



Exploring Pedagogical Approaches Used by Teachers for Learners with Intellectual Disabilities in Selected Schools of Luanshya District, Zambia

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ABSTRACT

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The study explored the pedagogical approaches used in teaching of learners with intellectual disabilities (IDs) in Luanshya district. The study employed the qualitative interpretivism research paradigm and a descriptive research design. The sample size involved 15 special education teachers. Homogeneous purposeful sampling procedure was used to select all the participants. The instruments for data collection were semi- structured interview schedule, FGDs and observation checklist. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The study found that some of the pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs were teaching methods, strategies and techniques. Examples of teaching methods included demonstration methods; question and answer and exposition. Examples of teaching strategies include discussion, task analysis; cooperative learning; individualized learning; one to one learning; field trips; pair work; story telling; role-play and using pictures for learning. Examples of teaching techniques included repetitions; coaching; hands-on and instructional prompts. The study also unveiled the barriers to successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers for learners with IDs. These were lack of teaching skills among the teacher, inadequate teaching and learning materials for lesson delivery and unfriendly learning environments for learners with IDs, overcrowded classrooms, limited time for teaching and unmodified curriculum for learners. Schools made the following efforts to address the barriers: Having more CPDs to improve the teaching skills, consultations from colleagues, capacity-building teachers, improvisation of teaching and learning resources for delivery of lessons, provision of remedial works to all slow learners, engaging in writing books for learners with learners with IDs and increase the learning time for learners. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that MoE should provide schools with the necessary teaching and learning resources, support teachers engaged in writing books for learners with IDs, capacity build special teachers, improve the infrastructure in schools to address the challenges of overcrowdings and limited numbers of desks in the classrooms. Schools should engage in CPDs, teachers should engage in research practices and engage in consultations from colleagues.

KEYWORDS:

Disability, Intellectual Disability, Learners, Pedagogical Approaches, Special Education, Special Schools and Teacher.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

For several decades, educational researchers and practitioners have been advocating the use of a variety of pedagogical approaches as a means of improving teachers' instructional

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practice and subsequently learner outcomes (Goddard et al., 2007). Spurred on by reform efforts that are placing a greater onus on schools to account for learner achievement and the growing number of learners with disabilities being served in the general education setting, the call for general education teachers to work collaboratively with special education teachers is still growing (Van Garderen et al., 2012). According to American Association on Intellectual and Development Disabilities- AAID (2019), Intellectual Disability is defined as a condition characterised by significant limitations in cognitive and adaptive behaviour

functioning. It is a disorder with onset during the developmental period, which is a period below the age of 18 years. The limitations in cognitive functioning include inadequacies in; reasoning, problem solving, planning, abstract thinking, judgement, academic learning as well as social experience (AAID, 2019). The limitations in adaptive behaviour include Activities of Daily Living (ADL) such as language and communication, social participation, cognitive abilities, and independent living across multiple environments such as home, neighbourhood, community, school and work. Due to the limitations in cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior, teachers face difficulties in identifying and addressing the needs of learners with IDs in schools. As such, stakeholders in the education of learners with IDs have been advocating for the use of a variety of pedagogical approaches as a means of improving teachers' instructional practice and subsequently learner outcomes.

Bulat et al. (2017) state that most teachers lack the tools and training to identify disabilities, and even when tools exist, they have difficulties in differentiating between identifiable disabilities and factors that interfere with learning such as lack of learning support inside or outside the classroom and unfriendly school environments. Even if a disability is detected, teachers and school administrators often lack the required resources to provide specialized and individualized instruction to these children (WHO, 2011).

Globally, studies have been conducted on teaching strategies for learners with IDs. For example, in India, a study by Ranjeeta (2018) on teaching strategies for learners with special educational needs and revealed that another pedagogical approach used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs is co-operative learning. The overall aim of the study was to contribute to a deeper understanding of how co-operation between teachers could promote learning of all pupils in a general education context. However, the study by Ranjeeta (2018) only described and analyzed the teaching strategies for learners with special educational needs in general and not specific with learners with IDs.

A study by Eskay et al. (2012) reveal that peer tutoring, cooperative learning and collaborative learning were some of the strategies that were used to reduce anti- social behavior among schooling adolescents in Nigeria. These teaching strategies aided the learning of learners with disabilities in the classrooms. The use of these teaching strategies enabled teachers to attend to the individual learning needs of learners and were able to communicate effectively with the learners. Nevertheless, the study by Eskay et al. (2012) did not look at pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs in selected schools.

In Zambia, Muzata and Mahlo (2019) assert that teachers use strategies such as giving extra time, giving different assessment tasks, reducing the amount of material and individualized teaching as aspects of curriculum adaptation. This was done by varying the pace of instruction, the method

of learning employed and the content to be learned. The study however, was too generalized in the context of disabilities. The findings were not specific to a disability group. The study did not bring for example, the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in the teaching of learners IDs. With this global, international and national background, this study was conducted to explore the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs in Luanshya district.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Zambia is a signatory to the international agreements or instruments such as the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Education Needs (1994). These international agreements emphasize the rights of children to education. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2008) demand for access, equity and quality of educational services for LSENs. Being a signatory Zambia has adopted an inclusive education curriculum whose successful implementation requires teachers with pre and in-service training in the area of inclusive education and special education.

Despite the sound policy pronouncement of inclusive education, which advocates for inclusion of all learners in education, little seems to be known about the pedagogical approaches that are used by teachers to address the needs of learners with Intellectual Disabilities in Luanshya district, Zambia. For example, Muzata (2017); Kalimaposo, Simalalo, Mweemba & Hambulo (2025) state that many general and special education teachers did not have pre and in-service training in the area of inclusive education and special education. Additionally, Mandyata (2015) points out that general education teachers' still have negative attitudes toward working with LSENs and they seem to lack support from school administration and the learners' families (Kalimaposo, Simalalo & Mweemba, 2025). It is against this background that the study explored the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs in Luanshya District, Zambia.

1.2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with Intellectual Disabilities in Luanshya District.

1.3. Study Objectives

The following objectives guided the study:

- 1) Establish the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with Intellectual Disabilities.
- 2) Explore the barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches used by teachers for learners with Intellectual Disabilities.
- 3) Ascertain the efforts teachers are making in addressing the identified barriers to successful implementation of

the pedagogical approaches for learners with Intellectual Disabilities.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study is significant in the sense that it would provide empirical research findings on the implementation of pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs in schools. The information obtained from this study would be useful to stakeholders such as educational practitioners, school administrators, class teachers, curriculum planners and policy makers on how to implement the pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs in schools. Further, it is envisaged that the study would raise awareness on teaching strategies for learners with IDs and enhance educators' understanding on handling learners with IDs.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Inclusive Model theory, which states that children learn in many different ways and that learning level of each child is shaped by his or her interests, experiences, prior knowledge and exposure to various stimuli and the child's response to them (Berryman, 2014). The conventional modes of teaching are gradually being replaced by innovative methods; wherein creativity, communication, child friendly teaching and child centered learning occupy a significant place. This approach focuses on making the child free from fear, anxiety and trauma and learning through activities, discovery and exploration. Embedded within this new approach are also the beliefs that children construct their own knowledge and children need to be encouraged to reflect upon and apply their learning. For this, teachers need to understand, create and give spaces to children so that learning becomes joyful and fun for them, rather than a burden. This is the inclusive approach to education. The inclusive approach to education refers to ensuring that all children, despite their differences, receive the opportunity of being a part of the same classroom as other children of their age; and in the process get the opportunity of learning the curriculum to their optimal potential. In other words, inclusive and responsive education implies that when children with different learning styles and needs study together. In line with the current study, the inclusive model was used to explore the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs. The model, stipulates that, teachers and the school administrators should try to address the unique learning needs, interests, and style of every student through the teaching process.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of the literature was based on set objectives. These were: pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with Intellectual Disabilities, barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches used by teachers for learners with Intellectual Disabilities and efforts teachers are making in addressing the identified

barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches for learners with Intellectual Disabilities.

2.1. Pedagogical Approaches used by teachers in classrooms for Learners with Intellectual Disabilities

This section reviewed literature on some the teaching approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs at global, international and national perspectives. A good pedagogical approach is required for learners with special needs who come from disadvantaged groups or minorities. The approach supports the needs of these students and helps them integrate better into the mainstream learning community.

According to the present study, pedagogical approaches means the nature or type of teaching methods, teaching strategies and teaching techniques that teachers make to support the learning of learners with IDs. There are number of pedagogical approaches that are associated with teaching learners with IDs. These have been discussed below:

Globally, a study in India by Ranjeeta (2018) on teaching strategies for learners with special educational needs revealed that another pedagogical approach used by teachers in classrooms for LSEs is co-operative learning. Co-operative learning is the social instructional strategy, which enables the instructors to create rich and varied learning environments. It usually takes place, when the students are working in small groups and participate in tasks and activities by putting into practice negotiating roles and responsibilities. The groups that are formed in promoting cooperative learning have five elements, such as positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, social skills and processing. Ranjeeta (2018) argues that the effective implementation of cooperative learning results in higher self-esteem, higher achievement, increased retention, greater social support, more on-task behaviour, creation of a pleasant environment, making use of modern, scientific and innovative methods. Further, effective implementation of cooperative learning leads to greater collaboration, development of communication skills and interactive abilities, greater intrinsic motivation, increased perspective, better attitudes towards educational institutions, formation of constructive viewpoints and the individuals employed in them and the use of the higher-level reasoning. When these factors are acknowledged and put into practice in an effectual and worthwhile manner, learners my benefit. It has proved to be beneficial to the students in number of ways. These are, acquiring support from others, forming good terms and relationships, implementing tasks and activities in a manageable manner, developing motivation towards learning. However, the study by Ranjeeta (2018) focuses on cooperative learning as the only teaching strategy that is used by special education teachers and general teachers to teach learners with special educational needs, leaving out other important teaching strategies such as peer tutoring,

collaborative team teaching, differentiated learning, individualized learning and task analysis, which this study investigated.

Another study in India by Kapur (2020) on understanding the meaning and significance of pedagogical approaches revealed that one of the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in the classrooms is collaborative team teaching. Kapur (2020) contends that collaborative team teaching is the method of teaching, where two teachers share the responsibilities within the classroom setting. Collaborative team teaching is a long-standing approach to teaching that is being practiced in educational institutions for number of years. When the teachers form the viewpoint that they need to implement collaborative team teaching, they will make use of professional knowledge to contextualize the teaching program to suit the needs and requirements of the learners as well as the overall system of education. The teachers may teach collaboratively in one or two learning areas, or open the doors between the classrooms to create a larger open classroom. When collaborative team teaching takes place, the ultimate responsibility of the curriculum delivery, assessment and reporting of all students within a form group still lies with the individual teacher with that class. One of the major benefits of collaborative team teaching is the teachers are able to augment their teaching methods and promote learner learning by working in collaboration and integration with each other. In addition, the teachers are able to obtain support and assistance from each other in enriching their job performance.

Additionally, Kapur (2020) argues that another pedagogical approach used by teachers in classrooms for LSENs is integrated learning. Research on “The Benefits of Work Integrated Learning for Learners, 2019” revealed that integrated learning is the learning theory that is focused upon combining what one learns within the classroom settings with the solutions of the real-world problems. This pedagogical approach provides learners with the overarching organizing ideas and concepts, which would enable the learners to develop the bigger picture. They began to internalize the process by developing connections across the disciplines and among topics across the disciplines. Integrated learning has number of benefits, which includes use academic knowledge in the real world, develop self-awareness and the learners are able to form their comfort zones, they develop awareness in terms of barriers taking place within the course of achievement of academic goals. Furthermore, learners develop awareness in terms of global issues, hone leadership, teamwork and communication skills, develop practical skills, develop thinking skills, recognize the meaning and significance of academic goals, and bring about improvements in the overall employability skills. Hence, it is implemented to a major extent at all levels of education. Therefore, it can be stated, integrated learning is regarded as a worthwhile pedagogical approach. Nevertheless, the study

by Kapur (2020) focuses on pedagogical approaches that are used to teach learners in general, not specifically for learners with IDs, which this study focused on.

Still on the global front, a study by Tomlinson (2020) on differentiated instruction in the United States of America revealed that one of the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with special educational needs is differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is the process of ensuring that what a student learns what types of methods, approaches and strategies are put into practice in enhancing learning and how the students make use of their knowledge and competencies in enriching their lives. Differentiated instruction within the classroom settings can be done in various ways. According to Tomlinson, teachers can differentiate instruction through four ways. These are content, process, product, and learning environment. The most common types of differentiated instruction are, grouping of students, varying amounts of time and changing the tasks. The instructors form the teaching methods in accordance to the grade levels, needs and requirements and academic goals of the students. There are four classroom elements, which are taken into consideration by the instructors, i.e. content, process, products and learning environment (Tomlinson, 2020). The pedagogical method of differentiated instruction is put into practice in educational institutions at all levels. It is facilitating to the students in performing well in their tests and assignments and acquiring appreciation. Therefore, it is well understood, differentiated instruction needs to be acknowledged and is regarded as a significant and encouraging pedagogical approach. Despite Tomlinson (2020) identifying content, process, and product as essential elements of differentiation that teachers should consider when teaching learners with special educational needs, it is not known whether teachers in Zambia were implementing these four elements, which were identified by Tomlinson, an issue this current study put into consideration. In Africa, a study by Eskay et al. (2012) reveals that peer tutoring, cooperative learning and collaborative learning are some of the strategies that are used to reduce anti-social behavior among schooling adolescents in Nigeria. The study found that peer teaching in special education is a peer tutoring is a pedagogical approach, which involves one or more learners teaching learners. In this strategy, higher-performing learners are paired with lower-performing learners or learners with disabilities to review or teach academic material. In peer teaching, the teachers encourage the learners to teach the concepts to their fellow learners and help them to provide solutions to their problems. The learners normally take pleasure and form cordial terms and relationships with their fellow learners. The Center for Promoting Research to Practice (2011) states that the peer teaching also enables the learners to enhance their teaching skills. In implementing peer teaching, there are various factors that need to be considered, for example, providing accurate explanations,

providing written exercises, explaining how to perform assignments and preparing for the tests. When the learners are to work on class as well as homework assignments and prepare for the tests, they usually communicate and seek help and support from fellow students. Hence, peer teaching is acknowledged and appreciated. Therefore, it is well-understood, peer teaching is a pedagogical approach, which has proven to be advantageous and meaningful in enhancing the teaching skills of the students and developing mutual understanding among them. Nevertheless, the study by Eskay et al. (2012) was conducted in ordinary schools, whose conditions were not be the same as in special schools where this current study was conducted.

Wanjiku (2014) conducted another study in Kenya on teaching strategies used by teachers educating learners with multiple disabilities. The study reveals that teachers use various teaching strategies such as task analysis, activities of daily living, and real objects to adapt instructions in classrooms for learners with cerebral palsy intellectual disabilities in special schools. Task analysis is a process by which a task is broken down into manageable component parts. Wanjiku (2014) points out that task analysis is when you break a complex skill or behavior down into smaller more teachable parts or steps. It often involves “chaining”, in which each step is taught, mastered, and then added to (so it is chained together), progressing either forward or backward in the steps. If the skill cannot be taught chronologically, then one or a few parts are worked on at a time. Task analysis, in simple terms, is a process that breaks down an activity into smaller parts. By using task analysis in the classroom, teachers find that goals are more easily reached and that students are more likely to recall material later. Sequences or steps are followed and practiced, making complex goals more attainable and hazy directions clearer. Nevertheless, the study by Wanjiku (2014) did not explore the barriers that hinders the successful implementation of task analysis in classrooms for learners with IDs, an issue this study unveiled.

In Zambia, Kandimba, Mandyata and Simalalo (2023) conducted a study on teachers’ experiences on curriculum adaptation for learners with moderate intellectual disabilities in Zambia. The study found that used a variety of adapted teaching methods such as demonstration methods, question and answer and exposition to ease learning of learners. Some of the teaching strategies they somehow adapted were; discussion, cooperative learning, task analysis, individualized learning, one-to-one learning, pair work, storytelling, role-play and picture study. Additionally, teachers adjusted teaching techniques such as repetitions, coaching, and hands-on and instructional prompts to make them suitable for learners with moderate IDs. The use of these teaching methods enabled learner with moderate IDs benefit more from the content exposed to them.

Further, Muzata and Mahlo (2019) conducted a study to establish teachers’ knowledge of the concept of curriculum

adaptation for LSENs and the strategies they used to adapt the curriculum. The study found that one of the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with special educational needs is individualised instruction. Individualized instruction refers to the use of strategies, resources, and assessments to meet the needs of one particular learner. It ensures that a student is getting the proper guidance, flexibility, and learning support to expand opportunities for academic growth. Individualized instruction meets the specific needs of learner, even during group work. Mwendalubi, Mandyata, Bwalya & Chakulimba (2018) posit that individualized instruction is an instructional method that personalizes instruction to the needs and learning style of the learner. This is done by varying the pace of instruction, the method of learning employed and the content to be learned. It is a way of teaching that considers each child’s unique personality, including age, developmental stage, interests, and learning styles. With an awareness of children’s differences, an educator can plan learning centers and activities, offer instructions or explanations, and encourage children to express their ideas and experiences in a way that is effective and appropriate.

Muzata and Mahlo (2019) add that individualized instruction is an instructional method that personalizes instruction to the needs and learning style of the learner. This is done by varying the pace of instruction, the method of learning employed and the content to be learned. Personalized learning refers to instruction in which the pace of learning and the instructional approach are optimized for the needs of each learner. Learning objectives, instructional approaches, and instructional content (and its sequencing) may all vary based on learner needs. In addition, learning activities are meaningful and relevant to learners, driven by their interests, and often self-initiated. Personalized learning, individualized instruction, personal learning environment and direct instruction all refer to efforts to tailor education to meet the different needs of students. However, the study by Muzata and Mahlo (2019) focus on teachers’ knowledge of the concept of curriculum adaptation for LSENs and the strategies they used to adapt the curriculum, not specifically on the pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs, which this current study unveiled.

This section has reviewed literature on some the teaching approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs at global, international and national perspectives. Some of the approaches include cooperative learning, collaborative team teaching, integrated learning, peer tutoring, task analysis, differentiated learning and individualized instruction. However, it is not known whether these teaching approaches are implemented in classrooms for learners with IDs in schools in Zambia. This is the gap, which the present study sought to investigate.

2.2. Barriers hindering successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers for learners with IDs

This section reviewed literature on the barriers that hinders the successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs at global, international and national perspectives. These barriers have been discussed below:

Globally, Allam and Martin (2021) conducted a study on issues and challenges in special education teachers in teaching children with learning disabilities in the City Division of Ilagan Isabela, Philippines South East Asia. The study reveals that teachers assigned in special education classes lacked of strategies in dealing with learners with disabilities. The classrooms for children with learning disabilities in Division of Ilagan at large had poor learning environment to support the special education such as lack of budget, curriculum guide, instructional materials and even school facilities. Learners with disability did not receive all the necessary support and services for accessing the curriculum facilities; and stakeholders' supports is minimal to support the needs of the students enrolled in special education classes. The study recommends that the Department of Education Training and Development in collaboration with regional in service officers should organize continuous professional development opportunities on inclusion strategies of learners with educational needs. Further, the implementers of the special education programs were recommended to strictly adhere to the policies, and the strong support of the stakeholders shall be encouraged by formulating active organization spearheaded by the school head. Nevertheless, the study by Allam and Martin (2021) focus on the teaching strategies for learners with learning disabilities only, while this current study focused on teaching strategies for learners with IDs.

Faiz et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative study on challenges faced by teachers when teaching students with developmental disability at primary school level in Lahore, Pakistan. The study finds that some of the barriers that hinder the successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers are lack of teacher training, lack of teaching materials, teaching methodology and large class size. Because most teachers were not trained in special education, they lacked knowledge and skills on how to adapt the content to suit the needs of learners they were dealing with. Further most schools had limited teaching resources to be used by teachers. Some class were too large for the teacher to address the needs of all the learners in the classrooms, very few special education teachers gave extra time and attention to the children for a better future. Faiz et al. (2019) recommend pre-service and in-service teacher training, which would promote innovative teaching method in schools and a limited number of students included in each class to avoid larger class size. However, the study by Faiz (2019) used a quantitative research approach, which could not provide certain

information, provided by qualitative studies to support generalization of the outcomes.

In Africa, a study in Kenya by Osero (2015) on challenges teachers encounter in implementing inclusive education in public primary schools reveals that teachers faced challenges such teachers lack of knowledge of the types of learners, indiscipline cases, heavy workload demanding more time, teachers' negative attitude towards LSENs and no facilities for teachers and learners. The study also revealed other challenges, which includes LSENs having low self-esteem, time-consuming, absenteeism of learners, make class control difficult, opposition of parents on classification as SNE, financial problems, lack of infrastructure, syllabus coverage impossible, discrimination of SNE children, current curriculum not meeting the needs of the learners in inclusive classes. The study concluded that the challenges were contributing to the negativity of teachers towards inclusive education and hence hindered the implementation of this programme. The study recommended that teachers should plan to have more time to remedy the children such as slow learners and they should maintain class control by involving all learners within each learning experience. It also recommended that teachers should be encouraged to develop positive attitude towards the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya. However, the study by Osero (2015) covers only the general challenges teachers' encounter in inclusive education in Kenya, while this current study focused on pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs in Zambian special schools.

Udoba (2014) conducted a study on challenges faced by teachers when teaching learners with developmental disability in Tanzania. The study notes that one of the barriers that hinders successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers for learners with special educational needs is lack of human resources such as limited number of qualified and trained teachers both in general and special education. Most teachers of mainstream schools were not sure on how to teach learners with special educational needs leading to many learners being turned away from such institutions. The shortages of trained teachers in special education and the lack of teaching facilities had a negative effect on the delivery of quality education to children with developmental disability. Most schools had large class sizes for teachers to facilitate quality learning. Teachers faced difficulties to teach learners in special education institutes when students needed extra attention, group activities, handle bad behaviours, and to teach younger students (Udoba, 2014). However, the barriers identified by Udoba (2014) may be applied to the Tanzania context, not in Zambia where the current study was conducted.

In South Africa, Adewumi et al. (2017) conducted a study on adaptation of the curriculum for the inclusion of learners with special education needs in selected primary schools in the

Fort Beaufort District. This study finds that one of the barriers that hinder successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers for LSENs is the classroom learning environment such as large class sizes and lack of training. The study outlines that it was difficult for teachers to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all learners when the classrooms were overcrowded. Some classes were reported to have learners up to forty-five (45) in the class. This made the work of the class teachers very difficult. Some respondents also report that schools operated multi-grade and large classes because of shortages of teachers. Multi-grade is the combination of two or more grades in a classroom. Nevertheless, it was not known whether the barriers of class size and lack of training identified by Adewumi et al. (2017) are among barriers hindering successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classroom for learners with IDs in Zambia.

In Zambia, Kandimba *et al.* (2023); Mtonga, Kalimaposo & Mandyata, (2023) found that teachers encountered challenges as they taught learners with moderate IDs and other disabilities. These challenges ranged from inadequate time for preparation; overcrowded curriculum; unsuitable learning environment, insufficient instructional resources to teacher inability in adapting the curriculum (Kalimaposo, Muzata, & Zulu, 2025). These challenges were seen to have negatively affected teachers' ability to adapt curriculum more to support the learning of learners with moderate IDs. Awareness of these challenges may lead to the formulation of policies that would improve the learning of learners with moderate IDs in schools. Thus, there was need to address these challenges in order to effectively adapt the curriculum in the learning of learners in schools.

Studies by Mudenda and Nakamba (2017), and Kafata (2016) highlight some challenges in the implementation of the curriculum in selected schools in Kitwe town. The studies found that some of the barriers that hinders successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers for LSENs are congested classrooms, limited physical facilities, shortage of qualified teachers, and some learners, as well as teachers, did not know the local language of instruction used (Kalimaposo, Muzata & Zulu, 2024). However, the studies by Mudenda and Nankamba (2017), and Kafata (2016) focuses on challenges faced by teachers in implementation of curriculum for learners with LSENs in general, while the current study explored the pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs in selected schools.

Mulenga (2016) carried out another study on the implementation of computer studies curriculum in selected public primary schools in Ndola district of Zambia. The study reveals that one of the barriers that hinder successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers is lack of specialised equipment to be used in teaching process (Kalimaposo, Moono, Daka, Mulubale, Kaumba & Mphande, 2023). For example, Mulenga (2016) finds that the teaching

of computer studies in schools in Ndola district was met with many challenges, which included lack of computers and accessories, poor setup of computer laboratories, lack of trained teachers in computer studies, and inadequate books (Mphande, Kalimaposo, Phiri, Tembo & Mwale, 2024). Nevertheless, the study by Mulenga (2016) focuses on the teaching of computer studies curriculum in general primary schools, while this current study focused on the pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs in selected schools.

Further, Muzata (2013b), in a study conducted to establish how the interactive methodologies were being implemented in teaching HI learners about HIV/AIDS, finds that teachers were faced with challenges in sign language and lack of materials for teaching and learning. These findings agreed with Muwana and Ostrosky (2014) who agree that lack of trained teachers with expertise in sign language and braille in Zambian schools was making inclusive education a challenge. The lack aggravates the situation for appropriately implementing the curriculum as intended. Further, the study by Mulenga and Luangala (2015) which reveals the gap between students being trained as English-language teachers failing grammar-related questions shows that much needs to be done if learners with disabilities are to benefit from curriculum modification. A Baseline Survey to improve Life Chances for Children with Disabilities in Zambia through Inclusive Education by Chakulimba, Ndhlovu, Tambulukani, Mkandawire and Muzata (2014) and Mandyata (2011) reveal that there were many teachers teaching LSENs in inclusive schools that were not trained in special education. Other challenges relate to access because schools do not have computers or portable laptops intended to help learners with disabilities. Even if computers were available, teachers do not know how to use computers themselves and it would be difficult for them to help learners. However, none of the studies above focused on the teaching approaches for learners with IDs in selected schools, an issue this study unveiled.

This section has reviewed literature on the barriers that hinders the successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs at global, international and national perspectives. These barriers include infrastructural barriers such as inadequate facilities and school buildings, classroom learning environment such as large class sizes and lack of teaching materials, human resources such as limited number of qualified and trained teachers both in general and special education and negative attitudes towards students with disabilities. However, it is not known how teachers are addressing these barriers in schools. This is the gap, which the present study explored.

2.3. Efforts to address the barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches for learners with Intellectual Disabilities

A study by Darling-Hammond (2010) on Teacher education and the American future, in America revealed that one of the

ways to address the barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs was training of teachers in special education so that they can deliver quality education. The study also recommends that teachers were supposed to receive continued training in teaching methodology in order to upgrade their skills and knowledge in teaching learners with IDs. Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2014) state that specialist teachers were capable of teaching a wide variety of skills and of using a range of teaching methods and strategies. Nevertheless, the findings of the two studies were limited to America and United Kingdom contexts.

In South Africa, Adewumi et al. (2017) conducted a study on adaptation of the curriculum for the inclusion of learners with special education needs in selected primary schools. The study recommends the need to train special teachers equipped with knowledge and skills delivering instructions in classroom for LSENs. However, the study by Adewumi et al. (2017) focuses on adaptation of the curriculum for the inclusion of LSENs in selected primary schools in general, while the current study focuses on pedagogical approaches in teaching learners with IDs.

In Zambia, Isiteketo (2019); Mubita, et al., (2022) & Mundende, et al., (2022) conducted studies on the challenges and opportunities of teaching Geography as a component of Social Studies in the revised curriculum. The findings of the study indicate that to address the challenges related to lack of trained teachers in schools, MoGE should expedite the training and recruitment of teachers who would come with the content and knowledge to teach the subject as a single discipline. Training and recruitment of qualified teachers would enhance the teaching and learning process as well as improve the performance of learners in the end. Additionally, the MoGE through the schools and resource centres should spearhead CPDs in the new integrated curriculum approach to teachers who were trained in the old methodologies. This would enable teachers get acquainted with the new approaches to teach an integrated curriculum and overcome challenges related with delivering the curriculum.

Additionally, Isiteketo (2019) states that in order to supplement government efforts, teachers of Social Studies should regularly go for in-service training to upgrade their skills (Kalimaposo & Mulubale, 2015). This helps them learn how to change their negative attitude to the curriculum, which in turn improves the performance of learners. Further, MoGE and schools should procure more of the needed teaching and learning materials for effective implementation of the new integrated curriculum. However, this study only focused on the challenges in the teaching Geography as a component of Social Studies, while the current study focuses on pedagogical approaches in teaching learners with IDs.

Therefore, if these suggested strategies or efforts were successfully implemented, most of barriers hindering full implementation of adapted curriculum in classroom for

learners with IDs including other disabilities in special schools would be addressed (Mtonga, Lungu, Kalimaposo & Mandyata, 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative interpretivism research paradigm because of its descriptive in nature, focusing on collection of in-depth data, non-use of numbers and focusing on interpreting data that is collected from the study sites (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens, 2015; Kalimaposo, 2010). This study focused on describing data, not using numbers, collecting in depth data and focusing on interpreting the views that were collected from the respondents. This paradigm was used because of its descriptive nature, focusing on the collection of in-depth data, the non-use of numbers, and its ability to ease the interpretation of data from the field or study sites.

The population for this study were class teachers from selected special schools in the Luanshya district. Learners with special needs were used to for observing the class teachers. The researcher's choice of this population was based on the belief that it could provide the necessary data need for the study. The sample for this research study consisted of three schools. The sample of 15 participants was used in this study; these were 5 from the School 1, 5 from the School 2 and 5 from the School 3. Class teachers for learners with IDs were chosen because they were the implementers and the ones who teach learners with special educational needs in the schools. This sample size was reached through the saturation point Creswell (2014). This study used homogeneous purposive sampling technique. Homogeneous purposive sampling technique was applied to select all the Class teachers for learners with IDs because they were the implementers and the ones who teach learners with special educational needs in the schools. Thus, this sample was reliable and was a source of rich information for the study.

With regard to instrumentation, the study employed semi-structured interview guide, focus group discussions and lesson observation checklist to generate the required data from the participants. The use of these instruments provided a triangulation of instruments for the collected data because it helped the researcher to collect data that was trustworthy and the other two research instruments supplemented a gap in one research instrument.

In this study, data were analyzed using thematic and content analysis. Data was reduced to themes or categories through the coding process (Martens, 2015). Data from interviews, FGDs and observations were coded and eventually arrived at the emerging themes. This process helped to understand and interpret the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs. The qualitative raw data from interviews, FGDs and field notes was subjected to a constant comparative analysis technique, which helped to reach the most significant

categories and themes of the topic under study. Creswell (2014) indicates that other considerations during thematic and content analysis are those, which relate to consistency and specificity in responses. This was achieved through probes as data was being analyzed in the present study.

3.2. Trustworthiness & Ethical Considerations

The study considered four aspects of trustworthiness used by qualitative researchers. These are Credibility, Transferability, Confirm-ability and Dependability. These aspects of trustworthiness do not use established metrics or numbers as it is in validity and reliability (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). In this study, the rights and respect for privacy were upheld. Firstly, consent was obtained from the Ethics Committee of University of Zambia. Further, permission was sought from the DEBS in Luanshya and the school Head teachers where this research was conducted. Furthermore, consent was sought from the participants and they were informed that the data collected was used for academic purposes only.

4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are presented in line with the research questions:

- How would you describe the pedagogy approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with Intellectual Disabilities?
- How would you describe the barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogy approaches used by teachers for learners with Intellectual Disabilities?
- How would you describe the efforts teachers are making in addressing the identified barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches for learners with Intellectual Disabilities?

4.1. Teaching approaches used by teachers for learners with IDs

In order to establish the teaching strategies used by teachers for learners with IDs, data was collected from (15) class teachers. The researcher used interviews, focused group discussion and observation checklist to probe the participants. A question was asked to the participants: “*what pedagogical approaches are used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs?*” Their views were reflected in following responses:

One class teacher from School 1 during interviews confirmed that:

We use different strategies or approaches if we see that the child does not understand. For example, we use learner centred teaching approach, where we involve all the learners in the lesson. We also use Individualized Learning, where the class teacher on a one to one basis

helps the child so that the child can understand better (TR1, 2025).

In another interview, one class teacher from School 2 pointed out that:

“Some of the teaching strategies I use to teach learners with special education needs are question and answer, teacher exposition, discussions and group” (TR6, 2025).

Further, in another interview from School 3, one class teacher confirmed that:

“I use discussion method, question and answer, demonstration method, discussion method, teacher exposition, role-play, using pictures for learning” (TR3, 2025).

In a Focused Group Discussion, one class teacher from School 1 observed that,

“The attention span of these learners is very low; therefore, they need teaching methods such role-play, using pictures for learning, demonstration method and discussion method” (TR3, 2025).

In another Focused Group Discussion, one class teacher from School 2 lamented that:

“These learners are slow in learning, so, I use discussion method, question and answer, demonstration method, teacher exposition, role-play and using pictures for learning so that they are fully involved” (TR8, 2025).

One other class teacher from School 3 during Focused Group Discussion reported that:

“The learners I teach forget easily, therefore, I use hands on teaching methods, where learners can see and touch what they are learning. This makes them not to forget what they learn” (TR12, 2025).

Further, during Focused Group Discussion, one teacher from School 4 highlighted that:

“Among the teaching strategies I use include demonstration methods, individualized learning methods, question and answer and discussion method” (TR15, 2025).

4.2. Barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches used by teachers for learners with IDs

In order to explore the barriers to successful implementation

of the pedagogical approaches used by teachers for learners with IDs, data was collected from (15) class teachers. The researcher used interviews, focused group discussion and observation check-list to probe the participants. A question was asked to the participants: *“What are the barriers to successful implementation of pedagogical approaches used by teachers for learners with IDs?”* Their views were reflected in following responses:

One class teacher from School 1 during interviews confirmed that:

“One of the barriers to successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers for learners with IDs is inadequate learning and teaching materials such as books for learners with SENs” (TR2, 2025).

In another interview, one class teacher from School 2 pointed out that:

“Another challenge is that of inadequate teachers for Special Education in the school. The school has only four teachers to handle the 34 or 340 learners in the school” (TR7, 2025).

Further, in another interview from School 3, one class teacher highlighted that:

“There is no support from the School Administration in terms of provision of the learning and teaching materials for these learners. Some Administrators don't really attend to the needs of learners with IDs in the school” (TR11, 2025).

In a Focused Group Discussion, one class teacher from School 1 observed that:

“Another barrier to successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers for learners with IDs is that the unmodified curriculum, so it becomes very challenging to modify the teaching strategies to suit the needs of learners with IDs” (TR4, 2025).

In another Focused Group Discussion, one class teacher from School 2 lamented that:

“Before the New Dawn Government, there has been no funds to purchase learning and teaching materials such as books for learners with IDs so that we can teach properly. Because of

inadequate funding in the school, some learners used stay without mobility aids such as wheelchairs and hearing aids which the school did not provided because of inadequate finances” (TR9, 2025).

One other class teacher from School 3 during Focused Group Discussion reported that:

“We spend a lot of time in trying to modify the teaching materials for learners with SENs. Another challenge was inadequate teachers trained in Special Education in the school. As I mentioned earlier, we are only 4 teachers here teaching all these learners against 34 or 340 learners with IDs at the unit” (TR13, 2025).

Further, during Focused Group Discussion, one teacher from School 4 highlighted that:

There is also a challenge of inadequate teachers trained in Special Education in the school. Because most of the teachers were not trained in special education, they lacked knowledge on certain conditions of disabilities and they did not have the necessary skills required by learners with physical disabilities and this adversely affected the academic performance of the learners” (TR14, 2025).

The researcher conducted lesson observations in order to establish the pedagogical approaches used by the teacher to teach learners with IDs in the classroom situation. The researcher observed three teachers, one from each school, teaching learners with IDs.

The following were observed during the lesson observations in the four schools:

- (i) Teachers were seen using the following pedagogical approaches when teaching learners with IDs in the classroom situation: *demonstration methods, individualized learning, question and answer, discussion method, cooperative learning, task analysis, teacher expository, storytelling, role-play, using pictures for learning, coaching, pair work and behaviour modification method.*
- (i) *With regard to the learning environment, it was observed that in three schools that the learning environments were not conducive for learners with Special*

Educational Needs. The learning environments were unfriendly for effective implementation of the teaching strategies for learners with IDs. The classrooms were overcrowded a situation, which hindered effective implementation of the teaching strategies for learners with IDs. For instance, in School 1, one teacher (TR 1) was observed while teaching 70 learners. In school 2, another teacher (T6) was also observed teaching 34 learners. In school 3, teacher (TR10) was observed teaching 23 learners, which is equivalent to 230 normal learners. In school 4, teacher (TR 14) was observed teaching 14 learners, which is equivalent to 140 normal learners. Further, some teachers faced communication challenges such as using sign language in classrooms for learners with hearing impairment. There was limited time for effective implementation of the teaching strategies for learners with IDs.

- (ii) Some of the challenges faced by the teachers in implementing the pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs in the classroom were: *Lack of competency and skills to implement instructional methods and techniques used in teaching for learners with IDs. There were inadequate learning and teaching materials for effective implementation of the teaching strategies for learners with IDs in the classrooms. Teachers had a lot of work due to modification of the learner's work.*
- (iii) Some of the efforts teachers made by teachers in addressing the identified barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs were: *Some teachers were seen using task analysis, teachers were seen using the available books for learners in the mainstream, modified the work to suit the needs of the learners we are teaching. Teachers were repeating the same lessons several times to make learners learn.*

4.3. Efforts teachers are making in addressing the identified barriers to successful implementation of pedagogical approaches for learners with Intellectual Disabilities.

The following were some of the responses given by (15) teachers from four schools that participated in the study in response to the question: What efforts are schools making in

addressing the identified barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs?

One class teacher from School 1 during interviews confirmed that:

“Although there are inadequate teaching and learning resources to make good teaching aids, we just improvise. We use our own initiative to for teaching and learning resources and make teaching and learning aids. For example, when we are preparing charts, we buy manila papers and markers in town so that we make reasonable teaching aids” (TR1, 2025).

In another interview, one class teacher from School 2 pointed out that:

“Since there are no books for learners with IDs in schools, we use the available books for learners in the mainstream and modify the work to suit the needs of the learners we are teaching” (TR6, 2025).

Further, in another interview from School 3, one class teacher suggested that:

“We usually have school based Continuing Professional Development (CPDs) three times in a term where teachers are oriented on best teaching strategies for learners with IDs” (TR10, 2025).

In a Focused Group Discussion, one class teacher from School 1 observed that:

“We consult from our colleagues within and outside the school on best teaching strategies for learners with IDs” (TR5, 2025).

In another Focused Group Discussion, one class teacher from School 2 lamented that:

“We don't just sit idle, most of the time we engage ourselves in research practices to discover new teaching strategies for learners with IDs” (TR9, 2025).

One other class teacher from School 3 during Focused Group Discussion reported that:

“Although it is time consuming to teach learners with IDs, as teachers, we try our level best by repeating the same lesson over and over so that they grasp the concept after the lesson” (TR12, 2025).

Further, during Focused Group Discussion, one teacher from

School 4 revealed that:

“We usually do behaviour modification. For example, we move learners who like sitting at the back of the classroom, to the front sits. Sometimes, we tell our learners that you will not go home until you finish doing a particular activity in class” (TR 14, 2025).

5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of the study were discussed in accordance with the objectives of the study. The findings were also discussed in line with the inclusive model by Berryman (2014).

5.1. Pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs.

The study found that some of the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classroom for learners with IDs were teaching methods, teaching strategies and teaching techniques. The teaching methods used by teachers included such as demonstration methods, question and answer and exposition to suit the level and ability of the learners. Teachers also used teaching strategies such as discussion, task analysis, cooperative learning, individualized learning, one to one learning, pair work, storytelling, role-play as well as using pictures for learning. Teachers also teaching techniques such as repetitions; coaching; hands-on and instructional prompts. However, teachers faced many challenges as they used these pedagogical approaches when teaching learners with IDs in the classrooms. Similarly, a study by Wanjiku (2014) in Kenya on teaching strategies used by teachers educating learners with multiple disabilities revealed that teachers use various teaching strategies such as task analysis, activities of daily living, and real objects to adapt instructions in classrooms for learners with cerebral palsy intellectual disabilities in special schools. However, the findings by Wanjiku (2014) were limited to Kenyan context and unverified in Zambia.

The findings of the current study were in line with the Inclusive Model by Berryman (2014), which states that children learn in many different ways and that the learning level of each child is shaped by his or her interests, experiences, prior knowledge and exposure to various stimuli and the child's response to them. In agreement with the current study, the inclusive model was used to explore the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs. Thus, the study explored how special education teachers in the schools operate to influence the performance of the child to learn. For example, the researcher established the classroom teaching strategies used by teachers as they taught and interacted with learners with IDs.

Based on findings of the study, the researcher's perspective was that if these pedagogical approaches such as demonstration methods, question and answer and exposition

to suit the level and ability of the learners. Teachers also used teaching strategies such as discussion, task analysis, cooperative learning, individualized learning, one to one learning, pair work, storytelling, role-play as well as using pictures for learning. Teachers also teaching techniques such as repetitions; coaching; hands-on and instructional prompts were effectively implemented in classrooms for learners with IDs, the learning of learners would be enhanced.

5.2. Barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches used by teachers for learners with IDs

The study found that the barriers to successful implementation of pedagogical approaches used by teachers for learners with IDs were lack of teaching skills among the teacher, inadequate teaching and learning materials for lesson delivery and unfriendly learning environments for learners with IDs, overcrowded classrooms, limited time for teaching and unmodified curriculum for learners. The findings of the current study were similar with a study conducted by Mulenga (2016) which revealed that one of the barriers that hinders successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers is lack of specialized equipment to be used in teaching process. Nevertheless, the study by Mulenga (2016) focused on the teaching of computer studies curriculum in general primary schools in Ndola district, not on the pedagogical approaches in special schools in Luanshya district.

Additionally, the Inclusive Model by Berryman (2014) used in this study helped the researcher to explore the barriers that hinder the successful implementation of the teaching strategies used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs. The researcher identified the barriers faced by teacher as teachers interacted with the learners in the classrooms.

Based on the above discussion, the study unveiled the barriers to successful implementation of pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms for learners with IDs. The barriers were lack of teaching skills among the teacher, inadequate teaching and learning materials for lesson delivery and unfriendly learning environments for learners with IDs, overcrowded classrooms, limited time for teaching and unmodified curriculum for learners. These barriers should be addressed if teachers are to teach learners with IDs in schools effectively.

5.3. Efforts teachers were making in addressing the identified barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs

In order to address the barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches used by teachers for learners with IDs, teachers made the following efforts: Engaging in CPDs to improve the teaching skills, consultations from colleagues, capacity building teachers, improvisation of teaching and learning resources for delivery of lessons. Other efforts included provision of remedial works to all slow learners, engaging in writing books for learners with learners with IDs and increase the learning time for learners.

The findings of this study were similar with the findings of Muzata and Mahlo (2019) who recommends that teacher-training institutions should align their curriculum to the 2013 curriculum and MoGE should develop teaching and learning materials for learners with disabilities in special schools. Nevertheless, the study by Muzata and Mahlo (2019) generally focuses on curriculum implementation for LSEs in general and not specifically on instructional pedagogies used by teachers in schools. Hence, created knowledge gap for further verification.

The findings of the study on the efforts schools were making to address the identified barriers to successful implementation of the teaching strategies for learners with special educational needs were in consistent with the Inclusive Model by Berryman (2014). This model states that teachers and the school administrators should address the unique learning needs, interests, and style of every learner through the teaching process.

Based on the above discussion, the researcher's views were that if teachers were engaged in CPDs, consulted colleagues, improvised teaching and learning resources, provided remedial works, engaged in writing books for learners with learners with IDs and increased the learning time for learners, then barriers to successful implementation of the pedagogical approaches for learners with IDs would be addressed.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings obtained from the study revealed that teachers used a variety of pedagogical approaches in the teaching of learners with IDs. These included teaching methods, teaching strategies and teaching techniques. Examples of teaching methods used included demonstration methods, question and answer and exposition to suit the level and ability of the learners. Examples of teaching strategies used included discussion, task analysis, cooperative learning, individualized learning, one to one learning, pair work, storytelling, role-play as well as using pictures for learning. Teachers also teaching techniques such as repetitions; coaching; hands-on and instructional prompts. However, teachers faced many barriers as they used these pedagogical approaches when teaching learners with IDs in the classrooms. These barriers included lack of teaching skills among the teacher, inadequate teaching and learning materials for lesson delivery and unfriendly learning environments for learners with IDs, overcrowded classrooms, limited time for teaching and unmodified curriculum for learners. In order to enhance the performance of learners with IDs teachers should therefore engage in CPDs to improve the teaching skills, consult colleagues, improvise teaching and learning resources, provide remedial works to all slow learners, engage in writing books for learners with learners with IDs and increase the learning time for learners. The study has shown that indeed, if these pedagogical approaches were

applied in classrooms for learners with IDs, learners with IDs would benefit.

6.2. Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusion, the following were the recommendations;

1. MoE should train and deploy more special teachers that would support the teaching and learning of learners with IDs in schools.
2. Schools should provide capacity-building programmes of special teachers of learners with IDs on implementation of pedagogical approaches in classrooms for learners with IDs by engaging them in seminars and workshops at school level.
3. Teachers should be engaged in CPDs to orient them on best teaching methods, strategies and techniques for learners with IDs in schools.
4. Teachers should be engaged to consult from colleagues on best practices for teaching learners with IDs.
5. MoE should provide necessary teaching and learning resources for learners with IDs in schools that would enable teachers implement pedagogical approaches in classrooms for learners with IDs.

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