

Adapting for Diversity: How Teachers adapt the Curriculum to Support Learners with Intellectual Disabilities that Require Limited Support in Inclusive Primary Schools in Isingiro District, Uganda

¹Mr. Twinamatsiko Alex., ¹Asso Prof. John Baptist Okech (PhD), ²Dr. Odeke Joseph Nato (PhD), ³Dr. Stackus Okwaput

¹Department of Intellectual and Development Difficulties, Kyambogo University Uganda.

²Department of Visual Impairment, Kyambogo University Uganda.

³Senior Lecturer, Department of Hearing Impairment and Sign Language Interpreting, Kyambogo University.

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to explore curriculum adaptation practices in inclusive primary schools, with a particular focus on how teachers adapt curriculum to support Learners with Intellectual Disabilities that Require Limited Support (LIDRLS). Its main objective was to explore how the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of these learners in inclusive primary schools in Isingiro District. The study employed a qualitative approach using an exploratory case study design. Data were collected from head teachers, classroom teachers, and learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. A total of (N=20) participants were involved, comprising (N= 4) head teachers, (N= 4) teachers, and (N=12) learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support.

Participants were asked how teachers adapt the curriculum for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support in inclusive primary schools. The study revealed the following: Pace-based teaching, adaptation of learning content, revision, reteaching some lessons adaptation of assessment methods, use of adapted learning materials, adaptation of learning activities, holistic learner well-being support, motivation and learner encouragement, participation and engagement. Although the study findings highlighted the above-mentioned ways in which the curriculum is adapted for those learners, other important ways such as the use of assistive technology, multi-sensory teaching strategies, functional curriculum integration, differentiated instruction, Individualised Education Program-based adaptation, instructional scaffolding, and the use of non-material-based visual supports were absent in the sampled schools.

Furthermore, the ways in which the curriculum is adapted for these learners differed across schools, largely due to variations in teacher training and the availability of resources. The study highlights the need for more structured support systems to improve effective curriculum adaptation in inclusive educational settings. It concludes by recommending that policymakers and other stakeholders prioritize and strengthen inclusive education services through improved curriculum adaptation practices.

Keywords: learners with intellectual disabilities, require limited support, how curriculum adapted, primary schools

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a global priority aimed at ensuring all learners, regardless of ability, have equal access to quality education within mainstream settings. International frameworks stress removing barriers and promoting meaningful participation for every learner (UNESCO, 1994, 2020). This commitment is reinforced by global initiatives such as Education for All and policies supporting the rights of persons with disabilities (United

Nations, 1993). However, challenges persist, as many of the estimated 240 million children with disabilities worldwide still face exclusion and limited educational opportunities (UNICEF, 2021).

In Uganda, inclusive education is promoted to enhance equity, leading to increased enrollment of learners with disabilities that require limited support in mainstream schools. Nevertheless, implementation is hindered by inadequate resources, limited teacher training, and insufficient instructional support (Muwanguzi & Fiedler, 2019). While access has improved, effective participation and learning outcomes remain limited, especially in rural areas like Isingiro District, highlighting a gap between policy and classroom practice.

Curriculum adaptation plays a crucial role in inclusive education by modifying content, teaching strategies, and assessment methods to meet diverse learner needs (Manley, 2018). Strategies such as differentiated instruction and flexible assessment improve engagement and achievement (Al-Zboon et al., 2022; Rendoth et al., 2021; Strogilos et al., 2021). These adaptations are particularly important for learners with intellectual disabilities, who experience difficulties in reasoning, communication, and applying knowledge (AAIDD, 2021; Patel et al., 2020).

Globally, intellectual disabilities affect about 1–3% of children (WHO, 2023), while in Uganda the prevalence is higher, at 7.6% among children aged 5–17 (UBOS, 2017). These learners are more likely to be excluded from education (UNICEF, 2023), emphasizing the need for effective curriculum adaptation. However, limited data exist on learners requiring minimal support, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (Mkabile & Swartz, 2022; World Bank, 2020).

Despite its importance, there is little empirical evidence on how the curriculum is adapted in teaching learners with intellectual disability that require limited support. Most studies focus on its significance or challenges rather than how the curriculum is being adapted (Lee et al., 2010; Kandimba et al., 2023). This gap is especially evident in resource-constrained contexts like Isingiro District.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore how curriculum is adapted for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support in inclusive primary schools in Isingiro District, Uganda.

By filling this gap, the study enhances understanding of how inclusive education is implemented in classroom settings and generates evidence to guide policy development, teacher training, and educational practice in similar contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

How Curriculum is Adapted for Learners with Intellectual Disabilities

Use of Adapted Learning Materials

Adapted learning materials are consistently identified as a foundational element of curriculum access for learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support. Across contexts, evidence shows convergence on the use of simplified language, enlarged print, visual aids, and concrete or locally available resources to reduce cognitive load and enhance comprehension (Adewumi et al., 2017; Musenyente & Knigge, 2022). These adaptations enable learners to engage with the same curriculum content while accessing it through more concrete and multimodal formats.

Empirical studies further demonstrate that visual and tactile materials improve task completion, conceptual understanding, and learner independence (Bouck et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2023). Similarly, international evidence highlights that teachers often modify, supplement, or simplify materials without altering curriculum intent, thereby preserving academic standards while improving accessibility (Harfitt, 2017/2018; Drayton et al., 2020).

From a Universal Design for Learning perspective, these practices primarily align with multiple means of representation, as they ensure content is accessible through varied sensory and symbolic formats (CAST, 2018). However, while existing studies extensively document what materials are adapted, there is limited explanation

of how teachers systematically decide which adaptations are most appropriate for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support, indicating a gap in decision-making processes within classroom practice.

Use of Adapted Teaching Methods

Curriculum adaptation is strongly implemented through differentiated teaching methods that enable access to mainstream content. Research consistently shows that learners with intellectual disabilities benefit when instruction is simplified, scaffolded, and structured through guided practice and task analysis (Florian, 2022; Engelbrecht et al., 2022). In Ghana, multisensory and contextualised approaches improve comprehension, while in Kenya, peer-assisted learning and flexible grouping enhance inclusion (Nketsia et al., 2024; Oranga et al., 2020).

Similarly, studies in the United States confirm that scaffolded and varied instructional strategies significantly improve engagement and learning outcomes (Alnahdi & Schwab, 2023). These findings collectively reinforce the importance of learner-centred pedagogy that adjusts instructional delivery to learner needs.

Within the UDL framework, these practices align with multiple means of representation and action or expression (Rao et al., 2021). However, most studies focus on describing instructional strategies rather than examining their sustained implementation or teacher competency development over time. This reveals a gap in understanding the long-term institutionalisation of adapted teaching methods in inclusive classrooms.

Adaptation of Learning Activities

Adaptation of learning activities involves modifying how learners interact with content while maintaining intended learning outcomes (Biggs, 2007). Evidence from South Africa shows that breaking tasks into steps, guided practice, and cooperative learning enhance participation (Adewumi et al., 2017). In Uganda and Zambia, inquiry-based learning, peer tutoring, and task differentiation improve self-efficacy and engagement (Kakooza et al., 2024; Mbewe & Chitiyo, 2021), although implementation is constrained by contextual challenges such as large class sizes.

Research consistently shows that aligning activities with learner readiness and interests improves engagement and comprehension (Tomlinson, 2022). UDL-aligned studies further demonstrate that flexible activity design reduces instructional barriers and supports inclusion (Rose & Meyer, 2002; Wehmeyer et al., 2022).

These findings align strongly with multiple means of engagement and action/expression, as learners are given varied ways to participate and demonstrate understanding. Nonetheless, there is limited empirical attention to how teachers balance curriculum coverage with activity adaptation, particularly in high-stakes or examination-oriented contexts, highlighting a key gap in implementation feasibility.

Holistic Learner Well-Being Support

Holistic well-being is increasingly recognised as integral to inclusive curriculum adaptation. Inclusive education frameworks emphasise that social, emotional, and psychological support must accompany academic instruction (UNESCO, 2020). Learners with intellectual disabilities are particularly vulnerable to exclusion, low self-esteem, and anxiety, making psychosocial support essential.

Studies in South Africa show that positive teacher–learner relationships and supportive classroom environments improve engagement and persistence (Adewumi et al., 2017). In Uganda, culturally grounded approaches such as Ubuntu Bulamu strengthen belonging and inclusion (Ssebunya et al., 2023). Similarly, social-emotional learning interventions enhance academic engagement and peer interaction (Humphrey & Hebron, 2019).

These practices align with UDL’s engagement principle, which emphasises motivation and affective support (CAST, 2018). However, the literature remains largely fragmented, with limited integration between psychosocial interventions and curriculum planning. This indicates a gap in understanding well-being as a systematically embedded component of curriculum adaptation rather than an adjunct service.

Motivation and Learner Encouragement

Motivation is widely recognised as a central determinant of learning success. Self-determination theory highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key drivers of engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2020). In East Africa, strategies such as praise, feedback, and recognition enhance participation and confidence (Mbewe & Chitiyo, 2021).

Research further shows that autonomy-supportive teaching improves persistence and achievement, while technology-enhanced learning can increase motivation (Wehmeyer et al., 2022; Taylor et al., 2021). UDL similarly emphasises engagement as a core principle of learning design (CAST, 2018).

Despite this convergence, most studies focus on motivational strategies in isolation, with limited exploration of how motivation interacts with instructional adaptation across curriculum dimensions. This represents a gap in understanding motivation as an embedded outcome of curriculum design rather than a standalone teaching strategy.

Participation and Engagement

Participation is a key indicator of successful curriculum adaptation and inclusive practice. Evidence shows that flexible and socially inclusive curricula enhance engagement and interaction (Friend & Bursuck, 2021). Interactive strategies such as group work, demonstrations, and discussions improve learning outcomes across contexts (Kakooza et al., 2024; Mbewe & Chitiyo, 2021).

Cooperative learning has been shown to improve both academic and social participation (Adewumi et al., 2017), while differentiated response formats further increase engagement (Bouck et al., 2020). UDL reinforces this through multiple means of engagement, enabling learners to participate in varied ways (CAST, 2018).

However, existing studies often measure participation qualitatively without linking it to structured curriculum design frameworks, creating a gap in understanding how participation is systematically planned and assessed within inclusive curriculum models.

Pace-Based Teaching

Pacing refers to adjusting instructional speed to match learners' processing abilities. Learners with intellectual disabilities often require extended time and repetition for mastery (Friend & Bursuck, 2021). Studies in South Africa show that breaking lessons into smaller units and incorporating repetition improves understanding (Adewumi et al., 2017).

Flexible pacing enhances mastery, reduces cognitive pressure, and improves learner confidence (Tomlinson, 2022). UDL also positions flexible pacing as a universal design feature that benefits diverse learners (CAST, 2018).

Despite strong evidence of its importance, limited research explores how pacing decisions are made in real classroom settings, particularly under time constraints, indicating a gap in the practical implementation of pacing strategies.

Adaptation of Learning Content

Content adaptation involves simplifying, prioritising, and structuring key concepts while maintaining curriculum standards. Research shows that chunking content and explicitly teaching core ideas improves comprehension (Adewumi et al., 2017; Department of Education, 2010).

In the UK and other contexts, clarity, scaffolding, and vocabulary modification are central to content adaptation (Smith et al., 2023; Oluwale, 2017; Zinboun, 2021). UDL reinforces this through multiple means of representation (Rose & Meyer, 2002; CAST, 2018).

However, existing literature do not indicate how teachers balance simplification with curriculum coverage demands, highlighting a gap in understanding tensions between accessibility and academic rigor.

Revision

Revision is essential for reinforcing learning, particularly for learners with intellectual disabilities who may experience memory and processing challenges (Westwood, 2018). Studies show that repeated exposure and guided practice improve retention and confidence (Tomlinson, 2017; Browder et al., 2008).

In African contexts, structured revision improves academic outcomes and learner confidence (Mbewe & Chitiyo, 2021; Kakooza et al., 2024). UDL supports revision through varied repetition formats to enhance retention (Hall et al., 2012).

Despite this evidence, there is limited research on how revision is systematically integrated into daily instructional planning, suggesting a gap in understanding revision as a structured curricula component rather than an add-on activity

Reteaching of Lessons

Reteaching is a corrective instructional strategy used when learners do not achieve mastery. International studies show that teachers use varied supports to revisit misunderstood concepts (McLeskey et al., 2022). Similar practices are reported in Africa, where repeated scaffolding supports understanding (Adewumi et al., 2017).

Reteaching typically involves breaking content into smaller steps and providing additional explanations (Bouck & Park, 2019), aligning with mastery learning principles (Schalock et al., 2021). UDL supports this through flexible and responsive instruction (CAST, 2018).

However, the literature provides limited insight into how reteaching is scheduled, resourced, and sustained within overloaded curricula, revealing a gap in institutional support structures for reteaching practices.

Adaptation of Assessment Methods

Assessment adaptation ensures equitable evaluation of learners with intellectual disabilities. Traditional assessment formats often disadvantage these learners, necessitating alternative approaches such as oral responses, portfolios, and extended time (Banshinski, 2002; Department of Education, 2010).

Evidence from Zambia and South Africa shows that diverse assessment methods improve fairness and accuracy (Muzata & Mahlo, 2019; Adewumi et al., 2017). UDL strongly supports multiple means of expression, enabling learners to demonstrate knowledge in varied ways (CAST, 2018). Flexible assessment practices also improve equity and validity (Wehmeyer et al., 2022; Jung & Guskey, 2012).

Despite this alignment, limited inquiry examines how assessment adaptations are standardised across schools or aligned with national accountability systems, indicating a gap between inclusive assessment theory and policy implementation.

OVERALL RESEARCH GAP

Across all subthemes, the literature consistently demonstrates that curriculum adaptation improves access, participation, and learning outcomes for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support. Strong alignment with the Universal Design for Learning is evident across engagement, representation, and action/expression.

However, a key gap emerges: most studies describe adaptation practices in isolation but few examine how these adaptations are systematically integrated within a unified curriculum design framework at school level. In particular, limited research explores:

- How teachers coordinate multiple adaptation strategies simultaneously
- How schools institutionalise UDL-aligned practices across planning, teaching, and assessment
- How contextual constraints affect sustained implementation
- How adaptation impacts long-term learner progression, not just immediate outcomes

This study therefore positions itself to address this gap by examining curriculum adaptation as a holistic, interconnected system rather than isolated strategies, grounded in UDL principles.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

During this study, the Universal Design for Learning offered a practical approach to the ways how curriculum is adapted for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support as illustrated by the Center for Applied Special Technology (2024). UDL provides a structured framework for improving teaching and learning for all learners, grounded in scientific understanding of how people learn.

This framework promotes instructional practices that are purposeful, reflective, flexible, authentic, and strategic in supporting learners. It is guided by three core principles: multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement, and multiple means of action and expression. These principles direct how curriculum aspects such as goals, materials, teaching methods, and assessment can be adapted to meet diverse learner needs.

However, UDL has been criticised for not clearly outlining the sequence in which curriculum adaptations should occur. Effective adaptation should follow a logical progression, beginning with assessing learners' needs and providing multiple ways of presenting information. This should then be followed by varied methods of engaging learners, and finally by offering different ways for learners to demonstrate their understanding through assessment.

METHODOLOGY

This study explored how the curriculum is adapted for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support in inclusive primary schools in Uganda. Its main objective was to explore the ways in which teachers adapt the curriculum to effectively support these learners. The study was guided by the Universal Design for Learning, which informed understanding of how curriculum adaptations can enable learners to succeed in inclusive classroom settings. A qualitative research approach was used and an exploratory case study design was employed.

Data were collected from Isingiro District through interviews with 20 participants, including head teachers (4), teachers (4), and learners with intellectual disability that require limited support (12). To enhance the corroboration of the findings, interview data were triangulated with classroom observations and document analysis. The data were then analysed using thematic analysis.

Methodological limitations

Despite these strengths, several methodological limitations should be acknowledged. First, the use of a qualitative case study design means that the findings are context-specific and cannot be statistically generalised to all inclusive primary schools in Uganda or beyond. The results are therefore best understood as providing in-depth insights rather than broad generalisations.

Second, the small and purposively selected sample particularly the limited number of teachers and head teachers may not fully capture the diversity of curriculum adaptation practices across different school contexts, resource levels, or teacher competencies. While the inclusion of learners strengthens the richness of perspectives, their responses may also have been influenced by communication challenges associated with intellectual disabilities.

Third, although triangulation was used to enhance credibility, classroom observations and document analysis were limited to available school records and observed lessons during the study period, which may not fully

reflect long-term or routine classroom practices. Some adaptation strategies may therefore be underreported or context-dependent.

Fourth, as with many qualitative studies involving interviews, there is a possibility of social desirability bias, where teachers and head teachers may have presented their curriculum adaptation practices in a more favourable light, particularly regarding inclusive education implementation.

Finally, while the Universal Design for Learning provided a strong analytical lens, the study did not quantitatively measure the extent to which UDL principles were implemented or the direct impact of specific adaptations on learner academic outcomes. As a result, the study focuses on describing and interpreting adaptation practices rather than evaluating their measurable effectiveness.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable context-specific insights into how curriculum adaptation is conducted in inclusive primary schools and contributes to understanding inclusive pedagogical practices for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

During the study, ethical issues were addressed in accordance with the guidelines of the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology as follows:

Respect for persons was ensured through obtaining informed and voluntary consent from all participants after clearly explaining the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study in a language they understood. Beneficence and non-maleficence were achieved by designing the study to maximize potential benefits while minimizing any possible harm or discomfort to participants, and by closely monitoring the study process.

Privacy and confidentiality were maintained by anonymizing participant information and securely storing all data, with access limited to the researchers. Protection of vulnerable groups was ensured by obtaining consent from legally authorized representatives where necessary. Risk benefit assessment was conducted prior to the study to confirm that the anticipated benefits outweighed any potential risks. Ethical approval was obtained from a recognized Research Ethics Committee before commencement of the study. Voluntary participation was maintained by informing participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Compensation in form of transport and lunch fee was provided in a fair and non-coercive manner to reimburse participants for their time and any expenses incurred. Scientific integrity was upheld by ensuring that the study was conducted in a transparent, honest, and accountable manner throughout its implementation. Lastly, the study was conducted transparently to avoid any potential bias or conflict of interest between the researchers and the participants. To avoid non authorized persons to access the data, it is in custody of the researchers. This minimizes chances of non- authorised persons to access and use the data in a manner that contravenes with original purpose of the current study of which it was sanctioned.

THE STUDY RESULTS

How Curriculum is Adapted for Learners with Intellectual Disabilities

The participants were asked on how teachers adapt curriculum for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support in inclusive primary school. The study revealed the following subthemes: Use of adapted learning materials, adaptation of learning activities, holistic learner well-being support, motivation & learner encouragement, participation and engagement, pace-based teaching, adaptation of learning content, revision, reteaching some lessons and adaptation of assessment methods. The data obtained from the study are hereby detailed as follows:

Use of adapted learning materials

The interviews from the head teacher from school A revealed that one of the ways how curriculum is adapted for LIDRLS in their school is by use of adapted learning materials. To attest this, a head teacher from school A had this to say:

We have found using the adapted instructional materials can help learners with intellectual disability that require to understand better during teaching-learning. So, in this school, we encourage every teacher to adapt the instructional materials and use them in teaching such children who require limited support. This is done in every lesson and daily basis. At least we can at least testify this, because we are seeing some improvement in performance of those learners. (HTA)

On the similar observation, another participant said that teachers adapt the curriculum by teaching while using adapted instructional materials. Thus:

When my teachers are coming to teach us, he comes to our class with adapted instructional materials. He support me with adjusted instructional materials. The materials he uses to teach us with are designed and made in a way that can make us understand better. He gets materials and start making changes onto them to make us understand better. I would love to see my teachers continue teaching me while using such materials for they make my learning easy. Yesterday he used those materials and even today morning and our lesson was very good. This makes the lessons we have here very easy to learn. (LIDRLSD1)

The head teacher's recognition of the importance of adapting instructional materials for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support reflects the practical application of the Universal Design for Learning. In particular, this aligns with the UDL principle of multiple means of representation, which emphasizes presenting information in varied and accessible formats to support diverse learners. The reported consistent use of adapted materials across lessons enhances clarity, thereby improving learners' understanding and academic performance. This interpretation is reinforced by a learner's account that adapted materials make lessons easier, more enjoyable, and supportive of comprehension, participation, and confidence. Such outcomes illustrate not only representation but also multiple means of engagement through increased motivation and interest and multiple means of action and expression through enhanced participation and confidence in demonstrating knowledge (CAST, 2018).

Although class teachers did not explicitly report curriculum adaptation, insights from the head teacher (A) and LIDRLS, together with classroom observations, suggest partial enactment of UDL principles. For example, School C demonstrated stronger alignment with UDL through the integration of adapted materials across subjects, including Science, Mathematics, English, and Social Studies, alongside the display of supplementary instructional supports. These practices indicate intentional efforts to design flexible learning environments responsive to learner variability. In contrast, Schools A and B primarily utilised adopted rather than adapted materials, limiting the extent to which UDL principles were operationalised, while School D exhibited inadequate provision and use of adapted materials. This variation suggests a disconnect between inclusive education intentions and the consistent application of UDL-informed practices.

Document analysis revealed that all sampled schools (A, B, C, and D) formally acknowledged the provision of curriculum adaptation services for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support. Reviewed materials included school files, strategic plans, curriculum adaptation training resources, and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), although these were absent in Schools B and D. Mission statements except for School D emphasized curriculum adaptation, and policy provisions were evident in most schools, except Schools C and D. From a UDL perspective, this indicates that while institutional frameworks supporting flexible curriculum design exist, their translation into classroom practice particularly in providing multiple pathways for access, engagement, and expression remains inconsistent. These findings are consistent with existing literature on curriculum adaptation and inclusive pedagogy. Harfitt (2017/2018) observes that teachers adapt curricula through strategies such as replacing, revising, supplementing, omitting, and innovating instructional materials, which aligns with UDL's emphasis on flexibility and responsiveness to learner diversity. Similarly, Drayton et al. (2020) argue that creative curriculum adaptation can maintain core content while enhancing accessibility, thereby supporting inclusive instructional design. Juck et al. (2018) further highlight that adapting institutionally produced materials increases flexibility for learners with intellectual disabilities, reinforcing the need for differentiated instructional approaches.

Empirical evidence also supports the effectiveness of UDL-aligned strategies. Bouck et al. (2020) demonstrate that visual and tactile adaptations improve task completion and conceptual understanding in inclusive

mathematics classrooms, illustrating the value of varied representational formats. Likewise, Smith et al. (2023) report that structured visual supports and scaffolded reading materials enhance comprehension and promote learner independence, reflecting the impact of providing multiple means of representation and action.

Overall, the findings suggest that adapting instructional materials, when aligned with UDL principles, enhances content accessibility, fosters learner engagement, and supports diverse modes of participation and expression among learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support. However, the observed inconsistencies across schools indicate the need for more systematic and explicit integration of UDL principles to bridge the gap between policy and practice and to strengthen inclusive educational outcomes.

Use of adapted teaching methods

The data collected from one of head teachers revealed that another way how curriculum is adapted for learners with intellectual that require limited support is use of adapted teaching methods. To affirm this, the head teacher revealed that:

They form groups by grouping learners whose academic performance is upright. They do this to help the LIDRLS to get education support from their peers. Because, if the learners learn from their peers, they can easily understand as they support each other. The learner whose performance is fairly better is guided on the nature of support to provide to his counterpart and also on how to provide that kind of support to their colleagues. We have seen this work especially for some learners who feel shy to approach and interact with their teachers for learning support. The learners may do the work as a group and then they make a presentation later. **(HTA)**

The study findings from head teacher D who is also from school D showed that schools adapted the curriculum by use of adapted teaching methods. To confirm this, the head teacher recounted that:

In this school, we teach LIDRLS through use of participatory methods .For example we use “I do, we do and you do” as one of the teaching techniques. First of all, it helps a teacher to understand whether the learner has picked what he or she has been teaching them or not. Because when when you reach the time of giving them activity, you will have known this learner has got something if even I give them work, he or she is going to perform or to get average marks **(HTD)**

On the same point, a learner with intellectual disability that require limited support from school A noted that:

Teachers of our school always give us one on one support while doing correction. My teachers usually like to support me when I am alone. When I am alone they teach and explain many things to me and I understand better. This always do that every day after the lessons. They sit me under the nearby tree in our school compound and they explain to me everything that I have not understood. **(LIDRLSA1)**

Head teacher A (HTA) indicated that peer grouping supports learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support by promoting participation and confidence, particularly when higher-achieving learners guide their peers. This practice reflects the UDL principle of multiple means of engagement, as collaborative learning fosters motivation, persistence, and social interaction. Similarly, Head teacher B (HTB) explained that linking new curriculum content to learners’ prior experiences such as familiar games and real-life situations—enhances understanding. This approach aligns with UDL’s emphasis on activating background knowledge and making learning meaningful, thereby supporting multiple means of representation (CAST, 2018).

Head teacher D (HTD) further highlighted participatory teaching approaches, such as the “I do, we do, you do” model, which enables gradual release of responsibility and scaffolds learners toward independence. This reflects the UDL principle of multiple means of action and expression, as learners are supported in progressively demonstrating their understanding. Teacher TB emphasized child-to-child support, where academically stronger learners assist their peers under teacher guidance, while TD reported that structured grouping of learners with and without intellectual disabilities improved academic outcomes. These strategies collectively demonstrate the use of flexible, learner-centered pedagogies consistent with UDL’s call for varied pathways to engagement and expression. Additionally, a learner (LIDRLSA1) reported that one-on-one support after lessons enhanced

comprehension and confidence, further illustrating individualized scaffolding as a critical component of inclusive practice. Other participants, including HTC and LIDRLSC2, confirmed the use of adapted teaching methods, reinforcing evidence of differentiated instructional approaches.

Classroom observations provided further support for the enactment of UDL-aligned practices. In Schools A and B, peer learning structures were evident, with learners with intellectual disabilities grouped alongside peers without disabilities to promote participation, collaboration, and social interaction. This arrangement reflects UDL's emphasis on inclusive participation and flexible grouping. Documentary evidence corroborated these findings: exercise books from Schools A and C demonstrated structured group work with peer support, while lesson plans from School B incorporated strategies such as Think-Pair-Share, indicating deliberate implementation of interactive and collaborative pedagogies. These approaches suggest an emerging alignment with UDL principles, particularly in fostering engagement and providing multiple opportunities for learners to process and express understanding.

These findings are consistent with existing literature on inclusive pedagogy and differentiated instruction. Lani Florian (2022) argues that learners with intellectual disabilities can effectively engage with mainstream curricula when pedagogy, pacing, representation, and engagement are appropriately adapted, reflecting core UDL principles. Similarly, Engelbrecht et al. (2022) document the use of simplified instruction, guided practice, scaffolded support, and concrete examples in South Africa, all of which align with UDL's emphasis on structured and accessible learning pathways. Nketsia et al. (2024) further highlight that multisensory, learner-centered approaches—incorporating visual aids, hands-on activities, and real-life examples—enhance comprehension and task completion, reinforcing the importance of multiple means of representation and engagement.

In the East African context, Oranga et al. (2020) identify flexible grouping, peer-assisted learning, modified questioning, reduced task complexity, and extended learning time as effective adaptations, contingent on teacher preparedness and class size. Likewise, Alnahdi and Schwab (2023) report that scaffolded activities and varied instructional strategies improve engagement and learning outcomes in inclusive classrooms. Importantly, Rao, Ok, and Bryant (2021) demonstrate that UDL-aligned practices particularly those incorporating multiple means of representation and expression enable learners to access curriculum content without segregation, thereby reinforcing the relevance of UDL as a guiding theoretical framework for inclusive education.

Overall, the findings indicate that the use of peer support, scaffolded instruction, and learner-centered strategies enhances participation, comprehension, and confidence among learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support. When interpreted through the UDL framework, these practices illustrate how providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression can facilitate equitable access to learning. However, the variation in implementation across schools suggests the need for more systematic and explicit integration of UDL principles to ensure consistency and sustainability in inclusive classroom practice.

Holistic Learner Well-being Support

The study findings from head teacher C of school C showed that schools adapted the curriculum by providing learner well-being support services. With regard to this, head teacher C said these during the interview:

In the first place, in addition for academic support, we promote social emotional learning of those children by providing psychosocial support which includes guidance and counseling. we give guidance and counseling to these learners with Intellectual Disability that Require Limited Support by comforting them and we give them life skills on how to navigate different situation without necessarily dropping out of school. We support these child to know how they can go about the challenges they face in this world. Our focus is always on family challenges and also school related challenges. This has enabled our troubled learners to remain in school. (HTC).

On the similar observation, another participant who is the learner with intellectual disability asserted that:

Our teachers give us psychosocial support services by encouraging, guiding and counseling me. They sometimes they tell us to come to a certain area near the office and start telling me that I should not give

up with my education. They also tell me that my future is brighter when I remain in school and finish primary seven. They also tell me that I should not lose hopes that I will perform well if I read harder. (LIDRLSA1)

The head teacher's (HTC) emphasis on psychosocial services reflects the UDL principle of multiple means of engagement, which focuses on sustaining learners' motivation, interest, and emotional connection to learning. Guidance and counseling initiatives that build life skills, address personal challenges, and promote emotional well-being directly reduce affective barriers to learning. This is reinforced by Learner LIDRLSA1's account, where teacher encouragement fostered persistence, hope, and confidence clear indicators of increased engagement. Within a UDL lens, these psychosocial supports are not peripheral but central strategies for recruiting interest and supporting self-regulation among learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support.

Classroom observations in Schools C and D further demonstrate multiple means of engagement, as well as elements of multiple means of representation. The integration of songs into lessons serves not only as a motivational tool that reduces stress and enhances emotional readiness, but also as a multimodal way of presenting content. By combining auditory, rhythmic, and participatory elements, teachers make learning more accessible and meaningful, aligning with UDL's emphasis on offering diverse ways for learners to perceive and process information.

Document analysis showing curriculum adaptation that incorporates psychosocial support particularly in Schools B and D highlights a structured application of multiple means of action and expression. Guidance and counseling activities enable learners to express emotions, reflect on experiences, and develop coping strategies in varied ways beyond traditional academic tasks. This broadens how learners demonstrate understanding and participate in the learning process, consistent with UDL's call for flexible pathways for expression and communication.

Taken together, these findings indicate that learner well-being is integral to curriculum adaptation, and through a UDL perspective, psychosocial support operates across all three principles: it enhances engagement by addressing emotional needs, enriches representation through varied instructional approaches like songs, and expands action and expression via counseling and life-skills development. Formal planning and implementation of such supports therefore strengthen not only social-emotional learning but also inclusive participation in academic contexts.

This interpretation aligns with evidence from South Africa (Adewumi et al., 2017), where positive teacher-learner relationships and emotionally supportive environments are key to inclusive curriculum adaptation, and with UNESCO (2020), which emphasizes integrating social, emotional, and psychological dimensions into curricula. Similarly, the Ubuntu Bulamu intervention in Uganda (Ssebunya et al., 2023) demonstrates how relational and community-based approaches to well-being enhance inclusion. Framed through UDL, these approaches collectively underscore that psychosocial support is not an add-on, but a foundational component of inclusive curriculum design.

Overall, explicitly linking psychosocial practices to UDL principles clarifies that supporting emotional well-being is essential for reducing barriers to learning, particularly for learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support, who are at heightened risk of exclusion, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

Motivation and reinforcement strategies

In one of the interviews conducted in school D, a participant said they adapt curriculum for LIDRLS by motivating them and use of other reinforcement strategies which can enhance their learning. Pertaining this, one of the head teachers highlighted that:

In this school we reward efforts or any attempt made by LIDRLS. We offer these learners positive reinforcements such as prizes, tokens and others. This makes these learners to work hard and aim higher for a better performance. This strategy motivates our learners in this category and we have seen it work for us. This is seen to be promoting learners to develop their self-esteem. The school management is really

support this idea with some finances where possible. Here we have encouraged all our teachers to the same so that the learning support of these learners facilitated. **(HTD)**

On the same point, a LIDRLS commented that:

When our teachers are teaching us for example on the spelling of different vocabulary, they will explain, again and again to make sure we understand. If they find still we have not understood, our teachers will explain again. If they find that we have not understood, they will spend more other time while explaining to us until they see that we can now answer. **(LIDRLSA3)**

HTD's emphasis on positive reinforcement strongly reflects the UDL principle of multiple means of engagement, particularly in sustaining effort and persistence. The use of prizes and tokens to reward participation enhances motivation, builds self-esteem, and encourages continued effort among learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support. Within a UDL framework, such strategies reduce affective barriers by fostering a supportive emotional climate and reinforcing learners' sense of competence and value. The presence of strong management support further institutionalizes these engagement practices, ensuring they are consistently applied.

TA's description of reteaching as a curriculum adaptation strategy aligns closely with multiple means of representation. By revisiting content with extended explanations, teachers provide alternative ways of presenting information, allowing learners additional time and varied approaches to process and understand key concepts. LIDRLS3's reflection—that repeated explanations and teacher patience improve comprehension and confidence—illustrates how flexible representation supports cognitive access and reduces frustration, a key goal of UDL.

Classroom observations across Schools A, B, C, and D demonstrate an intersection of all three UDL principles. Participatory techniques such as question-and-answer sessions promote multiple means of engagement by actively involving learners, while also supporting action and expression by giving them opportunities to respond, articulate understanding, and practice skills. Repetition and direct instruction further reinforce representation, ensuring that content is accessible and retained through structured and scaffolded delivery. Together, these approaches create a responsive learning environment where learners can engage with, process, and demonstrate knowledge in diverse ways.

Document analysis strengthens this interpretation. School C's motivational motto, "Others did, I will," exemplifies engagement by cultivating a growth mindset and encouraging persistence. Similarly, School D's emphasis on structured support and encouragement reflects both engagement and action and expression, as learners are guided to participate confidently and demonstrate their learning with support. These documented practices show that motivation and reinforcement are not incidental but deliberately embedded within curriculum adaptation.

Overall, the findings indicate that motivation, reinforcement, and reteaching function across all UDL principles: they enhance engagement by sustaining interest and effort, support representation through repeated and varied explanations, and expand action and expression by encouraging active participation and feedback. This integrated approach strengthens both learning outcomes and learner confidence.

These interpretations are consistent with research in East Africa (Mbewe & Chitiyo, 2021), which highlights the role of verbal praise, formative feedback, and recognition of effort in increasing participation and confidence. Carol Ann Tomlinson (2022) similarly emphasizes that responsive teaching that affirms learner effort sustains motivation, while Taylor et al. (2021) note that adaptive learning approaches can further enhance motivation and performance. These perspectives align with CAST (2018), which positions learner engagement as central to the UDL framework.

UDL clarifies that motivation and reinforcement are not supplementary strategies but essential components of inclusive curriculum design. For learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support who may be at

risk of disengagement or low confidence such practices are critical for ensuring sustained participation, meaningful learning, and improved educational outcomes.

Participation and engagement

The study findings from head teacher B of school B indicated that, the teachers adapted the curriculum through participation and engagement of learners with intellectual disability that require limited support during any learning activities. To attest this, head teacher B narrated that:

Here, when we are teaching Learners with Intellectual Disability that Require Limited Support, we try as much as possible by encouraging them to actively participate in learning. We do this by involve these learners in the lesson. During the lesson we normally make sure we solicit and invite the responses from those learners. So when we are doing this we make sure those learners are focused on to have their full participation. This enables them to participate and keep fully engaged in learning activities. **(TB)**

In the similar observation, one of the learners with intellectual disability that require limited support expressed that:

They involve me in the lesson to enhance my active participation in learning activities. When my teachers are teaching us in class they make sure that I participate in the lesson. In most cases they call me to come in front of other learners to answer some questions and also to participate in the learning activities. This is what they always do. **(LIDRLSD2)**

The emphasis on active participation as a teaching strategy strongly reflects multiple means of engagement. Teachers' intentional efforts to involve learners by inviting responses and ensuring participation in all activities help sustain attention, interest, and motivation. Learners' reports that direct involvement enhances confidence and a sense of belonging further demonstrate how engagement strategies reduce affective barriers and promote social inclusion. Within a UDL lens, such practices are essential for fostering learner agency and creating emotionally supportive learning environments for learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support.

Classroom observations across Schools A, B, C, and D illustrate a convergence of UDL principles. Techniques such as repeating after the teacher and "Listen, Say, and Use" not only promote engagement through interaction, but also support multiple means of representation by presenting content in structured, multimodal, and scaffolded ways. These approaches help learners process and internalize information through listening, speaking, and practice, thereby strengthening comprehension and retention.

Document analysis further highlights how curriculum adaptation enables multiple means of action and expression. In School B, allowing learners who are unable to write to respond orally provides alternative ways of demonstrating understanding. In School A, differentiated instruction creates varied pathways for participation, while in School C, group work fosters collaborative learning and peer-supported expression. These strategies align with UDL's emphasis on flexibility in how learners interact with content and show what they know, ensuring that participation is inclusive and meaningful rather than uniform.

Taken together, these findings show that active participation operates across all three UDL principles: it enhances engagement by building motivation and belonging, supports representation through interactive and scaffolded teaching methods, and expands action and expression by offering diverse ways for learners to contribute and demonstrate learning. This integrated approach ensures that learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support are not passive recipients of instruction but active participants in the learning process.

These interpretations are consistent with research in Uganda and Zambia (Kakooza et al., 2024; Mbewe & Chitiyo, 2021), where group discussions, demonstrations, and contextualized examples enhance participation and peer interaction. Similarly, studies in South Africa (Adewumi et al., 2017) show that cooperative learning and intentional grouping increase on-task behavior and social engagement. Marilyn Friend and William Bursuck (2021) emphasize that flexible, socially inclusive curricula improve participation, while CAST (2018; 2024) underscores the importance of providing multiple entry points, choice, and active involvement as central to UDL.

Pace-based teaching

The data obtained from interviews with head teacher from school D indicated that one of the ways how curriculum is adapted for LIDRLS in their school is by pace-based teaching. To corroborate this, a head teacher from school D had this to point out:

We teach these children basing on their pace of learning and understanding. We teach these children at a slow pace so that they can understand better. As we teach these learners, we try to be as friendly as possible. We talk to them slowly during teaching and learning. When we are teaching them, we explain one step at a time. This enables them to grasp what we teach without much difficulties. **(HTD)**

In the same view, another participant put it that:

Our teachers teach me at a slow pace and explain different learning activities at a slow pace so that I can understand better. They teach me and explain slowly so that I can understand better. When explaining, the teacher does not rush me. He will make sure that he moves slowly until I understand. This is how my teachers are supporting me to learn. For them they do not explain things very fast. They explain one step at a time. **(LIDRLSD1)**

HTD's emphasis on adjusting the pace of learning reflects multiple means of engagement, particularly in supporting persistence and reducing anxiety. Slower instruction, step-by-step explanations, and a friendly teaching approach help minimize frustration and create a supportive emotional climate. LIDRLSD1's confirmation that unhurried, sequential teaching improves understanding highlights how pacing fosters confidence and sustained effort. Within a UDL perspective, flexible pacing is essential for maintaining learner motivation and ensuring that cognitive demands do not become affective barriers.

At the same time, pacing adaptations strongly align with multiple means of representation. Breaking content into smaller, sequential steps and delivering instruction gradually allows learners to process information more effectively. These scaffolded approaches ensure that concepts are presented in manageable ways, enhancing clarity and comprehension. Observations in Schools A and B where learners were given sufficient time to process and respond demonstrate how pacing supports deeper understanding by aligning instruction with learners' processing needs.

Documented practices in Schools C and D further illustrate multiple means of action and expression. Providing extended time for task completion enables learners to demonstrate their understanding without the constraints of rigid time limits. This flexibility allows learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support to respond thoughtfully and accurately, rather than being disadvantaged by processing speed. In UDL terms, such adaptations ensure that assessment and participation are equitable and reflective of actual learning.

Taken together, these findings show that pacing operates across all three UDL principles: it enhances engagement by reducing stress and supporting persistence, strengthens representation through scaffolded and sequential instruction, and expands action and expression by allowing adequate time for learners to respond and demonstrate knowledge. This integrated approach positions pacing not as a remedial adjustment, but as a universal design feature that benefits all learners. These interpretations are consistent with research by Marilyn Friend and William Bursuck (2021), who emphasize the importance of flexible pacing and additional time for learners with intellectual disabilities. Studies in South Africa (Adewumi et al., 2017) similarly show that breaking lessons into smaller segments, incorporating repetition, and conducting frequent comprehension checks enhance learning. These practices align with CAST (2018), which identifies flexible pacing as a core UDL strategy for reducing barriers and supporting diverse learners.

Adaptation of learning content

The interviews with the teacher of school A revealed that one of the ways how curriculum is adapted for LIDRLS in their school is by adapting learning content. To attest this, a teacher from school A had this to say:

We give simplified content as a special work for these Learners with Intellectual Disability that Require Limited Support. We do this during teaching and learning sessions. We usually give a simplified version of content to such learners as they usually find it difficult to attempt the work which has not been simplified. The simplified work makes them active in learning. **(TA)**

On a similar finding, a learner with intellectual disabilities that require limited support from school B affirmed that:

When we are learning, my teachers sometimes the first letters of words. This helps me to remember the information about the work they are teaching us. When they give us the first letter of each word, it becomes easy for me to remember. At least this can make my marks increase. Sometimes they write and give us some part of the work and they ask us to complete it. **(LIDRLSB)**

TA's observation that curriculum adaptation involves simplifying learning content reflects multiple means of engagement, as reducing task difficulty lowers frustration and increases learners' willingness to participate. When tasks are made accessible, learners are more likely to persist and engage confidently. LIDRLSB3's account highlighting strategies such as providing first letters or partially completed tasks demonstrates how scaffolding supports motivation and builds self-efficacy. Within a UDL perspective, such supports help remove affective barriers and encourage sustained involvement in learning.

Simplification strategies most directly align with multiple means of representation. Observations from School C, where diagrams and pictures were used across subjects, illustrate how visual supports make abstract concepts more concrete and understandable. Similarly, School A's effort to break down complex content and School B's structured approach to subject matter and language competencies show how teachers present information in clearer, more accessible formats. These approaches ensure that essential ideas are communicated effectively through varied and scaffolded representations, which is central to UDL.

The findings also reflect multiple means of action and expression. Providing partially completed tasks, prompts, and structured activities enables learners to actively demonstrate their understanding, even when full independent performance may be challenging. These adaptations allow learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support to participate meaningfully and show progress in ways that align with their abilities. Documented academic meetings in School C further indicate that such strategies are deliberately planned, ensuring that learners have appropriate pathways to engage with and respond to content.

Taken together, these findings show that content simplification operates across all three UDL principles: it enhances engagement by reducing cognitive overload and building confidence, strengthens representation through clear and multimodal presentation of concepts, and supports action and expression by scaffolding learner responses. This positions simplification not as lowering standards, but as making learning accessible while maintaining meaningful educational goals.

These interpretations are consistent with research in South Africa (Adewumi et al., 2017), which highlights curriculum adaptation through content modification, chunking, and explicit teaching of key ideas. In the United Kingdom (Smith et al., 2023), content adaptation emphasizes clarity, relevance, and scaffolding while maintaining standards, while studies in Jordan (Zinboun, 2021), Nigeria (Oluwale, 2017), and Turkey (Bümen & Yazıcılar, 2020; Yazıcılar, 2016) show that simplifying vocabulary and modifying content improves comprehension for diverse learners. Foundational work by David H. Rose and Anne Meyer (2002), alongside CAST (2018), further underscores the importance of flexible and multiple representations in inclusive curriculum design.

UDL clarifies that simplifying content is a critical strategy for reducing barriers to learning. For learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support, structured and accessible presentation of content is essential for improving comprehension, participation, and overall academic performance.

Revision

The data obtained from interviews with the teacher of school A revealed that another way of how curriculum is adapted for LIDRLS in their school is by giving learners enough revision. To demonstrate this, a teacher from school A asserted that:

I adapt curriculum for learners with Intellectual Disability who Require Limited Support by giving them revision a lot of work. The revisions they do in this school include; tests, supported corrections. When I give them tests I make a serious revision of those tests so that they can get something. These tests enable the learners with Intellectual Disability who Require Limited Support to learn question approach and they can act as platform for their learning practice. In case any of these learners fail these tests I also make sure that I support them to do corrections (TA)

On a similar perspective, another teacher for Learner with Intellectual Disability that Require Limited support stated that:

Learners with intellectual disability who require limited support in the classes where I teach I give them work or activities for revision and I make sure these learners are guided while doing that very revision. For learners who re forgetful when they do revision they can try remember what we previously taught them. So guiding learner when they are doing revision activities, it is very helpful to such weaker learners. (TC)

In connection to the above finding, another participant disclosed that curriculum for LIDRLS is adapted by providing the learners with a lot of revision work for practice. The participant was however quoted saying:

My teachers give me more activities for revision and practice. They give me more work for practice during the lesson. This support is very good because it helps me to make a lot practice as I prepare for paper and examinations. It helps to me prepare for weekly tests and end of term examination. (LIDRLSD1)

TA's and TC's emphasis on frequent revision activities reflects **multiple means of engagement**, particularly in sustaining effort and supporting persistence. Regular tests, guided corrections, and structured revision sessions help learners remain connected to the learning process by reinforcing success and reducing anxiety around forgetting. LIDRLSD1's reflection that revision builds confidence and prepares learners for assessments illustrates how these practices enhance motivation and self-efficacy. Within a UDL framework, such structured reinforcement reduces affective barriers and encourages continuous participation.

Revision practices also align strongly with **multiple means of representation**. Revisiting previously taught content—especially when supported by guided corrections—allows teachers to present concepts in varied ways and clarify misunderstandings. As noted in the findings, learners benefit from repeated exposure and alternative explanations, which deepen comprehension. This is consistent with UDL's emphasis on offering flexible and repeated opportunities to access and process information, ensuring that learning is not dependent on a single exposure.

In addition, revision activities support multiple means of action and expression. Tests, correction exercises, and practice tasks provide learners with multiple opportunities to demonstrate what they know, receive feedback, and improve their performance. Guided revision, in particular, allows learners to actively engage in the learning process by identifying errors and refining their responses. The structured scheduling of revision sessions across Schools A, B, C, and D such as the dedicated morning and evening revision periods in School A ensures that learners have sufficient time and varied opportunities to practice and express their understanding.

Taken together, these findings show that revision functions across all three UDL principles: it enhances engagement by building confidence and reducing anxiety, strengthens representation through repeated and clarified instruction, and expands action and expression by offering multiple opportunities for practice and feedback. This positions revision not merely as repetition, but as a deliberate and structured strategy for inclusive learning.

These interpretations are supported by research in Uganda and Zambia (Mbewe & Chitiyo, 2021; Kakooza et al., 2024), which shows that repeated exposure and structured revision improve retention and learner confidence. Studies in South Africa (Adewumi et al., 2017) further demonstrate that revisiting concepts using varied approaches such as visuals and demonstrations supports mastery. Carol Ann Tomlinson (2022) also emphasizes that effective revision should incorporate diverse instructional strategies rather than relying on repetition alone. These perspectives align with CAST (2018), which highlights the importance of providing multiple opportunities for engagement, representation, and expression.

UDL framework demonstrate that structured and varied revision is a critical component of inclusive curriculum adaptation. For learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support, consistent opportunities to revisit, practice, and refine learning are essential for strengthening understanding, improving performance, and promoting sustained academic success.

Reteaching some lessons

The data got from interviews with the teacher of school A indicated that curriculum is adapted for LIDRLS in their school by reteaching some lessons.

You can teach them after teaching them you find those learners they have, they have scored low marks you so reteach again. Here we usually reteach the lesson whenever we assess and realise that Learners with Intellectual Disability that Require Limited Support have not understood fully. You might be teaching a particular subtopic or activity, then when you discover that some learners have not got the concept you need them to acquire, then you go back to the same lesson you reteach it with some lengthy explanations. (TA)

A participant who is a learner 2 from school D pointed out that:

My teachers always teach the lesson, which they have already taught when they discover that I have not understood. For me I beg that my teachers should normally reteach the lesson so that I can understand better. Learning and getting what they have taught makes me love schooling. They reteach the learning activities whenever they realise I have not understood. (LIDRLSD2)

The emphasis on reteaching lessons reflects multiple means of engagement, particularly in sustaining effort and fostering positive attitudes toward learning. When teachers revisit content with patience and provide additional instructional time including morning, evening, and weekend sessions they create a supportive environment that reduces frustration and builds persistence. LIDRLSD2's reflection that repeated instruction improves enjoyment and attitudes highlights how reteaching strengthens learners' emotional connection to learning. Within a UDL framework, this ongoing support helps remove affective barriers and promotes sustained motivation for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support.

Reteaching most directly aligns with multiple means of representation. TA's explanation that teachers revisit subtopics with more detailed explanations demonstrates how content is presented in varied and clearer ways to enhance understanding. By offering alternative explanations, breaking down concepts further, and reinforcing key ideas, teachers ensure that learners have multiple opportunities to access and process information. This is consistent with UDL's emphasis on flexible and repeated presentation of content to accommodate diverse learning needs.

The findings also illustrate multiple means of action and expression. Additional instructional time combined with focused testing allows learners to practice, demonstrate understanding, and receive feedback in a structured manner. These opportunities enable learners to refine their responses and improve performance over time. The inclusion of planned remedial and reteaching sessions in school timetables across Schools A, B, C, and D further ensures that learners are given equitable opportunities to engage with content and show what they know, rather than being limited by initial misunderstandings.

Taken together, these findings show that reteaching operates across all three UDL principles: it enhances engagement by building confidence and positive learning attitudes, strengthens representation through varied

and repeated explanations, and supports action and expression by providing multiple opportunities for practice and assessment. This positions reteaching as a proactive and inclusive strategy rather than a remedial afterthought.

These interpretations are consistent with research in the United States (McLeskey et al., 2022), where inclusive schools adapt curricula through reteaching with varied supports. Studies in South Africa and Zambia (Adewumi et al., 2017) similarly show that reteaching—especially in multigrade or resource-constrained contexts—relies on repeated scaffolding to support learner understanding. Carol Ann Tomlinson (2022) further emphasizes the importance of using alternative instructional strategies during reteaching to address diverse learner needs. These approaches align with CAST (2018), which highlights flexibility and responsiveness in teaching as central to UDL.

UDL clarifies that reteaching is a critical dimension of inclusive curriculum adaptation. For learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support, structured opportunities to revisit and deepen understanding are essential for improving comprehension, enhancing engagement, and achieving meaningful learning outcomes.

Adaptation of learning activities

The interviews with the teacher of school B revealed that one of the ways how curriculum is adapted for LIDRLS in their school is by teaching using adapted learning activities. To confirm this, a teacher from school B was hereby quoted verbatim:

We adapt the curriculum for LIDRLS by teaching them using adapted activities. These activities provided to learners are graded in accordance with their capabilities. With this, we normally tailor the learning activities according to the learners' abilities. If we realise this learner may not manage a certain activity, we tend to simplify it so that it can be well attempted by this learner who require limited support. Because not every activity can be well attempted by this learner. Some learners can ably attempt the simplified activities. **(TB)**

In the similar perspective, another participant revealed that:

Every day my teachers when they are teaching me, they give me activities after making it simple for me. They prepare different activities for us in class. The activity they give me, they make it simple for me to do. They help to me do the activities with some guidance. The activities they sometimes give me to do is written separately on the other part of chalk board. I do these activities as my fellow pupils do a different one. **(LIDRLSB1)**

LIDRLSC2's observation that adapted learning activities improve performance reflects multiple means of engagement, as tailoring tasks to learner ability increases motivation and reduces frustration. TB's explanation that activities are graded or simplified to match learners' abilities further demonstrates how curriculum adaptation fosters inclusion by ensuring learners experience success. LIDRLSB1's reflection that manageable, guided tasks enhance accessibility and participation reinforces the idea that engagement is strengthened when learners feel capable and supported. Within a UDL framework, such adaptation reduces affective barriers and promotes sustained involvement in learning.

The use of illustrations, diagrams, charts, and real-life observations observed in Schools A, B, C, and D strongly aligns with multiple means of representation. These multimodal strategies make abstract concepts more concrete and accessible, allowing learners to process information through visual, experiential, and contextual forms. Taking learners outside to observe realia such as flowers and soil further enhances conceptual understanding by linking classroom content to lived experiences. This reflects UDL's emphasis on presenting information in varied ways to accommodate different perceptual and cognitive needs.

Curriculum adaptation also clearly supports multiple means of action and expression. Individualized and graded tasks, as documented in School B learners' books and School A and C logbooks, provide structured yet flexible opportunities for learners to demonstrate understanding in ways aligned with their abilities. By adjusting task

complexity and offering guided support, teachers enable learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support to actively participate and show progress without being constrained by uniform expectations. This ensures that assessment and participation are equitable and responsive to learner diversity.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that adapted learning activities operate across all three UDL principles: they enhance engagement by increasing motivation and reducing frustration, strengthen representation through multimodal and experiential teaching methods, and expand action and expression by providing differentiated and individualized tasks. This positions activity adaptation as a central mechanism for inclusive curriculum design rather than a supplementary adjustment.

These interpretations are consistent with research in South Africa (Adewumi et al., 2017), which highlights task breakdown, guided practice, and cooperative learning as key adaptation strategies. Studies in Zambia (Mbewe & Chitiyo, 2021) similarly emphasize peer tutoring, small-group instruction, and task differentiation, though noting contextual challenges such as class size and teacher training. Carol Ann Tomlinson (2022) underscores the importance of aligning activities with learner readiness and interest, while foundational UDL work by David H. Rose and Anne Meyer (2002), along with CAST (2022), highlights how flexible activity design enhances engagement and reduces instructional barriers across diverse contexts, including Finland, Poland, and Canada.

UDL indicates that adapting learning activities is essential for inclusive education. For learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support, thoughtfully designed and differentiated activities are critical for improving access, participation, and meaningful learning outcomes.

Adaptation of assessment methods

Our teachers help me to learn by keeping checking my progress. When they are teaching and they find that I have not understood in English language, they teach me and explain different learning activities in local language. They mainly use the language I understand most to understand better. When they are explaining, you find they mix both English and Runyankore-Rukiga. But when they explain using both English and local language, we understand better. **(LIDRLSB2)**

LIDRLSB2's emphasis on bilingual instruction reflects multiple means of representation, as presenting content in both English and the local language reduces linguistic barriers and enhances comprehension. By translating and explaining concepts in a familiar language, teachers make learning more accessible and meaningful for learners with intellectual disabilities requiring limited support. This dual-language approach also supports progress monitoring, as learners are better able to understand instructions and demonstrate understanding when language demands are reduced.

Lesson observations in Schools A, B, and C highlight strong alignment with multiple means of action and expression. Allowing learners to respond orally instead of writing, providing additional reflection time, and using group-based assessments ensure that learners can demonstrate understanding in varied ways. These adaptations reduce performance pressure and accommodate diverse communication and processing needs. Within a UDL framework, such flexibility ensures that assessment measures what learners know, rather than how well they can conform to a single mode of expression.

Document analysis further reinforces structured application of UDL principles across schools. Evidence from meeting minutes, lesson plans, assessment records, and school profiles shows intentional planning for inclusive assessment, including extended time, oral support, and differentiated question formats. Teachers' participation in inclusive education training and academic meetings also reflects ongoing efforts to strengthen engagement by improving teacher capacity to support equitable participation and reduce assessment-related anxiety among learners.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that bilingual instruction and alternative assessment strategies operate across all three UDL principles: they enhance engagement by reducing anxiety and supporting participation, strengthen representation through dual-language explanations, and expand action and expression

by offering multiple assessment formats. This integrated approach ensures that learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support are not constrained by language or assessment barriers.

These interpretations are consistent with research in Zambia (Muzata & Mahlo, 2019), which shows that diverse assessment methods strengthen curriculum adaptation for learners with intellectual disabilities. Studies in South Africa (Adewumi et al., 2017) similarly highlight oral assessments, portfolios, and extended time as effective inclusive strategies. The CAST (2018) further emphasizes that providing multiple means of expression is central to inclusive assessment design, ensuring learners can demonstrate knowledge in varied ways. In addition, the Curriculum Relations Model (Johnsen, 2012) underscores assessment as a core dimension of curriculum adaptation.

UDL highlights that inclusive assessment is not simply an accommodation but a fundamental design feature. For learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support, multilingual support and flexible assessment methods are essential for ensuring fair access, meaningful participation, and accurate demonstration of learning outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the study findings, several conclusions were drawn. The study explored how the curriculum is adapted to meet the learning needs of learners with intellectual disability that require limited support in inclusive primary schools in Isingiro Town Council, Isingiro District. Guided by the Universal Design for Learning, the study provides insights into current practices and existing gaps in curriculum adaptation and inclusive education as a whole.

Largely, the findings indicate that curriculum adaptation is only partially implemented. Although teachers recognise the need to adapt the curriculum in many different ways, these efforts are limited, inconsistently applied, and constrained by systemic, institutional, and individual challenges. This has critical implications for practice and policy.

The study found that teachers adapt curriculum in the following ways. These include: Adaptation of learning activities, holistic learner well-being support, use of adapted learning materials, motivation and learner encouragement, participation and engagement, pace-based teaching, adaptation of learning content, revision, reteaching some lessons and adaptation of assessment methods. These align with the theory of Universal Design for Learning which advocates for different ways in which the curriculum should be adapted to address learner diversity.

However, major gaps remain. For instance the key ways such as use of assistive technology, differentiated instruction, Individualised Education Program-based adaptation, multi-sensory teaching approaches, functional curriculum integration, scaffolding of instruction and use of visual supports were largely missing. Their absence suggests that curriculum adaptation in the schools is often superficial, focusing on immediate classroom practices rather than long-term planning and learner development.

The study concludes that curriculum adaptation is a continuous and deliberate process that must address how it should be adapted comprehensively. It is also influenced by financial, human, institutional, and socio-cultural factors, meaning improvement requires coordinated support from school leaders, policymakers, parents, and the wider community.

In a nutshell, although teachers have made some efforts to adapt the curriculum, these remain fragmented and lack depth. Effective curriculum adaptation requires a holistic, flexible, and system-wide approach that integrates clear learning goals, varied teaching strategies, appropriate assessment, assistive technologies, and strong collaboration.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, recommendations are proposed at both policy and practice levels to improve curriculum adaptation and support learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support.

Policy Recommendations

1 Develop a National Curriculum Adaptation Framework

The Ministry of Education and Sports should develop a standardised national curriculum adaptation framework that explicitly operationalises the Universal Design for Learning. This framework should clearly guide teachers on how to implement:

- multiple means of engagement for instance motivation, participation strategies,
- multiple means of representation such as simplified content, bilingual instruction, visual supports, and
- multiple means of action and expression for example oral assessment, extended time, differentiated tasks.

This will move curriculum adaptation from general policy statements to practical classroom implementation guidelines.

2 Institutionalise Individualised Education Planning (IEP)

The Ministry should mandate and standardise the use of Individualised Education Plans for learners with intellectual disabilities that require limited support. These should include:

- individual learning goals aligned to the national curriculum,
- adapted assessment strategies,
- documented instructional accommodations and
- regular progress review mechanisms.

3 Strengthen Teacher Training and Continuous Professional Development

Teacher education institutions should:

- integrate compulsory modules on curriculum adaptation and UDL,
- provide regular in-service training on differentiated instruction, assessment adaptation, and behaviour support and
- establish school-based professional learning communities focused on inclusive pedagogy.

4 Improve Staffing and Specialist Support Services

Government should recruit and deploy:

- special needs education teachers,
- school psychologists or counsellors and
- inclusive education coordinators at district level.

This will enable schools have technical support for implementing curriculum adaptations and psychosocial interventions.

5 Increase Funding and Resource Allocation

Adequate funding should be allocated for:

- Assistive technology learning materials,
- curriculum adaptation resources and
- school-based inclusive education support activities.

6 Strengthen Monitoring and Accountability Systems

The Ministry should develop inclusive education monitoring indicators that specifically assess:

- implementation of curriculum adaptations,
- use of differentiated assessment,
- learner participation levels
- availability of adapted materials and
- School inspection frameworks should explicitly include UDL-aligned indicators

Practice Recommendations

1 Structured Lesson Planning for Curriculum Adaptation

School leaders and teachers should ensure that lesson plans explicitly include:

- adapted learning goals,
- differentiated activities,
- alternative assessment strategies
- planned support for learners with intellectual disabilities and
- planning should reflect all three UDL principles rather than focusing only on content delivery.

2 Strengthen Differentiated and Multimodal Instruction

Teachers should consistently apply:

- simplified and step-by-step instruction,
- multisensory teaching (visual, auditory, and practical activities),
- use of real-life examples and concrete materials and
- flexible grouping strategies.

This enables the learners to access content through multiple pathways of understanding.

3 Institutionalise Alternative and Flexible Assessment

Schools should adopt structured inclusive assessment practices, including:

- oral examinations for learners with writing difficulties,
- extended time for tasks and tests,
- group-based assessment where appropriate and
- use of portfolios and practical demonstrations.

Assessment should measure learning outcomes, not format compliance.

4 Strengthen Collaborative Teaching and Stakeholder Engagement

Schools should establish structured collaboration involving:

- co-teaching or peer support among teachers,
- regular communication with parents/guardians on learner progress and
- collaboration with special needs professionals where available.

This ensures continuity of support across home and school environments.

5 Improve School Leadership Support for Inclusion

Head teachers should:

- allocate time for remedial teaching and reteaching within timetables,
- reduce administrative and teaching workload for teachers implementing inclusion,
- ensure availability of teaching aids and adapted materials
- promote a positive school culture that values inclusion and
- school leadership should actively model inclusive education practices, not only supervise them.

6 Promotion of Learner Participation and Well-being

Teachers should intentionally:

- create opportunities for active learner participation in all lessons,
- use encouragement and positive reinforcement strategies,
- provide structured psychosocial support and
- ensure learners feel safe, valued, and included.

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