

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF  
INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGED CHILDREN:  
A CASE OF  
SELECTED SPECIAL UNITS IN LUSAKA DISTRICT**

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**BY**

**ALICE MULONDA – NZALA**

A dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the award of degree of Master of Education  
(Special Education)

The University of Zambia  
LUSAKA

**JANUARY 2006**



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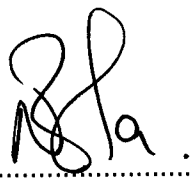
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Challenged Children:**

**A case of**

**Selected Special Units in Lusaka District**

## DECLARATION

I, **Alice Mulonda – Nzala**, do declare that this dissertation represents my own work and that it has neither in part nor in whole been submitted for award of any degree at the University of Zambia or at any other University.

Signed:  .....

Date: 18.01.06 .....

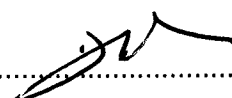
## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband Peter, who was deprived of my attention during the study, and my children: Charles Habowa – Lwiindi, Mutumu - Malugwa and Munyati - Peter Junior for their encouragement and unflinching support given to me throughout the study.

**APPROVAL**

**This dissertation of Alice Mulonda – Nzala is approved as a partial fulfilment of the Requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Education (Special Education) of the University of Zambia**

Examiners' signatures:

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Whilst taking full responsibility for any shortcomings in this dissertation, it is with a great sense of pleasure that I acknowledge the fact that its completion is owed to others who persistently rendered their support.

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## **ACRONYMS**

<b>ADD</b>	Action on Disability and Development
<b>ADL</b>	Activities for Daily Living
<b>BGT</b>	Behavioural Group Training
<b>FAMR</b>	Finish Association on Mental Retardation
<b>GRZ</b>	Government of the Republic of Zambia
<b>IDEA</b>	Individuals with Disabilities Education Amendment Act
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>PET</b>	Parent Effectiveness Training
<b>PPACSN</b>	Parent-Partnership Association for Children with Special Needs
<b>PTA</b>	Parent Teacher Association
<b>TEVETA</b>	Technical Vocational and Entrepreneur Training Authority
<b>ZACALD</b>	Zambia Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities

## **ABSTRACT**

The study sought to establish whether parents were involved in the education of their intellectually challenged children, and if so to what extent.

A sample of seventy- three (73) respondents was used. The sample comprised fifty-six (56) parents / care givers of the intellectually challenged children, twelve (12) special education teachers of the intellectually challenged pupils and five (5) head teachers of the schools hosting the Special Units in the five selected Basic Schools in Lusaka District.

Five separate focus group discussions (FGD) were held with parents for collection of in-depth data, while a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to teachers and head teachers for validation of FGDs with parent data.

From the study it is evident that there were no laid down procedures and a clearly written policy in Special Units on parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children. Parents were also not consulted on the curriculum planning for their children. This in turn has had some negative impact on the learning of these children.

The findings also showed that parents were involved in the education of their children only minimally. The involvement mainly consisted of attendance at the School Open Days. In addition, helping with children's homework, provision of teaching and learning materials and children's refreshments to a much smaller extent constituted the level of involvement by the parents.

The study also revealed that there were quite a number of barriers that hindered the parents from being involved in the education of their intellectually challenged children. The most prominent were negative attitudes towards the children by the parents themselves and lack of skills to apply in their quest to help their children.

The researcher therefore, makes recommendations to be addressed by school managers, Ministry of Education and parents as follows: school managers hosting Special Units should: clearly specify in writing procedures through which parents would be involved in the education of their intellectually challenged children; provide a flexible curriculum that would be appropriate to the needs of children who were intellectually challenged; institute home work policies in the Special Units in consultation with the parents in order to provide avenues for parental involvement; conduct school based workshops for parents of intellectually challenged children; conduct in-service training for mainstream teachers who handle the intellectually challenged children; identify local community based organisations and parent support groups for possible linkages with the Special Units and parents as a whole.

The Ministry of Education should formulate clear policies that would stipulate parents' rights and responsibilities in the education of their intellectually challenged children in Special Units; provide a guideline on the formulation of Individual Education Plans to special education in-service teachers that would be practical and suitable to the Zambian situation, through which parents would participate in deciding learning priorities for their children; initiate dialogue with the Department of Technical Educational Vocational and Entrepreneur Training Authority (TEVETA) at the Ministry of Science and Technology, to facilitate admittance of intellectually challenged children at reduced fees in recognition of the plant, machinery and equipment in their institutions that were initially funded by donors for the benefit of the intellectually challenged children who were currently excluded through the charging of commercial rates.

Schools should mount occasional sensitisation workshops for parents in order to foster positive attitudes towards their intellectually challenged children.

The study is organised in six chapters. Chapter one consists of a synopsis of the background to the study, the statement to the problem, the main objective, significance of the study, and definitions of operational terms used in the study. Chapter two is a review of related literature. Chapter three consists of the methodology, while chapter four consists of study results. Discussion of the results is presented in chapter five. Chapter six presents conclusions and recommendations.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background to the Problem

Parental involvement has been an increasingly important topic in education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Amendments Act (IDEA) of 1997 in the United States of America (USA) has re-established and enhanced parent participation in the education of children with special educational needs such as the intellectually challenged. Part of the Act stipulates that parents of children who are intellectually challenged should be consulted regarding the children's educational placement and programme planning (Apling & Jones, 2000).

In 2005, the total school enrolment in Zambia was 2, 967,348 out of this figure, 88, 030 (2.9%) were children with disabilities. Out of the children with disabilities, 26, 122 (29.5%) were intellectually challenged children. 13, 768 (52.7%) were males while 12, 354 (47.3%) were females (MoE, 2005). Intellectually challenged children are children who have a cognitive disability that manifests in a person through a reduced cognitive (intellectual) ability, limited adaptive behaviour and the need for support to participate fully in the community (Grossman, 1983). Intellectually challenged children are enrolled from lower basic school to upper basic school level in the Zambian

educational system. Very few proceed to high school level due to their reduced cognitive ability.

The term parental involvement was used broadly in this study to imply parents' participation in one or more school-related activities such as taking part in assessment, making decisions on school placement, attending Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, and school open days, volunteering to render service of one form or another at school, assisting their child with homework, generally aiming at encouraging the child to attain the best that they could be (Balli, Wedman, & Demo, 1997). It has also been suggested that parents may be involved in the education of their children by becoming advocates for better education in the community, insisting on high standards of behaviour for children or just finding out from the child how school had been on regular basis (A to Z Teacher Stuff, 2005). This action conveyed to the child that their education was important and they were expected to perform well.

In Zambia, there has been an assumption that there is an element of parental involvement in the education of their children by parents of intellectually challenged children in Special Units through the establishment of a Parent Teachers' Association, an official body that every school was required to establish according to education regulations (GRZ, 1976). What is not known is the nature and procedure under which the involvement took place.

Although the Parents and Teachers' Association (PTA) came into being in 1976, it was not known how far parents' of children with special educational needs had taken advantage of the provision. The Parents and Teachers' Association, a forum for promoting regular contact and interaction between parents and teachers was instituted in a schools through the election of an executive committee from the member population of parents that had children at the school and teachers who worked there. The committee was charged with the responsibility of spearheading school programmes. The PTA exerted its influence in activities such as school governance, parents meetings, school open days, sporting activities, fundraising and most recently employment of some teaching and support staff.

The study endeavoured to establish whether parents of children who were intellectually challenged were involved in the education of their children. If they were involved, to what extent were they doing so?

### **1.1 Theoretical Frame Work**

This Study is grounded in the overlapping spheres of influence theory (Epstein et al. 1997). The theory takes recognition of the fact that children learn and grow in three major environments: the family, the school and the community. These spheres of interaction exert their influence to engage, guide, energize and motivate the children.

The assumption was that if children with special educational needs felt cared for and encouraged in multiple reinforcing environments, they were more

likely to perform better and stay in schools longer. This was particularly important for children who were intellectually challenged who require staying longer in school due to their slower progression pace.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Although the benefits of involving parents in the education of their intellectually challenged children were acknowledged in Zambia (MoE 1996), the degree to which parents had been involved in Special Units has not been evaluated. It was important to conduct such a study in order to ensure that as far as possible, parents' potential contributions were fully utilised in the education process of their children.

## **1.3 Main Objective**

The main objective of the study was to find out the extent of parents' involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children in the Special Units.

## **1.4 Specific Objectives**

1. To find out the procedures that were in place for parental involvement in the special units.
2. To find out how parents were involved in the education of their intellectually challenged children.
3. To identify barriers to parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children.

4. To identify areas in which parents could be supported for enhanced involvement in the education of their children.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. Are there procedures in place that guide the special unit on how to involve parents in the education of intellectually challenged children?
2. How are parents involved in the education of their children?
3. What are the barriers to parental involvement?
4. How can parents be supported for enhanced involvement in the education of their children?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it was hoped that it could motivate the Ministry of Education into initiating or strengthening policies that facilitate parental involvement in the education of intellectually challenged children in schools. Similarly, Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) could be obliged to consider special educational needs issues in their programmes. Also parents would be cajoled into organizing themselves into a pressure group that would coordinate their efforts and make their presence more visible. It was further hoped that the findings would stimulate interested stakeholders on the provision of vocational skills training for the intellectually challenged children

whose educational attainments were usually limited. This would enable the children prepare for life in the community.

## **1.7 Operational Definition Of Terms**

The following terms in the study are defined as follows:

### **Disability**

It is a loss, reduction or problem of a functional ability of an individual resulting from some structural abnormality or injury of the body.

### **Intellectually challenged**

Children who are intellectually challenged have a cognitive disability that manifests in a person through a reduced cognitive (intellectual) ability, limited adaptive behaviour and the need for support to participate fully in the community (Grossman, 1983).

### **Special Educational Need**

It is a need that exists in a child whose disability prevents such a child from accessing education in an environment where 'ordinary' peers are able to do so.

### **Special Unit**

A class room or a number of class rooms in a Basic or High School set aside specifically for the use of children with special educational needs.

## **Parent**

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1987), it refers to a biological or foster mother and father of a person or animal. In this study, it will include a category of all adults who might carry the primary responsibility of a child's health, development and education. It includes both biological and foster mother and father, siblings and members of the extended family.

## **Parental Involvement**

It is the action of a parent which registers interest in the education of a child through a variety of ways, such as participating in policy making activities, supervising home work, attending school open days, and school meetings regularly or even teaching.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The literature review on parental involvement on the education of intellectually challenged children is presented in four sub-headings namely: parental involvement practices in the education of intellectually challenged children, collaboration between parents and teachers in the education of intellectually challenged children, communication between parents and teachers, barriers to parental involvement in the education of intellectually challenged children and support to parents for enhanced involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children.

Research confirms that parental involvement is a powerful influence on children's achievement in school (Henderson & Barla, 1994). When parents are involved in their children' education, children attend school more regularly, complete more homework, improve school performance, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviour. This is particularly true for children at risk of failure such as intellectually challenged children.

Some parents may have the time to get involved in many ways. Others may only have the time for one or two activities. Nonetheless, whatever level of involvement, if parents get involved and stay involved they can make a big

difference, as President Bill Clinton once stated 'parents who know their children's teachers and help with the homework and teach their kids right from wrong ... these parents can make the difference' (A to Z Teacher Stuff, 2005).

Several writers (Atkin et al, 1988; Seligman, 1979; Griffith & Hamilton, 1984; Topping, 1986; Featherstone, 1981; Sullivan, 1988) have documented research evidence indicating that there are several contributions that parents can make to the education of their children. They have cited the fact that all parents can contribute valuable information about their children with special needs because they have known them throughout their lives. Yet, it has been noted that the participation of minority parents is far less than that of their mainstream counterparts (Harry, 1992; Huag & Gibbs, 1992). Nonetheless, the researchers argue that effective parental involvement is only possible to the extent where there are established procedures and policies to support such involvement.

## **2.1 Parental Involvement Practices in the education of intellectually challenged children**

There are a number of benefits to be derived from involving parents in the education of their children in general. Acknowledgement of the benefits of parental involvement in the British school system, were made as far back as the early 1960s as a result of the Plowden Report (DES, 1967). The report had set out recommendations and guidelines that could assist schools on the

issue of parental involvement in the education of their children. The absence of such guidelines rendered parental involvement none-effective.

While the 1981 British Education Act improved upon previous legislation by granting parents the right to choose the school they wanted their child to go to and that school would be compelled to accept their child, the 1984 Act included recommendations from the Warnock Report whose focus was only on children with special educational needs. Not only did parents acquire a right to request the school authorities to conduct a formal assessment of their children's special needs but also to be involved in the assessment process itself. In addition the act provided for the consideration of parents' views on whether or not to integrate an intellectually challenged child into an ordinary school.

In addition, the 1993 British Act underscores the importance of schools working with parents through the establishments of partnerships and institutions with written policies and procedures to guide the operations of such partnerships (Hornby, 1995).

In the United States of America, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, emphasises the inclusion of parents in the decision-making process for learners who are intellectually challenged at all levels of their education from commencement of referral, assessment, eligibility, planning and accountability (Apling & Jones, 2000).

In Ireland the Education for persons with special needs education Act -2004, Provides for the greater involvement of parents in the education of their children and decision making (Oasis, 2005).

Although education is under the jurisdiction of provinces in Canada, most of them require legal parent participation in assessment or programming decisions (Smith & Foster, 1997). Also in British Columbia, the 2004 Ministry of Education Special Needs Student Order, stipulates that parents of children with special needs be consulted regarding the children's education placement and programme planning (Lai & Iahiyame, 2004).

On the other hand, in Zambia while there has been policies to express government commitment to educate children with special educational needs (MoE, 1977; 1992; 1996) there is still no law enacted to provide legal status on the education of children with special educational needs in general and intellectually challenged children in particular. However, the Ministry of Education initiated the introduction of Parents and Teachers' Association (GRZ, 1976) to pave way for the involvement of parents in school activities. In addition the Ministry of Education restructuring programme included an element of decentralisation of activities to the lower levels of the education structure. Decentralisation has led to the establishment of Education Boards at district level, in High Schools and Colleges of Education (MoE, 2001). Education Boards have given communities an opportunity to get more involved in school affairs.

By nature, children with special educational needs including those who were intellectually challenged were a minority in Zambian schools, numbering 4, 656 compared to 243, 336 'ordinary' pupils in Lusaka District (MoE, 2005), their parents followed suit. Since success at elections was determined by large votes, parents of children with special educational needs were rarely elected to the executive committee of the Parents Teachers' Association. This deterred their participation at higher levels of decision making.

In addition, the very fact that there was no law that regulated enrolment into school for intellectually challenged children in Zambia greatly disadvantaged them. Intellectually challenged children were left at the mercy of school head teachers whether to accept them or not in their schools. Even where they were allowed to be enrolled, school authorities portrayed negative attitudes towards them (Kalabula, 1991). This was despite the fact that the Ministry of Education has committed itself to providing access, equity and quality of education to children with special educational needs (MoE, 1977; 1992; and 1996).

## **2.2 Collaboration between Parents and Teachers in the education of intellectually challenged children**

Some studies on parental involvement have found that collaboration between parents and teachers is a key factor in the education of children, as demonstrated by the Portage Project, an early intervention programme established for children with delayed development (Shearer and Shearer,

1972). The programme emphasises establishment of partnerships between teachers and parents. The aim was to empower parents to facilitate development of their children. The concept of the Portage Project has since been adapted and used in many countries including Zambia (White and Cameron, 1988, Broillette et al., 1993). Parental involvement in the education of their children is so important that any educational programme without parental support is not likely to succeed (Simpson and Fielder 1989).

Most parents were willing and able to collaborate with teachers by reinforcing classroom programmes at home. Gascoigne (1993) reports on a class development of severely retarded children who were being taught the use of Makaton; a relatively simple signing system for purposes of giving them a concept of language. Since it was found to be helpful, the teacher decided to extend instruction to parents as a way of providing an opportunity to pupils to maximise their communication skills. The programme was reported to have been beneficial to children because it improved their communication skills. The pupils had an opportunity to practice at home with their parents what they had learnt at school, thereby perfecting their skill.

Although there has been some very persuasive arguments presented in education literature to support parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children, some parents were illiterate and not able to help with academic work. Others were not willing to carry out work at home with their children. A mother was reported not to be reinforcing the

independence that the school was promoting in her daughter by not according her an opportunity to conduct activities for daily living (ADL) on her own, such as needlessly dressing her up when the girl could do some of it by herself (Gascoigne, 1993).

Lunts (2005) reports that parents can be involved in their children's education regardless of their social standing, education attainment and it works for all children at all grades and levels. The benefits may include children getting better grades, staying longer in school, being better behaved and having more positive attitudes. Parental involvement is also seen as an investment. It is suggested that children who graduate at higher levels attain higher earning power in their life time. Yet parental involvement is an aspect that was overlooked in the education of the intellectually challenged children. This suggested that many parents did not realise how important it was to get involved in the education of their children.

One of the arguments for parental involvement was that greatest gains were achieved when parents acted as teachers to their own children (Hornby, 1995). At pre-school level, a study by Berrueta-Clement et al., (1984) was in support of the argument in which weekly home visits by the teachers, and school visits by the mothers resulted in notable increased academic achievement and decreased need for special education placement. It has been suggested that the positive results of the programme were due to the

involvement of the parents. The study was also noted for having promoted early intervention in children who were intellectually challenged.

A study at basic school level (Tizard et al., 1982) compared the effects of parental involvement in their children's reading between those who read aloud to their parents from books sent from school two to four times a week against those who attended additional specialist tutorial in reading at school. The results showed that children who read to parents at home made significant greater gains in reading.

Wolfendale (1992) is of the view that assessment should be conducted under the umbrella of a partnership between parents and teachers. Doing so facilitates sharing of information with both parents and teachers advancing their concerns about the child. Openly viewing of information of a child between parents and teachers builds into a collaborative partnership of the two. Under a partnership environment, parents were free to learn what steps could be taken as a result of the assessment and what part they could play to facilitate learning.

A suggestion has further been advanced to the effect that in fact the quality of the content of parental contribution to the process of assessment squarely matches that of professionals (Wolfendale, 1992). This was attributed to the fact that parents had extensive knowledge of their children's development from birth onwards from which they could contribute comments about any

specific weaknesses they had observed or particular strengths that may have been demonstrated, out of which parents could make realistic appraisals of their children.

### **2.3 Communication between Parents and Teachers**

The collaboration between parents and teachers can be further enhanced by good communication channels between them. Cystes et al, 1979; McConkey, 1985; Pugh & De' Ath, 1984 have written on the importance of communication between teachers and parents. They are agreed that all parents need to have effective channels of communication with all teachers who work with their children. Most parents want to know how their children are getting on at school.

In a study on involving parents in the education of their children, Ndhlovu (2005) reported that all parents agreed that invitations to school open days where they were informed of their children's performance would enhance their involvement in the education of their children.

A less formal but quite effective way of communicating with parents is the use of home-school books, (Gascoigne, 1993). It is conducted in different ways. One way was where the school made entries about the child's activities at school, providing guidelines to parents on what aspects to observe or implement. In response, the parent would write down what they may have observed, and the banter was conducted back and forth.

Atkenson & Forehand (1979) and Kelley, (1990) reported that establishment of a communication structure between home and school can yield significant benefits in the education of intellectually challenged children. The use of Home-School Behaviour programmes or 'Home-school Notes' was said to be successful for children with behavioural problems, The parent provided agreed upon incentives to the child when the teacher sent a written report of appropriate display of behaviour by a child.

Kalabula (1991) asserts that due to lack of communication between the school and parents, parents did not know the subjects their children were taking at school. This was as a result of most parents having had no contact with the school or special unit. Such a situation brought out dissatisfaction in the parents. In support of the view above, Mandyata (2002) states that parents of children with disabilities were not encouraged to participate in the education of their children because they were not allowed to make choices of what their children should learn. Every child was expected to fit into a standard curriculum.

#### **2.4 Barriers to Parental Involvement**

Although many parents are likely to be interested in participating in parent education programmes aimed at promoting their children's progress, they may not know where to start from. Schools must provide them with opportunities and support they need to become involved (Henderson & Barla, 1994).

The Regional Alliance Access (2005) report that barriers to parental involvement may arise from sources such as constraints faced by teachers on one hand, and challenges and pressures that parents faced on another hand. Other barriers were related to language, social economic differences between parents and teachers and support staff at the school. For many schools these barriers were formidable obstacles to increasing parents' involvement in their children's' education. Johnson et al. (2000) observed in their study that language and educational attainment differences between teachers and parents can make communication and parent participation in school activities difficult. Many parents who were non-English speaking where the official medium of instruction and communication was English were traditionally uninvolved in the education of their children.

Also, though most teachers were committed to work collaboratively with parents, they were ill-equipped to do so due to lack of skills (Hornby, 1995). In most teacher training programmes both initial training of teachers and post-experience in-service training did not include a component on parental involvement

Turnbull and Turnbull (1986) and Ojala (2003) have indicated that teachers in mainstream found it stressful to deal with parents of children who were intellectually challenged who alternated between the special class and the mainstream. They argue that mainstream teachers had negative attitudes to children with disabilities. Kalabula (1991) and Mandyata (2002) also state

that mainstream teachers were not keen to handle children with disabilities including those with intellectual impairments. Teachers considered such children a burden because they did not have knowledge and skills to handle them. Kasonde –Ngandu & Moberg (2001), in a study on inclusive education, reported that most teachers conceded to not having knowledge and skills required to teach children with disabilities.

Equally, parents also found communication with professionals such as teachers stressful due to certain attitudes where parents were viewed as problematic simply because they had children with special needs. Such attitudes led to parent's ideas not being given the credence they deserved. However, experiences in other schools and communities indicate that it was possible for parents and teachers to work together to overcome these barriers in productive and mutually satisfying ways (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

A mid-term review of the Finnish Association on Mental Retardation (FAMR) /*Technical Vocational and Entrepreneur Training Authority (TEVETA)* partnership in Zambia by Mukela and Kanyemba in 1998, reported that most parents of children with disabilities had a negative attitude towards the potential and capabilities of the children. Tibebu (1995) also reported that intellectually challenged children are one of the disability groups for whom parents had negative attitudes. This resulted in parents' reluctance to invest in the education of such children in preference to their 'normal' ones.

Hornby (1995) reported that though parents were willing to carry out work at home, and contribute much more to their children's education they were incapacitated by the fact that their resources were already fully committed to meeting other equally pressing needs at home with nothing extra to spare. Also Ojala (2003) observed that some challenges affecting the families' potential to assist in their children's' education related to poverty. Parents were willing to contribute some teaching and learning materials, but could not afford to do so.

Furthermore a recent study by Ndhlovu (2005) revealed that some parents were prevented from fully participating in the education of their children due to long distances between special education units and parents' residences.

## **2.5 Support to parents**

Many schools that have strong parental involvement have nourished and strengthened partnerships by tapping the support available in their local communities and beyond (Handerson & Barla, 1994). Collaborative efforts to provide schools and parents with the tools they need to support learning can include partnerships with community agencies, colleges and universities.

Hornby (1995) asserts that Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) and Behavioural group training (BGT), are widely known programmes for group parent education. Parents involved in such groups acquire skills that enable

them communicate better with their intellectually challenged children. Effective communication between parent and child facilitates favourable interaction between the two as the parents get involved in the education of their children. Such parental involvement not only promoted children's development but also helped to increase parental confidence levels thereby facilitate their adaptation of the situation they found themselves in.

Volunteer parents who themselves have children who are intellectually challenged (McConkey, 1985; Hornby, 1988; Hornby, 1995) provide parent to parent support through the parent to parent schemes which exist in many countries in varying models. The Zambian version 'Parent-Partnership Association for Children with Special Needs (PPACSN)' became operational in 2000. Its major objective include empowering parents to deal with their children's disabilities by provide training and information on disabilities, promoting the rights of children with disabilities and rehabilitating children with disabilities so that they become productive independent members of society.

Ndhlovu (2005) reported on a joint project that was established in Zambia in 1994 between the Zambia Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (ZACALD) and the Finnish Association on Mental Retardation (FAMR). The main objective was to provide vocational training to intellectually challenged children. The project was administered through the Technical and

Vocational Entrepreneur Authority (TEVETA). The resources were supplied by parents in Finland of children with mental retardation.

Features of studies on parental involvement from the 1960s to the present consistently indicate that they were carried out in developed countries. Comparative studies from African countries were not available. Yet such countries also had children with special educational needs which include the intellectually challenged children. This is a big gap in the field pertaining to parental involvement.

## **2.7 Summary of Related Literature**

The review of literature in the major areas of this study has revealed some significant findings which have been summed up. Several writers (Henderson, 1994; Sullivan, 1988; Topping, 1986) have documented research evidence indicating a catalogue of benefits that emanate from parental involvement in the education of intellectually challenged children. Some other literature (Harry, 1992; Huag & Gibbs, 1992) has lighted the fact that effective parental involvement was possible only where procedures and policies to support such involvement were already established. Also extensive research (Kalabula, 1991; Kasonde-Ngandu & Moberg, 2001; Mandyata, 2002; Ndhlovu, 2005) confirmed that major barriers to parental involvement were lack of skills and negative attitudes by both parents and teachers alike.

Although the literature indicated areas of parental involvement in the western world (Berrueta-Clement et al.; 1984; Gascoigne, 1993; Hornby, 1995), it was important for the present study to establish the nature of such involvement in Zambia. There is no documented research in Zambia, particularly in Basic Schools in Lusaka District that has established the extent of parents' involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children in the Special Units. It was to this effect that this study sought to evaluate the extent of parents' involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Study Design**

The chosen study design was a survey. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. Qualitative methodology was more appropriate because it provided an in depth understanding of issues at hand. It was also suitable for studying little-understood phenomena (Yin, 1989). Since the involvement of parents in the education of their intellectually challenged children is little researched in Zambia, the study was likened to a little-understood phenomenon. In addition, Ojala (2003) has noted that qualitative approach was suitable for documenting peoples' beliefs and interpretations of reality as well as their actions in that reality.

Quantitative approach was applied through the use of a questionnaire on teachers and head teachers, for purposes of maintaining objectivity in the study.

#### **3.1 Population**

The study's target population comprised all parents of intellectually challenged children, teachers and head teachers at all nineteen (19) special units in Lusaka district of Lusaka Province in Zambia. Parents were targeted

because the study was aimed at investigating their involvement. Teachers were included for cross validation.

### **3.2 Sample**

A sample of seventy-three (73) participants was used. This comprised fifty-six (56) parents / care-givers of the intellectually challenged children, twelve (12) special education teachers of the intellectually challenged pupils and five (5) head teachers of the schools hosting the special units in the five selected Basic Schools in Lusaka District. The schools were: Arthur Wina, Chilenje, George Central, North Mead and Woodlands.

### **3.3 Sampling Technique**

Convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants of the study. The choice of the technique was perceived appropriate due to the low number of special units, parents, and teachers for children who are intellectually challenged.

### **3.4 Data Collection Instruments**

#### **3.4.1 Focus Group Discussions Schedule**

One Focus Group Discussion was held at each Special Unit in the five basic schools. The group size varied from one unit to the other. The parent group sizes were: Nine at Northmead; seven at Woodlands 'A'; thirteen at Chilenje; fifteen at George Central and twelve at Arthur Wina basic schools. The FGD discussions with parents were guided by questions adapted from a checklist

by Mittler (1997, Appendix A). The focus group discussion was the preferred choice of data collection from parents in order to draw on the explicit use of group interaction to generate data and insights that would be unlikely to emerge without the interaction found in a group. The schedule of questions was pre-translated in Ibibemba and Cinyanja the two most common Zambian languages spoken in Lusaka District in order to cater for parents that were not fluent in English.

**Table 1: Socio-economic status of parents in the focus group discussions**

OCCUPATION	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL														
	Grade 0-4			Grade 5-7			Grade 8-9			Form 1-3			Grade 10-12		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Marketeer	-	4 (100.0%)	4 (100.0%)	-	5 (100.0%)	5 (100.0%)	1 (50.0%)	1 (50.0%)	2 (100.0%)	-	-	-	-	-	-
House wife	-	1 (100.0%)	4 (100.0%)	-	5 (100.0%)	5 (100.0%)	-	4 (100.0%)	4 (100.0%)	-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	-	2 (100.0%)	2 (100.0%)
Cross border trader	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 (50.0%)	1 (50.0%)	2 (100.0%)	-	-	-	-	4	-
Mechanic	-	-	-	1 (100.0%)	-	1 (100.0%)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 (100.0%)	-	2 (100.0%)
Designer	-	-	-	-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	-	-	-	1 (100.0%)	-	1 (100.0%)
Taylor	-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	-	-	-	-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	-	-	-	-	-	-
General Worker	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Security Officers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 (100.0%)	-	2 (100.0%)
Nurse	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 (100.0%)	2 (100.0%)
Typist / Secretary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	-	-	-	-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)
Driver	1 (100.0%)	-	1 (100.0%)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Table 1: Socio-economic status of parents in the focus group discussions (continued)**

OCCUPATION	Grade 0-4			Grade 5-7			Grade 8-9			Form 1-3			Grade 10-12		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Artist	-	-		-	-		-	-		1 (100.0%)	-	1 (100.0%)	-	-	
Accounts Clerk	-	-		-	-		-	-		-	-		-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)
Pensioner	-	-		-	-		-	-		1 (100.0%)	-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	-	1 (100.0%)
Unemployed	-	-		-	-		-	-		-	-		1 (100.0%)	-	1 (100.0%)
Plumber	-	-		-	-		-	-		-	-		1 (100.0%)	-	1 (100.0%)
Dependant	-	-		-	-		-	-		-	-		-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)
Chef	-	-		-	-		-	-		-	-		1 (100.0%)	-	1 (100.0%)
Office Orderly	-	-		-	-		-	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	-	-		-	-	-

### **3.4.2 Questionnaire**

A questionnaire (Appendix B) was used to secure quantitative data from both the special education teachers and the head teachers at the five Basic special units.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections; section A and B. Section A was used to collect background information such as qualifications of the teachers and head teachers, and how long they had been at the unit or school respectively. Section B sought to establish conditions in place that facilitated parental involvement.

The questionnaire sought to establish teachers and head teachers' perceptions on parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children. The questionnaire was preferred because it enabled participants to have the freedom to make their responses at their own time.

### **3.4.3 Unstructured Interviews**

Unstructured interviews were held with teachers and head teachers in order to probe further on some of the responses supplied in the questionnaire.

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedures**

Five focus group discussions with parents were conducted; one at each school on different days during the period July - September. Discussions were held in the special education classrooms in the mornings. In one unit the discussion

was held after pupils had knocked off. In three units alternative classroom space was allocated to the class. Only one unit had two special classrooms, the discussion took place in one of them without affecting pupils' learning. Focus group discussions lasted two hours on average. Time prolonged mainly because parents did not come at the same time. Some parents were still coming long after the discussions were already in progress. This necessitated repeating the questions to accommodate views of parents who had come late.

The Focus group discussions were mainly conducted in English. However, interpretations of questions were provided in Cinyanja and Icibemba for those who could not fully understand English. Questions were read out from a prepared translated schedule by one of the participants in each group in Cinyanja, the Icibemba version was read out by the researcher.

In order to capture the views of the respondents accurately an audio tape and recorder were used during the focus group discussions with the parents and during interviews with the teachers, and head teachers. This was done with consent from the parents, teachers and head teachers. In order to allow for free flow of information respondents were assured of confidentiality of their contributions. The findings of the discussions were typed out a few days later in order to make a report while the memory was still fairly fresh.

Information was obtained from the twelve teachers, and five head teachers of intellectually challenged children using a questionnaire that was administered

by the researcher. Unstructured interviews were held with the teachers and head teachers to probe and seek clarifications on responses from the questionnaire. Each one of them was interviewed individually and separately. Head teachers were interviewed in their offices while teachers were interviewed in the special education classes after pupils had knocked off. The interviews lasted from forty-five to sixty minutes.

At two of the five units, questionnaires were administered to the teachers and the head teacher a few days prior to the date of the School Open Days.

At the end of the discussions with parents, they registered their approval because discussions caused them to reflect on their level of involvement in the education of their children. While the teachers also expressed that it was a worth while exercise that enabled them to reflect on ways of working together with parents.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Data from the focus group discussions was analysed qualitatively commencing with identification of emerging themes and sub-themes while in the field.

According to Patton (2002), the first level of data analysis in a cross-case study should be to capture the details of the individuals' case. In line with this view, analysis of data began with case reports of each special unit. The aim was not to compare cases but to examine the information holistically in order

to identify patterns of data. After reading through all information, the researcher categorised data under some themes and sub-themes which were derived from the research questions, questionnaire, interview questions and data obtained.

The researcher marked data concerning each case with a different colour for easy identification. Then cut out the pieces of data placing them under the different themes in order to organise the data in a comprehensible way. The researcher then identified answers to the research questions. The first question was about the existence of procedures for parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children. The researcher put together all the responses from the parents, teachers, and head teachers so as to have an idea of their views on the 'procedures' theme. The researcher then moved to the second research question on how parents were being involved in the education of their children. The third question on barriers to parental involvement and finally the last question on how parents could be supported for enhanced involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children were treated in a similar manner. The data grouped in this fashion was studied in order to deduce information that was important for reporting.

In addition triangulation was used to establish validity of what was claimed by any of the three groups; the head teachers, the teachers and the parents.

This was done by checking what was said by any of the three groups with another (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2002).

Structured questions in the questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate descriptive statistics. Frequencies and percentages were used to generate tables and charts. The views of subjects were presented in form of tables, using percentages, bar and pie charts.

### **3.7 Data Interpretation**

Data was interpreted according to the findings in Chapter four. The researcher adopted the use of direct quotations from the participants in order to 'raise their voices'. Also summaries were made for easy grasping of the essential information. In addition the use of descriptive statistics made possible the presentations of the views of participants in form of tables, using percentages, bar and pie charts.

### **3.8 Challenges Encountered in the Field**

Parents in one unit were known by the school to shun invitations by the school. In order to attract a positive response from parents, they were informed through the letter of invitation that they would have an opportunity to observe a teaching and learning session in respect of their children. In addition they would meet a Ministry of Education Official. (Only 7 out of the 17 expected parents attended the meeting).

Not all parents could communicate in English adequately. One of the participants in each group offered to read out the questions from a Cinyanja pre translated schedule for the benefit of those who required the translation. While the Ibibemba translation was read out by the researcher. Care was taken to avoid distortion of the meaning due to language medium.

### **3.9 Ethical Consideration**

In all research, ethical considerations should be taken into account (patton, 2002). Equally in this study names of participants were not included. Therefore, all participants have remained anonymous.

### **3.10 Limitations of the Study**

For purposes of being objective and self- critical of the study undertaken, the researcher pays attention to some factors that challenged the work. These include hierarchy of the researcher in relation to some respondents; inadequate time; limited literature on the topic from developing countries for reference purposes.

#### **3.10.1 Hierarchy**

Teachers may have been constrained to express themselves fully to someone above their hierarchy, though the researcher explained that they were being consulted in their capacity as experts while the researcher was a learner. The researcher is presently a Principal Education Standards Officer for Special Education, which is relatively a very senior post in the Ministry of Education.

*Also the fact that the researcher goes in schools to monitor the quality of teaching, some teachers if not all of them, could not help feeling that they were being evaluated.*

### **3.10.2 Inadequate Time**

Lack of adequate time set aside against competing demands was a constraint on the conduct of the study.

### **3.10.3 Limited Studies**

Scanty literature on the topic 'parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children' in Zambia and other developing countries created a limitation on points of reference.

## **3.11 Delimitations**

In qualitative inquiry, findings relate to a particular time and context and may not be transferable to different contexts (Patton, 2002). Similarly, the findings of this study may not be applicable to other Special Units that were not part of the study. Therefore, generalisations of the findings should be done with caution.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results of the study. The presentation is made under the headings derived from the objectives of the study namely: existence of procedures for parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children; how parents were involved in the education of their children; barriers to parental involvement; and how parents could be supported for enhanced involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children in special units in Lusaka District.

The findings are presented in two sections. Section one reports parents' views from the focus group discussions and section two deals with teachers' responses from the questionnaire.

## 4.1 Section One: Parents' Views from Focus Group Discussions

### 4.1.1 Existence of Procedures for Parental Involvement in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children

Parents were asked to indicate whether there were any laid down procedures to be followed for parental involvement in the education of the intellectually challenged children in the special units under study. Their responses were as shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Existence of Procedures for Parental Involvement**

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	45	80.3
Not sure	11	19.7

As can be seen from Table 2 above, most of the parents, forty-five (80.3%) said "not at all", while eleven (19.7%) said that they were not sure of the existence of any procedures to follow for them to be involved in the education of their intellectually challenged children.

For the most part, parents felt strongly that the Unit did not encourage them to participate. A female parent complained thus:

*"Tika bwera ku Open Day ba ma tiuza kuti ngati kuli bvuto ti nga bwere thawi ili yonse , koma siba tiudza mobwelela ku sukulu."* (When we attend the Open Day, the teacher would tell us that whenever we have a problem with the child, we should come to school but the teacher does not say how to approach the school").

At another Special Unit, a male parent had this to say:

*"a clear cut method of being involved is not there, in my case it just happened that the teacher who was teaching my child up to Grade seven was very much interested in the child, so each time we came for an Open Day she would give us advice, and whenever she needed any of us, either the mother or myself would be called upon".*

#### **4.1.2 Whether the Special Units had a Clearly Written Policy on Parental Involvement in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

Parents were also asked to indicate as to whether the special units had a clearly written policy on parental involvement.

All the parents fifty-six (100.0%) in the study said that there was no clearly written policy on parental involvement.

For example a female parent summed it as follows:

*"Lamulo palibe. Monga ine ninga fune kuti lamulo likhalepo".* (There is no written policy at all, as for me I would like such a policy to be put in place). She further went on to say: *"Panthawi yo panga lamulo naise makolo tiyenela kuka pezekako".* (At the time of formulating the policy we should be part and parcel of the policy formulation).

#### **4.1.3 Knowledge of Rights and Responsibilities**

On the question as to whether parents knew their rights and responsibilities in their involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children.

The study showed that all fifty-six (100%) Parents did not know their rights in the education of their children. However, they were very clear on their responsibilities towards providing for their children to ensure that they were

provided with necessities that enabled them to access school in a similar way to other children.

Two mothers had this to say:

*'Ba phunzisi bama tiuza kuti po bwela mwana ku sukulu ise makolo tiyenele kumu konzela ca kudya', 'the teachers have told us that before the child comes to school the child should eat at home',*

*"Ni ncito ya makolo ku ona kuti mwana ali ense a enela ku enda ku sukulu anga nkhole ali pa wheel chair aenela ku enda ku sukulu", (it is the duty of the parents to ensure that every child whether on a wheel chair or not has a right to go to school). (Mother of a wheel chair bound child).*

#### **4.1.4 How Parents were Involved in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

A question was asked to parents which sought to find out how parents were involved in the education of their children. From the findings of the study the following activities were cited: Assessment and placement, homework, open days, provision of teaching and learning materials and contribution to refreshments.

##### **4.1.4.1 Assessment and Placement**

All fifty-six (100%) parents said that they contributed to children's assessment by providing the historical background information concerning the children's condition. However, placement was influenced by nearness to a school that housed a special unit that catered for the disability that a child had. Thus the parents' involvement on placement was limited to providing their residential

addresses. Most parents did not seem to appreciate the important role they performed by providing historical information to the extent that they did not consider it as part of being involved in the education of their children. As evidenced by one parent saying:

*"Bana ni uza kuti ni fotokoze mwa nene mwana ana yambila ku onekela kufikila mwa mene a lili lelo. Koma mapepala a kucipatala nina bapasa".* (I was asked to explain the child's condition from its commencement progressively to the present state, yet I had given them documents from the hospital.)

#### **4.1.4.2 Consultation on Curriculum**

On the issue of parental consultation on curriculum offered to the intellectually challenged children in the special units, the study revealed that all the parents fifty-six (100%) said they were not consulted at all.

#### **4.1.4.3 Parents' Involvement in the PTA**

The study revealed that parents were not actively involved in the Parents and Teachers association activities.

**Table 3: PTA Meetings**

PTA Meetings	Frequency	Percent
Invited but not attended	16	28.58
Not aware of meetings	40	71.42
Total	56	100.0

Table 3 above shows that forty (71.42%) parents were not made aware of the occurrences of the PTA activities in the school which the Special Units

were part and parcel. In addition, sixteen (28.58%) parents who were invited to attend the PTA meetings did not attend the meetings.

#### **4.1.4.4 Home Work**

With regard to home work, the results shown in Table 4 below indicate that fourteen (25.0%) parents said the children were assisted with their daily living activities while nine (16.0%) parents said that they were assisted with academic work. Thirty-three (59.0%) parents said that the children were not given any home work.

**Table 4: Home Work**

Type of activity	Frequency	Percent
Activity for Daily Living (ADL)	14	25.0
Academic work	9	16.0
No home work given	33	59.0
Total	56	100.0

For those who said the children were assisted in academic work, they said that they did this once in a week on average. As for the ones that said the children were assisted with daily living activities they said they did this three times in a week.

Some of the parents who helped their children in academic and ADL activities expressed satisfaction and pride with the results of their efforts. This was evidenced by a female parent who said:

*"I am glad I followed the teachers' advice to encourage my child to blow balloons and to face me and observe the movement of my mouth when talking to him. Now he can talk!"*

Another female parent said:

*"At long last my daughter has learnt the association between numbers and concrete objects".*

There were, however, still some parents who did not cooperate with the teachers. They found it easier to do everything for their children, rather than letting the children do things for themselves at their own pace.

One female parent could not assist the child with ADL saying:

*"She is very slow; I cannot wait for her to dress herself up because she takes forever. Instead I just dress her up so that we can all be on time".*

#### **4.1.4.5 School Open Days**

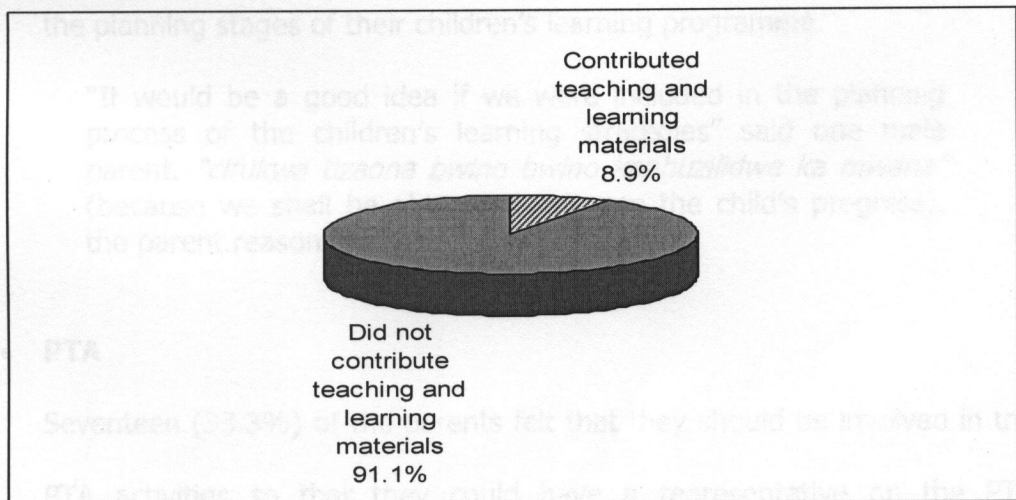
At the time of data collection in September only two (2) out of the five (5) units under study had held one Open Day meeting each in the year. The open days were held a week after the researcher had interviewed the teachers and the head teacher, but before meeting the parents. Almost all parents at the two units twenty one (75.0%) attended the meetings. Only a few seven (25.0%) did not attend.

In one unit three (33.3%) parents preferred not to take home school reports but instead to leave them at the school after they had discussed them with the teacher. The reason advanced was the fear of other children in the household getting to know the level of performance of their sibling which would cause them to ridicule the child.

*"Ninga fune kuti report ingazisala kwamene kuno cifukwa anzake banga museke ngati baona ati sacita bwino ku sukulu banga kambe kuti cafeluka cifukwa nico sokenezeka".* "I wish to have the report retained at school because when his friends become aware of his poor performance, they will tease him" (Male parent).

#### 4.1.4.6 Contribution towards Teaching and Learning Materials

On the issue of parents contributing towards teaching and learning materials, very few parents (8.9%) said that that they contributed the materials while the rest (91.1%) did not contribute. Figure 1 below show the percentage of parents who did and did not contribute towards the teaching and learning materials for their children.



**Figure 1: Contribution towards Teaching and Learning Materials by Parents**

#### **4.1.4.7 Contribution towards Refreshments**

The study revealed that eight (14.3%) parents indicated that they contributed towards refreshments in form of ingredients such as sugar, tea, milk or money because most children came to school without having eaten while the rest, forty-eight (85.7%) did not contribute towards refreshments. The refreshments were taken communally at break time, including children whose parents had not contributed.

#### **4.1.4.8 Other Desirable areas of Involvement**

Parents indicated that they wished to be involved in other areas as well.

Thus, in the study, fifty-one (91.0%) parents wished they could further be involved in the following areas:

- **Deciding Goals and Learning Priorities**

Twenty-eight (54.9%) of the parents indicated their wish to be involved in the planning stages of their children's learning programme.

"It would be a good idea if we were included in the planning process of the children's learning strategies" said one male parent. "*cifukwa tizaona bwino bwino kaphuzilidwe ka mwana*" (because we shall be able to clearly see the child's progress), the parent reasoned.

- **PTA**

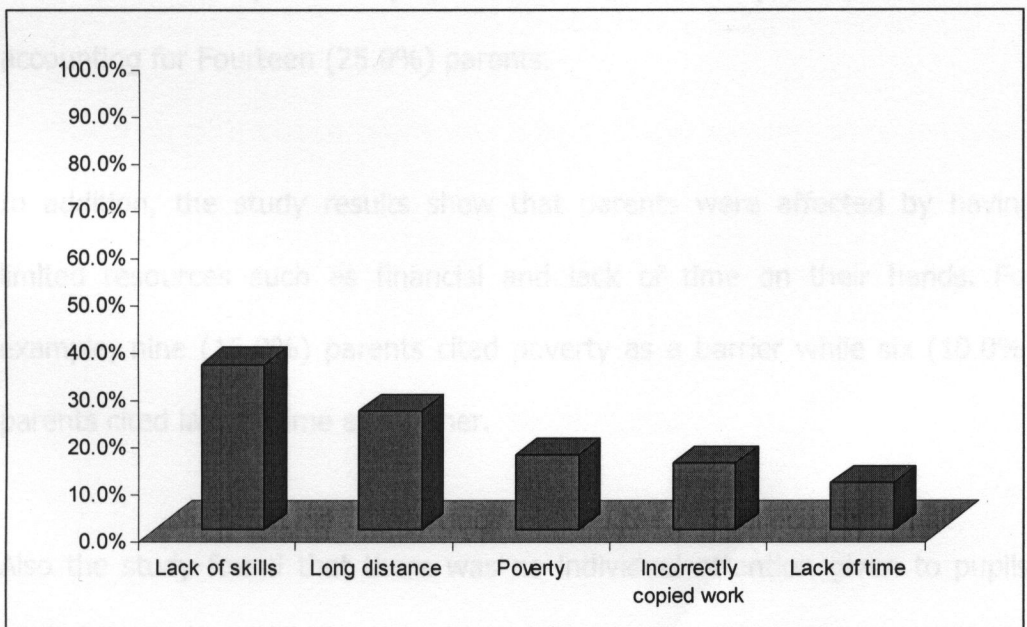
Seventeen (33.3%) of the parents felt that they should be involved in the PTA activities so that they could have a representative on the PTA committee which was a decision making body in the school.

- **Observing Teaching and Learning Process**

Six (11.7%) of the parents were of the view that they should be allowed to observe the teaching and learning process in order to acquire knowledge and skills which they could also apply in helping their children at home.

#### **4.1.5 Barriers to Parental Involvement**

The study showed that some of the barriers that hindered parents from being effectively involved in the education of their intellectually challenged children as identified by the parents were lack of skills, distance to school, incorrectly copied work, poverty and lack of time. Figure 2 below show some barriers to parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children.



**Figure 2: Barriers to Parental Involvement**

In the study, Twenty (35.0%) of the parents cited lack of skills to assist their children with academic and activities for daily living as the greatest barrier.

For example one female parent said she did not know how to help her son to learn how to handle a pencil in order for him to learn to write. She lamented the following:

*"ni ma esa kumuphunzitsa ku kata pensulo kuti akazilemba, koma akonda cabe ku enda enda alibe nthawi yo nkhalansa".*  
(I try to help him learn how to hold a pencil so that he can learn how to write but he never sits still).

Another female parent expressed frustration at her inability to help her child with his school work as the child was temperamental. She said:

*"Kumuphunzitsa sini makwanitsa cifukwa ama kalipa, so ni na vileka".* (I can't manage to teach him because he has a high temper, therefore I have stopped).

Further, long distances between the homes of the children and special units were established by the study as one of the barriers to parental involvement accounting for Fourteen (25.0%) parents.

In addition, the study results show that parents were affected by having limited resources such as financial and lack of time on their hands. For example, nine (16.0%) parents cited poverty as a barrier while six (10.0%) parents cited lack of time as another.

Also the study found that there was no individual attention given to pupils' work by teachers. This resulted in children taking home work that was

incorrectly copied which parents could not understand rendering them incapable of assisting their children. This accounted for eight (14.0%).

#### **4.1.6 How Parents could be Supported for Enhanced Involvement in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

##### **4.1.6.1 Identification and Nurturing of Children's Talents**

When asked how they wished to be supported for enhanced involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children, forty (71.4%) parents were of the view that if teachers assisted in identifying talent inclinations in the children, parents would direct their efforts to nurture the identified talent to fruition. The rest of the parents were in agreement with the sentiment expressed above. For example, one male parent said:

*"I have observed that my child is keen on gardening, I would like the school to facilitate development of that skill as I do at home, this would enhance his productivity in the community".*

Identification of a child's talent was important because an identified talent could be developed at school during prevocational skills programmes. It could also be an indicator that could be harnessed into acquisition of a profession.

##### **4.1.6.2 Accessible Vocational Skills Centres**

The study revealed that most parents appreciated the fact that some of their children would never advance academically to the level of the ordinary children in the main stream and were concerned about their future. To this effect all the parents, fifty-six (100%) showed the desire to have easy entry

mechanism into vocational skills centres for their intellectually challenged children. These centres would cater for skills such as house keeping, tailoring, carpentry and joinery and farming.

One female parent had this to say:

*"Some of our children will never achieve to the level of ordinary children, vocational classes could be introduced for children who cannot advance academically, so that they could learn skills that would help them to look after themselves and function in the community at their optimal level of performance".*

#### **4.1.6.3 Sensitization of Mainstream Teachers on Special Educational Needs Children**

Parents were of the view that the children who were integrated into the mainstream faced negative attitudes from teachers in the mainstream. In view of this, twelve (21.0%) parents who had children in the main stream but still went back to the Unit for special assistance, requested for the school authorities to have the teachers sensitised. For instance a male parent said:

*"I know that slow learners were given extra time during examinations. When I raised the issue with the school I was told that they would merely submit a report to the effect that the boy was a slow learner. In my view, that was not adequate, because they are entitled to extra time".*

#### **4.1.6.4 Pupils' Rating by Level**

The study revealed that forty-six (82.0%) parents were concerned as to whether the grades in levels in the special classes were ever equated to the grading system of regular pupils in the main stream, and wished to have a clarification of the rating.

One female parent enquired as follows:

*"bushe lilya bale sambilila kwali ba ati uyu alesambilila mu Grade 1 nangula mu Grade 2, pantu nshatala ishiba bwino bwino"* (were the children graded in a similar manner to the ordinary children such as Grade one or Grade two?", she asked).

In support of the need to understand the rating another female parent said:

*"a cibanja ba ma funa kudziwa grade ya mene mwana alimo, koma ni ma lephera ku bauza cifukwa si niziwa"*, (my relatives make enquiries concerning the child's grade; I fail to explain because I do not understand the rating).

The above sentiments were conquered by the rest of the parents.

#### **4.1.6.5 Parent Support Groups**

The study found that ten (17.8%) parents felt that it would help if they joined support groups or formed linkages with community based organizations that could support their efforts in securing a future for their children. The rest of the parents were not aware of the existence of support groups.

#### **4.2 Section Two: Teachers' Responses from the Questionnaire**

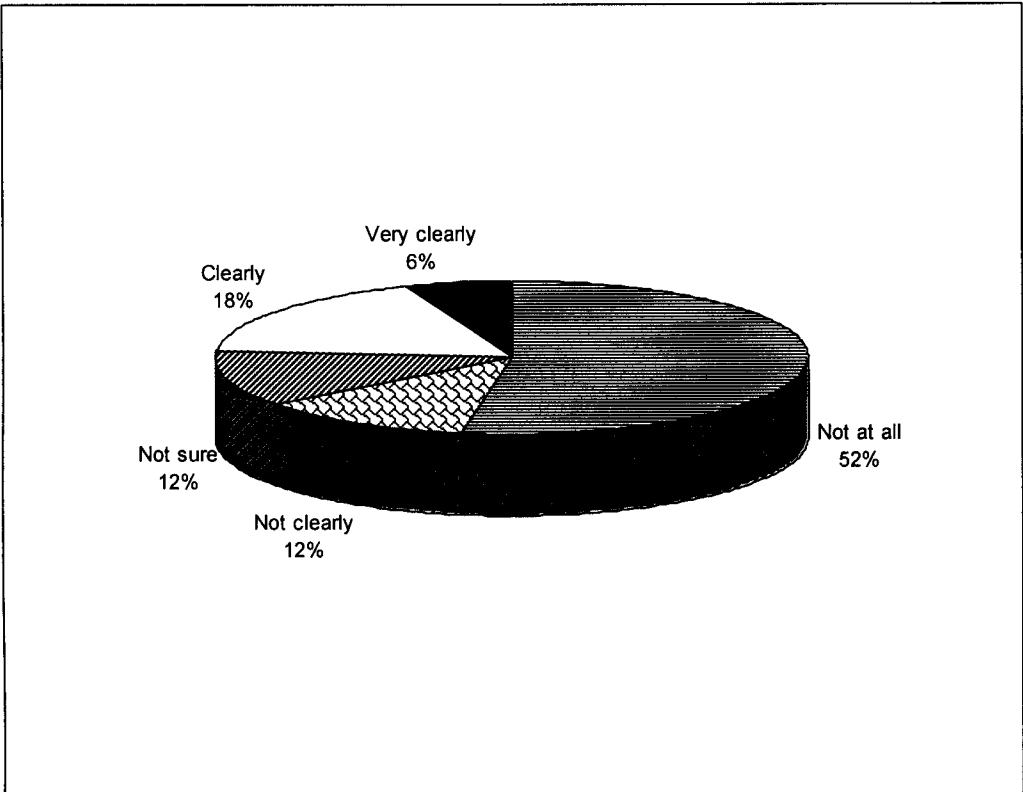
In order to validate parents' views on their involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children, a questionnaire was administered to special education teachers and the head teachers at the five special units from which parents who attended the focus group discussions came from.

#### **4.2.1 Existence Of Procedures for Parental Involvement in the *Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children***

The Teachers were asked to state if there were any procedures in the Special Units for parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children. The findings of the study revealed that two (11.8%) teachers stated that procedures were very much in existence, and another two (11.8%) perceived that procedures for the involvement of parents in the education of their intellectually challenged children in the Special Units were much in existence. One (5.9%) teacher was not sure. On the other hand, ten ((58.8%) teachers indicated that there were traces of procedures but not much and another two (11.8%) teachers stated that there were no procedures at all in Special Units for the involvement of parents in the education of their intellectually challenged children.

#### **4.2.2 Existence of a Clearly Written Policy on Parental Involvement in the Education of their intellectually challenged Children**

As can be seen from Figure 3 below, the study revealed that 52.0% of teachers were of the view that there was no clearly written policy at all existing in the special units for parental involvement in the education of their children.



**Figure 3: Teachers’ Perceptions on the Existence of a Clearly Written Policy on Parental Involvement in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

12.0% respondents stated that the policy was not clearly written while another 12.0% respondents were not sure. 12.0% and 6.0% respondents stated that the policy was clearly and very clearly written respectively.

**4.2.3 Teachers’ Perception of Parents’ Knowledge of their Rights and Responsibilities in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

Teachers were asked about their perception of the parents’ knowledge of their rights and responsibilities in the education of their intellectually

challenged children. The results of the study indicated that one (5.9%) teachers perceived that parents knew their rights and responsibilities very much. Two (11.8%) teachers perceived parents to know much while one (5.9%) of the teachers was not sure. Six (35.3%) teachers perceived that parents did not know much about their rights and responsibilities. Seven (41.2%) teachers indicated that parents did not at all know their rights and responsibilities in the education of their intellectually challenged children.

#### **4.2.3.1 Assessment and Placement**

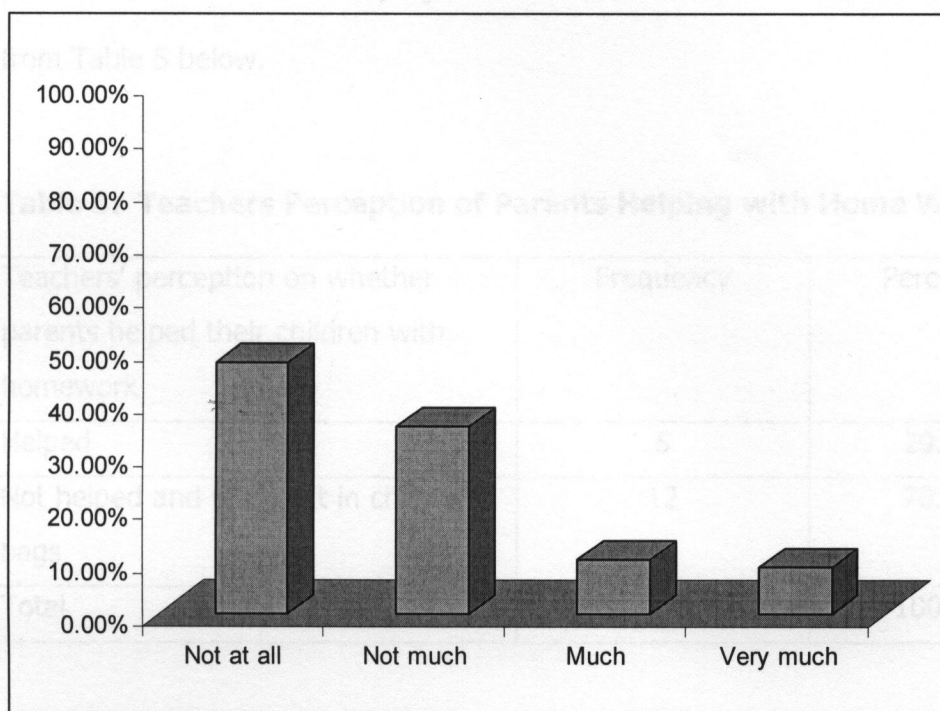
All seventeen (100%) teachers said parents contributed to children's assessment by providing the historical background concerning the children's condition, while placement was influenced by proximity to a school that housed a special unit that catered for the disability that a child had.

#### **4.2.3.2 Curriculum Consultation**

Teachers were asked to state whether parents were consulted on the curriculum offered to their intellectually challenged children. The findings of the study revealed that two (11.8%) teachers were of the view that parents were very much consulted. One (5.9%) teacher stated that parents were much consulted while three (17.6%) teachers were not sure whether parents were consulted. On the other hand, two (11.8%) teachers were of the view that parents were not much consulted. Nine (52.9%) teachers indicated that parents were not at all consulted on the curriculum offered to their intellectually challenged children.

### 4.2.3.3 PTA activities

Findings in figure 4 below, indicate that the majority (82.4%) of the teachers perceived that parents were not involved in the Parents Teachers Association activities. For example, 47.1% perceived that parents were not at all involved and 35.3% were not much involved.



**Figure 4: Teachers' Perception of Parents' Involvement in the PTA**

### 4.2.4 Teachers' Perception of Activities in which Parents were Involved In, in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children

Teachers were asked to indicate the types of activities that the parents of the intellectually challenged children were engaged in. The teachers in response indicated that the parents were involved in the following activities: assisting

with home work, attending school open days, providing teaching and learning materials and observing the teaching and learning process.

**4.2.4.1 Home work**

On the issue of home work, most of the teachers (70.6%) said that most parents did not help their children with home work. 29.4% teachers perceived parents to be involved in helping their children with homework as can be seen from Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Teachers Perception of Parents Helping with Home Work**

Teachers' perception on whether parents helped their children with homework	Frequency	Percent
Helped	5	29.4
Not helped and work left in children's bags	12	70.6
Total	17	100.0

**4.2.4.2 School Open Days**

The teachers here again were of the perception that most parents never participated in school open days as shown in Table 6 below. School open days were days set aside on the school calendar by each school for parents/care givers to visit the school in order to learn about the progress of their children. This is where an opportunity was provided for parents and teachers to have a one on one discussion concerning the child's progress.

**Table 6: Teachers' Perception of Parents' School Open Days**

Teachers' perception on parents involvement in Open Day meetings	Frequency	Percent
Attended	6	35.2
Not attend	11	64.8
Total	17	100.0

On the other hand, six (35.2%) teachers perceived parents to attend the school open day meetings at special units.

#### **4.2.4.3 Contribution Towards Teaching and Learning Materials**

The findings of the study revealed that almost all the teachers (94.1%) were of the perception that parents never contributed towards the teaching and learning materials for their intellectually challenged children. Table 7 below show the responses from the teachers.

**Table 7: Teachers Perception of Parents' Contributions to Materials**

Teachers' perception on whether parents provided teaching and learning materials	Frequency	Percent
Provided	1	5.9
Not provided	16	94.1
Total	17	100.0

#### **4.2.4.4 Contribution towards Children's Refreshments**

With regard to parents contributing towards their children's refreshments for consumption while at school, two (11.8%) teachers perceived that parents contributed towards their children's refreshments while fifteen (88.2%) of

them indicated that parents did not contribute towards children's refreshments as shown in Table 8 below.

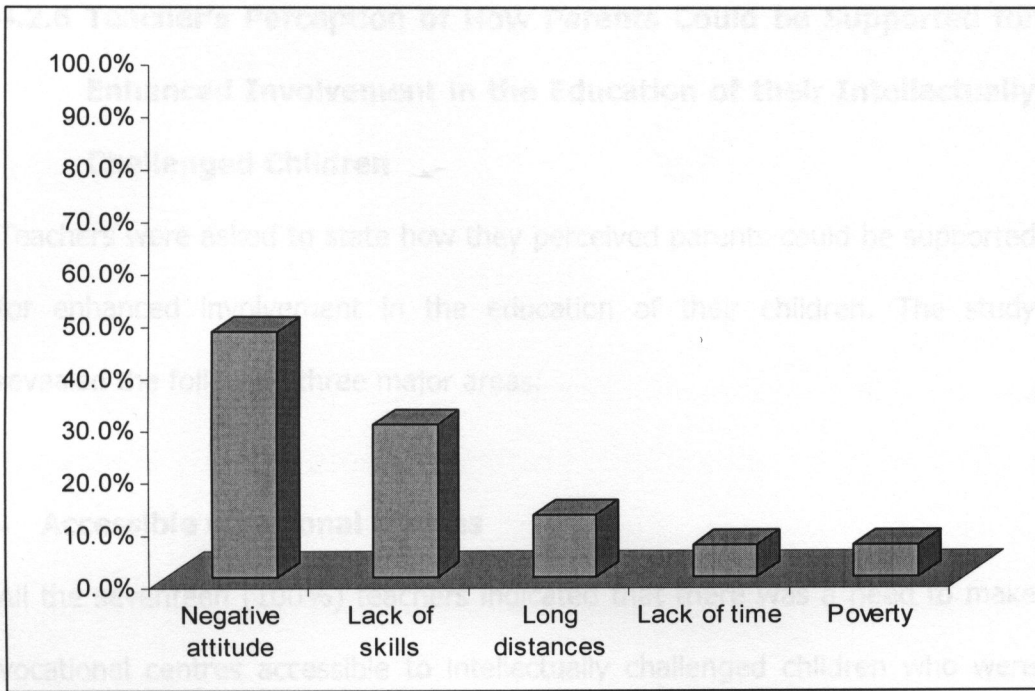
**Table 8: Teachers Perception of Parents' Contribution to Refreshments**

Teachers' perception on whether parents contributed towards refreshments	Frequency	Percent
Contributed	2	11.8
Not contributed	15	88.2
Total	17	100.0

Finally, three teachers indicated that parents were not involved in any activity at all in the education of their children in the special units.

#### **4.2.5 Teachers' Perception of Parents' Barriers to Involvement in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

Teachers were asked to state what they perceived to be the biggest barrier parents encountered in the education of their intellectually challenged children. Figure 5 below, shows that 47.1% perceive parents' negative attitudes to their children's education as the greatest barrier to their involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children.



**Figure 5: Teachers' Perception of Parents' Barriers to Involvement in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

29.3% teachers stated that parents lacked appropriate skills to enable them get involved in the education of their children while 11.8% perceived that long distances to school were a barrier to parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children. 5.9% teachers perceived that parents lacked time and another 5.9% of them perceived poverty as a barrier to parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children.

#### **4.2.6 Teacher's Perception of How Parents Could be Supported for Enhanced Involvement in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

Teachers were asked to state how they perceived parents could be supported for enhanced involvement in the education of their children. The study revealed the following three major areas:

- **Accessible vocational centres**

All the seventeen (100%) teachers indicated that there was a need to make vocational centres accessible to intellectually challenged children who were above sixteen years old for vocational skills acquisition in preparation for self sustenance.

- **Capacity Building Workshops**

Twelve (70.58%) teachers suggested that the schools could organize workshops at which teachers would exchange ideas with the parents on the education of the intellectually challenged children.

- **Special Unit Linkages with NGOs**

Five (29.42%) teachers stated that linking of Special Units with Non Governmental Organizations would benefit parents through the support that the special units would receive from the organizations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The chapter discusses the findings of the study. The study sought to find out the extent to which parents of intellectually challenged children were involved in the education of their children. The discussion follows the order of presentation in the previous chapter as follows: Existence of procedures for parental involvement in the education of their children, how parents were involved in the education of their children, barriers to parental involvement and support for enhanced parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children in five selected Special Education Units in Lusaka District.

#### **5.1 Existence of Procedures for Parental Involvement in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

On existence of procedures for parental involvement, most parents felt there were no procedures that existed in the Special Units for the involvement of parents in the education of their intellectually challenged children. Equally most teachers felt there was not much procedure in place. It followed therefore, that attempts to a systematic involvement of parents in the education of their children could not be successful. These findings were consistent with those of Harry, (1992), Huag and Gibbs (1992), which

observed that effective parental involvement in the education of their children, was only possible to the extent where there were established procedures to support such involvement.

For any system to operate effectively there should be laid down procedures that directed the flow of activities. Parents were willing to be involved in the education of their children. To this effect, parents were of the view that there should be clearly laid down procedures put in place indicating how they could fully participate in the education of their intellectually challenged children.

On the issue of the existence of a clearly written policy on parental involvement, the findings of the study revealed that all the parents and almost half the teachers in the study indicated that such a policy was not present in the Special Units. Both the parents and teachers in the study were dissatisfied with the absence of a policy for parental involvement in the Special Units. The teachers had complained that the absence of a policy had made it difficult to forge closer working links with parents. Consistent with these findings is the 1993 British Act in Hornby (1995) which underscores the importance of schools working with parents through the establishment of partnerships with written policies to guide the operations of such partnerships.

On consultation on the type of curriculum that was offered to the intellectually challenged children all parents said they were not consulted at all. Similarly,

teachers said that parents were not consulted at all on the curriculum offered to their children because Special Units offered a standard curriculum that was applicable to mainstream pupils as well. Each teacher tried to adapt it to the needs of the children as much as they possibly could. These findings were consistent with Kalabula (1991). The author asserts that parents did not know the subjects their children were taking at school because there was no contact between the Special Units and parents. Such a situation brought about dissatisfaction in parents.

Since a curriculum is a total sum of all that pupils were offered to learn in any institution of learning, there was need for parents to be consulted on what their children would learn. This was much more so for intellectually challenged pupils whose learning consisted of activities for daily living in some cases and academic work where it was appropriate.

## **5.2 How Parents were Involved in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

As far as assessment and placement is concerned, both the parents and the teachers said parents were not involved in placement. Their involvement was limited to the provision of the historical background information concerning the children's condition. These findings were inconsistent with Apling and Jones' (2000) emphasis of the Individuals with disabilities Education Act 1997 of the United States of America on inclusion of parents in decision making process for learners who are intellectually challenged at all levels of their

education including the assessment stage. This suggested that parent's involvement in assessment was concerned with the provision of historical background information. The Information so provided was so important that without its availability teachers would find it difficult to commence teaching and learning programmes for the children.

With regard to home work, the findings showed that most parents did not receive home work from the teachers. On the other hand teachers said that parents did not help their children with home work. This suggests that there was no link between parents and teachers. However, there were a few parents who said they helped their children with activities for daily living and academic work.

Parents who took heed of teachers' advice soon registered some improvements in their children's performance. These findings were consistent with those of Berrueta-Clement et al., (1984) and Hornby, (1995), who stated that the greatest gains in parental involvement were, realized when parents acted as teachers to their own children.

As for the parents who did not follow teachers' advice to encourage their children to do things for themselves, they deprived their children from becoming independent and learn to manage their lives in the most optimal way possible. Consistent with these findings, is Gascoigne's (1993), who stated that a mother was reported not to be reinforcing the independence that the school was promoting in her daughter by not according her an

opportunity to conduct activities for daily living on her own. Such parents were being short-sighted because by stifling the children's efforts to acquire independence they were promoting a dependency syndrome.

With regard to parents attending open days, the findings showed that they were poorly attended as evidenced from a large number of teachers who said parents shunned such meetings. Despite this being the case, in two out of five units researched, almost all the parents attended the school open days.

The large numbers in attendance at the two units could be attributed to the researcher having administered the questionnaire to the head teacher and special education teachers at the schools a few days prior to the open day date which may have made management to put in extra efforts to have the parents attend the open day meeting. There was no data available for the remaining three Units as they did not hold any open day meetings in the year. Nevertheless, the fact that there were no open day meetings for so long is a clear indication that parental involvement was not valued.

On contribution towards teaching and learning materials, the majority of parents and teachers were in agreement that parents did not contribute to the teaching and learning materials. Most parents said that they could not manage to do so due to their low level economic status. They looked up to government to provide free education. On the contrary, government funding was never adequate. Very few parents contributed learning and teaching

materials upon request from the teachers. Amongst the teaching and learning materials they provided were: crayons for academic work, toys and detergents for activities for daily living and off-cuts of materials for prevocational skills.

On the issue of other desirable areas of involvement, it was interesting here to note that in a show of willingness for more involvement the study found that parents wanted to be involved in the planning stages of their children's learning programmes. These findings were consistent with those of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 of the USA, (Apling & Jones, 2000). The Act stipulates that parents should be consulted regarding the children's programme planning. Since parents have a stake in their children's learning outcomes, it was therefore befitting that they should be involved in the planning of the children's learning programmes. The show of willingness by parents to be involved in other activities including membership to the PTA, deciding goals and learning priorities and observing teaching and learning process indicated above, could be taken advantage of by the teachers in order to forge a partnership with parents.

### **5.3 Barriers to Parental Involvement in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

With regard to the barriers encountered by parents in the education of their intellectually challenged children, the findings showed that the most prominent barrier was negative attitudes by parents as evidenced by the

majority of teachers citing it. These findings were consistent with those of Kasonde-ngandu and Moberg (2001). Also Mukela and Kanyemba (1998) from a mid-term review which reported that most parents of children with disabilities had negative attitudes towards the potential and capabilities of the children. This resulted in parents' reluctance to invest in the education of such children in preference to their 'normal' ones. To this effect parents admitted to making choices between investing in the education of the 'normal' and the intellectually challenged children where their resources were limited. In such a case they chose to support one perceived to have capacity to yield more returns.

Lack of skills was also reported as a second major barrier to parental involvement in the education of the intellectually challenged children by both parents and teachers. These findings were similar to those reported by Ndhlovu (2005). For instance, Ndhlovu in a study on parents' involvement in the education of their visually impaired children, points out that lack of skills by parents could lead to parents not being involved in the education of their children. The willingness of parents to observe the teaching and learning process would open doors for them to acquire some basic skills. Such skills would enable parents assist their children with their education. This would only be possible if teachers invited the parents to school.

Long distances between homes and schools were another barrier which emerged in the study. Since the children could not get to school on their own

they needed the company of a parent/caregiver. The findings reflecting long distances between homes and schools were consistent with those of Ndhlovu (2005). These finds could be true when we take into consideration that most of the intellectually challenged children have to be escorted to school by someone, usually a parent / a sibling / a household worker on a daily basis. When none of the care- givers were available to do so the children would not go to school.

Resources play a major role in the education of children. As such its absence always has a negative impact. In view of the fact that most parents came from a low social class as revealed by the study, this made it very difficult to cater for the needs of their children. These findings were consistent with Hornby (1995) who reported that though parents were willing to contribute much more to their children's education, they were hampered by the fact that their resources were already fully committed to meeting other equally pressing needs at home with nothing extra to spare. This reason could be particularly true for activities for daily living such as toys if the correlation between the cost of toys and the socio- economic status of the majority of the parents were taken into account.

Incorrectly copied work was also one of the barriers revealed by the study. Since there was no individual attention given to pupils by teachers due to the big class sizes, this resulted in children taking home work that was incorrectly copied which parents could not understand rendering them incapable of

assisting their children. The difficulty of handling a large class was confirmed by one female teacher, who narrated in an interview on 10 September 2004, that due to a large number of pupils (18) against one teacher (herself), she was not in a position to give individual attention to all the pupils in her class. Such large classes are not in line with the Special Education Policy which stipulates that the pupil: teacher ratio for moderate-mild intellectually challenged children should be 10: 1.

#### **5.4 Support to Parents for Enhanced Involvement in the Education of their Intellectually Challenged Children**

On support for enhanced parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children, the study revealed that parents wished to be supported in identifying and nurturing of the children's talents. Furthermore the study revealed that parents were of the view that this would help them direct their efforts to nurture the identified talent to fruition.

In view of the fact that teachers in the mainstream portrayed negative attitude towards children with disabilities as revealed by the study, parents felt that it would help if teachers in the mainstream were sensitised and trained in special education needs. These findings were consistent with those of Turnbull and Turnbull (1986), Kalabula (1991), Kasonde –Ngandu & Moberg (2001), Mandyata (2002), and Ojala (2003) where they argued that mainstream teachers had negative attitudes towards children with disabilities because they did not have the knowledge and skills to handle them. In view

of the above, no wonder that an idea brought in by a parent may not be given the credence it deserves as it was not appreciated.

On accessibility to vocational centres, the findings of the study showed that entrance to vocational skills centres was not easy for the intellectually challenged children. To this effect parents felt that it would help if the Ministry of Education had put in place an easy entry mechanism, some kind of positive discrimination for the intellectually challenged children to these centres. The findings on skills centres were consistent with the sentiments of seventeen teachers in the study, who were of the view that intellectually challenged children who were over sixteen years old and had outgrown the classroom set up continued to stay on. This was probably true when consideration is taken of the fact that most children who were intellectually challenged did not progress beyond the seventh grade, by which time they could have attained 16 years of age due to their slow progression rate.

These findings could be true because presently there was no provision for a streamlined progression to training for children in special units upon attainment of 16 years. They either lingered on in the Special Unit without any further prospects or just dropped out. In the past such children progressed to commence training in various skills at technical vocational centres such as the former Lusaka Trades Institute supported by donor agencies. The centres have since turned into Management Boards charging commercial rates and donors withdrew their support. The investments in the

vocational centres made in form of plant, machinery and equipment for the benefit of the intellectually challenged children were now being used by the 'normal' students to the exclusion of the disabled.

With regard to pupil rating by level, the study revealed that forty-six (46) parents were concerned as to whether the grades in levels in the special classes were ever equated to the grading system of regular pupils in the main stream, and wished to have a clarification of the rating. These findings could be true because parents were only familiar with the conventional stages of education. Unless the teachers made a deliberate effort to explain to the parents what it entailed for a child to be in one level or another in a Special Unit. Parents may feel left out and not be fully involved.

In education, generally levels denote a measure of a degree of academic performance by an individual child or a group of children (MoE, 2003). However, for intellectually challenged children rating by level puts emphasis on acquisition of functional skills. These are skills that facilitate domestic and community living and vocations. While rating by grade is based on acquisition of academic skills (Cohen, 1977). The difference lies in their goals. Therefore, Level one may not necessarily be Grade one, nor is it pre-school level. Level one (1) children may be beginners aged seven years (the official age to enter school in Zambia). They may also be profoundly impaired children aged up to sixteen years. Children need not necessarily start from level one. The child's intelligence quotient normally determines the placement (Kauffman, 1994).

Transition to the next level is based on considered improvement. A child may remain in the same level for a considerable number of years; at times not even move to the next level. The focus is on individualized education and children learn at their own individual pace (Kauffman, 1994). Level two children have mastered some basics in number work such as counting from one (1) to five (5), are able to socialise with their peers and respond to commands from teachers. Level three are much improved children. They may proceed to grade eight or if they are sixteen years and above, may enter a skills training centre.

On parent support groups, the study found that most parents felt that it would help if they joined support groups or formed linkages with local community based organizations that could support their efforts to educate their children in a way that secured a future for their children. This was in agreement with the overlapping spheres of influence theory (Epstain et al. 1997). The theory recognizes that children grow in three major environments: The family, school and the community. While the school provides an enabling environment in which children have an opportunity to explore their potential, the family is at the core of a child's development and growth. The school and community compliment efforts of the family in enabling intellectual challenged children attain their potential. The Action on Disability and Development (ADD) was one of the active local community based organizations giving support to intellectually challenged children, their parents and teachers.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations emanating from the findings and discussion of the study.

#### **6.1 Conclusion**

From the study it is evident that there were no laid down procedures or a clearly written policy in Special Units on parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children. Parents were also not consulted on the curriculum offered to their children. This in turn, has had a negative impact on parents' involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children.

The findings also showed that parents who were involved in the education of their children were only involved minimally. The involvement mainly consisted of attendance at the School Open Days. In other areas such as helping with children's home work, provision of teaching and learning materials and children's refreshments. involvement by parents was relatively to a smaller extent.

The study also revealed that there were quite a number of barriers that hindered the parents from being involved in the education of their intellectually challenged children. The most prominent were negative attitudes towards the children by the parents themselves and lack of skills to apply in their quest to help their children.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

In view of the findings, recommendations addressed to the school managers, Ministry of Education and the parents are made:

1. School managers should:

- Clearly specify in writing procedures through which parents would be involved in the education of their intellectually challenged children in the Special Units.
- Institute home work policies in the special units in consultation with the parents in order to provide avenues for parental involvement.
- Support teachers in-charge of Special Units to conduct school based workshops for parents of intellectually challenged children.
- Conduct in-service training for mainstream teachers who handle the intellectually challenged children.

- Schools with the support from Ministry of Education should conduct regular sensitisation workshops to foster parents' positive attitudes towards their intellectually challenged children. Such an attitude would enable the children find their own space in the family and community and attain their optimum level of performance.
- Identify community based organisations and parent support groups for possible linkages with the units and parents as a whole.

2. Ministry of Education should:

- Formulate clear policies that would stipulate parents' rights and responsibilities in the education of their intellectually challenged children in Special Units
- Provide a flexible curriculum that would be appropriate to the needs of children who were intellectually challenged.
- Provide a guideline on the formulation of Individual Education Plans to special education in-service teachers that are practical and suitable to the Zambian situation, through which parents would participate in deciding learning priorities for their children.
- Initiate dialogue with the Department of Technical Educational Vocational and Entrepreneur Training Authority (TEVETA) at Ministry of

Science and Technology. Such dialogue would facilitate admittance of intellectually challenged children at reduced charges in consideration of the plant, machinery and equipment in their premises. The equipment was initially provided by donors for the benefit of the intellectually challenged children who are currently excluded through the charging of commercial rates.

### **6.3 Future Research**

- A comparative study on parental involvement that takes into consideration length of stay of parents and teachers at the Special Unit and the geographical location of the Special Units in relation to urban or rural areas. This would be a worthwhile contribution to the existing knowledge on parental involvement in the education of the intellectually challenged children.
- A comparative study on the level of parental involvement in the education of intellectually challenged children between government, grant-aided and privately run Special Units.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A (i) (English Version)**

#### **STRUCTURED QUESTIONS USED IN PARENTS' FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGED CHILDREN**

##### **Adopted from Mittler (1997)**

1. Does the Special Unit have established procedures for parental involvement in the education of intellectually challenged children?
2. Does the Special Unit have a policy on parental involvement in the education of intellectually challenged children?
3. Do you know your rights and responsibilities in the education of your child?
4. Has the School administration made consultations with you on the type of curriculum offered to your intellectually challenged children?
5. How actively involved are you in the Parents and Teachers' Association at the school where the special unit is located?
6. Did you take part in the assessment of your child's strengths and weaknesses with regard to his learning abilities and placement at the special unit?
7. Does the school give any homework to the child? If so, do you help with the home work?
8. Do you attend school open days at the special unit for the review of the child's progress?
9. Have you ever contributed some teaching and learning materials to the Special Unit?
10. How else have you been involved in the education of your child so far in the Special Unit? Specify the activities.

11. How else would you like to be involved in the education of your child?
12. What difficulties do you encounter in your efforts to assist your child in her / his education?
13. How can you be supported to enhance your involvement in the education of your child?

**THANK YOU**

## Appendix A (ii) (Icibemba Version)

### **STRUCTURED QUESTIONS USED IN PARENTS' FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGED CHILDREN**

1. Bushe ici iciputulwa ica ibela ica masambililo (Special Unit) calikwata inshila isho aba fyashi ba bana bafwile uku konka pakuti bakwatemo ulubali mu masambililo ya bana babo?
2. Bushe ici iciputulwa ica ibele ica masambililo (Special Unit) calikwata amafunde aya lembwa ayo abafyashi bafwile bakonka mu kwafwilishako abana babo pa ma sambililo yabo?
3. Bushe mwalishiba insambu mwa kwata pa lwa masambililo ya bana benu?
4. Bushe abatungulushi be sukulu lino bala mwipusha pafyo abana benu bafwile ukulasambilila ilyo tabala fipanga ukuba ifunde?
5. Bushe mwaiposamo shani mu ci putulwa ca PTA pe sukulu lintu umwana wenu asambilila?
6. Bushe mwalisendelemo ulubali pakumona ukuti mwaishibe ubukose elyo nobunake bwa mwana wenu mu ku sambilila kwakwe pakutila mu mutwale pe sukulu ili?
7. Bushe isukulu lino lila pela inchito shakulemba nenchito shimbi isha kuti umwana aye bombela ku ng'anda? Nga ca kutila lila pela umwana wenu inchito ishi, bushe mula mwafwilishako?
8. Bushe mula sangwako ku kulongana kwa Open Day pakuti mwishibe ifyo umwana wenu acita mu ma sambililo yakwe?
9. Bushe mwa libala amupela ifya bupe ifya ku fundishishapo umwana wenu kwi sukulu lino?
10. Bushe ninshilanshi shimbi isho mwaiposamo mu lwa masambililo ya mwana wenu.
11. Ninshilanshi imbi iyo mwi nga temwa ukuiposamo pa mulandu wa masambililo ya mwana wenu?
12. Bwafyanshi musangwa nabo pa kwesha ukwa fwilisha umwana wenu mu ma sambililo yakwe?

13. Ni nshila nshi mwingafwaya ukuti ba mwafwilishe pa lwa masambililo ya mwana wenu?

**NA TOTELA**

## **Appendix A (iii) (Cinyanja Version)**

### **STRUCTURE D QUESTIONS USED IN PARENTS' FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGED CHILDREN**

1. Kondi ici ci gawo ca padera ca ma phunziro (Special Unit) cili ndi njira zomwe makolo abana ayenera ku tsatira kuti ankhale ndi mupata pa maphunziro ya ana awo?
2. Kodi ici ci gawo ca padera ca ma phunziro (Special Unit) cili ndi malamuo yo lembedwa yamene makolo ayenera kutsatira kuti athandidze ana awo pa ma phunziro awo?
3. Kodi mudziwa danga yomwe muli nayo pa maphunziri a mwana wanu?
4. Kodi akuru a sukulu lino ama mufuntsani pazomwe ana anu ayenera kuma phunzira?
5. Kodi mu magwapo motani mu ci gawo ca PTA ca pa sukulu pomwe mwana wanu ama phunzira?
6. Kodi munatengapo mupata kuti muone kulimba ndi kufoka kwa mwana wanu mu ma phunziro ace pakuti mu mupeleke pa sukulu iyi?
7. Kodi sukulu lino lima patsa mwana wanu nchito zolembe nzina zace pamene ali ku nyumba? Ngati lima mu patsa nchito idzi, kodi mu ma mu thandiza ndi nchito zomwe yidzi?
8. Kodi mu ma pezekako ku mu sonkhano wa Open Day kuti muone momwe mwana wanu amagwirila nchito mu ma phunziro ace?
9. Kodi muna patsako sukulu ili ca wanzi monga zinthu zo phunzitsilapo mwana wanu?
10. Kodi ni njira zotani zinangu zomwe mwa khala muli kuthandizira mwana wanu pa ma phunziro ace?
11. Kodi nijira ina yotani yomwe mu ngafune kugwapo pa ma phunziro ya mwana wanu?
12. Ni mabvuto otani omwe muma pezeka nawo poyetsera ku thandidza mwana wanu mu ma phunziro ace?

13. Ninjira yotani yomwe mu ngafune ku thandiziwa kuti mukhale ogwapo kwambiri pa ma phunziro ya mwana wanu?

### **DZIKOMO**

Appendix B

**A TEACHERS' CHECKLIST ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGED CHILDREN**

District: ..... School: .....

Teacher's initials: ..... Sex: ..... Duration at the Unit .....

Special Education Qualification(s): ..... Year(s) obtained: .....

College(s) where Sp Ed Qualification(s) obtained:  
.....

Other Qualifications: .....

**Instruction: You are requested to place a cross (x) next to your selected response for each question and provide an explanation where necessary**

1. Does the school have procedures for parental involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children?

- (a) Very much
- (b) Much
- (c) Not sure
- (d) Not much
- (e) Not at all

If yes, explain

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.....  
.....

2. Does the school have a clearly written policy on parental involvement?

- (a) Very clearly
- (b) Clearly
- (c) Not sure
- (d) Not clearly
- (e) None at all

3. Do you think parents know their rights and responsibilities in the education of their intellectually challenged children?

- (a) Very much
- (b) Much
- (c) Not sure
- (d) Not much
- (e) Not at all

Explain

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4. Are parental views sought on type of curriculum for intellectually challenged children?

- (a) Very much
- (b) Much
- (c) Not sure
- (d) Not much
- (e) Not at all

5. Do you think parents with intellectually challenged children in the special unit are 'actively involved in the Parents Teachers' Association (PTA) at the school?

- (a) Very much
- (b) Much
- (c) Not sure
- (d) Not much
- (e) Not at all

6. Have you specifically involved parents in the education of their children?

- (a) Very much
- (b) Much
- (c) Not sure
- (d) Not much
- (e) Not at all

Explain

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7. Have you instituted some form of Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each child in the unit?

- (a) Very much
- (b) Much
- (c) Not sure
- (d) Not much
- (e) Not at all

8. How much do you involve parents in the reviews of their children's progress?

- (a) Very much
- (b) Much
- (c) Not sure
- (d) Not much
- (e) Not at all

9. In your opinion what are the barriers faced by parents in the education of their intellectually challenged children?

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11. How can parents be supported for enhanced involvement in the education of their intellectually challenged children?

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.....  
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**THANK YOU**