

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES IN TEACHING PUPILS WITH
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN GARDEN CITY SPECIAL SCHOOL**



2022

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INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN GARDEN CITY SPECIAL SCHOOL**



**A Thesis in the Department of Special Education,
Faculty of Educational Studies, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment**

**of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Special Education)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

OCTOBER, 2022

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, **SARAH GYAPONG**, declare that this thesis is my own work and all secondary information used in the study has been duly acknowledged. No part of this thesis has therefore been presented in any form to any institution for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

Date:

Supervisors' Declaration

I certify that, the preparation and presentation of this thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis as laid down by the School of Graduate Studies, University of Education, and Winneba.

Name: Dr. Daniel Fobi

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my ever-loving husband Mr. Kwaku Oppong-Adjare
and my children who have been inspiration to my life



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

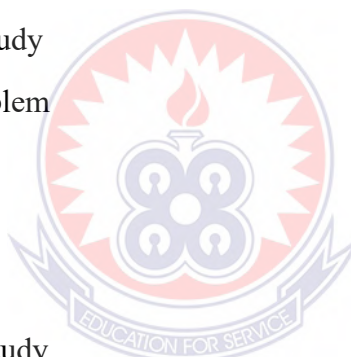
I wish to express my profound gratitude to God Almighty, for this guiding hand given to me, His strength, direction and peace of mind during the course of study, my supervisor Dr Daniel Fobi is recognized for his invaluable encouragement and patience for guiding me. He was very instrumental in critically evaluating my work. It has been a privilege working with him.

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ABSTRACT

Supported by Dewey's theory of experience, this phenomenological study explored the experiences of teachers teaching students with intellectual disabilities in Garden City Special School of Ghana. The study used qualitative research approach. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to sample nine out of 15 teachers. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic approach. Results of the study indicated that most of the special school teachers were professionally trained for special education but equally admit the need for additional training. It was observed that teachers required the provision of modern teaching and learning equipment which were not in adequate supply, and teaching support teams to give additional coaching for teachers. Again it was revealed that teachers faced challenges related to limited learning technologies such as tablets, smartphones, computers, and music players to help students with intellectual difficulties in learning. The study recommended that teachers learn to advance their strategies in coping with job stressors to minimize culminating effects of burnouts, depression and resultant absenteeism.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Intellectual disability is a condition that affects an individual's ability to learn and perform daily living activities (Sadock & Sadock, 2015). It is a lifelong condition that can significantly impact an individual's quality of life, including their education and social interactions. Globally, the WHO (2020) estimates that intellectual disability affects about 15 percent of the world population. Due to the uniqueness of their needs, usually specialised school facilities are designed to support their equitable lifelong learning and inclusion that is targeted at meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 10. In Ghana, meeting the educational needs of children with intellectual disability in special schools has been a primary focus and Section 18 of the 2006 Persons with Disability Law (Act 715, p. 6) provides for the establishment of special schools for people with disabilities who 'by reason of their disability cannot be enrolled in formal school'. The Garden City Special School was established in 1977 with the aim of training children with intellectual disability (Kassah et al., 2017). Due to this, the government of Ghana through the Ministry of Education has been posting both regular and special education teachers to support the children's training.

Teachers who work with children with intellectual disabilities by virtue of their diverse background may face unique challenges, including adapting teaching strategies to meet individual needs, fostering independence, and promoting social and emotional development. Teachers play a critical role in supporting the development of these children in promoting positive outcomes. However, research on the experiences of teachers working with children with intellectual disabilities is limited, particularly

in Ghana (Brunsting, Sreckovic & Lane, 2014; Kassah et al., 2017; Kebbi & Al-Hroub, 2018). Understanding the experiences of teachers working with children with intellectual disabilities is essential for improving educational outcomes for these children. It can help identify the challenges and barriers that teachers face, as well as the strategies and supports that are needed to promote success.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the experiences of teachers teaching children with intellectual disabilities in Garden City Special School. The study focused on understanding the experiences of the teachers on their professional development; their experiences on the support available in teaching the students; and challenges and barriers that teachers face, as well as the strategies and supports that promote success. By gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences of teachers, this study can contribute to the development of more effective educational policies, programs, and interventions for children with intellectual disabilities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Internationally, there is a growing body of literature which indicates that there are many challenges faced by teachers and caregivers of children with intellectual disabilities in special schools (Philpott & McLaren, 2011; McNally & Mannan, 2013). It is estimated that 75 percent of those who teach special needs students will leave their job within 10 years of starting (Ketheeswaran, 2018). According to Ketheeswaran, (2018), special education teachers face quite a number of experiences in their work with intellectually disabled students. These experiences include the difficulty of teaching the learners, non-instructional responsibilities, lack of support, professional isolation, budget problems and difficulties of discipline within the classroom setting.

In Ghana, some of the challenges that students with intellectual disabilities face emerge from the socio-cultural norms of the people (Brunsting et al., 2015). This portrays students with intellectual disabilities as undesired people, persons born out of the effect of witchcraft, curses, or the actions of the gods and ancestors (Hinds et al., 2015; Alifanoviene, Sapelyte & Orska. 2016), and thus brings about a lot of stigma against students with intellectual disabilities leading to their exclusion from social processes. Education for pupil with intellectual disabilities has been saddled with major problems like inadequate training and professional development opportunities for teachers, inadequacy of learning resources, and lack of parental support among other things.

The investigation on the experiences of teachers of children with intellectual disabilities has become very critical, given the assertion by Ferry (2012) suggesting that the teaching professionals face a wide range of difficulties. Whilst there are a few studies that have looked at the experiences of teachers and caregivers worldwide (Dhlodhlo, 2012), not much attention has been paid on the experiences of teachers working with these students with intellectual disabilities. Again, it appears there is no study on the experiences of teachers of children with intellectual disabilities in Garden City Special School. The current study therefore sought to investigate teachers' lived experiences in teaching students with intellectual disabilities in Garden City Special School

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' lived experiences in teaching students with intellectual disabilities in Garden City Special School

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to explore teachers' lived experiences regarding their:

1. Professional training in teaching students with intellectual disabilities.
2. The support systems that enhance the teaching and learning experience of teachers in handling students with intellectual disabilities.
3. The challenges faced by teachers in teaching students with intellectual disabilities.
4. The strategies they employ to address the diverse needs of students with intellectual disabilities.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions were posed as a guide to the study.

1. What are teachers' lived experiences regarding their professional training in teaching students with intellectual disabilities?
2. What are teachers' lived experiences regarding support systems needed to enhance the teaching and learning of students with intellectual disabilities?
3. What challenges do teachers face in teaching students with intellectual disabilities?
4. How do teachers mitigate the challenges they encounter as they teach students with intellectual disabilities?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The results of this study would aid in finding out the special education teachers' lived experiences regarding their professional development, support systems

they require to improve on teacher performance, some challenges they encounter and sources of work-related stress as they handle students with intellectual disabilities. The findings of study would address an under-researched area in the local environment in Garden City Special School, Kumasi. The study would help policymakers rethink policy framework and strategies and supportive interventions that could enhance teachers' educational delivery for pupils with special education needs and those with intellectual disabilities in particular. Lastly, the results of this study would add to previous literature evidence for those interested in similar studies.

1.7 Scope of the Study

In line with the case study approach, this study has a geographical limitation as it was conducted in a single special education school setting (Garden City Special School, Kumasi) to investigate teachers' lived experiences in teaching students with intellectual disabilities. Contextually however, the study touched on teachers' lived experiences relating to their professional training, the required support systems for enhanced performance, challenges teachers encounter in the discharge of their professional duties and work-related stresses they face.

1.8 Study Limitations

Any particular type of research and the methods applied for the conduct of the research have some associated limitations. Specifically in this study being an interpretative phenomenological design of qualitative nature, cause-effect relationship cannot be established among the variables (Brunsting et al., 2014) because it evaluates variables at a particular time and not across a continuous time frame. Again, the study

is conducted in one setting (Garden City Special School) and thus generalizing the study results can only be made for the population within the school and not beyond.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study is organized under five chapters. Chapter One gives the introductory part which covered the background of the study, purpose and objectives. It also covers the research questions which guided the attainment of the research objectives, the scope of the study as well as significance of the study. Chapter Two reviews previous relevant literature to provide an in-depth knowledge of the topic area. Under this chapter, a review is done on theoretical framework which acted as the basis for this particular research and extended to various concepts and empirical studies of other authorities.

Chapter Three discusses the methodological approach adopted in the study. It explains the research design, sample and sampling procedure as well as data collection methods. The chapter further explains the data collection procedure, method of data analysis, and the ethical considerations observed to ensure quality of work. The fourth chapter focuses on analysis and discussion of results in relation to prior empirical evidence and the study objectives. The final Chapter Five, summarizes the main findings of the study, outlines conclusions and makes recommendations for use by all stakeholders.

1.11 Operational Definition of terms

Special education: An educational program that provides individualized instruction for students experiencing disabilities.

Special school: Institutes dedicated to improving the lives of children and adolescents with paediatric developmental disabilities, learning disorders, and

behavioural problems through patient care, special education, research, and professional training.

Professional development: The method of educating staff with the skills and proficiencies needed to construct exceptional educational results for all students.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): A document that is created which outlines the eligibility, current functioning, goals, and objectives of a special education student for an academic school year.

Intellectual disability: A significantly sub-average intellectual functioning which leads to impairments in adaptive behaviour, all of which are first manifested during childhood

Students with intellectual disabilities: People with an IQ range from 50 to 70 often exhibiting deficits in intellectual functioning and face challenges in adaptive behaviour.

Experience: The teachers' current content of consciousness with regard to the way of doing, seeing and having things happen to them as a result of working with intellectually disabled learners.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher reviewed literature relevant to the study. The researcher reviewed the literature on the teachers' lived experiences in teaching students with intellectual disabilities. The literature reviewed also included empirical studies and the theoretical framework supporting the main issues addressed in this study. The areas that were discussed include the experiences on their professional training in teaching students with intellectual disabilities, experiences of support systems available in teaching students with intellectual disabilities, challenges faced by teachers in teaching students with intellectual disabilities and strategies teachers use to address the diverse needs of students with intellectual disabilities. Prior to reviewing literatures on these topics, the section gives insight into Dewey Theory on Experience which was used as a theoretical foundation for the study. The relevance of Dewey Theory and its relations to the study is elaborated in the section.

2.1 Dewey's Theory of Experience

This study was supported by Dewey's Theory of Experience (Dewey, 1986). According to Dewey's theory of experience (Dewey, 1986; Giles, 1987; Schmidt, 2010), experience is the product of the principles of continuity and interaction. The continuity principle offers a method for evaluating the quality of experience for its educational value (Giles, 1987). Every experience has an impact on subsequent experiences, according to the continuity principle. As a result, it considers more than just the experience's current quality to evaluate how it will affect future experiences and where they will lead (Giles, 1987; Schmidt, 2010). It is crucial to understand how

contact with children with intellectual disability may affect teachers' future teaching experiences with other children with similar condition.

Another standard for judging the caliber of an experience is introduced by the interactional concept (Giles, 1987; Schmidt, 2010). It is important to strike a balance between the internal, subjective, and outward, objective, parts of experience.

According to the interaction principle, experiences are influenced by situational or contextual factors such as the professional training of teachers, support available in teaching children with intellectual disability and the challenges teachers encounter when they teach these children. The two tenets are mutually exclusive. Instead, they intercede and converge to form experience. This notion holds that the information and abilities a teacher acquires during teacher preparation programs serve as a vital resource for comprehending and handling upcoming problems. Building the capacity to handle various situations requires continuity and contact with various environmental contexts (Giles, 1987).

The approach also acknowledges reflection, which entails reviewing past accomplishments in order to derive "net meaning" or "capital stock," which serves as a foundation for managing subsequent situations. According to Dewey's theory of experience, one should consider how experience influences one's present, future, and social role in order to assess its value. A teacher's future experience may be developed based on their current interactions with children with disability (Dewey, 1986; Giles, 1987).

2.2. Definition and Concept of Special Education Needs

The definition of 'special education' has raised considerable debate among professionals, parents and the individuals directly involved. Certain terminologies have emerged to describe those people needing particular types of education,

including: *'exceptional children'*, *'handicapped children'* and *'children with special education needs'* (Opoku, et al., 2015; Gobah, 2014). These children are recognised as having mental, emotional, physical or social needs which, following a diagnosis may require therapeutic intervention or special care by qualified specialists (Opoku, et al., 2015).

The term 'Special Educational Needs' (SEN) was proposed by the Warnock Report (Department of Education and Science – DES) in 1978, in an attempt to raise social acceptance of individuals with disabilities, as well as to re-conceptualise special education in Britain (Gobah, 2014). Prior to this term, statutory categories had been used, which also included terminology such as 'disabled'. However, the use of the term 'special educational needs' has been controversial and has generated extensive debate in the academic literature. The claim is that the term is nebulous and inappropriate, while others claim that it encourages discriminatory practices, arguing that any child might, at times, experience learning difficulties (Kepalaite, 2013; Johnstone, 2017).

Over the last three decades many of the above terms have been used synonymously with 'special education', despite having different meanings. For example, the term *'handicapped'* refers to difficulties in performing a task the way it is normally performed (Yekple, 2012). While *'disabled'* refers to lasting physical or mental impairment that causes an individual difficulty in performing particular functions, therefore reflecting deficit in the functional performance and effectiveness of an individual (Kittay and Carlson, 2010). *'Developmental disability'* describes factors that affect the development of a child, mentally, physically or as a functional limitation in major life activities which requires the provision of special services or treatment for a long period (James & Harris, 2010).

In contrast, 'special education' can be described as the science that deals with the categories of exceptional children in terms of measurement, diagnosis and the preparation of educational programs and teaching methods appropriate to them (Yekple, 2012). Therefore, 'special education' refers to the provision of suitable education for those children who do not have typical needs; it does not necessarily describe education for those children who are disabled or handicapped, as per the definitions above. For this reason, there is considerable controversy and confusion over the use of these terms (Yekple, 2012). Formal definitions have also been provided in this area. The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice defines the term 'special educational need' as: "a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made. According to the International Standard Classification of Education, 1997, cited in Yekple (2012) the concept of children with special educational needs included those failing in school for various reasons, adding that SEN includes the need for additional support. In other words, it relates to the extent to which schools adapt their curriculum, teaching and organisation in order to encourage efficient and effective learning for these pupils. Following this definition, specific disabilities could be understood to mean conditions such as difficulties with listening, reading, arithmetic, writing, written expression, handwriting and spelling.

The term special educational need was introduced in the beginning of the 21st century. The desire at that time was to move away from the use of older terminologies such as 'handicapped children' to find a generic description that would more suitably embrace the increasingly diverse group of children with problems in learning (Smith & Tyler, 2011). According to Kiyuba and Tukur (2014), a child has special

educational needs if he or she has learning difficulties than the majority of children of the same age. This calls for special educational provisions to be made for such category of learners. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Agbenyega and Deku (2011) explain that children have a learning difficulty if they (a) have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of the children of the same age; or (b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority; or (c) are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition in (a) or (b) above, or would so do if special educational provision were not made for them.

Kiyuba and Tukur (2014) are of the view that special education programs are designed for those students who are mentally, physically, socially and/or emotionally delayed. This aspect of “delay,” broadly categorized as a developmental delay, signifies an aspect of the child’s overall development (physical, cognitive, scholastic skills) which places them behind their peers. Due to these special requirements, students’ needs cannot be met within the traditional classroom environment. Special education programs and services adapt content, teaching methodology and delivery instruction to meet the appropriate needs of each child. Giving further description about children with special education needs, Angelka and Goran (2018) submit that a child has special educational needs if they have a learning problem or disability that makes it more difficult for them to learn than most children of their age. They may have problems with schoolwork, communication or behaviour. Parents can get help and advice from specialists, teachers and voluntary organizations. Special Needs Education is education for students with disabilities, in consideration of their individual educational needs, which aims at full development of their capabilities and

at their independence and social participation (Kontu & Pirttimaa, 2010). Special Needs Education is carried out in various forms, which includes resource rooms, in special classes (both are in regular schools), and in special schools named “Schools for Special Needs Education”.

2.3 The State of Special Schools in Ghana

Several studies have explored the perception of educators on special education and a common theme in most of the studies is that special education provides the most appropriate form of education for children with disabilities (Shree & Shukla, 2016; Keeter & Bucholz, 2012). Advocates believe that it will be more beneficial if children with disabilities are handled by specialized teachers, using specially designed curriculum and instructions tailored to meet their unique needs and abilities (Angelka & Goran, 2018; Shree & Shukla, 2016).

Some proponents of special education argued that segregating children with disabilities from other children and providing them with services tailored to meet their needs will be more beneficial to them and other children who do not need additional services (Angelka & Goran, 2018). In other words, it is believed that the needs of children with disabilities are best met when they are placed in separate classrooms. Studies have found that many teachers in general education lack adequate training and knowledge to handle children with disabilities in general classrooms (Angelka & Goran, 2018). There is also a perception that children with disabilities are difficult and stressful to handle. Consequently, some teachers feel unprepared to handle children with disabilities in inclusive setting (Shree & Shukla, 2016; Angelka & Goran, 2018). Shree and Shukla (2016) and Keeter and Bucholz (2012) for instance found that many general education teachers in Ghana have expressed concern about

their inability to teach particularly children with intellectual disabilities and have thus argued that general education is unsuitable for such children.

Furthermore, there are concerns that special needs students are likely to reduce standards of education in general education system and so they should be segregated from other students (Shree & Shukla, 2016). Some educators are concerned that including children with disabilities in general education will lower standards in two ways. Firstly, their own academic standard will be affected adversely and their presence in the classroom will also negatively affect the progress of other students (Angelka & Goran, 2018). Angelka and Goran mentioned further that in many countries such as Ghana, mainstream schools are under increasing pressure to raise academic standards. These schools are therefore reluctant to admit pupils whose presence, it is thought, would have negative impact on the overall profile of results.

Current trends in the educational system in Ghana support the above assertion. At the end of the Basic Education Certificate and Senior High School examinations, the results are analyzed and a “league table” indicating the performance of each education district is prepared. As a result, school heads, and even district directors of education are concerned about the examination results of their schools and districts respectively. They are therefore not willing to compromise their standards by admitting students with special needs, particularly those with intellectual disability because of the notion that they are likely to lower standards (Keeter & Bucholz, 2012).

Special schools have therefore become integral part of the special education programme, providing the most conducive environment to enhance teaching and learning for children who, for a wide range of reasons, may require extra support and adaptive pedagogy to participate in class (United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organization - UNESCO, 2011). It should be noted that until the introduction of inclusive education in about two decades ago, most children with disabilities in Ghana, such as those with intellectual disability are placed in special schools, probably because of some or all of the reasons discussed earlier in Keeter and Bucholz (2012). The dual system of education, where children without disabilities attend mainstream schools while those with disabilities attend segregate residential schools is still being practiced in Ghana. As with general education, special education in Ghana was started by the Christian Missionaries, and later took over by the government of Ghana (Opoku, Badu, Ampongeng & Agyei-Okyere, 2015). The main targets of special education in Ghana are children who have visual impairment, hearing impairment and intellectual and behavioural disabilities (Opoku et al., 2015; Gobah, 2014).

In any case, Opoku et al. (2015) state that there is no separate policy governing the operation of special education in Ghana; the policy on general education caters for special education. Activities in special education are therefore closely related to those in general education—special schools follow the general education curricular, with slight modifications to address the needs of specific categories of children with disabilities. Also, there is a separate division of the Ghana Education Service, Special Education Division (SPED) responsible for implementing policies on special education and overseeing the running of special schools (Ministry of Education, 2013). SPED is therefore one of the agencies under the Ministry of Education and receives funding from the central government. However, SPED receives a very small percentage of the total funds allocated to the sector in a fiscal year. For example, in 2010, SPED received 0.7% of the total funds allocated to the

education sector; in 2011, the division received 0.5% and in 2012, it received 0.4% (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Besides the academic programmes, it is required that all special schools established vocational departments (Gobah, 2014). However, there are some variations in the content and duration of the programmes being offered in the special schools to cater for the needs of the different categories of disability. For instance, blind students are supposed to learn typing, as part of their basic education, while deaf schools place a great deal of emphasis on vocational training. Moreover, deaf students spend more years in school at both the basic and secondary levels, one extra year at each level, than hearing students (Akingkugbe, 2012). For children with intellectual disabilities, the focus is primarily to provide “a variety of activities which the mentally handicapped should undertake so that their residual potentialities can be identified and developed into skills for future life.

In terms of teacher training and professional development, a course in special education has been introduced in the initial colleges of education to enable pre-service teachers to acquire some knowledge and skills on children with special needs. In-service courses are also being offered to teachers who have no training in special education, and resource teachers are being provided to support teachers in the classroom (Shree & Shukla, 2016). However, it is doubtful if the content of the course is enough to adequately prepare teachers to handle pupils with special needs. Studies in Ghana have shown that many of the teachers lacked the skills to manage children with intellectual disability (Akingkugbe, 2012).

Although a lot of efforts are being made to improve access to education for children with disabilities, it is unclear if special schools in Ghana are performing their functions effectively. There is lack of definitive data on the academic performance of

children attending special schools, but a cursory assessment of the number of students with disabilities attending tertiary institutions suggests that all is not well with special education. According to Opoku et al (2015), officials at SPED have confirmed that the academic performance of children in the special schools was far worse than their counterparts in general education.

The policy that special education and general education in Ghana use the same curricular requires that teachers in the special schools should be able to effectively adapt the curricular to make them disability-friendly. However, the lack of resources and well-trained teachers meant that teachers find it extremely difficult to make the necessary adaptations (Kontu & Pirttimaa, 2010). The ability of teachers to effectively help the children to participate in both classroom and extra-curricular activities are limited, leading to low achievements in the children (Akingkugbe, 2012; Kiyuba & Tukur, 2014). The consequence is that the children are targeted and negatively labelled by the teachers, as observed in Kontu and Pirttimaa (2010) about teachers' reaction when they encountered challenges handling students with intellectual disability

According to Kontu and Pirttimaa (2010) teachers who lack skills and were unable to cope with the challenges in the classrooms, become frustrated and verbally abuse the children. It is therefore not unexpected that children in the special schools were performing poorly in their final year examinations.

Studies suggest that the special schools are not effectively performing one of their core objectives of providing training for the children (Akingkugbe, 2012; Angelka & Goran, 2018). It is expected that if the children are unable to perform well academically, they should be able to acquire vocational skills to make them employable after school. However, Akingkugbe (2012) finds that learners in special

schools, typically Students with intellectual disability do not acquire skills needed on the labour market. Lack of resources and low expectation of the capabilities of the children by teachers accounts for the result. Akingkugbe (2012) therefore postulates that special schools are yet to be beneficial to children with disabilities as the children are not given the necessary training to make them productive after completion. Similarly, Hayford (2013) and Kiyuba & Tuku (2014) mentioned that special schools do not have good programmes for children with disabilities, so the children are kept in the schools as long as the parents want.

Conditions in most special schools, as reported in Keeter and Bucholz (2012), point to lack of commitment on the part of government to support education for children with disabilities. This attitude of governments may be due to the huge financial resources required to manage special schools. The large financial outlay required to run special schools, coupled with limited resources in the country, meant that government may be unable to meet all the financial needs of special schools. The Education Sector Report of 2013 showed that SPED was receiving meagre amount of funds allocated to the education sector over the years (Ministry of Education, 2013). Several authors have described special education as expensive, making it impossible for governments to adequately provide the needed financial assistance to the schools all alone (Keeter & Bucholz, 2012). Another reason for the lukewarm attitude on the part of government towards special education is the general attitude of society towards educating children with disabilities. Findings in Gobah (2014) indicated that education for children with disabilities has not been a priority of many governments. Labelling and categorizing children in terms of abilities create problems for the children, which according to Kiyuba & Tuku (2014) creates an impression of lack and

worthlessness. This can affect the way education of children with disabilities is treated.

2.4 Defining Intellectual Disabilities

There has been much discussion and controversy regarding the history and evolution of ‘Intellectual Disabilities’ (ID). This interest began through the making of provision for individuals but there was no general academic interest in the area (Kontu & Pirttimaa, 2010). It was seen that children with special needs were not able to benefit from the educational programs provided for the general population without additional support. They could not be provided for unless account was taken of special legislation made for the handicapped (Capri, 2016). Capri posited that people with intellectual disabilities are among the most disadvantaged groups in society. In recent years, the field of Intellectual Disabilities (ID) has been subject to significant amendment which has clearly affected what is contained in the legislation, as well as educational programs captioned for each category of ID.

At present, a variety of terms, definitions and classifications of ‘intellectual disability’ are accepted. Practitioners in the UK tend to use the term ‘learning disability’. According to the Emerson and Heslop (2010), the term ‘intellectual disability’ should be considered interchangeable with the term ‘learning disability’. There are several interchangeable terms in common use, including ‘intellectual disability’, ‘developmental disability’, ‘learning disability’ and ‘mental retardation’. The last century witnessed the emergence of many of the terms which reflect the concept of mental retardation, such as *‘mental impairment’*, *‘mentally handicapped’*, *‘mental deficiency’* as well as the term *‘mentally feeble minded’*.

In the 1970s, there were many issues presenting obstacles to children with ID in terms of their inability to achieve their educational needs. These were the subject of controversy and confrontation on the pages of scientific and professional journals (Mckenzie et al., 2013). The definition of ‘intellectual disability’, in terms of its classification and measurement, was at the heart of the controversies, and was considered one of the main obstacles to improving the structure of programs that serve the needs of people with intellectual disability (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The definition of ID is very ‘uncertain’ particularly as there is no single unique approach for the identification of these ‘disabilities’. As a result, a child might be deemed to fall into this category in one school setting but not in another.

Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) confirmed that the widespread interest in mental disability by the various categories of scientists and professionals led to an evolution in the understanding of this phenomenon and the determining of its causes. The difficulty has arisen in arriving at a definition of ‘mental retardation’ which is comprehensive, accurate and acceptable to various scientific and professional groups. Some of the definitions reflect the theories of causation, while others attempt to describe intellectual disability. Intellectual disabilities cannot be intrinsically attached to any person. However, they are associated with a group of disorders in the psychological functioning and adaptive characteristics (Addison & Yankyera, 2015). The levels of severity of intellectual disabilities depend on the differences between people’s abilities to learn and the expectations of the society within a social setting. People who are perceived to suffer from intellectual disabilities have an IQ that ranges from 50 to 70. Scholars argue that there is no particular known cause of delay development in people with intellectual disabilities (Gibbons et al., 2015).

Intellectual disability (ID) is a serious problem in most countries in the world, with about 15 percent of the world population suffering from this condition (World Health Organization, 2014). It is a condition characterized by significant limitations in cognitive functioning and adaptive behaviour (Wang, Chen, Chen, Li, Harari, Tignor, & Campbell, 2014). Individuals with intellectual disability experience difficulties with day-to-day activities. Manifestations of intellectual disability are varied, as individuals with intellectual disability have significant cognitive and physical impairments and require considerable assistance to carry out day-to-day activities (Sadock & Sadock, 2015). Individuals with intellectual disability have difficulty in learning, with the level of challenge in their scholastic functioning depending on the extent of the cognitive disability. Due to these deficiencies in social and cognitive functioning, most individuals with intellectual disabilities have special education needs. As a result of the deficiencies in functioning, school teachers and other caregivers are at times faced with considerable challenges in managing the behaviour of these individuals (Brunsting, Sreckovic & Lane, 2014).

It is widely agreed that all people with intellectual disabilities have deficits in intellectual functioning and face challenges in adaptive behavior. When it comes to challenges in intellectual functioning, learning is a slow process because these people find it hard to recall, generalize activities and skills, and they are less motivated. On the other hand, adaptive problems include challenges with social skills, conceptual skills and practical skills. Therefore, in the learning setting, people with intellectual disability find it hard to socialize and master concepts. Moreover, people with intellectual disabilities often show discrepancies in self-determination skills and problems in skill areas like decision-making, setting goals and solving problems (Haegele & Park, 2016).

2.5 Categories of Intellectual Disabilities

Attempts to define intellectual most often create some confusion, because educationists tend to define the phenomenon differently from the way physicians, psychologists, sociologists or legal professionals do (Antoniou et al., 2013). However, most of these diverse explanations converge and explain that intellectual disabilities include all learners' with special educational needs, including physical, sensory, and emotional-behaviour. Usually, there are four different categories of intellectual impairment, namely mild, moderate, severe and profound, depending on the level of the impairment. Below average intellectual functioning, which co-exists with deficits in adaptive behaviour (adjustment to everyday life) during the developmental period, adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Mild Intellectual Disability

Mild intellectual disability represents an IQ of 50-55 to approximately 70. Kepalaite (2013) states that at age 6, learners with MIDs may act like 4year olds; at age 10, their school achievement may resemble that of second or third graders. McLeskey and Waldron (2011) further observed that MID's affect the largest group (approximately 4.5 per cent) in the range of children who may be considered as experiencing intellectual disability. Most students with this level of disability can have their needs addressed in a regular classroom.

People with mild intellectual disability are often able to benefit from intensive educational efforts, learning to read and write and can do basic computations. They may appear normal during pre-school years and may develop the social and communicative skills expected of such young children (Mohammed, 2016). However, once they start schooling, their intellectual difficulties become more apparent, and they quickly fall behind their peers. With hard work they can usually reach the level

of an average sixth-grader by their late teens and are often able to develop sufficient social skills to be marginally employable. They may continually require supervision and guidance, especially when under stress (Naami & Hayashi, 2012).

Although there is considerable variation between the upper and lower levels, Antoniou et al. (2013) reports that children in this group are generally able to learn the basic scholastic skills expected of primary school children, but at a much slower rate than other children. Although there is a limit to what they can achieve scholastically, they can, with the right educational help, be reasonably self-supporting by adulthood (Kennedy, Thomas, Meyer, Alves & Lloyd, 2014).

Moderate Intellectual Disability

Moderate intellectual disability represents an IQ from 35-40 to approximately 50-55. About 1 person in 400 qualifies for this diagnosis (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). It was once believed that people with moderate intellectual disability could not benefit from educational programmes but could be trained to take care of themselves and handle menial tasks. Kennedy et al. (2014) maintain that although a few of those with this level of intellectual disability may benefit from scholastic education, most require a significantly adapted curriculum.

On the whole, they are unable to learn basic social and self-help skills (such as social communication, dressing, and using public transport), as well as some routine occupational skills. However, Brunsting, Sreckovic and Lane (2014) indicate that most of them find conventional scholastic skills beyond their ability. They can also benefit from social skills training, but even with such training they have serious difficulties in interpreting social situations which makes it hard for them to function socially (Mohammed, 2016).

Severe Intellectual Disability

Research (Kepalaite, 2013; Daniel, 2016) indicate that learners in this group have IQs below 30/35. This is a very small group, of whom none can cope in mainstream education. These learners may learn some self-help skills. Many of them require total, full-time physical care (feeding, toileting and dressing) and will continue to need this into adulthood (Brunsting, Sreckovic & Lane, 2014). Brunsting et al. (2014) mention that many individuals with severe intellectual disability also have additional difficulties (physical, sensory, emotional, and behavioural) and are frequently described as having high support needs.

People with severe intellectual disability usually recognise familiar people and have strong relationships with key people in their lives. Most will have little or no speech and rely on facial expression and body language and gestures to express their needs or feelings and those interacting with and supporting them must be active and keen observers in interpreting changes in such a person's demeanour or behaviour (Mohammed, 2016). Communication systems for people with this level of disability generally rely on photographs or objects to facilitate understanding. Many are able to live in community residences, but they normally require constant supervision and protective oversight (Naami & Hayashi, 2012).

Profound Mental Retardation

Profound intellectual disability represents an IQ below approximately 20-25. Approximately 1 person in 3000 qualifies for this diagnosis (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). The majority of people in this category have a serious physical disorder that accounts for their retardation. Consequently, they often have multiple physical problems and significant sensorimotor impairment. Most are unable to manage even the most basic self-care tasks without constant oversight, although some learn to do

simple tasks under one-on-one supervision (Mohammed, 2016). The more severe the disability, the more likely it is that the person will have associated sensory impairments which further undermines their ability to engage and learn. Vigilance with respect to detection and attention to sensory impairment is therefore imperative. This caution is especially important when interpreting the scores of students from different cultures.

Table 2.1 Classification of Intellectual Disability, stratified by three age groups

Age 0-5 years:	Age 6-20 years:	21 years and older:
<p>Maturation and Development</p>	<p>Training and Education</p>	<p>Social and Vocational Adequacy</p>
<p>Degree: Mild Generally develop communicative and social skills. May not be distinguishable until beginning school.</p>	<p>Can learn up to 4th/5th primary school grade skills when reaching the ages of 18 or 19 years. Can be integrated into society.</p>	<p>Is capable of acquiring social and work skills for integration into the workforce at minimum wage.</p>
<p>Degree: Moderate Can speak or learn to communicate. Some difficulties with motor skills.</p>	<p>Difficulty meeting 2nd primary school grade academic objectives.</p>	<p>May be able to partially maintain him-/herself economically in manual work under protected conditions</p>
<p>Degree: Severe Marked limitations in motor skills. Minimal language ability.</p>	<p>Can speak or learn to communicate. Can learn elemental self-care and health habits.</p>	<p>Can partially contribute to maintaining him-/herself economically under total supervision.</p>
<p>Degree: Profound Significant delay, minimal functional ability in sensorimotor areas. Needs</p>	<p>Nil</p>	<p>Some motor and language development. Can learn very limited care skills.</p>

basic care.		
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Adapted from Brunsting et al. (2014)

2.6 Teachers professional development needed in teaching students with intellectual disabilities.

Ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers can enhance their knowledge and skills in supporting students with intellectual disabilities. Training sessions, workshops, and access to resources can keep educators informed about best practices and the latest research in the field.

The essence of educational change consists of learning new ways of thinking and doing, new skills, knowledge and attitude. Young and MacCormack (2014) observe, though arguably, that when change is introduced teachers are frequently blamed for implementation failures on factors such as incompetence, non-cooperation, lack of commitment and laziness. Studies (Brunsting et al., 2014; Sweigart & Collins, 2017) have noticed, as cited in Habulezi et al. (2016) that most implementation efforts focus on teaching educators effective strategies and ignore the conditions within which educators must carry these out. Teachers are key to the transformation of schools specifically in the area of special education and in order for them to lead the reform efforts, they need to be afforded expanded and enriched professional development opportunities. Lack of this opportunity, as posited by Alkahtani (2016), tend to pose serious challenge to full realization of education for all agenda in the face of educating pupils with intellectual disability. Clearly the demands and challenges that face teachers in the performance of their professional role and responsibilities must be addressed (Batorowicz et al., 2012). Teachers are thus expected to accept new responsibilities and to extend their roles as facilitators to new, perhaps even personally threatening areas.

Teachers have a significant role to play in the development of schools including special school and to this end, pre-service teacher education is indispensable. However, Alkahtani (2016) argued that unfortunately many of these in-service development programmes that are intended to promote education of pupils with intellectual disability have proved both inadequate and inappropriate, resulting in negative feelings towards educating the special child. An important study (Habulezi et al., 2016) conducted in six countries including South Africa revealed that the training of teachers can be seen in direct relation to their attitude towards learner diversity. Training was identified as one of the key elements in the success of the development of teaching the special child.

While teachers are held responsible for teaching pupils with intellectual disability, they are confined by the deficiencies or shortcomings in their circumstances so that they cannot effectively address their learners' needs. This view is shared by Sweigart and Collins (2017) when they point out that both pre-service and in-service courses that address the skills and the attitudes of the teachers towards pupils with intellectual disability are deemed inadequate. Any effective teacher regardless of context requires competence in an understanding and respect of diversity, collaboration with stakeholders, fostering a positive social climate, instructing in ways conducive to special education, engaging in special instructional planning, engaging in meaningful assessment and engaging in lifelong learning (Mckenzie et al., 2013; Habulezi et al., 2016). Putting special education into practice and involving pupils with intellectual disability, teachers have to support and teach according to the needs and preferences of Students with intellectual disability (Batorowicz et al., 2012).

Research and academia describe professional development in education as a systematic method of collecting and amalgamating empirical data to authenticate knowledge and skills, attitudes, and classroom practice to advance programs and student learning. In particular, Young and MacCormack (2014) understand professional development as organized professional learning that results in transformations in teacher classroom practices and enhancements in student learning achievements.

Ambikile and Outwater (2012) identified action research, coaching strategies, networking, and self-monitoring and reflection as established models of professional development that develop teachers' practice. Likewise, Alkahtani (2016) and Hall, Cohen, Vue & Ganley (2014) link professional development to changes in teacher-child engagements, and proclaim having high-quality professional development is a crucial influence on improving education. In the past decades, educational systems and practitioners have transformed professional development to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century classrooms. This transformation exemplified using different approaches to teaching, including the whole teacher approach to professional development (Ambikile & Outwater, 2012), assessments and the development of learners' competencies (Hall et al., 2014) in which teachers participate in training programs to make improvements and change possible.

2.7 Teacher support systems for students with intellectual disabilities

Studies (Addison & Yankyera, 2015) indicate that despite an increase in the number of pupils with intellectual disabilities in special schools, teacher support systems are still inadequate. The assumption is that this inadequacy is caused by the lack of professional competency. Teachers' confidence in their own ability to educate pupils with intellectual disability can effectively be addressed by the availability of

support systems. A study on teacher preparedness for the special child conducted by Edyburn (2011) in the Gauteng Province, concluded that a small percentage of the teachers indicated that they received support from the services. Edyburn (2011) therefore argued against expecting teachers to manage their stresses effectively in an unsupportive environment as it causes a barrier towards teacher effectiveness in the special school context.

Teacher support systems for students with intellectual disabilities aim to provide the necessary assistance and accommodations to ensure these students receive an inclusive education (Kamran, Siddiqui & Adil, 2023). Below are strategies and resources used by teachers in supporting students with intellectual disabilities:

2.7.1 Visual Supports

Visual supports, such as visual schedules, cue cards, and visual aids, help students with intellectual disabilities understand and follow instructions, routines, and social expectations (Nagro, Fraser & Hooks, 2019). Visual supports can provide clarity and promote independence in daily activities.

2.7.2 Peer Support Encouraging peer interactions and fostering positive relationships among students can create a supportive and inclusive classroom environment (Delgado-Gil, Mendoza-Muñoz, Galán-Arroyo, Denche-Zamorano, Adsuar, Mañanas-Iglesias & Rojo-Ramos, 2023). Pairing students with intellectual disabilities with their peers who can offer assistance, guidance, and friendship can be beneficial.

2.7.3 Multi-Sensory Instruction

Incorporating multiple senses into the learning process can enhance engagement and understanding for students with intellectual disabilities. For example,

using manipulatives, hands-on activities, and sensory materials can reinforce concepts and promote active participation (Powers, 2023).

2.7.4 Small Group Instruction

Providing instruction in small groups or one-on-one settings can allow teachers to address individual learning needs more effectively (Mahmudovna, 2023). This personalized approach enables teachers to offer additional support and monitor progress closely.

2.7.5 Special Education Resources and Specialists

Schools may have dedicated special education teachers, specialists, or support staff who work directly with students with intellectual disabilities. These professionals can offer specialized instruction, interventions, and guidance to both teachers and students. The establishment of district-based support teams by education districts is of paramount importance for the successful empowerment of the special education teacher. The district-support teams should comprise of district specialists and former special school teachers, and take full functions of providing evaluation needs and support of all special schools in their district, and ensuring that special schools are transformed into resource centres (Habulezi et al., 2016). Habulezi et al. add that district-based support teams must ensure regular monitoring of the activities of special schools, ensuring that the needs and support required by each school in the district is responded to in terms of curriculum, assessment and instructions, as well as upgrading and training of staff.

Holding as very integral for teacher effective in special education settings, Hinds et al. (2015) mentions a school-based support team (SBST) as an internal support which is coordinated by a member of staff who has received training in either life skills education, counselling or learning support. This team should comprise

mainly teachers within the staff itself, parents and learners (Hinds et al., 2015). Special schools are mandated to establish school-based support teams that coordinate services and networks with the specialists from district-based support teams and resource centres (Edyburn, 2011). The purpose of the SBST is to support teachers who are experiencing problems and might fall short with skills of dealing with peculiar special circumstances. Key functions of the SBST include different forms of classroom-based support such as identifying learner categories and severity of disability and coordinating the curriculum (Flanagan et al., 2013). Collective identification of teachers' needs and in particular barriers to learning at learner, teacher, curriculum and institutional-levels are the responsibilities of the school-based support teams.

2.7.6 Parent and Family Involvement

Collaborating with parents and family members is crucial in supporting students with intellectual disabilities. Regular communication, sharing progress updates, and involving parents in decision-making processes can help create a strong support system. Hinds et al. (2015) see grossing over parental recognition and involvement in the education of pupils with intellectual disability is a serious mishap. Reiterating the submission of McLeskey and Waldron (2011), Edyburn (2011) indicates that parents are the most consistent advocates of their children's best interests. Their involvement in education issues is an integral part of developing a more vibrant special education system. Education for all include the possibility that parents have a greater say in the education of their children, typically the special child with intellectual disability (Addison & Yankyera, 2015).

2.8 Challenges Teachers encounter in teaching students with intellectual disability

There is a growing body of international and national literature which indicates that there are many challenges teachers of pupils with intellectual disabilities in special schools face (Philpott & McLaren, 2011; McNally & Mannan, 2013). It is estimated that 75 percent of those who teach special needs students will leave their job within 10 years of starting (Ferry, 2012). According to Ferry (2012), special education teachers face quite a number of challenges in their work with intellectually disabled children. These challenges include the difficulty of teaching the learners, non-instructional responsibilities, lack of support, professional isolation, budget problems and difficulties of discipline within the classroom setting.

Brunsting et al.'s (2014) study alluded that special educators are at high risk for burnout as their working conditions align with many factors associated with burnout. At one point or another, almost all teachers become frustrated with their job or harbour negative feelings toward the profession. Yet, some teachers experience these emotions more acutely or with greater frequency (Nalbant et al., 2013). Teachers were described as experiencing burnout when the stress they encounter overcomes their resources and abilities to cope adequately, leading them to feel exhausted, cynical, or unaccomplished in their work.

A study conducted by Ambikile and Outwater (2012) revealed psychological, emotional, social, and economic challenges teachers endure while teaching intellectually disabled children. Psychological and emotional challenges included being stressed by caring tasks and having worries about the present and future life of their children. They had feelings of sadness, and inner pain or bitterness due to the disturbing behaviour of the children. They also experienced some communication

problems with their children due to their inability to talk. Social challenges identified in the study were inadequate social services for their children, stigma, burden of caring task, and lack of social support.

2.8.1 School context Challenges and ways to resolve for students with intellectual disabilities

Challenges in the teaching-learning situations involving pupils with intellectual disabilities have widely been associated mostly with the intrinsic factors (internal), that is medical and disability models (Young & MacCormack, 2014). However, there has been a paradigm shift in the way teaching-learning challenges are conceptualized in Ghana. The current understanding is that challenges/barriers to learning are caused by a number of factors, some of which may not necessarily be of the learner's making, but could be social or lie within the school and/or curriculum (Lapan et al., 2012). Challenges/barriers, in the description of Young and MacCormack (2014), are those factors that hinder teaching and learning which include factors relating to specific individual characteristics, various aspects of the curriculum, the physical and psychosocial environment within which teaching and learning occurs, which have an impact on the teaching and learning process.

Adequate funding has been identified as one of the salient issues to consider when educating pupils with intellectual disability in special schools. Providing accessible school environment such as construction of ramps requires finance, and training and re-training of teachers by way of staff professional development requires money (Hinds et al. (2015). Hall et al. (2014) support Hinds, Jones, Gau, Forrester & Biglan (2015) and did not lose sight of the challenges of inadequate funding for the provision of resources, equipment and other forms of support to meet unique needs of learners with intellectual disability. Such a re-emphasis is fully explored in Ambikile

and Outwater (2012) who writing on ‘budgeting and financing special education’, remarks that while disability does not automatically equal extra expense, pupils with intellectual disability in special schools require more or extra funding in order to meet their peculiar learning needs. Additionally, Ambikile and Outwater (2012) said special schools must be financially supported, and that special schools require enough financial assistance to meet the differential learning needs of all pupils.

In a similar discourse, Capri (2016) suggested that the physical environment in special schools needs to be safe and accessible to all pupils, including those with physical and sensory disabilities. The school needs relevant facilities to minimize the effects of individual learning differences in achievement. Capri (2016) holds the view that a large amount of learning takes place through listening and speaking and it is critical that students can hear and understand their teacher’s instructions and directions.

Hinds et al. (2015) therefore recognize the need to provide optimal acoustical environments for students, following standards for the ideal levels of noise that should be present in a learning environment. Noisy equipment, for example, can be problematic and there should be an awareness of the effects of heating and ventilation systems as some students have difficulty tolerating even the gentle hum of classroom activity and are hypersensitive to noise. The use of background music helps to filter out distractions. Accommodating individual needs with headphones, ear muffs and others can prove useful too (Batorowicz et al., 2012).

Addison and Yankyera (2015) stated that providing a structured and predictable environment can prove useful for those pupils who experience difficulties with organization, especially students with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities. Some learners, in particular those with autism or Asperger syndrome, can

be dependent on external environmental cues for structuring and organizing their learning (Addison & Yankyera (2015). Having regular routines for class work and designated places for classroom materials can help alleviate any anxiety they may feel around this issue. Practical strategies to accommodate the needs of these pupils can include the provision of visual cues such as picture prompts, colour codes, and written lists, or number prompts to help organization (Daniel, 2016). Class schedules and timetables can be provided in both pictorial and written form, with the class rules clearly displayed.

Studies have revealed Ghana Education Service's concern about inaccessible and unsafe environment in the special schools regarding their learning centres (Daniel, 2016; Capri, 2016), hence it is conceptualized as a barrier to learning and development that need to be removed. Young and MacCormack (2014) contend that creating differentiated learning centres within the classroom allows pupils with intellectual disabilities to take some time to focus on a particular task or theme in greater detail. Young and MacCormack asserted that special education classroom can have designated spaces for certain activities such as reading corner, music and listening centre, arts and crafts area and a writing corner. This helps to provide for the different learning styles of pupils and helps organize targeted learning activities. These learning centres, according to Daniel (2016), can contain a variety of equipment such as computers and a variety of materials and resources to encourage creativity and learning. The learning centres present innovative ways of providing non-stigmatizing support to pupils who may have trouble with certain types of task, such as reading.

2.8.2 Stress and strategies of teachers handling students with intellectual disability

The widespread concern regarding teacher stress has led many researchers to focus on this area. Furthermore, there has been an increasing recognition of the link between mental and physical health and occupational stress, and indeed concern to improve the working lives of teachers (Adeniyi, Fakolade & Tella, 2010). Stress though are variously defined, is understood as a state of tension that arises from an actual or perceived demand that calls for an adjustment or adaptive behaviour (Kebbi & Al-Hroub, 2018). It is generally recognized as an unpleasant emotional state, which is said to occur when there have been prolonged, increasing or new pressures that are significantly greater than the coping resources (Hinds et al., 2015). The consequences of stress include health problems and reduction in work performance effectiveness (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).

In a discuss, Flanagan et al. (2013) also see stress as a factor in staff attrition, absenteeism and low morale, and maintains that stress is a phenomenon that manifests in the individual person as a result of various stressors that arise from the self and the environment. This affects the individual person in accordance with the way in which he or she attributes meaning to the events, stimuli or demands affecting him or her, and in accordance with the way in which he or she experiences and enters into or handles such events, stimuli or demands. Kebbi and Al-Hroub (2018) in a remark agree with Adeniyi, et al. (2010) that whether potential stressors invoke negative stressful emotions depends upon a person's cognitive appraisal of a given situation, and this varies according to their beliefs and whether they perceive it as personally relevant.

The above descriptions of stress highlight three important concepts about stress that: a) situational demands cause individuals to adapt; b) individuals tend to react and adapt in different ways to stressors, and (c) that some form of response will occur, be it physical and or psychological (Kebbi & Al-Hroub, 2018; Adeniyi et al., 2010).

Furthermore, it can also be deduced that there are two distinct types of stressors; those which are found within the individual, including personal values, attitudes and self-concepts, and those that originate outside the individual, also including environmental and work-related stressors (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Teacher stress typically, has been viewed as an interactive process which occurs between teachers and their teaching environment which leads to excessive demands being placed on them and resulting in physiological and psychological distress (Addison & Yankyera, 2015).

One of the major challenges that teachers face in handling pupils with intellectually disabilities is burnout. Alifanoviene, Sapelyte and Orska (2016) explain that teacher burnout occurs when teachers undergoing stress for long periods of time experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. Outcomes associated with burnout, according to Alifanoviene et al. (2016), include teacher attrition, teacher health issues, and negative student outcomes. McNally and Mannan's (2013) study alluded that special educators are at high risk for burnout as their working conditions align with many factors associated with burnout.

At one point or another, teachers become frustrated with their job or harbour negative feelings toward the profession yet some teachers experience these emotions more acutely or with greater frequency. Teachers are described as experiencing burnout when the stress they encounter overcomes their resources and abilities to cope

adequately, leading them to feel exhausted, cynical, or unaccomplished in their work (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). A study conducted by McNally and Mannan (2013) revealed psychological, emotional, social, and economic challenges special education teachers endure while living with learners with intellectual disabilities. Psychological and emotional challenges included being stressed by caring tasks due to the disturbing behaviour of the children, such as aggression.

In as much as stress is associated with teaching pupils with intellectual disabilities, teachers also have some adaptive strategies to cope with the situation. Whilst Flanagan et al. (2013) define coping “as all cognitive and behavioural efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate demands”, McNally and Mannan (2013) add that coping is “any effort, healthy or unhealthy, conscious or unconscious, to prevent, eliminate, or weaken stressors, or to tolerate their effects in the least hurtful manner.

In a related study, Edyburn (2011) identified role analysis as a work-focused coping strategy that is aimed at clarifying an individual’s work role to reduce distress, confusion and conflict. By this, special education teachers develop a role profile based on the expectations of superiors, peers, subordinates and the peculiar circumstances of pupils with intellectual disabilities with whom the teacher deals (McNally & Mannan, 2013). This expected role is clarified by eliminating conflicts and confusion in expectations.

It is common to see special education teachers handling pupils with intellectual disabilities adopt emotion focused stress coping strategies. This explains the use of stress inoculation training that combines training in physical relaxation and in cognitive strategies, including rehearsal in imagination of future stress situations (Edyburn, 2011), recognition and monitoring of the person’s usual anxiety-provoking thoughts in a situation of stress and rehearsal of a more realistic and control self-

statement, or self-reward for coping successfully with the stressor (Edyburn, 2011). Other coping strategies, according to Douglas and Travers (2012), include reduced perfectionism, where teachers are taught to have more realistic expectations and social support, providing the necessary emotional, informational, appraisal and instrumental support that the teacher needs (Douglas & Travers, 2012).

Lack of available and updated Teachers guide and curriculum guide and seminars among teachers are some challenging experiences teachers encounter in special schools.

This means that in the conflict between imparting knowledge and developing the students' learning competence school education puts the focus on the materials needed in teaching. Douglas and Travers (2012) revealed that inadequate special education teachers is a challenging situation, and professional development training to enhance effectiveness is also questionable. It was found in McNally and Mannan (2013) that the special education teachers in the study schools were not professionally educated and thus they had limited strategies in dealing with the learners with intellectual disabilities.

2.8.3 Problem Behaviours of Pupils with Intellectual Disabilities

Problem behaviour, challenging behaviour or emotional and behavioural problems are often used interchangeably to denote or describe behaviours of individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) which can be difficult to manage in special schools. Studies have observed that Pupils with ID can show a wide range of problem behaviours and there are different ways to classify them (Aldrup, Klusmann, Lütke, Göllner & Trautwein, 2018; Alter, Walker & Landers, 2013).

Generally, problem behaviours are often distinguished along two major dimensions of externalizing and internalizing problem behaviours. Externalizing behaviours include overactive, impulsive, and aggressive behaviours. According to Alter et al. (2013), these behaviours have a disturbing effect on an individual's environment, such as other people or objects. Internalizing behaviours, in contrast, are characterized by depressive, anxious symptoms, or social withdrawal, and are considered disturbing to the individuals concerned (Aldrup et al., 2018). Other conceptualizations focus specifically on problem behaviours typically seen in individuals with ID. Ghani, Ahmad and Ibrahim's (2014) assertion that students with intellectual disabilities often exhibit high levels of problem behaviours, such as self-injury, hyperactivity, aggression, stereotypies, anxiety, or impulsivity is echoed in a number of literature (Alter et al. (2013; Friedman-Krauss, Raver, Morris & Jones, 2014). Statistical reports suggest that problem behaviours occur three times more frequently in individuals with ID than in the general population (Alter et al. (2013). Exhibiting high levels of problem behaviours is associated with increased risk of social isolation and unemployment and with a higher probability of being taught in special needs schools (Ghani et al., 2014).

However, problem behaviours can pose challenges not just for individuals with ID but also for the key people in their environment. Besides parents, siblings, peers, or caregivers, they can also be a source of stress for teachers (Aldrup et al., 2018). While teachers who work with students with intellectual disabilities face various challenges, such as a perceived lack of learners' progress or heavy workloads, dealing with pupils' problem behaviours is one of the most frequently reported sources of stress for special needs teachers (Ghani et al., 2014). The more teachers perceive that a student's behaviour deviates from their instructional goals, probably

because of the amount of time it takes to manage the problem behaviour, the higher the intensity of unpleasant emotions (Chang, 2013), which can lead to the experience of stress. The reaction to prolonged and high rates of stress can produce feelings of emotional exhaustion, which is often referred to as a key aspect of burnout (Ghani et al., 2014). Ghani et al. suggest that teacher-rated student misbehaviour is linked to teacher exhaustion and turnover intentions.

Based on case analyses of individuals with ID, Friedman-Krauss et al. (2014) developed a broad list of behaviours often seen in individuals with ID and identified the five domains of disruptive/antisocial behaviours, self-absorbed behaviours, communication disturbance, anxiety, and problems in social relations. A study (Edyburn, 2011) conducted at a special needs school showed that 53% of the 321 students (3–19 years) exhibited at least one type of challenging behaviour. Self-injurious behaviour was exhibited most frequently (36.4%), followed by aggressive/destructive behaviour (30.2%), and stereotyped behaviour 25.9%.

2.8.4 Problem behaviours as stressors for teachers in Special Schools

Problem behaviours of pupils with ID are exhibited in different contexts, such as the home, living arrangements (Boujut, Dean, Grouselle & Cappe, 2016), and school (Chang, 2013), and can therefore affect different people. Given the association between higher levels of problem behaviours and increased probability of attending special needs schools, teachers working in such environments face especially high levels of such behaviours.

Various work stress theories have been applied to research on the ways in which learners' problem behaviours may relate to teachers' stress (Chang, 2013). Using a cognitive behavioural framework for instance, which emphasizes that stimulus only becomes a stressor if it is perceived as such, stress can be understood as

a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being (Boujut et al., 2016). Focusing specifically on teacher stress in this instance, Chang (2013) describes stress as a negative emotional experience being triggered by the teacher's perception that their work situation constituted a threat to their self-esteem or well-being. In this understanding, the problem behaviour of pupils with intellectual disability represents a stimulus from the environment that is not stressful per se for teachers. However, it becomes a stressor if teachers perceive it as causing a discrepancy between a demand and their ability to cope with this demand.

This understanding also corresponds with the job demands-resources model (Aldrup et al., 2018). In this model job demands, such as emotionally critical interactions with clients, represent job aspects that can evoke strain when exceeding the employee's adaptive capability. Job resources, such as social support from co-workers, refer to aspects that are functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and the associated costs, and stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (Friedman-Krauss et al, 2014). Hence, teachers' lack of resources may have the consequence of perceiving their job demands as stressors.

Researchers have sought insights into teachers' perception of different types of problem behaviours (Habulezi et al., 2016; Edyburn, 2011) and results suggested that antisocial behaviours such as stealing, cruelty/bullying, and destroying school property were perceived as most serious, whereas behaviours indicative of emotional and attention difficulties were considered least serious. Other studies also identified externalizing behaviours such as off-task and verbal disruption were perceived as more problematic than internalizing behaviours of self-stimulation, and isolation/no interaction (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2014). Corresponding with these findings,

Nicholls et al. (2019) found that higher levels of externalizing student problem behaviours predicted higher stress among teachers working in preschool classrooms.

Several studies (Nicholls, Hastings & Grindle, 2019; Chang, 2013) have suggested special needs teachers perceive student misbehaviour and behaviour management to be the greatest factors contributing to their stress levels. Focusing on a specific group of students, Nicholls et al. (2019) investigated the impact of problem behaviours of pupils with autism spectrum disorders (64% had an additional ID) on teacher stress. The authors found significant associations between teachers' stress and students' conduct problems, irritable behaviours, self-isolated/ritualistic behaviours, hyperactive behaviours, and self-injury/stereotypic behaviours. No relation was found between teachers' stress and students' insecure/anxious behaviours.

Concerning individuals with ID, a study by Boujut et al. (2016) provided insights into which behaviours are considered challenging. Results showed that teachers were more likely to rate behaviours that disrupt the environment such as hitting others and spitting as challenging behaviours that require intervention, compared to behaviours that disrupt the individual such as head banging and inactiveness.

Nonetheless, while these results indicate what teachers consider to be challenging behaviour among pupils with ID, Habulezi et al. (2016) are of the view that some distinctions are important because of differences that may exist due to gender and differing ages (children and adolescents).

2.9 Improving the education of students with intellectual disability

A number of complementary concepts underpin the development of children with special education needs. With regard to the teacher's role, Sweigart and Collins (2017) propose that the teachers' role plays a major part in achieving quality

education for children with special education needs. In Sweigart and Collins's (2017) submission, the emphasis is on well-prepared teachers who are capable of helping children with SEN both inside and outside of the classroom, by adapting their methods to suit the different circumstances that would enable children's success in learning.

Consistent with the meaning of special education, teachers' role generally refers to the way they execute their duty to teach students with special education needs (Keeter & Bucholz, 2012). The teachers' role includes daily duties such as planning, teaching, and developing strategies to reduce issues affecting their pupils' learning, and teachers also identify resources to support progressive development of children with intellectual disability. However, Ambikile and Outwater (2012) argue that special school teachers' roles are not limited to duties inside the classroom but cover duties outside of their classrooms.

In special education, the teachers' role requires flexible thinking in terms of being creative and innovative to accommodate diversity among learners with varying disabilities under their care (Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2011). Teachers' roles become realities when the skills and knowledge they have acquired through formal training in teacher colleges and universities and their own personal characteristics meet their understanding of children with special needs' diverse learning requirements (Angelka & Goran, 2018). In other words, the success of special education in a country depends largely on the capacity of the teachers' skills and knowledge. The discussion above underscores Shree and Shukla's (2016) conviction that classroom adaptation by the teacher is a vital practice and refers to how teachers adjust the physical layout of their classroom as a way of minimizing obstructions that might hinder students' engagement with their learning. Kontu and Pirttimaa (2010) cited how teachers

achieve classroom adaptations which include students' seating arrangements at furniture like desks and tables, as well as wall displays and student work centres that have no personalized approach. According to Kontu and Pirttimaa (2010), a teacher's posture, tone of voice and dress may also need to be adapted. Teachers must also design teaching strategies and organize classroom arrangements so that all pupils have equalized educational opportunities without physical obstruction. Studies suggest that when teachers create a less restrictive environment for students with special education needs, those pupils feel excluded (Young & MacCormack, 2014). According to Young & MacCormack, a teacher's proactively adjusting the classroom creates a sense of belonging for their pupils with disability so they do not feel like aliens.

Teachers' skills in adaptation are not limited to the way they set up the classroom environment but also include adapting the curriculum (Kontu & Pirttimaa, 2010). Curriculum adaptation includes a technical analysis of curriculum content, processes and outcomes by the teacher and the adjustments they make to their instructional practices in order to meet the specific learning needs of children with disability in their classroom (Chhabra et al., 2010). In addition, Boer, Pijl and Minnaert (2011) suggest that curriculum objectives, content, methodology, and evaluation need to be adapted.

Curriculum adaptation is essential as it reduces the chances of stigma that special children can feel when teachers do not take into account their special learning needs. Arrah and Swain (2014) suggest that curriculum adaptation is a significant strategy employed by effective teachers to meet the needs of diverse students. As Arrah and colleague put it, teachers must deliver 'best practice', which includes teaching a lesson that does not exclude any learner of the moment. Willig (2013) reiterates that adapting the curriculum is a must-do action in a class with special

learning needs because it is the way to keep all learners in the school. Ambikile and Outwater (2012) note some students simply choose to drop out of school since the lessons seem irrelevant to their lives. In order to hold special children in school to complete their education, curriculum adaptation is necessary.

In a contribution, McNally and Mannan (2013) call for adaptation of general school environment, referring to adjusting the general school setting to encourage a barrier-free learning environment. This includes the architectural structure of the classrooms and walkways, such as tracks on the school ground that allow easy accessibility for all children. As Boer, Pijl and Minnaert (2011) put it, facilitating inclusive school environments requires ensuring physical access for optimal learning and social experiences. Chhabra et al., (2010) also emphasize that adapting a whole school environment reduces the difficulties experienced in special schools, creating barrier free environment for learning. For better explanation, McNally and Mannan (2013) advocate that school environments need to be adapted in such a way to ensure that all children feel welcome as part of their school community. Ambikile and Outwater (2012) argue that to create an inclusive school environment is not an easy task and it requires professionally trained teachers to design a whole inclusive school environment that can best nurture different learners' needs with the support from all stakeholders.

The use of assistive technology for teaching children with intellectual disability has been established as critical in literature. Technology plays an important role in creating an effective and adaptable learning environment when teaching children with intellectual disability. Technology is a powerful tool and its use can form an important medium for special education (McNally & Mannan, 2013). The use of technology has become a standard form of teaching in schools. It is one of the most

convenient and effective ways for teachers to deliver their lessons. However, the use of ICT to teach students with intellectual disabilities has been inadequate (Brew, 2011) in many countries, particularly in Ghana. Most schools in Ghana are not adequately equipped with technological infrastructure and teachers do not have adequate knowledge to use ICT in class.

However, Alase (2017) asserts that this can be supported by making technology accessible to the schools, followed by training teachers in how to use ICT in teacher preparedness. It is important that teachers have a positive opinion towards using ICT in teaching children with SEN such as students with intellectual disabilities. They should consider ICT as an integral part of the learners' identity rather than just a cognitive educational tool (Young & MacCormack, 2014). Even for a developed nation like Sweden, where ICT is meant to increase the general level of knowledge, Alase (2017) reported that taking ICT into general and special schools has been a big challenge. This is simply because there are not many technological infrastructures such as hardware and software to support a wide range of capabilities for people with disabilities. Even having infrastructure in place does not assure the success of special education. McNally and Mannan (2013) supported Akingkugbe (2012) and posited that one of the main barriers to successful technology in education in the UK was associated with low uptake and the usage of ICT despite schools having a good supply of infrastructure.

In the debate for improved quality of teaching and learning for the benefit of children with special education needs such students with intellectual disabilities, the significance of collaborative teaching is increasing. Kilanowski-Press, Foote and Rinaldo (2010) define 'collaborate' as 'to work together or with someone else for a special purpose'. The objective of collaborative teaching is to help children with SEN

get an appropriate education, through specialized instruction. Teachers from same schools or from different schools team up to teach together in one class. In doing so, teachers are able to share their expertise. For example, special education teachers provide specially designed instruction to students based on their challenge specialties, and teachers from regular education class can help alongside. According to Florian (as cited in Alase, 2017) the regular education teachers can share their skills in-group instructions and classroom management.

Similar to collaborative teaching is *inter-professional practice*, in which two or more professionals team up to work on their mutual understanding to achieve a common goal (Akingkugbe, 2012). This is a student-centred practice in which professionals share the task dutifully and there is a clear communication about the classroom activities. McNally and Mannan (2013) point out that the outcome of effective inter-professional practice shows that the level of “conflict, confusion and duplication of work, is very minimal. One advantage of using inter-professional practice, according to Young and MacCormack (2014), is that there is always a flexibility to include participants from among a range of professionals such as teachers from special schools and inclusive schools, teaching assistants and practitioners from community agencies (Mentis et al., 2012). The other advantage is that, professionals’ teamwork and collaboration help towards the development of students with intellectual disabilities which otherwise could be challenging for the individual professionals if they are to manage singlehandedly.

2.10 Strategies employed by teachers to address the diverse needs of students with intellectual disabilities

Many teaching strategies have been postulated over the past years by various scholars in an effort to enhance the education system among learners with intellectual disabilities. While some scholars propose the use of one specific approach to teaching, Capri (2016) proposes that effective ways of giving instructions in the classroom setting is to integrate concepts from different perspectives. It is normal in the education field to challenge a position, dismiss it, and embrace the latest trend as though there were no important ideas in the original point of view. In most cases, however, effective strategies in the field of education integrate ideas from different perspectives.

It is the views of McLeskey and Waldron (2011) and Kennedy et al. (2014) to use ideas from both the constructivism and behaviourism approach to attain the best results in the teaching and learning process. It is equally advisable to adapt school curriculum and instructional methods according to the individual learner, the activities, and the learning environment as opposed to exclusively relying on one approach. As such, incorporating elements from different learning models could assist special education teachers to teach learners with intellectual disability (Daniel, 2016). Teachers employ various strategies to address the diverse needs of students with intellectual disabilities. These strategies aim to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that fosters the academic, social, and emotional development of students. Here are some the strategies used by teachers in addressing the diverse needs of students with intellectual disabilities.

2.10.1 Differentiated Instruction: Teachers employ a variety of teaching methods, materials, and activities to cater to the diverse learning styles, abilities, and interests of students. This may involve using visual aids, manipulatives, technology, and hands-on learning experiences. As established in classical theories by McNally and Mannan (2013), learners in a classroom setup with intellectual disabilities can attain a high quality of life in diverse aspects of life with an appropriate support provided. The curriculum and instructional methods for such students should be modified to help them attain their potential in academic and functional areas of life like independent living. Evidence in Brunsting et al. (2014) further established that although such learners exhibit adaptive characteristics, the shortcomings exist alongside various strengths in other areas of life. Therefore, the instructional strategies for students with intellectual disabilities should focus on improving independence and self-reliability. Since learning for pupils with intellectual disability is challenged because of their difficulties in generalizing concepts, making decisions, solving problems and setting goals, teachers should provide information in small bits. This helps these learners internalize the concept easily before moving to another.

The role of the teacher in the classroom situation is critical considering the fact that knowledge is not transferable from one person to another like a commodity. Recent research by Capri (2016) demonstrated that it is important for educators to structure their instructions to be student-oriented, particularly when it comes to students with intellectual disabilities. The authors argue that apart from ensuring that the learning process is established in the social context, collaboration and student-to-student interactions are inevitable. Through such interactions, every learner makes meaning at individual level to connect with existing knowledge.

Young and MacCormack (2014) advocate that the most important aspect of learning is that it should make sense and contextual to the problems of life. Through realistic examples integrated in the instructional methods, the students with intellectual disabilities get specific practice with the generalization. The strategy will help them in developing practical skills, which have been known to be a challenging area of learning. Researchers (McNally & Mannan, 2013; Batorowicz, Missiuna & Pollock, 2012) in the teaching of pupils with intellectual disabilities encourage teachers to give instructions from the known to the unknown. McKenzie, McConkey and Adams (2013) suggest that before introducing a new concept, the teacher should discuss related concepts first so that students learn new information based on what is already familiar to them.

It is recommended that teachers use techniques like mapping and brainstorming to improve the learning experience for learners with intellectual disabilities. Nalbant, Baran, Samut, Aktop and Hutzler (2013) also suggest that students with intellectual disabilities have low self-esteem and take long to master concepts. Therefore, moving from the known to the unknown will improve their self-confidence, especially after repeated learning and realizing that they can make sense out of the curriculum content.

2.10.2 Building Self-Advocacy Skills:

Teachers empower students with intellectual disabilities to advocate for themselves by teaching them self-advocacy skills. This includes helping them understand their strengths and challenges, teaching them to communicate their needs, and promoting self-determination. Active participation by students in the lesson helps them to learn and retain information. When learners with intellectual disabilities are provided with materials that interest them during the learning process, there are high

chances that they will master the content (Capri, 2016). Teachers should consider teaching learners with disabilities the techniques of summarizing, paraphrasing, predicting and using visual images. All these skills involve active learning that is essential when it comes to mastery and remembrance of ideas. Therefore, besides active participation of students in the class, it is advisable for teachers to focus on areas of interest for students.

2.10.3 Chunking and Simplifying Information

Breaking down complex information into smaller, manageable parts can make it easier for students to understand and process. Teachers use strategies such as chunking information into smaller units, providing step-by-step instructions, and using visual aids to simplify concepts.

Studies (McNally & Mannan, 2013; Edyburn, 2011) have indicated that students with intellectual disabilities have challenges in areas of problem solving and evaluation. Therefore, with extra guidance and preparedness, learners with intellectual disabilities can acquire and benefit from these skills in their practical life. For this reason, teachers can take an active role in engaging learners with intellectual disabilities in complex writing assignments, study tasks and research projects among other assignments (Douglas & Travers (2012). Edyburn (2011) who seemed to be more of a behaviourist thinks that breaking down activities into smaller tasks that can be managed by learners with intellectual disabilities. The technique is beneficial for students with intellectual disabilities because they are known to have problems when it comes to mastering complex material. Overwhelming information makes them frustrated and slows down the learning process. Regarding handling complex assignment like writing, the teacher can use modelling, Douglas and Travers (2012) added.

2.10.4 Multisensory Teaching

Engaging multiple senses can enhance learning for students with intellectual disabilities. Teachers incorporate visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile elements into their lessons to help students understand and retain information. Admitting that pupils with intellectual disabilities have shortcomings when it comes to remembering things and processing information, some researchers (Nalbant et al., 2013; Flanagan, Bouck & Richardson, 2013) suggest explicit instruction as the best strategy to ensure that these pupils remember concepts and process information to make sense of abstract ideas. The teacher-directed and managed lessons are beneficial for learners with intellectual disabilities because of their problems with processing information, paying attention and recalling ideas. Most students achieve best results during the learning process when they know what to expect from a lesson or topic. Their focus then shifts to new information conveyed so that they can be related to what is already known.

Overall, it can be postulated that information for pupils with intellectual disabilities should be related to real life situations so that it will be more meaningful for the students, teachers should move from the known to the unknown, incorporating examples and illustrations, structure tasks that trigger active participation of the learners. Sweigart and Collins (2017) add that teachers need to incorporate high level thinking capabilities through clear explanations and guidance, because Pupils with intellectual disabilities love graphical illustrations and presentation to capture and retain their attention (Nalbant et al., 2013). It is acknowledged that learners with intellectual disabilities acquire skills effectively in practical areas that can be used in their real life situation through an integrated learning approach. After the skills are acquired, the teacher can include extra settings to focus on generalization.

Obviously, students with intellectual disabilities require teachers to use unique approaches in the teaching process because of their deficiencies in the processing and academic areas. To ensure maximum mastery of concepts, Flanagan et al. (2013) admonish teachers to familiarize themselves with the patterns of strengths and weaknesses of students with intellectual disabilities. Generally, pupils with intellectual disabilities have problems with their intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour and thus required of teachers to combine strategies from different perspective and appropriate models to meet the needs of students with intellectual disabilities. Contemporary research (Mckenzie et al., 2013; Habulezi, Molao, Mphuting & Kebotlositswe, 2016) recommend models that advocate for teachers to structure the curriculum and instructions based on the needs, subject area, and the setting of the learning process. The most effective way of achieving maximum results is to divide complex parts of the subject into smaller parts to eliminate the difficulty associated with generalization.

2.10.5 Chunking and Simplifying Information

Breaking down complex information into smaller, manageable parts can make it easier for students to understand and process. Teachers use strategies such as chunking information into smaller units, providing step-by-step instructions, and using visual aids to simplify concepts. Although individuals with intellectual disabilities have limited intellectual functions and adaptations, teachers are expected to understand the uniqueness of students so that teachers are able to educate and teach students by developing ideas and innovations that they have. Intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorders) as a neurodevelopmental disorder is characterized by limitations in intellectual function and adaptive function (Shree & Shukla, 2016). Research has shown that this disorder includes three domains

covering conceptual, social and practical skills (Shree & Shukla, 2016; Angelka & Goran, 2018). Intellectual disability term is a new term used by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) to replace the term of mental retardation used in DSM-IV.

In some countries such as Indonesia, children with intellectual disabilities are included in the category of children with special needs where children with special needs are children who have extraordinary physical or mental, intellectual, social, or emotional limitations. Although intellectual disability is a developmental disability, Keeter and Bucholz (2012) observe that it has the lowest prevalence in most countries when compared to the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorders and other developmental disabilities. Teaching students with intellectual disabilities is a special challenge in which a teacher, besides teaching, must understand the conditions of each student who are certainly different from each other. The teacher must be able to innovate and use appropriate teaching methods to overcome the difficulties of students with intellectual disabilities. According to Angelka and Goran (2018) in general, children with intellectual disorders have special learning problems. As a result, having limitations in academic ability will affect their ability to adapt to the home, school and community environment (Keeter & Bucholz, 2012).

2.10.6 Assistive Technology

Teachers integrate assistive technology tools and devices to support students with intellectual disabilities. These may include speech-to-text software, text-to-speech tools, communication boards, adaptive keyboards, and specialized apps or software. Angelka and Goran (2018) submit that appropriate teaching methods in the classroom are very important for children with intellectual disabilities so that the lessons given by the teacher can be accepted and understood by the students. Teachers

can utilize various technologies to help students with intellectual difficulties in learning, for examples tablets, smartphones, computers, and music players. Given that students with intellectual disabilities have excellent abilities for visual association, teachers can also use media such as pictures and videos to effectively encourage learning (Keeter & Bucholz, 2012; Angelka & Goran, 2018). However, these students need support from parents and teachers, as well as learning facilities to develop their skills and abilities in learning.

2.10.7 Extended Time and Flexible Assessments

Providing extended time for assignments and assessments allows students with intellectual disabilities to work at their own pace. Teachers may also use alternative assessment methods, such as oral presentations or projects, to evaluate students' understanding and progress. Recounting the barriers of children with Intellectual Disability, Kontu and Pirttimaa (2010) acknowledged in a study that educators and must have understanding that children with intellectual disabilities are children who always need assistance in learning, easily forget what they have been taught about, and so that they need to be taught repeatedly. Shree and Shukla (2016) added that children with intellectual disabilities hardly read correctly and fluently, and that requires teachers the patients to do and re-do when teaching reading or arithmetic. In a complementary remark, Kontu and Pirttimaa (2010) gathered from a study that teaching children with intellectual disability requires extra patience because their grasping ability is not like students in public schools, so lessons should be explained many times. Therefore, behaviours like anger, impatience and upset must be completely out of place.

2.10.8 Peer Support and Collaboration

Encouraging peer interaction and collaboration can promote social and emotional development. Teachers facilitate opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to work with their peers, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support. In accordance with the characteristics of intellectual disability, individuals who have intellectual disabilities generally experience decreased ability to read, write, do mathematics, reason, understand science, and store memories (Shree & Shukla, 2016). In addition, people with intellectual disabilities experience limitations or weaknesses in intellectual functioning and have difficulty understanding abstract concepts. Interestingly however, parents and teachers have positive expectations for the children's future. Parents and teachers hope the children have a good future, can finish school and can be independent in doing activities, especially activities in meeting daily needs such as bathing, eating and dressing.

2.10.9 Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

Teachers work closely with special education professionals, parents, and the student to develop an IEP. This plan outlines specific learning goals, accommodations, and modifications tailored to the student's individual needs. According to Keeter and Bucholz (2012), parents in particular have a concern for the careers of their children with special needs with the hope that children with special needs can go to school, learn to write, read and develop their potential. Other previous studies have also mentioned that parents must have strong beliefs and optimistic views for the future of children who experience intellectual, physical and learning disabilities. Thus, support is needed from all well-meaning persons including teachers at school (Shree & Shukla, 2016). Accordingly, Shree and Shukla affirm that community, especially parents, expecting children with intellectual disability to be

independent in both career and education is something natural. It is because every parent or teacher wants the best for each child and their students in general. It is not always possible for the children to be together with their parents all the time, so efforts and interventions are necessary to help children become independent such as by providing good education at school.

2.11 Summary of the Literature Review

This chapter reviewed related literature on the research topic, empirical literature and the theoretical framework. The chapter was discussed under the following strands: (1) the professional development needs of teachers in teaching students with intellectual disabilities, (2) support systems that enhance the teaching and learning experience of teachers in handling students with intellectual disabilities, (3) challenges faced by teachers in teaching students with intellectual disabilities and (4) strategies employed by teachers to address the diverse needs of students with intellectual disabilities.

The theoretical framework was also discussed. From the above literature, none of these studies mentioned has tried to research into the teachers' lived experiences in teaching students with intellectual disabilities in Garden City Special School. The findings of study would address an under researched area in the local environment in Garden City Special School, Kumasi. The study would help policymakers rethink policy framework and strategies and supportive interventions that could enhance teachers' educational delivery for pupils with special education needs and those with intellectual disabilities in particular.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Research methodology, as described by McNally and Mannan (2013), is the procedural framework, within which a research is conducted. Research methodology is a collective term for the structured process of conducting research. The processes of steps used to collect and analyse information to increase our understanding of the phenomenon are three; pose a question, collect data to answer the question, and present an answer to the question. This chapter covers the research design which provides a brief overview of the overall methodology, the population from which a sample is selected, the sample size and sampling techniques. The chapter further indicates the instrument used for the collection of data from respondents. Data collection procedure follows, explaining how the research instrument was applied on respondents. Finally, how data collected is analysed and the analytical instrument used, ways of ensuring reliability and validity of research instruments are also explained in this chapter together with ethical consideration deemed very important in academic writings.

3.1 Research Approach

The qualitative approach was used for this study to enable acquisition of an in-depth understanding of special teachers' lived experiences regarding their training and development, support systems, school context challenges and work-related stress associated with teaching Students with intellectual disability. Qualitative approach encourages the discovery of individual attributes to social problems (Creswell, 2013). This is suitably done by interacting with teachers to provide quality information necessary for the study's objectives. Khan (2014), Daniel (2016), and Lapan et al.

(2012) hold the opinion, which has been supported here that qualitative research uses first-hand experience, including real conversations that allow for some truthful reporting based on participants' meaning.

Erchul and Sheridan (2014) describe qualitative research as inductive, holistic, subjective and process-oriented methods used to understand, interpret, describe and develop a theory on a phenomena or setting. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) add that qualitative method of research conduct is a systematic and subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning. Therefore, the rationale for selecting a qualitative design for this study was the need to gain a perspective and understanding of teachers' lived experiences in teaching students with intellectual disability. Differentiating between quantitative and qualitative approaches in research, Sweigart and Collins (2017) indicate that qualitative research is mostly associated with words, language and experiences rather than measurements, statistics and numerical figures in quantitative study. Researchers who use qualitative research adopt a person-centred and holistic perspective to understand the human experience, without focusing on specific concepts.

Through the qualitative approach, rich knowledge and insight can be generated in depth to present a lively picture of the participants' reality and social context (Sweigart & Collins, 2017; Khan, 2014). It involves the systematic collection and analysis of subjective narrative data in an organized and intuitive fashion to identify the characteristics and the significance of human in a description. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) narrated that qualitative research is aimed at gaining a deep understanding of a specific phenomenon, rather than a surface description of a large sample of a population.

3.2 Research Design

The study used the phenomenological design, which seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of our everyday experiences (Erchul & Sheridan, 2014; Khan, 2014). By adopting this design, I intended to “enter the world” of the teachers to understand and explain their lived experiences of working with students with intellectual disabilities. The justification for its use is that, the phenomenological design enabled an understanding of teachers’ lived experiences in teaching students with intellectual disabilities concentrating on training and professional development, teacher support systems, school context challenges and work-related stressors.

3.3 Population

For the current study, 15 teachers at Garden City Special School was the target population. These teachers fall within the age range of 24 and 56 years, their academic profile show a minimum of diploma qualification including some masters’ degree holders. Except for three of them who had not been professionally trained in special education, the rest hold specialty in early childhood, hearing, speech and learning disabilities. Special education teachers who had at least one-year working experience at the study setting and were willing to provide data in an interview were included in the study as respondents. However, teachers who had less than a year of working experience at the selected study setting were regarded as not having adequate experience required in the study, and thus were excluded from the study.

Creswell (2012) explains population as the large group of interest to the researcher. Although the entire population usually does not participate in a research study, the results from the study are generalized to the entire population. McNally and Mannan (2013) further stated that population identification is necessary because the

final result of the study seeks to serve the purpose of generalizing study results to the research population, although the entire population usually may not participate in the study.

3.4 Sample Size

The sample size for this study was nine teachers used as respondents for data collection. This refers to the number of units of the population that has been chosen from which data was gathered. These sampled respondents were permanent special education teachers, made up of three males and six females who have had several (more than 2) years of teaching experience at the school. They proved to have experienced teaching students with intellectual disabilities) and were ready to participate in the study to share their experiences. Though, three of these respondents have no professional training/education in special education, the rest of them were trained in specialties such as early childhood, hearing and speech as well as learning disabilities. This sample size (9) was reliable where a point of saturation was reached, and upon research recommendation (Creswell, 2014; Erchul & Sheridan, 2014) that participants ranging from 5-15 is ideal for data collection in qualitative studies that makes use of an interview. Relating population and sample, Antoniou, Ploumpi and Ntalla (2013) state that a sample is a representation of the population from which it was drawn and which have good size to substantiate a generalization to the population.

3.5 Sampling Technique

The study adopted the Purposive Sampling Technique for selection of study respondents from the target population of 15 special education teachers in the study setting. Following the inclusive-exclusive criteria that guided sampling of study

participants, teachers at Garden City Special School who had at least one-year working experience and were willing to provide data in an interview were included in the study as respondents. Impliedly, teachers who had less than a year teaching experience and the non-teaching staffs were excluded from the study as respondents. Special education teachers were purposefully selected because they could provide detailed information about their own experiences regarding teaching pupils with intellectual disability, better than any other group of people. Teachers who had less than a year of working experience at the selected school were not deemed to have adequate experience required in the study, and thus were excluded in the study.

3.6 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness in the quality of data collected is measured in terms of credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability. Methodological rigour in qualitative research refers to the soundness of a study in terms of planning, data collection, analysis and reporting (Petty, Thomson & Stew, 2012; Elo et al., 2014).

Credibility – this is a measure of the truth value of qualitative research. It was ensured through the accurate procedures for interviews as well as several reviews of the field notes and audio recordings, the neutrality of the researcher during the interviews and the examination of the findings by the supervisor.

Confirmability - Jamshed (2014) explains confirmability as the degree to which the results of a research could be corroborated by others. This was attained in this study by ensuring that findings were supported by the data, and that analysis and interpretation reflect the exact information gathered.

Transferability – this refers to the extent to which the results of a research can be transferred to another study setting with other respondents (Petty, Thomson &

Stew, 2012). This was ensured by providing detailed descriptions of the participants' characteristics and their description of the phenomenon and keeping audit trail.

Dependability – this also suggests how stable is the findings of research over time. Dependability was ensured by employing an independent auditor to validate the truthfulness of the data collected and analysed as against data recorded in an audit trail in field notes (Elo et al., 2014; Jamshed, 2014).

3.7 Piloting Study

Prior to the conduct of the actual research a pilot study was conducted in a different special school to determine the feasibility of the chosen research design. In the current study, piloting was done using 3 special school teachers which comprised two males and one female teachers at Jamasi School for the Deaf in Ashanti Region that was not included in the actual study. As explained by Sreckovic & Lane (2014) a pilot study is a preliminary small-scale rehearsal to test an intended research method on a smaller sample size. During the pilot study, some weaknesses identified with the items in the interview guide included grammatical errors, statements inconsistent with study objectives and some ambiguities. Again, some statements were rather lengthy, more than two statements carried same meanings and the time spent on one respondent was more than what was required to complete data collection. Corrections were then made and found suitable to ensure clarity and consistency of the interview guide to align with the study objectives and to merit timelines (20 minutes per participant) for the conduct of the interview, before the final set of data collection instrument was obtained and used in actual data collection.

3.8 Study setting

The study was conducted at Garden City Special School (GCSS) at Asokore Mampong in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The school serves the whole of Ashanti Region, Northern region and even Eastern region. The school was established 39 years ago, with the main aim of caring for learners with special needs including pupils with intellectual disability from Primary to Junior High School level.

Garden City Special School was initially a local Non-governmental Organization (NGO) but now owned by the Government of Ghana under the monitoring and supervision of Asokore Mampong Municipal Assembly. The school now holds a learner population of 160 pupils and 45 staffs (teaching and non-teaching). The school is a mixed school to accept males and females, has a boarding facility and accepts day pupils as well. It was initially designed to accommodate eight pupils in a class but now holds 12 pupils in a class. This presents the obvious challenge of work overload for teachers, coupled with limited instructional materials, to suggest indications of stress for teachers.

3.9 Instrumentation

The study made use of an interview guide developed from the literature reviewed and in line with the research objectives relating to the study context/variables to collect data for the study. The interview guide was first developed by the researcher and moderated by the research supervisor. In addition to the five items that explored respondents' demographic features, the interview guide had 12 items/statements to address the four study objectives. Two questions sought to address objective 1 on training and professional development of teachers and two other items also addressed objective 2 on teacher support systems. There were also five items in the interview guide taking care of objective 3 and three items taking care of objective

four, which respectively addressed challenges encountered in the schools context and work-related stress. For each statement in the interview guide, probing questions and prompts were used to allow for further and better explanations such as; “how do you rate the level of pupils’ disabilities”?, “how do deficits in adaptive behaviour look like”?, “how do pupils’ impairments affect their learning”?. Some other probes were; “explain the adequacy of teacher professional training”, how suitable are in-service training on skill acquisition”? how reliable are support teams”?, and “how is your work effectiveness affected by work stressors”?

The use of interview guide is justified for its open-ended nature to reap the advantage of allowing room for more detailed submissions from respondents (Haegele & Park, 2016), though organised in line with the study objectives. Again, Brunsting et al. (2015) posit that qualitative interview allows the interviewees a degree of freedom to explain their thoughts and to highlight areas of particular interest and expertise they have, as well as to enable certain responses to be questioned in greater depth.

3.10 Procedure for Data Collection

Interviews were conducted in the school’s resource centre with 9 teachers where respondents could have their privacy and confidence to fully express themselves. Participants were given explanation of the practical relevance of the study before engaging them in a conversation, using focus group discussion (Erchul & Sheridan, 2014), after which individual in-depth interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted as professional conversations in English language in which the interviewer (researcher) followed the conversational threads opened up by the interviewer who guided the conversation toward producing a full account of the situation under investigation. An audio recorder, pen and a note book were used to collect data.

A maximum of twenty (20) minutes was spent on interrogating each respondent, but on average a participant engagement travelled for 16 minutes though the least time spent on a participant was 12 minutes. Having been permitted by the school administration for access to the school and teachers, teacher respondents were personally contacted by the researcher for their consent. In this regard, teachers were made to understand the intent and purpose of the study. Pre-designed consent forms which assured respondents of full anonymity and confidentiality of information, were then given to respondents to read through, understand and signed to indicate their consent before the conduct of the interview to source data. Studies (Antoniou et al., 2013) recognise the possibility of respondents digressing from the main themes, as the reverse side of the use of interview guide, but responses were regulated with well-tailored follow-up questions to keep them on track. Clues were also given respondents if they seem to digress from the questions being discussed, and prompts were used to give appropriate details and emphasis to be better informed following the suggestions of Erchul and Sheridan (2014). As the interview goes on, notes were jotted and full recording of the conversation were made to a recording machine without missing a word.

3.11 Data Analysis

The analysis followed the Braun and Clark (2019) thematic analysis steps which were on-going with data collection: Step 1: Familiarise yourself with the data- listen to the audio recordings, and read the transcripts three times to familiarize with the entire story. Step 2: Generate initial codes- researcher codes the interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set. Step 3: Discovering themes - an active process whereby the analysis of data becomes broader and the researcher develops themes and sub-themes from the codes. Step 4:

Reviewing Themes- themes were reviewed with the aim of assessing internal coherence in the themes and distinctions between the themes. This may allow the researcher to merge, separate data or even remove certain themes. Step 5: Defining and naming themes- researcher describes the themes in a way that captures the essence of the theme. Step 6: Writing the Analysis- researcher gives an analytical narrative of the collected data.

Themes were selected from the manuscript, summarized and coded using NVivo analytical software. The analysis was inductive to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies. This was done in line with the research questions which guided the achievement of the study objectives. The thematic analysis is a method used for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, T., Ultriainen & Kyngas, 2014).

3.12 Ethical Considerations

It is always important to observe ethical issues in the conduct of research study (Kebbi & Al-Hroub, 2018). Before the start of data collection, permission was sought from the Educational Directorate of the Asokore Mampong Municipal Directorate with an introductory letter from University of Education, Winneba explaining the main purpose and objectives of the study. Upon a written approval, consent was therefore sought from the head of selected school, and subsequently the teachers also explaining to them the intent and purpose of the study.

Respondents were engaged in a focus group discussion for data collection upon their personal approval, assuring them of full anonymity and confidentiality of information given. To that extent, no respondent was made to indicate personal

particulars such as name or contact numbers that could help trace information to any respondent and thus stressed that the study was for academic purpose only and they had the option to refuse participation at any point in time without any repercussions whatsoever.



CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The study was undertaken to investigate teachers' lived experiences in teaching students with intellectual disabilities. This chapter on the study report analyses and discusses data collected for the study. The analysis begins with the demographic characteristics of respondents and continues with teachers' lived experiences on training and professional development, teacher support systems, school context challenges and work-related stressors as the key study variables. The analysis and discussions are therefore presented in line with the study objectives.

4.1 Data Analysis

Except for the demographic background of respondents, data on the key variables of the study was analysed qualitatively using the thematic approach. The demographic data collected and analysed covered gender, age, level of study, specialty in special education and years of teaching experience. These were presented mainly as pie charts and bar charts. Data collected on gender of respondents has been presented as a pie chart in

Figure 4.1.

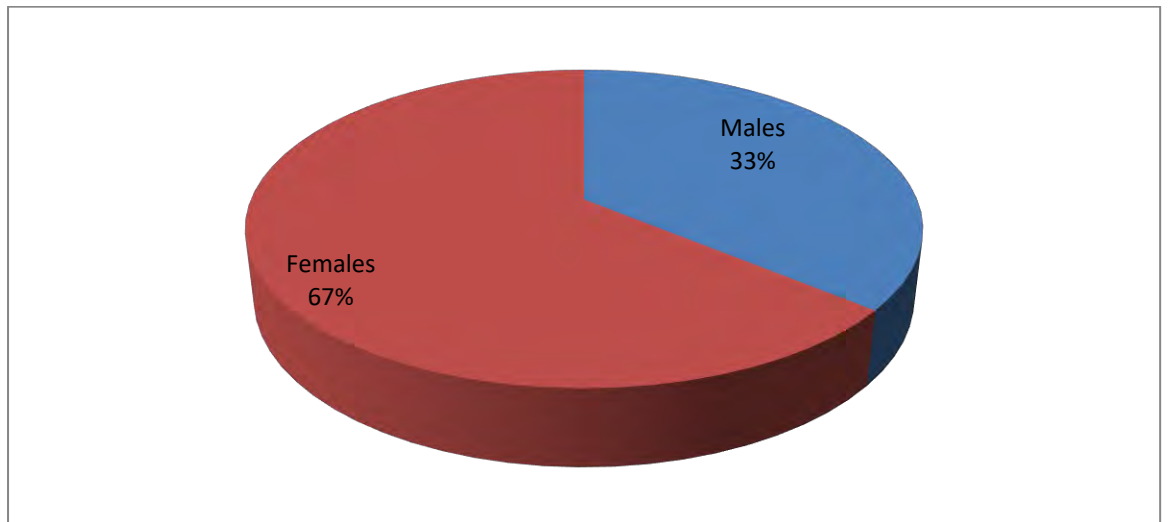


Figure 4.1 Gender of Respondents *Source: Study Data, 2022*

Obviously, the teaching staff of the selected special school is female dominated showing as many as 67% of females with only 33% who were found to be males, giving gender imbalance of 34%. Further on demographic data, the bar chart as shown in Figure 4.2 presented the age categories of respondents.

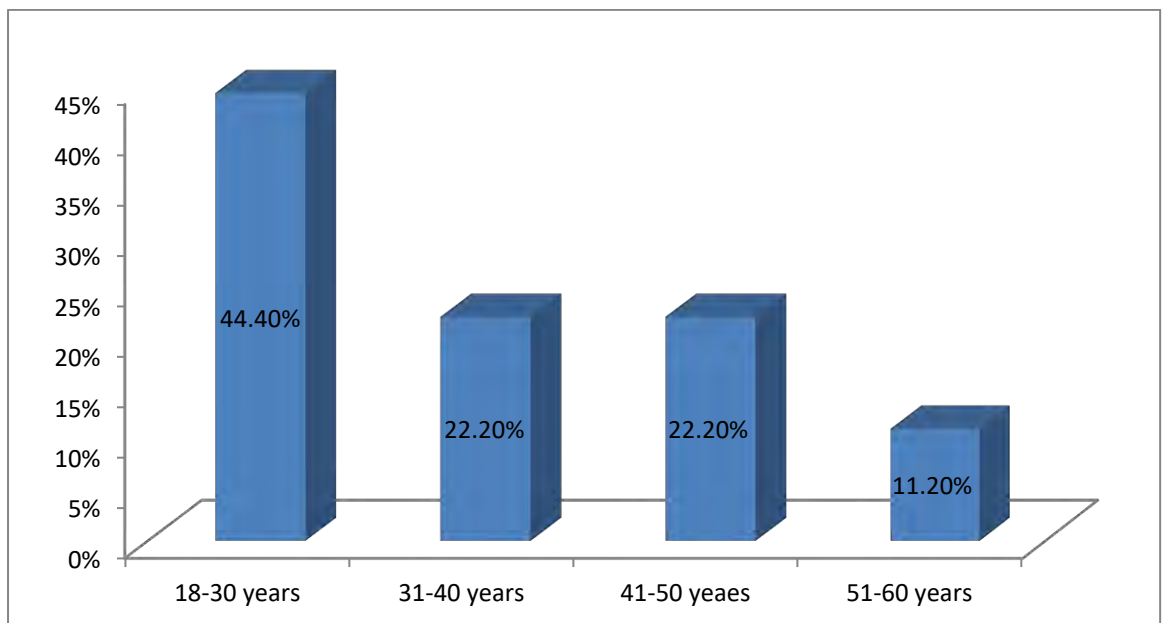


Figure 4.2 Ages categories of respondents *Source: Study Data, 2022*

The current study has reported variations in the ages of teachers at the special school. None of the teachers was found below eighteen years or above sixty years. But it can be seen from Figure 4.2 that the youth of age 18-40 years constituted the majority of approximately 66.6% of respondents whilst the aged group of more than 40 years was represented by 33.4%. Respondents were also interrogated on their educational attainments and had the data presented using another bar chart in Figure 4.3.

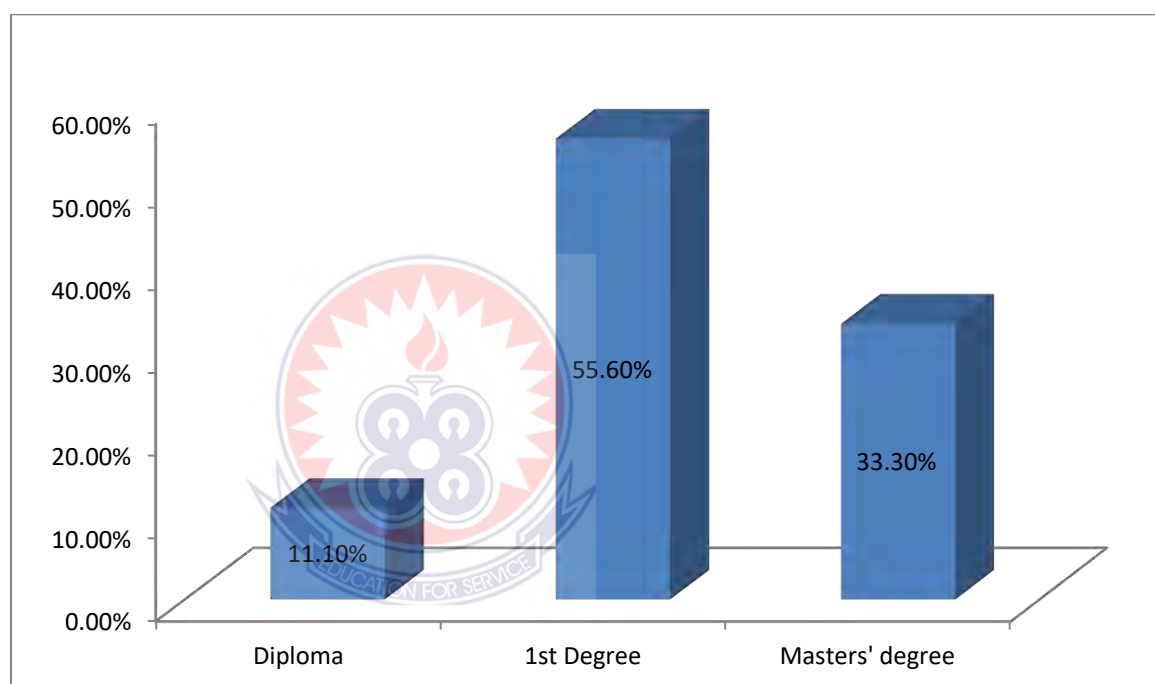


Figure 4.3 Respondents' level of study *Source: Study Data, 2022*

About 89% of the study respondents have had appreciable level of academic qualification to the extent that only a few of 11.1% do not have degree qualification. Overall, it can be stated that the special education teachers under study are expected to demonstrate high level of professionalism in their dealings with pupils with intellectual disability, holding their academic credentials in perspective. Respondents' specialty in special education training was also assessed and had the data on Figure 4.4 with a bar chart.

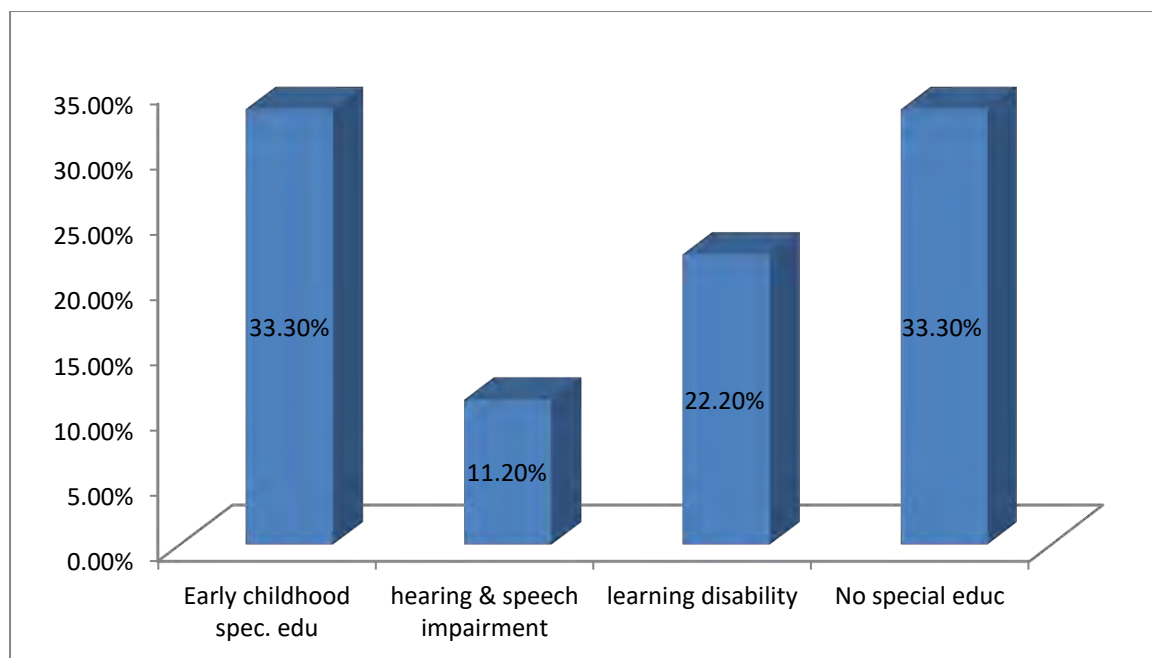


Figure 4.4 Respondents' programme of study *Source: Study Data, 2022*

Incredibly, it is observed from Figure 4.4 that approximately 33.3% of special education teachers confirmed having no pre-practice training in any special education specialty. About 76.7% of the respondents had been trained as special education teachers however, 33.3% of them had a general programme in early childhood special education without specific specialty. Teachers in specialty were recorded as 11.1% for hearing and speech impairment and 22.2% for learning disability. Last on respondents' demographics was teachers' years of teaching experience at the present school, which was represented using a bar chart shown in Figure 4.5.

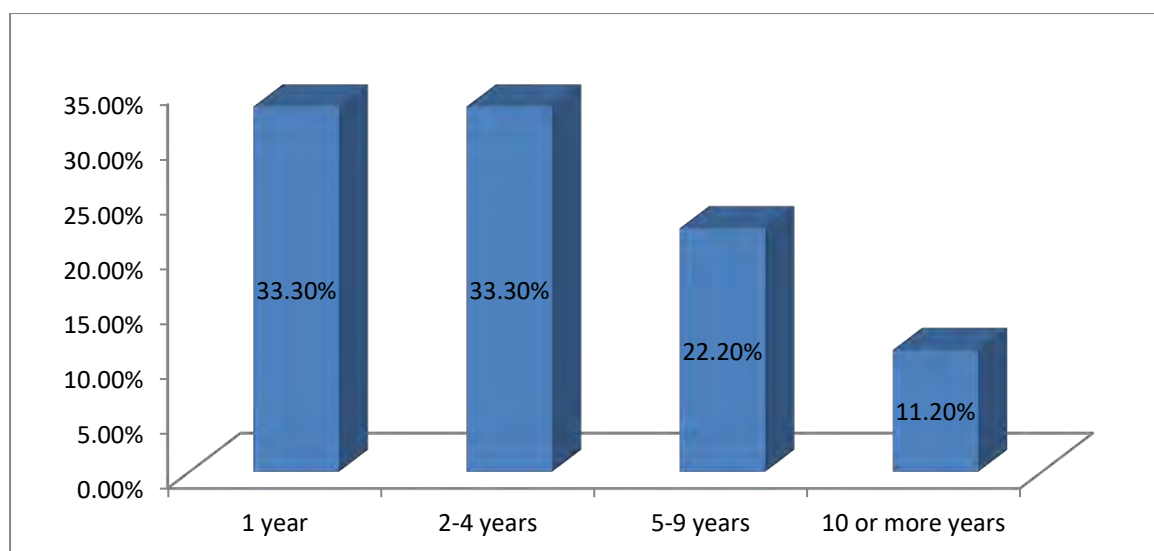


Figure 4.5 Respondents' years of teaching at present school *Source: Study Data, 2022*

A few of about 33% of special education teachers in this study have substantial number of teaching experience at the school. Nearly 67% of have worked at their present school for less than 5 years, which may be explained on high level of teacher attrition perhaps resulting from work-related stress and burnout.

Data obtained from teacher respondents interviewed was coded unto NVivo analytical software after transcription to generate the themes and sub-themes. Themes were analysed making reference to respondents coded as R1 referring to respondent 1, R2 referring to respondent 2, R3 referring to respondent 3 and so on.

4.1.1 Teachers' lived experiences on their professional training

Data was analysed on respondents' experiences regarding their training and professional development and resulted in two themes which addressed teachers' lived experiences in the categories and the extent of intellectual disabilities as well as teacher professional development relating to pre and in-service training.

Theme 1: Types and extent of intellectual disabilities

All the respondents disclosed their experiences in teaching diverse categories of intellectual impairment including physical, sensory, and emotional-behaviour. Respondents described pupils' levels of intellectual disabilities as mild, moderate, severe and profound disabilities and thus requiring personalized care and attention. Some respondents were quoted as saying that:

“I handle pupils with different forms of disabilities. In my class I have pupils with hearing impairment, speech challenges and deficits in adaptive behaviour (adjustment to everyday life). These impairments culminate into sensory, emotional, and behavioural maladjustments and their handling require great care and tact” (R1).yes, I have pupils with emotional-behaviours who display temper tantrums and hyperactivity sometimes and pose some challenges to me as a teacher and other pupils in the class. Such behaviours pose learning challenges as they have a little concentration most often (R3).

Theme 2: Teacher Professional Development

Most respondents raised diverse concerns about their in-service training models. Two respondents (R4 and R6) having no pre-service training in special education, and gave similar remarks that:

The work has not been that easy for me because I had not gone through any training in special education. It takes hard work and commitment to manage the pupils, especially as they pose behavioural challenges and low intellectual disabilities” (R4).

Another teacher said:

I need to understand the plight of mu pupils and manage them. I am lightly equipped by the in-service training sessions management has organized

for us. Though the workshops have not been that much, yet it has helped me so much (R 6).

One other respondent also disclosed that her level of knowledge and skill in special education does not match the demands on the ground. Explaining this,

A teacher reported that:

She graduated from the University with diploma in early childhood but the special education was a general course (R3).

A respondent indicated that:

For lack of skill and expertise in most specialties of learning disabilities, I expected that in-service training sessions would be very regular alas, we seldom have it” (R5).

Two respondents added that

We suggest different sessions of workshops must be run for specific categories of disabilities in addition to the general management of special education needs” (R5 and R2).

A non-professionally trained teacher interrogated and argued that the existence of pupils’ achievement constructively correlates to teacher’s certification training. A respondent remarked that:

I can confirm that special education acquired back at the university is good to have equipped me skills and expertise to handle my kids. However, I cannot dispute the relevance of on-going in-service training and workshops to sharpen the acquired skills with modern strategies and techniques.

Another respondent revealed that:

I can reiterate that adequate training positively relates to effective teaching” (R4).

4.1.2 Teacher support systems

Reference to the support systems teachers require to effectively handle pupils with intellectual disability, one respondent (R6) requested for provision for modern teaching and learning equipment and another (R3) required regular refresher workshops in specific disabilities like speech deficits and autism.

Theme 3: Learning support teams

The main theme that surfaced was learning support teams. Some respondents stated:

We seem to have district-based support teams established at the metropolitan education directorate but their input is not much felt. They do not visit us very often for us to discuss our problems with them. We virtually rely on school-based support team for which members are neither adequately trained nor resourced” (R3, R5 and R9).

Two respondents reported that

We need workable support teams. The district-based support team comes here once a while and we have no strong school-based support team (R2 and R4).

The respondents indicated that

I personally expect regular monitoring from the district team to sharpen us in terms of identifying learner categories and severity of disability as well as coordinating the curriculum” (R1 and R7).

4.1.3 Challenges teachers encounter in the schools context

Experiences with teaching strategies and pupil motivation explained some aspects of challenges teachers face. The assessment of school context challenges teachers were confronted with discovered three themes as presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Teachers’ challenges handling students with intellectual disabilities

Concept	Theme	Sub-themes
School context challenges	-Teaching strategies -teaching resources	-Pupils motivation to learning -inadequate level-appropriate learning materials and equipment
Aggressive challenges behaviours	-Evidence of aggressive	-behavioural approaches

Source: Field Data, 2022

Theme 4: Teaching strategies

Most respondents in this study (R1, R3, and R9) stated that learning difficulties and the status of pupils’ intellectual disabilities affect the learning process. Hence, the interest amongst learners with intellectual disabilities plays an important role as well. A teacher respondent was quoted as saying:

“In handling regular classes, it is very easy to initiate teaching strategies, but if you are teaching learners with intellectual disabilities, you have a limited teaching approach. Besides, it is very hard to motivate the learners with intellectual disabilities” (R1).

Another respondent added that:

I had a positive experience in teaching special education. Being a special education teacher, in terms of teaching strategies, you should not think of it but you should apply the applicable techniques if you are in the actual teaching situation. I have encountered problem about it and I have very limited teaching approaches in handling pupils with intellectual disability” (R3).

Theme 5: Teaching resources

Investigations as regards the challenges relating to teaching resources brought the discussion that teachers handling pupils with intellectual disabilities need various technologies such as tablets, smartphones, computers, and music players to help pupils with intellectual difficulties in learning. However, inadequacies with these technologies were commonly mentioned. Some teachers buttressed this revelation and reported that children with intellectual disabilities are children who always need assistance in learning, they easily forget what they have been taught, and so they need to be taught repeatedly. Explaining pupils leaning incapability, some teachers said:

When these pupils are asked to read or to count they cannot do it by themselves if a teacher does not help them, so they need to be assisted and encouraged in learning so that they can do it (R9 and R7).

Another teacher revealed that:

When reading he takes very long time, he spells the letters, even if I have helped him to spell the letters, and then ask him to re-read the sentence, he is not able to recall it again even though I have just mention the letters (R8).

Two teachers further reported that methods of teaching pupils with intellectual disability must go with adequate teaching resources which they are not getting enough. Teacher remarked that:

Our pupils have excellent abilities for visual association, so the use of media such as pictures and videos are necessary to effectively encourage learning.

These pupils need learning facilities to develop their skills and abilities in learning” (R7 & R5).

It was also gathered from teacher respondents that pupils with intellectual disabilities also do well in handicrafts. They are taught beads making and weaving but sometimes they lack materials to do that. Two teachers applauded school management for adequate provision of materials but a respondent had this to say:

We teach our pupils here beads making. We make these things we put on our wrist and necklace you see here. Some of the children are very good at these and weaving which I believe we must concentrate very well to equip them. Unfortunately, we are challenged by limited resources (R5, R8).

A teacher also said:

Let me plead with you to also add your voice to encourage school management to help us train our kids. I think they can equally do as their counterparts in the regular schools” (R6).

Theme 6: Aggressive behaviour of students with intellectual disabilities

Investigating prevalence of aggressive behaviours amongst students with intellectual disabilities special education teacher respondents admitted some experiences of aggressive behaviours amongst some learners. A respondent reported that:

A pupil in my class puts up some aggressive characters sometimes. This boy in my class (pointing at a particular boy) unusually shouts and attacks or hits other pupils in class, even sometimes myself. But you know it takes tact to deal with such pupils'' (R5).

Exploring further how aggressive behaviours can be managed to minimize the challenges associated with that, the teacher explained:

If you are not careful you will always beat or employ some sort punishments but I tell you, heavy reliance on punitive methods does not help. A rather positive behavioural support such as an exploration of the communicative aspects of the behaviour is ideal'' (R5).

Two teachers reported that:

A possible way of managing behavioural challenges of students with intellectual disabilities is teaching new skills which attempt to help the person learn new ways to engage in more meaningful and enjoyable activities, to be able to communicate their feelings more appropriately and to learn skills in tolerating life's stresses (R7 and R3).

4.1.4 Work-related stress and teachers' coping strategies

Students with special needs require extra attention, resources and time compared to regular students. Teachers' lived experiences of work-related stressors and strategies used to cope with stress were investigated and had three main themes as summarized in Table 4.3 for discussion.

Table 4.3 Teachers' stress and coping strategies

Concept	Theme	Sub-themes
Work-related stress	-Sources of stress	- excessive teacher workload -class size (staff-child ratio) -pupils behavioural problems - low job satisfaction -do and re-do activities using different teaching strategies
	-Effects of stress	-Burnout, psychological problems, depression, low performance, and motivation, absenteeism, or fatigue
	-Coping strategies	- internal locus of control, strong team approach, simple ABC stress management model (Activating event, Beliefs, Consequences)

Source: Field Data, 2022

Theme 7: Sources of stress

The study recorded pupils' behavioural problems and high staff-child ratio resulting in excessive stress. Some respondents were recorded to have said that:

ohhh I am not that much stressed but some amount of stress result from inadequate staff size vis-a-vis the behavioural characteristics of these special children. I think the staff-pupil ratio is high and that we need additional staff to further ensure improved work efficiency, taken cognisance of pupils' intellectual disabilities" (R 5).

Other respondents added that:

Actually, we need additional staff to lessen the work overload because our teaching-learning activities here involve do and re-do practices using different teaching strategies" (R2, R3, R6 and R7).

Theme 8: Effects of stress

Respondents reported of occasional burnouts, depression and tiredness. A respondent had this to say:

Sometimes I wake up in the morning so tired of the previous day's work such that you might feel lazy to report at work. Yesterday for instance, I nearly stopped coming because I was so much tired when I woke up. Yes oh, experiences of burnout, depression and situations of absenteeism are realities if you are not able to manage your way out” (R1).

Theme 9: Stress and strategies

When teachers were asked to share their coping strategies sense of self-efficacy, internal motivation and strong team approach were commonly cited. A respondent (R6) explained that:

Special education teachers generally and those handling pupils with intellectual disabilities in particular, must employ internal locus of control to be able to reduce the negative effects of stress.

Suggesting strategies to cope with stressors, R4 and R7 added that:

Stressors cannot be removed from the teaching in special school environment, and that is why teachers should learn strategies and techniques to manage them and maintain teaching and personal effectiveness” (R4).

A teacher reported that:

In fact, I am personally guided by the simple ABC stress management model.

It is good to understanding the main causes of stress and its likely consequences, you try and change the behaviour that leads to stress, and improve teacher-pupil interaction and social interaction with parents and other school colleagues to manage the likelihood of job stressors” (R8).

4.2 Discussion

This section of the study discusses results of data gathered from special education teacher respondents in line with the study objectives and situates findings in the perspectives of prior empirical evidence from other researchers. In this direction, findings known to be at variance or in consonance with previous findings are compared.

4.2.1 Teachers pre-service training and professional development

Investigating teachers' lived experiences in the categories of pupils' intellectual disabilities, the extent of disabilities and teacher professional development relating to pre-service training and professional development, diverse categories of intellectual impairment including physical, sensory, and emotional-behaviour were found. These impairments, according to Capri (2016), affect pupils learning capabilities and subject them to adaptive behaviour deficits. Severity of disabilities ranged from mild, moderate, to severe and profound disabilities and thus required personalized care and attention, as suggested in Johnstone (2017).

Recognizing the essence of educational change as consisting of learning new ways of thinking and doing, new skills, knowledge, and attitude respondents sided with Hinds et al. (2015) and raised diverse concerns about their pre-service as well as in-service training models. It is clear in this study that some teachers received little or no formal training in special education back at their training institutions and felt not adequately prepared to teach pupils with intellectual disabilities. Conversely however, some teacher respondents who had special education training disagreed with the earlier assertion of training adequacy and disagreed that they were inadequately trained back at their pre-service training institutions to meet the challenges of the job.

The assertion that teachers have the propensity to use the newly learned skills if well-mentored and properly developed in in-service training (Sweigart & Collins, 2017), looks more reflective in this study. This finding does not differ much from the findings in Hinds et al. (2015) in which regular refresher workshops in specific disabilities like speech deficits and behavioural disorders were recommended. Apparently, this study revealed that workshops run for teachers were irregular and inadequate in consonance with Haegele and Park's (2016) observation. This evaluation of professional development practices to prepare special education teachers to implement evidence-based practice, reported consistent findings congruence with Brunsting et al. (2015) and Addison and Yankyera (2015). Special education teachers required regular refresher workshops in specific disabilities like speech deficits and autism as postulated in Cau, Nita, Indah, Gusti, Wuriani (2020).

Teachers handling pupils with intellectual disabilities need various technologies such as tablets, smartphones, computers, and music players to help pupils learning but inadequacies with these technologies were commonly mentioned. Most teachers buttressed this revelation and sided with Flanagan et al. (2013) that pupils with intellectual disabilities always need assistance in learning as they easily forget what they have been taught, hence interactive learning technologies enhance their learning.

4.2.2 Teacher support systems required

It was noted from study respondents that teachers expect district-based support team to help coordinating school curriculum, and guide teachers handle acute behaviour maladjustment among special pupils. Though at variance with the findings in Hinds et al. (2015), the current observation is similar to that of Addison and Yankyera (2015) where learning support teams were not functioning adequately.

Neither the school-based support team is fully resourced nor do the district-based support team pay regular visit to monitor teachers' activities. Pupils with intellectual disability generally have special learning problems as a result, having limitations in academic ability will affect their ability to adapt to the academic environment, as reported in Addison and Yankyera (2015). Meanwhile, teacher respondents indicate that level-appropriate teaching resources in the classroom, though very important, yet are limited for pupils with intellectual disabilities so that the lessons given by the teacher can be accepted and understood by the pupils.

4.2.3 Challenges teachers encounter in the schools context

Learners' motivation by teachers is mostly regarded as a central condition for successful learning (Hinds et al., 2015), but found to be a challenge among teachers in this study. In the context of teaching pupils with intellectual disabilities, teachers in this study see pupils' motivation as a positive activating orientation in teaching-learning situation (Johnstone, 2017) however, teachers reported their limited teaching approach to motivate Students with intellectual disability. Most respondents in this study stated that learning difficulties and the status of pupils' intellectual disabilities affect the learning process.

Teachers also face challenging moments of managing aggressive behaviours when sometimes resort to beating up such pupils, similar to the report found in Addison & Yankyera (2015). Studies have shown that the level of aggression among pupils with intellectual disability is high (Brunsting, Sreckovic & Lane, 2014; Edyburn, 2011), and found to cause both physical and psychological harm to teachers and sometimes a reason for teacher absenteeism or increasing rate of attrition.

4.2.4 Work-related stress and teachers' coping strategies

The recent economic meltdown has affected Ghana negatively in almost all aspects thus, one would have expected teachers to cite unrewarding salary that hardly meets their basic needs as posing some amount of stress on teachers as reported in Addison and Yankyera (2015). However, first to mention was high pupil-teacher ratio emanating from large class sizes reflects the finding in Brunsting, Sreckovic & Lane (2014) in which the stress of excessive teacher workload manifested in teacher lateness and absenteeism at school. The need for additional teachers was emphasized. The overload resulting from inadequate staff has consequential stress on teachers who reported of occasional burnouts, depression and tiredness with few cases of absenteeism, just as Haegele and Park (2016) recorded.

Research suggests that special education teachers exhibit higher levels of stress than mainstream education teachers (Hinds et al., 2015), as pupils with special needs require extra attention, resources and time compared to regular students. This study have noticed that job stressors sometimes lead to internal conflicts that differ drastically from one person to another (Addison & Yankyera, 2015; Raty, Kontu & Pirttimaa, 2016), and that teachers experiencing constant work stress develop unusual tiredness, headache, and other health problems as noticed in Nalbant et al. (2013). The observations in this study is not that much different from Haegele and Park (2016), in which special education teacher burnout and high teacher attrition.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The study sought to investigate teachers' lived experiences in teaching students with intellectual disabilities, concentrating on special education teachers' lived experiences on training and professional development, teacher support systems, school context challenges and work-related stressors. To gather the required data, nine (9) respondents were interviewed for the purpose of data collection. Female respondents dominated and outnumbered their male counterparts by a margin of 34%, and 66.6% of them have taught at the present school for less than five years of whom 66.6% were the youth of 40 years or less. All the teacher respondents (100%) had formal education to the tertiary level with a minimum of diploma qualification and approximately 67% had been trained as special education teachers. Apparently, no particular specialty in special education dominates the study but it confirms Sweigart and Collins' (2017) study that some teachers in special schools have not been professionally trained as special education teachers.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The summary of key findings from the study was made in line with the research questions that reflect the study objectives investigating special education teachers' lived experiences on their training and professional development, support systems require to enhance their work performance, school context challenges and work-related stressors.

What are teachers lived experiences regarding their professional training in teaching students with intellectual disabilities?

The study found that some of the teachers in the special school studied have no professional certificate in special education and thus lack relevant skills and expertise to adequately handle students with intellectual disabilities. Most of the special school teachers were professionally trained for special education but equally admit the need for adequate in-service training for all teachers.

The study further established that pre-service training teachers acquired back at University is adequate for them to handle students with intellectual disabilities at the special school however, most of the teachers emphasized the importance of in-service training/workshops to further sharpen their skills and expertise of use of modern technological devices.

What are teachers lived experiences regarding support systems needed to enhance the teaching and learning of students with intellectual disabilities?

There was a common observation that teachers required the provision of modern teaching and learning equipment which were not in adequate supply, and learning support teams to give additional coaching for teachers. The study established virtual existence of district and school-based support teams but looked dysfunctional.

Neither the school-based support team is fully resourced nor do the district-based support team pay regular visit to monitor teachers' activities. It was noted from study respondents that they expect district-based support team to help coordinating school curriculum and guide teachers handle acute behaviour maladjustment among special pupils.

What challenges do teachers face in teaching students with intellectual disabilities?

Most teachers expressed challenges they encounter with teaching strategies that motivate pupils with intellectual disability. The challenge was related to limited learning technologies such as tablets, smartphones, computers, and music players to help students with intellectual difficulties in learning. Level-appropriate teaching resources in the classroom such as models and pictures were in short supply.

Some aggressive behaviours were found among a few pupils with intellectual disability but cases of physical harm caused to other pupils were not established. Teachers expressed experiences of challenging moments managing aggressive behaviours when sometimes resort to beating up such pupils.

How do teachers mitigate the challenges they encounter as they teach students with intellectual disabilities?

Most teachers reported high pupil-teacher ratio as a major stressor. The study found that the class sizes do not merit the number of teachers managing them looking at pupils' nature of disability and behaviours, resulting in excessive teacher workload. The need for additional teachers was emphasized.

The overload resulting from inadequate staff has consequential stress on teachers who reported of occasional burnouts, depression and tiredness with few cases of absenteeism. Teachers disclosed a way of coping with job stress as to understand the main causes of stress and its likely consequences so they try and change the behaviour that leads to stress.

5.2 Conclusion

Following from the findings herein, the following conclusions were made:

1. The special school teachers comprise both trained professional and untrained special education teachers but they all require regular in-service workshops to heighten their skills and expertise to adequately handle students with intellectual disabilities
2. Teachers in the special school studied require learning support in the provision of modern teaching and learning equipment. The school-based support team seems to exist by name and the district-based support teams do not regularly monitor the activities of the teachers to render coaching services to them.
3. The school faces challenges with limited learning technologies such as tablets, smartphones, computers, and music players to help students with intellectual difficulties in learning.
4. Teachers encounter challenging moments with pupils who exhibit aggressive behavioural maladjustment and so end up beating them sometimes.
5. Work-related stressor teachers encounter mainly have to do with work overload, emanating from inadequate staffing with its consequential teacher burnouts, depression and tiredness with few cases of absenteeism.

5.3 Recommendation

Based on the study findings and the conclusion thereon, it is recommended for consideration by stakeholders as follows:

Municipal Education Directorate

The Municipal Directorate appoints qualified professionally trained teachers in special education to teach in special schools, taking cognisance of the diverse

disabilities of pupils that affect their intellectual capabilities. It is further recommended that the district directorate of education must see to the conduct of regular in-service training and workshops for teachers. These workshops must be tailored to suit the skill deficits of teachers in areas of access to modern technologies and use of devices to teach pupils with intellectual disability.

The district directorate of education must also ensure that district-based support team are resourced to have workable monitoring schedules propel regular motoring of schools. The support teams must, among other things, be made to coordinating school curriculum and guide teachers handle acute behaviour maladjustment among special pupils.

Special school teachers

Teachers' attitude towards aggressive behavioural challenges of pupils must reflect high level of professionalism and avoid punitive approaches such as beating up pupils with intellectual disability. Teachers must learn advanced strategies to cope with job stressors to minimize culminating effects of burnouts, depression and resultant absenteeism. It is good teachers coping with stress by understanding the main causes of stress and its likely consequences so they try and change the behaviour that leads to stress.

School management

Management of the special school must ensure support systems are enhanced. Teacher and learner support system must include the provision of modern teaching and learning equipment and establishment of well-resourced school-based support team. Given the limited intellectual abilities of students with intellectual disabilities, provision of learning technologies such as tablets, smartphones, computers, and music

players to help students with intellectual difficulties in learning must form part of management's priority areas. Management must heed to teachers requisition for level-appropriate teaching resources in the classroom such as models and pictures.

5.4 Suggestion for further Study

It is suggested for a further study to investigate teachers' lived experiences in teaching students with intellectual disabilities in inclusive schools within Atwima Nwabiagya District.



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APPENDIIX

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

I am **Sarah Gyapong**, a student of the University of Education, Winneba conducting research in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of **Master of Philosophy in Special Education**. You are hereby requested to respond to these questions to help me undertake a study *“teachers’ lived experiences in teaching students with intellectual disabilities in Garden City Special School”*. Please, be assured that your identity is not required here and any information you provide will be held confidential as the study is only for academic purposes. Please, answer the questions to the best of your knowledge, understanding and experience. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions.

Section A: Demographic Data

1. Gender Male Female
2. Age group (in years)
17 – 24 25 – 30 31 – 34 35 – 40 41 and above [
]
3. Level of study: Degree Diploma Certificate
4. Specialty in special education training:
.....
5. Years of teaching experience: 1-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-
20years 21+years

Section B: Interview Guide

Teacher training and Professional Development

1. May I know some disabilities your pupils have and the degree of such disabilities?
2. Can you comment on the pre-service training you acquired before taking up the professional duty of teaching Students with intellectual disability?
3. How adequate has been the in-service professional development programs to enhance effectively teaching Students with intellectual disability?

Teacher Support System

4. What teacher support systems do you required to improve on your performance dealing with students with intellectual disabilities?

School context Challenges

5. What teaching resource challenges can you share with me?
6. What challenges do you experience with Students with intellectual disability' limited ability for self-maintenance?
7. Kindly share your experiences with me if aggression from people with intellectual disability (Students with intellectual disability) poses some challenges in the course of your work.
8. What other challenges do you face teaching Students with intellectual disability?
9. What strategies do you use in teaching Students with intellectual disability in the face of challenges you experience?

Teacher Job Stressors

10. Please share with me the main sources of stress you encounter while educating Students with intellectual disability.
11. What strategies do you adopt to reduce the level of stress you encounter?
12. How does the level of stress you encounter affect your personal life and work output?

Thanks for your participation

