

# STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS' UTILIZATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN MANAGING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN KWARA STATE SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

*One of the critical aspects required in the development of a healthy and important individual personality is the ability to perceive emotions to assist thought and promote emotional and intellectual growth and development. Hence, researchers argue that, Emotional Intelligence (EI) skills are required to be able to reflectively regulate one's emotions and also deal with others'. This study investigates perception of students on how Emotional Intelligence (EI) is being utilised by teachers in managing learners with disabilities and special needs in schools. Using a quantitative research method, a structured questionnaire was administered to a representative sample of 200 pupils/students drawn from three schools for special needs in Kwara State. The sampled schools were selected through stratified random sampling technique. This study meets the current need for reliable measures that operationalize constructs of EI through adoption of Wong's Emotional Intelligence Scale (WEIS) with slight modifications to five sub-scales of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation and social skills. The validity and reliability of measurement scale were ascertained using principal factor analysis and cronbach alpha respectively based on survey responses from students of school for special needs. The consistency of the questionnaire was ascertained with coefficient alpha value of .70. Results of factor analysis revealed the survey reliably operationalizes EI using 5 factors named: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. These factors of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills recorded a low mean average while motivation moderately competes with average mean score ranging from 2.70-3.18. By implication, teachers' personality and competence are not enough to motivate students with special needs to learn. In addition to this, there is need for teachers to develop quality emotional intelligence through self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation and social skills in a classroom setting especially when dealing with students with special needs in school. This will favourably impact on leadership effectiveness in school in the long run.*

**Key Words:** Emotional Intelligence, Special Educational Needs, Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Empathy, Motivation, Social Skills

## Introduction

World Health Survey estimates that about 15.6% (over 1 billion) of global population live with some forms of disability (Owens, 2013) with an approximation of at least 93 million children with disabilities who are less likely to attend school or have their voices heard in the society; placing them at higher risk of physical abuse, and excluding them from receiving proper humanitarian assistance in society (Kees & Qargha, 2014). Special needs which is a term that has been substituted for children with disabilities require special attention from significant people in their life. Globally, learners from the field of special needs education face problems and difficulties ranging from physical, social, economic, emotional and most importantly, to attitudinal (Nezami, 2012; Florian, 2008 & Overton, 2006). This is because disability and impairment in terms of intelligence,

physique, social behaviour, communication and sensorial often prevents concerned learners from acting fully to their capabilities and functioning effectively in their environment. In African context, research has, in fact, indicated that children with special needs are often marginalized within, or indeed, even sometimes excluded from the scheme of things. Experts in the disability-related fields consider negative attitude as the greatest barrier to the field of education of special needs, hence, the need for improved interpersonal skills, empathy, and increasing well-being (Ndlovu, 2016; Wehbi, Elin, & El-Lahib, 2010; Peter, 2009 & Ajuwon, 2008).

Teaching is not just a process of imparting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and supporting students to learn; but also, a cognitive operation of enhancing positive emotions that can lead to effective learning. Emotions play a significant role in our daily lives, in decision





making, planning, networking, relationships and creating a healthy working environment. Emotional intelligence should be recognized as essential to teachers in discharging their responsibilities particularly to learners with disability. In reality, emotion control our actions and can therefore impact or redirect our behaviors for good or worse thus the need to handle our emotions and those of others carefully more especially when faced with very challenging situations (Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt & Lang, 2013). These thoughts call for the need for teachers to proactively and reactively manage learners' emotions (Humphrey & Symes, 2013; Van Knippenberg and Van Kleef, 2016). Similarly, the influence of emotions in interpersonal behaviour and decision making has gained more attention in the field of education (Morris & Kether, 2000). Emotional knowledge is necessary for better understanding of the difficulties encountered by students with disabilities and more specifically how it reflects on emotional response of students' understanding which would then guide teacher in identifying or developing cognitive context.

Studies have shown a significant association between several dimensions of EI and academic achievements (Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan & Majeski, 2004), cognitive ability (Pestrices, Frederickson & Fumham, 2004), psychological well-being (Ugoani & Ewuzie, 2013) and social interaction in school environment (Linnenbrink-Garcia & Pekrun, 2011). Studies (Stratton, Elam, Murphy-Spencer & Quinlivan, 2005; Mathur, Dube, Malhotra, 2003) have equally revealed that, individuals with low levels of EI may lack the ability to relate empathetically with disabilities as they are unable to recognize feelings, distress and mood which may result in engaging in damaging behaviour. On the other hand, individuals with high EI may be more reflective, more responsible, more confident, better adjusted and possess better organizational and time management skills: hence they perform better.

However, it has been argued by Klare, Behney and Kenny (2014) that, reading the emotions of other people is important in determining the level of trust given to them as its value lies in the ability to improve interpersonal communication and build relationships. Having knowledge of emotional intelligence can help teachers realize how best to establish strong relationships and bonds with the student, increase teachers' self-awareness, improve their social skills and make them happy (Kumar, 2014). In this regard, Tylor, Farver and Stoller (2011) suggested that EI be taught as part of teaching professionals as the abilities

that constitute EI can help define specific curricular which can be taught, learned and measured. This is in line with earlier submission of Bradberry and Greaves (2009) that, misunderstanding of unclear emotions which could result in poor decisions, actions and behaviours is expected since it is not automatic to know what, where, when, why and how we feel. Only a few are gifted with the ability to understand when their emotions occur while the rest are not in position and may require undergoing trainings or learning.

### Theoretical Background

Emotional intelligence is a comparatively new psychological concept that was initially centred on its relationship to one's management success in the business sector. In recent years, study of EI then branched into the field of education where researches were carried out on EI and various school outcomes, thus, the term Emotional Intelligence is widely recognised as a focal area of research in the field of educational management and leadership. Research on EI has a long history in the study of leadership which relies solely on the ability to recognize, understand and manage own and others' moods and emotion; and to work well with people and people's emotion both on and off the job. The notion of EI was first identified in social intelligence by Thorndike, a professor of psychology, whereby EI was related to people's attitude towards the society, information about the society and individual's degree of social adjustment. It started gaining the current attention way back in the 1990s when it was described as a form of social intelligence that involves individuals' ability to recognize and deal with their own feelings which is of great importance in relating well with others by being in better position to handle others' feelings (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

In understanding and promoting a positive learning, there is need to be aware of the EI competencies, skills and be able to encourage interactions that would lead to a positive learning (Alhassan, 2018), although over the years, many theories of EI have been formulated, established and adopted to date; there are three theories that have been utilized most frequently in empirical research on EI and are overwhelmingly the most widely known to the public (Mayer, 2006). Each of the theories defines and conceptualizes EI uniquely with different predictions about emotionally intelligent individuals. The first is Mayer and Salovey (1997) model with four distinct components of EI: perception and expression of emotion, assimilating emotion into thought, understanding and analysing emotion, and regulating





emotion in self and others. The second is the Emotional Quotient Model of EI by Bar-On (1997) which can be broken down into five major areas with each consisting of specific skills in predicting success. These are: intrapersonal skill, interpersonal skill, adaptability, stress management, and general mood. The third is Goleman (1995) Model of EI which comprises five skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill.

Of all the theories of EI developed by different scholars, Goleman's EI model has been widely adopted and used to date as its domains of EI are shared by most theories (Morrison, 2007). In the application of EI in school leadership context, Goleman's EI model focused on array of skills and competencies that drives leadership performance (Bucich & MacCann, 2019, Muenjohn & Armstrong, 2007). Goleman (1998) contends that EI has a significant effect on leadership performance in organizations such as school and thus developed five competence models based on theory of employees' performance in predicting personal effectiveness at work. The model thus comprises: perceiving emotions, using emotion to facilitate thought, understanding emotions, managing emotions to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth and self-motivation which includes competencies such as initiative, achievement drive and commitment.

Previous research study (Hammet, 2007) on application of emotional intelligence to school system has identified and related some emotional intelligence skills like assertion and drive strength as most often connected to academic success. For Kagan (2001), there are five dimensions of emotional intelligence which are important for our understanding of how to build productivity in schools that would enable emotional adaptation and the academic achievement of students. This comprises: awareness of one's own emotions, controlling one's own emotions, motivating one's self, knowing the emotions of others and relationship skills. To provide a framework for this study, a group of five (5) skills by Goleman (2011) was touched to guide this study. These skills will enable school leaders and teachers to maximize their own potentials and their students' performance.

#### **Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness which is the most crucial competency associated with work place emotional intelligence consists of emotional abilities that enable an

individual to be more effective and form outstanding relationships in an organization (Okpara & Agwu, 2015). It can be generally described as the extent to which an individual is consciously aware of his/her internal states and interactions with others. It requires having a clear perception of one's strength, weakness, emotion, personality, thoughts, beliefs and motivation; which will allow one to have better understanding of how people perceive one's attitudes. Research studies have identified self-awareness as a primary means of alleviating emotional distress and a path of self-development for psychologically healthy individuals. Sutton (2016) described self-awareness as a strategic step in managing own stress, and a tool and goal that is generally associated with positive psychological well-being in an individual. Similarly, self-awareness is suggested to be a proactive step required in managing stress and as a process through which one gets in touch with his/her own feelings and behaviour (Gold & Roth, 1993). However, helping students deal with emotional and behavioural disabilities begins with understanding oneself particularly in the midst of anger and frustration. It could be said that dealing with disabilities is one of the most challenging roles of a teacher, however, the importance of self-awareness goes beyond well-being and mental health to include substantial impacts on day-to-day operations.

#### **Self-Regulation**

Self-regulation is the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods. Self-regulation, which is like an ongoing inner conversation, is a component of emotional intelligence that frees us from being prisoners of our feelings and enables us think before acting. A growing body of literature indicates that emotions can be controlled and regulated (Grandey, Fik & Steiner, 2005; Mayer, 2006). Although, teaching is an emotionally laden process for both teachers and students, a supportive teaching and learning atmosphere is required to be able to use effective strategies and further regulate emotions of teacher and students. Fried (2011) suggest that emotional regulation should have a valuable place in the school setting to enable teacher and students have some control over their behaviour, help them to avert negative emotions and remain committed to teaching and learning process. Teachers should therefore understand the importance of regulating their emotions as it is important to their job effectiveness.

#### **Empathy**

Empathy measures concern for others. Research





findings postulate that, individuals with low levels of EI may lack the ability to relate empathetically with others as they may not be able to recognize feelings, distress, and mood (Stratton et al. 2005), which lead to a negative impact on relationship with others (McQueen 2004). It may be regarded as one of those necessary though largely unexamined traits that define good feeling. A high degree of empathy is possibly the most potent factor in bringing about positive learning and change in students' attitude. Teachers with empathy have more positive self-concepts, are more self-disclosing to their students, respond more to students' feelings, give more praise and have a strong moral concern for student self-esteem and self-worth. An increased empathic ability would help the teacher understands and responds appropriately to his/her students. In a research study conducted by Murphy, Tubritt and Norman (2018), it was however revealed that empathic teachers were found to possess high level of morality and excellent communication with students which in turn encourages empathic peer relationships and successful motivation of their students.

### Motivation

Motivation is one of the most important aspects of teaching. Supporting students to learn is the superordinate aim of teacher, thus, teacher has a lot to do in motivating students to learn. Motivation has been proved by researchers as a factor closely related to learners' psychological fulfilment and wellbeing. According to User and Kober (2012), motivation can affect how students approach school in general, how they relate to teachers, how much time and effort they devote to their studies, how much support they seek when they are in difficulties and their overall performance in examinations. A class full of motivated students is enjoyable for both teacher and students as students are more excited to learn and participate in classroom activities. On the other hand, students who are not motivated will not learn effectively, they won't retain information, they won't participate actively in the lesson and some may even be disruptive by disengaging other students from learning. Therefore, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to improve students' academic achievement if they are not well motivated.

### Social Skills

Social skills are essential for every human being. They are interpersonal skills that help individual in a society to connect with others. Kumar and Devi (2016) described social skills as directing human relation or social skills by managing and adapting others'

emotions and the capacity for effective leadership and influence on others through their feelings. In school context therefore, it is teacher's ability to initiate and sustain social interaction with students and other stakeholders that is considered as fundamental to human development which can be associated with social competence.

However, several studies have been carried out in areas of emotional intelligence to find its impact on several areas in school system, but a bigger percentage of this research has been done in the developed countries. While there is an abundance of research indicating that increased students' emotional intelligence is positively correlated with various school outcomes like student positive behaviour (Nizielski, Hallum, Lopes & Schutz, 2012) and student academic success (McPherson Schwartz & Passe, 2011; Jones, Bouffard, and Weissbourd, 2013; Lanciano, and Curci, 2014); very few studies have investigated the effect of teachers' emotional intelligence on learners with special needs. Given that, students with disabilities often encounter numerous challenges that may impede their academic achievement particularly in developing countries. This study is designed to evaluate teachers' utilization of EI components such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation and social skill in managing students with disabilities in special needs school in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### Research Question

To what extent do students with special needs perceive the teachers' Emotional Intelligence with components such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation and social skills?

### Methods

This study was conducted using descriptive survey design. The target population of this study comprised learners of Kwara State schools for special needs in Ilorin, Moro and Offa. The sampling frame was drawn from the list of schools obtained from Kwara State Ministry of Education, with 200 participants selected from three high schools for special needs on a stratum basis (Ilorin - Central, Offa - South, and Moro - North) in the three senatorial districts of Kwara State. This quantitative study adopted Wong Emotional Intelligence Scale (WEIS) (Wong, Wong & Law, 2007) containing 28 question items spread over five factors which was administered to learners in the three selected schools for the special needs. The researcher requested for permission from the school heads and participants were assured of the confidentiality of their feedback before instruments were administered





on them. Participants were required to tick as appropriate and rate their level of agreement with each statement of 28 item questions on EI components using the five-points Likert scale rated on scale 1-never to 5-always. Five questions were constructed to measure self-awareness, seven questions to measure self-regulation, five questions to measure empathy, five questions to measure motivation and six questions to measure social skills. The reliability index of the instrument was established at coefficient alpha value of .70, which was adequate to adjudge the questionnaire to be consistent. Similarly, construct validity was established using the process of factor analysis to ascertain whether the construct is measuring what it is purported to measure. Data collected through the questionnaire were coded, categorized and scaled for ease of further analysis using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). Nominal values were assigned to the likert scales, thus Never=1, rarely=2, sometime=3, often=4 and always=5; where  $X = \text{sum of nominal values} / 5$  and the standard mean =  $1+2+3+4+5 = 15/5 = 3$ . Hence, 3 stands for the standard mean to agree or

disagree with the statements.

### Results and Discussion

The frequencies of the data in the questionnaire are briefly discussed in this study. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which their teachers utilized EI components with the statement on scale 1-5. All items were on interval scale, factor analysis was used to develop instrument into cluster related items with common factors, which interprets each factor based on items with high loadings. Initial factor ability of the EI items was examined using Component Analysis (CA). This was carried out on the 28 items in the instrument to identify a composite score for the five factors underlying the EI construct, which explained a cumulative variance of 68.65%. No item was deleted or suppressed as all items meet the criteria of having a primary factor loading of .40 and above (Maskey, Feleke, & Nguyen, 2018). All items significantly contribute to a simple factor structure (see Table 1 for the factor loadings).

**Q1: To what extent do students with special needs perceive teachers' Emotional Intelligence with components of self-awareness in Kwara State?**

**Table 1** Perception of Students with special needs on component of teachers' emotional intelligence (Self-Awareness) in Kwara State.

Item	Description	Loading	Mean	SD
SA1	My teacher impacts on my performance.	.632	2.28	1.27
SA2	My teacher's emotion is easily triggered	.707	2.65	1.26
SA3	My teacher speaks for a course of action even when others disagree.	.659	2.57	1.22
SA4	My teacher acknowledges my areas strengths and weaknesses.	.772	2.59	1.23
SA5	My teacher allows me to express my feelings.	.799	2.71	1.40
<b>Mean Average</b>			<b>2.56</b>	

The items involved in the first factor, abbreviated as SA, was named component of teacher emotional intelligence - Self-Awareness, are provided with their factor loadings and mean scores (see Table 1). Items SA1-5 are all positively worded, having the lowest mean score of 2.28 and highest score of 2.71. Item SA5 in Table 1 has the highest factor loading and as such indicates that, students' expression is a key factor in the component of self-awareness. Table 1 indicates an average mean score of 2.56 for the

component of emotional intelligence on self-awareness, indicating that the participants rarely agreed that their teachers have conscious knowledge of themselves and the environment while dealing with students with special needs ( $X < 3.0$ ). This is in line with the submission of Richardson and Shup (2003) that, although success of teachers in reaching and teaching students depends on many factors, their ability to make conscious and ongoing efforts to increase their own self-awareness will likely enhance

their effectiveness and satisfaction on the job.

Since teacher comes in contact with and have face-to-face interactions with students, he/she needs to be conscious of his/her own thoughts, speeches, attitudes, habits, strengths, weaknesses, assumptions, reactions and actions towards discharge of duty within and outside the classroom. On this note therefore, it is important for teachers to consider the mood and attitude they are acting or

reacting from and further give proper attention to themselves for self-observation to better understand the emotions of their students. Even though, many teachers have not received adequate training to be able to recognize how their own personality and psychological histories affect their interactions with students; it is however important to remember that, the overall attitude of teacher may affect students with disabilities more than any other interactions.

**Q2: To what extent do students with special needs perceive teachers' Emotional Intelligence with components of Self-Regulation in Kwara State?**

Table 2 Perception of Students with special needs on component of teachers' emotional intelligence (Self-Regulation) in Kwara State.

Item	Description	Loading	Mean	SD
SR1	My teacher responds immediately to emotions	.548	2.95	1.23
SR2	My teacher calms others even in stressful situations	.628	3.06	1.09
SR3	My teacher stays positive even in difficult moments	.759	3.06	1.05
SR4	My teacher publicly admits to mistakes even when it is not easy to do so.	.601	2.87	0.97
SR5	My teacher acts on values even when there is significant risk	.627	2.64	1.18
SR6	My teacher applies flexible procedures to fit specific situations	.636	2.81	1.21
SR7	My teacher easily manages multiple demands.	.620	3.04	1.38
<b>Mean Average</b>			<b>2.29</b>	

Table 2 indicates that few items scored higher than 3.00. The average mean score of 2.92 in Table 2 for the seven items involved in Emotional Self-Regulation indicates that the students agree that teachers in the school for special needs partly adjust and control their emotions even when students make unacceptable or disruptive behaviour. That is, they sometime utilize self-regulation as a component of EI when dealing with students with special needs. Item SR7, which asked whether teachers easily manage multiple demands from students had a relatively

large standard deviation indicating the presence of differing opinions. Unarguably, teaching is an affective laden process that makes different demands on emotions of teachers and students. Teachers are sometimes faced with situations that may trigger bad emotions and make them feel frustrated, angry, disgusted or even sad. If the state of affairs is not appropriately managed and well contained by the teacher, it may reduce students' interest in learning process.





**Q3: To what extent do students with special needs perceive teachers' Emotional Intelligence with components of empathy in Kwara State?**

**Table 3** Perception of Students with special needs on component of teachers' emotional intelligence (Empathy) in Kwara State.

Item	Description	Loading	Mean	SD
EP1	My teacher pays attention and listens	.677	2.93	1.38
EP2	My teacher asks questions to understand me	.685	3.16	1.24
EP3	My teacher accurately reads my moods/feelings or non-verbal communication.	.608	2.88	1.31
EP4	My teacher respects and relates well with me.	.605	2.84	1.17
EP5	My teacher demonstrates an ability to see things from my perspective.	.614	2.66	1.05
<b>Mean Average</b>			<b>2.89</b>	

Although, it is apparent from the result of analysis on Table 3 that teachers are sometimes empathetic (average  $X < 3.0$ ), it further reveals a high mean score of 3.16 on item EP2 which states that "teachers ask questions to better understand the students". This implies that, teachers create time to learn about their students. This is in line with the submission of Okonufua, Paunesku and Walton (2016) that reading students stories and experiences could help teachers

not only put themselves in their students' shoes, but also help them identify ways of behaving in more empathetic ways. In order to promote academic excellence, teachers should empathize with their students in the same way physicians provide better health care when they empathize with their patients. Thus, increasing teachers' empathy is necessary to be able to develop thorough understanding of students' personal, social situations and academic pursuit.

**Q4: To what extent do students with special needs perceive teachers' Emotional Intelligence with components of motivation in Kwara State?**

**Table 4** Perception of Students with special needs on component of teachers' emotional intelligence (Motivation) in Kwara State.

Item	Description	Loading	Mean	SD
MT1	My teacher is good in helping my students to learn	.600	2.70	1.24
MT2	My teacher performs the job to the best of his/her ability	.706	2.85	1.20
MT3	My teacher works independently.	.640	3.09	1.21
MT4	My learning achievement motivates my teacher to carry on teaching.	.622	3.18	1.25
MT5	My teacher comes regularly to class.	.632	3.14	1.23
<b>Mean Average</b>			<b>3.00</b>	

From the Table 4, items MT1 and MT2 that are positively worded had mean score that is below average of 3.00 while items MT3, MT4 and MT5 had mean score that is above 3.0. Also, the standard deviation for the item MT4 which indicates that students' learning achievement motivates teacher to carry on teaching was relatively large at 1.25 and had

the highest mean of 3.18. This indicates that motivation has been identified as a crucial factor for teacher and psychological health and well-being. This was corroborated by the study of Carson and Chappin (2009) that teachers' motivation is an essential component to enhance classroom effectiveness.



**Q5: To what extent do students with special needs perceive teachers' Emotional Intelligence with components of motivation in Kwara State?**

**Table 5** Perception of Students with special needs on component of teachers' emotional intelligence (Social Skill) in Kwara State.

Item	Description	Loading	Mean	SD
SS1	My teacher recognizes specific strengths and development opportunities in others	.610	2.75	1.36
SS2	My teacher gives constructive feedback in behavioural rather than personal terms	.601	2.92	1.16
SS3	My teacher expresses positive expectations about my' potential	.643	3.03	1.10
SS4	My teacher gives directions or demonstrations to my development	.656	3.08	1.20
SS5	My teacher shares information to foster collaboration	.719	3.02	1.28
SS6	My teacher stimulates enthusiasm and makes learning exciting for my me	.681	3.03	1.28
<b>Mean Average</b>			<b>2.97</b>	

The fifth component of emotional intelligence indicates the extent of utilization of social skill for teachers in dealing with students with special needs. The average mean score indicates that respondents rarely agree that teachers well utilized the social skills to influence learners when teaching. As presented by

Kramenitzer (2005) on emotional skills of kindergarten teachers and their impact on the children they teach, the importance of having early years pupils to have better social and emotional developments during their academic pursuits was highlighted.

Item	Dimension	Arithmetic Mean Average	Rating
1	Self-Awareness	2.56	Low
2	Self-Regulation	2.92	Low
3	Empathy	2.89	Low
4	Motivation	3.00	Medium
5	Social Skill	2.97	Low

### Discussion of Findings

The present study shed more light on the level of utilization of emotional intelligence by teachers, an aspect of educational leadership which has been unnoticed. Emotional Intelligence comprises of five components of self-awareness (SA), self-regulation (SR), empathy (EP), motivation (MT) and social skill (SS). The study produced five important findings. First, from the summary in Table 6, the mean average

for self-awareness reveals a low rating. This implies that, participants rarely agreed that their teachers have self-awareness, indicating that, teachers are not always conscious of themselves and the environment while dealing with students with special needs. Similarly, it is apparent from Table 6 that constructs of EI reveal a low mean average as participants indicates in their responses that, teachers partly apply self-regulation, empathy, and social skills as a component of EI when dealing with





students with special needs. However, the findings confirm that motivation has a medium mean average of  $\geq 3.00$  indicating that students with special needs are of the belief that teachers motivate them to learn. Exploring teachers emotional experience is prompted by self-clarity and integration of one's positive identity. Emotions therefore should not be viewed as automatic reactions to the behaviour of students but rather as a reflection of teacher personality. From the submission therefore, it is important for teachers to learn about their students' needs as some may often encounter difficulties due to variety of reasons part of which include; lack of interest in the subject, distraction by external forces, unengaging methods of teaching and most importantly, difficulty in learning due to their physical and or mental state.

#### Conclusion

From the reviewed literature, emotional intelligence has proven its importance. Conclusion drawn from this study however revealed that, teachers do not significantly utilize all components of EI in Kwara State except for the construct of motivation. Teachers' belief about self is a predictor of motivation to teach students and opt for behaviour that supports students with special needs. Undeniably, teachers' emotional intelligence will have greater impact on the education of special needs students and thus, teachers should create time to learn about self and their students. It is therefore important for a good teacher to make learning easier and fun for students by understanding them and inspiring them to learn and reach their full potentials through encouragement, getting them involved and positive reinforcement. Hence, well utilized components of emotional intelligence can be related not only to better academic achievement but also to greater conceptual understanding of subject contents, satisfaction with school, high self-esteem and social adjustment. This study therefore recommends the need for teachers to develop quality emotional intelligence through self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation and social skills in a classroom setting especially when dealing with students with special needs in school.

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