

# **Challenges Faced By Primary School Teachers In Including Learners With Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder In The Mainstream Classrooms In The Hhohho Region, Eswatini**

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by primary school educators in including learners with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in mainstream classrooms in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. The study was qualitative in nature and took a phenomenological research design. Thirty (30) participants participated in the study and they were purposively selected. Data were collected through individual interviews. It was then transcribed and categorized into themes that emerged from the study and then interpreted. The findings revealed that teachers experience a lot of challenges which include lack of training in inclusive education, lack of motivation to include learners with ADHD which is aggravated by the large numbers in classrooms. Also, support from the Ministry of Education and Training was not enough. However, it was revealed that Eswatini is a member of the world body of nations which ratified inclusive education. To that effect, a number of laws and policies in support of inclusion were put in place, but the researchers found out that, very little is done to fulfil the obligations of the ratification of these international conventions signed. The study therefore recommended that the Ministry of Education and Training may offer in-service training to educators on ADHD and render in-service training to assist educators in schools on how to handle learners with ADHD. Furthermore, all tertiary institutions that train teachers should consider introducing 'Inclusive Education' as a compulsory course/subject to all trainee teachers.*

**Index words:** *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Inclusive Education, special needs education*

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## **I. Background of the study**

Research has shown that Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a common disability prevalent in most schools, but, quite often, it is confused for childhood indiscipline. In addition to that, studies reveal that with the prevalence of ADHD learners in the classroom, teachers' work becomes much more demanding. It was observed that learners with ADHD may present themselves by having poor attention span and impulsivity which interfere with both classroom work and social activities in the school (Perold, Louw & Kleynhans, 2010). Therefore, the inclusion of all learners within the regular classroom, including those with ADHD has brought about a plethora of challenges for educators across the globe.

To be specific, the difficulties related to ADHD are often most apparent in the school settings and educators are often intricately involved in interventions for ADHD (Kern & Seabi, 2008). According to Hoz a (2007) a child with ADHD receives lower grades, falls behind in classroom learning, and up to one third of these children will repeat a grade during their elementary school years. With ADHD being one of the most common disabilities in schools, it is assumed that ordinary educators are confronted with learners who have

ADHD on a regular basis. However, most novice educators fail to recognise it as a disability because it is not physical as the generic ones (Gwerman-Jones & Burden, 2010). It is against this backdrop therefore that this study investigated the challenges which mainstream educators face in including ADHD learners in mainstream classrooms (Mills, 2013).

Research has shown that children and adolescents with ADHD present challenges to service providers in educational settings the world over (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). A study by Barkley (1998) defined Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as a brain condition that results in the inability to pay attention for more than a few seconds, and results in the people, particularly children, acting 'hyper' because their mind keeps wandering around to other things. The salient features of ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity (Spencer & Biederman, 2006). In many cases, it is accompanied by one or more serious psychiatric comorbidities. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2000), six or more of the following symptoms are needed to meet the criteria of inattention: often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, or other activities, often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities, often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly, often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties at home, often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities, often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort, often loses things necessary for tasks or activities, is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli and is often forgetful in daily activities. It is because of the nature of the symptoms of this disability which makes it difficult for educators who do not have training in inclusivity to identify and appreciate ADHD as a disability. The symptoms are generally behavioural and emotional in nature.

Whereas, six or more of the following symptoms are needed to meet the criteria of hyperactivity. An ADHD sufferer often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat, often leaves seat in classroom when remaining seated is expected, often runs about or climbs excessively when it is inappropriate, often has difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly. The sufferer is often "on the go" or often acts as if "driven by a motor" and talks excessively. Symptoms of impulsivity include: often blurts out answers before questions have been completed, often has difficulty awaiting turn, often interrupts or intrudes on others for instance butts into conversations (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Little is known about the aetiology of this disorder but it is often believed that it has strong heritability and genetic links, as well as environmental predispositions and triggers (Mick & Faraone, 2008).

It has been discovered that about 9% of all school children have at least some form of ADHD and is more commonly found among boys (Sue, Sue, & Sue, 1997). Furthermore, the behaviours associated with ADHD change as children grow older (Silver, 2001). For example, a pre-school child may show gross motor over activity; always running or climbing and frequently shifting from one activity to another. Older children may be restless and fidget in their seats or play with their chairs and desks. They frequently fail to finish their schoolwork, or they work carelessly and in adolescents, ADHD, manifest itself by making them to be more withdrawn and less communicative. They are often impulsive, reacting spontaneously without regard to previous plans or necessary tasks and homework (Hanna, 2009). Given the fact that children spend more time at school, teachers are therefore a valuable source of information with regard to the diagnosis of this disorder. Thus, in the context of this therefore, and with a prevalence rate of at least 9% of all school children (Sue, Sue, & Sue, 1997), ADHD as a disability could not be ignored. It has thus attracted the attention of these researchers to explore the challenges facing educators in including learners with ADHD in the mainstream classrooms in the Hhohho region of Eswatini.

### **The global picture on the prevalence of ADHD**

#### ***United States of America***

The prevalence of ADHD is not only confined to the Kingdom of Eswatini, researchers show that ADHD in the United States of America the prevalence rate stands at 5% - 9% among school going children (Moya, Bearer, Etzel, 2004; American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Polanczyk, 2007). This implies that at least one child with ADHD is present in every classroom in every school (Barkley, 1990; Kleynhans, 2005). This disorder has a significant impact on the development of affected children, and carries long-term implications such as learning difficulties, academic underachievement, expulsion from school, and school refusal (Willoughby, 2003). A comprehensive meta-analysis of 86 studies in children and adolescents revealed that the incidence of ADHD ranges from 5.9 - 7.1% (Ajinkya, 2013). Individual studies also have revealed similar figures. Therefore, with these percentages in the schools, the phenomenon cannot be ignored.

#### ***South Africa***

In South Africa, a country analogous to Eswatini regionally, the prevalence rates were reported retrospectively in a study as 37.9% of 58 adult participants diagnosed with childhood ADHD (Mahomed, Van der Westhuizen, Van der Linde & Coetsee, 2007) and 8% to 10% by the Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity

Support Group of Southern Africa (ADHASA). However, Muthukrishna (2013) argues that the prevalence of ADHD is not well documented in South Africa.

### ***Eswatini***

In Eswatini, studies on the prevalence of ADHD are scanty but pupils' behaviour in schools present inappropriate behaviour which causes serious disruption in the classroom. Therefore, to assume that ADHD in Eswatini does not exist is misleading. However, the general opinion in Eswatini is that ADHD range from it being a made-up disorder used as an excuse by low-achieving students, to it being a debilitating illness with the potential to severely limit the academic prospects of young students (Schlachter, 2008). In an effort to break down the veracity of these opinions, the researchers saw it fit to carry out a study of this nature in the Hhohho region of Eswatini.

Eswatini, as a country, has embarked in the effort to implement policies which foster inclusion in schools such the Eswatini Government's Ministry of Education and Training Sector Policy of 2018. This is because Eswatini is one of the signatory countries of the Salamanca Declaration of 1994 which called on the international community to endorse the approach of inclusive schools by implementing practical and strategic changes to include all learners with a disability in mainstream classrooms. The Dakar Framework for Action 2000, and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 in which education of children with Special Educational Needs is to be implemented through an Inclusive Education approach (Kabir, 2008); all inform the operationalisation of inclusive education in Eswatini.

### ***Inclusion as a concept***

Education experts argue that inclusion is not just about placing children in mainstream schools, but, it is about modifying/changing schools to make them more responsive to the needs of all children and in particular, more attention is given to disabled children (Mittler, 2000). This educational approach is to help all teachers to accept the responsibility for teaching all children in their schools and preparing them to teach those children who are currently excluded from their schools, for whatever reason. Bourke (2010) maintained that the concept of inclusion differs from integration due to its development from a socio-cultural view of disability. From this perspective, disability is viewed as a social construct influenced by the conventions of social expectations, rather than existing within a person.

Bunch (2008) argued that an inclusive education system is one that is premised on the principle of equity; where all children must be provided with equitable opportunities to develop to their full potential and benefit from what the education is able to offer. The researchers observed that reality or practice of inclusive education in Eswatini, particularly in the Hhohho region, is not aligned to this inclusive definition. The very learners, whom inclusive education is fighting to embrace into the school system, perpetually find themselves segregated in one form or another. Some scholars therefore argue that while inclusive education has come with some geographical integration, practical inclusiveness is still far from reality (Peters, 2003).

Based on Peters' (2003) argument, inclusive education is therefore about social justice and equity and takes into account learners' abilities, potential and diverse needs which includes learners with ADHD in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. Learners do not have to adapt to the school environment and systems, but the school or education system has to change or adapt in order to meet the learning needs of all children in the community. Hence, learners do not go to school as visitors. Schools need to prepare for all learners with their diverse needs. Thus, based on this perspective, inclusive education is a new human right and social justice approach to education and disability. It is a symbol of respect for all humanity.

In other words, inclusion involves restructuring the infrastructures such as cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond or suit the needs of diverse learners in their locality (Bunch, 2008). The researchers pragmatically accent that learners with ADHD in primary schools in the Hhohho region of Eswatini, are excluded yet they are living in the era of inclusive education. Quite often, these learners experience social isolation or rejection as their difficulties translate to poor social skills and may have difficulty forming friendships. Because of this, their self-esteem cannot plummet as they experience failure within the academic and social arena since their needs are not fully catered for in the school system. Thus, this study has investigated the challenges faced by educators in including learners with ADHD in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. The study also observed that most educators in the Hhohho region are not aware of the characteristics and impact of ADHD on effective learning of the challenged learners. When learners show ADHD symptoms, they are often labelled as discipline problem learners and hence are in most cases neglected or ignored. Based on these observations, there was therefore need for a study of this nature so as to explore the challenges faced by educators in including learners with ADHD in mainstream schools. It is anticipated that the results of this study will assist to capacitate the educators with identification knowledge which will empower them to know about the

prevalence of ADHD learners in their classrooms so that they would not leave them behind in their teaching process.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a common childhood disorder affecting approximately 5 - 9% of primary school going children the world over (Robin, 2000). Primary school teachers are often the first or the vanguards to encounter behavioural difficulties in children. According to Zimba (2011), many regular education teachers who felt unprepared and fearful to work with learners with disabilities in regular classes displayed frustrations, anger and negative attitudes towards inclusive education because they believed it lowers the academic standards of their classes. Furthermore, some scholars such as Ntombela (2011), argued that African schools; those in Eswatini included, adopted inclusive education without adequate preparations and that being the case, they were bound to experience challenges in teaching learners with diverse needs including those with ADHD. Hence, this study was intended to investigate the challenges facing educators in including learners with ADHD in mainstream classrooms.

The researcher thus observed that relatively little research has been undertaken in Eswatini on the challenges faced by teachers in handling children with ADHD in their classrooms and many teachers in Eswatini; the Hhohho region to be specific, are not aware of how ADHD present itself among learners; let alone, how to handle the sufferers. Thus, it was imperative for this study to investigate the challenges facing primary school educators in including learners with ADHD in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. Thus, this study was vital to fill this gap.

### **Aim of the study**

The aim of this study was to investigate the challenges facing educators in including learners with ADHD in the public primary schools in the Hhohho region of Eswatini.

### **Objectives of the study**

The study sought to:

Identify the problems facing educators in including learners with ADHD in the public primary schools in the Hhohho region of Eswatini.

Determine if ADHD affects learning and the progression of the child.

Examine if the special needs of ADHD learners are sufficiently met in the public primary schools of the Hhohho region.

### **Research questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

What are the problems facing educators in including learners with ADHD in the public primary schools in the Hhohho region of Eswatini?

How does ADHD affect learning and the progression of the child?

In what way are the special needs of the ADHD learners sufficiently met in a public classroom?

### **Significance of the study**

The significance of the study is in three folds: practical, theoretical and methodological significance.

#### ***Practical significance of the study***

It is hoped that the results of this study may be of help to primary school teachers in finding ways to accommodate learners with diverse educational needs; particularly those with ADHD. It is also hoped that the study may help curriculum designers and education inspectors as it unravelled the challenges teachers encounter in including learners with ADHD in regular classrooms.

#### ***Theoretical significance***

This study adopted the Critical Disability Theory (CDT) as its theoretical framework. The theory is based on the claim that disability is not fundamentally a question of medicine or health, nor is it just an issue of sensitivity and compassion; rather, it is a question of politics and power (-lessness), power over, and power to (Horkheimer, 1937). The CDT was developed by Max Horkheimer in 1937 and applied in the western world. In this study, it is applied in Eswatini; a third world African country. Thus, the theory is rejuvenated by being applied in a new context and in a new generation.

#### ***Methodological significance***

The methodological significance of the study is that the qualitative approach will enable the researchers to capture an in-depth understanding of the situation by talking directly with the participants in their original setting as Creswell (2013) explains it. In addition to that, this study uses the phenomenological research design which allows the participant the opportunity to explain his/her personal perception of the meaning of an event, and not the event external to the person. Thus, the study sought to understand the perceptions, perspectives and understandings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) of how teachers seek to include ADHD learners in their classrooms.

### **Delimitation of the study**

The study focused only on twelve (12) public primary schools in the Hhohho region of Eswatini out of one hundred and sixty eight (168) primary schools in the Hhohho region (EMIS, 2015). Also, the study only concerned itself on the challenges faced by educators in public primary schools in including learners with ADHD in the mainstream classrooms.

### **Limitation of the study**

The findings of this study showed that ADHD is a misconstrued disorder hence considered by many as being uncommon. It was also noted in the study that a significant number of educators did not recognise nor understand ADHD as a disability; hence it was difficult to get information from such participant.

### **Definition of terms**

The following terms were defined as they were used in this study

#### ***Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)***

In this study Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is defined as a brain condition that results in the inability to pay attention for more than a few seconds, and results in the people, particularly children, acting 'hyper' because their mind keeps wandering around to other things. Its salient features are inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity (Barkley, 1998).

#### ***Disorder***

Disorder is a problem or illness that affects a person's body or mind (Engelbrecht & Jansen, 2003).

#### ***Inclusive education***

Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton (2000) argue that inclusive education is education that provides an opportunity for all students regardless of their abilities to be educated in the same environment and sharing the same facilities.

#### ***Disability***

The World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health's (ICF) definition of disability is that it is a person who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Leonard, 2012).

## **II. Theoretical framework and literature review**

### **Introduction**

This section reviewed literature on the challenges facing educators in including learners with ADHD in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. The section commences with the theoretical framework underpinning this study, examining its history, and discusses the fundamental assumptions of the Critical Disability Theory as it relates to the topic under study. This section then articulates the theory and provides a justification why this theory is appropriate for this study. The section then presented some of the empirical studies on challenges facing educators in including learners with ADHD.

### **Theoretical framework**

The main thrust of this study is to investigate the challenges facing educators in including learners with ADHD in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. It employs Hosting's (2008) version of the Critical Disability Theory (CDT) as a theoretical lens.

#### ***The Critical Disability Theory***

The Critical Disability Theory (CDT) is one of the theoretical approaches under Disability Studies that belongs to the critical theory family as understood and proposed by Max Horkheimer in 1937. As a member of

the critical group of theories, the CDT is an theoretical approach to the concept of disability that is simultaneously explanatory, descriptive and normative (Hosking, 2008).

The CDT is based on the claim that disability is a question of politics and power (-lessness), power over, and power to. The theory centres disability as it compares the norms and values of liberalism with their actualization in the daily lives of people with disabilities. The CDT is based on seven elements namely: the social model of disability, valuing diversity, multidimensionality, rights and voices of people with disability, language, and transformative politics.

### ***The Social Model of Disability***

The dominant paradigm for understanding disability throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup>.century has been the medical model which identifies the source of the disadvantage experienced by people with disabilities as their medical condition (Hosking, 2008). In contrast, the CDT adopts a version of the social model based on the principles that; first, disability is a social construct, not the inevitable consequence of impairment; secondly, disability is best characterised as a complex interrelationship between impairment, individual response to impairment, and the social environment; and thirdly, the social disadvantage experienced by people with disability is caused by the physical, institutional and attitudinal (together, with the 'social') environment which fails to meet the needs of people who do not match the social expectation of 'normalcy'. The CDT version of the social model is a hybrid out of the medical and social models which the World Health Organization calls the 'bio-psychosocial model.' This approach balances the contributions of impairment, personal responses to impairment and the barriers imposed by the social environment to the concept of disability. Thus, the researchers found this theory quite relevant to inform this study.

### ***Valuing Diversity***

A fundamental principle of political and legal liberalism has been equality. Race, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity are all differences to which liberalism has had to respond. The main challenge has always been the question of how to deal with an existing difference to achieve equality (Hosking, 2008). Minow (1990) calls this a dilemma of difference. Depending on context, equality objectives may be promoted by acknowledging and respecting differences in ways which effectively ignore it or in ways which respond to it. With disability, in most cases, difference should not just be dismissed as irrelevant, because ignoring the difference usually has the effect of rejecting and marginalizing the person. Instead, a response which takes account of the disability so that adjustments can be made to eliminate the obstacle to welcoming the individual and enabling the person to participate as an equal is required. For CDT being identified, and identifying, as a person with disability, is central to understanding one's self, one's social position with its attendant opportunities and limitations, and one's knowledge of the world (Hosking,2008). In the context of this study, it has been very difficult for educators to appreciate learners with ADHD as people having a disorder.

### ***Rights***

The CDT embraces legal rights as an indispensable tool to advance the equality claims of disabled people and to promote their full integration into all aspects of their society while at the same time valuing and welcoming the diversity that disabled people bring to their communities. Eswatini is a signatory of the Salamanca Declaration and also, by so doing, it ratified it and adopted it as a policy informing it on how it handles children with disability. ADHD learners included.

### ***Voice of people with disability***

Traditionally, the voices of disabled people who contest mainstream conceptions of disability and the potential and role of disabled people have been suppressed and marginalized. CDT, building on the reflexive approach to the characteristics of social inquiry of the critical theory, privileges the stories of disabled people. It gives them voice. Able bodied people think about disability from their abled perspective and not from the perspective of those who live with it. It is only by listening to and valuing the perspectives of those who are living with disabilities that the able bodied can begin to understand and conceptualise that even severe disability does not have to prevent a joyful and desired life.

### ***Language***

Another theme of critical disability theory deals with how language influences the concept of disability and the status of people with disabilities. This theme includes both the words used to describe or label people with disability and the words and images used to portray disability (Hosking, 2008). In this case, ADHD learners. The CDT, however, understands language to be inherently political (Hosking, 2008). Language carries with it ideological implications which are more or less transparent. The words and images used to portray people with disabilities have a direct effect on social attitudes towards people with disabilities. Historically and

even contemporary societies portray people living with disability as deficient, pitiable, wicked or malign, dangerous or valueless. The CDT examines how these negative attitudes are revealed through a discourse of personal tragedy with disability, rendering individuals powerless, vulnerable and dependent.

### ***Multidimensionality***

Hosking (2008) views the theory of multidimensionality as an integral element of the CDT for two reasons: (1) in order to avoid the exclusion and conformism pitfalls that characterize public policies, and (2) to highlight the fact that people with disabilities differ. They form a diverse and variable population, without any social structure (country, ethnic group, class affiliation, etc.), and are found in all the above structures and classifications. Recognizing that everyone is multidimensional allows for a structural analysis of a society because each group is made up of multidimensional members. ADHD learners are found everywhere in contemporary societies and are often difficult to classify as people living a disability of their own.

### ***Transformative policy***

The development of more effective policies which respond to disability and a stronger political will and control of social and academic institutions which deal, in one way or another, with issues related to disability need to be put in place.

### ***Rationale for Critical Disability Theory***

The Critical Disability Theory is selected for use in this study because it embraces the underlying principles of a version of the social model of disability that looks at disability as a social construct which is characterised by the social disadvantages persons with disabilities face (Hosting, 2008). It recognizes the need to not only consider a person's impairment, but societal factors which hinder their integration into society especially people living with ADHD. The central concern is for the full integration and participation of people with disabilities; in this context, learners with ADHD in all aspects of society (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). Critical Disability Theory moves its focus from the traditional understanding and assumptions of disability; the social versus the medical model, bodily function versus impairment; to how people are disabled through systems placed in society. The Critical Disability Theory is therefore relevant and appropriate to inform this study.

### ***Empirical studies on challenges facing educators in including learners with ADHD.***

The review of literature was done globally and was guided by the objectives of the study.

### ***Challenges that educators face in including learners with ADHD in the mainstream classroom***

A study was done in South Africa by Hariparsad (2010) on the challenges facing educators in including learners with ADHD. The study was quantitative and the results showed that teachers required more training on teaching children diagnosed with ADHD. The study revealed that teachers engage learners who may have ADHD in a number of tasks which include sweeping the classroom, taking messages to other teachers or additional academic work in class as a means of managing them (Lopes, Eloff, Howie & Maree, 2009).

### ***Class sizes in schools***

A study by Clarke, (1999) showed that learners with diverse needs, such as ADHD require individual attention, support and guidance from their educators. This becomes impossible with the large class of 38-40 learners. Similarly, Kapp (2002) also revealed that the ADHD child naturally requires more attention and assistance. For teaching to be effective, the traditional class size will have to be adjusted considerably. Smaller classes are essential for inclusive classes. Educators expressed concern that impaired learners were given less time when in fact they called for more attention.

### ***Diversity of learners in schools***

Educational transformation within an inclusive framework impacts on the roles and responsibilities of school practitioners. In inclusive schools, it is vital that the school's vision for inclusive education is publicly stated and based on the democratic and egalitarian principles of inclusion which include among many other things; the belief that all children can learn, that all children have the right to be educated with their peers in age-appropriate mainstream classrooms, and that meeting the diverse educational and psychological needs of all children is the responsibility of the whole-school community (Engelbrecht & Jansen, 2003). Based on this observation, it is clear that schools are legally obliged to provide appropriate educational support services and make both attitudinal and structural adjustments to accommodate ADHD learners.

### ***Parental involvement in their children's academics***

Cross-cultural studies on parental involvement showed that in European countries parents' attitudes differed when the inclusion of their own children is in question. When inclusive education was first introduced, parents were typically quite supportive of including more students with disabilities into general education for instructional purposes (Green & Shinn, 1994). However, parents were more reluctant to include their own child into the regular classroom (Green & Shinn, 1995). Only 14% believed their own child's academic performance would improve in such circumstances (Green & Shinn, 1995). Nevertheless, some evidence suggests that parental attitudes towards inclusion can be positively enhanced if adequate information about the benefits of inclusion is given (Green & Shinn, 1995).

The findings of the present study also found that in Eswatini, parents offer minimal support for their children, yet parents are fundamental to the uninterrupted and continuous development of the learner between home and school, without which, the education process would be retarded.

### ***Effects of ADHD in the learning and progression of the child***

A study done by Tannock (2007) on the educational implications of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder students at the University of Toronto showed that students with ADHD benefit from an inclusive educational model where teachers use the latest teaching strategies for students with a Learning Disorder (LD). He highlighted that these same instructional practices could be considered best practices for all students in mainstream classrooms. Currently, classroom interventions for students with ADHD focus on reducing problematic behaviour and increasing task engagement. While these are important goals, reducing disruptive behaviour alone does not ensure learning and academic progress.

Brown, Reichel and Quinlan (2011) carried out a study in America on extended time and how it improves reading comprehension test scores for adolescents with ADHD. The results of the study confirmed that many of ADHD learners need extended time to have a fair chance to show what they know and can do in writing; but though they may understand the content at the time of reading a passage, they have chronic difficulty in recalling what they have read just a few minutes earlier. It appears therefore that re-reading is needed by the ADHD learners to engage their focus sufficiently to encode the information in memory.

### ***Professional support to assist educators meet the special educational needs of ADHD learners***

Shetty and Rai (2014) conducted a study in India on the awareness and knowledge of attention deficit hyperactivity disorders among primary school teachers. There were 312 participants. The study revealed that knowledge about ADHD is poor among primary school teachers in India. While a majority was aware of the term 'ADHD', only a small minority had adequate knowledge. Only one (1) in 10 teachers had received some training on ADHD. These teachers performed better than their peers in the study. A majority, (n=270) teachers felt a training session on ADHD was needed for teachers, but ironically 104 or one third of the teachers did not wish to attend such sessions. However, be that as it may, it can be concluded that training teachers could make a difference in creating awareness and identifying more ADHD affected children.

Another study conducted in South Africa about Teachers' Perceptions of ADHD at Private and Public Schools by Kern, Amod, Seabi and Vorster (2015) found that teachers are generally not trained in identifying or teach learners with ADHD. The Education White Paper 6 (2001) promotes the inclusion of all learners into mainstream classes. It asserts that classroom teachers are the primary resource for achieving the goals of inclusive education. This means that teachers need to acquire new skills as well as improve their existing skills and knowledge. However, pre-service teacher training programmes do not generally provide them with the tools to successfully implement inclusive education, and to identify and address the needs of learners presenting with ADHD (Mulholland, 2014). The findings of the present study also revealed that most teachers in Eswatini, the Hhohho region to be specific, lack training in Special Needs Education and that being the case, they are bound to experience challenges in including learners with diverse needs.

## **III. Research methodology**

### **Introduction**

This study investigated the challenges faced by primary school teachers in including learners with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. This section presents the research methodology that was employed in the study. It deals with the research paradigm, research approach and research design. The target population, sampling procedure and size, data collection as well as data analysis were also elaborated. The last part discusses ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness.

### **Research Paradigm**

Guba and Lincoln (2005) define a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs or world views that guide research action or investigation. This study is located within the critical paradigm which according to Rehman and



Aharthi (2016) aims, not only to explain and understand society, but to change it. The critical paradigm, as explained by Kincheloe (2008), endeavours to bring to light the beliefs and actions that limit human freedom with the aim of transforming the situation. This paradigm fits well with this study as it allows the researcher to investigate the problem, not just to generate knowledge of the social world as it exist and perpetuate the knowledge status quo (Kincheloe, 2008), but also point to the social injustices embedded in that reality with the ultimate aim of transforming it.

### **Research Approach**

A research approach is a plan and procedures that span from assumptions to methods (Cresswell, 2013). This study adopts a qualitative approach which draws its strength from focussing on, and trying to understand subjective experiences from participants' point of view (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This study explored the subjective experiences of primary school teachers in including learners with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the classrooms of the Hhohho region of Eswatini. The qualitative approach enabled the researchers to capture an in-depth understanding of the situation by talking directly with the participants in their original setting (Creswell, 2013).

### **Research Design**

The phenomenological research design to investigate the problem under study was adopted and used. Grover (2015) defines a research design as an overall strategy that one chooses to investigate the problem. Yin (2014) adds that a design logically connects evidence to be collected and analysed in a research. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) states that phenomenology refers to a person's perception of the meaning of an event, and not the event external to the person. This study seeks to understand the perceptions, perspectives and understandings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) of the experiences of primary school teachers in including learners with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the classrooms of the Hhohho region of Eswatini. Creswell (2013) explains that the phenomenological design involves collecting data from participants all of whom have had direct experience with the phenomenon under study. Hence, the target population of this study is made up of primary school teachers who teach learners with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the mainstream classrooms of the Hhohho region of Eswatini.

### **Study Area**

As said before, this study focuses on the experiences of primary school teachers in including learners with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the classrooms of the Hhohho region of Eswatini. The area was chosen because the researchers have observed that there is the prevalence of learners with ADHD in the Hhohho region and teachers are interacting with them on a daily basis.

### **Target population**

The target population of this study was qualified educators teaching in public primary schools in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. This population sample was taken from urban, peri-urban and rural primary schools. However, because there are 1580 teachers teaching in the Hhohho region (Education Management Information, 2015) the researchers resorted to sampling to select the actual participants. Primary school teachers were targeted in this study because they are a valuable source of information with regard to the diagnosis of the disorder. The teacher is usually the one who notices developmental/learning challenges of the child and in the case of learning disability, neurological dysfunction and ADHD (Kapp, 2002). Hence, they became the target for this study.

### **Sample size**

A sample refers to the group of subjects or participants from whom the data is collected and can be selected from a larger group identified as a population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). From the 168 primary schools in the region (Education Management Information, 2015), twelve (12) were randomly selected to participate in the study. The researchers also purposively selected 30 teachers to participate in the interviews. Those selected in this study were mainly those teachers who showed the prevalence of ADHD in their schools.

### **Purposive sampling**

In this study, the sampling method that was used to select the participating teachers was the purposive sampling. This is a non-probability sampling method in qualitative research where the sample members are selected purposefully at the discretion of the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this case, the researchers thus deliberately or purposefully selected a particular section of the wider population to include in his study. The strength of purposeful sampling method in this study is that the researcher sampled a section of teachers who were rich with the information that was pertinent for this study.

## **Data collection methods**

### ***Face to Face Interviews***

This study used semi-structure face-to-face interviews to collect data from teacher participants who teach learners with ADHD. According to Siedman (2006) the reason for interviewing is the desire to understand the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. The individual interviews were guided by interview guide generated by the researchers. Open-ended questions were used because they allowed the interviewees to freely express and explain their experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Interviewees were tape recorded for further transcription. Non-verbal or body language and facial expressions and other body gambits were recorded in the field note book. The field notes were important in creating thick descriptions of events that took place during interviews, but which could not be captured on audio tapes.

### **Data collection procedure**

Each interview session began with the researchers' introduction of himself and the purpose of the study. Interviewees were made aware of the academic nature of the study and that it is not for any other form of gain. The researchers explained that the session will be tape recorded and ensured the participants of the confidentiality protocol. Prior to that, they were asked to sign a prepared consent forms and all issues were made clear to them. Each interview lasted between thirty (30) to fifty (50) minutes on average and each session was done in private spaces preferred by the interviewees (like their own offices or unoccupied classrooms).

### **Data analysis**

The researchers began transcribing the voice recordings of interview sessions after listening to the tape recorded voices carefully to familiarise himself with the content. Once all the records were transcribed, the researchers once again, listened to audio tapes to compare the transcription with the voice records to ensure that transcribed data and taped interview data are identical. This was done to ensure that no detail is lost during the transcription process (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Materials from field notes taken during interviews were used to add all relevant detail during transcription stage. After ensuring that interviews have been accurately been transcribed, the researchers then followed the six-phase guide to thematic data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as follows:

**Phase 1:** Becoming familiar with data by immersing oneself in the data to enhance awareness of the length and breadth of the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). The researchers listened to the audio recordings of the interview data more than once together with field notes to put the two in sync. The researchers then transcribed the audios into verbal data.

**Phase 2:** The second phase involved generating initial codes. This involved organizing the transcribed data into meaningful groups. This was done manually by writing notes on the transcribed data using highlighters or coloured pens to indicate potential patterns.

**Phase 3:** Searching for themes was the third phase which involved sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. The researchers started to analyse the initial codes and considered how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme.

**Phase 4:** Reviewing themes- the researchers looked into themes to note those that may not remain as independent themes (if there is not enough data to support them) or collapse them into others. Themes that formed two independent ones were separated.

**Phase 5:** Defining themes- This involved defining and further refining the themes that were presented for analysis, and analysing the data within them. By "define and refine" according to Braun and Clark (2006) means identifying the essence of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures.

**Phase 6:** Lastly, it was writing the report. This involved telling the complicated story of the data in a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell within and across themes (Braun & Clark, 2006).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness for Qualitative Data**

In this study, trustworthiness was established by addressing the following aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Creswell, 2014). The aim of trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry was to support the argument that the findings of the enquiry were worth paying attention to. To achieve this, all the four issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research were observed and adhered to.

### ***Ensuring credibility***

Credibility is an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data (Hoffman, 2013). It is imperative to ensure that the readers are convinced that the research findings contain descriptions or interpretations which represent the perceptions of the participants in a study. In an attempt to ensure credibility, participants were accurately identified and described through the use of purposive sampling procedure. In addition to that, member checking with some participants assisted in the achievement of credibility in this study. Member checks entails giving the interpretation and report back to participants in order to check the authenticity of the work (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2011). To achieve this, information was restated or summarised and the participants were questioned to determine accuracy during the in-depth individual interviews.

### ***Ensuring dependability***

Dependability is an assessment of the quality of the integrated process of data collection, data analysis and the generation of the theory (Creswell, 2013). In order to address issues of dependability more directly, the process was reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to replicate the work and obtain the same results. Such in-depth coverage allowed the reader to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed.

### ***Ensuring transferability***

Transferability points out to the degree to which the findings of this inquiry can apply or transfer to other situations (Silverman, 2016). This implies that the concern often lies in demonstrating that the results of the work at hand can be applied to a wider population. The findings of study should have the potential to transfer to other settings and/or populations. This was achieved by ensuring that the complete set of data analysis documents were filed and were available if there was anybody who requested them. This was meant to give other researchers the ability to transfer the conclusions of this study to other similar cases, or to repeat, as closely as possible the procedure of this project.

### ***Ensuring conformability***

The concept of conformability is the qualitative researcher's comparable concern to objectivity. It is a measure of how well the findings of the inquiry are supported by data collected, and it safeguards the neutrality or objectivity of the researchers (Rossman & Ralls, 2012). Conformability relates to the degree to which an investigator's own biases or prejudices may impact on the findings of an investigation (Maxwell, 2013). In this study, prejudices and biases were declared from the offset of the research process. Bias in this study was limited by means of an audit trail, which included reviewing written field notes, documents and survey results.

### ***Pilot study***

A pilot study was required for this study because it assisted in testing the research process and/or protocol. Thus, a pilot study was conducted in one of the primary schools in the Hhohho region of Eswatini which had the same characteristics as the target population. Such was done to test for the clarity, readability and appropriateness of the interview guide. This was necessary to pre-test data collection tools and procedures. This enhanced the researchers' level of confidence, that is, it increased their experiences of interviewing as well as interpersonal skills and ensured that they were conversant with qualitative data collection and analysis. Lastly, questions that were not clear were rewritten.

### ***Ethical considerations***

Ethical considerations in conducting the study were very important in protecting the participants from harm. Ethical considerations refer to a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others and that while the truth is good; respect for human dignity is better (Creswell, 2011). In this regard, the following ethical considerations were observed: seeking permission, voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity.

### ***Seeking permission***

The aim of the study was explicitly communicated to the participants as alluded to by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011). Before data were collected, the purpose and objectives of the study were explained to the participants.

### ***Voluntary participation***

Voluntary participation was observed by ensuring that participation in the study was voluntary and that participants were informed that they were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any point if they felt uncomfortable to participate and that this would not attract any negative consequences for them.

### ***Informed consent***

Informed consent emphasises that prospective participants must be fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in research and must give their consent to participate (Rooney, 2012). Informed consent was observed by notifying participants that the study was purely academic and therefore, there were no financial benefits whatsoever in participating in the study. Prior to the beginning of data collection, permission was requested from participants to record their responses during in-depth interviews. This was necessary because it is unethical to record discussions without seeking permission from the participants (Creswell, 2014).

### ***Anonymity***

Anonymity refers to the quality or state of being unknown to most people (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Pseudo names were used to protect the identities of participants and the names of their schools (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011).

### ***Confidentiality***

Confidentiality is non-occurrence of unauthorised disclosure of information (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2011). The researchers made sure that the information that was provided by the participants was kept confidential by not disclosing it to other parties. Additionally, after transcribing and editing the transcripts, all were destroyed after a period of twelve months had elapsed to observe confidentiality.

## **IV. Data presentation and analysis**

### **Introduction**

In this section data collected through in-depth individual interviews were analysed, findings were interpreted and conclusions were drawn. The data comprises of the participants' biographical information which includes gender, teaching experiences, and the type of posts held by the teacher participants.

### **Description of the study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the challenges facing primary school teachers in including learners with ADHD in mainstream classrooms in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. The study was a qualitative research inquiry. The sample of 30 educators was interviewed from 12 purposively selected schools. A phenomenological research design was adopted. In the discussion of the findings, pseudonyms and alphabetic letters from A to I were used to replace the actual names of the schools. This was done to ensure confidentiality.

### **Data from the interviews**

The themes that emerged from the study guided the presentation of data. This was done objectively by objective.

### ***Lack of / or delayed government support***

The teacher participants revealed that the government had merely legislated the adoption of inclusive education in the country with diminutive efforts to help them understand how to operationalise it in a classroom situation. Participants expressed that Inclusive Education is articulated to reinforce a policy direction that all learners should be schooled in an inclusive setting where support equipment, among others, is provided to meet the needs of all learners. In this regard, the necessary resources must be available for both teachers and students if quality education for special needs students is to be provided efficiently and effectively in a classroom situation. The participants opined that government is taking time to provide the necessary equipment and infrastructure for educators to meet the needs of ADHD learners. The following verbal quotes illustrate the above findings:

*Our government takes time to provide enough material and as a teacher you have to make learners share the skimpy resources available. This makes teaching and learning very difficult* (Female, 9 years teaching experience, In-depth Individual interview).

Based on the concerns raised by the participants, it can be concluded that school management believe teachers' college training which teachers received prior to joining the teaching service, was sufficient in helping

them handle any situation encountered in the teaching profession. Life is not static. To keep them abreast with new programmes, new ways of doing things and new policies put in place, in-service programmes could be necessary for all deserving teachers. The following is an example of what the participants had to say:

*It would be much easier to deal with learners with ADHD if government would organise workshops where they will deliver the challenges they meet when handling learners with diverse needs including those with ADHD (Male, 5 years teaching experience, in-depth Individual interview).*

### ***Insufficient time***

The challenge that all participants seemed to share was that of insufficient time. Participants pointed out that the 35 minutes allocated per day for each subject was not enough to help ADHD learners as well. They pointed out that learners with ADHD need more instructional time. The time allocated to them makes them just rush through the lesson without giving enough attention to ADHD learners who, in most cases, are likely to lag behind. The following quotation is an example of what some participants revealed:

*I feel the time allocated to each period (35 minutes) does not allow teachers to enlarge upon the laid down syllabus, or to do extra work with ADHD learners because if we fail to complete the laid down syllabus for the year, the head teacher will not entertain our excuses that we were attending to learners with special needs but he will say that we are lazy and incompetent. The traditional syllabus we are following does not take care of learners with disability (ADHD learners included). There is no time for differentiated instructions for learners with learning disabilities (Female, 6 years teaching experience, In-Depth Individual Interviews).*

Participants reported that when teaching learners with ADHD, a teacher needs more time to explain thoroughly since by their nature, such learners need more time. They also expressed concern that the ADHD learners and the 'normal' learners do not move at the same pace. They reported that their dilemma is that when addressing issues to the ADHD learners, the other 'normal learners,' feel delayed and left out. They were also concerned that the current curriculum was not inclusive in structure. They pointed out that nothing has been done about the curriculum; it is still the same old curriculum that has been running before the introduction of inclusive education.

They further reported that they are encountering problems and difficulties in teaching learners with ADHD as most of them were trained to teach "normal children" in a 'normal' school. The participants had this to say:

*In the inclusive curriculum, there should be an explanation on how the teacher is to teach ADHD learners. I feel the delay in modifying the curriculum has a negative effect on the minors. Teachers are teaching pupils with special needs using traditional teaching approaches, and this makes learning and teaching a challenge for the teacher and the learner in an inclusive class (Female, 45 years old, in-depth individual interview).*

### ***Lack of training on handling ADHD learners***

It was revealed in the study that of the 30 participants, only 5 teachers specialised in Inclusive Education. The other participants were simply exposed to a course or two on inclusive education in their tertiary education but this was insufficient to capacitate someone to competently teach children with diverse disabilities. Thus, they reported that they have challenges in including ADHD learners in their mainstream classrooms. The following verbal quote illustrates the above findings:

*I am not trained for inclusion. I am not well equipped on how to handle learners with diverse disabilities, including those with ADHD. I have no knowledge and expertise on how to deal with learners with special learning needs. Thus, I am not an effective teacher in that regard (Female, 4 years teaching experience, in-depth individual interview).*

### ***Lack of parental involvement***

An overarching issue that ran throughout the interviews was lack of parental involvement in the education of ADHD learners. Teachers felt unsupported by parents yet having ADHD learners implies that both teachers and parents have to support each other and play a dual role if the learners are to perform well. Participants revealed that parental negligence and ignorance in the education of ADHD learners was the order of the day. The following verbal quotes illustrate the above findings:

*Some parents take schools as dumping grounds for their children. Whenever you encounter problems where you need to engage the parents, they either have feeble excuses or are nowhere to be found (Male, 42 years of age, In-depth individual interview).*

### ***The effect of ADHD on the performance of a child***

Participants reported that ADHD affects learning and the normal academic progression of the child. Participants pointed out that learners with ADHD have persistent academic difficulties that result in the attainment of lower marks, failed grades, high rate of expulsions and increased rates of school dropout. The participants revealed that ADHD learners are always lagging behind with school work. At times they are given remedial work as homework, but for some, it does not work because no one is assisting the child at home. The child is all by him/herself at home because some parents are not interested in the child's academic work. The following constitute what some participants had to say:

*These children with learning disorders are in a pathetic situation. They are always behind and fail repeatedly. Clearly we are not coping and the parents of these children are not helping in anyway. (Female, 8 years teaching experience, In-Depth Individual Interviews).*

### ***Teaching strategies***

The participants reported that to embrace inclusive education, it was necessary to also overhaul the teaching approach so as to accommodate all learners; those with ADHD included. They reported that with the diversity of learners in their classes, individualised approaches were the way to go so that no child is left behind. Participants revealed that although they are aware that they need to give each learner individual attention, the question of numbers and lack of training on inclusivity, still remain a challenge. The following is what some participants revealed:

*I suggest that all teachers need to go for in-service. Buildings also need to be upgraded to cater for all learners. Some of our classrooms are not user friendly for wheelchair bound learners. Teaching and learning aids that would be suitable for all learners should be available. In short, schools should prepare for all learners. Learners should not go to school as visitors (Female, 28 years of age, In-depth individual interviews).*

### ***Discussion of the findings***

The discussion on the findings of this study was guided by the emerging themes which came out of the study. The following subheadings constitute some of the emerging themes which will guide this discussion:

### ***Government support***

The findings of the study revealed that government is not doing enough to support educators meet the special needs of ADHD learners in mainstream classrooms. Inclusive education has a clear policy direction which enunciates that all learners should be schooled in an inclusive mainstream set up where support for teaching and learning materials, among many other things, are provided to meet the needs of all learners. Participants revealed that government is not giving enough support to the educators to capacitate them include ADHD learners in mainstream classrooms. Similarly, the provision of support in in-service teacher-education programmes falls far below the expectations of many participants. Participants felt that both in-service and pre-service teacher-education programmes should be reoriented and aligned to cater for inclusive education approaches in order to capacitate teachers on the pedagogical necessities which will make inclusivity work in the mainstream classrooms.

Furthermore, the findings of this study showed that the operations in an inclusive school requires several additional resources such as technical, material or organisational resources. Similar observations were made by Anderson, Klassen and Georgion (2007) who assert that the necessary resources for inclusivity must be available for both teachers and students if quality education for special needs students is to be provided in mainstream classrooms. Participants expressed that inclusive education systems and societies can only be realized if governments are aware of the nature of the problems they face in including learners with diverse needs, which include those with ADHD. In agreeing with the Salamanca Declaration of 1994, the Government of Eswatini has embarked in the effort to implement policies which foster inclusion in schools, such as the recent inclusion policy which is contained in the Eswatini Government's Ministry of Education and Training's National Education and Training Sector Policy (2018). This is a positive development in the right direction. However, participants bemoan that lack of resources make inclusion hard to translate from policy to practice. Reiser (2006), shares the same sentiments observed in this study that lack of resources makes inclusion hard to translate from policy to practice. However, the researchers note that although the resources are meagre to support the inclusive agenda, educators should be seen to be doing their part for this education agenda to be realised. Otherwise it would end up reducing inclusive education to battles of limited resources (Slee & Allan, 2001).

Another revelation from the findings was that support from government in terms of the provision of specialists or professionals in inclusive education is not adequate. These could be handy by guiding instruction and also offer in-service training to colleagues who are not skilled in inclusive education. The findings further revealed that the intervention of psychological services to provide support and guidance to educators in handling

ADHD learners is also not sufficient in Eswatini. Now that the government has adopted inclusion as a policy, participants expected the Ministry of Education and Training to take a robust stance towards its implementation.

### ***Inflexible curriculum for learners***

The findings also revealed that barriers to inclusion are a result of the structure of the curriculum. The participants reported that the primary education curriculum is centralized. Teachers need to cover the syllabus as quickly as possible and yet the curriculum is wide and long. Regrettably, the participants were concerned that ADHD learners need more time to understand certain concepts. The fast paced curriculum puts them at a disadvantaged position. The participants suggested that the curriculum must take a rounded approach to cater for the needs of all learners. Loreman, Depper and Harvey (2005) suggest that when inclusion is done right; everyone wins. The findings revealed that it was important, therefore, that the curriculum be flexible enough to provide possibilities for adjustment to individual needs and to stimulate teachers to seek solutions that can be matched with the needs, abilities and learning styles of each and every pupil. Therefore, there is need for a common core curriculum that is relevant for all learners. However, the researchers note that if inclusive education is to be a reality in Eswatini, teachers must individually accept the major responsibility of meeting the needs of all children, irrespective of their disability.

### ***Insufficient time allocated per subject in schools***

According to the findings of this study, insufficient time was cited as one of the reasons why the participants struggled to consider all learners' needs. The participants revealed that lack of sufficient time was an over-arching barrier in differentiating the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with ADHD. The teacher participants in this current study also revealed that they were under pressure to cover the curriculum content and prepare learners for grade level examinations.

However, overall analysis of the findings made was that teachers did not have a grounded understanding of what inclusion entailed. Their ideas were more on integration than inclusion. Inclusion necessitates that a teacher meet the needs of all learners in an inclusive environment. This is what Kearney and Kane (2006) had to say; "To be included is not to be excluded". Having participants in the study who suggest a need to create extra time for ADHD learners apart from their peers, shows an exclusionary model of education. Learners need to have their needs met concurrently with their 'normal' peers in an inclusive setting.

### ***Attitudes of educators towards the inclusion of ADHD learners in mainstream schools***

The findings of this study revealed that educators lamented that having ADHD children in their classrooms was very solicitant for them regardless of their experience and specialization. They expressed that it was very stressful to provide inclusive education. Recent studies show that although teachers were however positive towards inclusion of socially disadvantaged students, their attitudes towards including students with ADHD in regular classrooms were negative (Gao & Mager, 2011). Also, a study in Bangladesh (Khan, 2012) found that teachers in general agree with inclusion of ADHD learners but have reservations towards individual factors that influence its course. Observations made from this study however, showed that teachers saw problems in inclusivity because of oversized classes coupled with inappropriate knowledge of inclusivity.

### ***Teacher competency in teaching learners with ADHD***

Even though it can be concluded that training is the backbone to the success of all inclusionary practices, the findings of this study showed that teachers struggle to understand how ADHD present itself among children. Children with other factors impacting on their attention or activity levels are often confused as having ADHD. It also brings in the question of how accurate can teachers accurately diagnose learners with ADHD. The study revealed that there are other learners who are merely hyperactive or inattentive because of other factors.

Research has shown that many teachers in contemporary societies are generally not trained to identify or teach learners with ADHD (Holz & Lessing, 2002). The findings of this study confirmed that this appeared to also be true in the Eswatini context. The Eswatini Government's Ministry of Education and Training Sector Policy (2018) promotes the inclusion of all learners into mainstream classes. It asserts that classroom teachers will be the primary resource for achieving the goal of inclusive education. This means that teachers will need to acquire new skills as well as improve their existing skills and knowledge (Eswatini Government's Ministry of Education and Training Sector Policy, 2018). A phenomenal number of teachers were not trained in inclusive education. This includes teachers in the Hhohho region of Eswatini where the study was carried out.

### ***Effects of ADHD in learning and progression of the child***

The findings of this study showed that problems associated with ADHD can lead to poor motivation and difficulty in developing problem-solving abilities. The findings of this study revealed that in order to help

ADHD children succeed scholastically and socially, it was imperative that intervention strategies which are tailored to the specific needs of the child be put in place. The findings revealed that educators reported that learners with ADHD regularly procrastinate and find it hard to get tasks started. They have great difficulty in completing assignments in the time available. In exams, they spend too long on one question and do not have time to finish, and often do not even tackle the other questions.

In addition to that, the study showed that ADHD learners have difficulties forming and maintaining friendships and their behaviour can be very frustrating for teachers and other children. They constantly experience negative feedback. Findings revealed that the disruptive behaviour sometimes associated with the disorder may make students with ADHD more susceptible to suspensions and expulsions. In the context of this therefore, the findings of this study showed that educational interventions for these children were critical to ensure that a child's educational needs are met. This can mean special services for children who have learning disabilities in addition to ADHD.

#### ***Parental involvement in their children's academic work***

The findings of the study showed that parents and teachers play a critical role in the education of children with ADHD. The success of a child with ADHD in life is best predicted by parental use of effective parenting skills, positive relationships with other children and the role of the teacher in his/her academic life. The participants recommend for a collaborative approach where parents, teachers, psychologists and medical professionals would work together to assist children with ADHD. However, this study showed that in the Hhohho region of Eswatini, the support structure for learners with ADHD is fractured or broken. Some parents are not actively involved in the education of their children. This is contrary to the observations of Lindsay, Proulx, Scott and Thomson (2013), who showed that parental involvement plays a crucial role in the support of learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. In this regard, in order for parents to be actively involved in the children's education, there is need for the implementation of a home-school diary which can be used to facilitate clear communication and teamwork chart, meant to support children with ADHD, and improve communication between the teacher and parents.

## **V. Conclusions and recommendations.**

### **Conclusions**

From the results of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

There is lack in training on Special Needs Education. Educators' knowledge is inadequate and have no motivation to include learners with ADHD which is aggravated by large class numbers in classrooms.

The presence of policies in including learners with disabilities is a positive development and it gives schools the opportunity to include all learners, including those with ADHD in mainstream classes.

There are however barriers to the successful implementation of the inclusive education policies in the country. Lack of handling skills by some educators and knowledge regarding their role in the intervention and management of disabilities such as ADHD in the classroom is yet another challenge.

In most schools, there is lack of trained and qualified personnel to handle learners with ADHD. It was observed that the majority of educators had problems with identifying learners with ADHD and this implied that most teachers have inadequate knowledge about ADHD as well as its etiology.

Teachers do not make a distinction between inattention and ADHD. This means inattentiveness, possibly caused by other factors, is sometimes confused for ADHD.

### **Recommendations for action**

From the results of this study, it can be recommended that:

All teacher training institutions may consider including a course on inclusive education to support the government initiative on inclusive education. Consequently, teacher training programmes, both pre- and in-service, should consider taking inclusive education as a compulsory course for all primary school teachers.

The Ministry of Education and Training may consider having an educator skills development plan that would address the problem of skills shortage on the part of the educators who are already serving in the mainstream schools. This may come in form of in-service programmes targeting those educators who did not do inclusive education at tertiary level. Apart from equipping and upskilling the educators with skills to deal with learners with disabilities, it is hoped that these in-service programmes may also assist in altering the mind-sets of those educators who are resistant to inclusivity as an approach.

Workshops on the inclusion of learners with ADHD may be conducted more often to equip teachers with skills and knowledge needed to cater for the needs of diverse learners including those with ADHD.



Parents could be considered as important partners in the education of ADHD learners and others who are living with a disability in general. This is important because no structure should be left behind in the education of these children and will also assist for early interventions purposes.

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