

TITLE: A systematic review of legislation, policy and strategic plans governing educational opportunities for people with disabilities living in southern Africa

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STUDENT SUBMISSION: Yes

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: International policy makers and researchers

ABSTRACT: Background: International stakeholders have responded to disability as a public health concern by proposing disability legislation and policy to promote the affirmation of human rights. Stemming from the emergence of a global human rights movement, the most visible change has occurred in the education sector. However, the extent to which primary education guidelines are operationalized for children with disabilities in the southern African region remains uncertain. Purpose: Researchers aim to identify the primary education policies that govern disability in southern Africa (i.e., Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa), exploring how inclusive primary education services are conceptualized within original legislative documents, policies, and strategic plans. Methods: Publicly available sources were used to conduct a review of original documents that govern primary education services for people with disabilities in southern Africa. Data were synthesized qualitatively using deductive thematic analysis. Results/outcomes: 36 documents were included in the review. Three themes emerged; (1) legal protections for the right to education and enforcement; (2) definitions of disability, inclusion, and legal integrative structure in primary education; and (3) stakeholder collaboration. Conclusions: Despite the aspirational vision of leaders in the region to increase the prevalence of inclusive practices, there is a clear gap between the existing written documentation and local implementation. Of the 5 nations in this region, South Africa presents the most comprehensive educational protections for persons with disabilities.

OBJECTIVE(S): Compare primary education legislation, policy, and strategic plans that govern disability in southern Africa. Identify how inclusive primary education services are conceptualized within original legislative documents, policies, and strategic plans in southern Africa.
