LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN ZIMBABWE

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Introduction

• There are no Occupational Therapy services being provided in public schools in Zimbabwe despite the need for their services.

• Legislation and Policy form the basis of Evidence based practice

• The research objectives were to determine:
  • if there is a legislative and a policy framework to support the provision of Occupational Therapy services in public schools.
  • The position of policy makers in various Ministries with regards to provision of educational support services and occupational therapy in public schools
Ethical Considerations:

• Application and permission for ethical clearance was sought from:
  • The Joint Research Ethics Committee for the University of Zimbabwe College of Health Sciences and Parirenyatwa Hospital (JREC)
  • The Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe (MRCZ)
  • The parliament of Zimbabwe
  • The office of the first lady of Zimbabwe

• Consent Permission was sought from the relevant ministries and departments to:
  • review their policy documents
  • interview their ministers and National directors
Methodology

• A descriptive qualitative study that focused on reviewing legislative documents, as well as interviews with policy makers as key informants.

• Content analysis procedures were used and
  • Analysis of data from the legislation documents was done using the Records review format.
  • Analysis of data from questionnaires was done using simple descriptive methods.
• Purposive sampling of Legislative documents and key informants was done targeting:
  • Child welfare,
  • Children’s rights,
  • Educational Rights,
  • Rights of people living with disabilities,
  • Special Needs Education
  • Inclusion of persons with disabilities,
  • Educational Health Services and Rehabilitation services.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARLIAMENTARY TITLE</th>
<th>MINISTRY</th>
<th>ACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title 5: Persons and the Family</strong></td>
<td>Ministry of Public Service, Labour and social welfare</td>
<td>The Disabled Persons Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title 15: Health</strong></td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Child Care</td>
<td>The Public Health Act and The Health Professions Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title 25: Education, Sport and Culture</strong></td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Sports Arts and Culture</td>
<td>The Education Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Specific Title</td>
<td>Ministry of State for Liaising on Psychomotor Activities in Education and Vocational skills</td>
<td>No policy to support its existence yet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

- Review of legislative documents showed that the Constitution of Zimbabwe is the main legislation from which all the other legislations are derived.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Highlight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 19</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Governments’ obligation to the Rights of children to education and health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 20</td>
<td>The Youth (ages 15 – 35)</td>
<td>Governments’ obligation to the Rights of youth to education, health and employment (equal opportunities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 22</td>
<td>Persons living with disabilities</td>
<td>Governments’ obligation to the Rights of people living with disabilities to education, health and equal opportunities in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 27</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Governments’ obligation to the Rights of all Zimbabwean citizens to education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Highlight</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education Act</strong> (Chapter 24: 05)</td>
<td>Section 64 : Health in Schools</td>
<td>Stresses importance of health related service providers to work closely with teachers to assist children in a school setting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Section 69</td>
<td>The minister of health can appoint Government medical officers or other medical practitioners as school medical officers at Government schools and non-Government schools;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disability Act</strong></td>
<td>Section 4 and 5</td>
<td>The need of medical rehabilitation professionals in early identification of mental and/ or physical challenges and early intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health Professions Act (Chapter 27: 19)</strong></td>
<td>Section 58</td>
<td>Health Professionals’ obligation to provide health related services where justified and appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Health Act</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>The role of medical rehabilitation professionals is to be referred to the Health Professions Act.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• 8 out of 10 key informants noted OT to be important for:
  • performance in basic self care ADLs
  • Mobility and accessibility engagement in play
  • objective and standardized assessments to identify and support learning difficulties
  • Resettlement and vocational skills training
Challenges and limitations

• Unending Security checks to have interviews with key informants and to access government documents in Parliament building

• Constant rescheduling of interviews due to key informants’ busy work schedule

• The study was not exhaustive of the legislation and the policy that can support the provision of Occupational Therapy services in schools, as there are a number of these documents that can be found in each ministry

• Politicization of the research
Conclusion

• Zimbabwean legislation supports provision of O.T services in schools as Health related services

• policy makers consider Occupational therapy as relevant especially for children with participation restrictions

• The government pledges through the legislature to ensure:
  • education for all, including those with special needs,
  • to provide health services for children and youth including those with special needs.
Recommendations

To Occupational therapists in Zimbabwe

• Engage Civil society organizations and advocates for issues to do with children, their health and education and persons living with disabilities

• Provide an initiative of providing Therapy services in public schools,

• engage in more practical research to highlight (prove) the importance of Occupational Therapy services in specific areas in the school setting

• further their education and specialize
To the government ministries

• To employ Occupational therapists in schools to enhance effectiveness of the inclusive education program

• Ensure training of more occupational therapists

• Inter-ministerial programs

• To develop specific policy for the inclusive education program in Zimbabwe
Acknowledgements

• University of Zimbabwe, College of Health Sciences, Department of Rehabilitation

• The Parliament of Zimbabwe (House of Assembly and Senate)

• The office of the First lady of Zimbabwe

• The following government ministries:
  • Ministry of Public Service, Labour and social welfare
  • Ministry of Health and Child Care
  • Ministry of Education, Sports Arts and Culture
  • Ministry of State for Liaising on Psychomotor Activities in Education and Vocational skills

• My Parents Mr and Mrs Maphosa and 3 siblings
Thank you

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