

Inclusive Education of Children with Disabilities in Cape Verde: Voices of Parents/Guardians and Teachers

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ABSTRACT:

This study aimed to describe the singularities of the education of children with disabilities in Cape Verde, where inclusion is guiding policies and practices as a foundation for a more just society, and there is a lack of research. Therefore, three surveys were conducted with a stratified random sample of 345 primary school teachers and 265 parents/guardians. Conclusions showed that according to parents/guardians, not all children with disabilities started their educational pathway in preschool and or in basic education at the legally established age of six years old. Additionally, this study indicated that, according to teachers, classrooms were significant in terms of the number of pupils and that there is a need for additional special education and related services. Moreover, participants presented a positive attitude toward inclusive education and supported a definition that highlights not only placement in regular classrooms whenever possible but also the existence of specialized support to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Finally, participants pointed out the need for and interest in supplementary events that could raise awareness and provide training on inclusion. These conclusions have practical implications for both national stakeholders endeavoring to promote inclusion and for worldwide researchers conducting comparative reviews.

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INTRODUCTION

The engagement of government entities in the implementation of inclusion in communities and schools in Cape Verde is recognized in the country with the definition of policies and laws, as well as with coordinated work with national and international organizations. Cape Verde has always given a notable priority to education and training, having since the 1980s undertaken reforms in order to gradually improve the functioning of the educational system and the quality of specialized services provided to children, young people, and adults (Ministério da Educação, 2017). In 1990, the Law of Bases of the Education System (Decreto Legislativo [Law] 103/III/90) promoted special education in institutions as well as the integration of students with disabilities in regular schools as long as it was advantageous for their education. Since then, several actions have been developed to promote greater visibility of children with disabilities, more extensive improvements in social awareness, and more commitment from parents. In fact, these actions have contributed positively to many parents stopping “hiding” at home their children with disabilities and starting to advocate and look for answers for their education in regular schools. In this regard, the critical contribution of Cape Verdean civil society organizations in advocating both for inclusion and the rights of children with disabilities must be underlined (Handicap International, 2012). United Nations Children’s Fund has contributed to advocacy, technical and financial support in a way to promote access to education for all as well as the quality of learning in schools as stated in the Country Sustainable Development Plan and Education Sector Plan 2022-2026 (United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 2023). Therefore, nowadays, at the educational level, all children should attend educational institutions without discrimination, and an education policy for inclusion is being legally established and promoted by both the Legislative Decrees no. 13/2018 (Decreto-Legislativo [Law] 13/2018, that reformulates the Law of Bases of the Education System) and no. 9/2024 (Decreto Lei [Law] 9/2024, that establishes the principles and standards that guarantee the inclusion of children and young people with disabilities). The later law defines inclusion as the right of all to access and participate, thoroughly and effectively, in the same educational environments. The main aim of the government is to promote equity in opportunities for all and to provide human, material, and financial conditions for a free, appropriate public education (Decreto Lei [Law] 9/2024). This law is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development, which aims to balance the economic, social, and environmental needs of people and planet as well as ensuring that no one is left behind while emphasizing the need to reach the furthest behind first. Achieving Universal Primary Education, continuing to make significant progress on gender equality and equity, and promoting the access of all children to four to five years of preschool education are examples of the education ambition that has been a permanent feature in building Cabo Verdean citizenship (Ministry of Finance, 2018).

In this context, there is a visible need for a strong alliance, continuous articulation, and systematic fine-tuning among all members of society to create conditions to maximize a school system that welcomes all children without discrimination. This means creating a whole-system approach in which five interrelated factors- inclusion and equity as principles, administration, use of evidence, community members’ involvement, and school development- promote change and move inclusion forward (Ainscow, 2020). In the Cape Verdean culture, it is essential that parents, as part of the community members’ involvement, support change for developing inclusion and building capacity and networks (Ainscow, 2020). Furthermore, in the Cape Verdean culture, parents should avoid overprotecting their children, which can often condition or even prevent their enrollment at school. In this particular instance, it is also necessary to nurture parents’ awareness and encourage more participation in planning and decision-making processes concerning inclusive schooling, as endorsed by the United Nations Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). Furthermore, as inclusive education has been implemented and has changed policy and pedagogy, an essential component of its success is teacher acceptance and attitude” (Boyle et al., 2023), namely a positive one, as shown by international reviews of the literature (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; De Boer et al., 2011; Lindner et al., 2023).

Within the above-mentioned context, the purpose of the current study was to describe the singularities of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Cape Verde from the view of the parents/guardians and teachers. The research questions that were addressed were the following:

1. How well do children with disabilities follow the educational pathway promoted by the system?
2. To what extent do special education and related services provided in regular schools support children, families, and teachers?
3. What characterizes the overall training and awareness activities on inclusive education promoted for families and teachers?

4. What does inclusive education mean among participants?
5. How do teachers perceive the implementation of inclusive practices, cultures, and policies in schools, and what personal and professional variables may influence their voices?

As such, this research intends to contribute both to the systematization and deepening of knowledge of the phenomenon of inclusive education in Cape Verde and to have a positive impact by promoting research-based educational services and policies for students with disabilities. Moreover, this study seeks to contribute to the research literature by adding results from Cape Verde to many studies that have assessed teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education around the world.

METHOD

Participants

The process towards inclusion in regular school is complex, and transformations involve multiple stakeholders. By prioritizing the participation of family members and teachers, we are taking into account a variety of viewpoints and experiences, which may enhance the impact of this research. To calculate the sample size, we considered the population size (3197 elementary school teachers and 1320 pupils with disabilities), a margin of error of 5.0%, and a confidence level of 95.0%. Therefore, this study included a sample of 265 parents/guardians of students with disabilities and 343 primary school teachers, selected and stratified by the 22 municipalities that are spread over nine inhabited islands of the country's ten islands. In this case, the term guardian was used to include those participants who are not their parents but represent "their best interests" in school proceedings. This is due to the fact that a significant percentage of Cape Verdean children do not live with their parents but rather with others, such as siblings, uncles, grandparents, and cousins. These participants were 80.7% female, aged between less than 20 and more than 60, with a predominance of 31 to 41 years old. Most of them lived on the island of Santiago (60.4%), had secondary education or less (76.2%), and worked in jobs that fall into the group of personal services, protection and security services, and sales (61.9%). The most common disabilities of their children were sensory (27.2%), learning (20.6%), motor (8.6%), and intellectual (8.2%).

Of the teachers, 74.3% were female, with ages ranging from less than 20 to more than 60. Overall, half of the participants were less than 41 years old, and more than

half worked and lived on the island of Santiago (54.8%). More than half had training, and the majority of them (56.6%) indicated having taken the Pedagogical Institute course, which is considered a specific training for teaching primary education in Cape Verde. The length of service as a teacher varied from less than five to 30 years, with 73.1% of the answers being between 11 and 30 years. About three-quarters belong to the permanent staff of the Ministry of Education, which shows some professional stability.

Data collection instruments

In this study, we developed three questionnaires to collect data from parents/guardians and teachers about their personal, professional, and experience with inclusive education. As well we used an adapted version of the *Index for Inclusion, developing learning and participation to schools* (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) for teachers.

Part I of the questionnaires consisted of closed-ended personal and professional items, with the participants choosing the one that was appropriate to their situation. The items of the questionnaire applied to parents/guardians of students with disabilities were included to gather data on:

- 1) gender, age, current island and municipality of residence, level of education, profession, and household composition (number of children, number of children with disabilities and type of disability);
- 2) the education of the children with disabilities in the family, through questions on attendance at preschool, the age at which the child entered primary school, the grade the child attends, the duration of the stay of the child at the current school, the existence of other student(s) with disabilities in the classroom, their attitude toward inclusion, and the existence of specific materials/specialized equipment and accessibility;
- 3) special education and related services, with questions related to the existence or lack of support, the person/team providing these services, the frequency, and place of support;
- 4) disabilities awareness events, with questions on participation in lectures/seminars about special education, which institution/association promoting the training, duration of training, and interest in participating in these events.

Part I of the questionnaire for teachers gathered information related to:

- 1) gender and age;
- 2) classroom situation on the number of students in the classroom, the number and type of students with dis-

- abilities in the classroom, and characteristics of materials and physical space of the classroom or school;
- 3) special education and related services, type of professionals/team and services, duration, eligibility, places where services are provided, and reasons for lack of specialized support;
 - 4) disabilities awareness' events and formal training.

Part II for both parents and/or guardians and teachers consisted of closed-ended items concerning data on the meaning of inclusive education. Therefore, three definitions of inclusion were presented, and parents and teachers were supposed to choose one from the following definitions:

- 1) "All children with disabilities receive their education in the same regular classroom as other children, as much as possible; specialized support may be provided outside the classroom";
- 2) "All children with disabilities receive their education in a regular classroom within a regular school full time";
- 3) "All students with disabilities receive education in a resource room within a regular school".

The *Index for Inclusion* has been adapted and developed in the international and national educational contexts (Menino-Mencia et al., 2019). In the current study, after authorization from the authors, we started the adaptation of the Portuguese version from Portugal of the *Index for Inclusion, developing learning and participation to schools* (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) into Portuguese from Cape Verde. Any issues in this process, specifically related to scientific terminology that was in use and well understood in the country, were reviewed in a joint session with three national experts from the field of education. They had extensive teaching and research experience and in-depth knowledge of the characteristics of the population from which the sample was selected. These expert appraisals were a beneficial strategy for identifying problems and fine-tuning items in order to improve the overall style of the index as well as the three questionnaires. This adapted version of the index contains 43 items, organized along three dimensions: policies (15 items), practices (15 items), and cultures (13 items), with a four-point *Likert* scale allowing teachers to indicate their positive-to-negative strength of agreement (1-totally agree, 2-agree, 3-disagree, 4-totally disagree) with a lower score indicating a greater level of agreement of inclusion.

A respondent-driven pretest was carried out with the first version of the *Index* and the three questionnaires with ten regular teachers and nine parents/guardians of students with disabilities with characteristics similar to the ones from the sample. When collecting the pretest

data, we used the same administration techniques that were supposed to be used in the full-scale survey. This pretesting brought to light unfamiliar terminology and items that were misunderstood, whether or not respondents were overly sensitive to specific questions, as well as the amount of time it would take to complete each instrument, which we wanted to report in the introduction of the final one.

Procedures

The Scientific Committee of a Portuguese University approved this research plan. After that, in order to collect data in Cape Verde, authorization was requested from the delegates of the Ministry of Education in the 22 municipalities of the country. In addition, a request for collaboration was sent to the following stakeholders: representatives of the Ministry of Education, heads of Local Centres and Inclusive Education in the various municipalities, heads of resource rooms, teachers, and undergraduate students in the last year of the Course in Special Education at the University of Cape Verde. Data gathering took place over six months. Each participant signed a written consent confirming their voluntary and informed participation in the study, within with safeguarded confidentiality and anonymity. The return rate of the questionnaires was about 97.0%.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. We used both an independent *t*-test and an analysis of variance *F*-test to study the impact of personal (gender and age) and professional variables (academic qualifications, training, and experience) on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. For these two inferential tests, significance levels were set at $p < 0.05$ (Field, 2013). An analysis of the internal consistency of the results was conducted for all items and items of the three dimensions of the *Index for Inclusion* using Cronbach's Alfa. All statistical analyses were undertaken in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

RESULTS

In the following section, the results of the current study will be presented, guided by the five initial research questions.

Educational pathway of children with disabilities

According to 86.2% of parents/guardians, their children with disabilities attended preschool education. Those

who mentioned that they did not enroll their children in this system indicated that it was due to the fear that they would be made fun of, the lack of conditions in the preschools, the refusal of enrolment by the preschool professionals, and due to limited financial resources of the families. Regarding the attendance of basic education, 72.6% of the parents/guardians stated that their children with disabilities enrolled in basic education at the legally established age, which is six years old in Cape Verde. In general, they remain at this level of education within the required time limit, thus revealing a progression in school learning. Teachers reported that the number of students per class was considerable as it varied from less than ten to more than 40 and that half of the teachers work in classes with 21 to 30 students. About half stated that they had students with disabilities in their classes and that most of them were identified by psychologists (30.7%). These results showed that an adequate educational pathway for all children with disabilities is not yet widespread in the country.

Special education and related services in regular schools

More than half (59.2%) of the parents/guardians informed that their children with disabilities were supported, in the majority of cases, by technicians from the Cape Verde Ministry of Education's delegations in the municipality (16.7%) and by a psychologist (14.0%), both in the regular classroom (26.0%) and in the resource room (24.0%). However, according to the other 40.8% of these participants, their children were not getting specialized support, being the two most reported reasons for the families' financial limitations (44.9%) and the difficulties in transporting the technicians to the schools (21.3%).

Additionally, and corroborating the parent's answers, 54.9% of the regular teachers specified that different specialized professionals supported students with disabilities. Still, most of the cases were by psychologists (44.2%) and by technicians from the Cape Verde Ministry of Education (26.0%). The frequency of the support varied from every day to annually, with a predominance of monthly (24.0%), and took place in several spaces with an emphasis on the regular school (29.5%). It should also be noted that 45.1% of teachers were of the opinion that these students were not supported, mostly (54.1%) due to the family's lack of financial resources. Approximately 90.0% of teachers believed there were no materials/equipment for supporting students with disabilities, and 62.6% that the school space was not suitable or accessible for the needs of these students. Therefore, there was a vis-

ible shortage of special education and related services to support children, family members, and teachers.

Training and awareness activities on inclusive education

Regarding participation in a lecture/seminar on inclusive education, 64.4% of the parents and/or guardians of students with disabilities mentioned that they had never participated. However, of those (35.6%) who had already attended, the majority said they had participated once (41.8%), with the most significant promoters being the municipal delegations of the Ministry of Education (30.3%) and the Ministry of Education itself (19.1%). Among those who did not participate, it must be highlighted that almost all (94.0%) were interested in participating. Less than half (40.7%) of the parents and/or guardians of students without disabilities indicated that they participated in short-duration (less than four hours) awareness-raising actions promoted by the Ministry of Education and by the respective county delegations. The overwhelming majority (97.3%) expressed interest in participating in these kinds of activities in the future.

As for the teachers, around 55.0% stated that they had not been enrolled in a subject/seminar related to inclusive education, special education, or disabilities during their initial teacher training. Of those who reported having participated in continuous or specialized training on these subjects, approximately half reported having enrolled in only one training event, and these were mainly of short duration (39.2%) and organized by the Ministry of Education (30.2%) or by its regionalized structures (23.7%). The overwhelming majority (96.1%) of those who have not yet participated in the training expressed interest in this type of professional development. These results indicated that teachers and parents/guardians needed and were interested in participating in events related to the education of children with disabilities.

Meaning of inclusive education

Concerning the meaning of inclusion, we underline the central tendency of teachers, parents, and guardians of students with disabilities to choose the definition that focuses on the notion of a least restrictive environment. As such, the definition - *all children with disabilities receive their education in the same regular classroom as other children, as much as possible; specialized support may be provided outside the classroom* - obtained about 50.0% of the responses in each of the two groups of participants. This is followed by the definition that considered full inclusion: *all children with disabilities receive their education in a regular classroom full time*, which obtained more than

25.0% of the responses from both groups of participants. Finally, the third option - *all students with disabilities receive education in a recourse room within a regular school* - was the least option chosen, obtaining approximately less than 25.0% of the responses.

Half of these parents/guardians (54.9%) agreed that other children with disabilities should attend the same regular classroom attended by their child, justifying that inclusion is a human right (36.5%), that it brings benefits to all children (32.8%) and promotes equality between children (16.1%). The other half (45.1%) of the parents/guardians disagreed with having other children with disabilities attending the same regular classroom as their child. Among the reasons for such an attitude were the large number of children in the classroom (28.8%), the idea that children with disabilities learn better in separated environments (30.6%) and that it would be adverse for their classmates (9.3%).

In summary, parents/guardians and teachers supported the idea of placement in a regular classroom and not in a resource room, considering that children with disabilities should be separated from classmates as little as possible and only for specialized support to meet their needs.

Inclusive practices, cultures, and policies in schools

Less than half of the teachers (40.7%) considered inclusive education a reality in Cape Verde, while 30.3% did not consider it, and 28.7% did not know what to answer. Despite the existing conditions in the country for supporting students with disabilities, there is an understanding that the ideals of this process are being implemented.

Results from the adapted *Index of Inclusion* showed that the overall attitude of regular teachers towards inclusion was positive, as most opinions focused on points 1 and 2 of the scale – I totally agree, and I agree, respectively – with an overall average of 2.08 (SD= 0.68). The difference in means between dimensions was not expressive, which shows the consistency between participants. Cronbach’s alpha as a measure of internal consistency was 0.92 for the 43 items and above 0.80 for each dimension (see Table 1).

These results of inclusive practices, cultures, and policies suggested a good understanding of school life, along with positive attitudes from teachers despite the lack of human and material resources and specialized training on inclusive education for students with disabilities. Inferential results showed that personal and professional variables that were tested did not influence the attitude of the teachers in relation to the inclusion of students with disabilities.

DISCUSSION

In the current study, teachers and parents/guardians provided data whose analysis allows for a comprehensive understanding of inclusive education for students with disabilities enrolled in public primary schools in Cape Verde. First, we emphasize that not all children with disabilities attended preschool education or started basic education at the legally established age of six years old. Considering that there is a solid body of evidence showing “that the foundations for learning are largely built in the early years of life before a child ever crosses the threshold of a primary school” (UNICEF, 2019, p. 8), and that the legislation in Cape Verde convey and promote the right of all children to attend all education subsystems (Decreto-Legislativo [Law] 13/2018; Decreto-Legislativo [Law] 2/2010), the refusal to enroll in preschool should be analyzed, understood, and fought against. Therefore, this study underlines the significance of the decentralization of social services to the municipalities and the National Care System to bring an opportunity to the country to reinforce the quality of education as well as to pay attention to children and young people with disabilities (Ministry of Finance-National Directorate of Planning, 2018). Additionally, it aligns with the Government of Cabo Verde foresees in order to promote the access of all children aged 4-5 to preschool education as mentioned within the framework of the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan of Education (Ministério da Educação, 2017). This approach of early childhood intervention can take advantage of the fact that our results show that children with disabilities receive support from their parents/guardians

Table 1. Descriptive and Internal Consistency of Results from the Index of Inclusion

Dimensions	M	SD	α
Inclusive practices	2.00	0.67	0.85
Inclusive policies	2.16	0.71	0.83
Inclusive cultures	2.07	0.66	0.85

in their schooling process and that this support showed mainly in the help in homework and in maintaining the home-school-home links.

A second finding showed that classrooms were significant in terms of the number of students and that there was a shortage in special education and related services. In fact, a class with children who have disabilities should have a reduced number of children to greater availability of teachers for them without diminishing the attention given to others (Silva & Leite, 2015). In this regard, it was stipulated in the guidelines for the 2019-2020 school year that classes should have a maximum of 22 or 20 pupils, respectively, if one or two children with disabilities were included (Ministério da Educação, 2019). Additionally, the provision of special education and related services, specialized materials/equipment, and school physical conditions to accommodate students with disabilities did not yet seem to meet the challenges of inclusive education. This finding is consistent with previous research in Cape Verde (Handicap International, 2012; Tavares, 2009; Tavares & Martins, 2019), which reported limitations of an educational pathway for children with disabilities, besides the tendency to support inclusion from a human perspective. It also corroborates a study conducted by The Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF and the Cabo Verde National Commission for UNESCO, in which the consultations also brought to light the challenges and barriers to be overcome in schools so that inclusion, health, and safety standards would be available to all. This report mentioned obstacles to the inclusion of all students, and specifically of those with disabilities, that include: a) schools with no psychological support for students and teachers or ramps and other infrastructure for access for people with disabilities, b) a significant deficit of teachers with training in inclusive education; and c) adequate support, materials, and equipment to facilitate proper learning for students with disabilities (Ministério da Educação de Cabo Verde & United Nations Cape Verde, 2022). The role of the Ministry of Education and the respective municipal delegations has been relevant in this domain. Still, conditions should be created to ensure greater availability of the support units in order to reduce travel and financial barriers. Additionally, UNICEF has supported all public kindergartens in the country with more up-to-date and innovative pedagogical materials and has promoted professional training for members of the multidisciplinary teams as well as teachers from regular classes with children with disabilities, covering 9 of the 22 municipalities in the country (UNICEF, 2023). For all these reasons, adequate care for children with disabilities

is not yet widespread, and education must continue to fulfill its primary mission of inclusion for all (Ministry of Finance, 2018).

Third, results indicated that it is essential to stimulate activities and programs that could succeed in raising awareness and training on inclusion for parents/guardians and teachers. This urgent need for additional information and training has also been referenced by previous research that was conducted in Cape Verde (see Alfama, 2013; Handicap International, 2012; Tavares, 2009; Tavares & Nunes, 2014). In our study, parents/guardians and teachers showed interest in participating in these types of events. Therefore, it is vital that non-governmental and government organizations, as well as Higher Education Institutions, promote an increase in training and awareness events about the inclusion of all and, in particular, about how to educate children with disabilities with quality and “an emphasis on whole-school approaches in which teachers are supported in developing inclusive practices” (Ainscow, 2020, p. 14). It would be essential that these awareness and training activities were supported by rigorous, high-quality research designed intentionally and conducted in the country. Such type of research would not only make progress in advancing understanding of what works but also how it works, under what conditions and nuances of effective outcomes (Toste et al., 2023).

Moreover, these awareness and training activities would promote teamwork, communication, and collaboration among all, as well as the adoption, tailoring, and integration of evidence-based practices in schools (Talbot et al., 2021). The use of the Portuguese version of the *Index for Inclusion* in Cape Verde may not be a blueprint for improvement and change. Still, it can empower school members and families to analyze their own contexts better and better identify the need for awareness and training activities for the subjects involved. It can guide schools in a cycle of self-developing phases of investigation that can promote the emergence of clear priorities for change, the reduction of barriers, and the maximization of material and human resources to support learning and participation for all (Vaughan, 2002). In summary, it can magnify the path of inclusion in Cape Verde and ensure that no one is left behind.

Finally, we found a positive attitude toward inclusive education and support for a definition that highlights not only placement in regular classrooms, whenever possible, but also the existence of specialized support to meet the needs of children with disabilities. It corroborates conclusions from a study conducted by The Ministry of

Education, in partnership with UNICEF and the Cabo Verde National Commission for UNESCO, in which participants point out that schools should not only welcome all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, or linguistic characteristics but also promote diagnosis and accommodations so that they remain in school and develop their potential (Ministério da Educação de Cabo Verde & United Nations Cape Verde, 2022). Hence, this attitude can thrive and shape the school system, as the lack of positive attitudes towards inclusive education is seen as a barrier to its implementation (Lindner et al., 2023). It must be underlined that a more positive attitude towards inclusive education from teachers “would be accompanied by more positive cognitive and emotional reactions, as well as stronger behavioral intentions, such as a greater willingness to make adjustments to teach all students” (Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019, p. 232). Moreover, these results are in line with international ones that show evidence of positive attitudes but no evidence of acceptance of a total inclusion approach to students with disabilities (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Participants chose a definition of inclusive education that highlights not only placement in regular classrooms, whenever possible but also the existence of specialized support to meet the needs of children with disabilities. This definition points to a trend towards inclusive schooling and rejection of education in a resource room, contradicting practices based on the child’s deficit, which only hinders the inclusive process (Ainscow, 2007). In this study, inclusion was seen as a concern with disability, which can act, according to Messiou (2017), as a barrier to the development of a broader view of inclusion. This comprehensive vision, inclusive education is not only an approach to support children with disabilities within a regular school; it is an approach in which inclusive education is seen as a principle that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners and the foundation for a more just society (Ainscow, 2020). Cape Verde has the opportunity to promote a broadened definition of inclusive education as a general guiding principle to strengthen equity to quality learning opportunities for all learners, and not only those with disabilities, within the education system. Moreover, Cape Verde has the chance to promote inclusion values as a principled approach within the society (Ainscow et al., 2006). These current results do not call into question how far inclusion has come. Still, they do raise questions about why personal and professional variables investigated did not influence the attitude of the

teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities or how these results may be associated with the fact that inclusion is in an early stage of implementation.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this research analyzed the singularities of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Cape Verde from the viewpoint of the parents/guardians. Findings showed that participants had a positive attitude towards inclusion, that there was a need for awareness and training activities as well as special education and related services, and that not all children with disabilities were enrolled in regular schools. The limitations of this study are related to the use of a survey with participants who have modest experience in both inclusive environments and research.

This study promoted knowledge about the characteristics of inclusive education, from which policymakers and different leaders can infer how to improve the conditions of education for students with special educational needs in Cape Verde. The country still has a long way to go towards an education that meets the real needs of all children in schools in their communities. In fact, taking into account the current circumstances of inclusion in Cape Verde, the actions taken, the gains achieved, the goals set, and the weaknesses that still exist in relation to resources and training of parties involved, in order to provide adequate responses and achieve the desired effects, there is need for much will, much determination, much knowledge and a positive attitude of all parties involved, based on effective coordination of actions and available resources. Only together can we continue to challenge and enrich the paths of inclusive education in Cape Verde and thereby build our capacity to develop the inclusive societies of tomorrow.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author reported no potential conflict of interest.

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