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8. Educating caregivers for quality education and support for children with severe to profound intellectual disabilities

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Introduction: The South African Government is committed to the education of children with severe to profound intellectual disability (SPID). A shortage of skills has been identified as a major barrier in this process. The Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion (TEDI) project (a partnership between University of Cape Town and Christoffel-Blindenmission (CBM)) developed a short course to address this need. This study sought to understand its impact upon the confidence of participants in providing quality education and care for children with SPID.

Methods: Pre- and post- course surveys and focus group discussions were conducted with the 29 course participants who work with children with SPID and who attended the 5 day course and completed an assessment portfolio. The quantitative data was analysed statistically using SPSS and the qualitative data was subject to thematic analysis using Invivo.

Results: Participants found the course helpful in understanding their learners and structuring the daily programme. They appreciated the interactive nature of the course and the topic of self-care for the carers. They requested more training and made a plea for formalised full qualifications.

Implications: Caregivers of children with SPID face many challenges, some of which can be addressed through interactive training programmes. However, training should be formalised into a professional career path. It is important to understand and acknowledge the difficult work that they do and offer appropriate support.

Keywords profound intellectual disability, caregivers, education of caregivers, South Africa