

**CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN TEACHING LEARNERS WITH SPECIFIC
LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN REGULAR PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KEGONGA
ZONE, KEGONGA DIVISION DISTRICT KENYA.**

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own original work. It is not a duplication of similarly published work of any scholar for academic purpose nor has it been submitted to any other institution of higher learning for the award of a certificate, diploma or degree in special Needs education. I further declare that all materials cited in this paper which are not my own have been acknowledged.

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APPROVAL

This is to certify that this research report has been submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Bachelor of Education with my approval as University supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife Akinyi Mary and children; Vera, Linda and Brian.

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ABSTRACT

Learners with specific learning difficulties do not benefit much from regular learning setting due to their varied learning characteristics. This study critically focused on teacher's challenges and academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties in regular primary schools.

The study was based on the theory of Piaget of cognitive development. The researcher adopted quantitative approach of data collection from the target population. Teachers from public Primary schools responded to the questionnaires. Simple random sampling procedure was used to select the schools and the teachers. The researcher used questionnaires as data collection tools since all the respondents were literate.

The respondents revealed that they face various challenges including lack of curriculum guidelines, lack of teaching aids, lack of support from parents, lack of training in special needs Education and negative attitudes. These challenges were found to bring about poor teaching and hence poor academic performance of learners. The researcher concluded the study by advocating for the working together of all stakeholders in solving the problems faced by the teachers, in addition, recommendations were made. They included: teachers handling learners with specific learning difficulties getting refresher courses, availing education resources in all schools, adequate staffing and remuneration of teachers and educating parents on the importance and value of education for their children.

All the intervention strategies laid out were meant to minimize the challenges faced by the teachers working with learners with specific learning difficulties.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale of the Study

Teachers in regular primary schools face various challenges. There are limited financial resources, which are not evenly distributed in these schools. Teacher support services are inadequate, initial teacher training is also inadequate. Considering that this is time of educational change and expansion, this scenario is unsatisfactory and the quality of teaching and learning inevitably suffers.

Inservicing of teachers in special needs education is necessary. This can be done through lectures, films and conferences in which teachers will discuss with experts the problems they face in their work. Seminars and workshops can be held in which practical solutions to current difficulties are hammered out and materials for implementing these solutions devised and produced.

It is true that the current generation of teachers and learners is faced with a major challenge of equipping itself well for a better future. The most and important key to living a comfortable life is education. All children regardless of their diverse needs and challenges require education to make them achieve to the fullest possible in social integration and development.

However, children with special needs are sometimes denied the chance to receive education and its related services. Those with specific learning difficulties for example fail to get full support to enable them perform well in academics like their counterparts.

In this era of free Primary Education teachers in primary schools and especially the public ones, can't escape interacting with pupils encountering various difficulties in their learning. Those with special needs or difficulties bring a big challenge to the teachers involved in their learning. Those with specific learning Difficulties are no exceptional. They do not benefit from normal learning unless with some modifications put in place and thus their academic performance leaves a lot to be

desired. Due to this fact, teachers handling these learners face additional challenges while teaching them.

Statement of the problem

For along time it has been seen that teachers pay attention to learners who can easily understand what they are being taught. This means that learners with specific learning difficulties are not taken care of and end up performing poorly in regular schools. This has prompted the need to carry out this research study on teachers challenges and academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties.

1.2 Significance of the study.

This study will benefit the following disciplines.

The ministry of education will be able to train teachers in special needs Education.

The district supervisor will be able to motivate teachers so as to assist the children with specific learning difficulties.

The teachers will be able to develop positive attitudes towards learners with specific learning difficulties so that children can attain to their maximum potentials.

The parents will be able to support their children with specific learning difficulties while at home. This will in turn make the teachers' work easier and lessen the challenges they face.

The pupils will appreciate the efforts put by the ministry, parents and teachers towards making them achieve their maximum potentials. This will make children work hard to achieve their best level in academics.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate teacher's challenges and academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties in regular schools in the area.

1.4 Objective

1.4.1 General: This study sought to:

1. Determine the profile of the respondents as to

Socio demographic data

- Age
- Gender
- Qualifications

2. Determine the teacher challenges in terms of

- Availability of educational resources
- Teachers' training.
- Teaching methodologies
- Curriculum
- Teachers' attitudes

3. Determine the level of academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties.

4. Determine if there is significant relationship between the teachers' challenges and the level of academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties.

1.5 Statement of the null hypothesis (Ho)

There is no significant relationship between teacher challenges and academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties in regular schools.

1.6 Theoretical frame work

This study is based on theory of Piaget which states that cognitive development is the most popular of the theories on the child's mental maturation process. It has also become the cornerstone in understanding the child's reasoning. The theory is divided into stages which aid educators, researcher and other professionals in determining the level at which the child is reasoning.

The theory also assists professionals in determining the necessary instructional materials according to the child's intellectual levels. However, these levels are flexible and not definite, they are approximations, Piaget believed that all children follow these stages. Therefore, when the child significantly deviates from the pattern of intellectual development, professionals become concerned.

In order to assist people to understand the theory, Piaget precedes it by introducing two terms, namely; organization and adaptation, which are part and parcel of cognitive development because without them, learning would be absent. Organization and adaptation are also part of the survival of man. Had the frog organized its functional mental processes and learned that the environment had become hostile; it would have adapted to the new situation and survived.

Piaget's concept of adaptation is the most widely discussed. It is broken down into assimilation and accommodation because of their concern with adaptive functions of an organism. The functions of assimilation and accommodation change with the enlargement of what Piaget calls schema, or what an individual already knows about on object. When a child has no knowledge of existing object, and is presented with one, or comes to know of one through exploration, he/she is said.

to have assimilated the object. If the child is presented with another object, which is different from, the one assimilated, he/she accommodates the characteristics of the object by way of modifying the existing schema or knowledge. Grasping an object is an example of assimilation and accommodation since the child modifies the schema which is determined by the size of the object.

The stages of cognitive development consist of the sensori-motor period; the pre-operational period, the period of concrete operations, and the period of formal operations. Under each stage are the activities that take place in the mental processes of the child.

Sensorimotor period is characterized by the child's reflex activity where the child is involved in systematic natural reflex activities to assist him/her in learning environment. The environment is mainly material; nipples in the first month of birth. Between one and four months, the child is involved in circular reactions, a form of self exploration which is aimed at assisting him/her adapt to the environment.

One major observation during the sensori-motor stage is that the child's concept of object permanence is non-existent in the early stages of development. However, in the fourth stage of the sensori-motor period which occurs between 8 and 12 months, goal directed activities enable the child to develop a sense of object permanence. Object permanence is the belief that an object exists or is present at the place it was previously seen even if it is invisible to the child. For instance, if the child is shown a ball and then paper or cardboard is placed between him and the ball, he believes that the ball is still there even if he/she cannot see it. In the sixth stage of the sensori-motor period (age 18-24 months), the child has developed a full sense of object permanence. This is a result of internalising new experience in the schema through tertiary circular reactions and problem solving.

The pre-operational period (2-7 years) is so called because at this stage the child has not developed logical thinking or operations although his/her language has

developed rapidly and extensively. The stage is divided into pre-conceptual stage (2-4 years) and intuitive stage (4-7 years).

One important characteristic of the pre-conceptual stage is animistic thinking where the child as alive perceives inanimate objects and possessing human characteristics.

In the intuitive stage, two characteristics emerge the child's inability to know the rules of conservation and reversibility. In conservation a child is represented with two glasses of milk and is told that both of them contain the same amount. The milk from one glass is poured into a plate and the child is asked to indicate which object contains more milk. This task is to test the child's ability to understand that the amount remains constant even if poured into another object. In this example, the child states that the glass contains more milk because it is taller than the plate.

Reversibility is another area where the child at the intuitive stage of the pre-conceptual period has difficulty. If the amount poured into the plate is poured into the glass and the child is asked whether the milk from the plate and in the glass is the same, the child would probably say "No" since it came from a hollow object.

During the period of concrete operation (7-11 years), children are able to apply the rules of reversibility, conservation, number concepts, serialization, and classification although at a concrete level they cannot generalize beyond what they see to a more hypothetical level.

As the mental processes of the children advance they are able to do more difficult assignments children at this stage are also able to sub-classify items from a given classification. The ability to classify and sub-classify assists in distinguishing children in sensori-motor and pre-operational stages from children in the operational stages because with children in the first two groups schemas are the guiding factor in learning, whereas with children in the operational stage, operational structures are the guiding factor.

The formal operational stage (11 + years) is the highest and final level of cognitive development. In this stage, adolescents and adults are able to hypothesize beyond the level of children in the concrete operation period. They are also able to apply logical rules to situations that violate principles of reality, Make complex deductions, analyse ways or reasoning and solve problems by systematically testing hypothetical solutions" The level and breadth at which the individual may reason depends on many factors, including the technological development of the locality or country, infrastructure, exposure to other cultures through visits, television and magazines, and indeed the level of education. But basically, at the formal operations stage, hypothesizing and problem solving mentally exist in all individuals who have no intellectual impairment.

1.7 Limitations and delimitations

1.7.1 Limitations

The researcher used a substantial amount of money in transport using the public means to reach the respondents. Money was also used in printing, photocopying, binding and typesetting in order to produce the final research report document.

The time conducting the research was short and squeezed with a lot of activities and it being in winter the temperatures were very low.

1.7.2 Delimitations

The researcher had the advantage of being well known in the area of study by the virtue of sharing the same linguistic and cultural background with the respondents. Most of the roads leading to the schools are tarmacked and reaching the respondents was easy.

1.8 Definition of terms

For the purpose of this study the following terms are defined operationally:

Challenges: These are problems, which hinder achievement of the set goals.

Resources: These are teaching / learning aids which will make it easier for the teacher to achieve the set educational objectives.

Special Needs: These are conditions or factors that hinder normal learning and development of individuals.

Normal Learning: Acquisition of education where the learner doesn't require special support, attention or modification to go through the learning.

Specific learning difficulties: refers to the conditions, which affect the learners' ability to learn specific skills like academic subjects as reading, writing, spelling and or Mathematics.

Level of academic performance: refers to the behaviour change that can be seen in learners with specific learning difficulties as compared to their age mates and classmates.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher made an attempt of reviewing related literature to the theme 'Teacher challenges and academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties in regular primary schools. The researcher contributed by supporting or differing with other authors as well as airing personal experiences in the field.

2.2 Definition and perspectives of specific learning Difficulties

Specific learning difficulty is explained as one of the pathologies of the nervous system that affects learners in a classroom situation. The condition may be caused by diseases and accidents, which may affect or damage the brain or the spinal cord. Learners with specific learning difficulties may exhibit certain physical or behavioural difficulties ranging from mild to severe which are associated with deviations of functions of the central nervous system. These deviations may manifest themselves by various combinations of impairments in perception, conceptualization, and language memory, control of attention, impulsivity, and motor functioning. This is according to Kilei (2002)

In its contribution towards the same the United States Public Law 94-142 cited in Ndurumo (1993) defined specific learning difficulty as a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using Language, spoken or written which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or; do Mathematical calculations.

Kilei (2002) stipulated that learners may experience specific difficulties that may be portrayed in skills such as listening thinking, talking reading, spelling writing or arithmetical computation. It does not include learning difficulties, cognitive difficulties emotional disturbance or environmental disadvantage.

Calloway and Goodwin (1976) referred to learners with specific learning difficulties as slow learners that is, pupils achieving and grasping academic concepts at a lower rate than their peers. This is especially in the basic skills of reading writing and number work. They have learning difficulty, which does not seem consistent with their general level of intellectual ability.

The researcher is in agreement with the above authors as they all concur with the fact that learners with specific learning difficulties do not perform well in school and this baffles teachers who are challenged by their low academic achievements.

2.3 Causes of specific learning Difficulties in children

Children with specific leaning difficulties have difficulties in specific areas in their learning. Different authors have outlined various causes.

Lovell (1958) outlined some of the causes of specific learning Difficulties as follows:

- Absenteeism from school due to illness or truancy.
- Frequent change of schools due to change of residence.
- Poor quality of teaching - children being taught by teachers who are not competent or committed.
- Introduction of basic academic skills to children before attainment of appropriate age to be mentally mature. That is introduction of concepts when a learner is not developmentally ready for them.
- Lack of harmony between home and School.
- Emotional attitude of the child towards school and school subjects. This is more so when the learner's attitude towards a specific area of learning is negative.

Other causes of specific learning difficulties according to farrant (1964) include inefficient and frequent change of the teaching staff, long absence of a child, emotional stress due to lack of peace and security at home, malnutrition and sickness.

According to Njuki and Oganda (2000) causes of specific learning difficulties can occur during prenatal, perinatal or postnatal stages of child development. During prenatal stage, there is a possibility of a child inheriting relative genes that is Genetical inheritance. Perinatal causes include lack of oxygen or unusual delivery among others. Postnatal causes comprise of child abuse, head injuries, diseases among others.

The condition of specific learning difficulties is also referred to as Minimal Brain Dysfunction (MBD). It may be caused by diseases and accidents which may affect or damage the brain or the spinal cord. Learners with this condition may be of near or above average general intelligence. They may be exhibiting certain physical or behavioural difficulties ranging from mild to severe which are associated with deviations of functions of the central nervous system. Kilei (2002).

The researcher is in agreement and adds that these deviations may manifest themselves in various combinations of impairments in perception, conceptualisation, language, memory and control of attention, impulsivity or motor functioning.

Various other factors in school also cause specific learning difficulties among the learners.

2.4 School based factors

2.4.1Curriculum

According to Randiki (2002) evaluation and promotion criterion in regular schools does not account for the diversity of learners with specific learning difficulties. They are tested in the same content with other learners same who are average in performance. In the same thesis Wallace and Meloughlm (1975) cited in Ndurumo (1993) stated that educational systems tend to take certain subjects for granted. For instance, children are not taught interpersonal relationship skills or how to use verbal and non-verbal communication such skills would let a child be discerning, analytical and critical in thinking and execution of duties and problem solving.

2.4.2 Teaching methods

According to Hughes (1974), the personality of the teacher, size of class and other factors can be considered as possible causes of scholastic failure. Some children in a class will respond to teaching methods, which may not suit the rest of the learners. A child suffers when a teacher is unable or ignores to appreciate individual needs. The major cause of slow learning or learning difficulties is bad teaching. Collins (1961).

The researcher is in agreement with the above sentiment and has observed that teacher's use of inappropriate teaching methods may cause a child not to master the content being presented. The reason for this in appropriate teaching methods may be as a result of teacher's lack of necessary teaching skills or foundation in the subject matter.

2.4.3 Absenteeism

Absenteeism leads to breaking of continuity required in learning and hence lack of sequential mastery of concepts. According to Burt (1946), cited in Hughes (1973) during a survey in London, irregular attendance in learning is one of the casual factors causing backwardness. In his inquiry, as many as eleven percent of the backward cases had irregular attendance as chief cause of lack of progress in academic work. Some learners may be suffering from diseases like Asthma and Epilepsy. Such learners experience difficulties in performing activities of daily living as a result of irregular School attendance.

2.5 Psychological factors

Unfavourable emotional relationship such as rejection of the child by parents, marital disturbances, absence of parents from home, broken homes and others are factors that may cause difficulties in learning. Psychological disturbance interfere with functions of perceiving, recalling, conceptualization, understanding and writing. Ndurumo (1993)

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2.6 Socio-economic factors

According to Okot, Eron and Kutosi (2000) children from poor or financially challenged families may lack resources and atmosphere that is conducive to stimulate learning. This affects growth and development and may lead to poor communication and language development. Other factors include environment and topographical conditions e.g. hot climate, long distances from home to school which may cause fatigue and stress. These ones may sometimes cause absenteeism or withdrawal.

2.7 Classification of learners with specific learning difficulties

Learners with specific learning difficulties are mostly classified according to their areas of difficulty in the curriculum content. According to Njuki and Ogonda (2002) learners with specific learning difficulties may be classified as follows:

2.7.1 Learners with reading difficulties.

These are learners with poor oral reading even with simple words like he, so, but and others. They are identified through displaying some physical characteristics which include hesitant and laboured or slow, choppy reading especially when the child is reading locally. Failure to recognize familiar sounds, Missing out a line or reading the same line twice, often associated with repetition and failure to recognize punctuation marks.

Portraying some tricky behavioural characteristics when given a reading task. These include; pretending to yawn, developing a tricky cough, refusing to read / crying and attempting to distract when given a chance to read.

2.7.2 Learners with spelling problems.

A child doesn't automatically improve with his ability to read. It has been found that spelling is much a difficult skill to acquire than reading and almost all children with specific learning difficulties experience this problem in their academic work. This is because a number of English words are irregular i.e. the way they are written may be quite different with the way their pronunciation should be. The learner needs exposure before acquiring the proficiency.

2.7.3 Learners with writing problems.

Handwriting is a skill relevant for all learners. Learners with specific learning difficulties experience problems in its execution and find it laborious and time consuming. A learner may write poorly for a reason, could be to hide poor spelling or simply due to in-coordination and fine motor difficulties.

Njuki and Oganda (2002) argued that most learners with learning difficulties write poorly in their areas of difficulties. For instance a learner experiencing difficulties in Mathematics will mostly produce a poor written work in order to mask the mistakes involved but those performing well will produce a neat work.

2.8 Techniques of assisting learners with specific learning problems.

Learners with specific learning Difficulties call for varied modified teaching approaches which include individualized Education Programme (IEP), Task analysis, Direct Instruction, co-operative learning and peer tutoring.

Teachers of such children should prepare for the lessons well in advance. They should evaluate their lessons thoroughly to check on achievements of objectives. Otiato (2000).

Kilei (2002) defined the procedure to follow in helping those with SLDs in class as outlined below:-

- Identify the learner's area of difficulty.
- Assess the present level of performance.
- Analyse the strengths and weaknesses.
- Set achievable goals and objectives.
- Plan and prepare an educational programme
- Evaluate to check if the learner is making progress
- Make modifications if the learner has not achieved as expected or if you are satisfied with the results, move to the next step or skill and implement following the same procedure.

However Ogonda and Njuki (2000) outlined several ways of helping learners with difficulties in reading through exposing them to variety of reading materials of

their level, involving parents in supporting them and using the appropriate methods for teaching reading. The methods for teaching reading include.

- The phonic or sound method.
- The sight word (whole word) or look and say method).
- The Key word method.

For the learners who do not catch up with above methods. The teacher may try multi-sensory approach. Spelling mistakes can be helped by having proper marking e.g. avoiding many wrong marks (x) sometimes the teacher may underline or indicate the additions omissions.

A teacher may also adopt a different sign to indicate a wrong answer. Involving a learner in covering a word and trying to write it from memory can also be tried.

Learners with difficulties in mathematics may be assisted through the following ways among others:-

- Allow learners to use memory aids in problem solving.
- Apply multi-sensory approaches, task analysis, co-operative learning practical and concrete through use of appropriate teaching and learning resources.
- Use strategies that encourage thinking and reasoning.
- Let learners over learn and practice new concepts together after presentation by the teacher.

Living (1985) emphasized on provision of remedial instructions to those with specific learning difficulties. Remedial instructions help in bringing the learner with difficulties at par with the others.

This was supported by corney and Rowling (1985) who said that some learners may not grasp all the concepts during the whole class teaching. This is more so with those with specific learning difficulties. This fact calls for the teachers concerned to organize for remedial sessions to help learners with difficulties in the acquisition of certain specific skills in learning. This should be practiced with all learners with special needs including those with SLDs.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

As stated in the introductory remarks the purpose of the study is to investigate 'Teacher challenges and academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties in regular primary schools. In view of this the researcher used this section to outline procedures and techniques that were used to collect data, selecting the respondent and other related aspects.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed the descriptive survey method to determine the challenges and academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties in regular Primary Schools of Kegonga Division, Kuria District, Kenya.

3.3 Environment

The study was conducted in regular primary school in Kegonga Division. The Division is located in Kuria District. The area includes both rural and urban settings.

3.4 Respondents.

This study involved teachers of regular primary schools, Forty teachers were targeted to fill the questionnaires.

3.5 Sample size and sampling Techniques

The researcher used a simple random sampling method, where forty teachers were randomly picked. These represented all the teachers in the division teaching learners with specific learning difficulties.

3.6 Instruments / Tools

This study utilised a researcher devised instrument, which was a questionnaire. The researcher decided to use questionnaires because the tool is easier and cheaper to use as compared to other tools. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999).

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Materials

To establish the reliability of the questionnaires, the researcher used the method of expert judgment, which is recommended by Gay (1992) as the best method for reliability. To effect this, after constructing the questionnaire, the researcher contacted two experts to ensure the reliability and validity of the research instruments. After the consultations, the researcher made the necessary adjustment, to ensure that the questionnaire was made to the advice of the experts. That is, it was made more clear, relevant, specific and logically arranged.

In addition, a pre-test was conducted in order to test and improve on the reliability of the questionnaire. To prove the validity of the data collection instrument (the questionnaire), the number of relevant questions were divided by the total number of questions, and the outcome was above optimal. The following scale was used. (Adopted from Dr. Chandy, 2007)

$$V = \frac{RQ}{TQ} = \frac{16}{20} = 0.8$$

Where by, V= Validity

RQ=Relevant questions

TQ=Total number of questions.

The above expression, indicates that, the number of relevant questions from the total number of questions on the questionnaire, were above the required 0.5 scales. Hence, the instrument used was valid.

3.8 Research Procedures

The researcher first secured a letter of introduction from the office of the administrator, institute of open and distance learning, Kampala International University, which was presented to the Head teachers of Schools, for permission to carry out research in their schools. There after, a selection exercise followed.

The researcher ensured that, the completed questionnaires were collected as soon as they were filled, to avoid loss or misplacement.

3.9 Data Processing and Analysis

Data was analyzed and interpreted, with the view of checking for accuracy and completeness. The questionnaires were edited immediately after they had been collected, which facilitated an easy follow up of the respondents, for clarifications/corrections, before analysis was done.

The questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics that is frequencies and percentages that were presented in tables, pie-charts and line graphs and bar graphs to enhance understanding, for discussion.

3.10 Data Collection Procedures

Letters were presented to the Head Teachers asking for permission to carry out research in their schools on teacher challenge and academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties. After collecting the data, the researcher presented the data in tables and analysed it.

3.11 Statistical Treatment of Data

Tables of frequency and percentage were used to determine the age, gender qualifications among other related aspects.

Formula: frequency count = $f/n \times 100$

f – Frequency

n – Number of respondents

100 – Total number of respondents

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter presented the methodology of the study, this chapter provides presentation, interpretation and analysis of data.

Presentation and analysis of the collected data was computed by using percentages in order to show the distribution of the respondents on the various question items. Tables, pie charts and graphs were used in the presentation of data.

The percentage (%) was obtained using the formula; $(\%) = \frac{n}{N} \times 100$

Where n = number of respondents

N = Total population

As earlier on noted in chapter three of this work the information for this study was provided by the teachers. Forty teachers were targeted but (30) teachers returned the questionnaires and provided the following information.

Table 1: Profile of the respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (in years)		
21-30	7	23
31-40	12	40
41-50	6	20
51-60	5	17
Total	30	100
Gender		
Male	11	37
Female	19	63
Total	30	100
Qualification		
Masters Degree	2	6
Bachelors degree	5	17
Diploma	9	30
Certificate	14	47
Others	0	0
Total	30	100

The above table shows that majority (40%) of the teachers fall between the ages of 31-40 years Female teachers are the majority (63%) as compared to their male counterparts. As far as the qualifications are concerned majority (47%) of the teachers have certificates in primary teaching.

Table 2: Respondents response on teaching of Mathematics and English to learners with specific learning difficulties.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	21	70
No	9	30
Total	30	100

In this item the researcher wanted to know whether the respondents teach Mathematics and or English to learners with specific learning difficulties since these are the two major subjects where the learners have difficulties in.

According to the data collected majority of the teachers, 21 which is 70% teach Math and or English. While only 9 teachers which is 30% do not teach these subjects. This implies that majority of the teachers were in a position to give information regarding issues related to learners with specific learning difficulties.

Table 3: Respondents views on challenges encountered.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of curriculum guidelines	9	30
Lack of teaching and learning aids	8	27
Lack of References	8	27
Undefined curriculum	5	16
Total	30	100

In this item the researcher wanted to identify the challenges encountered by teachers when teaching learners with specific learning difficulties. The data collected indicate that majority of the teachers (9) which translates to 30% cited undefined curriculum. 8 of them which is 27% cited lack of teaching and learning aid, likewise other 8 which is 27% cited lack of reference materials while only 5 which is 16% quoted undefined curriculum as a challenge. This implies that the single most challenge facing majority of the teachers of learners with specific learning difficulties is lack of curriculum guidelines on how to deal with these learners.

Table 4: Respondents views on additional challenges

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of training in Special Needs Education	16	53
Lack of support from parents	8	27
Negative attitudes by other teachers	3	12
Total	30	100

In this item the researcher wanted to establish other challenges faced by the teachers. According to the raw data collected it is clear lack of training in Special Needs Education is 53% is a major challenge. Lack of support from parents was also quoted by 27% while Negative attitudes by other teachers formed 12%. This implies that majority of the teachers require training in Special needs Education in order to assist learners with specific learning difficulties effectively.

Table 5: Respondents response on teacher training and specific learning difficulties.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No	20	67
Yes	10	33
TOTAL	30	100

The researcher wanted to know whether the training the teachers underwent prepared them to cater for learners with specific learning difficulties. According to the data collected 20 teachers which is 67% stated that the training did not equip them with skills to assist learners with specific learning difficulties while only 10 amounting to 33% got training that enable them to assist these learners. This implies that majority of the teachers do not have the skills to assist learners with specific learning difficulties.

Table 6: Respondents views on problems exhibited by learners with specific learning difficulties.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reading problems	6	20
Handwriting problems	6	20
Problems in mathematical calculations	5	17
Reading comprehension problems	5	17
Difficulties in spelling	4	13
Problems in Mathematical reasoning	4	13
Total	30	100

The researcher wanted to find out the common problems exhibited by learners with specific learning difficulties. According to the data collected majority of the teachers cited reading problems and handwriting problems with each category claiming 20%. Problems in Mathematical calculations and reading comprehension problems were also cited by 17% each. Difficulties in spelling and problems in Mathematical reasoning were also cited by 13% each. This clearly implies that reading and hand writing problems emerged as the major challenges encountered by learners with specific learning difficulties.

Table 7: Respondents response on employment of varied teaching strategies.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Yes	19	64
No	11	36
Total	30	100

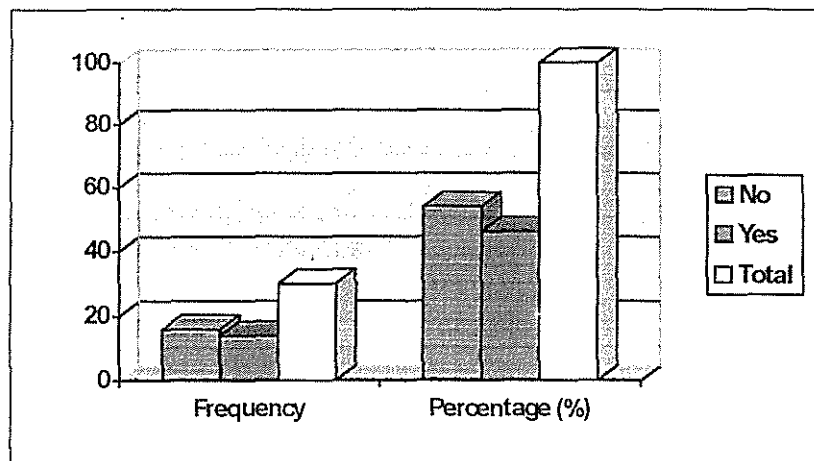
The researcher wanted to establish whether the teachers employ varied teaching strategies to cater for learners with specific learning difficulties. According to the data it shows that 19 out of 30 teachers which is 64% employ varied teaching methods while 11 out of 30 which is 36% do not. This indicates that majority of

teachers use varied teaching strategies to cater for learners with specific learning difficulties

Table 8: Respondents response on Adaptation of different activities

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No	16	54
Yes	14	46
Total	30	100

Bar –Chart 1:Response on Adaptation of different activities

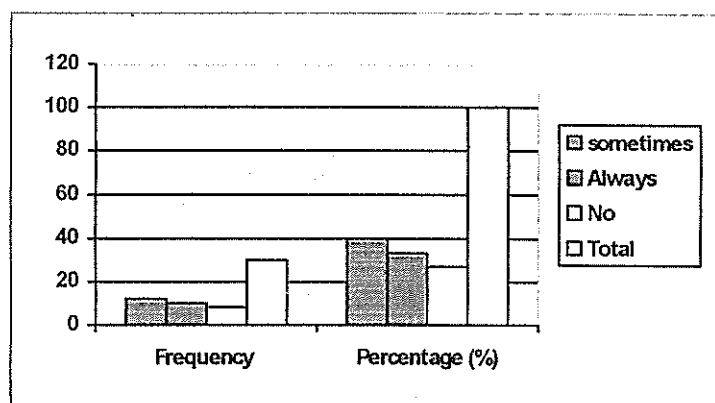


In this item the researcher wanted to know whether teachers adapt different activities to suit the needs of learners with specific learning difficulties. According to the raw data collected it is clear 16 teachers which is 54% do not do this. Only 14 teachers which culminate to 46% adapt different activities to cater for these learners. This implies that majority of the teachers do not effectively assist learners with specific learning difficulties.

Table 9: Respondents views on good lesson presentation

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
sometimes	12	40
Always	10	33
No	8	27
Total	30	100

Bar –Chart 2: Respondents views on good lesson presentation



The researcher was interested in establishing whether teachers present the lessons in a clearly understandable and organized manner to help all pupils as well as those with specific learning difficulties. It is clear from the above table and graph that 12 teachers which is 40% do it sometimes while 10 teachers which is 33% do it always and pathetically 8 of them which is 27% do not present the lessons in clear and understandable way. The implications here is that majority of the teachers make an effort to present the lessons well to cater for learners with specific learning difficulties but not always.

Table 10: Respondents response on availability of resource rooms

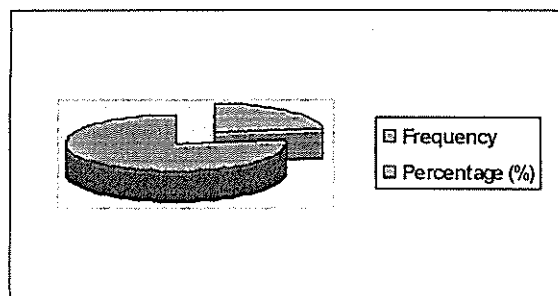
Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No	27	90
Yes	3	10
TOTAL	30	100

Here the researcher wanted to know whether the schools have well-equipped resource rooms which are accessible to learners with specific learning difficulties. It is clear from the data collected that 90% of the respondents lamented that schools do not have resource rooms, only 10% of the respondent's school have the resource rooms. This implies that majority of the learners in the schools do not receive the essential services offered in the resource rooms to minimize their learning difficulties.

Table 11: Respondents views on Classroom Environment

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No	23	77
Yes	7	23
TOTAL	30	100

Pie chart 1: Classroom Environment



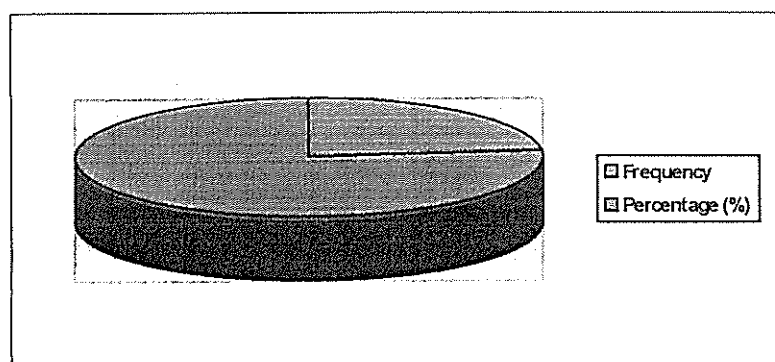
In this item the researcher was interested in establishing whether the classroom environment in the schools is conducive for learners with specific learning difficulties. 23 out of 30 teachers which culminate to 77% stated that the classroom environment in their schools is not conducive for these learners while only 7 teachers which is 23% cited conducive classroom environment. This implies

that majority of the classrooms in the schools are not conducive for learners with specific learning difficulties.

Table 12: Respondents views on Conduction of remedial teaching.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No	17	56
Yes	13	44
TOTAL	30	100

Pie-chart 2: Conduction of remedial teaching

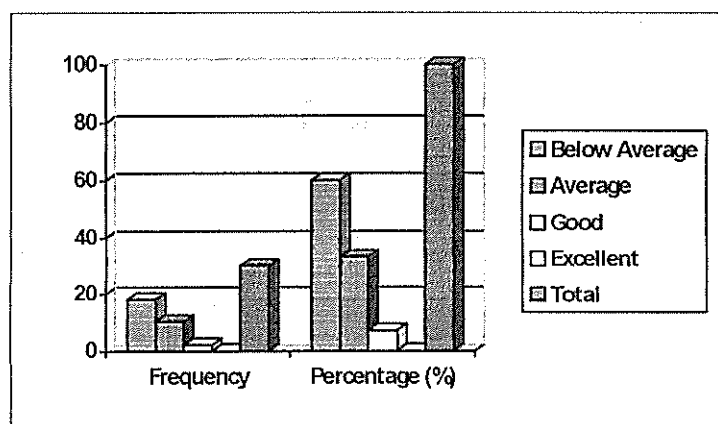


In the above table pie -chart, Seventeen teachers (56%) stated they do not conduct remedial teaching to assist learners with specific learning difficulties. Only Thirteen teachers (44%) agreed that teachers conduct remedial teaching. This shows that a big number of teachers do not conduct remedial teaching to assist these needy learners.

Table 13: Respondents Response on Academic performance of learners with specific learning Difficulties

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below Average	18	60
Average	10	33
Good	2	7
Excellent	0	0
Total	30	100

Bar chart 3: Academic performance of learners with specific learning Difficulties

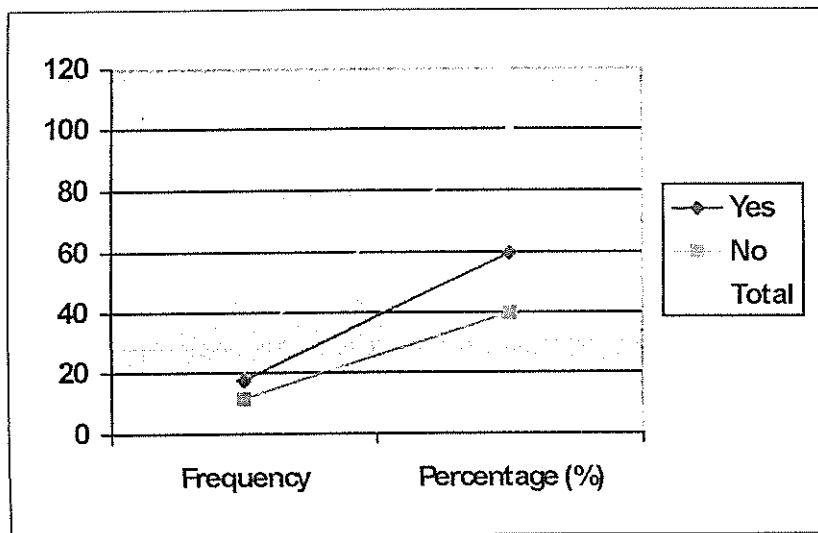


In table 13 and Bar chart 3 above, on the question of the academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties, Eighteen teachers (60%) said that the performance is below average while ten (33%) said that learners performance is average, only two (7%) talked of good performance while none (0%) cited excellent performance. This clearly shows that the majority of learners with specific learning difficulties perform below average compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

Table 14: Respondents response on curriculum inadequacy

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	60
No	12	40
Total	30	100

Line graph 1: Respondents response on curriculum inadequacy

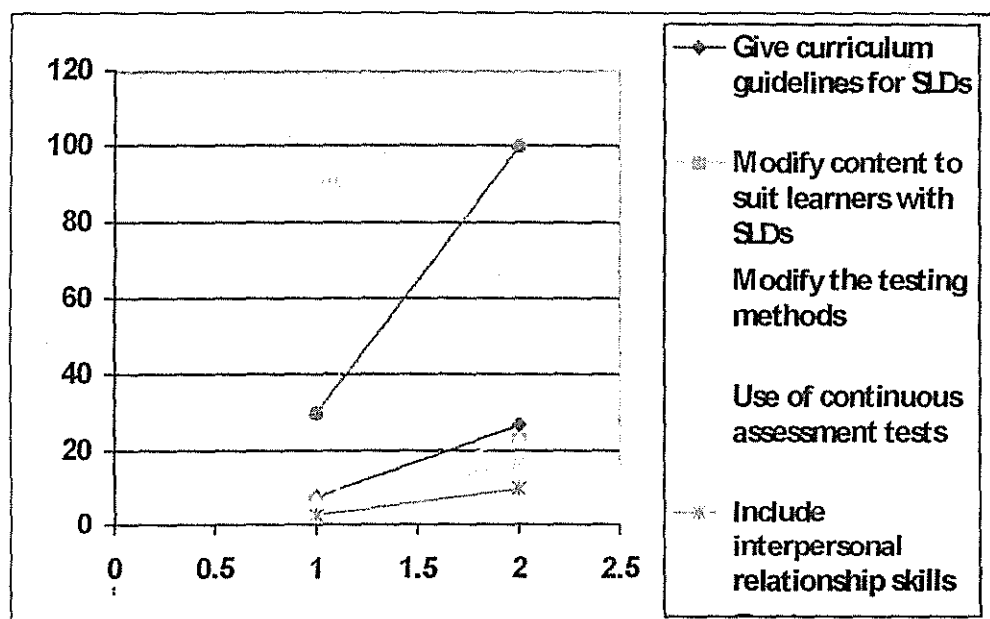


In this item the researcher wanted to get teachers views on whether they find the curriculum inadequate for the needs of learners with specific learning difficulties. According to the data collected 18 teachers (60%) found it inadequate while twelve (40%) did not find it inadequate. this implies that majority of the teachers find the curriculum inadequate for learners with specific learning difficulties.

Table 15: Respondents suggestions to curriculum developers

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Give curriculum guidelines for SLDs	8	27
Modify content to suit learners with SLDs	7	23
Modify the testing methods	7	23
Use of continuous assessment tests	5	17
Include interpersonal relationship skills	3	10
Total	30	100

Line graph 2: Suggestions to curriculum developers



The above table 15 and line graph 2 shows the respondents suggestions to curriculum developers in order to cater for the needs of learners with specific learning difficulties, Eight (27%) cited provision of curriculum guidelines, seven (23%) suggested modification of content to suit the needs of these learners, likewise another seven (23%) cited modification of the testing methods while five (17%) suggested the use of continuous assessment tests to assess these learners and only three (10 %) suggested the inclusion of interpersonal relationship skills. This implies that majority would like to be provided with curriculum guidelines on how to assist learners with specific learning difficulties.

the content being presented. The reason for these in-appropriate teaching methods may be as a result of teacher's lack of necessary teaching skills or foundation in the subject matter. In contradiction to this, teachers in table 7 when asked about whether they employ varied teaching methods to cater for learners with specific learning difficulties, majority (64%) claimed they do so, only 36% did not. This indicates that teachers are not aware of methods that aid these learners for example task analysis, developing individualised educational programmes, peer tutoring among others. Therefore they require training in special needs Education.

This is probably why when asked whether they adapt different activities to suit these learners in table 8, only a minority, 14 teachers (46%) responded positively. This implies that majority of the teachers do not effectively assist learners with specific learning difficulties. This is also evident in table 9 and bar graph 2 where pathetically 27% of the teachers do not present the lessons in clear and understandable way.

The school administration is also to blame for some of the challenges facing teachers and resulting to poor academic performance of learners with specific difficulties. This is evident in table 10 of chapter four where 90% of the respondents lamented that schools do not have resource rooms, only 10% of the respondent's school have the resource rooms. This implies that majority of the learners in the schools do not receive the essential services offered in the resource rooms to minimize their learning difficulties. On the same note in table 11 and pie chart 2, 77% of the respondents stated that the classroom environment in their schools is not conducive for these learners while only 23% cited conducive classroom environment. This implies that majority of the classrooms in the schools are not conducive for learners with specific learning difficulties. This situation was noted to cause learning difficulties by Okot, Eron and Kutosi (2000) in 2.6.

5.3 Discussion of the Findings on challenges faced by learners

The data collected in table 6 indicated clearly that learners show a number of challenges in the two subjects. The most serious problems in English were reading problems (20%), Handwriting difficulties (20%), Reading comprehension problems (17%) and spelling Difficulties (13%) while in Mathematics, Mathematical calculations (17%) in subtraction and division were singled out as the main problems experienced by the learners.

These findings are in agreement with Kilei (2002) in (2.2) who stipulated that learners may experience specific difficulties that may be portrayed in skills such as listening thinking, talking reading, spelling writing or arithmetical computation.

Calloway and Goodwin (1976) also said that these pupils achieve and grasp academic concepts at a lower rate than their peers. This is especially in the basic skills of reading writing and number work. They have learning difficulty, which does not seem consistent with their general level of intellectual ability.

There are other challenges that hinder proper learning, for example in table 11 majority of the teachers (77%) stated that the classroom environment in their schools is not conducive for these learners.

Yet in table 12 and pie chart 2, (56%) of the teachers stated they do not conduct remedial teaching to assist learners with specific learning difficulties. Only Thirteen teachers (44%) agreed that teachers conduct remedial teaching. This shows that a big number of teachers do not conduct remedial teaching to assist these needy learners. This is in disregard of several authors in 2.8, who highlighted various techniques of assisting learners with specific learning difficulties for example, Living (1985) emphasized on provision of remedial instructions to those with specific learning difficulties. He added that remedial instructions help in bringing the learner with difficulties at par with the others. This was also supported by corney and Rowling (1985) who said that some learners may not grasp all the concepts during the whole class teaching. This is more so with those with specific learning difficulties. This fact calls for the teachers concerned to organize for remedial sessions to help learners with difficulties in the acquisition of certain

specific skills in learning. This should be practiced with all learners with special needs including those with specific learning difficulties.

5.4 Discussion of the Findings on Academic performance of learners

The findings show that the academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties is poor compared to their non disabled peers, in table 13 and bar chart 3 , (60%) of the teachers said that the performance is below average while ten (33%) said that learners performance is average, only two (7%) talked of good performance while none (0%) cited excellent performance. This performance can be attributed to the challenges faced by these learners as well as their teachers as discussed above.

It is important for the educators to reverse this trend by following the techniques advocated for in 2.8 of chapter two by various authors and bearing in mind the words of Otiato (2000) that Learners with specific learning Difficulties call for varied modified teaching approaches which include individualized Education Programme (IEP), Task analysis, Direct Instruction, co-operative learning and peer tutoring. Teachers of such children should prepare for the lessons well in advance. They should evaluate their lessons thoroughly to check on achievements of objectives.

5.5 Discussion of the Findings on curriculum

The findings show that the respondents felt that the curriculum is inadequate and does not cater for specific needs of learners with specific learning difficulties. They also gave suggestions to curriculum developers on what they felt should be done in order for it to be inclusive and be suitable to these learners. Looking at table 14 and line graph 1 (60%) found it inadequate while twelve (40%) did not find it inadequate.

Table 15 and line graph 2 shows the respondents' suggestions to curriculum developers in order to cater for the needs of learners with specific learning difficulties. Eight (27%) cited provision of curriculum guidelines, seven (23%)

suggested modification of content to suit the needs of these learners, likewise another seven (23%) cited modification of the testing methods while five (17%) suggested the use of continuous assessment tests to assess these learners and only three (10 %) suggested the inclusion of interpersonal relationship skills. This implies that majority would like to be provided with curriculum guidelines on how to assist learners with specific learning difficulties.

These findings are in agreement with Randiki (2002) in 2.4.1 that evaluation and promotion criterion in regular schools does not account for the diversity of learners with specific learning difficulties. They are tested in the same content with other learners who are average in performance. In the same thesis Wallace and Meloughlin (1975) cited in Ndurumo (1993) stated that educational systems tend to take certain subjects for granted. For instance, children are not taught interpersonal relationship skills or how to use verbal and non-verbal communication such skills would let a child be discerning, analytical and critical in thinking and execution of duties and problem solving.

5.6 Conclusions

In view of discussions of the findings and suggestions from the respondents, the researcher was able to make the following conclusions;

Challenges faced by teachers lead to poor teaching methods and hence poor academic performance of learners, these challenges include; lack of curriculum guidelines, lack of training in special needs Education ,lack of teaching aids, lack of references, undefined curriculum, lack of support from parents and negative attitudes from fellow teachers.

The initial teacher training at college does not prepare them for handling learners with specific learning difficulties and therefore they don't have sufficient skills. For teachers to have a smooth teaching a combination of several factors have to be put in place. Teachers need to be equipped with special needs education.

Parents need to be sensitized on the importance and value for education so that they can easily provide the necessary requirements and support for their children. Other educational stakeholders are required to take their roles seriously and provide all the necessary requirements in order to motivate learners and teachers.

Finally the curriculum developers should modify the curriculum so that it can accommodate and cater for all learners regardless of their diverse needs.

5.7 Recommendations

In view of the above discussion, the researcher wishes to make some recommendations. The recommendations are as follows:

The teachers in public primary schools should be equipped with knowledge to support and handle learners with special needs.

The government should check into the issue of poverty. It should therefore support those who are financially disadvantaged and especially those who can't meet the basic requirement for their children.

The current curriculum should be revised and modified to cater and accommodate the individual needs of all learners including those with specific learning difficulties.

Teachers in public primary schools should be given refresher courses which would boost the morale and equip them with the modern skills for supporting learners with difficulties.

Use of interesting and attractive educational resources should be a must so that learners can easily grasp concepts being introduced without difficulties and to enhance use of as many senses as possible.

Learners should be motivated to like the subjects in the curriculum and learning in general. This is mostly through praising and rewarding their efforts. Hope to continue with their education after the primary level should be created and maintained.

The government should check into the issue of staffing in primary schools equipping the schools with adequate and qualified human resources to handle learners with special needs would be of much help

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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO THE RESPONDENTS

Kampala International University
Faculty of Education
Institute of Open and Distance Learning
P.o Box 20000
Kampala
8th March 2010

Dear respondent

RE: REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

You have been selected as one of the respondents for this study; "Challenges faced by teachers in teaching learners with specific learning difficulties in regular primary schools"

Your selection is based on the important role you play in the promotion of education of learners with special needs in this country.

The responses that you give will be treated with maximum confidentiality. You are therefore free to say whatever feel you should say. The responses will be used strictly for the purpose of this study. Should you wish to have access to the study report therefore, you will be welcome.

Thank you very much.

Yours faithfully,

.....

MIGOT LUKIO OBINY

Appendix B
Questionnaire for teachers

Dear staff/respondent,

You are kindly requested to help the researcher by providing information regarding the questions below. You are requested to respond by filling the questionnaires on the theme "Teacher Challenges and academic performance of learners with specific learning difficulties in regular schools". The information given will be treated with confidentiality and your cooperation and contribution to this study will highly be appreciated. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Section A of the Questionnaire

Profile of the respondent (Tick where applicable)

Age of respondent: years

Gender: Male Female

Qualification: degree diploma certificate others

Duration in the field of teaching: over10 years 5-10 years

Less than 5 years

Section B of the Questionnaire

1. Do you teach learners with specific learning difficulties Mathematics and/or English? Yes... No

2. Which problems do you encounter when teaching the subjects you have named? (Tick where applicable)

- i) Undefined curriculum
- ii) Lack of references
- iii) Lack of curriculum guidelines
- iv) Lack of teaching and learning aids

3. What other challenges do you encounter when carrying out your duties?

- a. Lack of support from parents
- b. Negative attitudes by other teachers towards learners with SLDS
- c. Lack of training in special needs education

4. Did the training you got prepare you in catering for learners with specific learning difficulties? Yes... No.....

5. What are the common problems exhibited by learners with specific learning difficulties?

- i) Reading problems
- ii) Difficulties in spelling
- iii) Reading comprehension problems
- iv) Handwriting problems
- v) Problems in the mathematical calculations
- vi) Problems in mathematical reasoning

6. Do the teachers employ varied teaching strategies to cater for learners with specific learning difficulties? Yes... No....

7. Do the teachers adapt different activities to suit the needs of learners with specific learning difficulties? Yes... No....

8. Do you present the lesson in a clearly understandable and organised manner to help all the pupils as well those with specific learning difficulties?

Always..... sometimes..... No.....

9. Do the school have a well-equipped resource room which is accessible to learners with specific learning difficulties? Yes..... No....

10. Is the classroom environment conducive for teaching and learning to cater for learners with specific learning difficulties? Yes... No....

11. Do the teachers conduct remedial teaching to assist learners with specific learning difficulties? Yes... No....

12. What Is the Performance of Learners with specific learning difficulties compared to their peers without this disability?

Excellent... Good... average..... Below average.....

13. Do you find the curriculum inadequate for the needs of Learners with specific learning difficulties? Yes... No....

14. Give suggestions on what should be done by the curriculum developers to cater for the needs of learners with specific learning difficulties-----

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