DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
School of Education

Practitioner-Informed Professional Development to Advance Special and Inclusive Education in Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe

Morgan Chitiyo, Ph.D.

www.duq.edu/education

The Issues

• Push towards inclusive education

• Shortage of special education teachers (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016; Vittek, 2015)

• High number of children in need of special education

Possible Solutions

- Increase special education teacher preparation programs (Chitiyo et al., 2015)

- Special and inclusive education classes for general education pre-service teachers (Kamchedzera, 2008)

- Professional development in special and inclusive education for in-service teachers (Royster, Raglin, & Losike-Sedimo, 2014)

Purpose of the Study

- Identifying schoolteachers' professional development needs for special and inclusive education in Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.

Research Questions

1. Do schoolteachers in Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe believe that students with special needs should be educated in inclusive classrooms?

2. How important do schoolteachers in these four countries consider professional development to be in the area of special and inclusive education?

3. What areas of professional development or resources do schoolteachers in these four countries need to effectively serve students in inclusive educational settings?

4. Are there differences in beliefs among schoolteachers in Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe regarding the idea of educating children with special needs in inclusive educational settings?

5. Are there differences in the degree to which schoolteachers in Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe value the importance of professional development in the area of special and inclusive education?

6. Are there differences in what schoolteachers in Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe identify as prioritized professional development needs regarding knowledge and services about special and inclusive education in their respective countries?

Method

- **Sampling and Participants:**

- A combination of purposive and convenient sampling

- *Ghana*: 250 surveys were distributed and 232 were returned
- *Namibia*: 203 surveys were distributed and 125 were returned
- *Malawi*: 500 surveys were distributed and 300 were returned
- *Zimbabwe*: 340 surveys were distributes and 204 were returned

- *Total received:* 861

Method (Continued)

- **Instruments:**

- A semi-structured questionnaire with open and closed-end questions

- Questionnaire was content validated by special education experts and piloted in the region

- Questionnaire- 12 demographic questions, 26 Likert type questions and 3 open ended questions
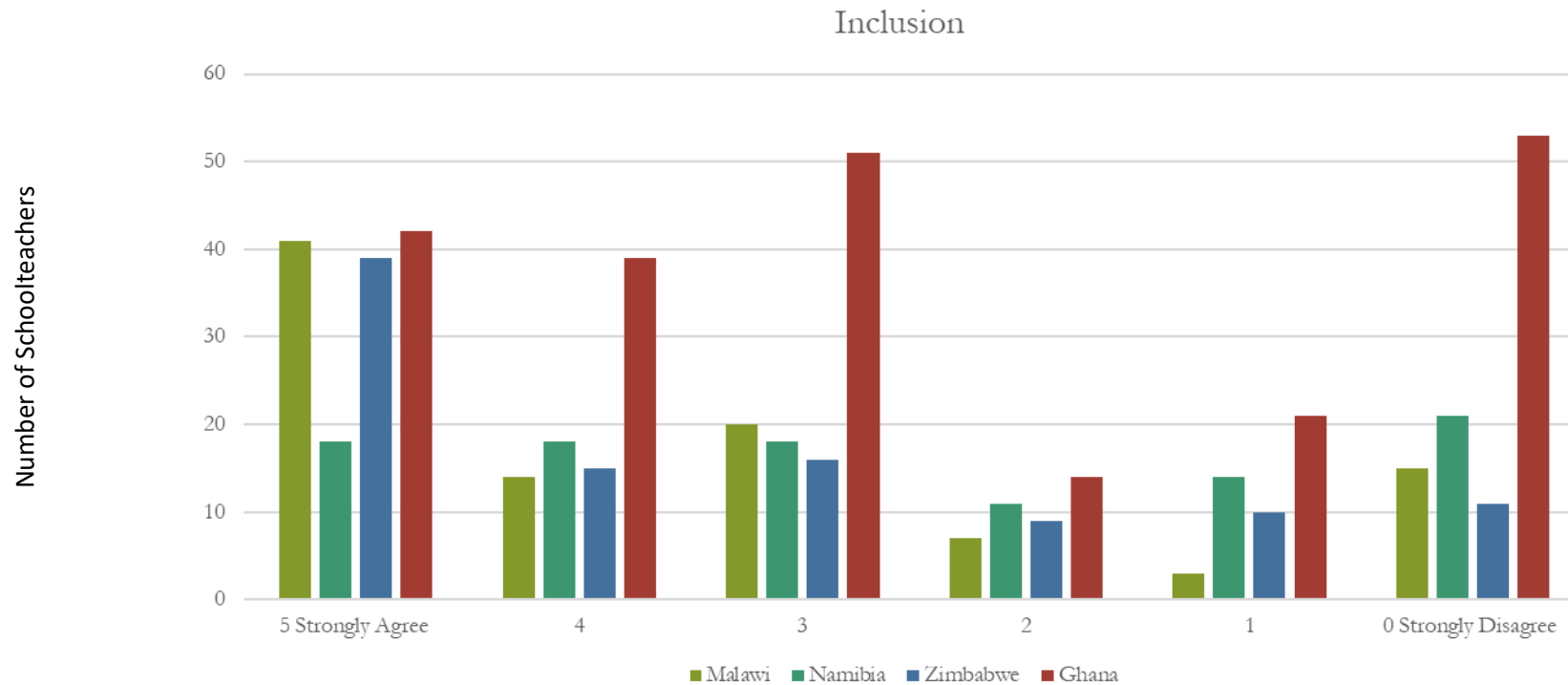
Results

•**Demographics:**

- Teachers who were teaching students with disabilities: 46% (n=368)

- Certified special education teachers: 15% (n=150)

- Teachers in regular education class with no supports: 44% (n=383)

- Regular education class with some support, e.g., teaching assistant: 8% (n=45)

- Inclusive setting with some support, e.g., special educator: 10% (n=190)

- Special education class: 6% (n=83)

Results

Students with special needs should be educated in inclusive classrooms. (Likert scale ranging from zero (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree))

Inclusion

Results

How important is professional development on teaching students with disabilities? (on a scale ranging from zero (Least Important) to five (Most Important))

Professional Development
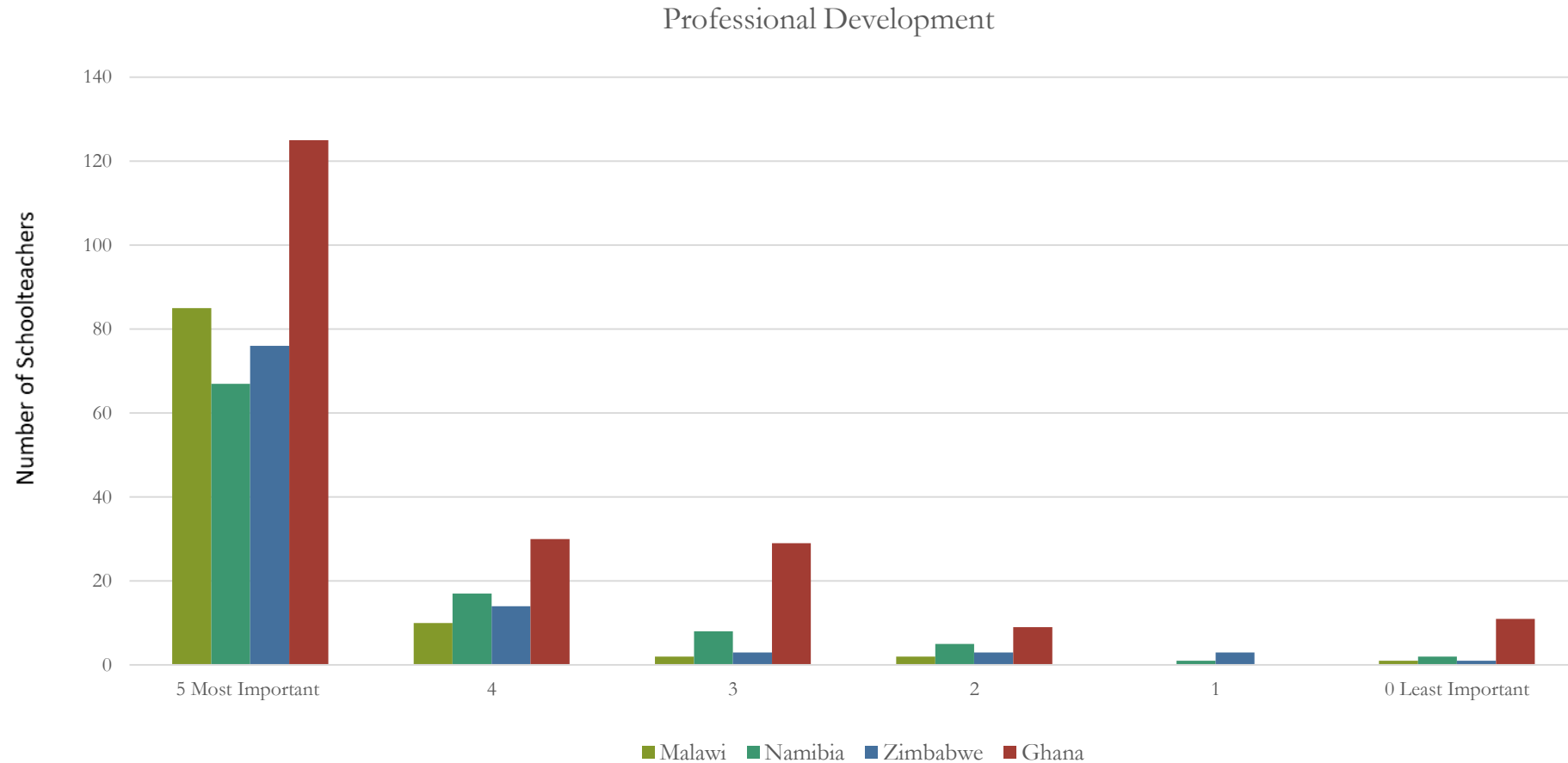
Results

Professional Development (PD) Topics by Country

MALAWI				NAMIBIA				ZIMBABWE				GHANA			
PD Topic	N	M	SD	PD Topic	N	M	SD	PD Topic	N	M	SD	PD Topic	N	M	SD
Behavior management	262	4.55	0.98	Discipline	119	4.51	0.83	Teaching life skills	185	4.70	0.66	Organizing your teaching	213	4.35	.973
Organizing your teaching	259	4.54	0.90	Organizing your teaching	117	4.47	0.92	Blindness or visual impairment	185	4.68	0.69	Instructional Methods	216	4.25	1.049
Discipline	258	4.51	1.03	Learning strategies	118	4.45	0.87	Deafness or hard of hearing	192	4.60	0.72	Learning strategies	213	4.24	.994
Instructional methods	264	4.50	1.00	Behavior management	117	4.39	0.94	Behavior management	186	4.60	0.79	Collaboration with parents/guardians	213	4.22	1.103
Learning strategies	256	4.50	0.86	Instructional methods	117	4.36	0.91	Learning strategies	188	4.58	0.71	Behavior Management	218	4.20	1.080
Assessment	260	4.48	1.00	Assessment	117	4.33	1.03	Organizing your teaching	188	4.58	0.77	Discipline	210	4.17	1.186
Disability characteristics	250	4.45	0.96	How to differentiate instruction	116	4.31	0.94	Discipline	191	4.57	0.74	Teaching life skills	217	4.13	1.137
Deafness or hard of hearing	257	4.45	1.06	Collaboration with parents/guardians	119	4.29	0.93	Other health-related conditions	187	4.54	0.81	Assessment	219	4.05	1.222
Collaboration with parents/guardians	266	4.44	0.97	Learning disabilities	115	4.29	1.05	Collaboration with peers	183	4.53	0.73	Learning Disabilities	212	3.87	1.310
Learning disabilities	256	4.41	1.06	Teaching life skills	119	4.29	1.07	Instructional methods	192	4.52	0.74	How to differentiate instruction	215	3.86	1.135
Blindness or visual impairment	257	4.41	1.08	Collaboration with peers	117	4.23	0.91	Collaboration with parents/guardians	183	4.52	0.75	Other Health-related conditions	215	3.86	1.291
Teaching life skills	262	4.36	1.08	Disability characteristics	117	4.23	1.00	Learning disabilities	182	4.51	0.84	Disability characteristics	214	3.77	1.263
Intellectual disabilities	256	4.34	1.11	Behavior disorders	118	4.23	1.12	Epilepsy	186	4.49	0.85	Physical Disabilities	212	3.75	1.264
Collaboration with peers	255	4.33	1.02	Intellectual disabilities	116	4.12	1.14	Behavior disorders	182	4.48	0.86	Behavior Disorders	213	3.74	1.297
Physical disabilities	251	4.29	1.14	Inclusive education	116	4.10	1.27	Intellectual disabilities	185	4.43	0.98	Intellectual Disabilities	216	3.72	1.381
Other health-related conditions	253	4.28	1.04	Physical disabilities	117	4.09	1.08	Physical disabilities	187	4.41	0.90	Deafness or Hard of Hearing	211	3.68	1.437
Behavior disorders	255	4.26	1.11	Diversity and cultural contexts	114	4.09	1.02	How to differentiate instruction	185	4.41	0.91	Collaboration with peers	214	3.67	1.259
Inclusive education	266	4.20	1.16	Other health-related conditions	117	4.07	1.17	Disability characteristics	183	4.41	0.89	Diversity & Cultural Contexts	213	3.63	1.192
How to differentiate instruction	254	4.17	1.19	Autism	112	4.04	1.09	Assessment	179	4.37	0.91	Autism	209	3.52	1.428
Autism	224	4.15	1.13	Legal aspects	108	4.02	1.04	Diversity and cultural contexts	185	4.36	0.95	Blindness or Visual Impairment	210	3.51	1.535
Epilepsy	252	4.13	1.39	Deafness or hard of hearing	116	4.02	1.24	Legal aspects	184	4.29	0.98	Legal Aspects	212	3.50	1.413
Diversity and cultural contexts	255	3.96	1.32	Blindness or visual impairment	116	3.96	1.24	Autism	170	4.27	1.01	Birth to age Three	204	3.30	1.540
Legal aspects	241	3.94	1.27	Epilepsy	115	3.91	1.31	Inclusive education	183	4.23	1.07	Epilepsy	212	3.29	1.585
Birth to age Three	249	3.62	1.54	Birth to age three	114	3.61	1.31	Birth to age three	177	3.93	1.27	Inclusive Education	212	3.21	1.690

Results

Needs for Successful Inclusion

- **Self-Reported Needs and Additional Thoughts:**

- Similar themes emerged amongst the three countries and these included:

  - Instructional supports

  - Infrastructure

  - Personnel support and training

  - Reducing student-teacher ratio

  - Remuneration for teachers needs to be reviewed upwards

Implications

- Teachers across the countries supported inclusive education. However more work still needs to be done to promote inclusive education.

- The teachers supported the need for professional development. This is encouraging as teachers' own interest, felt need, and desire for professional development can influence participation in professional development.

- The teachers rated all the identified topics a important. Policy makers need to take this feedback into consideration in designing professional development for teachers.

- Policymakers need to address the identified needs in order to move inclusive education further ahead.

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