



American Journal of Education and Technology (AJET)

ISSN: 2832-9481 (ONLINE)

Volume 3 Issue 3 (2024)



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Level of Collaboration among Stakeholders to Promote Inclusive Education in Schools: The Case of Lilongwe Rural East and Mthandiza Zone in Dedza

Makarios Kizito Chimowa¹, Dannie Soko¹, Stewart Maganga¹, Paul Muotcha¹, Gerald Nkowani¹

Article Information

Received: June 04, 2024

Accepted: July 08, 2024

Published: July 11, 2024

Keywords

*Collaboration, Communication,
Inclusive Education, Stakeholders*

ABSTRACT

The study set out to investigate the level of collaboration among stakeholders with regard to promoting inclusive education in primary and secondary schools in Lilongwe Rural East and Mthandiza zone in Dedza. Twenty-six schools under the Research on Inclusive Education, Sanitation, Environment and Hygiene (RIESEH) project were targeted upon. The study provides contemporary insights into how teachers and stakeholders view their collaborative roles in securing better outcomes for students with special educational needs (SEN). The study demonstrated that teachers showed their willingness to learn best practices and strategies to guide the students with SEN in pursuit to their education. It further revealed that teachers understand and know about inclusive education practices upon attending different workshops in addition to what they learnt while at teacher training colleges. Despite this, the study demonstrated that the main concern of the teachers was the little support received from stakeholders when it came to promoting inclusive practices in their classes and schools. Parents in this study acknowledged that collaboration was vital should inclusive education be achieved in schools. They indicated that they are aware of their roles in promoting inclusive education through collaboration with teachers. The study's findings further indicated that collaboration between mainstream teachers and other stakeholders was limited in scope and that the nature of collaboration was conditional, erratic and unplanned. The results further revealed that many activities are done on an individual basis rather than teamwork where the groups share ideas in order to achieve the intended goals of inclusive education. The study attributes this to lack of policy clarity especially the National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2017 – 2021 and several other factors and thereby proposes a collaboration model or framework deemed most appropriate for the schools in the Malawian context.

INTRODUCTION

The study set out to investigate the level of collaboration among stakeholders when it came to promoting Inclusive Education (IE) in the schools. Twenty six public schools were targeted and these were found in Lilongwe Rural East with a few others in the Mthandiza zone of Dedza district. To provide a brief background, Emmanuel University (EMUNT) had been working in this area through two projects namely Disability, Inclusiveness, Sanitation, Hygiene and Environmental Protection (DISHE) and Research in Inclusive Education, Sanitation, Environment and Hygiene (RIESEH) from October 2021.

Lingo *et al.* (2011) define collaboration as an ongoing process where teachers become involved in various educational phases that together facilitate the progress of learners with special educational needs (SEN). Studies by Christenson & Sheridan (2001) and Henderson & Mapp (2002) in other countries suggest that teacher-parent collaboration is essential for teachers and parents to consult, undertake joint efforts and share information in providing efficient and meaningful education for students with SEN. Generally speaking, collaboration is necessary specifically if certain objectives are to be achieved. This is essentially the case in as far as IE is concerned. With that said, it is worth mentioning that in most parts of the world including Malawi, inclusive education is a relatively

new concept (National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2017 – 2021, 2021). When speaking of the Malawian context, it is worth mentioning that when it comes to the understanding of IE, it is often in terms of learners associated with special educational needs and those with disabilities. This has to be attributed to the Handicapped Persons Act (1971) which had tended to place specific emphasis on such groups. It was not until 2012 that the Disability Act was enacted that it eventually replaced the longstanding Handicapped Persons Act (1971). The act incorporated the many principles and obligations found in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (Werning *et al.*, 2016). In the current situation, the term “inclusive education” has come to take a broad approach in which it has come to be defined ‘as a process of reforming the education system, cultures, policies and practices to address and respond to diverse needs to all learners’ (National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2017 – 2021, 2021). From this broad definition, it can be said that IE does not solely focus on learners with special educational needs and disabilities but also coming from marginalized backgrounds.

The Rationale of the Study

As was stated in the previous section, inclusive education is relatively new in the Malawian context. Therefore, it

¹ Emmanuel University, P.O. Box 30583, Lilongwe, Malawi

* Corresponding author's e-mail: k.chimowa@emunimw.com

was imperative to investigate whether efforts have been made on the part of relevant stakeholders to ensure that there is collaboration in promoting inclusive education in schools. In addition, the study was set to investigate if DISHE and RIESEH projects implemented by EMUNI, had an impact in promoting inclusive education through collaboration in the targeted schools. When speaking of the relevant stakeholders concerned, they would include teachers, head teachers, special needs education teachers, Primary Education Advisors (PEAs), Director of Education Youth and Sports (DEYS), Parents Teachers Association (PTA), School Management Committees (SMCs) and Mother Groups (MG). By obtaining information from these stakeholders, it is intended that this will provide a picture on the state of collaboration among stakeholders in promoting IE in Malawi including possible interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

World View on Collaboration in Promoting Inclusive Education among Stakeholders in Schools

A study conducted by Paju *et al.* (2021) in Finland indicates that collaboration between educators is considered to be the key issue when implementing inclusive practices within schools. The study was administered to classroom teachers, subject teachers, special education teachers and teaching assistant in primary, secondary and special education public schools in order to understand collaboration between teaching staff in Finland. The results indicate coordination, cooperation and reflective communication as modes of collaborative action in the participants' teaching. By combining the perspectives of the activity theory framework and modes of collaboration, the results illuminate how educators wished to have collaboration but usually played their traditional positions in the multilayered teaching activity. In addition, Washington (2022) in the dissertation report noted that general education and special education teachers are expected to work together. Florian (2017) also said that collaboration is critical to co-teaching and it is the heart of inclusion.

Collaboration at a school is when teachers of a learning community work together to increase learners' achievements and learning such as writing lesson plans together, writing schemes of work as well as team teaching. According to UNESCO (2009), collaboration means purposefully building interpersonal relationships and working towards healthy interdependence which occurs when teachers are comfortably giving and receiving help without losing responsibility.

Friend and Cook (2007) identified several key concepts that determine the success of teacher-parent collaboration. These concepts include realizing that collaboration should be voluntary, the need to share resources, being responsible in decision-making towards a common goal, acknowledging including aiming towards a common goal, acknowledging each other's roles, the ability to work together intuitively to plan a formal

program process, and finally, trust and respect for each other. In addition, teachers who are collaborative at school promote cooperative relationships not only within the school but also between schools, among teachers and the whole community. Hernandez (2013) added that collaboration in education is seen as a legal mandate, best practice in teachers' mode of operation and necessary for inclusion of children with special educational needs. Hernandez further states that at the heart of inclusive education, practice is a joint idea aimed at producing the necessary changes, transformations, improvements and new directions, including the outcomes representing the benefit for all learners involved in the education system through collaboration.

However, Barley (2009) noted that teacher-parent collaboration is more difficult to promote and maintain if teachers and parents work as separate units. Studies by Fluijt *et al.* (2016), Pratt and Pratt (2014), and Strogilos (2016) revealed that the problem is that general education and special education teachers show a lack of symbiotic relationships in inclusion classrooms because of a lack of adequate planning time, lack of parity, and interpersonal differences.

Carlisle *et al.* (2005) and Epstein (2001) support the notion that teachers and parents need to collaborate so as to identify what areas of students' development requires attention and determine together appropriate goals and objectives to be achieved. The study carried out by Dettmer, Dyck, and Thurston (1999) further supports the idea for a collaborative working team, stating its importance in accomplishing the goals of inclusion. According to Christenson (1995), sound educational outcome in teacher-parent collaboration relies on shared responsibilities. While Cramer (2006) says that teachers play a vital role by providing support to parents with the resources available inside and outside the classrooms and as executors of the educational plans while parents need encouragement to carry out their roles effectively in their child's development and academic performance. This means that successful student outcomes can be more easily achieved if both teachers and parents know each other's roles in the collaboration process.

African View on Collaboration in Promoting Inclusive Education among Stakeholders in Schools

The study by Ceralli (2021) looked at the collaborative approach as key to promoting inclusive education in West African region. This Inclusive Education in the Sahel Project 2017-2021 which was implemented by Handicap International and co-financed by NORAD and AFD (Burkina Faso) created a "collaborative dynamic for organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and civil society movements working in education at the regional level (West Africa) and national level (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger) for the promotion of inclusive education." The advocacy actions were implemented using an alliance strategy that focused on bringing actors (rights holders (children with disabilities, including girls and

their families), duty bearers (governments and relevant ministries, especially the Ministry of Education and its decentralized departments, as well as local authorities), and champions (civil society organizations: NGOs, OPDs, EFA-CSO coalitions, PTAs, MTAs) together, strengthening their skills and creating synergy of action. This strategy echoes the Incheon Declaration which states that “civil society organizations (CSOs), including representative, broad-based coalitions and networks, play essential roles. They need to be engaged and involved at all stages, from planning through to monitoring and evaluation, with their participation institutionalized and guaranteed”. They can “promote social mobilization and raise public awareness, enabling the voices of citizens (particularly those who face discrimination) to be heard in policy development”. The action encouraged the strengthening of the links between disabled people’s organizations and other civil society movements working in the field of education to enable them to implement coordinated actions, promote civil society dialogue and undertake more advocacy actions. These actors used to work separately, without consultation, synergy or a common vision of the problems and challenges of the inclusive approach.

Malawian View on Collaboration in Promoting Inclusive Education among Stakeholders in Schools

In her study on the collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education, Muleme (2020) revealed that the Community of Practice Theory posits that collaboration does not take place incidentally but requires careful and constant planning, interaction, positive attitudes and commitment between two sets of professionals having different knowledge and skill bases. It emphasises that there must be continuous interaction and sharing of knowledge and skills between the two sides, in this case between two sets of teachers. The study noted that it is important for both sets of teachers to develop a good working relationship. The theory that was used stipulates the call for collaboration between partners who have different expertise to merge their knowledge and skills in order to support inclusive education. It also calls for collaboration and support among different players in the education sector such as teachers, administrators, MoEST and NGOs as well as the community at large to take an active role to support the collaboration of specialist and mainstream teachers and make inclusive education in primary schools a success. The Malawian Government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and developed several laws and policies to promote, fulfill and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Despite these commitments, children with disabilities remain largely excluded. The 2018/19 Education Sector Performance Report indicates that children with special educational needs represent a 3.3% of total enrolments at primary school and 2.4% of total enrolments at secondary level. Up to now, there has been paucity on

published figures or estimates on children with disabilities further making it difficult to estimate real needs for policy and planning.

One of the biggest barriers to inclusive education in Malawi is the lack of teachers trained in inclusive or special needs education. This is compounded by a severe and persistent shortage of qualified teachers. To date, there has not been a comprehensive approach with regard to the training of teachers to practice inclusion. This has been attributed to the fact that it has normally been delivered as a patchwork of small trainings that are largely funded by donors. Being said, the new NESIP (2020-2030) considers inclusion as a cross-cutting element of the overall education plan. It also includes a relatively detailed breakdown of specific line items aimed at promoting IE, and disability-inclusion in particular. In order to develop inclusive schools, there is a need for several different specialist approaches, forms of knowledge, skills and competence, which is more than qualified teachers are generally able to provide. Therefore, cross-professional collaboration is in general the main strategy required to develop inclusive schools.

Emmanuel University (EMUNI) has a strategic plan which has been drawn from national and international policies, legislations, declarations and conventions on education and in support of inclusive education. The availability of the strategic plan outlines the implementation of the activities. Among others the activities are targeting the promotion of inclusive education practices. Therefore the aim of this study was to investigate the level of collaboration among stakeholders in promoting inclusive education in schools. Success for inclusive education in the future is not simply a matter of sending students with special educational needs to regular classrooms and waiting for miracles to happen; it depends largely on collaboration among stakeholders who are both responsible for the quality and access to meet the needs of these students.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The study employed a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach was selected based on the subject and environment of the study. The qualitative methodology was preferred as it is an approach that allows for the exploration of the meanings given to a problem by an individual or a group such as a collaborative group or its participants (Creswell, 2009). The study used the qualitative approach since it collected views, attitudes and opinions which could not be quantified. According to Gay and Airasian (2009) and Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), qualitative research is the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive, narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon more deeply and exhaustively; It is the best approach in dealing with real people in real life situations which enables for the presentation of ideas more clearly than simply abstract theories, statistics and principles.

A qualitative approach was used based on an assumption

that the qualitative outcome of the study will be exploring the collaborative process by the teachers and parents in the schools. In the current study, the data collection process was done concurrently. Questionnaires were distributed to teachers while focus group discussions were conducted with PTA, SMC and MG members at the same time.

Population and Sample

The study was conducted in 26 primary and secondary schools in Lilongwe Rural East and Mthandiza zone in Dedza district. The study employed purposive sampling based on Teaching Practice Schools for the then Emmanuel Teacher Training College. These schools have undergone capacity building through DISHE and RIESEH projects that included fostering collaboration efforts between schools and communities. A survey instrument was administered to 156 teachers, 26 head teachers and, and 3 PEAs, with Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides administered to 26 school committees' member's groups (PTA, SMC, MG). Member-checking was used to determine the accuracy of the findings by selecting 6 teachers, 6 head teachers, 3 PEAs and 9 school committee members to validate the data for further analysis.

Data Collection and Analysis

Written questionnaires were distributed to 6 (3 males and 3 females) selected teachers per school from the 26 schools, head teachers, PEAs, Special Needs Education teachers while FGDs were conducted with PTA, SMC and MG members. Data was summarized and organized into thematic areas in order to synthesize and interpret easily. Specific quotes from the qualitative study were highlighted to reinforce the analyses which are teachers' and parents' strongest collaboration thematic areas and which are not. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, (2004) agrees that the combination of these types of data provided a complementary and robust basis for analysis required for mixed methods design

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers Perceptions on Level of Collaboration

The research has revealed that majority of teachers in primary schools have an understanding and knowledge in IE from teacher training colleges. In the Initial Primary Teacher Education (IPTE) curriculum, there are topics in IE. This was confirmed when 96.2% of teachers responded to the question that they have knowledge in IE. The research further noted that they also got the knowledge from Disability Inclusiveness, Sanitation, Hygiene, Environmental Protection (DISHE) project by EMUNI and CPDs workshops. Others indicated that they had acquired knowledge from Mzuzu University and Catholic University of Malawi during their training as secondary schools teachers.

When teachers were asked to account for the support they get from different stakeholders, 86% of the teachers

responded that they received little or no support get from stakeholders. They further indicated that teachers show lack of symbiotic relationships in inclusion classrooms due to a lack of adequate time, parity and interpersonal differences. This is further demonstrated by some of the statements provided here:

"... I have never seen any stakeholder coming to our school to offer support basing on inclusive education". (Comment from a teacher)

"...little because other learners with special educational needs lack basic or school needs; like those with visual impairment are not given the braille machine to help them in their studies (Teacher)

On this, teachers attributed to a number of reasons such as:

"....poor relationship among stakeholders (i.e. between school and parents); financial challenges stakeholders face; lack of knowledge by stakeholders to manage issues of IE; lack of appropriate resources to cater or support learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) e.g. Braille books, resource room, wheel chairs; parents do not attend PTA meetings; inadequate resource centers; unfavorable environment for learners with SEN and lack of qualified specialist teachers. Other reasons are that committees change while teachers get posted away leaving some new members requiring CPD"

The study also noted that despite teachers having knowledge in IE, they are unaware of the way these learners can best acquire their education. Despite this, they were able to provide ways that can help to improve lack of knowledge in the education of these children. Most of the teachers suggested the following:

".....conducting refresher courses and continuing professional development workshops (CPDs) regularly; training teachers in inclusive education; sensitizing parents on inclusive education; providing appropriate resources for learners with SENs; identify scholarships to train teachers in inclusive education and consider students with SENs when selecting them to secondary schools."

Very few teachers in the study were able to give clear areas of collaboration with other stakeholders to promote IE such as:

"...CPDs of both teachers and parents.". (One of the teachers).

Another teacher said;

"...holding a PTA meeting with parents where the parents should be encouraged on the need of sending children to school including those with special educational needs."

"...stakeholders should pay a visit to parents whom they know that are keeping children with special educational needs and discuss with them."

But during validation meeting, areas of collaboration came out very clear from the teachers such as:

".....during meetings like staff meetings, zonal meetings, committee meetings e.g. PTA, SMC, MG; when conducting workshops for example CPDs; during planning sessions such as scheming, lesson planning & developing resources; when conducting sensitization meetings with

parents/ stakeholders; during identification/assessment of learners with SEN by specialist teachers; when conducting team teaching; during school and project supervisions; when procuring resources for SNE; during sporting activities like special Olympics; during open days especially when closing schools where parents are invited to attend and make speeches and during exchange visits to learn from each other.”

Based on the responses provided here, it can be said that the teachers involved believed that equipping themselves with skills and knowledge is necessary in carrying out inclusive education practices. This also came out very clear from special needs education teachers on the need to collaborate in promoting inclusive education in schools. While the DEYS accepted that teachers do not have adequate support with regards to budgeting for special needs education. Still they recommended the need to conduct regular CPDs and increase resources in order to promote IE for in-service teachers.

Parents Perceptions - Roles of Parent Teachers Association

Based on the perceptions and responses provided by parents, the research has revealed that 83% of PTAs are aware of their roles in promoting Inclusive Education through teacher-parent collaboration.

Among others, their role as parents has been to encourage, search and advocate parents who have children with SEN to send them to school. At the same time, making sure that children with SEN are receiving the needed help in order for them to attend school through building proper facilities like ramps, small resource contributions. Moreover, making sure that Children with SN are not discriminated against and are helped to attend classes, ramps and proper structures are built, parents are encouraged to open up and send their children to school, taking stocks of children; give advice to teachers and learners not to segregate learners with SEN; working with SEN teachers; Promoting SNE amongst Parents, teachers and other stakeholders.

Much as PTAs are able to know their role, 50% believe that they have done all they could to promote Inclusive Education, while 50% believe that they have a long way to make it adequate as far as inclusiveness is concerned for the following reasons:

Because mobility of children with SEN is still a problem in terms of wheelchairs; there is less support given to children with SEN; need for more resource rooms; Sensitizing parents is also needed; some parents are hiding their children, and that they have lost hope in them.

“...some parents lock their children in a house and they go to garden or to the market instead of sending them to school’.... (PTA)

The findings of this research further revealed that the PTAs have got good suggested ways of being actively involved in promoting Inclusive Education like for example assisting learners with SEN in different ways including collaboration and providing learning and

teaching resources; Orienting SMC (through workshops) on how to help SEN learners; Building Ramps; promote cooperation among stakeholders, encouraging parents to bring their children to school; having a work plan; helping further with teachers (SMC) on how to help learners without discrimination; Providing them with transport like bicycles; building ramps; working together with other stakeholders; More workshops; meet with VH; collaborate with ADC.

Parents’ Perceptions - Roles of School Management Committee

On the other hand, School Management Committee are the local managers of a particular school. They are one of the important stakeholders in a community as far as running a school is concerned. The SMC is an active arm of the school such that 50% of the team interviewed meets twice in a month while 50% meet once in a month. “.....we meet twice in a month, because we believe school issues need more attention on regular basis”.....said a member of SMC.

When the School Management Committee meets, they discuss a number of things such as having a proper sitting plan; providing ramps, and encouraging parents and teachers to take care of children with SEN. Building special toilets for children with SEN; Ways of teaching learners with SEN; Why there is absenteeism among children with SEN; Creating a friendly environment for children with SEN; Addressing issues of stigma; Take stock of children with SEN.

The role of a School Management Committee in relation to IE is almost similar with other Committees at a school such that they work hand in hand to achieve the intended goal / motto of a school. Here are some of the roles they play as a Committee which include encouraging parents to send children with SEN to school in collaboration with PTA, Mother groups, Chiefs, and teachers. Promoting and encouraging inclusiveness, Lobbying for more help to children with SEN, Encouraging teachers to love SN children with SEN and children to love school; Sourcing learning and Teaching materials for children with SEN; encouraging learners, teachers and parents to take IE seriously; lobbying for funds and other help for IE; Provide learning and writing materials, Uniforms, and groceries; scouting for children with SEN; Meeting with village heads.

This school management committee works hand in hand with other committees through meetings with other stakeholders which includes parents at school in order to assist well children with SEN.

‘...we always call for a meeting of all parents, chiefs, mother groups to look into how we can best assist learners with special needs’says one of the school committee members...’

Parents’ Perceptions - Roles of Mother Groups

The Malawi Government introduced Mother Groups Committees in schools so that issues of girls are well

addressed. This group comprises of women only. While PTA and SMC, are groups with mixed gender.

The research has unearthed some of their roles at school which is beyond only girls. These include encouraging parents to send their children to school; To source resources and encourage girls to attend school at all times; Prepare girls on how to avoid risking their lives and how to take care of themselves during monthly period; Providing sanitary pads; discourage discrimination; encouraging female teachers to be helping girls. Meeting and visiting girls; identifying needy students; encouraging young mothers to go back to school; discourage issues of early marriages; encouraging girls not to look down upon themselves.

However 50% of the mother groups lamented they are new in the system and needs training for making pads.

‘...here at school we have what we call Chitenje (1.5 meter cloth). This helps girls to wrap up their waste if they are not ready to receive the visitors...’. What this means is that when a girl is not ready with her sanitary pad and begins to menstruate, then this piece of cloth can help to cover up her dress/skirt, so that she gets home safely without any embarrassment..... said a member of SMC.

About 70% of the women interviewed do not provide sanitary pads to girls. Girls are encouraged to use traditional ways (using old clothes – zitenje). While 30% of the women we met said that there has been an attempt to provide sanitary pads, but that did not last long.

The reason why there has been little attempt to provide sanitary pads is because of poverty – lack of materials. There is also a need to train mother groups on how to saw / make sanitary pads. Furthermore about 70% of the MGs have not done much to provide enough awareness for girls from ultra-poor backgrounds about usefulness of sanitary pads because of poverty,

....’in this village, where can we get money to buy pads on monthly bases. We use our traditional way.’ ...one mother lamented!

Some of the reasons are: ‘Lack of orientation from stakeholders, some girls are childish; some and need encouragement; some parents push their responsibility of pads to mother groups; some girls’ do not listening to the advice given.

.....’atsikana a lero samva (today’s girls don’t listen to advice)...’ a concern of one of the mothers.

Perceptions between Ministry and Community

The Director of Education Youth and Sports accepted that teachers do not have adequate support with regards to budgeting for special needs education.

Recommended the need to:

.....conduct regular CPDs

.....increase resources in order to promote IE for in-service teachers.

Parents in the study also acknowledged teachers’ effort in guiding and educating their children by their confidence in allowing teachers to use best practices learnt from others

through collaboration. Guerrero *et al* 2003 agreed that collaboration has proven to be the main contemporary strategy to feed innovation and creativity for effective educational programs

CONCLUSION

The underlying assumption of collaboration among stakeholders in special educational practices is that everyone who has an involvement in a child’s life, including the parents and teachers should work together to give that child the best education possible. In reality, however, key stakeholders in a child’s life may have many different ideas and beliefs, and, as a result, disconnection in communication and relationships among them can arise. In such situations, fluid partnerships between these stakeholders can be challenging, and tensions can emerge, further affecting a child’s educational experience. While the sample in this study is clearly not representative nationally, the evidence it provides is indicative and serves as a point of reference for education professionals including teachers and policy-makers such as DEMs/DEYS interested in enhancing inclusive education. This study on the level of collaboration among stakeholders attempts to fill a gap in the literature, regarding stakeholders’ collaboration in inclusive education in Malawi. The successful inclusive classroom requires collaborative interaction between teachers and parents (school committees). Perhaps, the process of collaboration itself reflects what inclusion is all about. Differences can serve as strength in the creative process when they are collectively focused to accomplish a singular mission or goal. The diversity and difference of each individual in a collaborative team result in a creative synergy that could not be achieved by members individually. Collaboration among stakeholders provides the pathway to successful achievement of inclusive education. However, an education system consisting of inclusive classrooms remains the final step in an educational journey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite EMUNI implementing DISHE and RIESEH projects in the same area, there has been no significant impact on promoting inclusive education as revealed by the study. Apart from that, there were some limitations which have affected the report. Lack of knowledge on the computer software packages affected the development of appropriate tools for easy analysis. Additionally, coordination and clear outline of activities with proper time frame was another limitation. Therefore, these recommendations are offered based on the work accomplished during this project and on the conclusions given above. It is imperative that EMUNI should do the following: collaborate with other universities in fostering quality in promoting IE, conduct other projects to support and sustain IE, train teachers on how to conduct school based CPDs, conduct CPDs for in-service-teachers in promoting collaboration with other stakeholders and conduct further research studies on IE.

Ministry of Education (Government) can do the following: collaborate with public and private universities in training teachers on IE, create a more robust monitoring mechanism for supporting collaboration on IE, ensure that buildings and sanitary facilities in schools are disability friendly with monitoring mechanism in place, open more resource centers in schools, post more SNE teachers in zones/schools, conduct frequent CPDs in schools for teachers and parents on collaboration on IE and increase budget allocation in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) to support SNE activities at district level.

As for well-wishers, donors, NGOs and proprietors, they can do the following: to improve collaboration with schools to procure assistive devices and specialized resources as well as ensuring that buildings and sanitary facilities in schools are disability friendly.

REFERENCES

- Barley, Z. A. (2009). Preparing teachers for rural appointments. Lessons from the mid-continent. *Rural Educator*, 30(3), 10-15.
- Carlisle, E., Stanley, L., & Kemple, K. M. (2005). Opening doors: Understanding school and family influences on family involvement. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(3), 155-162. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-005-0040-4>
- Ceralli, G. (2021). Collaboration between Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and Organisations working for Education For All in promotion of Inclusive Education in West Africa. <https://asksource.info/sites/default/files/Capitalization%20Collaboration%20OPDs%20and%20EFA%20040222.pdf>
- Christenson, S. L., & Sheridan, S. M. (2001). *School and families: Creating essential connections for learning*. Guilford press.
- Christenson, S. L. (1995). Supporting home-school collaboration. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology III* (p.253-267). National Association of School Psychologists.
- Collins, K. M. T., Onwuegbuzie, A. J. & Sutton, I. L. (2006). A model incorporating the rationale and purpose for conducting mixed methods research in special education and beyond. *Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal*, 4(1), 67 – 100.
- Cramer, S. F. (2006). *The special educator's guide to collaboration: Improving relationships with co-teachers, teams, and families*. Corwin press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage publications.
- Dettmer, P., Dyck, N. & Thurston, L. P. (1999). *Consultation, Collaboration and Teamwork for Students with Special Needs*. Pearson Education Inc.
- Epstein, J. L. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Westview press.
- Florian, L. (2017). The heart of inclusive education is collaboration. *Pedagogika*, 126(2), 248 – 253. <https://doi.org/10.15832/p.2017.32>
- Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2007). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for School Professionals*. Allyn and Bacon.
- Gay, L. R., & Airasian, P. (2009). *Educational research: Competences for analysis and applications*. Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Guerrero, L. A., Meijas, B. Collazoz, C. A., Pino, J. A. and Ochoa, S.F. (2003, November). Collaborative learning and creative writing. In *2003 First Latin American Web Congress* (pp. 180 – 186). IEEE.
- Hendersen, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family and community connections on students' achievement*. National Center for family and community connections with schools.
- Hwang, Y.-S., & Evans, D. (2011). Attitudes towards inclusion: Gaps between belief and practice. *International Journal of Special Education*, 26(1), 136-146.
- Lee, L. W., & Low, H. M. (2013). Unconscious' inclusion of students with learning disabilities in a Malaysian mainstream primary school: Teachers' perspectives. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 13(3), 218-228. <https://doi.org/abs/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2012.01250.x>
- Lingo, A. S., Barton-Arwood, S. M. & Jolivet, K. (2011). Teachers working together: Improving learning outcomes in the inclusive classroom-practical strategies and examples. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 43(3), 6-13.
- Mugenda, A. and Mugenda, O. (2003). *Research Methods*. ACTS press.
- Muleme, T. L. (2020). *Investigating the Collaboration between specialist and mainstream teachers in enhancing inclusive education: A case of two primary schools in Mulanje*. [Master's dissertation, Mzuzu University] Vid:Open <https://192.168.2.8:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/337>
- National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2017 – 2021. (2021). *Towards an Inclusive Education System in Malawi*. Lilongwe: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
- Paju, B, Kajamaa, A, Pirttimaa, R, & Kontu, E. (2021). Collaboration for Inclusive Education Practices: Teaching Staff Perspectives from Finland. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 66(3), 427- 440. <https://doi.org/pdf/10.1080/00313831.2020.1869087>.
- Salend, S. J. (2005). *Creating inclusive classrooms: Effective and reflective practices*. Prentice Hall.
- Staples, K. E., & Diliberto, J. A. (2010). Guidelines for successful parent involvement working with parents of students with disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 42(6), 58-63. <https://doi.org/abs/10.1177/004005991004200607>
- Taylor, R., Smiley, L. R. and Richards, S. B. (2009). *Exceptional students: Preparing teachers for the 21st century*. McGraw-Hill.
- Unger, D. G., Wayne Jones, C., Park, E. and Tressell, P. A. (2001). Promoting parent involvement among low-income single caregivers and urban early intervention programs. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 21, 197-212. <https://doi.org/abs/10.1177/004005991004200607>

- abs/10.1177/027112140102100401
- Washington, W. R. (2022). *Collaborative Practices between General Education and Special Education Teachers in Middle School Inclusion Classrooms*, [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University].
- Werning, R., Artiles, A.J., Engelbrecht, P., M. Hummel, M. Caballeros and Rothe. A. (2016). *Keeping the Promise? Contextualizing Inclusive Education in Developing Countries*. Verlagulius Klinkhardt.