

**ORDINARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS
LEARNERS WITH MENTAL RETARDATION IN ORDINARY
BASIC SCHOOLS WITH SPECIAL UNITS.**

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By

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FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE MASTER
OF EDUCATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION.



May 2010

Declaration

I, Dearance Kasokolo Lombe, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is a result of my own individual effort and that all the work from other researchers have been acknowledged. I further certify that this dissertation has not been submitted for a degree at this or another university.

Signature:.....*Lombe*.....

Date:.....*MAY 2010*.....

0280018

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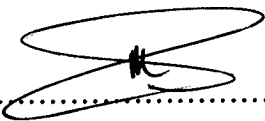
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Approval

The University of Zambia approves this dissertation of Dearance Kasokolo Lombe as partial fulfilling of the requirements for the award of Masters Degree in Special Education.

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Date: 12/07/2010

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Dedication

To my wife Mary and children for being cooperative and supportive when I was absent from home during my two years of study at the University of Zambia.

Acknowledgement

My sincere appreciation is due to the Ministry of Education Officials for having accorded me this chance of studying at the University of Zambia for Master of Education degree in the field of Special Education.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. J. T. Phiri who coordinated my work so well and made it possible for me to complete my dissertation on time.

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Abstract

The study investigated the attitudes of ordinary basic school teachers and head teachers towards learners with mental retardation in ordinary basic schools which have special units in the Northern Province. The objectives of the study were to find out the knowledge ordinary basic school teachers had on learners with mental retardation; to find out the teachers' and head teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation; to find out whether there were differences based on gender in teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation; and to find out whether teachers' attitudes changed with years of teaching experience.

A case study was used in five schools on 100 teachers and three head teachers who were purposively selected. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the teachers while an interview schedule was used for head teachers.

The results showed that teachers and head teachers had positive attitudes towards learners with mental retardation and welcomed the integration into their schools / classrooms. The results further showed that teachers had adequate knowledge on mental retardation and that both male and female teachers had positive attitudes although male teachers showed more positive attitudes than females and that the less the years of teaching experience the more the teachers showed positive attitudes towards learners with mental retardation.

The study recommended that the integration of learners with mental retardation should continue, but legislation should be done to give it legal backing. Further, the study recommended that for the learners with mental retardation to benefit further, they should be placed in ordinary classes rather than in special units. At the same time, support in terms of trained teachers, teaching / learning materials should be made available.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives background information about learners with mental retardation found in ordinary basic schools. It further presents the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study and definition of terms used in the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

In Zambia, the education system is divided into the following structures:

basic schools which offer grades 1-9; high schools which offer grades 10 - 12; and the tertiary sector which offers education to school leavers who have completed grade 9 or 12. Learners with mental retardation are placed in either special units attached to ordinary basic schools or in ordinary classes. These are learners with significant intellectual problems or adaptive behaviour. The integration of learners with mental retardation in ordinary schools is as a result of the government's policy which states that to the greatest extent possible, learners with special needs will be integrated in ordinary basic schools where they will be provided with the necessary facilities (MOE, 1996). As a result of this policy, there are seventy-seven special units in the country. The integration of learners with mental retardation in Northern Province has been implemented in five districts. These are therefore five units in five basic schools.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Learners with mental retardation are integrated in ordinary schools. The integration of the learners has a major implication for teachers who are not trained or who have little knowledge about teaching learners with mental retardation. The teachers are expected to contribute to the education of learners with mental retardation as well. Their professional attitudes may facilitate or constrain the implementation of integrating learners with mental retardation into ordinary schools. There is need therefore, to find out the teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate ordinary basic school teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation in ordinary basic school with special units. Teachers' positive attitudes and realistic perceptions lead to greater interaction and enhance social and emotional development of learners with mental retardation and the emergency of more acceptable attitudes.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The following specific objectives guided the study:

- i.** To find out the knowledge ordinary basic school teachers had on learners with mental retardation.
- ii.** To find out the attitudes of ordinary basic school teachers and head teachers towards the integration of learners with mental retardation.
- iii.** To find out whether there were differences based on gender in basic school teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation.

- iv. To find out whether ordinary basic school teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation changed with years of teaching experience.

1.5 Research Questions

In this study, the following questions guided the study:

- i. How much knowledge do ordinary basic school teachers have about learners with mental retardation?
- ii. What attitudes do basic school teachers and head teachers have towards integration of learners with mental retardation?
- iii. What are the differences between male and female ordinary basic school teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation?
- iv. Do ordinary basic school teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation change with years of teaching experience?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will help the Ministry of Education to evaluate the integration policy of learners with mental retardation because one major goal is to promote acceptable and realistic attitudes in teachers. In a similar manner, the results of this study will help school administrators and teachers to have positive attitudes towards learners with mental retardation. The study will help to improve teacher's perceptions towards learners with mental retardation in schools.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

There are seventy seven schools hosting learners with mental retardation in Northern Province. The time factor, and distances involved, if one were to visit all of them, would have made the cost of the study prohibitive. Therefore, only three ordinary basic schools in Northern Province were considered.

1.8 Definitions of Terms of the Study

The following terms were used in this study:

Attitudes: Are a combination of feelings and beliefs by either mainstream learners or teachers which result in a predisposition to respond either favourably or unfavourably towards special unit learners.

Integration: Is the placement of learners with special needs in ordinary schools in order to increase interaction with their mainstream peers.

Mental retardation: This refers to individuals with significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour. Mental retardation is also referred to as intellectual disability.

Ordinary basic school: This refers to any school having grades 1–9 that do not have a specialist role in relation to learners with special needs.

Ordinary School Teachers: This refers teachers who are not trained to teach learners with mental retardation.

Special unit: Is used to describe a class for learners with a categorised disability on the premises of an ordinary basic school.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores relevant literature on teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation. The literature will be preserved according to the four objectives which were:

1. To find out the knowledge ordinary basic school teachers had on learners with mental retardation;
2. To find out the teacher's and head teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation;
3. To find out whether there were, differences based on gender in teachers attitudes towards learners with mental retardation; and
4. To find out whether teachers' attitudes changed with years of teaching experience.

2.1 Teachers' Knowledge of Learners with Mental Retardation

One of the factors which had attracted teachers' considerable attention is the knowledge about learners with mental retardation, which is acquired by teachers during pre and in-service training. Segel and Jausource (1994), considered in-service training to be an effective way of improving teachers' attitudes. This view was supported by findings of a study by Marchesi (1998), which emphasised the need for the professional training of teachers, as this was critical in the implementation of a successful integration programme.

Lambe (2007) highlighted the fact that the lack of a coherent training plan to support teachers in changing attitudes, as expert educators, had seriously affected learners with mental retardation in ordinary schools. Training was also identified as paramount. Mandyata (2002) felt that the reason why teachers appeared to have negative attitudes was due to lack of training in special education and as such, having learners with mental retardation in ordinary schools was seen as an unnecessary burden.

Some of the studies conducted in the 1980s appeared to indicate that many ordinary teachers did not know their role. This may explain the teachers' negative attitudes towards learners with mental retardation. One study by Ammer (1984) examined the teachers' level of participation and a preferred degree of participation in the special education planning, programming and placement process. The study revealed that teachers had no knowledge about learners with mental retardation found in their classes. Nearly all teachers surveyed indicated that they played almost no specific role in the learning of learners with mental retardation in their classes. One role which the teachers mentioned was individualising of learning materials for learners with mental retardation.

In the same study, Ammer (1982) surveyed a number of ordinary teachers regarding their knowledge about educating learners with mental retardation in the regular classrooms. The results indicated that teachers felt a lack of expertise in planning for individual differences as related to curriculum and instructions. They also reported that they were confused as to their role and

responsibilities towards learners with mental retardation in their classrooms.

Another factor which was identified as important in improving teachers' negative attitudes was teachers' empowerment to initiate changes in their lessons and teaching plans. For teachers to do this, Marchsi, (1998) found that it was necessary that they should have opportunities to visit settings where integration was practiced. In addition, factors external to the school that affect the working conditions of teachers, such as financial rewards, status in the society and professional expectations, had also been found to influence the teachers motivation and dedication. The study concluded that if these conditions could be improved, they were likely to boost the attitudes of teachers.

Barryman and Neal (1980) observed that attitudes of teachers on integration of learners with mental retardation in ordinary schools can only be said to be positively changed if they had the knowledge, and ability to use time available to offer individual educational attention to learners with mental retardation in ordinary classrooms. Such help partly depended on the confidence of a teacher to meet the educational needs of learners with mental retardation. The study concluded that teachers without confidence felt threatened by the presence of learners with mental retardation in ordinary classrooms. In the same study, Barryman and Neal (1980) developed a scale to elicit teachers' confidence on the two types of service delivery models, that is the pull out model referring to separate education and the in class model indicating integration. The scale was administered on a sample of 382 teachers. The

results showed that both special and ordinary teachers favoured a pull out model. In a related study, Avissar (2000) studied teachers' confidence on the integration of learners with mental retardation in ordinary classrooms in Israel. The study involved fifty ordinary teachers. The study noted that though integration was practiced in schools in Israel, not all teachers were actively involved in it. Lack of confidence led to teachers identifying several difficulties and issues that, to a large extent influenced acceptance of learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes. The difficulties included lack of a workable policy, legislation and inadequate professional support to effectively educate learners with mental retardation. The study reports that due to lack of confidence, teachers favoured a model which educated learners with mental retardation separately to that which tended to bring them into ordinary classes. Teachers felt that they did not have enough resources and time to competently teach such learners in ordinary classes. They therefore, supported a separate model of education for learners with mental retardation.

The separate model of education is supported by a study done by Kalabula (1991) which investigated the attitudes of secondary school teachers in Zambia regarding the integration of visually impaired pupils in ordinary secondary schools. The study observed that teachers had many obstacles to overcome in an integrated classroom. The study reports that teachers confirmed that they lacked training and confidence in teaching learners with mental retardation in their classrooms. They concerted that learners with special educational needs should be taught separately, unless teachers in ordinary schools were adequately prepared for

integration. It must be noted however, that the study by Kalabula (1991) focused on the attitudes of secondary school teachers and may not necessarily reflect those of basic school teachers. Nevertheless, the study showed that teachers often tended to show positive commitment after having gained mastery of the professional expertise needed to implement integration programmes. To gain this mastery, a field based approach to the training of teachers on integration would be recommended. Musonda (1995) observed that the field based approach tended to increase the possibility of changing ordinary teachers' attitudes. Furthermore, it had the advantage of reaching many teachers. In addition, teachers were helped to quickly build confidence in teaching instructions. School based training programmes, therefore, provided teachers with the opportunity of identifying their own training needs, plan and implement programmes.

Leyser, Kepperman and Keller (1994) also confirmed that cultural influences such as religion and over crowding in schools was likely to affect teachers' attitudes towards integration of learners with mental retardation. However, more positive attitudes towards learners with mental retardation were held by teachers who had more training in special education. A common finding in this study on attitudes was that teachers reported a change in their attitudes after some experience with learners with mental retardation. They described their initial experience as primarily negative. Teachers' attitudes are therefore, an important aspect of integration.

2.2.1 Teachers' Attitudes Towards Learners with Mental Retardation

The positive attitudes of classroom teachers have consistently been recognised as key to the success of teaching learners with mental retardation. Research has revealed that positive attitudes were some of the main predictors of the successful implementation of integration practices in the classroom (Avramidis et. Al., 2000). Studies of trainee teachers had tended to indicate more willingness among trainee teachers to accept learners with mental retardation than more experienced teachers (Florin et. al, 1995). Additionally, educational background was cited as being an important influencing factor of teachers' attitudes. Studies of both pre-service and in-service teachers' attitudes on integration of learners with mental retardation in ordinary schools have also shown that attitudes were affected by the quality of preparation received by teachers (Lambe, 2007). This indicated that improving and increasing training provision at the pre-service phase of teacher education would be the most effective method of promoting better attitudes to educating learners with mental retardation in ordinary schools.

It was also realised that if student teachers complete their pre-service education without having developed positive attitudes on learners with mental retardation, that would be very difficult to change when they graduate. This may have a negative effect on learners with mental retardation. Beare (1985), Tait and Purdie (2000), found that a positive attitude was seen in student teachers early in their initial training. The provision at pre-service through a structured approach towards training based practice would be the best point to nurture this attitude. While much research was focused on the views of practicing teachers, it is the pre-service

period that offers significant potential to influence concentration on this phase of teacher education which might in fact provide the best means to create a new generation of teachers who will ensure the successful implementation of policies and practices of learners with mental retardation.

Several studies have been done on teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation and the results vary. The majority of the teachers surveyed had negative attitudes about learners with mental retardation. Leyser Kapperman and Keller (1994) carried out a cross-cultural study of teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes in the United States, Germany, Israel, Ghana, Taiwan and Philippines. Their findings showed that there were differences in attitudes by teachers in those countries. Teachers in the United States of America (USA) and Germany for example, had positive attitudes. Teachers' attitudes were significantly not positive in Ghana, Philippines, Israel and Taiwan. The assumption could be due to lack of training to acquire the competency in handling learners with mental retardation, lack of teaching experience and experience with learners with mental retardation could be the other reason.

The research study which was conducted by Scugg and Mastropieri (1996) showed in their meta-analysis that twenty-eight survey reports from 1958 up until 1995, reported that two thirds of the respondents agreed with the general idea of integration, which was a little more than half of teachers who expressed willingness to teach learners with mental retardation in their classrooms. Another study by Vaughn, et al (1996), observed

special teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation using focused group interviews. They found that the biggest number of teachers, who were currently taking part in the programmes, had negative attitudes about learners with mental retardation. The teachers identified several factors that would affect the success of learners with mental retardation such as size of the class, inadequate resources and lack of adequate training.

Additionally, it was found that most researchers in the integration of learners with mental retardation reported negative initial attitudes on the part of teachers generally toward having learners with mental retardation in their classes especially those teachers who had formerly been in special schools but now are in ordinary classes (Hegarty, Pocklington and Lucas, 1986).

The research done by Dean (1996) revealed that 90 per cent of teachers who actually had learners with mental retardation in their ordinary schools felt that the placements were appropriate. The study also found that teachers tended to be over protective and unready to treat these learners with mental retardation like they did with their peers. Most teachers were prepared to have learners with mental retardation in their classes, but were not enthusiastic about them. Teachers did not always take teaching learners with mental retardation seriously. Teachers reacted least favourably to learners with severe mental retardation. Some teachers reported not being easy with learners with mental retardation in one-to-one and social situations. However, there was evidence that contact changed attitudes. Furthermore, the study found that successful teachers of learners with mental retardation somehow manage to

convey to those learners their belief in them and their ability to achieve. This showed that teachers' expectation was a very important part of this work. Bennett et. al., (1994) found that teachers generally underestimated learners with mental retardation more often than they over estimated them. It was also found by Chaikin et. al., (1974) that teachers who expected a superior performance from learners with mental retardation used more positive attitudes. They smile more, leaned toward the learners more used eye contact more, and nodded in response to the learner to a greater extent than they did with learners of whom they expected less. This entails that there was a considerable danger that learners with mental retardation and their teachers would be affected by the label special needs, whether these were the result of learning difficulty or exceptional ability and would perform accordingly.

A study by Lambe (2007) established that the nature and the severity of the disabilities influenced the attitudes of teachers. Florin (1995) found that acceptance of learners with mental retardation in ordinary schools was lower for learners with a physical disability. This seemed to be a trend also in other studies such as Alkhatteeb (2003). On the other hand, in the Clough and Lindsay (1991) study, many teachers with learners with mental retardation indicated that they were the most difficult to meet, followed by learners with visual impairments. They attributed the low ranking of learners with sensory and physical impairments to the relatively infrequent existence of learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes at that time. Nevertheless, teachers' attitudes appear to vary with their perceptions of the

specific disability and additionally, the demands that learners' instructional and management needs exert on them.

Hegarty, Pocklington and Lucas (1986) indicated that teachers' attitudes were generally unfavourable towards learners with mental retardation in ordinary schools. Many teachers and other professionals were found to perceive learners with mental retardation in a negative light. The majority of teachers in this review affirmed that most emotionally disturbed and educable learners with mental retardation should not be placed in ordinary classes. Furthermore, teachers were asked to evaluate learners along various dimensions. They had rated learners with mental retardation lower than others on all factors. Besides, teachers were asked to complete an interpersonal checklist for hypothetical learners with mental retardation and learners without mental retardation. The study elicited distinct stereotype images from all teacher groups, those with experience in teaching learners with mental retardation as well as teachers without experience. The study reported that fifty per cent of ordinary teachers were opposed to placing learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes. It also observed that initial reactions were frequently negative and were only gradually replaced by more positive ones later. Hesitance, over protectiveness, fear and downright hostility was by no means uncommon. Teachers expressed doubts about feasibility of teaching or supervising learners with mental retardation. There was a lot of uncertainty about how best to proceed and anxiety as to whether learners' needs were being met. Some teachers admitted having felt uncomfortable in the presence of learners with mental retardation. The tendency towards other protective attitudes was

the subject of particular comment by outside professionals and was readily apparent in a number of cases. Teachers were reluctant to treat learners with mental retardation like they did to their peers and make comparable demands on them.

It was also learnt from the study that most staff were prepared to have learners with mental retardation in their classes or teaching groups, though without any great enthusiasm for the most part. A few teachers welcomed learners with mental retardation for the professional challenge which they posed and eagerly sought ways of presenting the subject matter so that it was relevant and meaningful to them. There was some reluctance of their outright refusal to teach learners with mental retardation. In one school, for example, attitudes of ordinary school teachers to the special centre were generally poor and many would refuse if asked to have learners with mental retardation in their classes. This was tied to a host of complicated factors at local level and was not a simple refusal on their part to teach learners with mental retardation.

In a study by Jordan, Wilson and Silverman (1991), it was reported that while teachers generally accepted the presence of learners with mental retardation in their classes, this did not mean that they always took them seriously for teaching purposes. The study also observed the perceptions of teachers' roles in providing educational services to learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes. The study used semi-structured interviews involving teachers with learners with mental retardation. The study found that teachers believed that the children's learning in integrated classes was partly constrained by lack of teacher-learner interaction. The

significance of the study was that it gave teachers the primary role of adjusting their interactive behaviour for the purpose of accommodating different needs of learners in their integrated classrooms.

2.2.2 Head Teachers' Attitudes towards Learners with Mental Retardation

The Mandyata (2007) study findings show that as a matter of policy, head teachers tend to restrict the number of learners with mental retardation enrolled in their schools for integration in ordinary classes. The head teachers considered it vital not only to restrict the number of learners with mental retardation but to consider the kind of demand the learners made on the school system in terms of support and equipment. However, the study doesn't indicate how they manage this.

Stainback and Stainback (1984) conducted a survey on the attitudes of head teachers toward integration of learners with mental retardation in ordinary schools and the support services being provided. The results indicated that head teachers were positive only about integration of learners with mental retardation who demanded neither extra competency nor extra curricular duties from teachers. For example, the head teachers expressed dissatisfaction on the quality and support services, educational materials and personnel available in ordinary schools to effectively support integration of learners with mental retardation.

Kasonde-Ngandu and Moberg (2001) carried out a survey on the attitudes of head teachers and ordinary teachers towards

integration in North-western and Western provinces of Zambia. The findings revealed that ordinary school head teachers and teachers had more positive attitudes than special education teachers. Most of the special education teachers thought that separate education provisions were more ideal in meeting special educational needs of learners with mental retardation, hence favoured exclusion. However, no concern was raised about learners with mental retardation, in particular. The study was on learners with special needs in general.

2.3 Differences based on Gender of Teachers' Attitudes towards Learners with Mental Retardation.

Gender has also been found to be a factor in the way teachers educate learners with mental retardation. Several studies have found gender to be a factor. In a study by Leyser, Kappeman and Keller (1994), it was found that female teachers expressed more positive attitudes towards learners with mental retardation than male teachers. Female teachers appear to have more passion than male teachers in society. This is supported by a study done by Hanwi (2003), which reflected that female high school teachers showed more positive attitudes than primary school teachers towards learners with mental retardation. Leyer et. al., (1994) again found that female high school teachers showed more positive attitudes towards learners with mental retardation than elementary female school teachers. On the contrary, female teachers who teach lower classes had been cited as having more positive attitudes than those teaching higher grades. Green (1993) had a different view on teachers and grades taught. He held a view that primary school teachers tended to have positive attitudes towards learners with

mental retardation than secondary school female teachers. His views were that female primary school teachers tended to have positive attitudes towards learners with mental retardation.

2.4 Effect of Years of Teaching Experience on Teachers' Attitudes towards learners with mental retardation.

Teaching experience has been cited by several studies as having an influence on teachers' attitudes. Clough and Lindsell (1991) found that young teachers and those with fewer years of experience were more supportive of learners with mental retardation. The study by Florin (1995) showed that acceptance of a learner with a physical disability was more in teachers with six to ten years of teaching experience. The most experienced teachers of more than eleven years were the least accepting. Similarly, results found by Leyser, Kapperman and Keller (1994) also found that teachers with fourteen years or less teaching experience had a significantly higher positive score in their attitudes than those with more than fourteen years on learners with mental retardation. It was found that there were no significant differences in attitudes among teachers whose teaching experience ranged from four, five and nine, ten and fourteen years. Hegarty, Pocklington and Lucas (1986) found that teachers who taught learners with mental retardation in their ordinary classes were more positive in their attitudes than teachers with no experience of teaching learners with mental retardation.

Hegarty, Pocklington and Lucas (1986) also carried out an investigation on the teachers' experience with the child's disability and it was found that it had an impact on teachers' attitudes

towards the presence of learners with mental retardation. It was revealed in this study that teachers who had earlier contacts with learners with mental retardation tended to perceive greater benefits from integration than those with no experience (Mandyata, 2002). Related to this, Monaham, Mario and Miller (1994), pointed out that experience with learners with mental retardation in an ordinary class was only workable when integration was accompanied with enough educational materials and supportive services. If little support is provided, teachers tend to express negative attitudes towards the presence of learners with mental retardation in ordinary classrooms. It was observed that variables such as the material and parental status of a teacher had no significant influence on teachers' perceptions of integration. However, no relationship between the sex of a teacher and acceptance of learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes was shown.

Karty (1996) maintained that the issue of integrating learners with mental retardation was not an easy thing because teachers who were less experienced feared handling learners with mental retardation because such learners were usually slow and had a bad handwriting. Highly qualified teachers were for the integration while the less qualified were for exclusion. Other specialist teachers also had negative attitudes towards learners with mental retardation because of having little experience. Coaste (1989) claimed that teachers with little experience on learners with mental retardation were likely to have negative attitudes towards integration. This was supported by findings of a study by Monaham, Mario and Miller (1994) in which experienced teachers

with learners with mental retardation was another variable which appeared to have influenced some teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes. The study established that teachers who had earlier contacts with learners with mental retardation tended to experience greater benefits from integration than those with no experience. In this study, instead of teachers with less experience to show less desire to teach learners with mental retardation, it was the more experienced teachers who showed less desire in teaching learners with mental retardation. The study concluded that the more exposed the young teachers were in teaching learners with mental retardation the more they change their attitudes towards learners with mental retardation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter aims at outlining the process of the study. Various aspects are dealt with under the following headings: Research design; target population; sample size, Sampling procedure; research instruments; data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design.

The research design which was used in this study was a case study. The study aimed at collecting data from respondents on teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation in ordinary basic schools with special education units in Northern Province. The research used case study because it is an ideal design to produce in-depth information and a better understanding of the problem at hand (Kombo and Tromp 2006).

3.2 Target population

Northern Province has twelve districts. Out of the twelve districts, only five districts had ordinary basic schools with special units for learners with mental retardation. The five basic schools with special units had an estimated population of one hundred and thirty teachers and five head teachers. All the teachers and head teachers in all the five basic schools with special units constituted the population.

3.3 Sample Size

Three basic schools with units for learners with mental retardation were selected out of the five schools in the Northern Province. The sample comprised hundred teachers and three head teachers. This gave a total population of hundred and three respondents. The

sample was drawn from the following three basic schools: Kabale, Chifwani and Mbala ordinary basic schools. There were thirty-five teachers from Chifwani basic school in Kasama, thirty two from Mbala basic school in Mbala and thirty-three teachers from Kabale basic school in Mpika.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

Random sampling was used to select the schools for the study using the lottery method. Names of the five schools with special units were written on pieces of paper. Three pieces of paper were randomly picked. Further, lottery method was used during random sampling of teachers. In addition, an equal number of male and female respondents were used to balance gender at some point. Twenty three male respondents were picked purposively while twenty three female respondents were picked randomly using lottery method. The study gave equal chances to the entire population of teachers to be included in the study sample. A purposive sampling was used to pick the head teachers. This was to get a lot of information. This method gave an in depth of what was obtaining in ordinary basic schools with special units of learners with mental retardation.

3.5 Research Instruments

A Questionnaire was used in collecting data from teachers. The questionnaire had two parts: one for background information on the teachers. The questions brought out information on age, sex, highest qualifications, year the qualification was obtained, the college from where the teacher was trained, the grade the teacher was teaching and the number of learners who were in the class one was teaching. In the second part of the questionnaire, questions were based on

identifying teachers' and head teachers' knowledge, and change in attitudes based on years of experience and gender. The interview was also conducted to know the type of attitudes head teachers had toward learner with mental retardation. The questionnaire for teachers was more reliable than the interview conducted to head teachers because it gave freedom and anonymity to participants.

3.6 Data Collection

Before data collection commenced, permission was sought from the Provincial Education Officer, District Education Board Secretaries, and head teachers. Teachers' consent to be involved in this research was also obtained. The researcher also collected an introductory letter from the Dean, Post Graduate studies from the School of Education at the University of Zambia. The data was collected in the third term of the school calendar. The questionnaire was administered in the afternoons when teachers were free. Before teachers filled in the questionnaire, instructions were explained. The three head teachers were interviewed in their respective schools.

3.7 Pilot Testing of the Instrument

Before the main study was conducted, a pilot study was done. Pilot testing of the questionnaire and the interview schedule was conducted at Chibile basic school in Mungwi District. This was to ascertain whether the tools for the research were suitable and friendly to the respondents. According to the head teacher and his teachers at Chibile basic school, there were very few problems with the questionnaire and the interview schedule. Changes were made to the instruments.

3.8 Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, the following analyses of data were undertaken. First, the information from the close-ended items in the questionnaire were entered into the statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for counting purposes. In addition to this, thematic analysis was used to identify categories of themes for answers and comments which were given to the open-ended items in the questionnaire for teachers and the interview schedule for head teachers. Second, careful examination was applied to all pieces of data, in order to come up with frequency distribution tables, as well as the pie charts displayed in percent.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.

The essence of any study is to collect data that will invariably show the occurrence or non-occurrence of the problem in the study. However, it is important that the data collected is not only analysed and tabulated, but that it is also representative of the responses of the population under study.

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It gives the information that was gathered in the field in an organised manner in order to provide meaning. In this chapter, statistical tables were used to present the data. The objectives were used to describe the distribution and the understanding of data using responses. Each objective was analysed separately. A five point scale was used: Strongly agreed, agree, strongly disagree, disagree and neutral. The results were used to establish the attitudes of head teachers and teachers towards learners with mental retardation. The findings were given under headings derived from the objectives of the study. the first objective was to find out the knowledge, ordinary basic school teachers' attitudes on learners with mental retardation.

4.1 The first objective on this study was to find out the knowledge ordinary basic school teachers had on learners with mental retardation. Two tables and two figures were generated in this section to establish how much knowledge teachers had on learners with mental retardation.

Responses from teachers on teachers’ knowledge about learners with disabilities.

n=100 Respondents

Table 1

VALID RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALID PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
STRONGLY AGREED	50	50.0	50.0	50.0
AGREED	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
STRONGLY DISAGREED	40	40.0	40.0	40.0
DISAGREED	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
NEUTRAL	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
TOTAL	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

The teachers were further asked if they had knowledge about the disabilities of learners with mental retardation in the special units. The teachers who strongly agreed said that they had knowledge and were able to name the learners as ‘learners with mental retardation’. The teachers were fifty percent (50%). Many of the respondent teacher out of the fifty per cent stated that they knew something about learners with mental retardation but they lacked experience on how to handle them. Forty percent (40%) of the teachers disagreed and had

no comments to make at all. Those who were neutral were ten per cent. No respondent teacher strongly agreed or disagreed. The table reflects that the majority of teachers had knowledge about the disability of mental retardation.

Teachers’ responses whether they had information about Learners with Mental Retardation

n=100 respondents

Table 2

VALID RESPONDENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALID PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
STRONGLY AGREED	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
AGREED	70	70.0	70.0	70.0
STRONGLY DISAGREED	07	07.0	07.0	07.0
DISAGREED	23	23.0	23.0	23.0
NEUTRAL	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
TOTAL	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

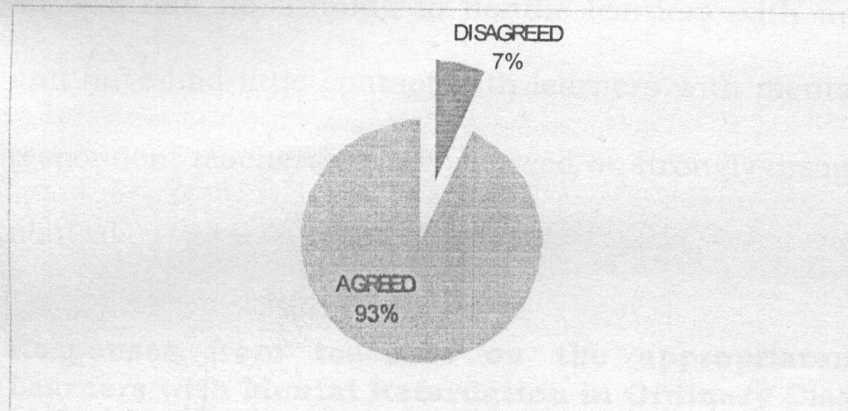
The teachers were asked about whether they had information on learners with mental retardation. There were no teachers who strongly agreed. The respondent teachers who agreed were by far the majority, seventy percent (70%). The respondents, who agreed having received information, revealed that they were given information about learners with mental retardation during local induction courses. These respondents were asked to orient other teachers in ordinary basic schools with special units. On the other hand, twenty three percent

(23%) of the teachers disagreed, seven percent (7%) strongly disagreed, and no respondent teacher remained neutral.

Responses of teachers on the need for Units in Ordinary Schools.

n=100 respondents

Figure 1



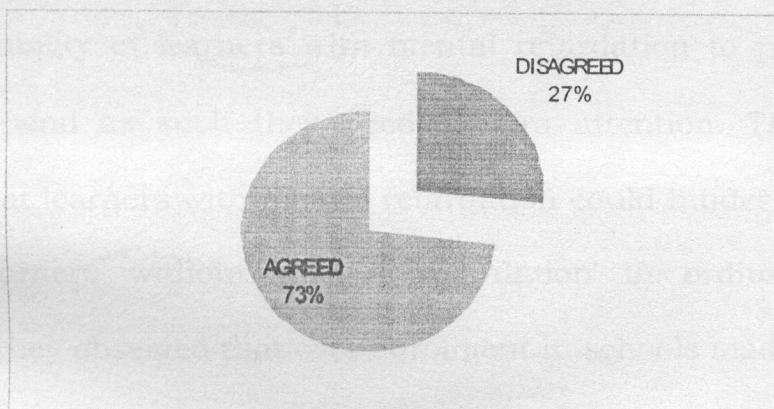
Almost all teachers about, ninety-three percent (93%) were for the idea that the special units were necessary in ordinary basic schools. The respondent teachers who agreed stated that although they are agreeing there should be enough special teachers in future to help them when they were stuck. On the whole ,however, they insisted that the special units could remain in ordinary schools so that learners with mental retardation especially those with very serious problems could be confined in the special units. They argued that the learners with mental retardation in ordinary schools could develop socially as they mingled with other learners. Only seven percent of ordinary teachers were against units being opened in ordinary schools. They

disclosed that there were no or inadequate teaching and learning materials in ordinary classes. Furthermore, the teachers observed that both learners and ordinary teachers in ordinary classes stigmatised against learners with mental retardation. The respondent teachers further observed that many ordinary teachers in ordinary schools had no training to handle learners with mental retardation and have had little contact with learners with mental retardation. No respondent teachers strongly agreed or strongly disagreed or remained neutral.

Responses from teachers on the appropriateness of Placing Learners with Mental Retardation in Ordinary Classes.

n=100 respondents

Figure 2



When teachers were asked whether it was appropriate for learners with mental retardation to be integrated in ordinary schools, seventy three (73%) of teachers were for the idea that learners with mental retardation could be integrated. However, the respondent teachers

stated that only those learners whose problems were moderate could be placed in ordinary classes. They argued that due to lack of specialist teachers, learners with mental retardation should be placed with caution in ordinary basic classes. They observed that placement of learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes would reduce discrimination and stigmatisation of learners with mental retardation. Though the majority of teachers who agreed were ready for learners with mental retardation, there were some reservations since some teachers attached conditions to their answers.

Twenty Seven- percent (27%) of teachers were against the integration of learners with mental retardation. They said that learners with mental retardation did not concentrate in class. They further said that the ability of learners with mental retardation to perform was quite low and as such they needed extra attention. The teachers argued that learners with mental retardation could hinder the pace at which learners without mental retardation in ordinary classes learned. They observed that over enrolment in schools made it difficult for teachers to pay attention to learners with special needs, besides, the special attention was best given by specialist teachers who were few and mainly found in special schools. Nevertheless, no teachers strongly agreed or strongly disagreed or remained neutral. The

stated that only those learners whose problems were moderate could be placed in ordinary classes. They argued that due to lack of specialist teachers, learners with mental retardation should be placed with caution in ordinary basic classes. They observed that placement of learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes would reduce discrimination and stigmatisation of learners with mental retardation. Though the majority of teachers who agreed were ready for learners with mental retardation, there were some reservations since some teachers attached conditions to their answers.

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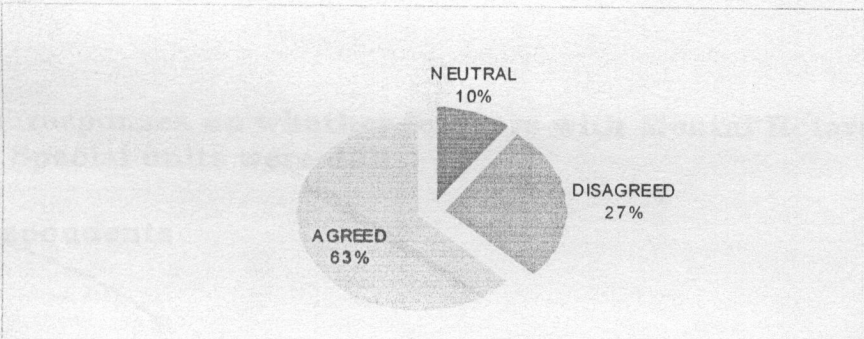
results indicated that the majority of teachers were in favour of integrating learners with mental retardation into ordinary classes and that they would work hard to take care of their educational needs.

4.2 The second objective was to find out the teachers' and head teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation. Three figures and a table were generated to establish the attitudes of both teachers and head teachers in basic schools with unit.

Teachers' responses on whether there was anything Wrong with Learners with Mental Retardation from the Special Unit

n=100 respondents

Figure 3



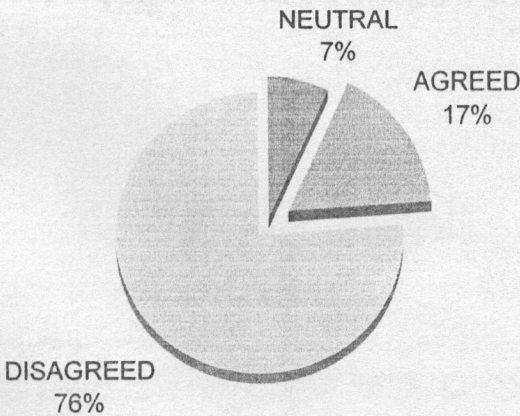
The respondent teacher were asked as to whether there was something wrong with learners with mental retardation in the special units. Sixty- three (63%) of teachers agreed. They observed that learners with mental retardation did not learn at the same pace with learners without mental retardation in ordinary classes. The teachers further said that there was something wrong with learners with

mental retardation because they needed special resources and they needed special assistance by teachers in teaching them. They further said that learners with mental retardation were different from learners without mental retardation in many areas. Furthermore, they observed that learners with mental retardation had impairments which called for special attention from all teachers and that they could not be left alone without supervision. About twenty- seven per cent (27%) of teachers saw nothing wrong with the learners with mental retardation. There were also ten per cent (10%) of teachers who were neutral. However, no response fell under strongly agree or disagree.

Teachers' responses on whether learners with Mental Retardation from the Special units were dull

n=100 respondents

Figure 4



The teachers were asked about the performance of learners with mental retardation; seventeen percent (17%) stated that learners were 'dull'. They observed that learners with mental retardation could not work on their own or together with other learners. The teachers who were neutral were seven per cent (7%). On the other hand, seventy-six percent (76%) of the respondent teachers disagreed with the notion that the learners were dull they argued that learners with mental retardation performed well in some areas and that learners with mental retardation mostly understood what teachers taught them and were able to remember vividly the previous work they learnt. In addition to this, they stated that learners with mental retardation were able to draw some pictures, shapes and write some simple sensible words and sentences. They further stated that the learners were able to count and compute the figures accurately which are at their level. No respondent teachers strongly agreed or disagreed.

Teachers’ responses on whether learners from the Units Learn as Much as those in Ordinary Classes.

n=100 respondents

Table 3

VALID RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALID PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
STRONGLY AGREED	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
AGREED	77	77.0	77.0	77.0
STRONGLY DISAGREED	17	17.0	17.0	17.0
DISAGREED	06	06.0	06.0	06.0
NEUTRAL	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
TOTAL	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

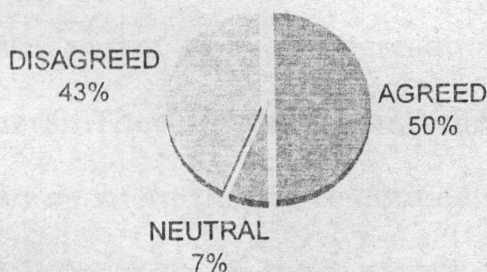
The teachers were also asked as to whether they knew whether learners with mental retardation learnt as much as these learners without mental retardation. Seventeen per cent (17%) of teachers strongly disagreed. They stated that learners with mental retardation did not learn as much as those without mental retardation. They explained that some learners with mental retardation were slow in understanding concepts and that the learners learnt according to their abilities and at their own pace so much that teachers had to be patient as they taught them. Six per cent (6%) of the teachers disagreed and said learners with mental retardation, especially those with serious problems needed to remain in special units. They could have contacts with learners without mental retardation in ordinary schools just for socialisation and acceptance purposes by both teachers and their peers without mental retardation. No respondent

teachers strongly agreed or strongly disagreed. On the other hand, seventy percent (70%) of the teachers agreed that the learners learnt as much as their counter parts in the ordinary classes. Although they observed that the learners did not grasp the concepts easily because of the impairments they had. They also observed that most learners with mental retardation were slow in thinking, understanding concepts and some in speaking. In fact, they added that the learners took time to understand ideas behind a concept and were slow to learn; they could only learn few subjects per day, for example, two subjects only as the day's work; no one would blame both the teacher and the learners unless one did not understand the learners. No respondent teachers were neutral.

Teachers' responses on whether they would welcome Learners with Mental Retardation into Ordinary Classes

n=100 respondents

Figure 5



The teachers were asked if they would welcome learners with mental retardation. The pie chart above shows the responses of three categories of respondents. The smallest number, which was seven per cent (7%) of teachers, remained neutral and they made no comments. The next group of teachers was forty three per cent (43%) who disagreed and stated that they would not welcome the learners in ordinary classes. Those teachers who disagreed argued that other learners would be laughing at learners with mental retardation. They further stated that learners with mental retardation would not be free to be in the same classes with learners without mental retardation and besides, the classes were already over crowded. At the time data was being collected, ordinary classes had on the average, sixty (60) learners without mental retardation. They added that learners with mental retardation could be disadvantaged and labeled as dull, slow, empty vessels by peers without mental retardation including some ordinary teachers. Fifty per cent (50%) of teachers were for the idea of welcoming learners with mental retardation. They stated that integration was meant to avoid segregation and promote acceptance for all learners. They observed that the learners had a right to education and as such, they were entitled to education like any other learner in schools. They also observed that it was necessary to have fewer learners with mental retardation in one class.

Responses from Head Teachers and teachers on their Attitudes towards Learners with Mental Retardation

Three head teachers were individually interviewed. All the three head teachers showed that they were willing to accommodate learners with mental retardation in their schools and observed that they were sensitised about learners with mental retardation before they were enrolled into their schools. They further stated that having learners with mental retardation was not a problem as long as those with technical knowledge continued updating them. However, head teachers raised a concern on the need to improve the infrastructure of the school especially in the unit where learners with mental retardation were placed. They pointed out that their schools needed wall fences to safeguard learners with mental retardation.

The head teachers indicated that having learners with mental retardation in ordinary basic schools was an ideal situation as the practice reduced stigmatisation and isolation of learners with mental retardation. They further stated that all learners had a right to education. The head teachers further indicated that what was needed was continuous professional development on learners with mental retardation since at times special teachers were not available in schools with special units. It was noticed that positive attitudes by

head teachers would allow learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes. They stated that there was need to receive enough support, materially and financially and to have adequate information and materials in order to encourage their teachers.

4.3 The third objective in this study was to find out whether there were differences based on gender in teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation. Seven tables and a figure were generated in this section to establish the effect of gender by teachers on learners with mental retardation. In this section twenty-three male teachers were picked purposively because they were only twenty-three, while female teachers were sampled randomly because they were seventy-seven.

Female teachers' responses' on whether they encouraged Learners with Mental Retardation in the Units to Play Together with Learners in the Ordinary Classes.

n=23 females

Table 4 A

Valid responses	frequency	percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Strongly agreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Agreed	21	91.0	91.0	91.0
Strongly disagreed	00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Disagreed	2	08.6	09.0	09.0
Neutral	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0
TOTAL	23	99.6	100.0	100.0

Male teachers' responses on whether they encouraged Learners with Mental Retardation in the Units to Play Together with Learners in the Ordinary Classes

n=23 males

Table 4 B

Valid responses	frequency	percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Strongly agreed	00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Agreed	20	86.9	87.0	87.0
Strongly disagreed	00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Disagreed	03	13.0	13.0	13.0
Neutral	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
TOTAL	23	100.0	100.0	100.0

While finding out whether teachers did encourage learners without mental retardation to play with learners with mental retardation in the ordinary classes, ninety percent (90%) of female teachers were agreeable. Their sentiments were that encouraging learners from the ordinary classes to play together with learners with mental retardation would enhance socialization among both groups of learners. They stated that learners without mental retardation needed socialization with learners with mental retardation as well and that there was no need to isolate learners with mental retardation because they did not want learners from the unit to feel that they were different from his grade pupils. They were united in stating that they would like learners with mental retardation to play with those learners without mental retardation in order to encourage both learners, to learn and work together, to cooperate and value one another as fellow human beings. No female teachers remained neutral and there were no respondent

teacher who strongly agreed or strongly disagreed. There were nine percent (9%) of teachers who disagreed. On the other hand, eighty seven percent (87%) of male teachers were agreeable. Only thirteen percent (13%) of male teachers disagreed. However, no male teachers strongly agreed or strongly disagreed or remained neutral.

Female teachers’ Responses on whether it was better to place learners with Mental Retardation in an ordinary class: unit or Special School.

n=23 Female

Table 5 A

VALID RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALID PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
Strongly agreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Agreed	02	08.6	09.0	09.0
Strongly disagreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Disagreed	21	91.0	91.0	91.0
Neutral	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
TOTAL	23	100.0	100.0	100.0

Male teachers’ Responses on whether it was better to place learners with Mental Retardation in an ordinary class: unit or Special School.

n=23 Male

TABLE 5 B

VALID RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALID PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
Strongly agreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Agreed	22	95.6	96.0	96.0
Strongly disagreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Disagreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Neutral	1	04.0	04.0	04.0
TOTAL	23	100.0	100.0	100.0

The teachers were asked as to what would be better between special units or ordinary class or special schools for placement of learners with mental retardation. Seventy-four per cent (74%) of female teachers stated that learners with mental retardation would be better if placed in special units. Their reasoning was that, each child had different challenges and he/she would be better off if attended to in special units and that everything needed for learners with mental retardation was available in special units. In addition, teachers from ordinary classes would find well trained teachers to help them in the special units and that special units had the necessary equipment suitable for learners with mental retardation. However, twenty-six per cent (26%) of female teachers felt that a unit was not conducive for learners with mental retardation.

The table shows that there was no female teacher who strongly agreed or strongly disagreed. Ninety six per cent (96%) of male teachers agreed. They said socialisation could only happen if learners without mental retardation were interacting with learners with mental retardation during intervals. The interaction among other things would be of help in that learners with mental retardation would learn how to accommodate other peers. They also noted that special teachers in the special units were there for both learners and ordinary

teachers in case they needed help. There was no one who disagreed. Those who were neutral were only four per cent (4%).

Female Teachers’ responses on how they think about other teachers’ Attitudes are about Learners with Mental Retardation.

n=23 females

Table 6 A

VALID RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALID PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
Strongly agreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Agreed	16	69.0	69.0	69.0
Strongly disagreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Disagreed	05	21.7	22.0	22.0
Neutral	02	08.9	09.0	09.0
Total	23	100.0	100.0	100.0

Male teachers’ responses on how they think about teachers’ attitudes are about learners with Mental Retardation.

n=23 males

Table 6 B

VALID RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALID PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
Strongly agreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Agreed	23	100.0	100.0	100.0
Strongly disagreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Disagreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Neutral	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
TOTAL	23	100.0	100.0	100.0

There were sixty nine percent (69%) of female teachers who agreed that other teachers had positive attitudes about learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes. They stated that other teachers’ attitudes were good, because some female teachers had registered

learners with mental retardation in their classes and they did help learners with mental retardation, socially and academically. They reported that learners with mental retardation were treated equally and their needs were met by attending to them as situations dictated. It was further highlighted that teachers did encourage learners with mental retardation to learn and play together with learners without mental retardation and helped them where necessary. Furthermore, at one school statistics showed that there were two learners with mental retardation in grade nine (09), one in grade eight (08) and one in grade seven (07) and the other three were in grade one (01). They noted that other teachers' attitudes toward learners with mental retardation were good because they could see learners with mental retardation take part in doing activities like sports and athletics. They also saw other teachers going to assist in the units. A Catholic nun was cited as an example. And so were those teachers who did not agree. There were twenty two per cent (22%) of teachers who disagreed and those who were neutral were nine per cent (9%).

A hundred percent (100%) of male teachers agreed that teachers had good attitudes in that they liked having learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes. As shown in the table, no teacher strongly agreed, strongly disagreed, disagreed or was neutral.

Female teachers' responses on their feelings of Ordinary Teachers about Learners with Mental Retardation on Social Situations.

n=23 females

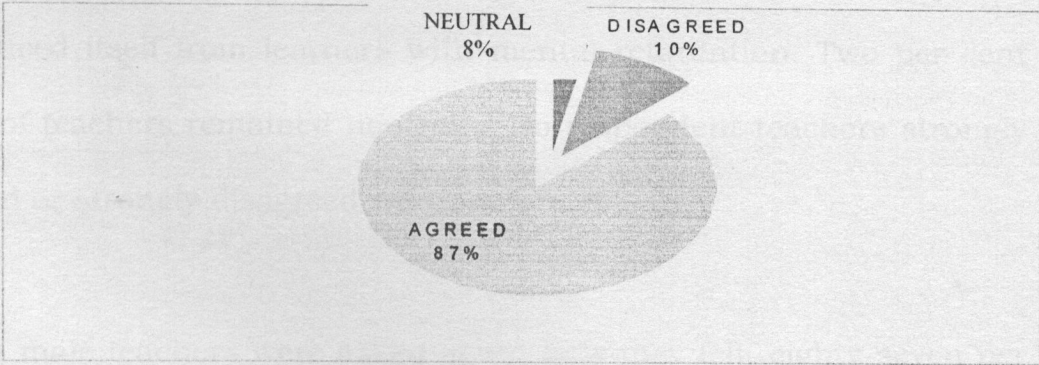
Table 7 A

VALID RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALID PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
Strongly agreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Agreed	15	65.0	65.0	65.0
Strongly disagreed	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
Disagreed	06	26.0	26.0	26.0
Neutral	02	08.6	09.0	09.0
TOTAL	23	100.0	100.0	100.0

Male teachers' responses on their feelings of Ordinary Teachers about Learners with Mental Retardation on Social Situations.

n = 23 males

Figure 6



When female teachers were asked on how they felt about learners with mental retardation when they met them in one to one social situations, sixty-five per cent (65%) of female teachers said that they

felt at ease. The teachers indicated that they used to call the learners by their names. They talked to them and had accepted them where ever they met them. The teachers also indicated that there was need to regularly train teachers since teachers came and went on transfers. The teachers further said that training would empower old and new teachers in handling learners with mental retardation. In addition to this, the teachers stated that it was important to tour big special schools. This would encourage ordinary teachers who did not have formal training in special education to accept learners with mental retardation. Another group of six per cent (6%) of female teachers did indicate that they felt uneasy whenever they met learners with mental retardation. Their comments were that some learners with mental retardation were violent towards teachers and learners without mental retardation. That was the reason why the school community distanced itself from learners with mental retardation. Two per cent (2%) of teachers remained neutral. No respondent teachers strongly agreed or strongly disagreed.

When male teachers were asked about how they felt, eighty-seven per cent (87%) of male teachers felt at ease with learners with mental retardation. Male teachers who disagreed were 10 per cent (10%) and three per cent (3%) of the teachers were neutral. No male teacher

strongly agreed or strongly disagreed. More male teachers felt at ease than female teachers.

4.4 The fourth objective was to find out whether teachers' attitudes changed with years of teaching experience.

This objective is based on whether teachers' attitudes changed with years of teaching experience. Three sub topics were established to study the effect of teaching experience of teachers on learners with mental retardation.

Teachers' responses on their Teaching Experience in Years.

n=100 respondents.

Table 8

VALID RESPONSES	frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
0 – 10 years	70	70.0	70.0	70.0
11 – 20 years	26	26.0	26.0	26.0
21 – 30 years	4	04.0	04.0	04.0
TOTAL	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

The table above shows the years of teaching experience of ordinary teachers in basic schools with special units. The teaching experience ranged from one month to twenty seven years. Seventy percent (70%) of ordinary teachers had a range of one month to ten years of teaching experience. Twenty six per cent (26%) of teachers had eleven to twenty years of teaching experience. The least was four per cent (4%) in the range of twenty one to thirty years of teaching experience. This

showed that many teachers in basic schools were young in service. It can be deduced from the table above that there were many ordinary teachers who had little experience in teaching. It can be deduced from the data above that those ordinary teachers who were in the range of one month to ten years of teaching experience were four percent (44%) more than those teachers who were in the range of eleven to twenty years of teaching experience and were sixty four per cent (64%) more than ordinary teachers who were in the range of twenty one (21) to thirty (30) years of teaching experience. These ordinary teachers who were in the range of eleven to twenty years of teaching experience were also twenty two per cent (20%) more than those ordinary teachers who were in the range of twenty one (21) to thirty (31) years of teaching experience.

Effects of teachers’ teaching experience on their Acceptance of learners with Mental Retardation in Ordinary Classes.

n=100 respondents

Table 9

VALID RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALID PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
0 – 10 years	65	65.0	65.0	65.0
11 – 20 years	30	30.0	30.0	30.0
21 – 30 years	05	05.0	05.0	05.0
TOTAL	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

According to the table above, sixty five (65%) percent of ordinary teachers who were in the range of nine to ten years of teaching experience expressed that they would accept learners with mental

retardation in their ordinary classes. The results showed that many young (in service) ordinary teachers were ready for learners with mental retardation. The teachers in the range of eleven to twenty years of teaching experience were thirty per cent (30%). Teachers in the range of twenty one to thirty years of teaching experience were only five per cent (5%). The ordinary teachers who disagreed were almost twice less than those who agreed. There was an indication that teachers could support and accept learners with mental retardation in ordinary classes more when they are younger than when they are older in the system.

Effect of teachers’ teaching experience on their Work with Learners with Mental Retardation in Ordinary Classes.

n=100 respondents

Table 10

Valid Responses	frequency	percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
0 – 10 years	57	57.0	57.0	57.0
11 – 20 years	43	43.0	43.0	43.0
21 – 30 years	00	00.0	00.0	00.0
TOTAL	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

Ordinary teachers were asked if it was interesting to work with learners with mental retardation. The biggest number of ordinary teachers who agreed was in the range of one month to ten years of teaching experience and was slightly more than those who were in the range of eleven to twenty years of teaching experience. There were fifty-seven per cent (57%) of ordinary teachers in the range of one

month to ten years of teaching experience followed by forty- three per cent (43%) of ordinary teachers who were in the range of eleven to twenty years of teaching experience. There were no ordinary teachers who were in the range of twenty one to thirty years of teaching experience who enjoyed working with the learners. Ordinary teachers have shown that they were more interested to work with learners with mental retardation when they were younger.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings. The discussion is presented based on the objectives and research questions of the study.

5.1 Knowledge and Information teachers have about Learners with Mental Retardation

Even though integration of learners with mental retardation in ordinary basic schools is not done on a large scale, the programme was not known to both teachers and head teachers. Suffice to say, many teachers, if not all, had either learnt about learners with mental retardation in colleges or they had been sensitised at zone or school level.

The findings indicated that, ordinary teachers appeared to be ready for the integration initiative. Ordinary teachers appeared to have accepted the integration of mental retardation although they have provided little support to learners with mental retardation. This was more evident with learners with mental retardation who were integrated in ordinary classes. This finding is contrary to the

findings of earlier studies on integration (Ammer 1984). In the case of the present study, it was found that ordinary teachers started with no or little interest in supporting learners with mental retardation due to lack of knowledge or information. This may lead to lack of confidence in handling learners with mental retardation. In fact, Kalabula (1991) and Mandyata (2002) confirmed that teachers who lacked training in disabilities lacked confidence in handling the learners with special needs. The study also found out that both ordinary teachers and head teachers implemented the integration of learners with mental retardation with little knowledge and information about the learners. Many respondents stated that they were placed into the integration programme because government policy dictated that they should have learners with mental retardation in their schools. The study revealed that lack of knowledge and skills on mental retardation remained a challenge on ordinary teachers and head teachers. They had very little and scanty knowledge about learners with mental retardation. The findings indicated that some ordinary teachers had no formal or informal training on mental retardation. The findings are in line with findings by Barryman and Neal (1980). They concluded that teachers without mastery of skills lacked confidence and that teachers without confidence felt threatened by the presence of

learners with mental retardation in their ordinary classes. Lambe (2007) also highlighted that lack of coherent training to support teachers has a serious impact on them.

This means that although ordinary teachers were striving to do the right thing with regard to teaching learners with mental retardation, they were getting very little support from their special education colleagues. The situation in the schools suggests that ordinary teachers are not planning together with special teachers on regular basis in terms of handling learners with mental retardation.

5.2 Basic School Teachers' Attitudes Towards Learners with Mental Retardation.

The research findings showed that there was willingness by respondents to integrating learners with mental retardation. The findings show that respondents observed that many learners with mental retardation had challenges in that the learners they needed enough time and resources for them to learn concepts effectively. The findings further indicated that teachers needed to be consistent in dealing with learners with mental retardation. Furthermore, respondents agreed that they needed to help learners with mental

retardation but at the same time pointed out that special teachers were the best resources.

Additionally, the study findings indicated that most learners with moderate to mild mental retardation could benefit from academic work. In fact some were able to do better than learners without mental retardation. However, for them to perform better, contacts with learners with mental retardation were key to the improving of teachers' attitudes and acceptance of learners with mental retardation. Studies by Hegarty, Pocklington and Lucas (1986) and Jordan, Wilson and Silverman (1991) support this result. The two studies indicated that learning of learners with mental retardation was constrained by the lack of interaction with learners by teachers and their peers without mental retardation. Just like the present study, the two studies concluded that teachers needed to have patience; give learners with mental retardation enough time and fewer subjects. Teachers too, needed continuous professional development through sensitisation, and tours for them to understand learners with mental retardation well. Furthermore, only those learners with serious mental challenges needed confinement to special units. The learners in units could only be released at intervals for socialisation purposes. From the findings of

this study, it is clear that integration is one of the remedies to improving the learning of learners with mental retardation socially and academically.

5.3 Head Teachers' Attitudes Towards Learners with Mental Retardation.

The findings of this study have revealed that ordinary teachers were not all that negative towards learners with mental retardation. In the course of this study, it was learnt that head teachers appreciated having learners with mental retardation in their schools. The findings further indicated that teachers felt that integration reduced isolation and stigmatisation of learners with mental retardation. As teachers agreed, integration was the best remedy which improves socialization of learners with mental retardation. The findings also revealed that ordinary teachers and head teachers met with few insurmountable challenges when learners with mental retardation were integrated into their schools. This was consistent with what Stainback and Stainback (1984) found. They found that ordinary school teachers and head teachers were positive about integration of learners with mental retardation although they were dissatisfied with the quality and support services, education materials, and personnel which they received. The Kasonde-

Ng'andu and Moberg (2001) study findings were also consistent with the findings of this study. They found that ordinary school head teachers were more positive than special school head teachers.

Although results showed that ordinary head teachers were positive about learners with mental retardation, there is still need to intensify sensitisation because any negative attitudes in ordinary school head teachers may be transferred to their teachers and learners without mental retardation.

5.4 Effects of Gender towards Learners with Mental Retardation.

The results of the findings of this study revealed that male teachers were more enthusiastic about learners with mental retardation than female teachers. They further revealed that socialization between learners with mental retardation and their ordinary school peers was important. It can induce cooperation and acceptance of one another. Furthermore, the findings of this study indicated that many teachers favoured having special units attached to ordinary basic schools than sending learners with mental retardation to special schools. Additionally, the findings showed that suitable materials and trained special teachers to help ordinary teachers

should be provided to the special units so that special teachers could mentor ordinary teachers. On the whole, the findings of this study indicated that both male and female teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation in the units were good.

The results were not consistent with findings by Leyser et. al., (1994) and Green (1993) which indicated that female teachers tended to have more positive attitudes than male teachers towards learners with mental retardation. However, it can be said that for the present study to show the difference between male and female teachers on learners with mental retardation more time was needed to focus on this aspect. This area required more time to observe the teachers attitudes toward learners with mental retardation.

5.5 Effects of Years of Teaching Experience on Teachers' Attitudes.

Findings of this study showed that teaching experience did influence teachers teaching learners with mental retardation.

The teachers who had more years of teaching experience lost interest in teaching learners with mental retardation as they grew older in the system. Many of those teachers who accepted and

wanted to work with learners with mental retardation were in the range of one month to ten years of teaching experience. The results are consistent with those obtained by Clough and Lindsell (1991) who found that younger teachers and those with fewer years of teaching experience had been cited to be more supportive of learners with mental retardation. Leyser (1984) in a similar study revealed that, teachers with fourteen years or less teaching experience had a significantly higher positive score in attitudes than those with more than fourteen (14) years of teaching experience. The findings are contrary with those by Karty Coaste (1989) and Monaham, Mario and Miller (1994).and (1996) who reported that teachers with less teaching experience feared learners with mental retardation. Although this study reflected that young teachers had more interest in teaching learners with mental retardation. Not all younger teachers had interest in teaching learners with mental retardation. It is also true that not all old teachers lose interest in teaching learners with mental retardation as they grow old.

In this study, having experience was not seen as being a best teacher. All teachers, regardless of years of experience needed skilling and reskilling in order for integration programme to be effectively implemented. It should not be taken for granted that

inexperienced teachers did a better job than experienced teachers. All teachers needed regular sensitization and in service training. On the whole, the study has shown that many teachers' attitudes were positive about learners with mental retardation. What they required was support in terms of training and teaching / learning materials. It should be appreciated that whether teachers know about a programme or not, it would be important to sensitize teachers before they go into a new programme.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter covers the summary of the study, conclusions which are drawn from the study, and recommendations.

6.1 SUMMARY

The study investigated the attitudes of ordinary basic school teachers and head teachers towards learners with mental retardation in ordinary basic schools which have special units in Northern Province. A case study was conducted in five basic schools on 100 teachers and three (3) head teachers picked purposively. A questionnaire and the interview schedule were the instruments used.

The results showed that the majority of male and female teachers were in favour of the integration of learners with mental retardation in their classrooms and schools; that they had knowledge and enough information on the disability; that both head teachers and teachers had favourable attitudes towards learners with mental retardation; and that there was gender differences which affected both male and female teachers; and teaching experience had an

effect on teachers attitudes towards learners with mental retardation in that the less teaching experience a teacher has, the more favourable they are towards learners with mental retardation.

The study's conclusion is that ordinary basic school teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation in ordinary schools with special units is favourable, with male teachers showing more favourable attitudes than female teachers and that teaching experience affects the attitudes.

The study recommended that the integration of learners with mental retardation should continue. However, consideration should be made to providing ordinary school teachers with continuous in-service trainings so that they are kept abreast with all aspects of educating learners with mental retardation. At the same time, support services to both ordinary school teachers and learners with mental retardation should be provided. The support should include human and material resources.

6.2 Conclusion

It is evident in this study that practice makes perfect. As long as ordinary basic school teachers were not exposed to techniques of

integrating learners with mental retardation into the ordinary schools, it will be difficult for teachers to support integration and be of help to the programme. Therefore, no person is likely to remain static upon being passed through training. Teachers who are trainable are likely to change although resistance to change may not be overruled.

6.3 Recommendations

In view of the findings, the following recommendations were proposed:

- (a) The Ministry Of Education should ensure that legislation to make integration of learners with mental retardation into ordinary class compulsory.
- (b) The District Education Boards should organize, at district, zone and school levels, regular professional development in-service training for ordinary and special teachers, administrators, and parents on the integration and education of learners with mental retardation.
- (c) The District Education Board Secretaries should ensure that at least one special education teacher is placed at each school. This teacher (or teachers) would act as resource person for a school.

- (d) District Education Board Secretaries should ensure that teaching and material resources are made available to special units so as to enable teachers provide quality education to learners with mental retardation.
- (e) Head teachers should ensure that their schools design guidelines on the integration of learners with mental retardation the implementation and evaluation of which they and a committee should conduct.
- (f) The Ministry of Education should annually review the integration of learners with mental retardation so as to strengthen the implementation of the policy.

FUTURE RESEARCH

In order to improve teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation, there is need to carry out further studies in the following areas:

- Effect of school location on the attitudes of teachers towards learners with mental retardation.
- Longitudinal study on the effect of years of service on teachers' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation.

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APPENDIX I

Structured Interview Schedule For Head Teachers' Attitudes

I am a post graduate student at the University of Zambia carrying out a research into 'teacher' attitudes towards learners with mental retardation'. I would be grateful if you found time to answer the following 12 questions. The information which will be provided will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and will be used purely for academic propose.

1. Do you feel that it is appropriate for learners with mental retardation to be placed in ordinary schools like yours?

Do you think that the unit should be in this school?

3. Do you think that you know the disability of the learners in the unit in this school?

4. Is the school given information about the learners with mental retardation in the unit?

5. Do you think that there is something wrong with learners in the unit?

6. Do you think that learners from that unit are dull?

7. Do you think learners from that unit learn as such as other learners in school?
8. Would you welcome the integration of pupils in that unit into your school?
9. Would you encourage your learners in school to play with learners with mental retardation in that unit?
10. Do you think that the learners in that unit will be better off if sent to special schools?
11. Do you think that the attitudes of your fellow head teachers in the ordinary schools towards learners with mental retardation in the unit are good?
12. Do you feel at easy with learners from that unit when you met on one to one in school?

(Ghosh 2008)

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

I am a post graduate student at the University of Zambia carrying out a research into ‘teacher’ attitudes towards learners with mental retardation’. I would be grateful if you found time to answer the following 15 questions. The information which you will provide will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and will be used purely for academic purpose. Tick where applicable.

Your Personal Details:

Age:.....Sex:.....highest Qualification:.....
Year qualification obtained:.....
College / University:.....
Your graduate as a teacher:.....
Grade currently teaching:.....
Number of pupils in the grade teaching:.....

1. Do you feel it is appropriate for learners with mental retardation to be placed in ordinary classes like yours?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

State reasons for your answer:

.....

2. Do you think that the unit should be in this school?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

3. Do you think that you know the disability of the disability of the learners in the unit?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

4. Are you given information about the learners with mental retardation in the unit?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

5. Do you think that there is something wrong with the learners with mental retardation from the unit?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

6. Do you think that learners with mental retardation from that unit are dull?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

7. Do you think learners with mental retardation from that unit learn as much as your grade pupils do?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

8. Would you welcome the integration (mixing) of learners with mental retardation in that unit into your class?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

9. Would you encourage your grade learners to play with learners with mental retardation in that unit?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

10. Do you think that the learners with mental retardation in that unit will be better off if sent to a special school?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

11. Do you think that the attitudes of your fellow headteachers in the ordinary schools towards learners with mental retardation in the unit are good?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

12. Do you feel at easy with learners from the unit when you meet on one to one social situation?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

13. For how long have you been teaching?

14. Do you accept learners with mental retardation in your class?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....

15. Do you enjoy working with learners with mental retardation in the ordinary class?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐strongly disagree ☐

Give reasons for your answer.

.....