

# Investigating the Practice of the Learning Support Programme in Schools



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## **Acronyms**

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HoDs	Heads of Department
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology

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## **1. Introduction**

For the purpose of this report, the learning support programme was initiated in response to Circular: Form Ed. 4/2004 when compensatory teaching (later referred to as learning support) became compulsory for all schools at all phases. The learning support programme was further underscored in the National Curriculum for Basic Education. In 2010, the first learning support teachers' manual and resource book were developed and revised in 2014 to be aligned with the core functions of the National Curriculum for Basic Education (NCBE) and to ensure that all learners are able to make progress and achieve according to their potential (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2016). It is against this background that the NIED research sub-division was tasked to investigate the practice of the learning support programme across phase levels (Junior Primary; Senior Primary; Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary). Therefore, this study was aimed to investigate how the learning support programme is practiced in schools.

## **2. Objectives**

The main objectives of this study were:

- To gauge the views of the participants on the practice of the learning support programme with regard to their awareness, access and understanding of the learning support teachers' manual and resource book.
- To determine how schools have been supported to implement the learning support teachers' manual guidelines.
- To investigate challenges that schools encounter with regard to the use of the learning support teachers' manual guidelines.
- To provide realistic recommendations on how to effectively implement the learning support programme in schools.

## **3. Research methodology**

### ***3.1 Research design***

This study adopts a mixed method design that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In this case, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data.

### ***3.2 Population and sampling***

The population of this study consisted of 14 regions with schools starting from Pre-primary to Grade 12, targeting school managers and teachers. The sample consisted of seven regions, 34 schools (five schools per region except the Zambezi region with only four schools due to the school holiday subsequent the Heroes day) with 518 participants (62 school managers and 456 teachers). It is worth noting that at each school, the Life Skills teacher was interviewed separately from other teachers because of the nature of their job descriptions in relation to this study.

### ***3.3 Data analysis***

The quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The qualitative data were transcribed verbatim. The transcribed data together with the field notes were coded and categorised into patterns for reporting.

## **4. Report outline**

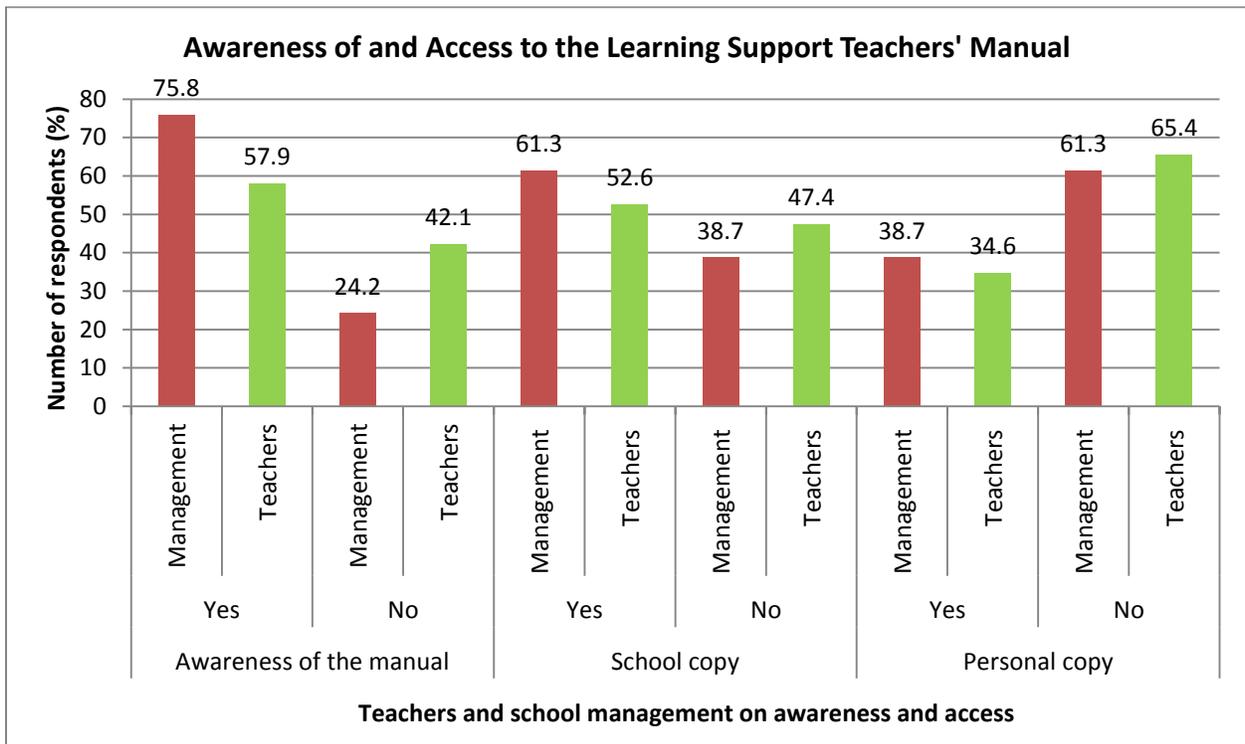
The report is organised into five sections: findings, appreciation of the learning support practice, summary of the findings, recommendations and conclusion. The main respondents included school managers (principals, acting principals, or HoDs) and teachers. The inclusion of both school managers and teachers was for validity purposes (John, 2015). Their responses are triangulated. Triangulating responses exposes similarities and counter opinions from the two groups (Caillaud & Flick, 2017).

### ***4.1 Findings***

The findings are reported under section twenty-eight headings, numbered 4.1.1 – 4.1. 28.

4.1.1 Awareness of and access to the learning support teachers' manual

This section is intended to establish the extent to which participants (school management and teachers) were aware of the learning support teachers' manual. It is also aimed to establish if schools had copies of the learning support teachers' manual, and whether teachers had access to them. Lastly the current section was intended to establish whether teachers and the school management had personal copies of the learning support teachers' manual or not.



**Figure 1: Awareness of and access to the learning support teachers' manual**

Figure 1 portrays that awareness and access to the learning support teachers' manual was satisfactory, ranging from 52.6% to 75.8% across the first two variables. However, only 34.6% and 38.7% of the teachers and school managers who had a personal copy of the manual as compared to 65.4% and 61.3% of the same group who don't have the manual, which is quite disturbing.

Generally, it is worth noting that the agreement percentage of school managers, across all three variables, was higher than that of the teachers; this implies that many school managers were

aware of the learning support programme and had access to the learning support teachers' manual than teachers. Reasons and scenarios leading to this outcome vary. In most schools, the interview revealed that only principals, HoDs, Life Skills teachers and Junior Primary teachers had copies of the learning support teachers' manual. Below are some of the participants' claims:

*"Yes, it was through my hand but now it went to the Junior Primary teacher. I don't have a copy now."* (**Principal**)

*"...yes, but only the Junior Primary teachers who are in possession of the document and not us at senior primary."* (**Teacher**)

*"Yes, we the Junior Primary teachers had a copy."* (**Teacher**)

*"The school has one but me as a Life Skills teacher, I don't have one."* (**Life Skills teacher**)

*"The existence of the manual is there but we did not make time to page through that manual to see guidelines..., it is only there for filing purposes."* (**Teacher**)

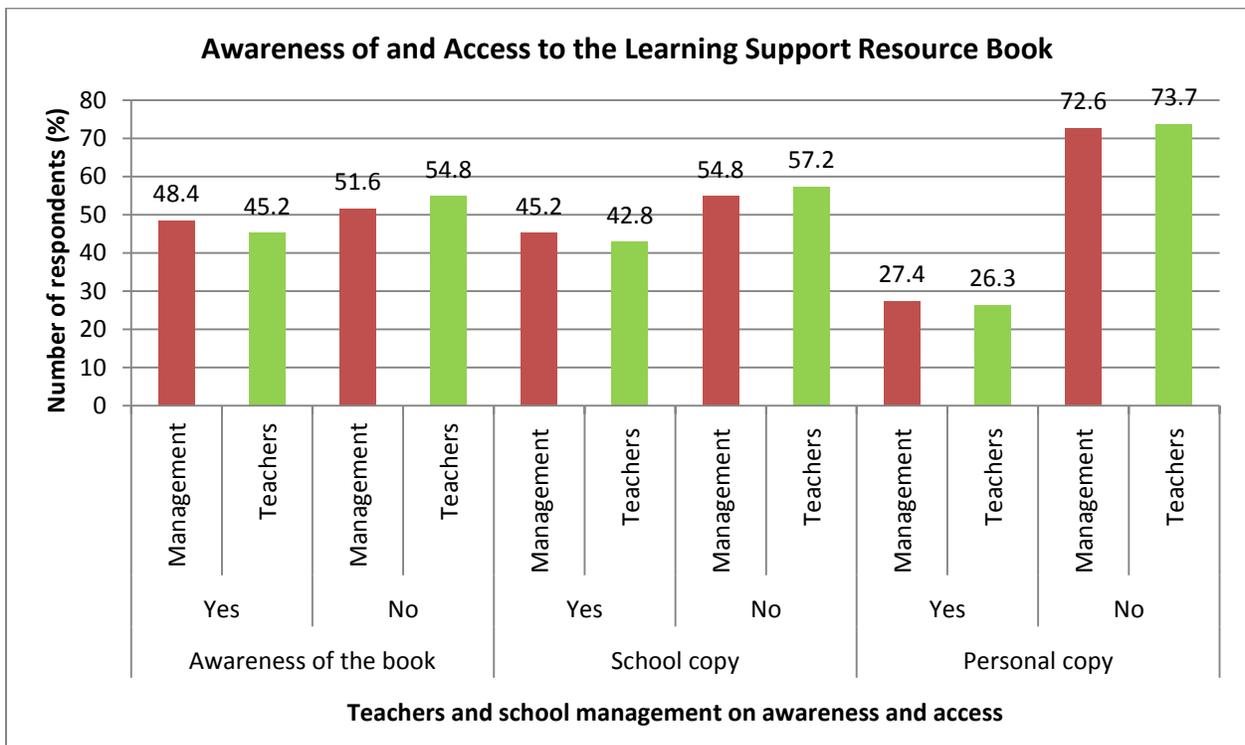
In addition, most of the Senior Secondary teachers claimed not to know anything about the document.

*"Myself, I am not in possession of the manual. I am personally did not familiarise myself with it at all. Honestly, I didn't know and really for me teaching at Senior Secondary I didn't have to take time and read that book."* (**Teacher**)

Generally, the awareness of and accessibility of the learning support teachers' manual varied among schools and participants. Although the majority of the school managers and teachers were aware of the teachers' manual and had access to the copy at the school, a significant number of teachers had no personal copies of the teachers' manual as compared to the school managers.

#### 4.1.2 Awareness of and access to the learning support resource book

In this section, data collectors wanted to find out if participants (school management and teachers) were aware of the learning support resource book; whether the schools had copies of the resource book, and if teachers had access to these books. This section was also aimed to establish whether teachers and the school management had personal copies of the resource book.



**Figure 2: Awareness of and access to the learning support resource book**

The results in Figure 2 reveal that awareness and access to the learning support resource book was unsatisfactory, ranging from 51.6% to 73.7% across three variables. This implies that the majority of the teachers and school managers were not aware of the resource book, plus the school or individuals had no copies of the book. Surprisingly, only 26.3% and 27.4% of the teachers and school managers had a personal copy of the resource book and this is worrisome.

Based on the results in Figure 2, the percentage of teachers who agreed across all three variables, was lower than that of the school managers. This trend denotes that many teachers were not aware of the learning support resource book and had no access to it unlike the school managers.

From the interview, majority of the participants revealed that they do not have copies of the resource book except the principals, HoDs, Life Skills teachers and Junior Primary teachers. Below are some of the participants' assertions:

*"I personally also don't have it but it is in the office." (Principal)*

*"Yes, I have a copy from the workshop and I gave it to the school." (Life Skills teacher)*

*"The school has one but as a Life Skills teacher, I don't have one." (Life Skills teacher)*

*"I didn't see anything concerning learning support as I just came here last year. And the problem is when I came here there was no principal." (Life Skills teacher)*

*"No I don't have, I saw it in the principal's office." (Teacher)*

*"No, I don't have and it is even the first time to hear about the resource book." (Teacher)*

*"Myself, I don't have a copy only the Life Skills teacher who went for the training." (Principal)*

*"So, I say no because I never laid my eyes on it, if it is here then it is not to my knowledge." (Principal)*

*"All the documents she was given, because the day she came from the workshop she briefed us on that and then she kept the books in her office. She also informed us that if we need the books we can come to her and borrow the books from her but it's in her position." (Acting Principal)*

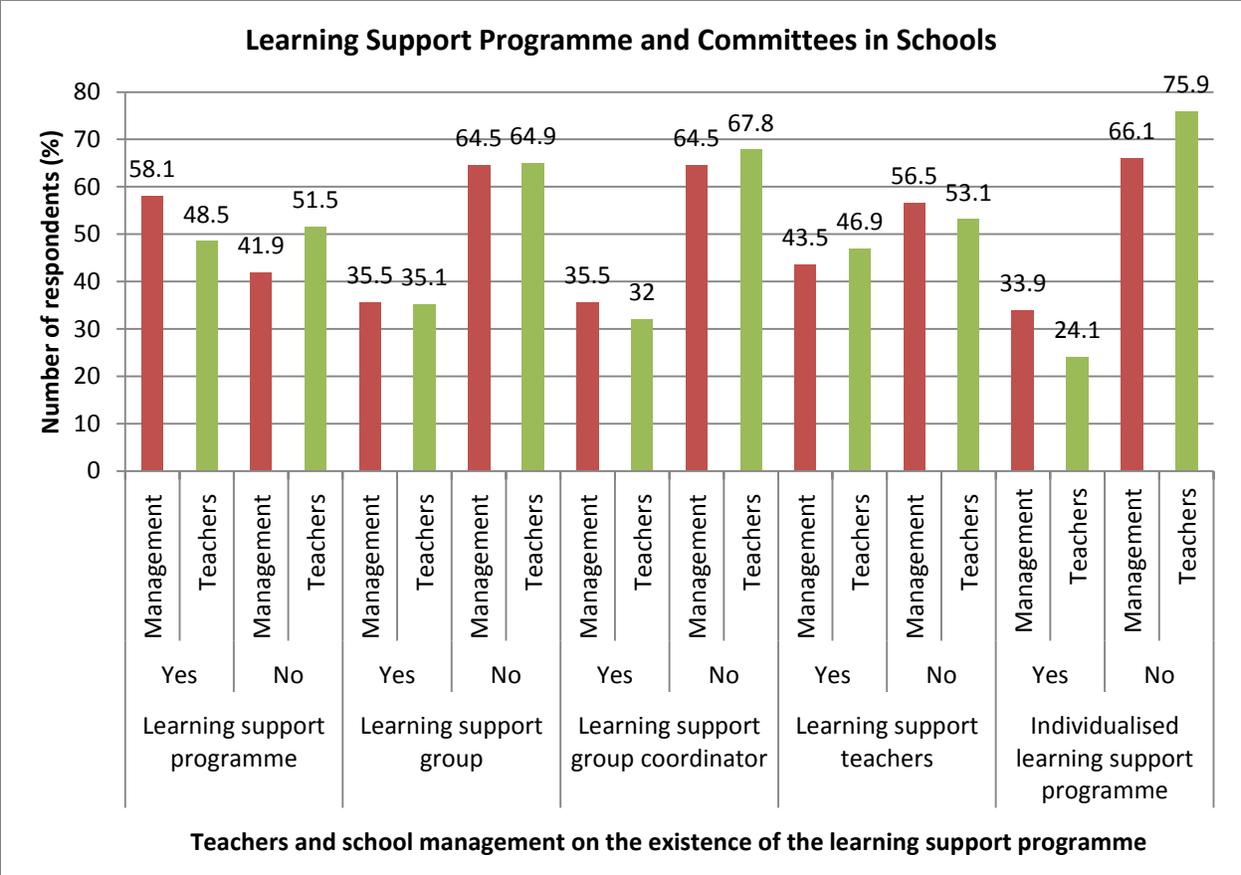
*"No, I don't have one, probably the lower grades." (Life Skills teacher)*

It seemed that there were no copies of the resource books at many schools. Similarly, the majority of the participants were not in possession of the learning support resource book. As a result, teachers and school managers found it difficult to practice the learning support

programme in schools due to the lack of resource books. In addition, at some schools, teachers appeared to practice the learning support programme but with insufficient understanding.

#### *4.1.3 The existence of the learning support programme and committees in schools*

According to the Ministry of Education (2014) it is expected from each school to organise learning support programmes according to the regulations stipulated in Circular: Form Ed. 7/2006 and the guidelines given in the manual. The responsibilities in the learning support programme at each school depend on how well established the responsible committee is, which should consist the principal, learning support teachers and learning support group coordinator among others. This section is therefore aimed to find out whether the schools have the learning support programme in operation with the learning support teachers, learning support group and the group coordinator in place. The section further intends to establish whether there are individualised learning support programmes at the schools, specifically for learners with special educational needs (learners with disabilities, impairments, learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural problems).



**Figure 3: Existence of the learning support programme and committees in schools**

With regard to the learning support programme, the results in Figure 3 reveal that 58.1% of the management indicated that they have the learning support programme in operation whilst 51.5% of the teachers disagreed. Figure 3 also indicate that the learning support groups, learning support group coordinators and the learning support teachers were not in existence at some schools; with responses ranging from 53.1% to 67.8% across the three variables. On the question whether there were an individualised learning support programmes at the schools that are meant for learners with special educational needs. On the contrary, 33.4% of the school managers responded yes; while the majority of the teachers (75.9%) indicated no. It is worth noting that there are discrepancies observed between school managers and teachers on the establishment of the learning support programme and individualised learning support programmes for repeating and struggling learners. This is a cause for concern as to whether to consider the school managers or the teachers’ responses. It could be possible that some school managers only said ‘yes’ to promote their schools and cover up weaknesses.

Generally, good practices were observed in some schools. For instance, though uncommon, some schools had learning support teams/committees headed by Life Skills teachers, including the management and some teachers. In other schools, despite the absence of learning support teams, the learning support activities were planned, timetabled, monitored and effective. However, in some schools, undesirable practices, deviating from the guidelines of the learning support teachers' manual were observed. These are what some participants have alleged:

*“We usually start at the beginning of the year, six weeks before we have our exams. We always start with our psycho-tests and during those tests and our assessments we pick up learners with problems and learning difficulties. Then we looked at them and see whose learners are in need of the learning support. Then the Life Skills teacher draws up the learning support timetable and start with that one.” (Principal)*

*“In Junior Primary from Grade 0 – 3, we focus on the Mathematics and Language (Literacy Skills) for learning support. We keep learners behind two times a week for an hour to get learning support. For Senior Primary, it is almost similar because we set up the timetable where learners have to stay in the afternoon twice a week per grade. We also looked at the previous grade of the child and try to focus on these areas.” (Teachers)*

*“At Junior Primary, teachers are responsible for their subjects and they do it in the afternoon with few selected learners when other learners go home. At the senior, after school again for Mathematics and Languages. The selected learners are staying behind for learning support with English and Mathematics teachers.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“At our school, learning support normally only appear in Junior Primary but with Senior Primary to Junior Secondary, I think teachers found it more difficult since; let me say you identify some learners in Grade 8 that you need them to stay and your last lesson is in Grade 5. The time you conclude your Grade 5 lesson, maybe the teachers who was in Grade 8 already conclude and automatically the learners will already leave before you. So, that's how we find it more challenging except for Junior Primary whose teachers are always in their classes.” (Acting Principal)*

Some schools practised the ‘up to the teacher’ approach. Each teacher had to decide how and when to provide support, and this was not timetabled, nor monitored. To the extremes, some school managers lamented the unwillingness of some teachers to render learning support, but mostly teachers’ reluctance to continue providing support in the afternoons, citing a number of reasons, among them too much workload, Covid-19 pandemic, and that they were not trained. Some of the participants stated that:

*“What we do, we just integrate within a lesson. Every teacher is given that opportunity to see how you cater and support your learners within the lesson. No learning support programme, we failed to do that because we really don’t understand. We really need much of the training and a lot on how to do it.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“We do not have learning support programme at the school at all. Other than this, it is up to us ourselves when we see the need to assist these learners but the programme in place there is nothing. And if you happen to identify a learner, you just have to refer him/her to the Life Skills teacher, that’s it.” (Teacher)*

*“Yes, on paper there was a programme drawn up by the learning support coordinator who was sent for the training but practically it is not done and put into practice due to some challenges. The truth is that we are not doing learning support programme and what we are doing is afternoon classes.” (Principal)*

*“We are having but not coordinated in a group. It’s only done by teachers as individuals.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“We don’t have a formal scheduled programme at the school; however, we encourage each teacher to integrate learning support into the lesson preparations.” (Principal)*

*“Since the beginning of Covid-19, I think the programme has stopped because of the unexpected circumstances that are normally happening but in the past before Covid-19 we used to have a*

*programme whereby teachers used to have afternoon classes with learners who used to have difficulties in various learning areas.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“Currently now we don’t have a learning programme but teachers identify learners who can’t catch up during their presentation of lessons and they can have extra time with these kids and give them extra support by the teachers without the others.” (Principal)*

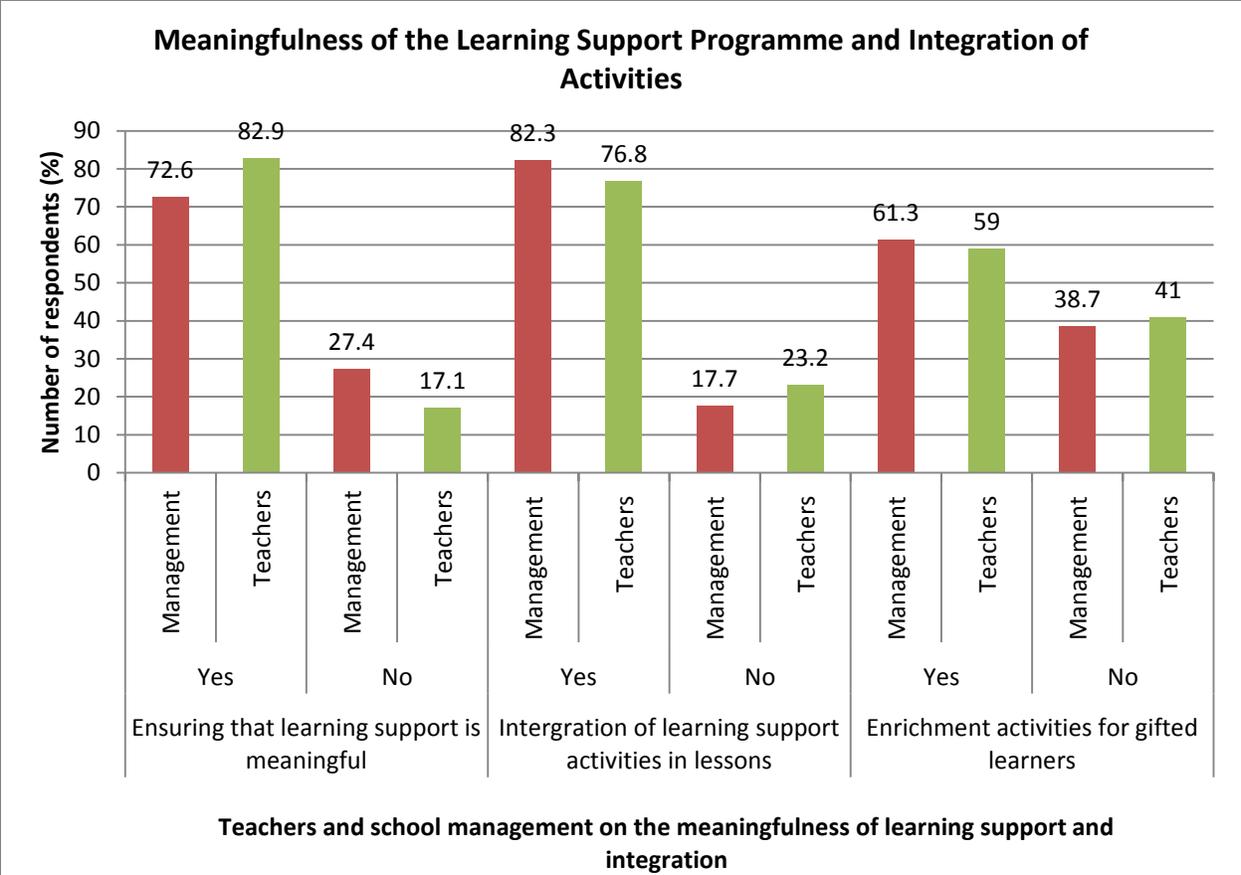
*“There is nothing, we don’t have that program in our school.”(Teacher)*

*“This one lies particularly in the hands of that particular teacher of that particular grade or subject. We don’t have that specific schedule for learning support, but each and every teacher has to identify those learners that need learning support and perhaps try to organize something more specifically in the afternoon after the lessons.” (Principal)*

Conclusively, schools without required committees (learning support) and programmes (individualised learning support programmes) jeopardise effective teaching and learning. As per the teachers’ manual, these committees and programmes are essential in schools in terms of supporting learners academically. The trend observed in Figure 3 needs further exploration across all five variables.

#### *4.1.4 Meaningfulness of the learning support programme and integration of activities*

In section 4.1.4, participants were asked whether they were making learning support meaningful to their learners and if they were integrating learning support activities in their everyday lesson preparations. In addition, participants were also asked if they were giving their gifted learners enrichment activities.



**Figure 4: Meaningfulness of the learning support programme and integration of activities**

As seen in Figure 4, the school managers (72.6%) and teachers (82.9%) made sure that learning support was meaningful to all the learners in their classes. Interestingly, the majority of the management (82.3%) and teachers (76.8%) agreed that they were integrating various learning support activities in their daily teaching and learning process to meet the needs of all the learners. The results presented in Figure 4 also reveal that 61.3% and 59.0% of the management and teachers respectively agreed that they used to prepare enrichment activities for gifted learners. Although, most of the school managers and teachers agreed, a significant number of them disagreed.

Generally, gifted learners were ignored, some participants acknowledged. Programmes for gifted learners largely comprised of unorganised and spontaneous activities, such as enrichment tasks, and no structured programmes. During the interview, many participants related that:

*“The gifted ones we don’t normally pay attention to them because those ones we think they know already, we are ahead with them we don’t waste time with them again. We focus mostly on the ones who are not coping well, we do not lie.” (Teacher)*

*“Honestly, those ones we neglecting them because they are handful and we know not paying much attention to them. Only giving them some praises here and there.” (Teacher)*

*“We don’t support them fully. We only give them activities to keep them busy, so they do not get bored and disturb others. These activities are not monitored whether they are effective or not.” (Principal)*

*“To be honest, speaking for myself, personally we neglect these smart learners because like I said I am always running behind with these kids’ work. The moment I see my fast learners are done then I only concentrate on the slow ones.” (Teacher)*

*“I don’t assist them. I only include them if I need them to assist me and they become teachers as me. I have never given them extra activities. We have never done it.” (Life Skills teacher)*

On the contrary, some participants stated in the interview that they provide enrichment or challenging activities for the gifted learners and effectively engaged such learners in teaching as ‘teacher learners’ who assist fellow learners with the completion of class tasks. Here is what some participants asserted:

*“Usually more on paper work and extra activities that are challenging them a little bit more. Like giving them research work, they go home and do little bit of research, more like academic work.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“Intellectual gifted learners get challenging activities; mostly because these learners are gifted. There are learners who answer everything once a teacher asked questions they already know the answers. It can be the same work but we structured it a little bit hard to see how they think but it is still the same work with the same answers. The way we structure the questions for the slow*

*learners and the intellectuals will not be the same. The level of questioning is different with the same activities and the same answers.” (Teacher)*

*“I used to motivate them to keep up the good job and I also used to challenge them with self-test activities to test their intelligence. I also give them opportunities to teach others where they can’t understand.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“We do support them. There is a time that they cannot answer one of the questions or they are confused to answer. So, we direct them that so this one you can use this method to give answers but there is another one that you can use. When they are done earlier than the rest of the group, you can give them extra work while others are completing theirs. Sometimes they can even get the easier questions wrong because they are too fast and we are assisting them to be a bit slow and focus on the instructions given.” (Teacher)*

*“We give them some challenging activities that are a little bit tough to keep them busy doing something. If you give them the same activities they finish quick and start making noise.” (Life Skills teacher)*

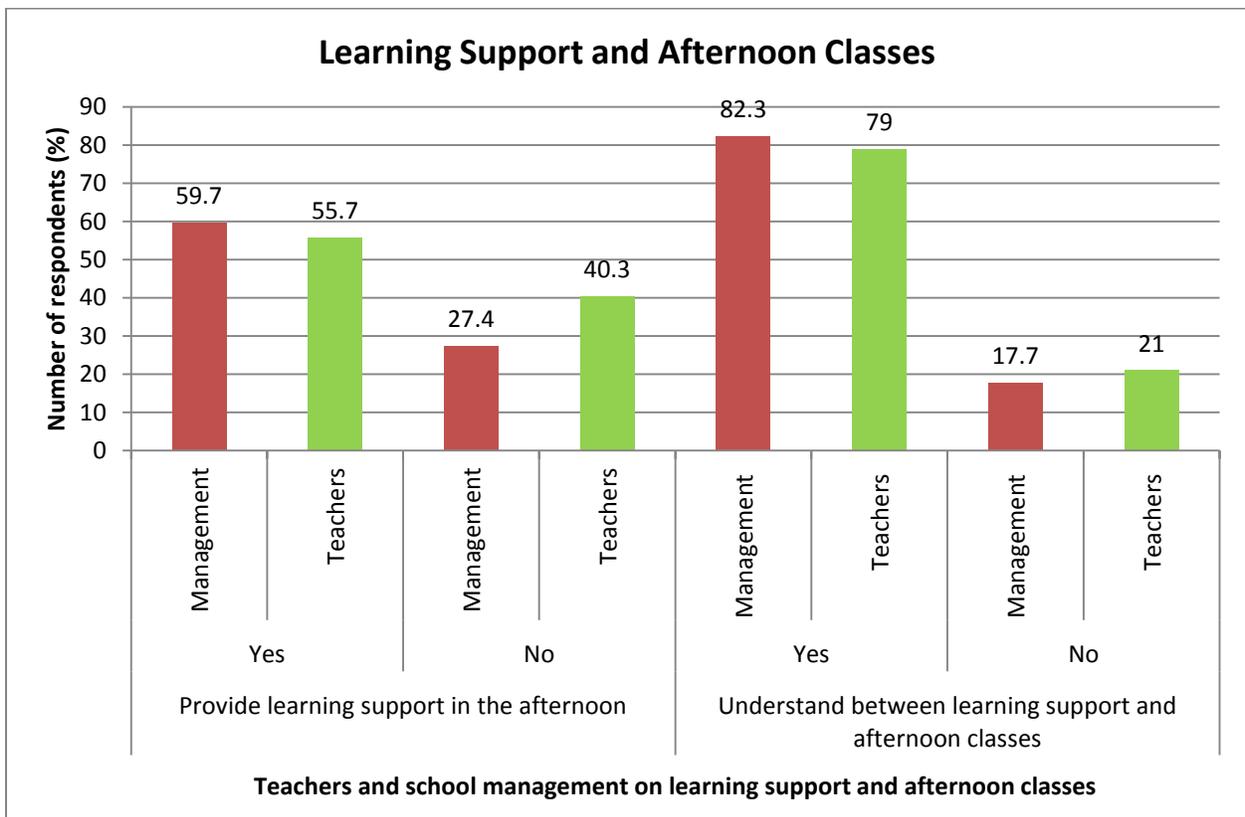
*“We give them extra work, the work that are a bit challenging even the work from the next grade just to keep them busy. Because if you neglect them, they will also fall in the category of those learners that are not performing well.” (Acting Principal)*

*“In my case, I write the objective on the chalkboard before I start with the lesson and the gifted ones will explain to other learners what the objective is all about and what does it mean in-depth. I am also changing / rotating them with groups and allow them to spearhead the practical activities.” (Teacher)*

It seemed that the many of the participants were including extra and enrichment activities into their daily lesson preparations to cater for the gifted/intelligent learners. In so doing, gifted learners are kept occupied while teachers were busy supporting the less gifted learners.

#### 4.1.5 Provision of the learning support and afternoon classes

Learning support refers to “extra support given to learners with special needs or any other learners with difficulties in learning” (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 129). As per learning support teachers’ manual, learning support should take place in the class immediately when a problem is identified during the lesson. On the other hand, afternoon learning support lessons or extra classes should be arranged for small groups of learners (not more than 15) on some weekdays. According to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2018), all struggling learners, at-risk learners, borderline cases, special need learners and repeaters should be provided with learning support. In the light of this, participants were asked whether they were providing learning support to their learners in the afternoon and if they understood that learning support differs from afternoon classes.



**Figure 5: Provision of the learning support to the learners and afternoon classes**

Figure 5 reveals that majority of the management (82.3%) and teachers (79.0%) understood that learning support differs from afternoon classes. However, 59.7% and 55.7% of the management and teachers respectively opted to provide learning support to their learners in the afternoon instead of doing so during normal lesson presentations (teaching and learning process) as compared to the management (27.4%) and teachers (40.3%) who were not. To some participants, rendering learning support was affected by extramural activities in the afternoons. This raises a concern as mostly learning support seemed to be understood as an afternoon session only. Learning support, instead, is indispensable to teaching “*learning support forms part of everyday teaching and should also be portrayed in lesson plans*” (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2018, p. 4). It should be rendered whenever the need arises. However, the management and teachers who understood learning support in this context cited over-crowdedness of classrooms as a hindrance.

*“The groups are sometimes too big and you can’t give attention that is needed to learners who need learning support.” (Principal)*

*“Classes are full and most of the time you have five or ten learners who need support and you have only 40mins and you have to attend to the gifted, moderate and severe cases. So, the time is very little and not be able to give attention to all at once. And in most cases learning support is in the afternoon, and learners are exhausted and mostly the child who needs learning support in languages is the same child who needs support in numeracy. And you cannot expect that child to be active as learning support is usually done in the afternoon. The timing is wrongly placed, in the afternoon.” (Teacher)*

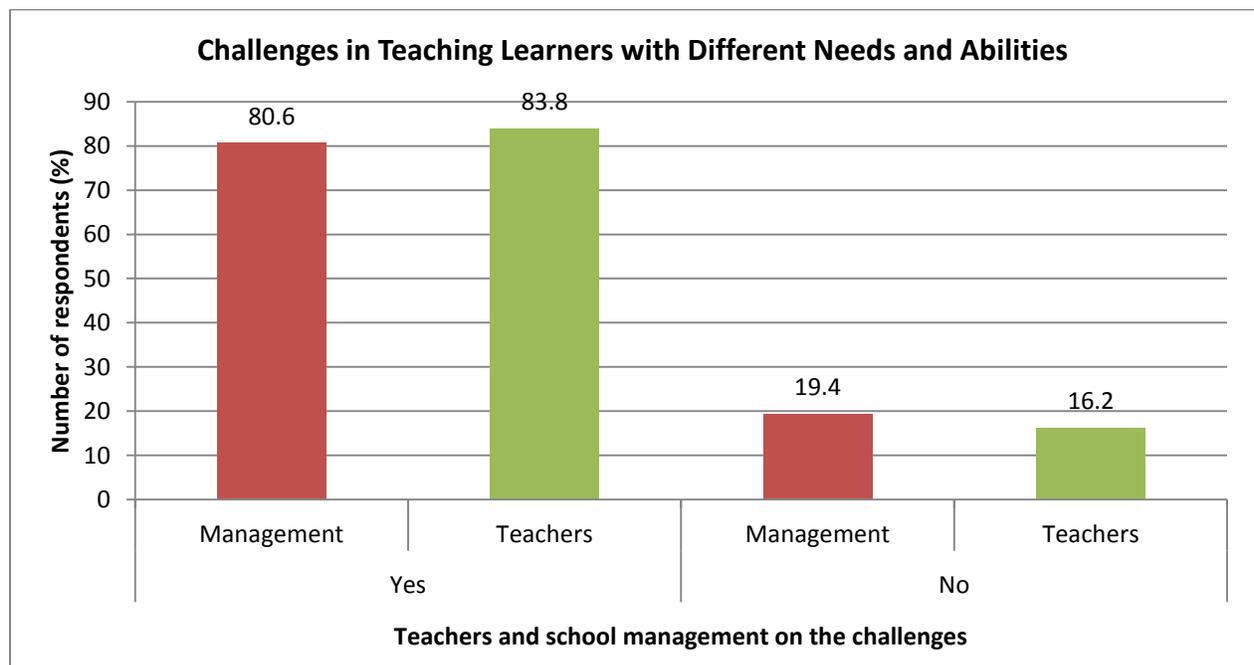
*“Learners are too many and the majority are far away the grades. We don’t know whether the learning support materials that we are have are the right ones or not.” (Principal)*

*“Workload of teachers; unavailability of learning support manual and resource books; overcrowded classes; too much administrative forms; and lack of induction / guidance for novice teachers in schools.” (Teacher)*

In spite of the concerns raised above, some participants acknowledged that for the learning support programme to be effective, it needs more effort and hard work from both teachers and learners.

#### 4.1.6 Challenges when teaching learners with learning difficulties

In order to improve the education system to better respond to learners’ needs, Namibia is committed to the policies of Learner Centred Education and Inclusive Education. These policies derive from the national education sector goals of access, equity, quality and democracy. Section 4.1.6 aims to establish whether participants were faced with difficulties and challenges when teaching a class of learners with different needs and abilities.



**Figure 6: Challenges when teaching learners with different needs and abilities**

As seen in Figure 6, the majority of the school managers and teachers with 80.6% and 83.8% respectively agreed that they were faced with challenges when teaching learners with different needs and abilities. From the interview, here is what some of the participants said:

*“Yes, for example in Grade 4, there are some learners who can’t read and wherever you give them something to write that learner cannot write, and sometimes a learner does not have a pen. You might give that child a pen, but still that learner can’t write. Automatically, you know already that this child is lacking some competencies from the previous grade or maybe it is an intellectual problem. Now you fail to assist a child. How can I teach this child to read and write in Grade 4?” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“...time, as it does not allow you to attend to all learners plus the class size. Learners are just too many and the way our school is, most of our learners are those that are struggling. So, many a times you give the lesson for the whole class and it is like the repetition. You are teaching something and you have to teach it even three times to make sure that learners master it.” (Teacher)*

*“Most of our learners lack motivation. They don’t come forth on their own and if you happen to pick up one or two and called them in the afternoon. They might not even turn up and you don’t know what else to do and how you can assist them. Or say go and do this once you are finish bring it to me because I want to check. They take it, keep it and they don’t come.” (Teacher)*

*“Parents also, sometimes you keep the kids after school to help them and then parents are complaining. Learners themselves, sometimes you want to assist but they don’t have the willingness or some of them they look at it as a punishment when they are looking at others going home. Instead of them taking what you supposed to give them, they are more concerned about others going home.” (Teacher)*

*“I have no necessary skills to help these learners, for example for the learners who can’t read and sound the words. I am not trained in that field; it is difficult to help these learners.” (Acting Principal)*

*“Learners who need support are the ones who always do not have a pen to write with, you provide a pen to these specific learners, still he/she is complaining, he/she cannot see well. There are always many of those excuses...” (Principal)*

*“Some learners don’t really understand the language like English. So sometimes you need to go back to their mother tongue which is difficult because I don’t speak that language. From there, there are some learners you try to teach but they fall out, so that is where the problem is.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“Some of these learners need specific teachers that are trained to help learners with special needs. Sometimes it becomes difficult for the staff members to assist these learners according to their needs. Some of the learners need to be referred.” (Acting Principal)*

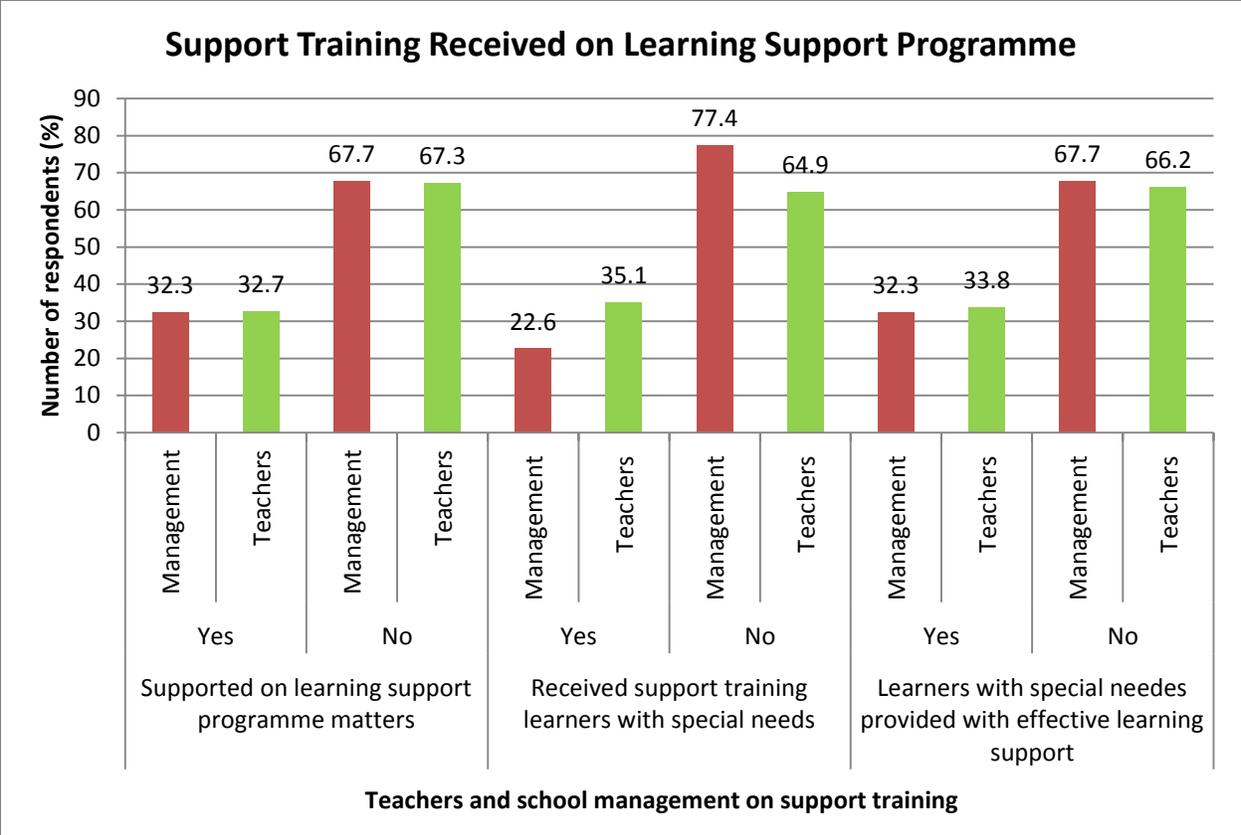
*“The keep repeating the same activities to these learners; planning extra classes for these learners and sit with them during lunch/break time.” (Teacher)*

*“Workload and overcrowded classrooms of about 80 learners per class; absent minded learners in the classroom; absenteeism and lack of motivation; lack of parental involvement.” (Teacher)*

It is observed from the interview that some of the facts that contributed to these challenges are teachers’ workloads, overcrowded classrooms, learners’ lack of motivation, parental involvement, lack of training, language barriers among others.

#### *4.1.7 Provision of support training in relation to the learning support*

As per the learning support teachers’ manual, some special needs learners are easy to identify as they are easily observable, e.g. a learner who walks with crutches. Other special needs may require a teacher to look at behaviour and the responses of a learner. This section is thus aimed to establish whether the participants have been supported on matters related to the learning support programme, received support training to enable them understand and meet the needs of the learners with special needs, and whether learners with special needs are provided with effective learning support in accordance with their unique educational needs.



**Figure 7: Provision of support training in relation to the learning support**

Figure 7 shows that participants’ support on matters related to learning support programme and training on how to meet the needs of learners with special needs were unsatisfactory, ranging from 64.9% to 77.4% across the first two variables. In addition, 67.7% and 66.2% of the management and teachers respectively disagreed that special needs learners at their schools were provided with effective learning support in accordance with their unique educational needs. From the figures provided by the respondents, this is a worrisome situation. Most of the participants stated during the interview that no training and/or workshops were given to them on how to support learners with special needs.

*“For me, I did a module Inclusive Education at the university but not specifically trained on learning support.” (Teacher)*

*“We attended only one or two day workshop and it was done very quickly as there was no funds. No in-depth training.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“I have trained at the first school that I was teaching is a special school for the Hearing and Impaired and during that they gave us learning support training. But it was in-service it comes in and out only about 45mintes.” (Teacher)*

*“I received on training, which was not so much broader because whenever we attend the workshop we always run behind time. I received one learning support training for the principals in 2017 or 2018. There is where I got information, which I normally apply at our school environment.” (Principal)*

*“I was trained as a Life Skills and basic counselling skills teacher. I think I have enough understating of what we have to do with learners in that situation.” (Acting Principal)*

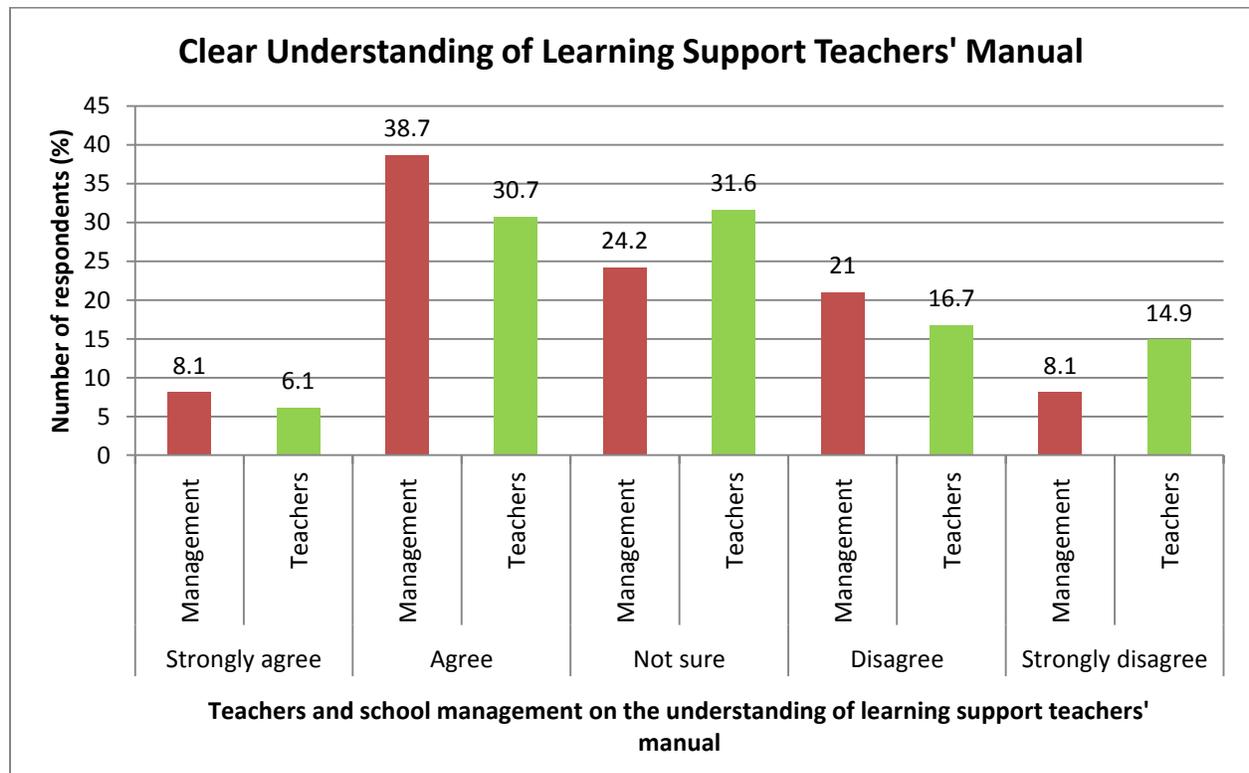
*“When I did my Advanced Certificate in Education, there was a module called HIV/AIDS and Counselling, which was about identifying learners’ needs and counselling them; but coming to the school; No, I did not receive support training although I am able to identify learners with problems.” (Teacher)*

However, participants claimed to receive only lectures on inclusive education during their professional training at the institutions of higher learning but that was not enough as it was more theoretical. At some schools, participants indicated that only the Life Skills teachers were normally invited by the advisory teachers for the workshops in special education on how to deal with learners with special needs. However, Life Skills teachers felt that such workshops were inadequate to empower them to handle learners with special needs.

#### *4.1.8 The clarity of understanding of the learning support teachers’ manual*

This section gauges participants’ understanding of the learning support teachers’ manual. As Figure 8 shows, the majority of the school managers (46.8%) agreed that they clearly understood the learning support teachers’ manual as compared to the teachers (36.8%). Similarly, although the agreement response was less than that of the managers, 31.6% of the teachers admitted that

they do not have difficulties understanding the guidelines set up within the teachers' manual. In addition, an equal number of teachers has indicated that they were not sure.



**Figure 8: The clarity of understanding of the learning support teachers' manual**

Despite a significant agreement response, 31.6% and 29.1% of the teachers and managers respectively who faced difficulties understanding the teachers' manual is a concern. Most disturbing are school managers who did not seem to have a clear understanding of the teachers' manual guidelines. If the member of management lacks understanding of the document, how do they assist teachers? Probing further during interview participants acknowledged numerous interpretations of the document. The most cited contributing reason was the lack of training or workshop that could help teachers to have a common understanding.

*“The instructions in the teachers' manual are clear only that we the teachers we need training on how to use them.” (Principal)*

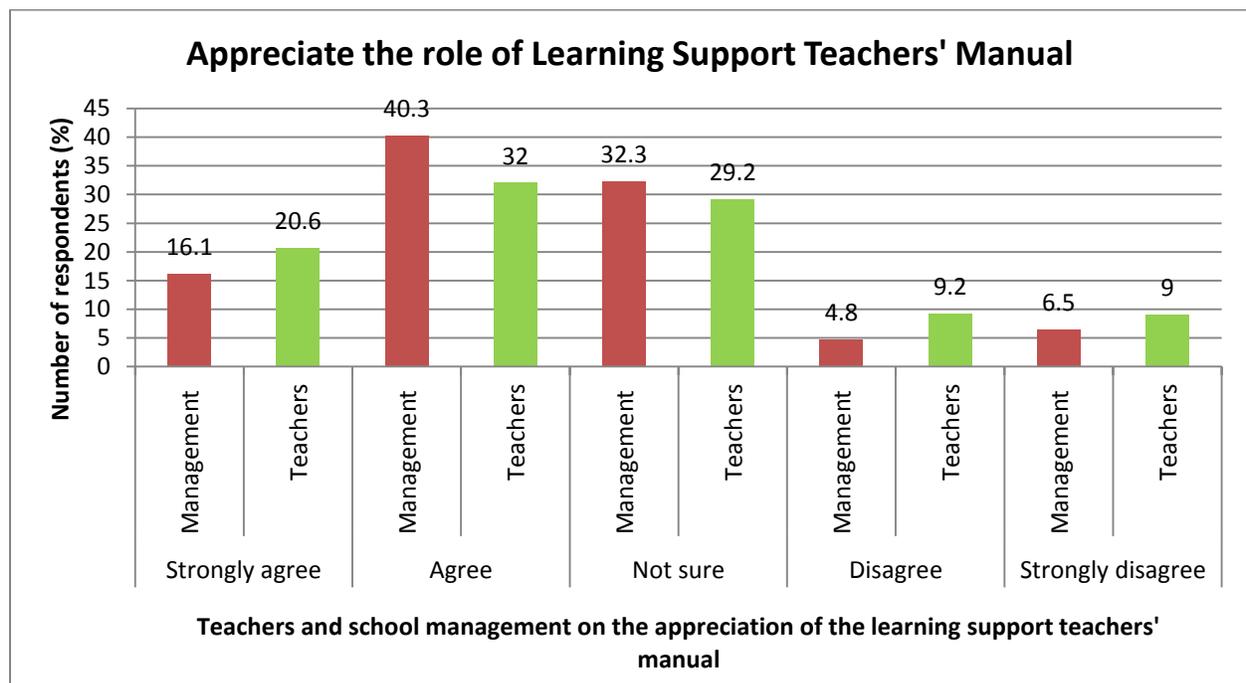
*“I just went through it a day because we did not get the training for that. It is somehow good but we don’t know how to use them unless we get the training.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“The existence of the manual is there but we did not make time to page through that manual to see guidelines that is give just to be honest, it is only there for filing purposes unless we get training.” (Teacher)*

In most cases, teachers and members of the school management were able to read on their own; a practice that they felt led to misinterpretations of the document. However, in some schools, although not that common, management initiated workshops for teachers to reach a common understanding. This effort, to some school management was insufficient, as interpretation accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

#### 4.1.9 Appreciation of the role of the learning support teachers’ manual

In section 4.1.9, participants were asked the extent to which they appreciated the role of the learning support teachers’ manual.



**Figure 9: Appreciation of the role of the learning support teachers’ manual**

As seen in Figure 9, the management (56.4%) and teachers (52.6%) appreciated the role that the learning support teachers' manual played in their daily teaching and learning process in terms of supporting learners. Although, most of the teachers agreed, 18.2% and 29.2% of the teachers disagreed and not sure respectively. During the interview, many participants mentioned that the manual was useful because it is regarded as a directive that guides school managers and teachers on how things should be done at the school level nationally for uniformity. Furthermore, the participants stated that the document helps teachers on how to support learners; and directs teachers in the right direction as to what to do and what not to do. For the participants who were not aware of the existence of the manual and/or not in possession of the manual, their responses were the opposite.

*“I don't know whether it is helpful or not because I didn't read or see the manual before.” (Life Skills teacher)*

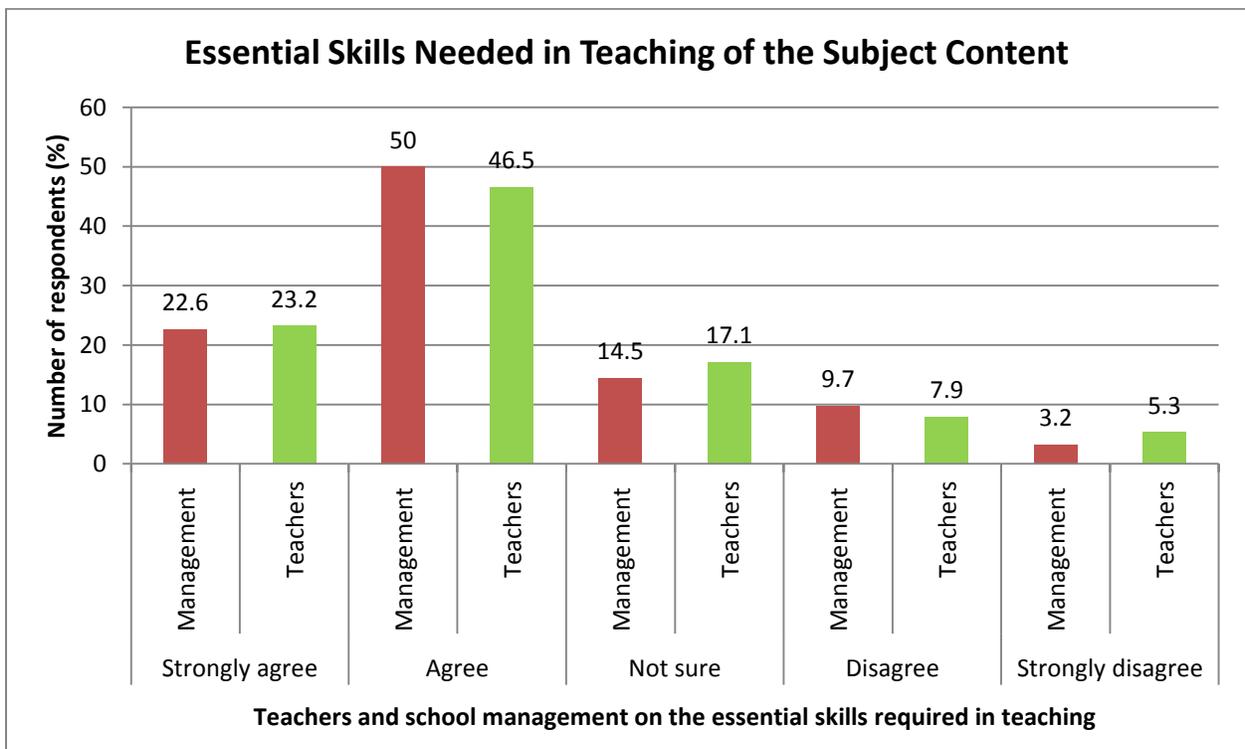
*“When I heard from other schools, the manual is the best of its kind. If I could have this one at our school, then our school could flourish.” (Principal)*

*“I am not sure of the content itself so I cannot say I appreciate what is really happening in that book. Something that I am using is the only understanding of how maybe I can help learners on learning support; really on the content of the book, I cannot say anything because I am not really familiar with the document.” (Acting Principal)*

Learning support teachers' manual seemed to have provided the school managers and teachers with relevant information to enable them do what they were not aware of. Although, it was unfortunate to the newly appointed and transferred teachers and school management who found it difficult to appreciate the teachers' manual as they were not in possession of the document.

#### 4.1.10 Essential skills needed in teaching the subject content

Participants’ responses on whether they possess essential skills needed in all learning areas, objectives and competencies are given in Figure 10. The majority of the management (72.6%) agreed that they possess essential skills as compared to the teachers (69.7%). A total of 14.5% and 17.1% of the managers and teachers were not sure and this is quite unsettling. It seemed that these participants were either not comfortable with the subjects/grades that they were teaching or doubting their own subject content knowledge.



**Figure 10: Essential skills needed in teaching the subject content**

During the interviews, some participants indicated that they have the skills to teach their subjects but cited few challenges that hindered them from delivering subject contents optimally. Here is what some participants said:

*“We cannot say yes, as you might be qualified to teach as a teacher and yet the learners are failing. It is also a challenge when it comes to the resources.” (Teacher)*

*“Yes, I am competent to teach that subject but then it depends on the type of the learners that you are dealing with as some learners are unable to read and some don’t understand.” (Principal)*

*“I am not a qualified teacher. I have a degree in theology but I believe that I am a qualified Life Skills teacher.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“Yes, I think but the challenge is this changing of teachers. We are made to teach some of the subjects that we are not qualified to teach because of the shortage of teachers. You find yourself teaching extra subjects.” (Teacher)*

*“I do have the skills but I need to be reminded. I need in-service training just to recap and get more skills as things are revolving. So, 50% I say yes and 50% I need support.” (Acting Principal)*

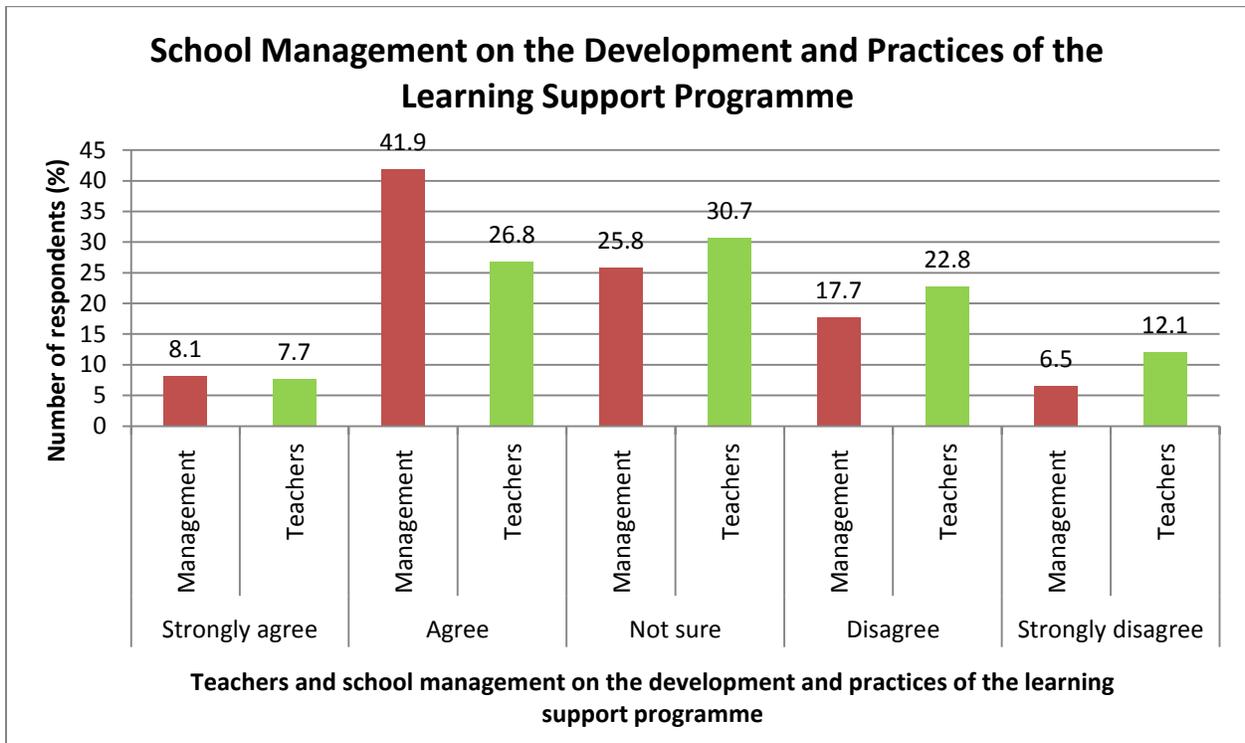
*“I am a qualified teacher and when it comes to teaching basic competencies, that one I know 100%. I was trained to teach the content of the subject that I am specialised. Yes, I have the skills but it depends also to the type of learners that I am teaching.” (Principal)*

*“We are knowledgeable and qualified but not professionally developed and supported because you have knowledge as a teacher but when it comes to delivery this is where the problem comes in.” (Teacher)*

It was observed from the interviews that participants experienced some challenges in the teaching and learning process regardless of their teaching knowledge and skills. These included the type of learners they were teaching as some learners could hardly read. Lack of resources on their disposals, lack of in-service training, subject areas of specialisation were some listed challenges among others.

4.1.11 *The development and practices of the learning support programme*

As stipulated in the learning support teachers’ manual, school principals and heads of departments are encouraged to study the manual since they play an important role in developing learning support programmes and learning support practices at their schools.



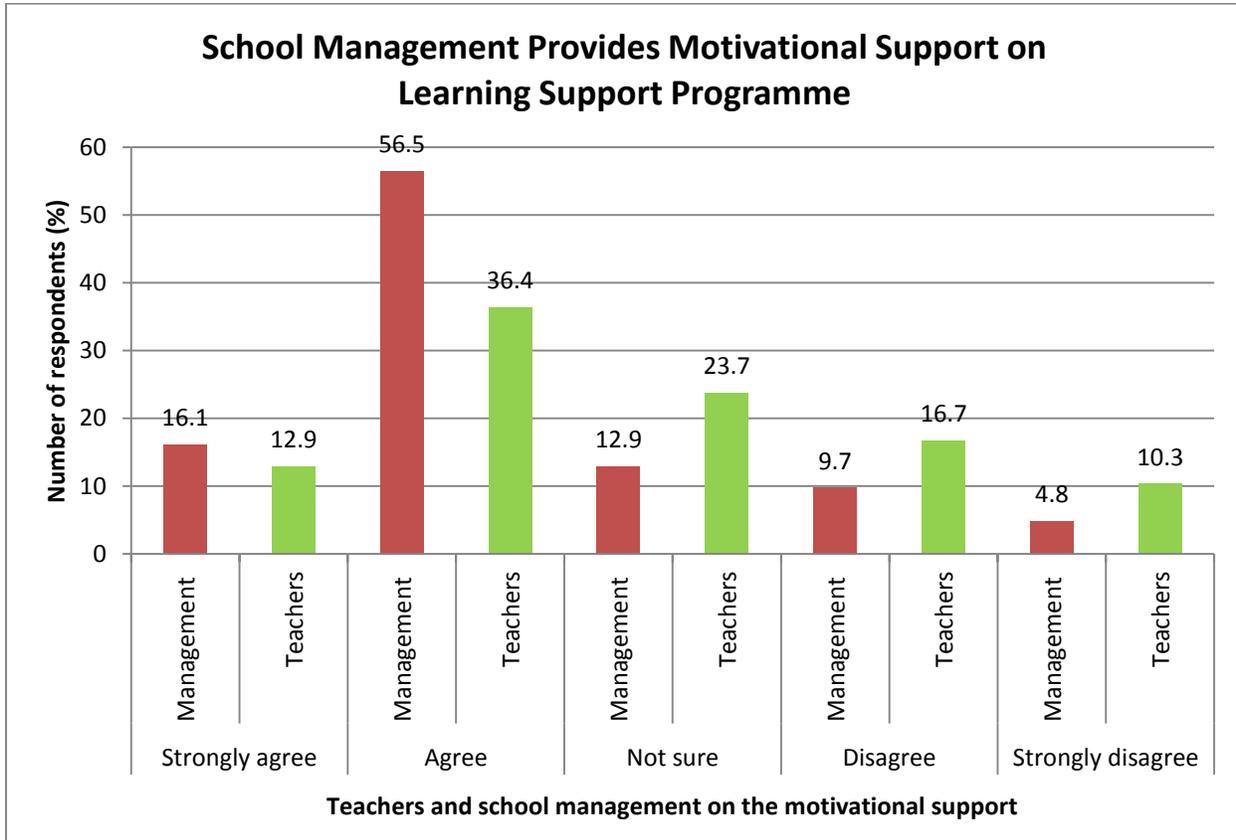
**Figure 11: The development and practices of the learning support programme**

Figure 11 indicates that 50% of the school managers agreed that they were developing learning support programmes and practices at their schools. However, 24.2% and 25.8% of the management disagreed and were not sure in response to the statement. Even though some of the management agreed, 30.7% and 24.2% of the teachers were not sure and disagreed on whether the school managers were really developing the learning support programmes and practices.

4.1.12 *Provision of motivational support on learning support programme*

The school principal is expected to provide leadership and “give motivational support for the learning support programme at his/her school” (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 6). Figure 12

provides responses to whether the school management were providing teachers with motivational support on learning support.

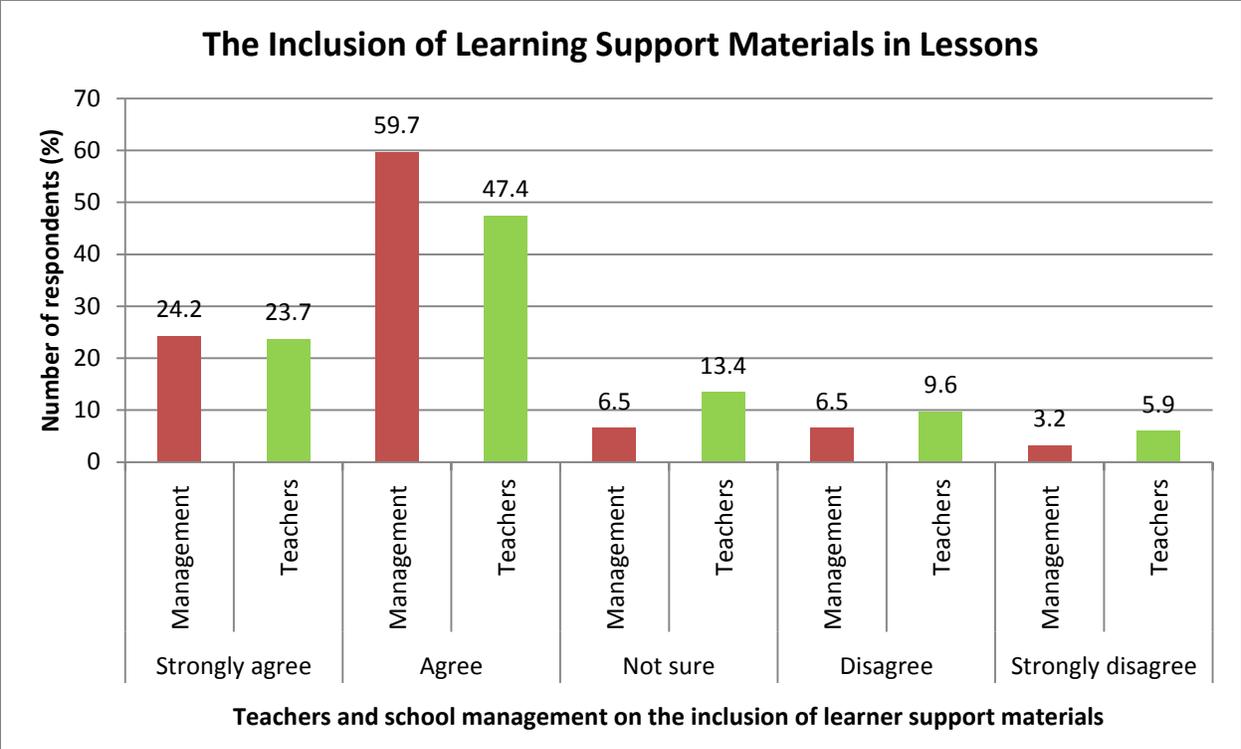


**Figure 12: Provision of motivational support on learning support programme**

According to Figure 12, the management (72.6%) and teachers (49.3) responded that there was motivational support in schools provided by the management on learning support. Meanwhile, only 14.5% of the management and 27% of the teachers who did not agree compared to the 12.9% (management) and 23.7% (teachers) who were not sure.

#### 4.1.13 Inclusion of learning support materials in lessons

Participants' responses on whether teachers were informed by the school management to include learner support materials in their lessons are given in Figure 13.



**Figure 13: Inclusion of learning support materials in lessons**

The majority of the management (83.9%) agreed that they informed the teachers to include learner support materials in their lessons. Similarly, although the agreement response was less than that of the management, 71.1% of the teachers agreed to the statement. However, 15.5% of the teachers admitted not having informed by their school management to include learner support materials in their lessons whilst only 13.4% (teachers) were not sure. Probing further during interview, participants stated the following.

*“We are encouraging staff members that English should not be neglected across the board, the learners must be taught the vocabularies because what make our learners to fail is responding in the way that the examiner don’t want to respond. For Junior Primary, the numeracy and literacy activities must be taught.” (Acting Principal)*

*“In Mathematics when you are teaching certain competencies or a topic and in order to accommodate all the learners we make use of teaching aids and when you calculate, you can draw the shapes, diagrams and pictures as that child might not understand the word sentences*

*because learners learn differently. Just to incorporate different types of skills because if they didn't pick up this skill then they pick up the other skill. At Junior Primary, we are trying to do the activities more practical and easy.” (Teacher)*

*“To incorporate the so-called “group work activities”, learners used to be in groups to learn faster from their peers. Lack of understanding of some terminologies is also a challenge.” (Teacher)*

*“Activities from known to the unknown and then if learners are not coping, you try to get activities from their daily activities.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“We give activities for learning support and compensatory teaching. Sometimes, if there are learners that are fast, you can prepare them with extra activities to keep them busy when they are done with normal activities.” (Principal)*

*“Pictorial activities that accommodate all the learners for better understanding.” (Teacher)*

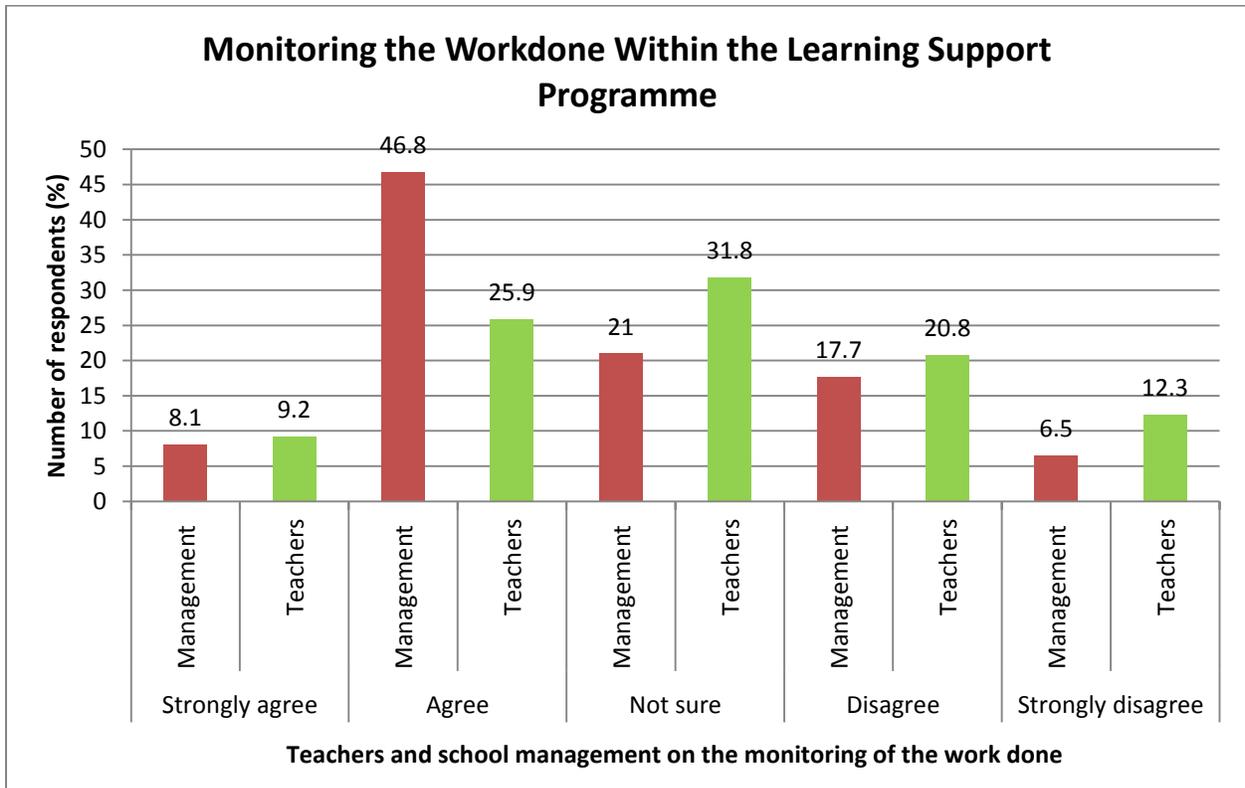
*“Activities that keeping learners work in groups to share ideas, get support and learn from their friends; In Maths, I give them calculation activities from known to unknown and from step to step.” (Teacher)*

In most cases, teachers, school management included, prepared appropriate learning support activities/materials to support their learners. To some participants, group work activities with shapes, diagrams and pictures allow learners to assist each other; a practice they felt led to learners' better understanding.

#### *4.1.14 Monitoring the work done within the learning support programme*

According to the learning support teachers' manual, it is expected that school management should monitor the work done by the learners within the support programme and ensure that continuous individual feedback is provided to both the learners and the parents. Thus,

participants' responses on whether school managers were monitoring the work done within the learning support programme are provided in Figure 14.



**Figure 14: Monitoring the work done within the learning support programme**

As shown in Figure 14, the school management (54.9%) agreed that they monitor the work done by the learners within the learning support programme and ensure that continuous individual feedbacks are provided to both the learners and the parents as compared to the teachers (35.1%). Contrary, 24.2% (management) and 33.1% (teachers) disagreed, while 21% and 31.8% of the management and teachers were not sure regarding the statement. Some participants stated in the interview that:

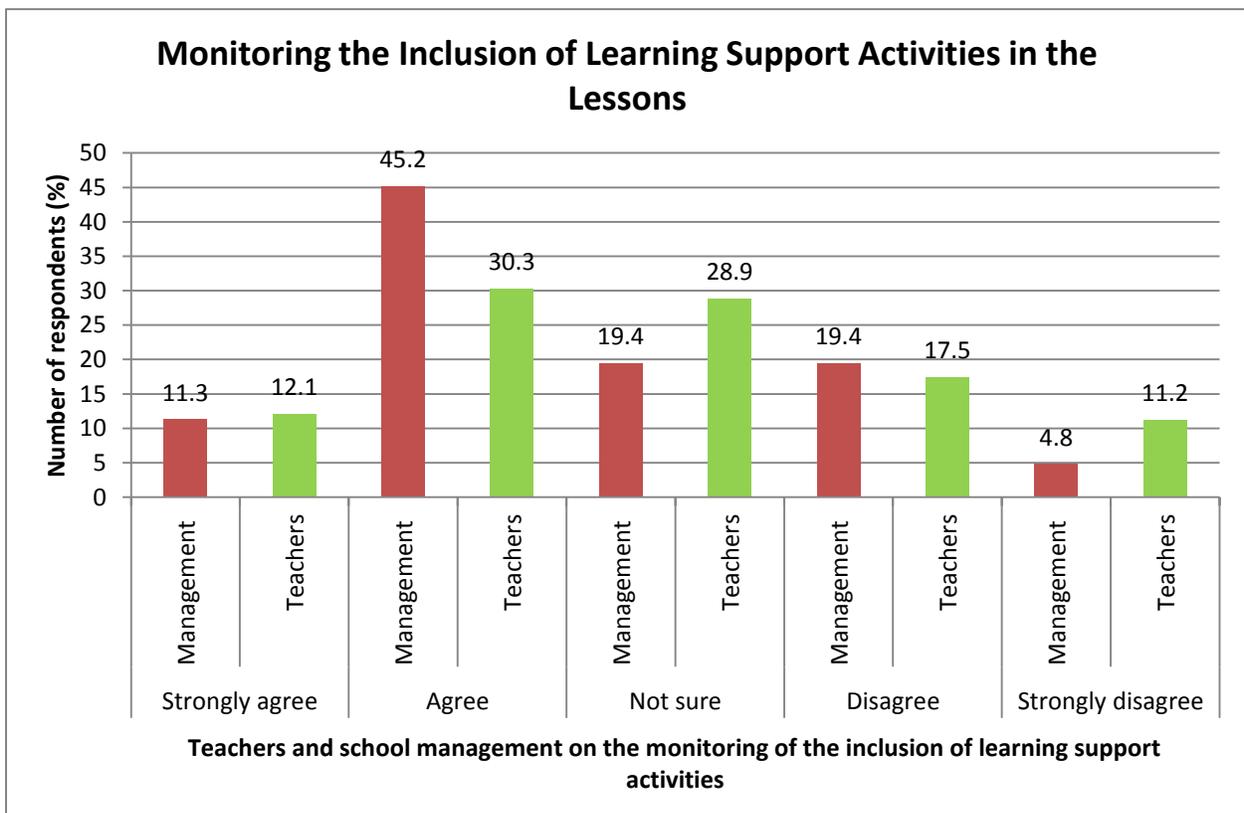
*“Previously, there were learning support from 15h00-16h00. The 30 minutes were used for mathematics and 30 minutes for languages. The management used to monitor whose teachers not around but it died a natural death due to poor learners’ turn-up.” (Teacher)*

*“The HoD is the one responsible for monitoring and she gave the feedback to me end of each week. We sit and discuss.” (Teacher)*

In conclusion, therefore, teacher participants reiterated that some school management were very active and supportive in assisting teachers who found it difficult to help learners during the learning support programme. This means that some school management were involved in the planning of activities and facilitated the learning support programme on a daily basis. However, at some schools, there were no learning support programmes, hence the school management had nothing to monitor and/or facilitate.

#### 4.1.15 Monitoring the inclusion of the learning support activities in the lessons

In section 4.1.15, participants were asked about the extent to which the school management monitor the inclusion of the learning support activities in teachers’ everyday lessons.



**Figure 15: Monitoring the inclusion of the learning support activities in the lessons**

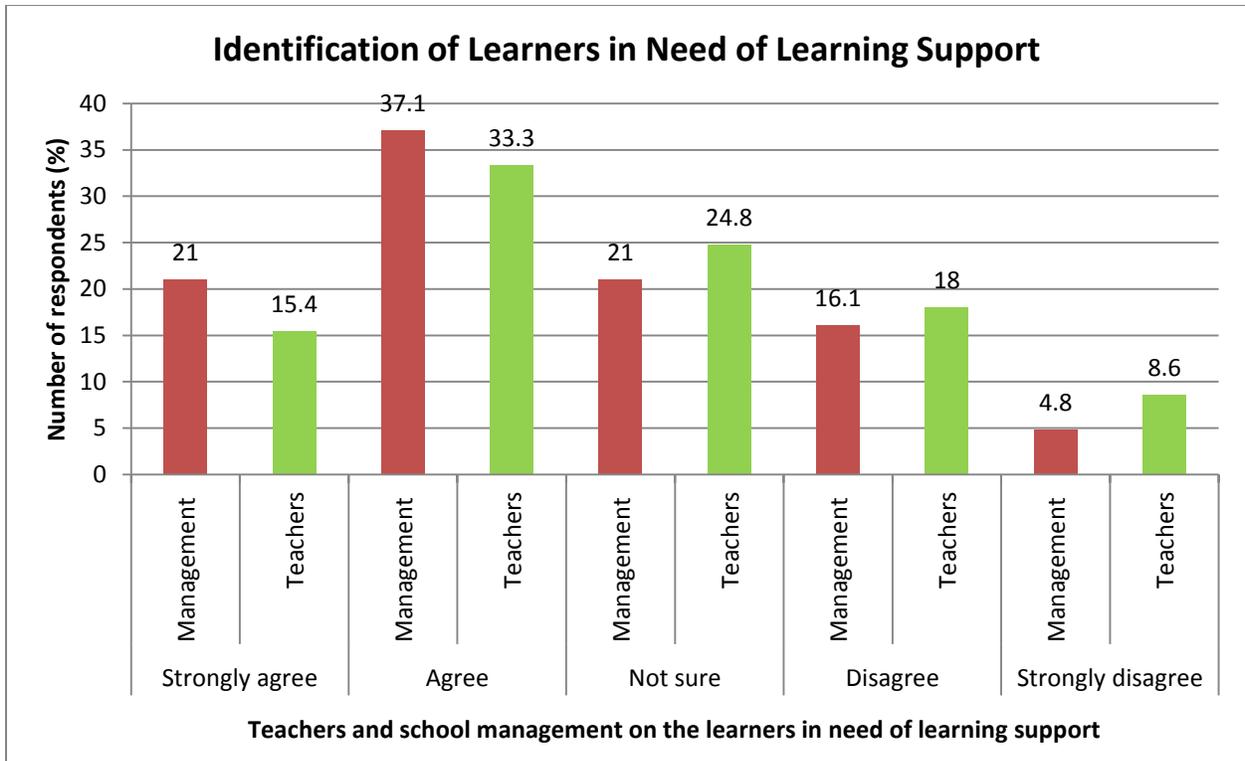
Figure 15 reveals that majority of the management (56.5%) and teachers (42.4%) agreed that school management were monitoring the inclusion of the learning support activities in teachers' everyday lessons. Even though, 24.2% of the management and 28.7% of the teachers did not agree as compared to the 19.4% (management) and 28.9% (teachers) who were not sure.

*“Monitoring is what the management talks all the time in our briefings and encourages teachers to prepare activities and give quality homework. Teachers submit their files once a week to their Subject Heads, HoDs and Principal. The monitoring is there but not strong.” (Teacher)*

It seemed that in some schools, teachers' activities in relation to learning support were monitored although the monitoring system was not intense and effective.

#### *4.1.16 Identification of the learners in need of learning support*

The learning support teachers' manual states clearly that every teacher has the responsibility to identify learners in need of learning support and include learning support into his/her everyday lesson. Therefore, this section provides responses from the participants on whether they identified all the learners in need of learning support.



**Figure 16: Identification of the learners in need of learning support**

As Figure 16 illustrates that the school management (58.1%) and teachers (48.7%) indicated that they identified all the learners in need of learning support in their schools while 20.9% (management) and 26.6% (teachers) disagreed. However, 21% of the management and 24.8% of the teachers were not sure. During the interview, participants were asked about how they identify learners who are in need of learning support in their schools. Here are some of their responses.

*“We identify the learners earlier in the first semester and look at the areas where the learners need help. In Mathematics, the focus is on number sentences as most of the children struggle with addition or fractions. When you teach you picked up that these learners do not understand certain areas and make note of it or when writing the exams and then give support on those learning areas.” (Teacher)*

*“It is done by checking learners who failed the previous grade or transferred to the next grade. Also when we have assessments, learners who didn’t master the basic competencies are the one who will receive the learning support.” (Principal)*

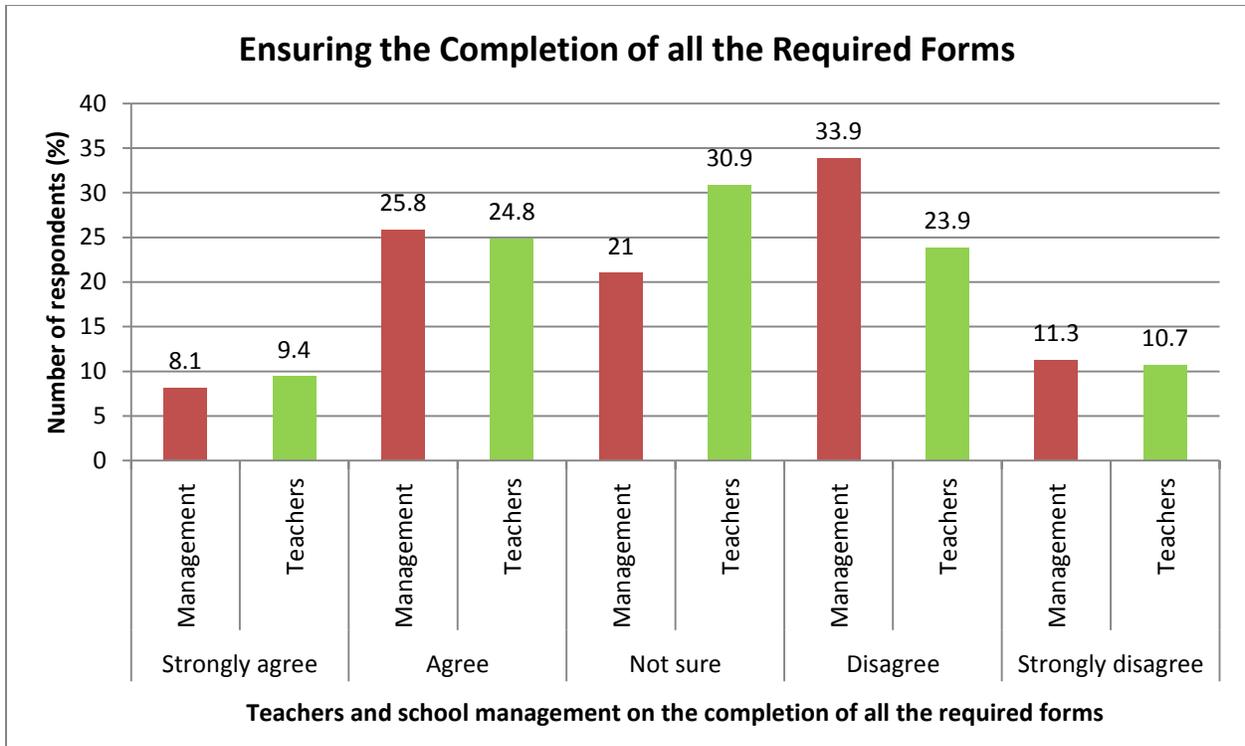
*“Through the teaching process, when you are teaching in the class and you see that these learners are struggling here and there. One can see and make a conclusion that that particular learner needs more extra time to be taught on that particular task or topic. We identify learners when teaching and see learners that are a bit slow and then try to get time from that workload to help those learners with extra work.’ (Life Skills teacher)*

*“By checking their performance in the previous exams especially for the grades where they came from, those overaged learners that were transferred because of their age and those with special needs. Also, those that are naturally weak in reading or not so good.” (Acting Principal)*

It also emerged from the interviews that some school management and teachers make use of the Life Skills teachers to identify the learners. One of the reasons for this was that as non-life skills teachers, they were not trained when it comes to learners’ identification. However, they were able to support identified learners in order to boost their interests so that they could do well in their subjects. According to the participants, this was part of the learning support teachers’ manual when it stipulates that teachers should provide learning support to their learners.

#### *4.1.17 Ensuring the completion of all the required forms for learners in need of support*

In section 4.1.17, participants were asked whether school management were ensuring that teachers complete all required forms for every learner in need of support as stipulated in the teachers’ manual. Participants’ responses are presented in Figure 17.



**Figure 17: Ensuring the completion of all the required forms for learners in need of support**

Figure 17 portrays that 33.9% (management) and 34.2% (teachers) agreed that the school management were ensuring the completion of learners’ forms. Some of the school management said that:

*“Yeah, we are always make sure that teachers complete the forms but they normally do it through the Life Skills teacher, she normally provide the forms especially during end of the term and we the management we also receive our forms to fill.” (Acting Principal)*

*“The forms are like checking the progress of the learners but to get all those forms completed it is a struggle because teachers feel that it is a burden to them.” (Principal)*

On the contrary, the majority of the management (45.2%) and of the teachers (34.6%) disagreed.

*“I came here last year and I didn’t complete any form regarding learning support for the learners.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“No, we just designed our own but for now that I have seen the manual, I will go back to the LS teacher and borrow that book then I can go and familiarise myself with what is in the manual.”*  
**(Acting Principal)**

*“I think by the look of things if the programme was in place and looking at what the management are doing now I think they could have look at it. I think it is only that it is not there but it was there then the management could have ensured that the forms are in place and so on. But I hope as soon as the pandemic is over this will be done.”* **(Teacher)**

However, 21% and 30.9% of the management and teachers respectively were not sure whether to agree or disagree to the statement.

*“Since I took the office, we haven’t done it. I really don’t know if we have them at the school.”*  
**(Acting Principal)**

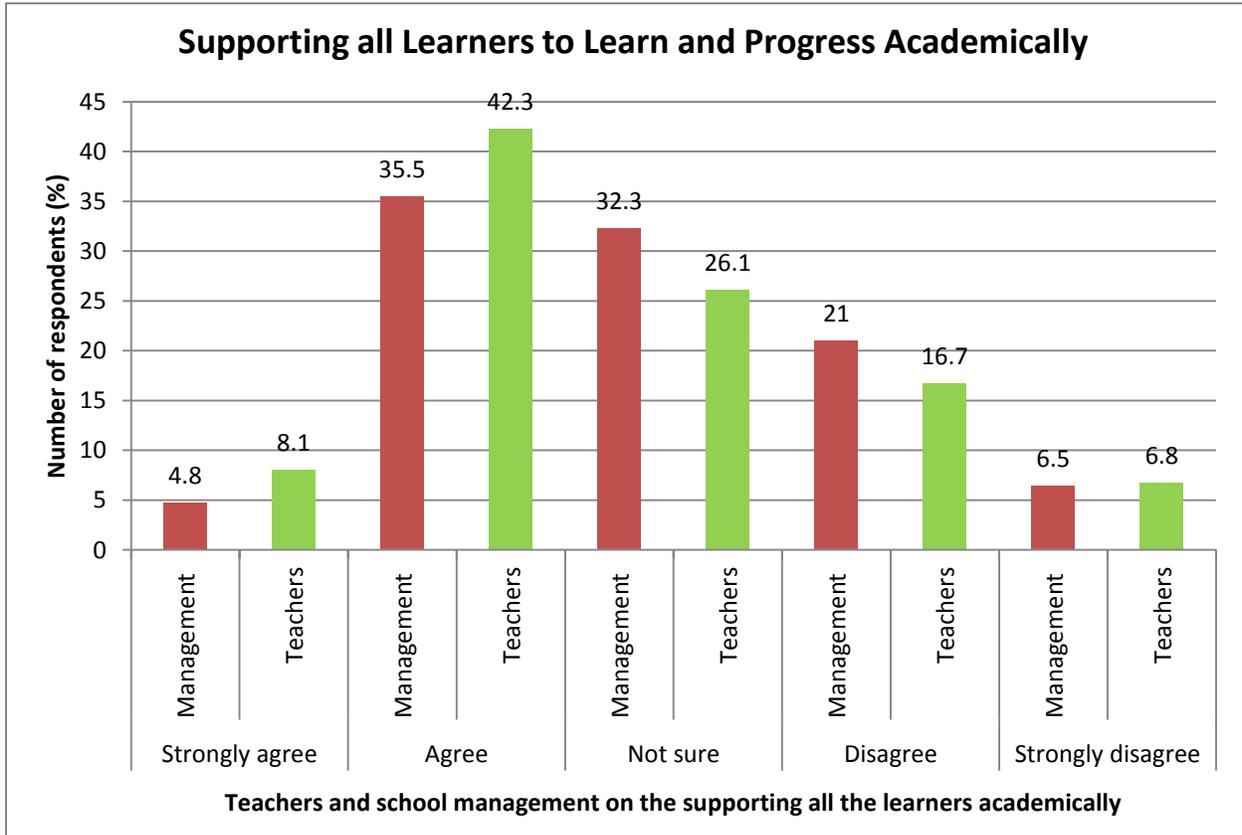
*“We have never seen those forms; we only know teachers’ classroom observation and self-evaluation forms.”* **(Teacher)**

*“The unfortunate part is that we are only doing learning support without any documents. Therefore, I cannot say that these forms are being completed because we don’t have the book. We are only doing learning support out of our own just to make sure that these learners are understood.”* **(Principal)**

Some of the participants admitted that it was their first time to hear about the forms because they were not inducted on learning support programme. It was also indicated during the interview that at some schools the forms were only completed at Junior Primary grades and not from Senior Primary grades upwards.

4.1.18 Supporting all the learners to learn and progress academically

Participants’ responses on whether all the learners including those with specific learning difficulties are supported, to enable them learn and progress academically are given in Figure 18.



**Figure 18: Supporting all the learners to learn and progress academically**

Despite a significant agreement response, 27.5% and 23.5% of the management and teachers respectively disagreed that all the learners including those with specific learning difficulties were supported, to enable them learn and progress academically. This is worrisome and the most disturbing respondents are the management (32.3%) who were not sure as compared to the teachers (26.1%). Probing further during interview on whether teachers were provided with sufficient professional development to enable them support learners in need of learning support, some participants acknowledged that:

*“No, I don’t think teachers are supported enough to distinguish between the different kinds of abilities. I think that teachers who are long in the system had learned the skills while the new teachers are struggling a bit.” (Principal)*

*“No, teachers do not have sufficient information about this learning support. Again, sometimes we find it difficult as teachers as we were not trained from the same institutions and some they did it through in-service training. As I am talking now, teachers do not have sufficient information about this. We really need continuous professional development.” (Teacher)*

*“The only training that we normally have is the workshops that teachers normally attend and the assistance from the subject advisors and HoDs or perhaps also information and guidance from the senior education officers. In terms of resources, if a teacher needs something then must be assisted for the learning support process.” (Principal)*

*“Yes, the CPD was only coordinated by the HoD and Grade 3 teacher who attended the training.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“Teachers are not well equipped, they did not receive training. We are only trying as the management to provide supplementary materials/stationaries for learning support.” (Principal)*

*“No, that one I don’t know. I believe when the teacher gives support to the learner obviously has to use educational facilities, which is maybe the syllabus or textbooks; all the facilities that we use when teaching a class. That is what they are using and they are having enough.” (Life Skills teacher)*

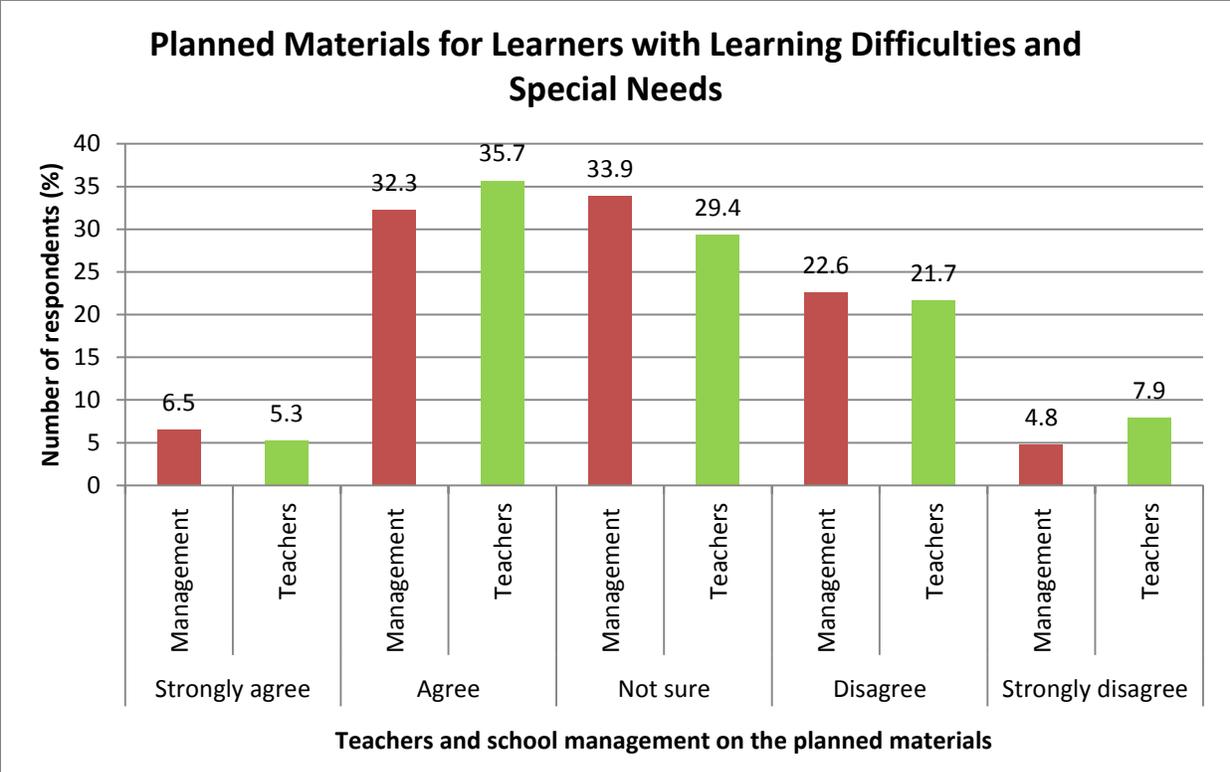
*“Well you need somebody who is specialized in the area of learner support; we don’t have that person who specializes in that learner support. We do this from reading documents that we have from how we want to support learners from meetings that we organize, smaller workshop that we have at school, we come up with some ideas on how we can support these learners. I can’t say teachers are given sufficient professional learner support training.” (Principal)*

*“Apart from the training teachers had received from different universities that they have attended. We normally have what is called Continuous Professional Development (CPD) at the school level. Whereby I do presentation and I find someone one has an expertise in a certain area, I ask them to present. I can say that we normally try our level best where we can but I cannot say we are 100% able to handle the learning support. At least with that little knowledge that we have, we tried our level best.” (Principal)*

Most respondents indicated that they were not provided with professional development support to help learners in need of learning support. The most cited contributing reasons were lack of training or workshops that could help teachers, including the newly appointed ones, to have a common understanding, and the lack of skills and knowledge among some Life Skills teachers who were trained on the learning support programme.

#### *4.1.19 Planned materials for learners with learning difficulties and special needs*

According to the Ministry of Education (2014), learning support “involves planned extra support such as teaching methods and materials that enable learners with learning difficulties and other disadvantaged learners to reach essential basic competencies in different subjects and skills” (p. 1). In light of this, participants were asked whether schools had planned teaching methods/materials that enable learners with learning difficulties and special learners to reach essential basic competencies in the different subjects.

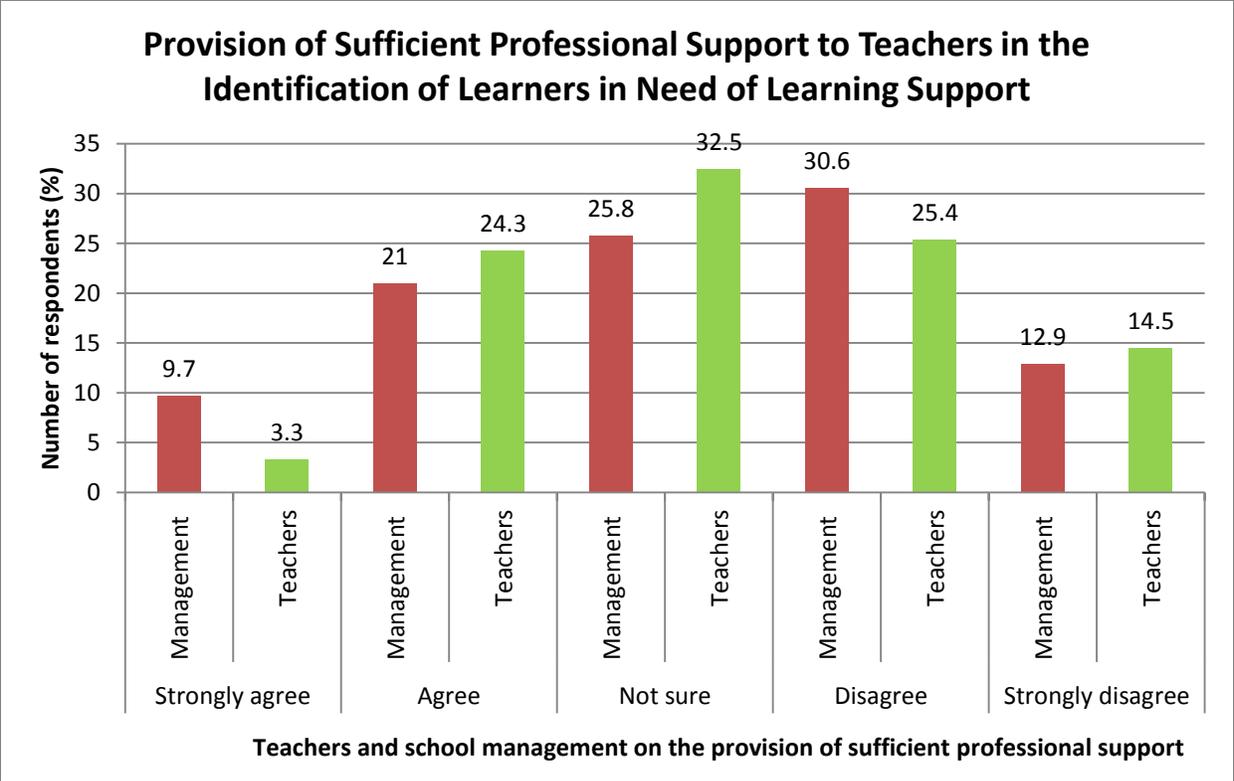


**Figure 19: Planned materials for learners with learning difficulties and special needs**

Responses in Figure 19 show that 41% of the management and 38.8% of the teachers agreed that there were planned teaching methods/materials at their schools that are meant for learners with learning difficulties and special needs. However, the management (33.9%) and teachers (29.4%) were not sure about the statement. Looking at the number of respondents who disagreed (27.4% of the management) and (29.6% of the teachers), and those who were not sure (33.9% of the management) and (29.4% of the teachers).

*4.1.20 Provision of sufficient professional support to the teachers in the identification of learners*

The learning support teachers’ manual states clearly that teachers should identify learners with learning difficulties and set out a plan of action to remedy the learning difficulties. Therefore, Section 4.1.20 provides responses from the participants on whether they were provided with sufficient professional support to identify learners with learning difficulties who are in need of learning support.



**Figure 20: Provision of sufficient professional support to the teachers in the identification of learners**

As seen in Figure 20, the majority of the school management (43.5%) and teachers (39.9%) disagreed that they received sufficient professional support to identify learners with learning difficulties as compared to the 30.7% (school management) and 27.6% (teachers) who agreed to the statement. During the interviews, some participants purported that:

*“I am the cluster principal, there is no support received.” (Principal)*

*“I think teachers are provided with that information because what I use to see is that teachers are trying their level best to help those younger ones who are having learning problems.” (Life Skills teacher)*

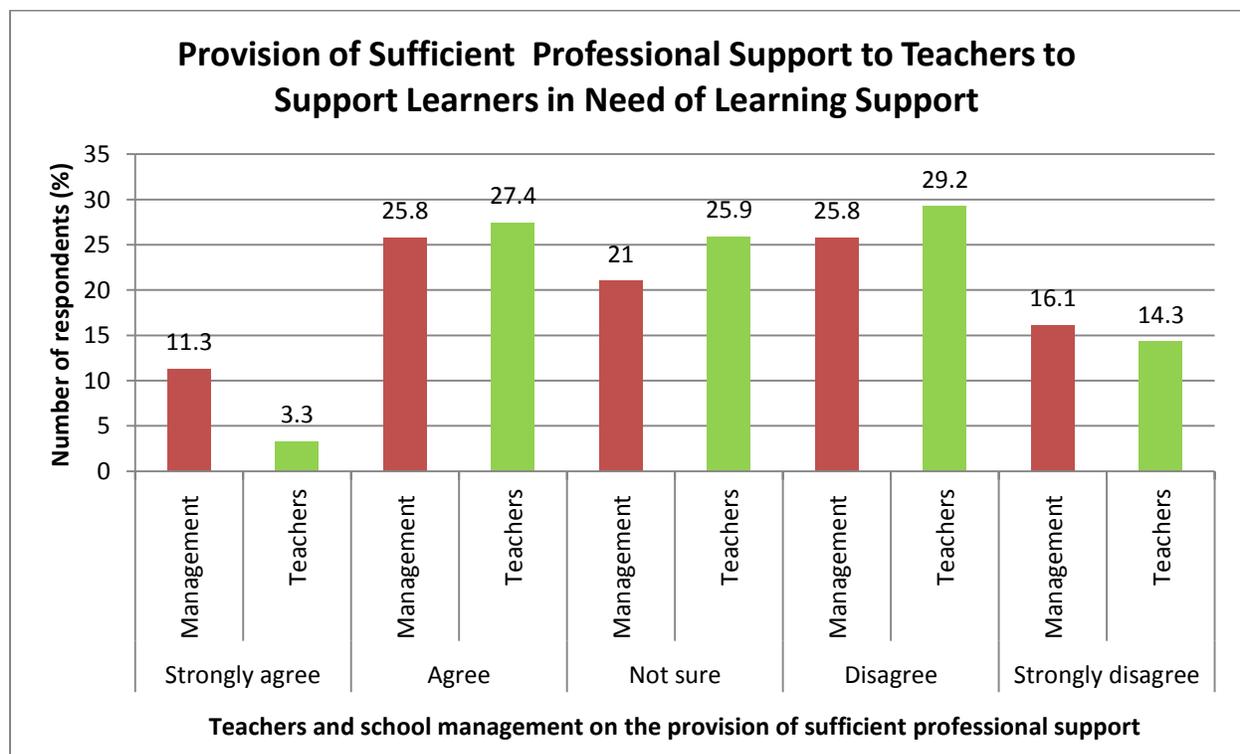
*“I have not gone through that teachers’ manual myself and I am not aware of anybody who has received training on learner support.” (Principal)*

“My answer will be no. Because if you check at the Junior Primary phase you see that there are teachers who are still studying and 80% of them are still students under Meme Katrina’s initiative programme.” (*Acting Principal*)

Most of the participants during the interview revealed that they were not trained on how to identify learners with special needs in the mainstream classes. However, some teachers tried to identify learners with learning difficulties and other problems using their teaching experiences.

#### 4.1.21 Provision of sufficient professional support to the teachers in support of learners

This section provides responses from the participants on whether teachers were provided with sufficient professional support-to-support learners in need of learning support.



**Figure 21: Provision of sufficient professional support to the teachers in support of learners**

As Figure 21 shows that more teachers (43.5%) than school management (41.9%) disagreed that teachers were provided with sufficient professional support to support learners in need of learning support. Similarly, although the disagreement response was higher than the agreement,

25.9% of the teachers and 21% of the management admitted to be not sure about the statement. Some of the participants claimed in the interviews that:

*“...nothing, because I haven’t seen these people who are responsible for support in this learning support program. These people on top are supposed to come and advise us on what exactly should be done and what to follow including that manual of the support program. So they need to bring that one and they need to advise us accordingly. Sometimes we don’t know if we are on the right path, we are just trying to help but those who are experts in this area of learners with special needs; the coordinators should come and advise us.” (Teacher)*

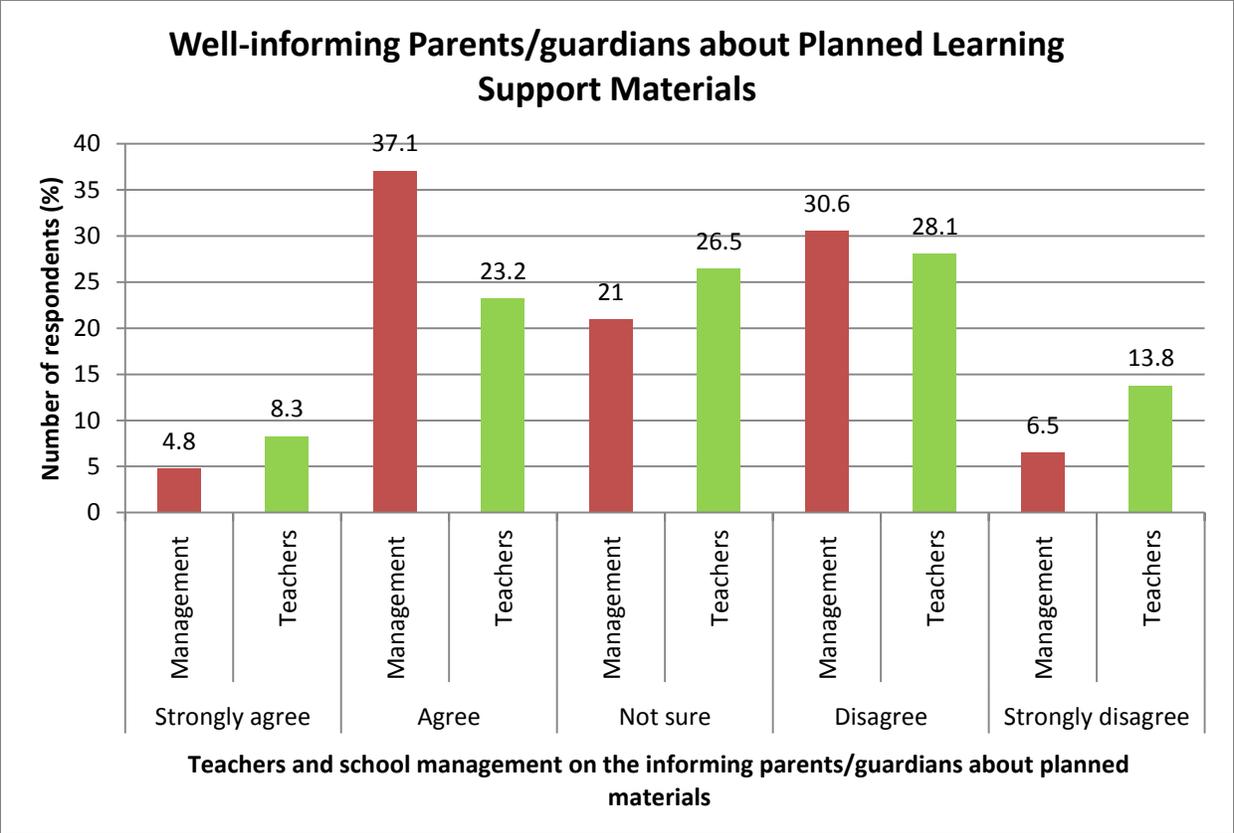
*“Support is insufficient from the community and parents but the only sufficient support is only from the teachers here internally who are willing to assist the learners in need. Most of the teachers did not receive such professional support.” (Principal)*

*“I have not gone through that myself and I am not aware of anybody who has received training support on learner support.” (Teacher)*

The results from the interview mostly the teachers indicated that no professional support was given to them on how to support learners in need of learning support.

#### *4.1.22 Informing parents/guardians about the planned learning support materials*

The learning support teachers’ manual stipulates that parents/guardians should be informed and provided with details of their child’s individual learning support programme in order for them to motivate and support their child throughout their schooling and not only when they repeat. Thus, this section intends to find out if parents/guardians were informed about the planned learning support materials so that they are able to support their children at home.



**Figure 22: Informing parents/guardians about the planned learning support materials**

Figure 22 depicts that 41.9% of the management agreed that they informed parents/guardians about the planned learning support materials and programme so that they are able to support their children at home. On the contrary, the same percentage number of the teachers disagreed. Moreover, there are more management (37.1%) than teachers (31.5%) who disagreed and agreed respectively to the statement. Because of these given percentages, the data collectors wanted to find out whether and/or how parents/guardians were informed about the planned learning support methods/materials or programme meant for their children. Some participants responded that:

*“...sometimes we call parents to come to the school. Normally we have identified that certain learners are struggling and so on, all we do is communicate to the parents in writing and then we say this learner B or C needs extra help that’s what why you always find in her bag that there’s an extra work prepared and as a parent, you can also assist. Sometimes in week we have also specified a certain day that particular learners will remain at the school for certain minutes or certain hours for them to receive learning support.” (Principal)*

*“Parents are being informed if there is extra help or learning support needed from them. In addition, when we start with learning support the parents will receive SMS and letters from the school informing them all that their children need to attend learning support.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“Parents are informed during parents’ meetings and they are really appreciate the learning support programme, only the implementation of the programme. In Junior Primary, I made an observation that such learners don’t knock off with the class, they came back to do their work for few minutes.” (Principal)*

*“We invite parents of those learners with learning difficulties to come to school and when they come here we inform them. From there, we tell parents that after school from this hour to this hour learners will still come back to school and we need copy papers and textbooks because we need to make copies for learners who need to go practice what the teacher has taught...” (Teacher)*

*“Sometimes we call parents or driving to the child’s place or nearby the village just to find out what is wrong. We are normally giving prepared work to the learners and sometimes give them notes to notify parents about the learning support.” (Principal)*

*“Sometimes parents can be informed in parent meetings, sometimes you can send letters with learners when they go back home who are not in the hostel, so that they inform their parents that this week they are going to have extra classes or learning support after school.” (Teacher)*

*“We communicate with parents through letters informing them the status of their learners when it comes to the learning support, because these learners could have different needs. For example, one learner is unable to read while the other learner is unable to write, so we write that communicative letters and explain politely to the parents, that we have identify certain needs in your children or your child is unable to read or write that’s why we are requesting you to permit that particular child to stay a bit longer after normal school hours so that we give that learner support. We also explain the importance of the learning support programme.” (Principal)*

From the interviews, some participants responded that most of the time the parents/guardians of the learners who are struggling are illiterate and hardly help their children to complete the prepared activities at home.

#### 4.1.23 Parental and community involvement in learning support programme

In the learning support teachers' programme, it is stipulated that schools should form partnerships with parents by monitoring the work of their child done in the learning support programme. They should motivate their child to cooperate in the learning support programme, visit the school to show interest in the progress of the child, attend parent-teacher days/meetings and seek advice on how to support the learning of their children, among others. In other words, schools should build and sustain parental and community involvement and support. Therefore, this section provides the responses from the participants on whether there was good parental and community involvement in the learning support programme in schools.

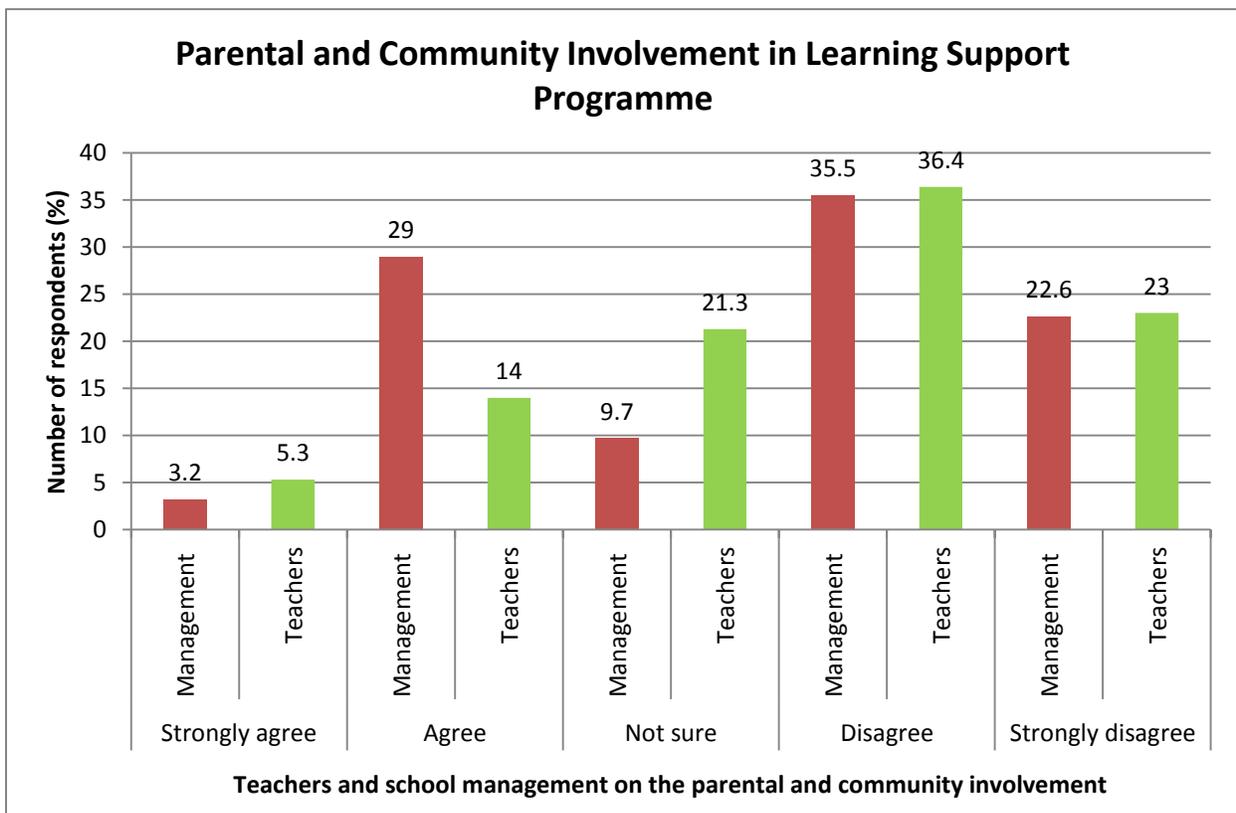


Figure 23: Parental and community involvement in learning support programme

The results in Figure 23 show that majority of the teachers (59.4%) and management (58.1%) disagreed that there was good parental and community involvement in schools in relation to the learning support programme.

*“The parents’ involvement is very low. Generally, that is what at my school and when you bring this to their attention. There is a low level of understanding in the community at the moment. And bringing them to say you are giving learning support to some learners may feel that you are stigmatising the learners. I think there should be an understanding to the parents so that we can speak these things openly with parents.” (Principal)*

*“...for the learners who need attention, care and help is difficult to get those parents involved. The learners that are really in need, it is a struggle to get their parents even if we call them to come and see the teachers about your child’s progress, there is a difficulty. Generally speaking, it is difficult to get parents involved. It mostly depends on the school itself to help the learners.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“To be honest, parents from this area really find it difficult to understand. They are low in education, even though we try to explain, is it key area no. 6, the school link with the community that their presence at school, they can come and observe teachers, they must visit the school and out of 20, you might get one if you lucky or out of 12 months maybe two the whole year. And the ones that you are getting are those selected as school board members as they might understand better than others. Honestly speaking they don’t turn up.” (Acting Principal)*

*“I would say this time it’s not really good because some parents are not really serious, the involvement in their children’s education I would say is not really good. When we invite these parents, some come and some don’t. Some keep complaining when you say buy your child this or that, they will still complain and in the end they will not do anything. So, I will say the involvement of our parents and the community is not really sufficient mostly for those learners who require learning support.” (Teacher)*

*“To be honest, we are not receiving support from the parents. Sometimes when you call the parents, they might not turn up and if they come and we tell them about their children they are in denial. Most of the times you don’t receive that support you want. Sadly, some parents who might want to help are illiterate.” (Acting Principal)*

On the contrary, 32.2% of the management and 19.3% of the teachers agreed that there was good parental and community involvement in schools in relation to the learning support programme.

*“When coming to communication or the cooperation between parents and community yes we are very lucky parents are very cooperative. We were never faced with a situation where parents were objecting this program, most of them were proud when we started with the program. The community is supporting, they really understand why it is very important for the learners to be given additional support so that they cater for what they could not get in the normal lesson.” (Principal)*

*“There are parents who are very supportive, always calling the school, coming to the parents’ meeting, and also actively involving in the school activities.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“Some are willing to support their children, but you find especially in remote, rural areas that most of the parents are illiterate whereby they can’t read and write. Or the child is stay with the granny and the mother is outside the region. So, you find it difficult and it is a challenge.” (Principal)*

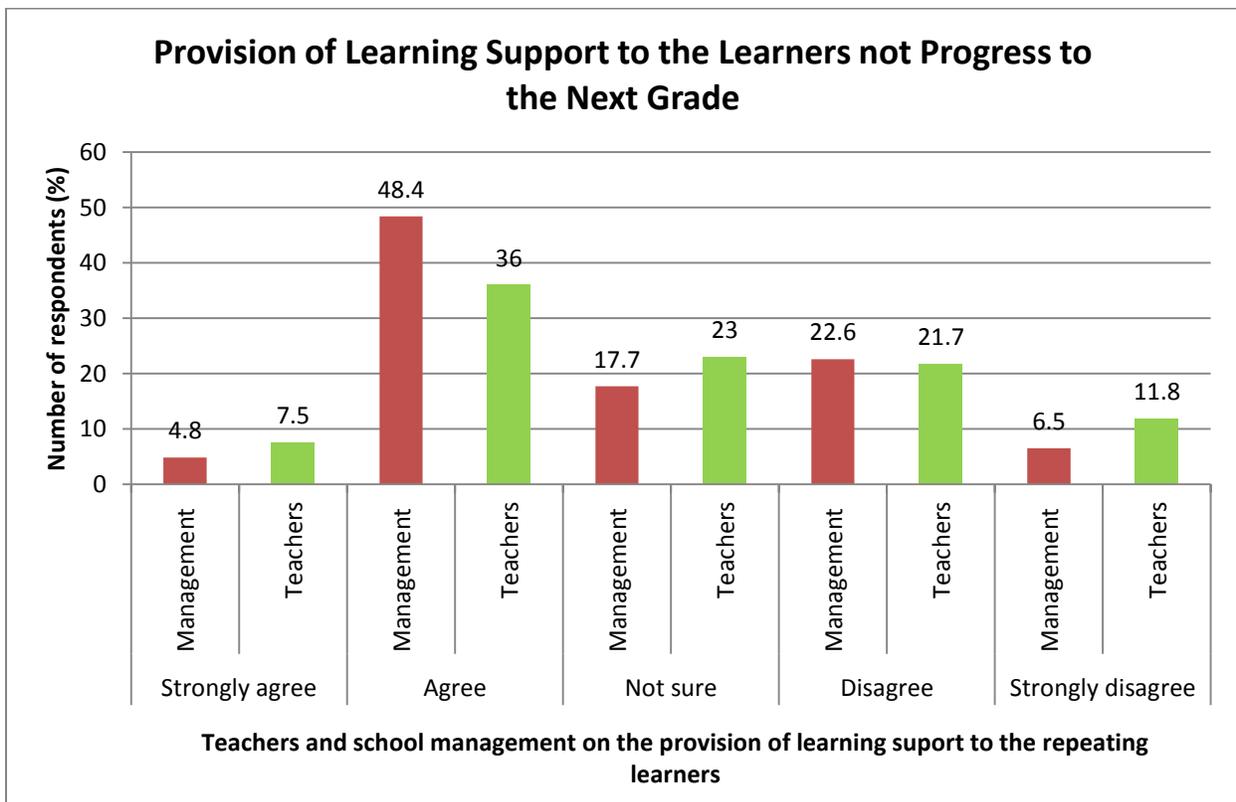
*“...we normally got parents’ involvement, the only challenge that we have is these parents that are illiterate in our area. That’s why it’s very difficult sometimes, you give an extra material to the learner who stays with the grandparents, some of them cannot read and write. You expect the same material to come back blank the next day. It’s not that they don’t want to assist but due to that barrier that they themselves cannot read and write.” (Principal)*

It was observed from the interviews that some parents supported the schools and helped their children with schoolwork. On the contrary, there were lack of parental and community

involvement at some schools due to some challenges. According to the participants, some of the challenges were that some parents were illiterate; some children were staying with grandparents while their parents were at the farms or outside the region for work purpose; ignorance and lack of knowledge were some cited challenges among others.

#### 4.1.24 Provision of learning support to the repeating learners

According to the Ministry of Education (2014) “all learners who are repeating a grade, learners who are transferred or learners who otherwise cannot achieve the required competencies must receive learning support” (p. 4). Thus, this section intends to find out whether learners who do not progress to the next grade were receiving learning support to help them to achieve competencies of the grade.



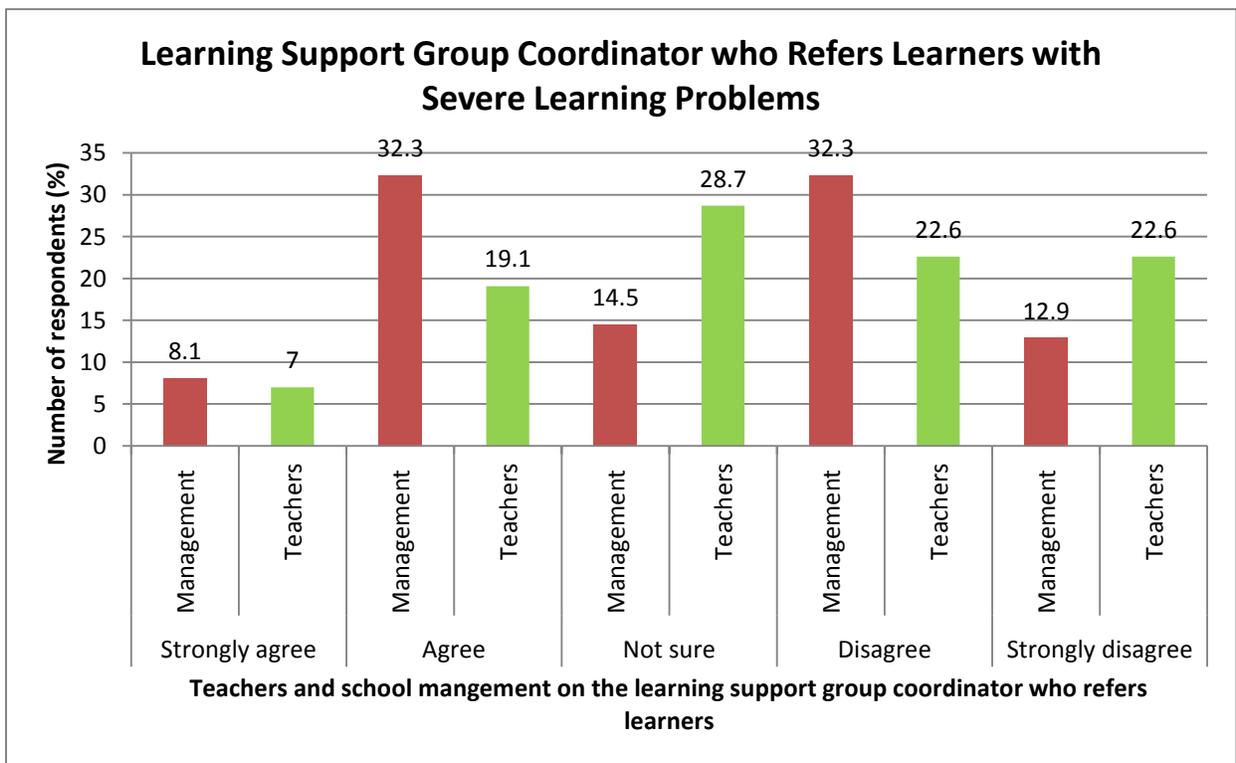
**Figure 24: Provision of learning support to the repeating learners**

As seen in Figure 24, the management (53.2%) and teachers (43.5%) agreed that learners who were repeating the next grade are provided with learning support to help them to achieve

competencies of the grade as compared to 29.1% (management) and 33.5% (teachers) who disagreed. Despite the majority of the management and teachers acknowledging that the repeating learners were provided with learning support, 23% of the teachers and 17.7% of the management were not sure.

*4.1.25 The presence of the learning support group coordinator at the school who refers learners with severe learning problems*

Learning support teachers’ manual stipulates that at each school, there must be a Learning Support Group Coordinator (LSGC) who refers learners with severe learning difficulties to the regional school counsellor/inclusive education officer on the referral form available at all schools. Hence, this section aims to find out whether there were learning support group coordinators at schools who refers learners with severe learning difficulties to the regional school counsellor/inclusive education officer.



**Figure 25: The presence of the learning support group coordinator at the school who refers learners with severe learning problems**

To the question on whether there was a learning support group coordinator at the schools who refers learners with severe learning problems to the regional school counsellor/inclusive education officer, the majority of the management and teachers (both with 45.2%) disagreed as compared to 40.4% and 26.1% of the management and teachers respectively who agreed. However, some of the participants had the following to say.

*“No learning support group coordinator at the school. The Life Skills teacher is the coordinator and she is the one who normally refers these learners to the regional school counsellor.”*  
**(Principal)**

*“It is not easy to refer these kids here because their parents feel like you are discriminating their children. And we are not sure even if our Life Skills teacher is a trained Life Skills teacher.”*  
**(Teacher)**

*“No, we don’t have the coordinator. That’s why we need more information on how go about it and make sure that learning support is functional. We have only the Life Skills teacher who works with aftercare school counsellor.”* **(Principal)**

*“No learning support coordinator at the school. If there is a case that I can’t handle, I used to refer to the social worker.”* **(Life Skills teacher)**

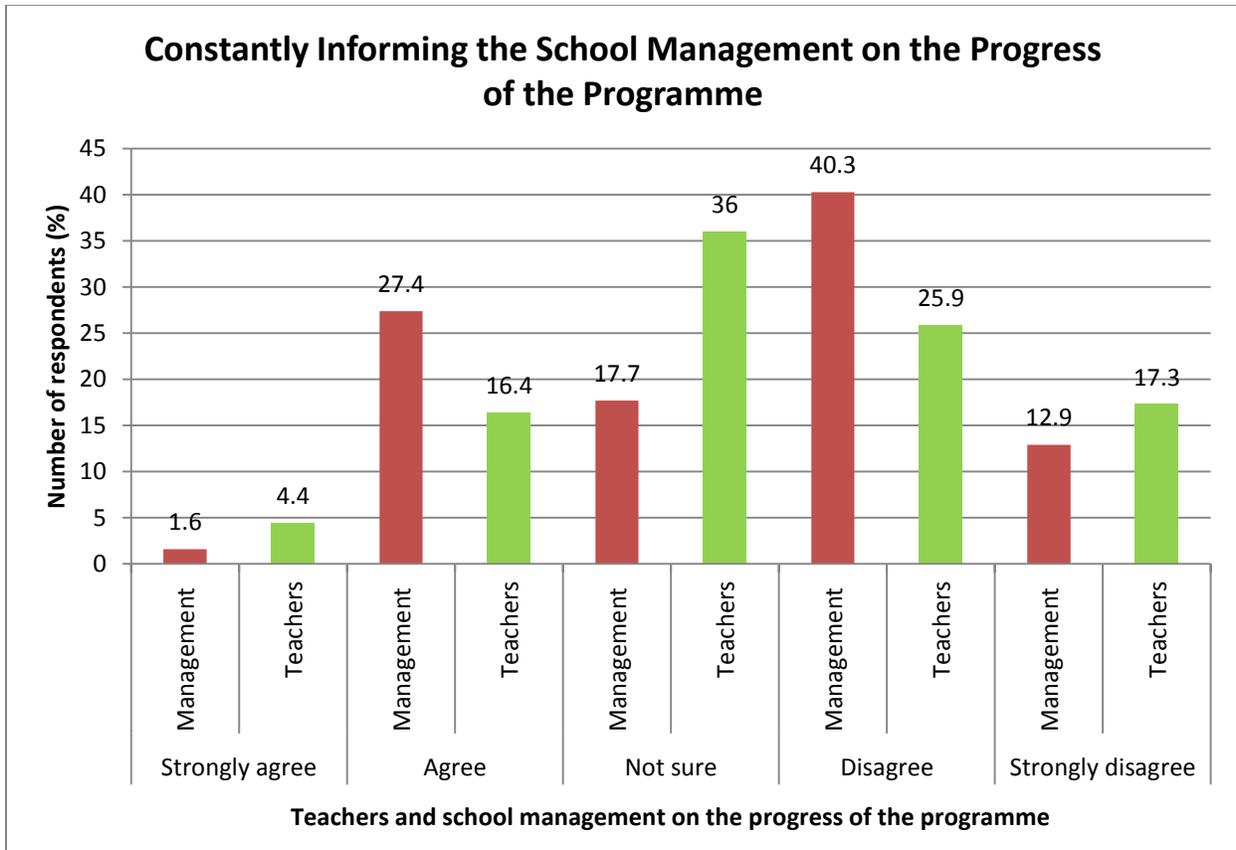
*“There are those learners with severe cases, but to be honest we don’t know where those regional school counsellors are. And when we referred the learners to those special schools in the region, we are told that they are already full.”* **(Principal)**

At some schools, the interview results indicated that they did not have referral and placement procedures in place. There was a scarcity of special schools in some regions and some schools were far away from such schools, and some parents were not comfortable with their children labelled as learners with learning difficulties amongst other learners. Thus, some parents even opted to keep their kids out of schools. Secondly, delays of feedback. Some participants were

concerned that, regional officers are nowhere to be found and/or are not known by the participants.

*4.1.26 Constantly informing the school management on the progress of the programme*

It is stated in the learning support teachers’ manual that school principals should be constantly informed by the coordinator of the learning support group on the progress of the programme. Thus, the results on whether the learning support group coordinator used to inform the school management of the progress of the programme are presented under Section 4.1.26.



**Figure 26: Constantly informing the school management on the progress of the programme**

As portrayed in Figure 26, 53.2% (management) and 43.2% (teachers) indicated that they did not agree that there was a learning support group coordinator at their schools who constantly informed the school management about the progress of the programme. Although, 29% (management) and 20.8% (teachers) agreed to the statement, 17.7% and 36% of the management

and teachers respectively indicated that they were not sure. During the interviews, participants have indicated that:

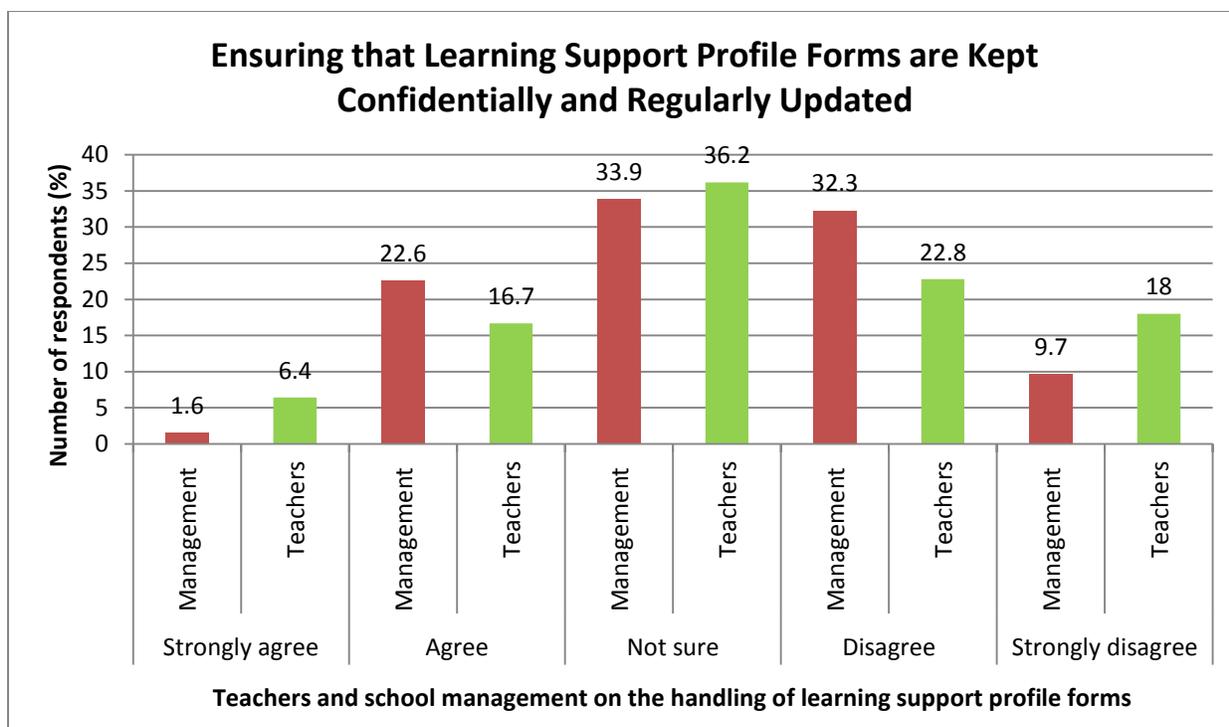
*“No learning support group coordinator at the school, only the Life Skills teacher who draws up the timetable and gives us the feedback.” (Teacher)*

*“Now, I am the coordinator because of the less information we have on how to put this programme into practice, I am just a coordinator by name. So far, no information on the progress.” (Life Skills teacher)*

At most schools, participants indicated that there was no learning support group coordinator for the programme instead the Life Skills teachers were regarded as the coordinators. This means that the Life Skills teachers were reporting or informing the school management of the progress of the programme on a regular basis. At some schools, where there was no Life Skills teachers, the teachers were the ones who were informing the management about the progress of the programme of their learners.

#### *4.1.27 Ensuring that learning support profile forms are kept confidential and regularly updated*

According to the Ministry of Education (2014), the learning support group coordinator should “ensure that the individual learning support profile forms of learners are handled confidentially and are regularly updated” (p. 7). The current section intends to find the extent to which the learning support group coordinator ensures that learners’ learning support profile forms are kept confidentially and are regularly updated.



**Figure 27: Ensuring that learning support profile forms are kept confidential and are regularly updated**

In Figure 27, 42% (management) and 40.8% (teachers) disagreed that the learning support group coordinators were ensuring that learners’ learning support profile forms were kept confidentially and were regularly updated. With only 24.2% of the management and 23.1% of the teachers agreed to the statement; whereas, 33.9% (management) and 36.2% (teachers) were not sure. During the interviews, participants attested that:

*“The Life Skills teacher is always informing the management and keeps the forms confidential. Teachers return the forms to her once they are done and she is the only one who knows more than anyone at the school.” (Acting Principal)*

*“Life Skills teacher keeps the files with information about learners who have psychosocial needs and problems. To link that to learner support, I don’t know it, if that’s also to ensure if HIV positive learners do not take their medications, they are supported to take the medications and just do fine. I have never experience a situation where any problem develop from information shared with Life Skills teacher. I have never come across that. I would safely say that the Life Skills teacher handles information fine and with confidentiality.” (Principal)*

*“As a Life Skills teacher, everything that I have worked with has to be kept confidential. So, finding that learner “A” has a problem of learning it should be with me and it will be between me and that learner. If I talked to that learner nobody will find out.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“The Life Skills teacher has his space where he works, some of the things we don’t see them but he inform us that the information is confidential. He collects this information, he record it and then he keeps it for himself or he sends it to the regional office, so if anything happens the management will be informed verbally sometimes but not to look at those specific forms.” (Acting Principal)*

*“I am always keeping information confidential and inform the principal about it just in case if I am not around them the principal is aware about it.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“When it comes to the confidentiality the Life Skills teacher has a separate office where files are being kept. The Life Skills teacher is the only person who has access to those files and other colleagues are not allowed to go in that office because some of the information could be sensitive. That’s why the Life Skills teacher cannot disclose that information unless maybe he is going to refer the case to the region but he should not bypass the office of the principal.” (Principal)*

*“Being a teacher and due to the teaching workload, I did not update the profiles yet but I noted the information in the book and kept the information secretly.” (Life Skills teacher)*

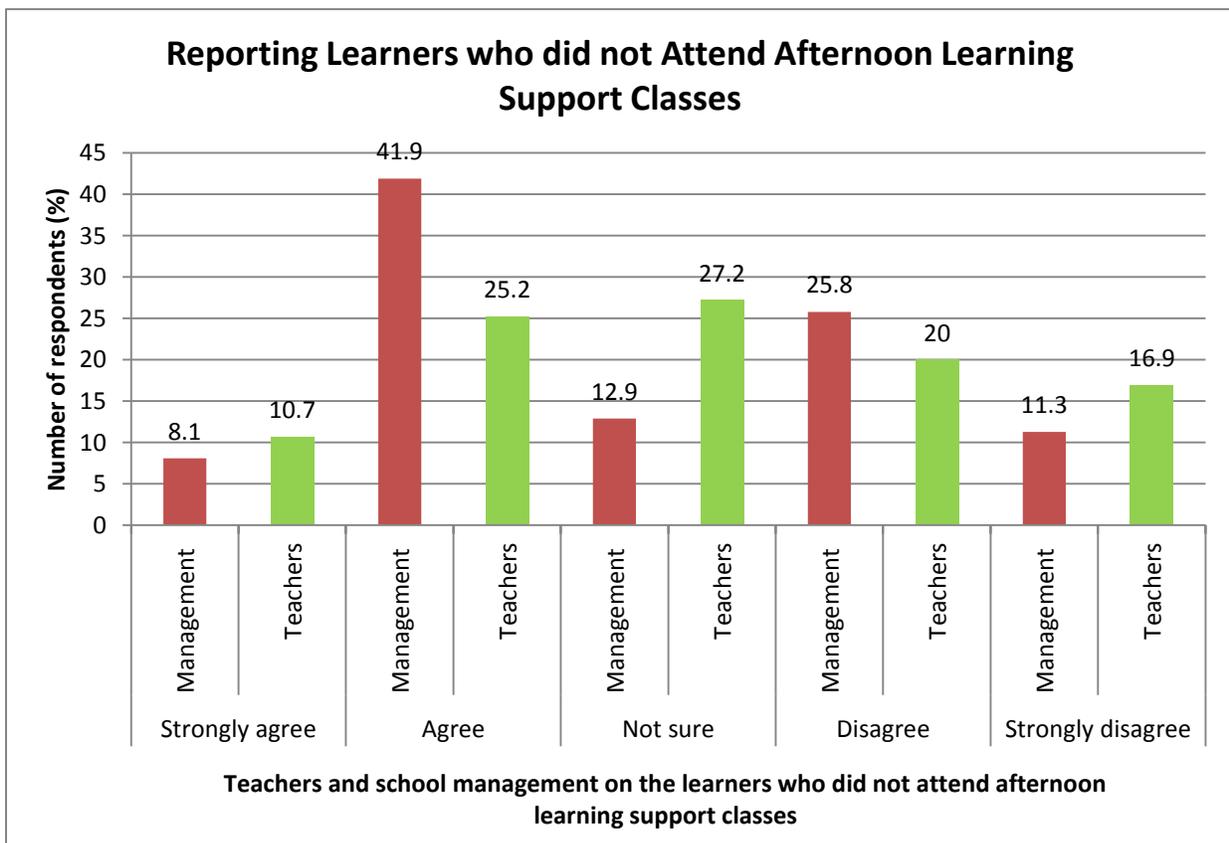
*“As I said we don’t have those forms, we don’t complete any form. We are just completing the cumulative cards, so we don’t have any forms just to be honest.” (Acting Principal)*

*“There is a file with those forms whereby I am the only one who keep the file, that’s how we keep the confidentiality of the information.” (Principal)*

Most of the participants revealed that since there was no learning support programme at their schools, automatically the learning support group coordinator was not there. Again, at some schools, even though they had the learning support programme, they do not have the learning support group coordinator. Instead, it was the Life Skills teacher or the school principal who was coordinating the programme and kept learners' profile forms confidentially and regularly updated.

*4.1.28 Reporting learners who did not attend afternoon learning support classes*

The learning support teachers' manual stipulates that learning support group teachers should report learners who do not attend afternoon learning support class to the principal for follow-up. Hence, Figure 28 provides responses to whether schools had learning support group teachers who reports learners who did not attend afternoon learning support classes to the school management.



**Figure 28: Reporting learners who did not attend afternoon learning support classes**

In relation to the participants' understanding between learning support and afternoon classes, as alluded to earlier, the majority of the management (50%) responded that there were learning support group teachers who report learners who did not attend afternoon classes to the management whilst the majority of the teachers (36.9%) disagreed. Despite the number of the management who agreed, 37.1% and 25.8% of them disagreed and were not sure respectively. However, 35.9% (teachers) agreed as compared to 36.9% (teachers) who disagreed. Participants in the interviews stated that:

*“For us at Junior Primary, it is not a problem because learners are staying after school and we don't have those behaviours. At Senior Primary, teachers keep the register and if learners did not turn up for two to three days then we made the follow-up. These learners are mostly from the disadvantaged backgrounds but we monitor them and report them to the management.”*  
**(Teacher)**

*“Teachers are reporting learners and we took note of that. And some got to an extent of phoning the parents and informing them that their children were supposed to attend afternoon classes and still learners didn't. Also at the office, we call the parents, talk to them, and even try to counsel the learners.”* **(Principal)**

*“For me, I don't report them. I call them in for counselling. And I have to make sure that they come because they need to catch up otherwise, when the examination come they would not make it and their parents will come and ask why my child did not make it.”* **(Life Skills teacher)**

*“As a member of the management, I usual used to receive complains from the teachers that they have about five learners that they wanted them to remain for learning support but disappeared. As a school management, we used to make arrangements with the teachers as to when else do they need learners so that I will inform those learners that they can come to me after school. Once they come, I will hand them over to the teachers and tell the teachers that learners are here and you can now have them.”* **(Acting Principal)**

*“We don’t allow learners to go home. Teachers must make sure that learners stay at school after school. We have the feeding scheme programme at the school for them to eat. There is no excuse for them not to be there.” (Teacher)*

*“Yes teachers inform the management and what the management used to do is to write letters to the parents or to call them that they needed at the school to be informed about the next day work that your child will be helped in this line. When the learners are aware that their parents know what is happening that is when they start to change and improve.” (Life Skills teacher)*

*“Well, what we do yes learners are reported to the office of the principal and we do follow ups to find the reasons why they did not avail themselves to the lessons. We usually give counselling to make them understand the importance of attending afternoon classes. We do that in conjunction with the Life Skills teacher and teachers in the counselling committee who assist learners. Usually in the past people gave them the punishment and we trying to change from that just to give them a discussion and try to understand them why they are not really doing that.” (Principal)*

*“Some learners stay in the hostel, yes we have a hostel. Some learners who come from houses, teachers used to call the parents if learners didn’t turn up. They call in the parents and also the learners to find out as to why they didn’t turned up also to encourage them to do more and show up next time.” (Teacher)*

*“Yes, that is what is happening. We report to the management. Everything is reported and we have the numbers of parents of all the learners here and if the number is not going through, we write letters to the parents and invite them to the school and discuss the issues of his/her child.” (Life Skills teacher)*

At some schools, learners were staying in the hostel and participants indicated that they did not experience difficulties with them attending afternoon learning support classes. To the learners who were coming from homes, some were unable to attend afternoon learning support classes due to some challenges such as lack of parental involvement, house chores after school,

starvation – unable to stay due to hunger, and learners’ reluctance due to lack of motivation. However, teachers reaffirmed that they used to report learners who did not turn up for afternoon learning support classes to the school management. The school management always made sure that these learners are communicated to, and in some occasions, parents were engaged to find amicable solutions.

## **5. Major challenges into the practice of the learning support programme in schools**

- ***Overcrowded classes:*** at some schools, classes were full and teachers were hardly attending to all learners in need of learning support within the allocated 40 minutes.
- ***Afternoon learning support:*** some participants indicated that learning support was offered in the afternoon; therefore, learners and teachers were not active as they were hungry and exhausted.
- ***Time constrain:*** some participants mentioned that they don’t have much time to successfully implement the programme.
- ***Cooperation / involvement:*** parental involvement in the child’s education is important. According to some participants, this was lacking as there was no support from the parents to successfully implement the learning support programme.
- ***Lack of resources:*** some schools had no learning support teachers’ manual and resource book. Therefore, participants found it difficult to understand and differentiate between ‘compensatory teaching’, ‘learning support’, ‘afternoon classes’, ‘special classes’ and ‘remedial teaching’. So, all these related terms brought confusion amongst some participants.
- ***Lack of training:*** participants stated that the majority of the school managers, teachers and Life Skills teachers were not trained or given workshops on the learning support programme. This means that some participants who were not capacitated about the programme had no sufficient information about it. Thus, these participants were not aware as to whether learning

support should be offered in the afternoon or during teaching and learning process (normal school hours).

- ***Lack of interest and motivation:*** according to the participants, some learners were not interested in the learning support programme. These learners did not want to remain after school for learning support. In addition, participants revealed that some learners lacked motivation and they were only coming to school because of social grants and food (feeding programme) that they were receiving.
- ***Reluctance:*** at some schools, there were university graduates who are qualified teachers with knowledge and skills in different subject areas but they were not eager and/or willing to help and support learners in need of learning support after school. According to the participants, these teachers lacked commitments and cooperation. They rather complain about petty issues.
- ***Administrative work/workload:*** according to the participants, they had too much administrative work plus markings and lesson preparations. Because of full workloads, teachers would either do lesson preparations or let learners go home; or support the learners and not prepare for the next day.
- ***Lack of communication:*** there were no proper communication between the school and the community. Thus, some parents did not want to come to school and discuss learning support issues as some learners' issues were coming from their homes.
- ***Lack of reading materials:*** some teachers lacked necessary skills and knowledge on how to teach, help and support learners with learning difficulties especially in reading. Therefore, lack of reading materials in schools has worsened the situation because teachers would have at least relied on these materials for guidance on how to support learners, specifically with reading.

- ***Insufficient training days:*** participants who were trained stated that they were disappointed because the training days were not enough to equip themselves with knowledge and skills required to enable them to successfully implement the programme.
- ***Lack of monitoring:*** participants who were trained mentioned that they were not visited by any official from the regional education offices to check whether the programme was implemented or not and what challenges they had.
- ***Openness and collaboration:*** at some schools, teachers were not open to inform other teachers about learners with learning problems within their classes. Since these teachers were not collaborative, it was difficult for the Life Skills teachers and school managers to support them on how to support learners with learning difficulties.
- ***Lack of induction:*** some participants indicated that due to lack of induction and guidance for novice teachers, this has negatively contributed to the implementation of learning support programme in schools.
- ***COVID-19 pandemic:*** according to some participants, COVID-19 has disrupted schools' activities, initiatives and programmes including teaching modes in which cohorts were introduced. As a result, the learning support programme was also suspended especially at the schools where it was offered in the afternoon.
- ***Lack of support:*** teachers need support from the regional offices on learning support in order to support learners in need of their support successfully. Therefore, some participants were not supported from the regional office and most of the teachers at the Senior Primary and Junior Secondary do not even have the essential skills on how to practice the learning support programme. Nevertheless, if they could have received in-service training support it would enhance their learning support knowledge.
- ***Syllabus coverage:*** some teachers were already struggling to complete and cover what was stipulated in the syllabus. Now, to balance normal teachings and individual learning support

was perceived by teachers as unrealistic because teachers might not complete the syllabus on time

## 6. Recommendations

- ***Learner transfer:*** the system of transferring learners even if they did not master the basic competences was the biggest problem as it contributes to the high rate of learners in need of learning support. Therefore, learners should master the basic competencies before they are allowed to move to the next grade.
- ***Extra Life Skills teacher:*** schools with many learners should be provided with two Life Skills teachers to enable learners get enough support.
- ***Class size:*** the smaller the number of the learners in the class, the better the learners could receive the learning support. Learner-teacher ratio should be adhered to.
- ***Inclusion of learning support in the curriculum:*** the institutions of higher learning responsible for training teachers should integrate learning support into their curriculum focusing on the identification of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and how to support them effectively. If this component is included, after graduating teachers will enter the teaching profession fully prepared and able to support learners with learning challenges in schools.
- ***Create a special class:*** at each school, there should be a special class per grade from pre-primary to Grade 7 to cater for learners with special needs. Unlike now when these learners are taught in the mainstream and they do not really get the necessary attention and support they deserve.
- ***Provide training and/or workshops:*** for the effective and successful implementation of the learning support programme in schools, teachers and other stakeholders (parents and school board members) should be trained or attend workshops during the first and/or second term on

how to use and implement the teachers' manual and resource book when offering support to those who are in need of support. To those who were trained, they should be provided with refresher trainings, unlike programmes being rolled out to schools without induction and training, which eventually become ineffective.

- ***Programme coordinators:*** it should be made mandatory that there must be one or two programme coordinator(s) at each school and one at the circuit to seriously deal with the programme and ensure its effectiveness.
- ***Prioritise technical schools/subjects:*** not all the learners are academically gifted, even if they are provided with the learning support. Consider learners with learning difficulties who might be gifted in artwork as opposed to academic. Therefore, schools that are more technical should be built in each region to cater for these learners. Moreover, technical subjects should equally be prioritised in schools instead of forcing these learners into the mainstream system.
- ***Special schools:*** due to many learners with special needs in schools as compared to the current numbers of special schools in Namibia, there should be at least two (2) special schools such as Eluwa special school per region in order to accommodate these learners.
- ***School community awareness campaigns:*** parental involvement in education is crucial. The school community should, therefore be educated through community radios, churches, councillors, and regional governors to sensitise them about the importance of learning support. Parents should also be motivated and made aware of the importance of sending learners to school and not only for being in school in order to get social grants.
- ***Digitalise learning support profile forms:*** in order to embrace and promote Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools, learning support profile forms should be digitalised to enable teachers to complete learners' information electronically. This would easily form part of the ministry's database right away.

- ***Monitoring and supporting:*** for the programme to be implemented successfully, the designated persons to check if the activities are carried out and done correctly should regularly monitor activities within the learning support programme. At the same time, support should be provided to the teachers to strengthen them in areas they are experiencing challenges.
- ***Reporting and updating:*** there should be a monthly report, whereby teachers would report and update the school management on the progress of the learning support programme.
- ***Teachers' manual and resource book:*** schools should be provided with the learning support teachers' manual and resource books. As for now, many schools had no access to these learning support materials and hardly implement the learning support programme in their schools.
- ***Literacy programme in schools:*** adult education should be encouraged at least per school to provide literacy to the parents especially parents of learners in Pre-primary to Grade 3. The programme would educate parents on how to assist and support their children with homework while at home.
- ***Teachers' workload:*** some Life Skills teachers complained about workload. Instead of teaching Life Skills and provide learning support, counselling and other psycho social support; they found themselves teaching promotion subjects like English, Social Studies, Mathematics, etc. Thus, Life Skills teachers should be exempted from teaching other subjects to enable them fully support learners in need of learning support and other social support including counselling.
- ***Localise regional school counsellors:*** all the school counsellors are based at the regional education offices, which is far from schools. Therefore, the services of these officers are highly needed closer to the schools. Each circuit should therefore at least have one school counsellor closer to the schools.

## 7. Conclusions

This study investigated the practice of the learning support programme in schools. The study was aimed at gauging the views of the participants on the implementation of the learning support programme with regard to their awareness, access and understanding of the learning support teachers' manual and resource book. The study was also aimed to determine how schools have been supported to implement the learning support teachers' manual guidelines; to investigate challenges that schools encounter with regard to the implementation of the learning support teachers' manual guidelines; and to provide realistic recommendations on how to effectively implement the learning support programme in schools.

The majority of the school management were aware of the learning support programme than teachers. However, only few schools had copies of the learning support teachers' manual and resource book. This made it difficult for some school management members and teachers to fulfil the mandate/guidelines related to the implementation of learning support programme. To some extent, some teachers had insufficient understanding of learning support and this resulted in 'up to the teacher' approach on how and when to provide learning support to the learners in need of support. Moreover, some teachers were reluctant to provide learning support, especially in the afternoons because of teachers' workload, emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, overcrowded classrooms, lack of training, lack of parental involvement and learners' lack of motivation.

Furthermore, only few schools were supporting gifted learners with enrichment and/or challenging activities. Gifted learners were also allowed to assist fellow learners with schoolwork where other learners did not understand. Some schools however ignored gifted learners and only supported learners with learning difficulties. Surprisingly, many teachers did not receive training or professional development on the learning support programme. However, some school management with a clear understanding of the programme have supported teachers who found it difficult to support learners in need of learning support. Such schools also monitored teachers' activities on learning support although the monitoring system was not intense and effective.

## 8. References

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