TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF ESWATINI

Hlob'sile Matsenjwa

Regional Education Offices, Lubombo Region,
Siteki, Eswatini

*Kayi Ntinda

Department of Educational Foundations and Management
University of Eswatini, Kwaluseni, Eswatini

Davison Makondo

Department of Educational Foundations and Management,
University of Eswatini, Kwaluseni, Eswatini

ABSTRACT

The study sought to explore the teachers' experiences of learners with intellectual disabilities (IDs), collaborating with parents in mainstream primary schools in the Lubombo region in Eswatini. Using a qualitative approach, twenty-four (n= 24; females = 15; males = 9) teacher participants were sampled from 6 conveniently selected primary schools. Purposive sampling was utilized to select teacher participants with the experience of teaching learners with ID at upper primary school level. Data on collaborative aspects with parents of children with IDs were collected through focus group discussion and in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis of data indicated that teachers consider the following important facets in their collaboration with parents: Journaling; personal skills development; creation of time to do school work and provision of basic needs. The teachers reported the use of journaling in their daily communication with parents on the progress of the learners with intellectual disabilities. They also indicated the importance of personal skills development to reinforce good personal hygiene and grooming of the learners. The teachers reported a need for more co-operation and commitment from parents to effectively assist their children in their educational activities at home. Teachers also reported that they assisted some parents by providing basic needs such as food and uniforms for the learners. These findings suggest a need to better equip parents in basic special education needs and counselling skills training to enable them to effectively assist their children in their educational activities. Furthermore, there is a need to raise awareness regarding having a child with a disability to overcome the social stigma surrounding disability in Eswatini.

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: Kayi Ntinda, University of Eswatini, Private Bag 4, Eswatini. E-mail address: _kntinda@uniswa.sz_; Tel: (+268) 25170315

INTRODUCTION

Teachers of learners with Intellectual Disabilities (IDs) in mainstream schools may be exposed to a variety of experiences in collaborating with parents depending on the severity of the learners' disability. Collaboration between teachers and parents is important for the reflection of practices and exchange of knowledge as a main strategy to generate creativity and innovation to support positive educational experience for the learners with disabilities (Adams, Harris & Jones, 2018). Collaboration between teachers and parents may also constitute parental involvement in the education of learners with IDs, which creates opportunities to plan for individualised care, share information on weaknesses and strengths of the learners to provide meaningful support (Afolabi, 2014). Therefore, considering the way in which teachers of learners with IDs collaborate with parents as key stakeholders in education, may provide great opportunities to support teaching and care for such learners.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Given the significance of the connection between parental involvement and successful student outcomes, it is imperative that teachers of learners with special education needs develop skills in establishing positive relationships with parents (Collier, Keefe & Hirrel, 2015). Moreover, the nature of a disability in a child comes with its complexities and often puts parenting skills to test (Thwala, Okeke & Dludlu, 2018) such as showing affection towards them. The study further revealed that parents had unique experiences in raising their children with disabilities and there is a need for parents to have appropriate information about the disabilities of their children to effectively support them. Learners with IDs have significant limitations in cognitive functions (lack of intellectual functioning; limitations of learning) and restrictions in adaptive behaviour skills such as social skills and self-care skills (Okyere, Aldersey & Lysaght, 2019). Therefore, there is a need for the use of special education needs and counselling skills in establishing higher levels of interactions between teachers of learners with IDs and parents to fully support the learners. The aim is to enhance the positive educational experiences of learners with ID through parent- teacher collorabation.

Education is a basic human right for all children with or without disabilities in most developed and developing countries. For instance, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD] (2006) affirms that States including Eswatini should ensure that learners with disabilities such as IDs are not excluded from mainstream schools on the basis of their disability (United Nations Children's Fund, 2013). Many governments are also signatories to international Conventions on disabilities such as the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994), Dakar Framework of Action (2000) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 (UNESCO, 2015).

Therefore, there has been an increase in demand to provide quality education for all children with diverse education needs and abilities in mainstream schools, leading to wide experiences of teachers (Chimhenga, 2016). This requires having teachers with special education needs and counselling skills who support learners with ID when they are at school. Conversely, parents are responsible for taking care of these learners when at home; hence, the importance of collaboration between the teachers and the parents to effectively support the learners.

Additionally, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Eswatini (2005) embraced education for all children agenda which includes learners with IDs. The Ministry of Education and Training Education Sector Policy of (2018) emphasizes that all individuals can learn effectively according their intellectual capacity, skills and interests at all levels, whilst living with their parents (Education Sector Policy, 2018). Teachers in mainstream schools play a pivotal role in the holistic development of learners with IDs and they require full support from the parents to effectively assist these children.

The education system in the Kingdom of Eswatini has been structured into five phases: foundation phase, middle primary phase and upper primary phase. That is eight (8) years of primary education; junior secondary phase and senior secondary phase representing three (3) years respectively (Education Sector Policy, 2018). Both English and siSwati are used as mediums of instruction as described in the curriculum framework (Education Sector Policy, 2018). Cross cutting issues such as special education needs, training of teachers, and the inclusion of learners with IDs in Eswatini are mainstreamed in the curriculum at all levels (The government of the Kingdom of Swaziland, 2014) as operationalised by the National Education and Training Improvement Programme (NETIP). These issues still persist and may affect the educational experiences of the learners in primary schools.

Although several studies have been conducted on IDs in Eswatini; little is known regarding teachers' experiences of learners with IDs in collaborating with parents from mainstream primary schools. Yet the collaboration is crucial in teaching and learning of these learners. Mainstream primary schools are ordinary public schools with learners with IDs learning together with their typically developing peers. For instance, Okeke and Mazibuko (2014) conducted a study on experiences of parents of children with special education needs in Nhlangano, Eswatini. The findings indicated that parents appeared to be ill-prepared in their roles of providing their children's special educational needs and suggest that educators and parents should work as partners to come up with some guidelines on the expectations from each other. Additionally, Ntinda, Thwala and Tfusi (2019) carried out a study on experiences of teachers of the deaf and hard-of-hearing students teaching in a special needs high school in Lubombo region of Eswatini. The findings of the study recommend a need for higher level of parental involvement in the academic, personal and social aspects of development of their children with special educational needs. This suggests that teachers of learners with IDs in mainstream schools require strong commitment from other key stakeholders such as parents and government to help the learners to benefit from education as noted by Okyere, Aldersey, Lysaght and Sulaiman (2019).

Studies on teacher - parent collaboration are most needed in Eswatini, particularly in the Lubombo region because learners with IDs are an underserved target group in mainstream primary schools. Therefore, the current study aimed at exploring experiences of teachers of learners with IDs in collaborating with parents in mainstream primary schools of Siteki, in the Lubombo region of Eswatini. The specific research question was: What collaboration strategies do teachers of learners with IDs use with parents in mainstream primary schools of Siteki, in the Lubombo region of Eswatini?

Theoretical framework

The study was guided by the Social Constructivist Learning Theory that was developed by Lev Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky believed in constructivism which is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. The theory affirms that a favourable societal view on children with disabilities give preference to strengthening and empowerment of individual skills rather than stressing on weaknesses as described by Rodina (2006). Individuals generate their own rules and mental models from the society which they then use to make sense of their experiences. Vygotsky emphasized that knowledge is constructed through dialogue and interaction with others whereby the learners make sense of their environment depending on the situation (Churcher, Downsb & Tewksburya, 2014).

Considering this theoretical lens, teachers of learners with IDs can be able to make sense of their own experiences and communicate better with the outside world such as parents in this case. Major constructs of the Social Constructivist Learning Theory include: social interaction (sharing ideas with others), More Knowledgeable Other (teacher or adult) and Zone of Proximal Development [area of exploration] (McAllum, 2014). Teachers and parents of learners with IDs play a pivotal role in guiding the learners in performing certain tasks such as listening and eating. The strength of the theory lies in interactive dialogue amongst teachers, peers, and parents. Furthermore, it underscores the role of significant others (at home and school) in sharing ways of guiding learning and development of learners with IDs. In the case of this study, the role of the teacher and parent is critical in supporting the learning and development of the learners with IDs.

METHODOLOGY

The phenomenological research design which creates an opportunity for multiple socially constructed worldviews (Creswell, 2013) was employed in this study. The phenomenological design allows for a deep understanding of commonality of lived experiences within a particular group and provides abundant data about real life of people (Maxwell, 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). The approach was utilized because it provided an opportunity to explore the innermost deliberation of the lived experiences of the participants on the phenomenon under study (Alase, 2017). In addition, the choice of a phenomenological design was preferable for the study because it allowed for detailed data on experiences of teachers of learners with IDs in collaboration with parents to support them in mainstream primary schools in Siteki in the Lubombo region of Eswatini.

The participants

Twenty-four (24) teacher participants were sampled from six (6) conveniently selected mainstream primary schools in Siteki, Eswatini. A sample of (n = 24; 15 female; 9 male) teachers that met the inclusion criteria participated in the study. Table 1 presents participants' demographic information. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants based on their, teaching experience, qualification and training. The inclusion criteria were having: at least two or more years teaching experience, Primary Teachers' Diploma with specialisation in Special Education Needs Training and teaching learners diagnosed with IDs (6 - 12 years).

Table 1: *Participants' demographic information for the study (n=24)*

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Sex		
Male	9	38
Female	15	62
Age Group		
25-35	10	42
36-46	10	42
47-60	4	16
Qualification	8	26
B.Ed.	1	4
PGCE	15	70
PTD		
SEN Training experience		
2-5 years	21	88
6-10 years	2	8
11-20 years	1	4
Total	**24**	**100**

Note: B. Ed. = Bachelor of Education Degree; PGCE= Post Graduate Certificate in Education; PTD= Primary Teachers' Diploma; SEN= Special Education Needs.

Data collection

Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to collect data, and interview guides were generated and used to guide the collection of data (Vosloo, 2014). All interviews were conducted in English though participants were allowed to respond in both English and SiSwati. All the participants took part in the Focus group discussions. Three (3) focus group discussions comprising of 8 participants each were conducted in three (3) different schools for an average of sixty (45) minutes per session to identify trends in the different views of the participants (Daniel, 2016). Participants' responses were coded and recorded in accordance with the interview guide. Probe stems were used to ask participants to describe aspects that constituted their work collaboration with parents in support of learners with IDs. Participants who provided

detailed responses were recruited for individual in-depth interview and 12 teachers participated. In-depth interviews created opportunities for emerging questions and teacher participants were encouraged to feel free to give elaborate responses that enhanced data collection (Jamshed, 2014). In-depth interviews were also conducted in three (3) conveniently selected schools and lasted for approximately 30 minutes per interview. All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed.

Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in Eswatini. All teacher participants that were included in the study signed consent forms and audio tape recording consent forms before they engaged in the study. Head teachers of the participating schools also consented for their schools to be sampled in the study. Teacher participants consented to participate in the study by completing the consent forms prior to interviews. Participants were informed that participation in the study was purely voluntary, and of their right to withdraw from the study without negative consequences. An unoccupied classroom was used to ensure confidentiality and privacy when conducting all interview sessions. No participant's name or school were identified, anonymity was observed by assigning letters and numbers to participants and schools respectively.

Trustworthiness of the study

In qualitative research, it is vital to scrutinize the trustworthiness of every phase of the analysis process, including the preparation, organization, and reporting of results to support the argument that the findings are worth paying attention to (Elo et al., 2014). Member checks with the participants were done in this study to observe credibility and the accuracy of responses from each participant (Khan, 2014). The process of member checking gave the participants an opportunity to correct flaws from responses, comments, and to interpret and solidify some of the findings. In addition, participants were encouraged to be as honest as possible and open during discussions to ensure dependability. There was consistent recording and reporting during the discussions.

Data analysis

The researchers conducted data analysis concurrently for both the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Data analysis was done on regular bases immediately after each interview session. Thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used and it allowed for an opportunity to identify patterns and themes of the phenomenon beyond the participants' perceptions (Rabinovich & Kacen, 2013). This enabled the researchers to become intimately familiar with the data by reading and re-reading the data; and listening to audio recorded data at least once if relevant (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Initial codes were identified and compared. Then similar codes were grouped into categories that led into the development of one major theme and sub-themes which were crucial for the purpose of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main objective of the study was to obtain in-depth understanding of the collaboration strategies teachers of learners with IDs use with parents in mainstream primary schools of Siteki in Eswatini. To report the collaborative strategies used by teachers of learners with IDs and parents to support these learners, the findings are presented in accordance with the sub-themes which emerged from data analysis. Table 2 indicates the sub-themes which emerged from data analysis.

Table 2: Theme and Sub-themes derived from data analysis

Theme	Sub- themes
• Collaboration strategies	o Journaling
	o Personal skills development
	o Creation of time for school work
	o Provision of basic needs

Journaling

This section present teachers' strategy in working with parents of children with IDs through journaling. Participants of the study from the three (3) focus group discussions indicated that parents worked in partnership with them through journaling. Teachers of learners with IDs reported that some parents kept a record of their children's work progress in an exercise book. The exercise book indicated daily activities; parents indicated areas of difficulty and progress made by their children as noted in the example statements below:

> *Parents play a pivotal role because sometimes they become fully involved in the learning of their child. At times you find that I give them some work to do at home and I also write a note. I put the notebook in the child's school bag and address it to the parent to ensure that he/she does look at the child's work and respond in return* (Participant 4, school B, female, 32 years old, 4 years teaching experience).*There are parents who come and give us all the information about the child with intellectual disabilities. For an example that the child is slow in taking instructions. This parent is supportive; we occasionally talk or write on a note book to give responses to each other about the child…* (Participant 3, school A, FGD A, female, 36 years old, rural school, 8 years teaching experience).

> *Some of the parents do cooperate and sometimes they take our cell phone numbers to call and give us periodic feedback about the child with intellectual disabilities. They also respond in writing to keep track of the progress of the child and try their best to assist the child. I also write to advise the parents to try extra classes…* (Participant 5, school B, FGD B, male, 31 years old, urban school, 4 years teaching experience).

Half of the participants 6 out of 12 (50%) from in-depth interviews indicated that parents of learners with IDs worked collaboratively with them to support their children with school work by constantly providing feedback in a notebook. Below are illustrative statements from participants:

We work well together by asking the information that I need about the child and I update the parent about the performance of the learner using a notebook. The parent also reports changes that he/she has observed in the learner as a result of their experiences, may be, at home and keep record of their work (Participant 1, school A, female, 28 years old, rural school, 4 years teaching experience).

"*Parents play a pivotal role because sometimes the parent becomes fully involved in the learning of the child. I give the learner work to do for more practice, request the parents at home to assist the learner in doing the work and they do. They even comment on the work done in the notebook* (Participant 4, school B, female, 32 years old, urban school, 4 years teaching experience).

…In other instances we use an exercise book which is for home work; the teacher writes to the parent on what needs to be done, the parent signs that the learner has brought homework and respond accordingly with comments or concerns (Participant 2, school C, male, 27 years old, semi-urban school, 3 years teaching experience).

Personal skills development

A majority of the teacher participants from in-depth interviews participants, 7 out of 12 (58%) reported that parents of learners with IDs assisted their children in personal skills development such as keeping their bodies clean, dressing them up properly and being independent individuals. The following are verbatim quotations from participants:

Parents support their children by making follow up on their daily routine as they go to school. They make sure that the child is taken care of at home like their social welfare, giving them time to play, help them dress up properly and look good when they come to school (Participant 1, school A, female, 28 years old, rural school, 4 years teaching experience).*Parents support their children by making follow up on their daily routine as they go and come back from school. They give them something to do on their own at home and guide them throughout the task to show that they care.*

(Participant 2, school B, female, 43 years old, urban school, 16 years teaching experience).

…Sometimes parents also help their children with intellectual disabilities to wake up on time, others have difficulties in dressing themselves up so they help them in dressing up appropriately (Participant 3, school C, male, 49 years old, semi-urban school, 25 years teaching experience).

Additionally, participants from all 3 focus group discussions reported points of agreement on the important role played by parents in personal skills development to assist learners with IDs maintain physical and emotional health. The following are illustrative statements from participants:

> *The parents who do come to school you find that the parent is a warder or is working at Manzini and the child stays here at home with grandmother but they take care of them. Those are the parents who come to show human dignity, respect and care for their children* (Participant 3, school A, FGD A, female, 27 years old, rural school, 3 years teaching experience).

> *…some parents emotionally support the child when she/he approaches me first to report about the progress made by the child. Talking about the work of the learner in his/her presence has helped us a lot because he/she becomes responsible and the child to develop self-control since he/she gets assistance from both sides.*

(Participant 1, school B, FGD B, female, 36 years old, urban school, 6 years teaching experience).

> *Parents at home do teach the learners how to live in a safe and socially responsible manner even at school. Others even teach them how to show respect for others* (Participant 2, school C, FGD C, male, 44 years old, semi-urban school, 20 years teaching experience).

Creation of time for school work

Participants' experiences in relation to opportunities given to the learners to do school work at home are presented in this section. Participants from all the focus group discussions were in agreement that some parents were supportive by giving their children more time to do school work at home as noted in the following direct quotations:

> *…The parents also give themselves time and come to the school, usually at the beginning of the year to give us information about the problems we might face when teaching that particular child* (Participant 3, school A, FGD A, female, 36 years old, rural school, 8 years teaching experience).

> *Some parents are cooperative and they assist us by creating time for the children to do school work at home because they are aware that they have intellectual disabilities. It is so difficult to change that child but sometimes they improve if they are given enough time for practice at home* (Participant 7, school B, FGD B, female, 43 years old, urban school, 16 years teaching experience).

> *We are able to work together with the child because we work in collaboration with their parents. When they reach home, their parents are able to create time to look at the work done at school and continue from where the teacher left…* (Participant 3, school C, FGD C, male, 29 years old, semi-urban school, 4 years teaching experience).

63

Additionally, responses from in-depth interviews indicated that a significant number of participants; 8 out of 12 (67%) acknowledged that parents do create time for school work at home. Teacher participants acknowledged that some parents worked in collaboration with them by maximising time for school work and assisting the learners to do their homework or repeat what was done in class as exemplified below:

> *If the parent has accepted that the child has an intellectual disability, he/she is able to create time to take care of the child's school work. They make follow up and find ways of getting assistance for the learner from me as a teacher as well as giving the child enough time for school work at home. In most cases some do ask for the teacher's advice on what can be done at home, like reducing time for watching TV, so that time for doing school work is increased…* (Participant 4, school A, male, 29 years old, rural school, 3 years teaching experience).

> *Parents do assist the learners with their school work by creating time for them to do homework and study. Some reduce the time for watching television in the evening. Others do appreciate that their children do not move at the same pace with the others; so, helping and giving them time for repetition of what have been done at school helps them to improve…* (Participant 2, school B, female, 43 years old, urban school, 16 years teaching experience).

> *When they are at home those parents who are educated, take time to check the learners work and ask them questions about the day's work. These parents also create time to their children to do school work or homework. If there is something they do not understand about the performance of the child, that particular parent also find time to come to school and enquire from the teacher concerned through the head teacher about the child's performance* (Participant 4, school C, male, 44 years old, semi-urban school, 20 years teaching experience).

Interestingly, some participants from in-depth interviews indicated challenges they faced in working with parents of learners with IDs who still need to be motivated on collaborative work and are non-cooperative. For example, one participant reported:

> *Others do not have time for their children because if you ask the parents to come to school in most cases they do not come; at home there is no time for books but for TV. Some children have got a responsibility of looking after cattle like on Monday and Tuesday, they always come late to school from the dipping tank. In this case when you ask the parent to assist with school work they do not, they blame the children instead of supporting them.* (Participant 1, school A, female, 28 years old, rural school, 4 years teaching experience).

Provision of basic needs

Teachers' responses regarding parents who work with them collaboratively through the provision of basic needs for their children with IDs were considered. In-depth interview participants, 7 out of 12 (58%) reported that parents of children with IDs played a vital role in supporting their children with basic needs. Below are direct quotations from participants:

> …*Other parents, like the grand parents may not be aware of all things but they know what is major, like providing school uniform, food to the child before going*
>
> *to school and a dish to use at school during break time. If the child does not have a school jersey, they give him/her something warm to put on when it is cold* (Participant 1, school A, female, 28 years old, rural school, 4 years teaching experience).
>
> *Parents are very important because they provide some of the resources that we need to help the learners learn better, for an example, books and school uniforms, because they have to come to school in their uniforms like the other children so that they feel part of the school. They also provide basic needs like food because the learners cannot learn without food* (Participant 3, school B, female, 38 years old, urban school, 8 years teaching experience).
>
> *… Parents do take care of other basic needs like providing food other than that of doing their school work. I have also observed that they treat them like the other children; they do buy uniforms for them and all the other materials that could be needed at school* (Participant 3, school C, male, 49 years old, semi-urban school, 25 years teaching experience).

In as much as participants reported that parents were collaborative; half of the participants (n=12) from focus group discussions reported a consensus that some parents of children with IDs were unable to fully provide basic needs for their children. Participants' responses showed that there were parents who do not work in collaboration with teachers of learners with IDs as exemplified below:

> *In some other cases parents in this area do not cooperate with us. Most of the children here stay with their grandmothers who are not so much concerned about wearing a school uniform and proper nutrition. The parents just send their children to school and say its free education as if government will provide everything for the learner. They even ask the learners to bring them food from school. They do not work with us in supporting the learner to overcome his/her challenges* (Participant 1, school A, FGD A, female, 28 years old, rural school, 4 years teaching experience).

Honestly, I do have learners with intellectual disabilities but most of their parents do not accept it and do not care about their basic needs. We argue a lot with some of the parents, about 80% of these parents do not understand their children's disability and it becomes difficult for them to appropriately provide for their basic education needs like school uniform, shoes and learning resources (Participant 2, school B, FGD B, female, 43 years old, urban school, 16 years teaching experience). *Most of the parents in this area do not cooperate with us; maybe it is because the school is in a rural area, I don't know. Some of the learners come to school without school uniforms and others without proper clothes even if it is cold. Of course, other children come on empty stomach and that becomes a challenge to the teacher* (Participant 1, school C, FGD C, male, 41 years old, semi-urban school, 16 years teaching experience).

Study participants reported the value of the use of journaling by parents in supporting their children with IDs. They indicated that constant teacher-parent collaboration enabled both the teacher and the parent to get an immediate feedback on the learner's work. This finding was consistent with previous studies from other countries (Collier, Keefe & Hirrel, 2015; Cuskelly, 2020; Hallahan, Pullen, Kauffman & Badar, 2020). For instance, a study carried out in the United States of America by Collier, Keefe and Hirrel (2015) concluded that parents want their voices to be heard in the process of making educational decisions related to their children with special education needs. Drame and Kamphoff (2014) in Dakar; Senegal indicated the importance of family support and interactions for the development of learners with intellectual disabilities. There is need to support teachers of learners with IDs by parents through continuously providing feedback to ensure that the learner receives appropriate assistance both in school and at home as mirrored by previous studies (Afolabi, 2014; Okyere, Aldersey, Lysaght, & Sulaiman,2019).

Although participants reported collaboration with parents; some expressed their concern about parents of children with IDs who still need to be empowered on collaborative strategies. Participants' responses indicated that some parents were in denial of the disability of their children and others lacked knowledge on how to assist their children who are living with IDs. This becomes a challenge for teachers of learners with IDs because some of the learners have limitations in adaptive functioning skills such as dressing up which requires a high level of parenting skills. It is noteworthy that parents of children with IDs experience stress, which negatively impact on their relationship and ability to care for their children (Ntinda, Thwala & Dlamini, 2016; Peer & Hillman, 2014). It is also significant for parents to clearly understand the type of disability that their children have and seek appropriate advice (Adams, Harris, & Jones, 2016; Thwala, 2018). Therefore, there is need to empower parents of children with IDs skills on how to handle intellectual disabilities to create awareness on how to take care of their children and enable them to assist the teachers in primary schools. Moreso, the aspect of the more knowledgeable other of the Social Constructivist Learning Theory which views the parent or teacher as the more knowledgeable other, seems to confirm the finding of the current study. Both the teacher and the parent of a child with IDs are the enlightened individuals who play a significant role in the holistic development of these children.

It was evident from the study that teachers of learners with IDs suggest that the learners need to be given more time because they have certain limitations both in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour. Participants reported that some parents created extra time for learners with IDs at home to reinforce the work that was done at school. Martinez, Conroy and Cerreto (2012) in Boston, USA concurred with the above finding that there is a relationship between parental involvement in school work and outcomes for learners with IDs (Ntinda, Thwala, & Tfusi,2019; Okyere, Aldersey, & Lysaght, 2019). This suggests that when the teachers of learners with IDs get support from parents; learning becomes easier for the learners. This finding seemed to affirm the construct from the Social Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) that the child's mind is inherently social in nature and the society (parents or teachers) becomes an immediate environment for the promotion of social interaction for learners with intellectual disabilities. On the contrary, the findings of a study conducted by Okeke and Mazibuko (2014) in Eswatini indicated that a majority of parents of children with learning disabilities did not take an active role in the education of their children as expected. Seemingly there is a need for the education system in Eswatini to have structures in place that will assist teachers of learners with IDs. This can be done by providing learning and developmental support for the learners in and out of school to maximise time spent on school work and their overall quality of life as valued members of the society.

To have basic needs is a human right; teachers handling learners with IDs reported that they worked collaboratively with parents in the provision of basic needs for their children such as food, shelter and school uniforms. Participants reported that they felt comfortable to teach learners with IDs who were treated in the same way as their typically developing peers who are without disabilities. Apparently, there were more rewarding aspects for providing basic care for learners with IDs by their parents which helped them to cope with their daily needs as mirrored by a study by Masulani-Mwale, et al., (2016). This finding further confirms that the provision of basic needs enabled teachers of learners with IDs to successfully teach the learners as this enhanced their self-esteem and helped them to actively participate in their own learning.

Limitations
The study used self-reports and thus social desirability might have affected the dependability of the findings, thus compromising the findings. Teachers who participated in the study were selected from schools in the Lubombo region yet there are teachers handling learners with IDs in the other three regions of Eswatini. Future studies should explore experiences of teachers handling learners with IDs in both primary and secondary mainstream schools in other regions of the kingdom.

CONCLUSION

The study explored the experiences of teachers of learners with ID in collaborating with parents of these children in mainstream primary schools in Siteki, Eswatini. Evidence from the study indicated that teachers of learners with IDs and parents used collaborative strategies such as: journaling, personal skills development, creation of time for school work and provision of basic needs. However, teachers reported a need for parents to be empowered with skills on how to effectively support the overall development of their

children with IDs. This study suggests a need for appropriate support groups in the communities to provide awareness and basic special education needs and counselling skills to parents of children with IDs. There may be need for the Ministry of Education and Training to consider the provision of in-service training in special education needs for teachers to better prepare them to educate and support all learners including those with learning disabilities such as IDs.

REFERENCES

Adams, D., Harris, A., & Jones, M. S. (2016). Teacher-parent collaboration for an inclusive classroom: success for every child. *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Sciences, 4*(3), 58- 69.

Alase, A. (2017). The Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): a guide to a good qualitative research approach. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, *5*(2), 13- 19.

Afolabi, O. E. (2014). Parents' Involvement in Inclusive Education: An Empirical Test for the Psycho-Educational Development of Learners with Special Education Needs

(SENs). *International   Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, *6*(10), 196-208.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). *Thematic analysis. In Cooper, H. (Ed.), the handbook of research methods in psychology*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Chimhenga, S. (2016). Inclusive education in Zimbabwe: the need for teachers to be trained in assisting learners with learning disabilities in mainstream primary schools of Bulawayo Province. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies, 4*(6), 239-244.

Collier, M., Keefe, E. B., & Hirrel, L. A. (2015). Listening to parents' narratives: the value of authentic experiences with children with disabilities and their families. *School Community Journal, 25*(2), 221-242.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*: *Choosing Among Five Traditions* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Cuskelly, M. (2020). Parents and schools: commentary on "Identifying child, parent, and school correlates of stress among parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities"(Burke, Rios, & Aleman-Tovar, 2020). *Research and Practice in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 1-9.

Daniel, E. (2016). The usefulness of qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in researching

problem-solving ability in science education curriculum. *Journal of Education and Practice, 7*(15), 91-100.

Drame, E. R., & Kamphoff, K. (2014). Perceptions of disability and access to inclusive education in West Africa: A comparative case study in Dakar, Senegal. *International Journal of Special Education*, *29*(3), 69-81.

Elo, S., Kaariainen, M., Kanste, O., Polkki, T., Ultriainen, K., & Kyngas, H. (2014). *Qualitative content analysis: a focus on trustworthiness*. SAGE. DOI: 10.1177/2158244014522633.

Hallahan, D. P., Pullen, P. C., Kauffman, J. M., & Badar, J. (2020). Exceptional learners. In *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Education*.

Honorene, J. (2017). Understanding the role of triangulation in research. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, *4*(31), 91-95.

Jamshed, S. (2014). Qualitative research method-interviewing and observation. *Journal of Basic and Clinical Pharmacy*, *5*(4), 87.

Khan, S. N. (2014). Qualitative research method-phenomenology. *Asian Social Science, 10*(21), 298-310.

Martinez, D. C., Conroy, J. W., & Cerreto, M. C. (2012). Parent involvement in the transition process of children with intellectual disabilities: the influence of inclusion on parent desires and expectations for postsecondary education. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 9*(4), 279–288.

Masulani-Mwale, C., Mathanga, D., Silungwe, D., Kauye, F., & Gladstone, M. (2016). Parenting children with intellectual disabilities in Malawi: the impact that reaches beyond coping? *Child: Care, Health and Development*, *42*(6), 871-880.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McAllum, R. (2014). Reciprocal teaching: critical reflection on practice. *Practice Paper*, *15*(1), 26-35.

Ministry of Education and Training (2018). *Education Sector Policy*. Mbabane: Eswatini Government.

Ntinda, K., Thwala, S. L. K., & Dlamini, T. P. (2016). Lived experiences of school-going
    early mothers in Swaziland. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, *26*(6), 546-550.

Ntinda, K., Thwala, S. K. & Tfusi, B. (2019). Experiences of Teachers of Deaf and Hard-
    of-Hearing Students' in a Special Needs School: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of   Education and
    Training Studies*, *7*(7), 79-89.

Okeke, C. I. O., & Mazibuko, G. F. (2014). The experiences of parents of school children
    with special education needs: An empirical study. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, *5*(15),
    227.

Okyere, C., Aldersey, H. M., & Lysaght, R. (2019). The experiences of teachers of children
    with intellectual and developmental disabilities in inclusive schools in Accra, Ghana. *Journal of
    Research in Special Educational Needs*, *19*(4), 283-294.

Okyere, C., Aldersey, H. M., Lysaght, R., & Sulaiman, S. K. (2019). Implementation of
    inclusive education for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities in African countries: a
    scoping review. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, *41*(21), 2578-2595.

Peer, J. W., & Hillman, S. B. (2014). Stress and resilience for parents of children with
    intellectual and developmental disabilities: A review of key factors and recommendations for
    practitioners. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, *11*(2), 92-98.

Rabinovich, M., & Kacen, L. (2013). Qualitative coding methodology for interpersonal
    study. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, *30,* 210–231. http://doi.org/10.1037/a0030897.

The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland (2005). *The Constitution of the Kingdom of
    Swaziland*. Mbabane: Government Printers

The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland (2014). *National Education and Training Improvement
    Programme* (NETIP). Mbabane: Government Printers.

Thwala, S.K. (2018). Teachers' strategies of including learners with autism spectrum disorders in
    mainstream classrooms in Swaziland. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and
    Education,* 5(12), 78-85. http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0512009

Thwala, S.K., Okeke, C.I.O., & Dludlu, I.N. (2018). A phenomenological approach to the challenges faced by parents of children with disabilities in Swaziland. *Journal of Education in Developing Countries*, 26(2), 383-392.

United Nations (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD). *Final Report of the ad hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities.* United Nations, New York.

United Nations (2013) *The Millennium Development Goals Report*. United Nations. New York.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (1994). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for action on special needs education. *Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education; Access and Quality.,* Salamanca, Spain, 7-10 June 1994. Unesco.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, E. (2000). The Dakar framework for action: Education for all. *Meeting our collective commitments*, Dakar Senegal, 26-28.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2015). *The Swaziland Education for All Review Report*', Government Printers. Mbabane

Vosloo, J. J. (2014). A sport management programme for educator training in accordance with the diverse needs of South African schools. *Unpublished doctorate dissertation*. North-West University, Potchefstroom.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Interaction between learning and development. *Readings on the Development of Children*', 23(3), 34-41.