

## Education for all in the North and the South: Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education in Finland and Zambia

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*Abstract: A survey assessed attitudes of 1636 Zambian and Finnish teachers towards inclusive education and consequently the perceptions of appropriate educational environment for children with different disabilities. On the whole, attitudes varied but were quite critical. Structure of the attitudes was similar in both countries; factor analyses extracted four attitude dimensions: 1) social justice, 2) meeting special needs of students with severe disabilities, 3) teachers' competence, and 4) quality of education for non-disabled students. On inclusion in general, the Finnish ordinary teachers were the most critical group and the Finnish special education teachers the most optimistic. Most respondents felt that inclusive education enhances social justice. However, pursuit of inclusion in practice, especially the guarantee of good and effective education for all, was seen as problematic. Compared to Finnish respondents, the Zambian respondents preferred a more segregated educational environment for children with different disabilities. Type and severity of disability affected the preferred educational setting and there were clear differences in this regard between respondents from the two countries. Findings support the idea that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are important in developing inclusive school systems and that inclusive education is best understood as a multi-dimensional concept, which, at the practical level, is highly context-dependent.*

The debate surrounding integration of students with disabilities into general education has continued for some 30 years. Today, there exists a high-level political consensus on inclusion (Education For All, EFA) as a goal, as indicated by internationally agreed declarations (United Nations, 1994; UNESCO, 1994; UNESCO, 2000). In spite of this global political consensus, the debate continues, not only with regard to the means in which to attain this goal, but also on the very concept of inclusion. The term inclusion has many uses, although recently researchers have begun to use the term without an explicit definition leaving the reader to determine meaning of the word from content of the article (Ryndak, Jackson, & Billingsley, 2000).

The conceptual ambiguity of inclusion is apparent, both in academic literature, and in opinions of practitioners (Vlachou, 1997). Dyson (1999) finds many versions of inclusion

in the debate and distinguishes between two intersecting dimensions along which different discourses can be categorized. The first dimension is primarily concerned with the *rationale* for inclusion and contains the rights and ethics discourse and efficacy discourse. The rights and ethics discourse stems from sociological criticism of special education and posits that only inclusive education can deliver social justice. Efficacy discourse views inclusive education as educationally more effective and cost-efficient than segregated education. The second dimension can be termed the *realization* dimension, along which political and pragmatic discourses can be identified. The former relates, for example, to the vested interests inherent in current professional infrastructure to resist the shift towards inclusive education. The latter relates to more practical questions concerning how inclusive education can be brought about. The major point in Dyson's analyses is that there are multiple versions of inclusion used in the debate. The ethics and rights discourses, together with the politics discourse, focus more on the question of social participation. The efficacy and pragmatics discourses concentrate on the practical

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and focus on effectiveness of access to education and quality of learning.

Lunt and Norwich (1999) view that the complexity of the concept of inclusion arises partly from contradictions about educational values and partly from practical limitations in arrangement of educational services. The consequence is that inclusive education is based on a set of multiple values, which are not fully compatible. One typical example is balancing emphasizing ones' right to social participation with one's right to a meaningful learning experience. However, many advocates of the inclusion movement claim that full participation and high standards are not necessarily mutually exclusive goals; both of them can be achieved in inclusive school (e.g., Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Stainback & Stainback, 1996).

The diverse understanding of inclusion is also clear in practitioners' perception of inclusive education. Ryndak et al. (2000) found five themes within expert definitions of inclusion of which 'placement in natural typical settings', 'all students together for instruction and learning', and 'supports and modifications within general education to meet appropriate learner outcomes' formed the core definitions.

Not only do concepts vary, so do attitudes towards inclusive education. Furthermore, teachers' attitudes have been found to have a serious impact on effectiveness of mainstreaming. Some authors claim that teacher attitudes are the single most important factor in determining success or failure of mainstreaming (Bunch, Lupart, & Brown, 1997; Rose, 2001).

Although findings on teachers' general attitudes are somewhat contradictory (Vlachou, 1997; D'Alonzo, Giordano, & Vanleeuwen, 1997; Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996), some clear patterns can also be observed. First, special education teachers or teachers with some special training seem to be more positive towards inclusion than regular education teachers or teachers who do not have any additional training (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Buell, Hallam, & Gamel-McCormick, 1999; Minke, Bear, Deemer, & Griffin, 1996; Stoler, 1992). Second, many studies show that teachers accept inclusion in principle, but are skeptical towards it in practice; expressing doubts especially on the effectiveness of teaching in inclusive settings and on the ability of regular education teachers to

meet the needs of pupils with disabilities (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Lathman, 2000). Scruggs and Mastropieri's (1996) research synthesis convincingly shows that although a clear majority of teachers agree with the general concept of inclusion, far fewer are willing to implement it in their own classes, and less than one third believe that they have sufficient time, resources, or training to implement inclusion successfully.

A third common pattern in prior studies is that general support for and willingness to implement inclusion is related to type and severity of disability of children in question. There is a wide range between individual countries: this indicates wide differences of teacher attitudes on suitability of students with different types of disability for integration in normal settings (Bowman, 1986). Teachers seem generally to exhibit a more positive attitude towards the integration of students with physical and sensory disabilities than to those with emotional-behavioral and intellectual difficulties (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Chazan, 1994; Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998).

Finally, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) point out that teachers' attitudes may be linked more to practical procedural classroom concerns than to affective responses or general attitudes towards working with students with disabilities. Among the practical concerns, teachers' own feelings of self-efficacy as professionals and past experiences are highlighted. Teachers who feel confident of their professional skills and have positive experiences of inclusion are more positive towards inclusion (Olson, Chalmers, & Hoover, 1997; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Soodak et al., 1998). On the other hand, perceived lack of self-competence and insufficient training has been found to be major stressors of teachers in inclusive settings (Engelbrecht, Swart, & Eloff, 2001).

Inclusive education is a universal goal. However, its practical conceptualization is still ambiguous, attitudes vary, and most of the literature is not based on empirical research (Dykens & Hodapp, 2001). Furthermore, what is effective in one country might not be applicable to another. Booth (1999), for example, points out that our 'Northern' understanding of inclusive education might be irrelevant to learners in the poorer Southern countries, where exclusion can result from

societal-level problems such as poverty, war, HIV/AIDS pandemic. Findings of Kasonde-Ng'andu and Moberg (2001) support this observation by indicating that in Zambia, out of the 32% of school-age children who do not attend school, most are excluded because of economic reasons, illnesses and long distances.

Zambia has a segregated system of special education that originated in the philanthropic support received in the 1950s and which was taken over as a government responsibility after independence in the 1970s. In 1995 there were 31 special schools and 80 special units in the country, leaving the vast majority of disabled children out of school. Traditionally special education concentrates on educating deaf, blind, mentally retarded and physically disabled children for which specialization areas teachers have been trained in a centrally located institute during the last two decades. Current policies drawn up in the 1990s support decentralization of special education and the development of more inclusive education (Ministry of Education, 1996, Kasonde-Ng'andu & Moberg, 2001).

Finland is an industrialized Northern country, where almost all children (99.7% of the age group) complete compulsory schooling. Finnish students' outstanding performances in reading, mathematical, and scientific literacy in the international PISA survey (OECD, 2001) can be seen as a sign of the emphasis on cognitive outcomes and of efficacy of the Finnish education system. Providing all students with equal educational opportunities and removing obstacles to learning especially among the least successful students have been leading principles in Finnish education policy since the 20th century. In the light of PISA findings, Finland seems to have managed extraordinary well in combining these two principles. Although since the 1970 an official aim has been to mesh special and general education into one unified system, still 3.5 % of all school age children receive special education in segregated settings. However, most students with special educational needs are taught most of the time in regular classrooms.

More research-based information is required concerning how different stakeholders perceive inclusive education. Comparison between the most developed education systems in the North and on the resource-burdened

developing education systems in the South is a challenging test for the universal applicability of the idea of inclusive education. This study aims to contribute towards this end by bringing together and comparing views of teachers from two countries belonging to such extremes, Zambia and Finland.

### *Research Questions*

The purpose of this study was to assess teacher perceptions surrounding the Education For All movement in a developing country (Zambia) and in a developed country (Finland). The goal was to answer the following questions: What are the attitudes towards inclusive education? What is the structure of the attitudes? Which educational environments are rated best for students with different disabilities? What kinds of differences are there between Zambia and Finland in this respect? What kind of differences are there between ordinary teachers' and special education teachers' attitudes? Is experience of inclusion related to attitudes towards inclusive education?

### **Method**

#### *Participants*

Participants in the present study were 1124 Zambians (594 head teachers, 514 ordinary teachers, 16 special education teachers) and 512 Finns (206 ordinary teachers, 306 special education teachers). In the Zambian sample, teachers ranged in age from 23 to 63 (median category 41-50) and in the Finnish sample, from 22 to 60 (median 41-50). Of the Zambian teachers 19 % were female. In the Finnish sample the corresponding percentage was 82 %. All teacher samples can be considered to be representative of teachers concerned in Zambia and Finland.

#### *Procedure*

Information was collected through two questionnaires (A and B; see below). In Zambia, the present study was part of a baseline study commissioned by the "Education Sector Support Programme III" currently being implemented by the Zambian Ministry of Education and supported by the Finnish Ministry for For-

eign Affairs (Kasonde-Ng'andu & Moberg, 2001). Zambian data was gathered in the north western and western provinces during spring 2001. Questionnaires were translated into the respective local languages (Silozi, Kiikaonde, Lunda, Luvale) in Zambia and Finnish. In Zambia, 18 pairs of research assistants collected the data. A university (UNZA) student and special education teacher or district resource center coordinator formed each pair. In Finland, questionnaires were administered during ordinary in-service training sessions in 1999 - 2001.

*Questionnaire A* (19 items on a six-point Likert scale designed by Moberg 1997) was used to assess participants' attitudes towards inclusive education. Items represent the major features of the debate over inclusion (Semmel, Abernathy, Buteral, & Lesar, 1991; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). The scale consists of both negatively- (nine items) and positively- (ten items) phrased items. Order of the items is randomly determined. Each item was scored from 1 to 6, with the highest score referring to the most positive perception of inclusive education. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach alpha) of the scale were .80 (Zambian sample) and .86 (Finnish sample). In the Finnish sample, two additional questions concerning the quantity and quality of experience about in-

clusive education were included in the questionnaire.

*Questionnaire B* consisted of 10 items. Participants were asked to choose the educational environment that would be best for most students with different disabilities when trying to meet their special needs. Options were: (1) full time in an ordinary classroom, (2) majority of time in an ordinary classroom, (3) majority of time in a special class, (4) full-time in a special class/unit in an ordinary school, (5) full-time in a special school, and (6) full-time in a special institution. The best environments were rated for five disability categories, separating moderate and severe disabilities. Reliability coefficients (alpha) for the total scale were .81 in the Zambian sample and .91 in the Finnish sample.

## Results

### *Overall Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education*

Attitudes towards inclusive education varied greatly and on average, were quite critical. There were no statistically significant differences between Zambian subgroups (Table 1). Consequently, Zambian data will be treated as one group in the following analyses. Finnish ordinary teachers are remarkably more pessi-

**TABLE 1**

**General Perceptions of Inclusive Education in Zambia and Finland by Subgroups. Means (*M*), Standard Deviations (*SD*) and Differences (*F*). Higher Scores Mean More Positive Perceptions, the Neutral Midpoint of the Scale is 66.5**

| <i>Country/Subgroup</i>                    | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>F</i> |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Zambia                                     |          |           |          |          |
| Head teachers                              | 60.3     | 15.6      | 594      |          |
| Ordinary teachers                          | 60.9     | 16.5      | 514      | 0.64     |
| Spec. ed. teachers                         | 56.6     | 16.1      | 16       |          |
| Finland                                    |          |           |          |          |
| Ordinary teachers                          | 52.7     | 13.4      | 206      |          |
| Spec. ed. teachers                         | 63.4     | 12.8      | 306      | 81.8***  |
| Between-subjects effects                   |          |           |          |          |
| Country (C)                                |          |           |          | 0.07     |
| Subgroup (teachers/spec. ed. teachers, SG) |          |           |          | 2.71     |
| C × SG                                     |          |           |          | 12.99*** |

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

mistic in their outlook towards inclusive education than special education teachers,  $F(1, 508) = 81.8, p < .001$ .

Although there was no overall difference between the perceptions of Finnish and Zambian respondents (main effect:  $F(1, 1630) = 0.07, p = ns$ ), there was a difference between teacher groups within the two countries, interaction effect:  $F(2, 1630) = 12.99, p < .001$  (Table 1).

*Factor Analysis of the Attitudes*

A principal axis factor analysis with oblimin rotation of the perception scale items was performed with the data from both countries (Table 2). Both analyses extracted a four-factor solution that explained 51.8 % (Finnish sample) and 45.4 % (Zambian sample) of the total variance. Both analyses resulted in essentially similar factor structures, thus facilitating good comparability across factors between the two countries. The four factors were named as 1) social justice, 2) meeting special needs of stu-

dents with severe disabilities, 3) teachers' competence and 4) quality of education for non-disabled students.

*Item-Wise Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education by Factors*

Table 3 shows the item contents organized according to the magnitude of their loading on the four factors, comparison of mean scores between the three subgroups, and percentage of respondents having a positive perception of inclusion across all items.

Results show that there is quite a large variance in responses and also clear differences between the three subgroups. The Zambian group has the most positive attitudes towards inclusion in the items falling under the dimension of social justice (factor 1) and as many as 63% of this group relate positively to these items. This indicates that the Zambians believe that inclusion means social justice and equity more often than the Finns. However, only few Zambian respondents believe that

**TABLE 2**

**Factor Analysis (Principal Axis Factoring, Oblimin Rotation) of the Perceptions of Inclusive Education. Comparison of Factor Structure of Finnish ( $n = 512$ ) and Zambian ( $n = 1124$ ) Data, the Highest Loadings Presented**

| Item | Finland |     |     |     | Zambia |     |     |     |
|------|---------|-----|-----|-----|--------|-----|-----|-----|
|      | I       | II  | III | IV  | I      | II  | III | IV  |
| 5.   | .68     |     |     |     | .57    |     |     |     |
| 4.   | .58     |     |     |     | .53    |     |     |     |
| 18.  | .52     |     |     |     | .37    |     |     |     |
| 15.  | .43     |     |     |     | .31    |     |     |     |
| 12.  | .42     |     |     |     | .46    |     |     |     |
| 1.   | .42     |     |     |     | .39    |     |     |     |
| 19.  | .74     |     |     |     | .68    |     |     |     |
| 20.  |         | .68 |     |     |        | .73 |     |     |
| 13.  |         | .73 |     |     |        | .46 |     |     |
| 7.   |         | .54 |     |     |        | .33 |     |     |
| 16.  | .39     | .19 |     |     |        | .27 |     |     |
| 10.  |         | .50 |     |     |        | .71 |     |     |
| 9.   |         |     | .57 |     |        | .23 | .23 |     |
| 6.   | .30     |     | .28 |     |        |     | .36 |     |
| 14.  |         |     | .13 | .18 |        |     | .38 |     |
| 8.   |         |     |     | .44 |        |     |     | .55 |
| 17.  |         | .36 |     | .28 |        |     |     | .48 |
| 3.   |         |     |     | .47 |        |     |     | .27 |
| 2.   |         |     |     | .30 |        |     | .43 |     |

Note. Number of item refers to Table 3.

**TABLE 3**

**Perceptions of Inclusive Education in Zambia and Finland. Item- and Factorwise Means (*M*), Percentages (%) of Persons Having Positive Perception of Inclusion, and Differences (*F*) Between the Subgroups (*Za* = Zambians, *n* = 1124, *Fio* = Finnish Ordinary Teachers, *n* = 206, *Fis* = Finnish Special Education Teachers, *n* = 306). The Scale 1–6, Higher Scores Mean More Positive Perceptions, the Neutral Midpoint of the Scale is 3.5**

| <i>Factor/Item</i>  | <i>M</i>  |            |            | <i>Posit. Perc. (%)</i> |            |            | <i>Difference</i> |
|---|-----------|------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------------|
|   | <i>Za</i> | <i>Fio</i> | <i>Fis</i> | <i>Za</i>               | <i>Fio</i> | <i>Fis</i> | <i>F</i>          |
| <b>I Social justice</b>   |           |            |            |                         |            |            |                   |
| 5. Full time integration for pupils with disabilities in ordinary classes means equity for all pupils.  | 4.6       | 3.1        | 4.1        | 76                      | 36         | 65         | 61.0****          |
| 4. The self-esteem of pupils with disabilities would improve if placed full time in the ordinary classroom.   | 4.1       | 3.7        | 3.8        | 67                      | 56         | 63         | 5.3**             |
| 18. Achievement levels of pupils with disabilities would increase if they were placed full time in the ordinary classroom.                                    | 3.5       | 2.9        | 3.1        | 53                      | 29         | 40         | 13.6****          |
| 15. Pupils with disabilities would lose the stigma/label of being “dumb,” “different,” or “failures” if they were placed full time in the ordinary classroom. | 3.8       | 3.2        | 3.6        | 59                      | 40         | 50         | 9.3****           |
| 12. Placing pupils with disabilities full time in regular classes means quality education for all.  | 4.2       | 3.0        | 3.6        | 65                      | 34         | 51         | 36.4****          |
| 1. All pupils will receive appropriate educational programmes and related services in ordinary education.   | 3.7       | 2.6        | 2.9        | 55                      | 21         | 29         | 46.5****          |
| Social justice (total)  | 4.0       | 3.1        | 3.5        | 63                      | 29         | 47         | 56.1****          |
| <b>II Meeting special needs of students with severe disabilities</b>  |           |            |            |                         |            |            |                   |
| 19. Because of their special needs, pupils with severe disabilities are best taught in special classrooms.  | 1.6       | 1.9        | 2.9        | 9                       | 9          | 33         | 126.9****         |
| 20. Pupils with severe behaviour disorders need special education in special schools.   | 1.9       | 2.2        | 3.5        | 14                      | 16         | 50         | 130.1****         |
| 13. Special classes are needed for pupils who display severe forms of severe behaviour problem.   | 2.2       | 1.6        | 2.5        | 20                      | 6          | 22         | 20.2****          |
| 7. Non-disabled children and children with severe disabilities should be taught in separate classrooms.   | 2.7       | 2.0        | 2.8        | 31                      | 12         | 28         | 13.5****          |
| 16. It is right to ask ordinary class teachers to accept pupils with severe disabilities into their classes.  | 3.2       | 2.7        | 3.1        | 46                      | 28         | 36         | 7.8****           |
| Meeting special needs of students with severe disabilities (total)  | 2.3       | 2.1        | 3.0        | 15                      | 8          | 28         | 56.1****          |

TABLE 3—(Continued)

| Factor/Item   | M   |     |     | Posit. Perc. (%) |     |     | Difference |
|---|-----|-----|-----|------------------|-----|-----|------------|
|   | Za  | Fio | Fis | Za               | Fio | Fis | F          |
| III Teachers' competence  |     |     |     |                  |     |     |            |
| 10. Ordinary class teachers can meet the academic needs of pupils with disabilities currently in their classrooms.  | 3.5 | 2.7 | 2.9 | 57               | 24  | 32  | 20.9***    |
| 9. Only teachers with special education training are able to teach effectively pupils with severe disabilities.   | 1.9 | 2.5 | 2.8 | 15               | 25  | 37  | 53.6***    |
| 6. Ordinary education has the resources and personnel to address the individual educational needs of all children.  | 3.2 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 46               | 5   | 2   | 172.2***   |
| 14. Ordinary class teachers have the primary responsibility for the education of pupils with disabilities in their classrooms.                              | 4.1 | 3.7 | 4.4 | 69               | 55  | 74  | 10.4***    |
| Teachers' competence (total)  | 3.2 | 2.6 | 2.9 | 31               | 14  | 17  | 21.7***    |
| IV Quality of education for non-disabled students   |     |     |     |                  |     |     |            |
| 8. Having pupils with disabilities in ordinary education classes will interfere with the quality of education offered to pupils considered as non-disabled. | 3.7 | 3.7 | 4.6 | 54               | 48  | 78  | 34.0***    |
| 17. Time for teaching of non-disabled is taken away when pupils with disabilities are placed in ordinary classrooms.  | 3.1 | 2.5 | 3.3 | 39               | 19  | 40  | 16.5***    |
| 3. Pupils with disabilities are sometimes rejected, ridiculed, and/or teased by other pupils in the regular classroom.                                      | 2.1 | 3.5 | 3.7 | 15               | 44  | 49  | 231.0***   |
| 2. Pupils with mild disabilities would experience more academic failure if they were placed full time in the ordinary classroom.                            | 3.6 | 3.7 | 4.4 | 53               | 58  | 79  | 29.9***    |
| Quality education for non-disabled students (total)   | 3.1 | 3.3 | 4.0 | 34               | 35  | 69  | 87.3***    |

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

special needs of students with severe disabilities are met in integrated settings (factor 2, Table 3).

Finnish ordinary teachers are the least positive in their attitudes towards inclusive education and only 8% support the idea of placing severely disabled students in the ordinary classrooms. Their most positive perceptions relate to items loading on the fourth factor,

quality of education for non-disabled students, but even here, only 35% have an overall positive attitude (Table 3).

As a group, Finnish special education teachers are the most optimistic towards inclusive education. Like their Finnish regular teaching colleagues, they have the most positive view on the items on the fourth factor with a clear majority (69%), having a positive outlook to-

wards these items. It is interesting that Finnish special education teachers are most pessimistic towards ordinary teachers' competence for dealing with children with disabilities as indicated by 17% of the former group holding positive perceptions of the third factor items (Table 3).

The three groups differ significantly in their perception of each of the single items (Table 3). Most responses to individual items follow the same pattern as with the average scores, but a few findings stand out:

1. Greatest unanimity amongst the groups relates to the issue that self-esteem of pupils with disabilities would improve if placed full-time in the ordinary classroom (item 4)
2. Finnish special education teachers stand out from the other two groups in their greater belief that students with severe behavior disorders (item 20) or severe disabilities in general (item 19) do not necessarily need to be taught in special schools or classrooms
3. Zambians have much greater faith in the resources of ordinary education and personnel to address the individual educational needs of all children (item 6) than the Finnish groups

4. Zambians have a much more negative outlook towards the idea that pupils with disabilities are sometimes rejected and teased by other pupils in the regular classroom (item 3)

*Perceptions About the Most Suitable Educational Environment for Students with Different Disabilities*

Respondents evaluated the best educational placement across different disability groups and were also asked to differentiate between moderate and severe levels of disability. The three groups clearly differ: Zambian respondents are the most segregative and Finnish special education teachers the least segregative groups,  $F(2, 1630) = 498.72, p < .001$ , Scheffe  $p < .001$ . Detailed results are presented in Table 4 showing a comparison of responses between the Zambian group and Finnish ordinary teachers and special educational teachers.

Views on the best educational placement depend on the severity of disability (mean effect size 1.71), main effect,  $t = 73.38, p < .001$ , the nationality of the respondent (mean effect size 1.21),  $F(1, 1630) = 972.43, p < .001$ .

**TABLE 4**

**Best Educational Environments for Students with Different Disabilities Rated by Zambian Educators (Za, n = 1124), Finnish Ordinary (Fio, n = 206) and Special Education Teachers (Fis, n = 306). Means, Standard Deviations (in Parentheses), and Differences of the Groups (F). The Scale 1–6, the Higher Scores Refer to More Segregated Environment (1 = Full Time in Regular Classroom, 6 = Full Time in Special Institution)**

| Student with                     | Best Educational Environment Rated by |           |           | Difference (F) |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
|                                  | Za                                    | Fio       | Fis       |                |
| moderate physical disability     | 2.9 (1.8)                             | 1.8 (1.0) | 1.2 (0.6) | 157.9***       |
| severe physical disability       | 5.2 (1.3)                             | 3.2 (1.3) | 2.1 (1.1) | 824.8***       |
| moderate visual disability       | 2.8 (1.5)                             | 2.1 (1.1) | 1.4 (0.7) | 130.0***       |
| severe visual disability         | 4.8 (1.1)                             | 3.5 (1.2) | 2.4 (1.3) | 562.0***       |
| moderate hearing disability      | 2.7 (1.5)                             | 2.2 (1.1) | 1.5 (0.8) | 101.6***       |
| severe hearing disability        | 4.7 (1.2)                             | 3.7 (1.1) | 2.7 (1.3) | 375.5***       |
| moderate behavior disorder       | 2.4 (1.5)                             | 2.8 (1.0) | 1.9 (0.8) | 28.3***        |
| severe behavior disorder         | 4.3 (1.5)                             | 4.1 (1.0) | 3.1 (1.0) | 89.0***        |
| moderate intellectual disability | 3.1 (1.5)                             | 3.1 (1.0) | 2.4 (0.9) | 38.9***        |
| severe intellectual disability   | 4.9 (1.2)                             | 4.3 (1.0) | 3.5 (1.0) | 216.1***       |
| Total (mean)                     | 3.7 (0.8)                             | 3.0 (0.7) | 2.2 (0.6) | 498.7***       |

Note. Scheffe test indicated significant differences between all groups.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



.001, teacher group among Finnish respondents (mean effect size 0.70),  $F(1, 510) = 172.79, p < .001$ , and type of disability,  $F(4, 1629) = 498.13, p < .001$ . Effect of type of disability on the perception of the best educational placement is, however, different in the two countries, interaction effect,  $F(2, 1629) = 88.41, p < .001$ .

The major findings of this comparison are that more restrictive environments were recommended for students with severe disabilities than for students with moderate disabilities. This pattern was similar in both countries, but Zambian respondents consistently recommended a more segregated environment than Finnish respondents. In Finland, ordinary teachers were more segregative than special education teachers, whereas in the Zambian data, there were no statistically significant differences between subgroups. There were differences between Zambian and Finnish respondents in their perception on what disabilities would be most problematic from the point of view of integration. In Finland, it is most difficult to accept that students with intellectual disabilities and students with behavior problems would be educated in the mainstream. In Zambia, the most problematic group in this regard was physically disabled children. The integration of visually impaired students was seen as almost just as difficult as the integration of students with intellectual disabilities.

*Relationship of Experience with Inclusive Education and Attitudes Towards Inclusion*

The meaning of experience of inclusive education to the attitudes towards inclusion was analyzed only in the Finnish sample because in the Zambian sample the amount of teachers having experience with inclusive education was small. The quantity of experience of inclusive education had no impact on the perceptions of inclusion. However, the quality of experience, that is whether experiences had been successful or not, was related to the perceptions (Table 5). Successful experiences seem to increase and unsuccessful experiences decrease the favorableness of perceptions towards inclusion,  $F(2, 498) = 9.28, p < .001$ . Those teachers reporting successful experiences had more positive perceptions than those with no experience or unsuccessful experiences (Scheffe,  $p < .001$ ).

**Discussion**

Perceptions of inclusive education vary greatly in Zambia and Finland but are on average, quite critical. The structure of perceptions is similar as indicated by the comparable factor structures of the attitude items in both samples. However, perceptions on the four dimensions of inclusion vary between the three compared groups.

The first dimension, social justice, is connected to teachers' beliefs on the rationale of

**TABLE 5**

**Impact of Quantity and Quality of Experience on Perception of Inclusive Education. Differences of Means (M) of the Subgroups in Finnish Sample (n = 501)**

| <i>Experience</i>       | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>F</i> |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Quantity of experience  |          |          |           |          |
| no experience           | 324      | 58.04    | 13.99     | 0.66     |
| some experience         | 151      | 59.66    | 13.50     |          |
| much experience         | 19       | 61.05    | 13.95     |          |
| very much experience    | 7        | 59.09    | 10.70     |          |
| Quality of experience   |          |          |           |          |
| unsuccessful experience | 33       | 54.12    | 16.24     | 9.28***  |
| no experience           | 324      | 58.04    | 13.99     |          |
| successful experience   | 144      | 63.16    | 12.78     |          |

*Note.* The higher the score is, the more positive is the perception.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

inclusion and its realization in principle. This concurs with the rights and ethics and political discourses as described by Dyson (1999). Zambians are most optimistic on this aspect of inclusion and among Finns there are large differences with ordinary teachers being more pessimistic than special education teachers. The remaining three dimensions of perceptions—meeting special needs of pupils with severe disabilities, teachers' competence, and quality of education for non-disabled students—relate more to the practical issues of inclusion and are similar to the efficacy and pragmatic discourses shown by Dyson. On these three dimensions, the respondents have the most pessimistic outlook on the first two; showing doubts on educating severely disabled children in ordinary classes and teachers' competence to cope with the situation.

Both the severity and type of disability effect perceptions of the most suitable educational placement for a child with a disability. The more severe the disability, the more a segregated educational environment is considered to be better for the child. These results are similar with some earlier findings (e.g., Bowman, 1986; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). On average, Zambian respondents seem to prefer a more segregated educational environment than Finns.

Opinions of Finnish ordinary and special education teachers have similar profiles concerning different disability types, but special education teachers are consistently more optimistic with regard to integration. Integrated education is seen as appropriate, especially for children who have speech disorders, specific learning disabilities, or physical disabilities. Placement in a full-time special class or a unit in an ordinary school seem to be the preferred placement, especially for children with severe mental disabilities, behavior problems and hearing impairment.

Zambian respondents view the situation somewhat differently, preferring a more segregated educational environment than Finnish respondents. Zambians' opinion profile across different disability types also differs markedly from Finns (Table 4). Most notably, Zambians view that children with severe physical disabilities would be best educated in special schools with a preference for much more segregative education for children with severe visual impairments.

These findings should perhaps not be interpreted as an indication of overall attitudes towards disabilities, but rather as a reflection of foreseeable practical problems. Zambian respondents' reluctance to integrate children with physical disability or visual impairment perhaps reflects reality in Zambia with long distances to the nearest school, which may consequently place such children in an unfavorable position. Thus, a special school environment with boarding facilities can be viewed as a more appropriate type of schooling.

Finally, the finding of the effect of experience on inclusion is very important: experience in itself does not result in more favorable attitudes; the nature and quality of experience seem to be a significant influence on the way attitudes towards inclusive education developed. Teachers who had good experiences of inclusion were more positive towards inclusion. As the teachers will be key players in the development of more inclusive education, it is essential to make sure that they have a realistic chance to gain positive experience of inclusion from the very beginning.

Although inclusion has been universally accepted as a common goal, there still exist a wide range of opinions regarding inclusive education and inclusion is understood in many different ways (Dyson, 1999; Ryndak et al., 2000). Furthermore, attitudes towards inclusion are very much dependent on the specific aspect of inclusion. This study supports the previous findings (e.g., Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996) in showing that inclusion in principle is largely accepted but is viewed as more difficult when addressed in practical terms. In terms of the social justice discourse formulated by Dyson, teachers, especially in Zambia, seem to think, that inclusion can be justified by reference to the right of children to an education and, moreover, to an education that is made available alongside the majority of their peers. This is simply part of a much wider discourse, in which inclusion is seen as an inevitable outcome of a commitment either to rights as such, or to some more generalized notion of social justice. In terms of the efficacy discourse teachers seem to view students with disabilities in the context of the reality of the regular education classroom rather than the prevailing attitudes about inclusion. Teachers see that regular education

classes are not equipped to accommodate students with disabilities, thus they demonstrate certain reluctance about inclusion.

In Finland, regular teachers are much more pessimistic towards inclusion than special education teachers. In Zambia, no such differences can be found. This finding perhaps indicates that special education has not yet established itself as a discrete profession in Zambia. Thus, the perceptions of all respondents vary equally and are in general quite critical. In Finland, the demand for efficiency of teaching and the competence it requires from teachers is more emphasized in the critique of inclusion than in Zambia. In Zambia, inclusion is viewed more as an avenue to enhance social justice than it is perceived in Finland. This finding can perhaps be interpreted through the fact that quite a large proportion of children are still excluded from schools in Zambia, mainly for socio-economic reasons. In countries like Finland, where all children are in schools, inclusion is more of an internal question of efficiency of the school system, and we may talk about exclusion only in terms of some children being taught in special education instead of the normal neighborhood school. This clearly suggests that the critical determinants of inclusion are highly context-dependent and socio-cultural differences should always be borne in mind when talking about a universal approach towards inclusion.

In conclusion, this study clearly indicates that more comparative research is required. Understanding how educators relate to inclusion is crucial since they are the key resource that will make inclusion a reality. Nevertheless, in the opposite case, they can also become the key barrier to desired development. However, teachers do not as such disagree with the principle of inclusion; they are merely more critical of the practicalities. Consequently, any policy to transform the school system towards inclusion that omits the accommodation of realistic additional resources and training support for regular class teachers is perhaps a much greater threat to successful inclusion than teacher attitudes. The building of more inclusive schools should lay their foundations in today's realities and accept educators' perceptions as part of that reality. The nature of this may be very different from country to country.

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