Experiences of General Secondary Education Teachers in Inclusive Classrooms: Implications for Sustaining Inclusive Education in Botswana

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Abstract

Inclusive education in the context of Botswana involves addressing the barriers that prevent students with disabilities from fully participating in the activities of the general education schools. A lack of understanding often exists among general education teachers in relation to the implementation of inclusive education in general education classrooms. This qualitative study reports on the daily experiences of eight general education secondary school teachers who are teaching in an inclusive school in the South-Central Region of Botswana. Using interviews and reflective journals, the study investigated teachers' experiences and understandings of the Inclusive Education Policy of Botswana in one secondary school. The data were analysed using content analysis procedures. Key findings revealed that teachers had limited experiences of inclusive education and limited understandings of what it entails in Botswana. The findings further revealed that the participants had both positive and negative experiences in the inclusion setting and that these experiences affected their attitudes and beliefs about inclusion. The implications with respect to inclusive implementation are discussed along with the relevance of professional development opportunities and support.

Key Words: *Botswana, inclusive education, teachers' experiences*

Introduction

The Inclusive Education Policy of Botswana (IEPB) (2011) requires that all children regardless of their disability be given the opportunity to access education in the general education schools (Government of Botswana, 2011). However, there are many barriers to the realisation of this right in the lived experiences of children and families (Mukhopadhyay, 2009). Current efforts towards upholding the rights of all children are impeded by the lack of understanding of inclusive education on the part of teachers, resulting in many children with disabilities being denied equal access to inclusive education learning environments (Nthitu, Kithard, & Sayed, 2012). There is also evidence that the implementation of inclusion in classrooms presents formidable challenges for teachers (Mangope, 2013). Thus, particular attention needs to be paid to how students with disabilities access an appropriate education and also to understand the experiences of teachers in inclusive classrooms.

This study explored the experiences of a small sample of government secondary general education teachers in their efforts to implement the inclusive education policy in Botswana. The study is premised on the assumption that teachers' knowledge, understandings and experiences of inclusive education would be influenced by, among other things, the quality and quantity of professional development opportunities available to them to implement this initiative. Inclusive education (IE) has been defined as a way of addressing the unique needs of diverse learners by increasing their participation in different contexts and minimizing exclusionary practices. This mainly entails adapting content, methods, structures and strategies with a common vision and conviction that it is the responsibility of the general education system to educate all children (UNESCO, 2005).

As an approach to education, inclusion has been conceived as a means of equalizing educational opportunities. This philosophy informed the Salamanca Statement of 1994, which emphasised the point that general education schools with an inclusive orientation are the most

effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all (UNESCO, 1994). Since the Salamanca Conference in 1994, the pressure on policy makers in Botswana to include students with disabilities into general education classrooms has increased tremendously (Government of Botswana 2011). Subsequently, this increased pressure on educational authorities for more inclusive classrooms has required that general education teachers differentiate their instruction for students with disabilities and share their classrooms with other professionals such as teacher aides and special education staff (Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012; Mamas, 2013; Padeliadu, Papanikolaou & Giazitzidou, 2014; Rajovic & Jovanovic, 2013).

Undoubtedly, these changes have generated varying feelings and beliefs among different stakeholders regarding the implementation of inclusive education (Magumise & Sefotho, 2018; Mukhopadhyay, Nenty & Abosi 2012; Su, Guo, & Wang, 2018).   Globally, while policy makers and administrators seem to be excited about this approach, general education teachers are confused and frustrated, with many teachers complaining about the inadequacy of knowledge and skills and administrative and material support to effectively implement inclusive practices in their classrooms (Brendon, 2015; Monje, 2017; Rajovic & Jovanovic, 2013). Additionally, research indicates that there is a lack of clarity in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the general education teachers who provide instruction in the inclusion setting (Mangope, Kuyini, & Major, 2012; Mangope, 2013; Mukhopadhyay, 2009).

Inclusive Education in Botswana

Prior to Botswana's independence in 1966, the educational needs of students with disabilities were championed by non-government organisations. The Lutheran Church and the Dutch Reformed Church set up a number of special schools in the country to support the

learning needs of different categories of disabilities. For example, a school was set up for individuals with visual impairment in Mochudi in 1967 by the Dutch Reformed Church, followed by another school in Ramotswa for those with hearing impairment formed by the Lutheran church just after independence. Following independence in 1966, the country responded to the challenges within the education system, including a review of the provisions made for all the disadvantaged groups.

A major reform took place in 1977 when Botswana crafted its first education policy, which sought to provide universal access to education, and this policy accommodated the educational needs of individuals with disabilities. The policy states that "all children should have access to basic education" (Government of Botswana, 1977, p.7). The Government of Botswana developed a number of strategies that could be used to make education accessible to all Batswana. For instance, basic education was changed from 10 years to nine years in 1987 with the aim to make education universal to all. Thus, seven years of primary and two years of secondary formal schooling for all children was introduced (Tabulawa, 2011). In line with this policy, more junior secondary schools (Form 1 to Form 2) were built within each local community in order to enhance access to education. This was done in collaboration with the community. These schools were known as Community Junior Secondary Schools (CJSS). Additionally, school fees, which has been one of the major barriers to access education, were abolished (Tabulawa, 2011), and progression from primary to secondary level became automatic. It can be argued that through these inclusionary initiatives, the Government of Botswana achieved its goals in terms of education infrastructure development and widening opportunities for open access to basic education, making it possible for most children to attend school irrespective of gender, disability, social or economic backgrounds.

In 1994, another set of reforms increased the basic education requirements. The government changed the 9-year basic education structure, which was perceived as a

bottleneck with regard to progression from junior to senior secondary schools. As a result, basic education in Botswana currently consists of seven years of primary, three years of junior secondary and two years of senior secondary schooling (Government of Botswana, 2017). Even though the government introduced a cost sharing measure at junior secondary level, children from lower income families and those with disabilities were not expected to pay school fees (Government of Botswana, 2008; Tabulawa, 2011), and this implied that children with disabilities still had universal access to basic education.

The right to inclusive education is articulated in both the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability* (CRPD). Consistent with ratifying these conventions, the Government of Botswana expressed its commitment to inclusive education in an array of documents and policies, including the *National Policy on Education* (1977)*, The *Revised National Education Policy on Education* (1994)*, National Development Plans* (NDP), particularly NDP 9*, and the *Inclusive Education Policy of Botswana* (IEPB, 2011). Each of these documents recognizes the importance of responding to student diversity and ensuring the participation of all students as learners.

Inclusive Education Experiences of General Education Teachers

Human experience with any activity or event leaves impressions - thoughts, perceptions and feelings - about engaging in that activity. In the same way, teachers' experiences with inclusive teaching produce states of mind, thoughts and feelings about inclusive education. Experience with inclusion is about the teaching and learning process, and correspondingly, the existing literature with regard to reports of teachers' experiences on domains such as attitudes, knowledge/skills to meet the needs of students with disabilities,

self-efficacy, and concerns and challenges about teaching in such contexts. These findings are the focus of this review.

Internationally, research has shown that positive experiences with regard to teaching in inclusive classrooms have some effect on teachers' willingness to include learners with disabilities. Researchers such as Boyle, Topping and Jindal-Snape (2013) and Wilkerson (2012) found that teachers who were involved in the inclusion of students with disabilities tend to develop more positive attitudes towards the inclusion process. Other studies on teachers' experiences with inclusion (For example, Dart, 2006; Uzair-ul-Hassan, Hussain, Parveen & De Souza, 2015) indicated that teachers with inclusive teaching experiences developed more positive attitudes about inclusion than teachers with no such experiences. Lee, Kang, and Jung (2016), who found similar effects of the inclusion experience on teachers' attitudes, concluded that the change in attitude and commitment emerged as a result of the teachers' increasing mastery of the skills required to teach students with a wide range of abilities.

The literature further highlights the link between teachers' experiences with inclusion and their enhanced personal/professional development. For example, teachers in Sukkyung, Eui and Kyulee's (2019) study believed that their own personal development had been advanced by their experience of inclusive education. Humphrey and Symes (2011) argued that the enhanced personal development derives from teachers being challenged to learn skills to meet the needs of student with disabilities, which has an effect on their sense of efficacy to implement inclusive activities.

On the other hand, challenges or difficulties with meeting the needs of student with disabilities have been reported by teachers who have had experience with inclusive education (Kuyini & Desai, 2007). In a Greek study, Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) reported that teachers who experienced inclusion implementation expressed difficulty with accommodating

different types of disabilities in general education classrooms even though they held positive attitudes about the process. Such challenges are linked to teachers' concerns about being involved in the decision-making processes (Cook, Cameron &Tankersley, 2007) and burnout (Talmor, Reiter & Feigin, 2007). Teacher concerns are also associated with limited knowledge /skills and resources (e.g. materials and time) and lack of support from school principals (See Brendon, 2015; Kuyini & Mangope, 2011; Monje, 2017; Shah, Das, Desai & Tiwari, 2013; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2007). In these studies, teachers were worried about their skills to deliver instruction, limited resources, and lack of support and therefore felt ill-prepared for inclusive classrooms. Although teachers might have concerns about inclusion, direct experience of inclusion can motivate some teachers to persevere. In this regard, Yeo, Chong, Neihart, and Huan (2014), reported that while teachers who had experienced inclusion were concerned about having to cater for the needs of students with disabilities, the actual experience led teachers to develop an attachment to their students. This finding (Yeo, et al., 2014) suggests that teachers' concerns emanating from their experience with inclusive education could either be beneficial to students with disabilities or create anxiety in teachers to the extent that they are unwilling to or reluctant to commit themselves to inclusion.

Botswana Teachers' Experiences of IE

Inclusive education is a relatively new concept in Botswana, and only a few studies exist about the effect of inclusive experiences on teachers. Existing research suggests that some teachers are positive about it and others are not. Mangope, et al. (2012) reported that experience in teaching in inclusive classrooms resulted in some teachers becoming more inclined to teach learners with disabilities. Specifically, teachers with 16-20 years of experience in teaching in inclusive classrooms were more willing to support students with

low incidence disabilities in their classrooms. Further, in a study of a Botswana school with a long history of practising inclusive education, Mukhopadhyay (2013) observed that some general education teachers collaborated well with special educators and such teachers reported that their experience with inclusion made them more inclined to include learners with disabilities in their classrooms.

On the other hand, Nthitu, et al. (2012) reported that some teachers felt that inclusive education could not work for those students with low incidence disabilities and that such students could only be included after they had been through a remedial class. The researchers (Nthitu, et. al., 2012) concluded that the reason why teachers held such beliefs was because they had "a mystified conceptualization of inclusive education" (p. 15), which led to bad experiences of inclusive education. A similar finding was reported by Mukhopadhayay, Molosiwa and Moswela (2009) and Otukile-Mongwaketse, Mangope and Kuyini (2016), with both noting that teachers were not familiar with the concept of inclusion. This lack of understanding of the concept of inclusive education among teachers in Botswana has huge implications for translating the policy ideals of government into practice at the classroom level.

Current Study

Currently, about 10% of the Botswana population comprises of children who are identified as having a disability. Of this 10%, about 29-38% are considered to be missing in general secondary school settings (Government of Botswana, 2008), which translates to about 62-71% who are fully included in schools. Some of the missing students are in the special schools while others do not attend school (Mukhopadhyay, Nenty, & Abosi, 2012). While this level of inclusion of students with disabilities is commendable given the early nature of inclusion in Botswana, studies from Kuyini and Mangope (2011) and Mukhopadhyay, Nenty

and Abosi (2012) show that teachers are concerned about the expectation that they will provide appropriate instruction to students with disabilities within the context of limited resources and a lack of clarity about inclusive education. Further, while quantitative research has been conducted in Botswana on the attitudes and beliefs of general education teachers about inclusion, (e.g. Mangope, 2013), few qualitative studies have been carried out to explore and describe the daily experiences of the general education teachers in inclusive settings. The way individuals view their experiences while engaging in an activity is critical to ascertaining whether or not they will be successful. In the case of inclusive education, which imposes on teachers a different set of expectations (Ashman & Elkins, 2014; Kuyini & Paterson, 2013), the question is whether teachers' actions can be sustained long-term for inclusion to succeed in Botswana. It is therefore important that teachers' daily experiences are understood so that policy makers are able to make appropriate adjustments and school principals are provided with the required supports to enhance successful outcomes for all students.

Aim of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of secondary general education teachers who are currently teaching in an inclusive education setting and how those experiences influenced their attitudes and beliefs about inclusion. This is important given that there is little research that documents the experiences of the general education teachers who are currently teaching in inclusive secondary school settings since the implementation of the inclusive education policy in Botswana. This study will help fill this research gap by enhancing understanding of the daily experiences of secondary general education teachers and how those experiences may or may not shape their attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion.

Research questions

The research questions explored in the study were:

1. What are the experiences of secondary general education teachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education in their classrooms?

2. How do these experiences shape their beliefs and attitudes about inclusive education?

Methodology

This study explored secondary general education teachers' experiences of teaching in inclusive setting in Botswana. As research that is concerned about teachers' understandings of their experiences, it is evident that there is no single reality. This means that a methodological approach that allows for the researchers to understand teachers' derived meanings based on their lived experiences was warranted. Based on this, a qualitative, constructivist paradigm was chosen. This allowed the participants to interpret their own reality of inclusive education as they experienced it. Deriving from this position is the idea that each teacher participating in the study constructed their own meanings about teaching in inclusive settings (Liamputtong, 2013). Furlong (2013) contends that constructivism concerns itself with constructed or co-constructed realities. Thus, this paradigm allowed the teachers to socially construct the context specific realities of how inclusive education is experienced in one secondary school in Botswana. A case study design, involving the use of semi–structured interviews and reflective journals as the primary method of data collection, was used to capture the meanings teachers gave to their experiences (Liamputtong, 2013). A case study, which is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009), enabled the researchers to obtain an in-depth and clear focus on the dynamic interactions of inclusive education as experienced by teachers in one secondary school in Botswana.

Setting

The setting of this study was one urban general education secondary school (the case) in the South-Central Region of Botswana. Molemo School is the pseudonym that has been used throughout the study to maintain confidentiality. Purposeful sampling was used to select the school from which data were collected. The selection was based on the criteria that the participating school should have students with different types of disabilities, must have been practicing inclusion for three years or more, and must have an active School Intervention Team (SIT). Two such schools were judged to have met the criteria and one of them (Molemo) was selected due to proximity for this study.

During the 2010-2013 school years, Molemo School had a total student population of 700 of which approximately 18.1% were receiving special education services. The school had 45 full-time employees. Only 19.2% of the Molemo School teaching staff were males and the rest (80.8%) were females. The language of instruction at this school was English and students attending the school came from diverse nationalities, races, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The school has had an inclusive agenda since the government adopted the idea of inclusion in the mid-1990s. The school enrols students with different types of disabilities such as learning disabilities, mild to moderate intellectual disabilities, mild to moderate hearing impairment, physical disabilities, and emotional and behavioural disabilities because such students are from the school's catchment area. The school has a school intervention team (SIT), which assists with the identification and screening of learners as well as developing Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs). This team works across the school as consultants and assists all teachers. All teachers in the school have some exposure to special education during their training at University of Botswana or Teacher Training Colleges. However, some teachers have had additional specialized training in special education through in-service or formal courses, and these teachers form part of the

School Intervention Team (SIT). There is also a resource room where students who have been withdrawn from the general education classrooms are given individualized support.

Participants and Sampling

The study participants consisted of eight general education teachers who were teaching in inclusive classrooms at the school. Criterion sampling was used with participants drawn from all teachers at Molemo School. According to Creswell (2007), criterion sampling works well for phenomenological studies because it is essential for all participants to have experienced the phenomenon that is under investigation. The participant selection criteria were all general education teachers who were teaching at Molemo Secondary School at the time and had two or more years of experience teaching in that setting.

Eleven participants who met the criteria were invited to participate in this study, and eight agreed to participate. Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) have suggested that the appropriate number of participants for phenomenological research is six, and Creswell (2007) has suggested that a total of 10 participants is adequate. For this study, all eight were included in the study in order to obtain more diverse information about teachers' experiences of teaching in an inclusive setting and how these experiences have shaped their attitudes and beliefs about inclusion. Following is a table (Table 1) showing background information of the participants.

Table 1

Background Information of Participants

Teachers	Age	Gender	Years of experience teaching in inclusive classrooms	Qualifications	Subject taught
1. Tom	38	Male	5	Bachelor's Degree in Education	Maths
2. Neo	41	Female	6	Diploma in Secondary Education (Associate Degree)	Art
3. Sid	35	Male	4	Bachelor's Degree in Education	Social Studies
4. Pat	41	Female	5	Bachelor's Degree in Education	English
5. Gift	40	Male	5	Bachelor's Degree in Education	Physical Education
6. Onie	38	Female	6	Diploma in Secondary Education (Associate Degree)	Setswana (local language of Botswana)
7. Cath	34	Female	3	Bachelor's Degree in Education	Agriculture
8. Carol	39	Female	4	Bachelor's Degree in Education	Computer Science

Instruments, Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews and reflective journals were used to collect data for this study. The semi-structured interview questions focused on teachers' experiences of interpreting inclusive education policy and providing instruction to meet policy guidelines in classroom settings. It also explored how those experiences influenced their attitudes and beliefs about inclusion and also what they thought would lead to better implementation of inclusive education. Examples of interview questions are:

1. What are your experiences of teaching in an inclusive classroom?

2. What are your experiences of interpreting inclusive education?

3. Tell me about your experience of providing instruction to meet the policy
   guidelines in your classrooms?

b. What has been exciting about it?

c. What has been difficult about it?

4. In what way have these experiences influenced your beliefs about inclusive
   education?

5. In your opinion, what would lead to better implementation of inclusive education?
   Follow up questions were used after the major questions to clarify and expand on
   the responses of the interviewees.

The reflective journals contained information about the teachers' activities,
methodologies used for teaching, feelings, frustrations and evaluations. Thus, the journal
content, which constituted collected data, was aligned with the research questions. The
journal format encouraged participants to document their daily experiences in an inclusive
setting and how those experiences shaped their beliefs and attitudes about inclusion, possibly,
in an un-intrusive or un-obstructive manner. The reflective journals also encouraged
participants to express their feelings, ideas and insights regarding the phenomenon of
inclusion. This record was kept over five weeks.

Permission to undertake the investigation in the selected school was sought from and
granted by the Ministry of Education Skills and Development as well as the school itself.
Permission was also sought from participating teachers. The interviews with teachers took
place in the school after school hours and lasted approximately 1-1.5 hours. The reflective
journals were reviewed after the five-week timeframe.

Both the interview and reflective journal responses of the participants were
transcribed verbatim and transferred into Microsoft Word. Content analysis method (Glaser

& Strauss, 1967) was employed to analyse data. Thus, the analysis was essentially inductive and reflexive in nature (Patton, 1990). The overall themes, which were significant to this study, emerged from coding categories generated through the interviews and the reflective journals. These initial coding categories were further re-examined and analysed. First, both interview and reflective data were sorted and labelled according to the individual teachers for easier management.

The second phase was a preliminary exploratory analysis that involved reading both the transcripts and the reflective journal data many times in order to become familiar with it, which is when the themes began to emerge. The sections of the transcripts that reflected a theme were identified. Codes were also constructed to record ideas that the researchers identified while reading the data. This helped organize data into categories. Data were then organized, classified and categorized according to data sets and sources and in line with the research questions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

The third phase was to search for categories after all the data had been coded and collated. The codes were then collapsed into major categories, which reflected the main responses of the participants about their experiences of teaching in inclusive classrooms. The data from different sources and data sets were then triangulated to derive the common themes across all teachers. The fourth phase involved the reviewing of the categories in terms of homogeneity and heterogeneity across all data sources and data sets. Phase five entailed the defining and naming of sub-themes. Then, a detailed report on each sub-theme was written in relation to the research questions.

A cross case analysis of the data was completed. Patton (1990) explains cross case analysis as "grouping together answers from different people to common questions or analysing different perspectives on central issues" (p.376). This method also includes "constant comparison" (Merriam, 1998, p.159). Cross case analysis results in themes

emerging inductively from the data. These themes provided explanations about the phenomenon of interest to the study. Summaries of findings were submitted to individual participants for scrutiny and corroboration. This process of member checking (Robson, 2002) enabled participants to assess and modify the findings in view of their experiences. Pseudonyms are used for the school and the teachers in the reporting of the findings.

Results and Discussion

The research findings are organized in terms of the research questions, which were also in line with the themes that emerged from the study: teachers' experiences of inclusion and the effect of those experiences on teachers' beliefs and attitudes about inclusion. There were a number of subthemes identified under these main themes

Experiences of Inclusive Education

In relation to teachers' experiences of inclusive education, some mixed experiences were revealed by the data, which reflected the teachers' attempts to implement inclusive education in one secondary school. Some experiences were related to the benefits that both teachers and students gained as a result of exposure to inclusive classrooms, while others were more aligned with the challenges that teachers faced in their attempts to implement inclusive education. For teachers' experiences of inclusion, the sub-themes identified were teachers' professional growth and satisfaction, meeting the students' needs and limited time for inclusion, limited policy guidelines, limited knowledge and skills to implement IEP, lack of collaboration, and role clarification.

Teachers' professional growth and satisfaction. The first finding related to the positive experiences that teachers gained by teaching in inclusive classrooms. Some teachers

in this study indicated that, despite limited knowledge and skills of inclusive education, they experienced some professional growth and increased personal satisfaction by teaching in inclusive classrooms. For instance, teacher Tom reported that "It (inclusion) has been an eye opener, it has taught me many things; for example, I could never go to class without making a thorough lesson preparation because planning made it easy for me to reach all students".. Thus, inclusion helped him to understand that students with disabilities could also learn if teachers engaged in proper lesson planning. Exposure to the task of teaching in an inclusive setting for this teacher resulted in acquisition of knowledge and skills of modifying lesson plans for teaching in inclusive classrooms. This was complemented by teacher Neo who in her reflective journal also reported:

> I was scared of them [learners with disabilities] initially, but having them in my class was fun as I realised that they can actually learn, as long as we differentiate our teaching and have sufficient resources. For instance, when others were giving examples of mammals in a form of writing, Jenny, a student without speech, did her description in the form of drawing the actual mammals…

The narratives from these teachers (Tom & Neo) indicate that exposure to students with disabilities and/or experiencing positive results with such students led to some changes in their understanding of students with disabilities. They also imply that this experience is a critical factor that needs to be considered for successful inclusion in the southern region of Botswana. Indeed, some research (Kuyini & Mangope, 2011; Sharma & Deppeler, 2005) shows that people who have never had an experience or contact with someone with a disability tend to have fear of such individuals and that exposure to inclusion has the potential to minimise or eliminate teachers' fears and concerns.

Meeting students' needs. Both the interview and reflective journal data showed that the benefit of the inclusive experience was not limited to skill development in teachers but also to change in teachers' perceptions of the quality of their teaching. Some participants reported that such increase in skills resulted in higher quality teaching for all children; that is, all children seemed to benefit, even those for whom the modifications were not intended. This outcome gave teachers more confidence. One of the teachers (Sid) indicated that when he used some real money (currency notes and coins) in teaching money concepts in his classroom, the aim was to accommodate the needs of a student with intellectual disability, "only to realize that, everyone liked and benefitted from this approach". Data from reflective journals also corroborated this finding as teacher Pat expressed in her reflective journal that she used task analysis in her English lesson to help a student who was struggling with drawing the smiley face of a person. According to teacher Pat, "I killed two birds with one stone; as the learner was doing the drawing on the board, he followed the steps I showed him while others were watching, and in that way they also gained something". These experiences and outcomes indicate that increasing teacher instructional competencies for inclusive education is likely to support the learning of all students – those with and without disabilities.

Limited time for inclusion. Even though some teachers in this study reported positive experiences of inclusion in their classrooms, most of the teachers reported having challenging experiences. First, most of the teachers felt that the inclusion process was very stressful and time consuming. One of the reasons given for teachers' stress related to the fact that they had to find time to design specific assignments/tasks for the students with disabilities while providing the regular tasks for other students without disabilities. Teacher Gift expressed concern related to this time factor in the following manner: "Even if we try our best, time is always the biggest enemy". This sentiment was echoed by all teachers in the

study and exemplified by teacher Tom, who said "…our good efforts are also thwarted by the fact that secondary school curriculum is congested, so in actual fact there is practically no time for inclusion". According to teacher Onie in her reflective journal, "I think the Ministry needs to reduce class size and our teaching loads so that we can have time for planning and collaboration". Such comments suggest that teachers were feeling overwhelmed by some of the demands that inclusion imposed upon them and felt that reduction of class-size and teaching loads would provide some relief. However, one may infer that these teachers might feel differently if they were offered adequate support to include students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Limited policy guidelines. Another finding was that teachers were challenged by the lack of clear guidelines in the Inclusive Education Policy of Botswana (IEPB) about how to include students with disabilities. According to the teachers, there were no proper guidelines in the policy as to how exactly they were supposed to include students with disabilities. In this regard, Teacher Cath pointed out: "We are also frustrated by the policy…really what does the policy itself say, it is just quiet about what we should do to include students". Similarly, teacher Sid reiterated that "students are dumped into our classrooms; no guidelines nor at least orientation on what we should do". This on its own implies that the Inclusive Education Policy of Botswana (IEPB, 2011) does not provide directions on implementation, and as a result, teachers find inclusive education implementation stressful and time consuming.

 Reflective journal data also corroborated this finding. To a certain extent the response of the teachers appeared out of place because policies are mostly broad generalisations about how to implement inclusive education, from which the schools can create more specific guidelines about different sets of practices, which will work under the different circumstances

in classrooms. However, the finding points to the fact that the teachers do not have the appropriate training to be able to design learning tasks to meet the needs of a diverse classroom of students, some with disabilities. The findings also raise questions about how adequately the Ministry of Education Skills and Development has explained the purpose and reach of the inclusive education policy and the supportive resources available to teachers. Both the policy and resourcing issues require measures to better align the inclusive education implementation environment to the whole-schooling principles of supportive policy & leadership and resourcing in order to promote effective instructional practices.

Limited knowledge and skill to implement IEP. Most of the teachers complained about the development of the Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) and said it was frustrating to try to implement such a plan in an inclusive classroom. When asked how he used IEPs in his lesson delivery of social studies, teacher Sid argued that, "it is difficult to put IEPs into practice in the classrooms; we need to observe it done practically so as to guide us". In support of this, teacher Onie also pointed out that "there is just too much theory about inclusion, but not available hands-on- practices to guide us". Other teachers, particularly in their reflective journals, complained about the amount of time needed for the IEP meetings. Generally, teachers felt that their schedules were just too tight to accommodate such initiatives and that they lacked the skills of adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of all students as required by the IEP. Teacher Gift summarized the concerns by pointing out that, "our education system is exam oriented, and the curriculum is congested so how exactly should we do IEPs?"

Generally, in this study, most teachers reported that they experienced difficulties in designing and implementing IEPs in their classrooms and curriculum adaptations to meet the needs of all students. This reflects previous studies (Ghesquière, Moors, Maes &

Vandenberghe, 2002; Shah, Das, Desai & Tiwari, 2013; Simpson, de Boer-Ott, & Smith-Myles, 2003) and raises questions about the quality of teacher training with respect to designing instruction for diverse classrooms, including adapting for individual students. This lack of preparation is disconcerting considering inclusion has been found to have positive benefits for all children locally and globally.

Lack of collaboration. The findings of this study further revealed that the majority of the participants felt that collaboration between special education teachers and the general education teachers was inadequate. The general education teachers viewed this as a bad experience of inclusion. Teacher Cath stated: *"I am so frustrated because we are not working together as a team"*. Similar sentiments were echoed by teacher Sid when he said that *"…we are working in isolation, everyone pursuing their own agenda…"*. One may infer that the participants believe that if there could be collaboration among teachers, inclusion would not be so frustrating. The fact that there is no team-work makes it very difficult for teachers to include learners with disabilities. It is incumbent upon the Ministry of Education to make efforts to intensify collaboration strategies through workshops and other measures.

Role clarification. Another finding that emerged from both the interviews and the reflective journals related to role clarification. The responses appeared to suggest that some teachers did not understand whose responsibility it was to teach students with disabilities. In his reflective journal, teacher Sid argued that "Special Education Teachers are not helping us and yet these children are theirs". This comment therefore indicates that the general education teachers have come to an erroneous understanding that the teaching of students with disabilities in their classrooms was not solely their responsibility because such students did not really belong to them but to the special education teachers. Such a misunderstanding

with regard to who was responsible could lead to role confusion and conflict between general and special education teachers.

This misunderstanding was captured in the fact that four of the general education teachers felt that their role was limited in the inclusion setting because the special education teacher was often 'territorial', and that made them (general education teachers) lose confidence in their ability to implement and differentiate traditional curriculum in an inclusive setting. Teacher Carol pointed out that "Special education teachers make us feel as if we are nothing, they take full control of the children and now it seems as if we know nothing*".* It is clear from the general education teachers' experiences that the role of the special education teachers in the implementation of inclusive education was not well understood. Others felt that special education teachers were stepping on their toes, while other teachers argued that their (special educators) efforts were inadequate.

The findings in this section revealed that general education teachers had limited understanding of inclusive education policy and also had negative experiences of inclusion. This indicates that there is a lack of clarification of roles between regular and special education teachers; a situation, which has led to a conflict-filled working relationship. Thus, the Ministry of Education, Skills and Development needs to clarify roles and also push for more collaboration between regular and special education teachers.

Inclusive Experiences and Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs

For Research Question 2, the findings of the study revealed that a majority of general education teachers believed that their experiences with inclusion had a positive effect on their beliefs and attitudes about inclusion. However, a few reported negative effects.

Positive effects. The data revealed that the experiences of inclusion resulted in some of the participating teachers developing positive attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities. This finding is evident in teacher Cath's statement that "teaching learners with disabilities has helped me to really understand inclusive education". In relation to why these inclusion experiences generated such positive attitudes, teacher Carol commented that she enjoyed the learning activities in the inclusion classroom. Other teachers cited the support from their school-heads (Principals) as having a positive influence on their attitudes about inclusion. For instance, teacher Tom pointed out that, "I like inclusion, I think partly because my school-head is very supportive and she also has interest in these kids...". This implies that the support of school-heads can shape teachers' attitudes and is therefore critical to the success of inclusion in Botswana. That is, for the teachers to be able to implement inclusive education effectively, school-heads have to be supportive. Previous research indicates that school-heads have a positive effect on teachers' commitment towards inclusion of learners with disabilities (Kuyini & Desai, 2007; Kuyini & Paterson, 2013; Schmidt & Venet, 2012).

Experiences with inclusion influenced the implementation of inclusion in a number of ways. The majority of participants believed that experience in an inclusion setting provided an improved understanding of the challenges of implementation as well as improved their understanding of students with disabilities. For instance, teacher Sid pointed out that "the practice of inclusion has helped us to understand the challenges it brings and how we can overcome such challenges; I think experience is the best teacher". Sharing similar sentiments, teacher Pat indicated that "I was scared of inclusion at first, I thought it wanted too many things, but after trying it, I realised that it just wants us to be systematic in our teaching". Teacher Tom also added that "it forces me to use good methods of teaching; you cannot just wake up and rush to class. It makes me think and plan about what I am going to teach, and I kind of like it".

This confirms previous studies that exposure to students with disabilities can lead to personal improvements among teachers, including developing more favourable attitudes toward students with disabilities and more inclination to include them (Humphrey & Symes, 2011; Kuyini & Mangope, 2011; Sukkyung, Eui & Kyulee, 2019). It is therefore essential that the government take steps to ensure that teachers are exposed to students with disabilities before they engage in their actual teaching through intensifying programs like teaching practice and field visits for prospective teachers.

Negative effects. Nonetheless, some of the teachers, in particular teacher Onie and Neo, believed that the limited resources and knowledge/skills of teaching in the inclusion setting had some negative effect on their attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion. They generally stated that they lacked the knowledge and skills of working with students with disabilities and also had limited resources necessary to assist such students. In particular, teacher Neo argued that even though inclusion helped her to be always prepared for her lessons, "the fact that I have not been adequately trained made teaching difficult for me and also made me think that maybe we are not yet ready for inclusion". Sharing similar sentiments, teacher Onie in her reflective journal stated that "I think our government wants us to perform miracles…I mean there is no proper furniture, teaching materials and the environment is generally hostile". When asked in the interview to clarify this statement, teacher Onie pointed out that the physical environment was not accessible for wheel-chair users and that other teachers were not making efforts to assist them as "our teaching loads are unbearable". Generally*,* teachers expressed the view that even with the support of the school head in the school, it was difficult to carry out plans without, what they considered to be, the necessary resources and supports. Particular reference was made to the lack of support

services from the Ministry of Education along with a lack of coordination between these services and the schools.

These comments suggest that, while support from principals occurred in some situations, it was inadequate and contributed to teachers' negative experiences of inclusion. Teachers felt that inclusion was "dumped on them" without the necessary support services, and this negatively affected their attitudes. Data from the reflective journals also corroborated this finding, and research indicates that teachers' negative attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities are generally related to limited training (Mukhopadhyay, 2009) and lack of resources (Kuyini & Mangope, 2011; Kuyini & Desai, 2007). The Government of Botswana needs to give more attention to such issues because these concerns are not new in the Botswana context. They have been raised by past research (Brandon & Ncube, 2006; Mangope, 2013; Mukhopadhyay, Molosiwa & Moswela, 2009) but remain unaddressed, leading one to wonder whether policy makers in Botswana take such research into consideration.

Implications

The findings of this study clearly demonstrated the significance of a clear articulation of what inclusive education entails in Botswana as a way of giving teachers certainty about their roles and those of other professionals supporting students with disabilities. As the findings suggest, the lack of clarity is at the heart of the confusion between what general classroom teachers and special education teachers should do when they work together. Thus, this study's findings could prompt the development of a new strategy or strategies for inclusive education practice and the professional relationships among different staff in schools. Such strategies should embrace whole-schooling principles so that supportive policy

and leadership, necessary training and resources can enhance flexible curriculum and pedagogy and develop positive attitudes (Loreman, 2007), which are all important for principals and teachers to effectively implement inclusive education.

Specifically, in relation to practice, this study gave voice to the eight general education teachers who shared their positive and negative experiences about working in an inclusive setting. Their voices revealed that policy is unclear on some roles, and therefore, it is important to listen to general education teachers when trying to put into practice what is an unclear policy. In addition, the study's finding speaks to the critical role of further professional development and collaboration to the success of the inclusive education agenda. In the case of Botswana, professional development ought to be designed to support the use of various inclusion models/ teaching practices. This could lead to attitudinal and practice changes among general education teachers who are apprehensive about inclusion so that they may feel more confident to teach students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

The creation of professional learning and support communities for teachers who work in an inclusive setting may also promote positive social change as they could provide avenues for teachers to share their experiences. Reviewing teacher preparation and job embedded professional development programs may assist secondary schools in the creation and implementation of effective co-teaching models as well as create positions within schools for teachers to become inclusion coaches. The Botswana Government could also establish a government funded training and technical assistance team that goes out to schools to provide advice on including students with severe disabilities.

The issues of resources and limited support from school-heads (Principals) have implications in terms of whether practices can be successful and sustained. Without adequate resources and support, school staff at the forefront of any educational reform are unlikely to be successful in the work they do. Finally, these findings support the need for positive social

change because all of the participants strongly believed that with appropriate professional development, administrative support, and the development of mutual respect between general and special education teachers, inclusion could be successfully implemented. By supporting these beliefs, change might occur as general education teachers become more receptive to include students with disabilities into general education classrooms. Additionally, the special education teachers might see their role in the inclusive setting as more than just "disciplinarians and paraprofessionals", but as co-facilitators who share equal responsibility in the academic achievement of students with disabilities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of secondary general education teachers who are currently teaching in inclusive classrooms and how those experiences shaped their attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion. Findings from the study revealed that the participants encountered both positive and negative experiences in the inclusive setting. These experiences shaped/ affected their attitudes and beliefs about inclusion. Overall, general education teachers believed that collaboration, lower class sizes, administrative support, mutual respect, a positive work environment, open minds towards inclusion, professional development opportunities, and knowledge of students with disabilities are all crucial components needed to successfully implement inclusion. Inclusion is a phenomenon that continues to spark debate among teachers, administrators and policymakers throughout the world, including Botswana. Although this study was conducted on a small scale, the findings contribute to the existing body of research because current research reveals the successful implementation of inclusion can enhance social skills for both students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers as well as increase student achievement

for students with and without disabilities (Mangope, 2013). These findings may inspire local school departments to create professional development opportunities related to effective inclusion practices.

Additionally, school regions may be prompted to develop professional learning communities for teachers who work in an inclusive setting. By providing support for general and special education teachers who work with students with disabilities in the inclusive setting, positive social change may occur as schools strive to provide teachers with the appropriate resources they need to successfully educate students with disabilities in the general education classroom environment. While no one strategy or model can solve all the issues related to inclusion, the development and implementation of effective inclusive practices and teacher support should be explored in greater depth in order to improve the overall success of inclusion.

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