

## AN EXPLORATION OF PLAY ENVIRONMENTS FOR LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is informed by findings of a study which sought to explore least restrictive inclusive play environments for learners in inclusive schools. Inclusive play stresses the importance of including all children regardless of the disability by fostering an environment where diversity is respected and valued (Rennie, 2003). The study used a schulzian transcendental phenomenological design. The population included head teachers, teachers, guidance and counselling teachers and pupils in selected schools in Lusaka. The sample consisted of 30 respondents: 2 head teachers, 2 guidance and counselling teachers, 4 teachers and 22 pupils. Purposive sampling technique was applied to select the head teachers and guidance and counselling teachers; while simple random sampling method was used to select learners and teachers. Data was collected using interviews and observations. The thematic approach to data analysis was used. Results revealed that there were challenges with physical access to play facilities in majority school environments, use of vulgar language (by both learners and teachers) was very common; bullying was prevalent; though guided for half of the play time, learners needed more guidance and teachers' presence at the play stations; short term funding and unskilled recruited staff. The study recommends that inclusive schools should offer high quality accessible inclusive play opportunities to all pupils and reinforcement of the integration of play in the curriculum.

**KEYWORDS:** Inclusive Education, Play, Special Education Needs.

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