools you want to involve in your research.

You are also required to provide a copy of your final report to the Ministry since it is instrumental to the development of education in Zimbabwe.

I. Cooling
FOR: SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE
Appendix 4: Permission to carry out research from Harare Provincial and Chitungwiza District Offices
Appendix 5: Letter of appreciation to the Provincial office, District and the participants

C/o University of Oslo
P.O.Box 1140, Blindern
N-0318 Oslo (Norway)
20 October 2010

The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education Sport and Culture
Post Office Box CY 121
Causeway
Zimbabwe

Dear Madam

Ref: Appreciation of the services that were granted by your Ministry

I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the support that you offered me during the time that I carried out my research. Everything went on very smoothly because of the permission that I got. The staff in your Ministry, at the Policy implementation stage became very assistive. The teachers and their heads were quite co-operative. The students and their parents were also easy to access because of the permission that I got from your Office.

I am happy that I managed to get the data and assistance that I had already anticipated.

I hope to bring a copy of the study report as per our agreement. I hope that the study will go a long way to enhance the learning of students with disabilities in Zimbabwe.

Yours Faithfully

Ethilda Chidindi
Appendix 6: Interview guide for the students

Interview guide for the pupils

Background
1. Could you tell me how many you are in your family?
2. I guess you do not live alone at home, whom do you live with?
3. Who pays for your school fees and is responsible for your learning requirements?
4. What does your father/mother do for a living?

Educational
5. Is it a problem to be a disabled child in your family?
6. Can you tell me the general experiences of living with parents, siblings or other family members?
7. What are the most challenging times that you usually experience?
8. Could you tell me about the pleasant times that you also experience?
9. Are you included/excluded in the family activities?
10. In which areas are you included or excluded?
11. Could you enlighten me on how you feel when you are excluded or included?
12. What do you think should be done to increase the participation within your own family and in school?
13. Do you have friends who are not disabled?
14. What difficulties are there in playing with them?
15. Is it a problem to be friends with people without disabilities?
16. At school do you have friends who have no disabilities?
17. Which activities do you do at school?
18. Are you included /excluded in the activities at school that some other people participate in?
19. How do you feel about being included / excluded? How do you cope with the experiences?
20. What do you think should be done to increase your participation at school?
21. Do you have any other experiences that you wish to share with me?
Appendix 7: Interview guide for the parents

- Could you tell me about yourself?
- Are you a one parent or a two parent family?
- Who pays for the school fees for your children?
- Can you tell me a short developmental history about your child?
- Which particular challenges did you meet in raising you child?
- What have been the achievements so far?
- Which family duties do you include /exclude your child in?
- Could you enlighten me on the specific reasons why you exclude him/her?
- How does…. Interact with his/her siblings and everybody in the family?
- How does…interact with friends and all the other people in the neighbourhood?
- How has been the general reaction of people in your community/neighbourhood on the interaction of your child and their children?

- Schooling
  - How far is the school that your child attends schooling?
  - What problems did you face in sourcing a school for your child?
  - What problems do you have now/ earlier when your child is in school?
  - Do you have an idea of what the children do in school?
  - How do you react to requirements from school, e.g. homework?
  - Could you give a comment of your own observation about on the learning of the children with disabilities and its suitability to their life needs?
  - Which activities would you wish to be included in their learning?
  - What would you want the school/Ministry to do to enhance the learning of PWD?
  - Do you have any other comments that you would like to add?
  - Thank you so much for taking your time to attend this interview.
Appendix 8: Interview guide for the teachers

1) Can you tell me about yourself?
2) How long have you been teaching students with disabilities?
3) Do you have any training in special education?
4) How did you come to join working with students with disabilities?
5) Can you tell me about your experiences working with students with disabilities?
6) Are all the pupils whom you teach included in the activities which you plan for them?
7) What challenges do you face in teaching the children with disabilities?
8) What obstacles / hindrances do you see the children having in accessing and participating in educational activities?
9) What are the most difficult times you face?
10) What are the pleasant moments that you cherish?
11) Is it a problem to teach children with disabilities?
12) How do you deal with the problems that are raised from the stakeholders?
13) Do you experience some achievements in teaching the children with disabilities?
14) What do you think should be done to increase the educational access and participation and enhance your teaching?
15) Do you have any other experiences that you would like to share with me?
16) Thank you very much.
Appendix 9: Interview guide for the Policy Officials

Background information

1) Would be comfortable to share little information about your educational background?

2) Your present position

Educational

- Are you aware of any policies that cover people with disabilities and which are they?
- can you give a general overview of the policy?
- are there any specific policies which you can enumerate that concern people with disabilities?
- what strategies do you use to implement the policies?
- what have been the challenges to implement the policies?
- can you also comment on the achievements that you have accomplished so far?
- What changes does the policy hope to see?
- can you comment on the issue that children with disabilities experience challenges, obstacles and hindrances in their education?
- how do you respond to the grievances that are forwarded on the obstacles that hinder meaningful participation?
- How do you get feedback on the implementation of the policy from the stakeholders?