

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to Facilitate the Learning of Students with Intellectual Disabilities within the Inclusive Educational Context in Sarawak, East Malaysia

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to explore the difficulties faced by Intellectual Disabilities (ID) students to learn in inclusive educational settings, and strategies incorporated by the teachers using Universal Design Learning (UDL) to facilitate effective learning of ID students. A qualitative study through document analysis and semi structured interview has been conducted. The informants are 4 special education teachers teaching at Special Education Integration Program (SEIP) classes. Findings indicate that ID students face difficulties comprehending complex concepts and require simplified instructions. Additionally, they also face difficulties in social interactions, articulation-based communication, and sensory sensitivities; exhibit behavioral or emotional challenges that affect their learning and classroom dynamics. There are also limited resources and support service to support ID students within the educational system in Sarawak, East Malaysia can be very challenging. It is necessary for the teachers to modify the different teaching methods so ID students can reach their full potential in learning. Flexibility, visual aids, technology aids, and clear voice and speech are among the strategies used by the teachers. This study can assist ID students to become more socially and functionally literate.

Keywords: Intellectual Disabilities, Universal for Design Learning, Inclusive Education, Teaching Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The aspiration of introducing and implementing the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework is to increase students' access to an inclusive learning environment, encourage student engagement, and meet their educational requirements. The goal of the UDL framework is to reduce obstacles to instruction to maximize students' access to the inclusive education curriculum (Dalton et al., 2019; Yusof et al., 2019). Students' abilities, needs, and preferences are clearly diverse, and it is observed that a sizable heterogeneous group is facing difficulties in learning and meeting their educational requirements for a variety of reasons (Antoninis et al., 2020; Yusof et al., 2019). Lack of flexible learning and teaching practices makes it difficult for students with the heterogeneous grouping of sensory disabilities, behavioral challenges, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and attention deficit disorder to access the inclusive education curriculum (Al Hazmi & Che Ahmad, 2018; Korotkov & Yarrow, 2022). With relation to the learning environment, UDL aims to bridge the gap including flexibility into the curriculum so that students with varying learning requirements may access inclusive education (Bray et al., 2023; Campus & Bedir, 2022).

The Individualised Education Programs (IEPs) are designed to support the educational progress of students with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted to meet the requirements of providing disabled students with access to inclusive education (Othman et al., 2022). Three fundamental ideas of information presentation, that is, providing students with a variety of adaptable and engaging ways to acquire sufficient knowledge were incorporated into the curriculum design process. It also includes a variety of choices to boost student engagement and sustain motivation, as well as flexible and numerous forms of expression for students to demonstrate what they've learned (Abol & Nordin, 2023; Evmenova et al., 2024; Korotkov & Yarrow, 2022).

In this regard, the purpose of the article is to explore the challenges faced by students with learning disabilities in inclusive classroom, as well as how UDL can facilitate intellectual disabilities (ID) students' access to the inclusive education curriculum in East Malaysia. The current methods used worldwide to educate ID students are thoroughly examined and analyzed in order to achieve the goal (Al Hazmi & Che Ahmad, 2018). This study provides valuable insights into the implementation of UDL principles for ID students in the specific context

of Sarawak, East Malaysia, addressing a significant gap in the literature on UDL application in non-Western, resource-constrained educational settings. Moreover, by exploring both the challenges faced by ID students and the strategies employed by teachers, this research offers practical, context-specific guidance for educators and policymakers working to enhance inclusive education practices in similar cultural and economic environments. To better appreciate the necessity of using UDL, ideas supporting inclusive education access among ID students apart of the challenges in gaining access to inclusive education should be explored. This study addresses a gap in UDL research by exploring its implementation for ID students in Sarawak, East Malaysia. It explores the unique challenges and strategies in this non-Western context, contributing to the broader understanding of UDL's effectiveness in diverse cultural settings (Yusof et al., 2019).

Problem Statement

The Malaysian Ministry of Education (2017) explains that ID students have the highest ratio of students compared to the other Special Education Needs (SEN) groups in Malaysia. Out of a total of 88,118 SEN with learning difficulties who are in the Special Education Integration Program (SEIP) class, a total of 35095 SEN students are from the ID subcategory (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2023). Therefore, this study focuses on SEN with ID, which is a sub-category under the category of learning problems involved in inclusive learning environment in the state of Sarawak, East Malaysia. According to data from the Special Education Division on December 1, 2023, the total number of SEN in Sarawak is 8,285 students, of whom 6,915 are SEN in the Learning Disabilities category and 3025 are from the 6,915 SEN with learning disabilities in the ID sub-category (Sarawak State Education Department, 2023). The number of SEN in this country, especially for the ID category which continues to increase every year is very worrying (Cheng & Toran, 2022).

Many teachers are not very accepting of ID students being placed in an inclusive classroom environment because of their perception the lack of teacher training or not being prepared to teach students with disabilities (Bonnici, 2022; Khofidotur et al., 2023). Among the reasons why teachers are less prepared is because before the Disability Education Act (IDEA) was created, ID students were often isolated from the general population of students in different schools or designated special school areas. IDEA 2004 stipulates that ID students must have

access to the general education curriculum and be provided with individualized instruction to meet their needs (Garratt et al., 2022; Korotkov & Yarrow, 2022).

Teachers today face challenges in finding more effective solutions to meet the complex needs of students, especially those with special learning needs (Alshoura, 2021). The lack of understanding and knowledge among special education teachers on the concept of inclusive learning environment and flexible learning goals to meet the educational needs of SEN students, referring to individuals with a diversity of educational needs within the context of special education, needs to be addressed (Ainscow, 2020; Smith et al., 2020).

Navaitiene and Stasiunaitiene (2021) assert that improving learning opportunities and changing educational structures to make them more accessible for all students are at the heart of inclusive education. According to the tenets of UDL, this calls for a change from the conventional one-size-fits-all approach to learning to one that recognizes learner variety as the norm (Ewe & Galvin, 2023).

Based on the findings of previous studies, the UDL framework is a catalyst for the education of students with disabilities as well as those with special needs who are considered a core component of the personalized learning system (Bray et al., 2023). The application of UDL principles in the inclusive learning environment can strengthen the level of academic standards at an optimal level, especially among those with special needs (Meyer et al., 2016). Based on ten years of systematic literature review from 2008 to 2018, seven previous studies have been discussed regarding the findings of the UDL implementation study in the classroom involving ID students as well as the effectiveness of this group (AlRawi & AlKahtani, 2021). AlRawi and AlKahtani (2021) stated that the effectiveness of using the UDL framework through interventions involving the use of various teaching materials involving low and high technology has had a positive impact on ID students.

Whereas the findings of a qualitative study conducted by previous researchers involving ID students, the teachers mostly do not understand the concept of UDL and the principles of UDL in delivering learning content in addition to appropriate teaching materials, causing ID students have difficulty following courses that offered at universities (Al Hazmi & Che Ahmad, 2018; Rakhimbekova, 2019).

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the difficulties of ID students faced in inclusive classroom and the practic-

es of UDLs to support ID students' access to inclusive learning environment in Sarawak, East Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intellectual Disabilities (ID)

A person with an intellectual disability, a neurodevelopmental disease, has reduced cognitive and adaptive functioning, which limits their capacity to learn. This is one of the many prevalent disabilities that students have (Fauziyah et al., 2019; Meyer et al., 2016). The children's growth is hindered by the learning limitations, and they typically learn more slowly than a typical youngster (Cheng & Toran, 2022). Recent research by Irawati et al. (2023) emphasizes that intellectual disabilities encompass a spectrum of challenges, ranging from mild to severe, each requiring tailored educational approaches to maximize learning potential. There are many levels of intellectual disability namely moderate, high, and severe (Irawati et al., 2023). The main distinction between children with varying disabilities is that the greater the disability, the more difficult it will be for the student to learn and grow into an independent adult. An IQ test result is used to diagnose intellectual disability. A score of between 70 and 75 indicates a modest disability (APA, 2018). If the child's score is less than 70, it suggests that they have a moderate intellectual disability. The condition will be more severe the lower the score.

A person's capacity for both intellectual and adaptive functioning is essentially impacted by intellectual disability. According to Irawati et al. (2023), children with intellectual disabilities struggle with comprehending, communicating, reasoning, recalling details, and solving difficulties. It might take a long time for these students to pick up even simple daily tasks like talking, writing, dressing, and washing. A student with an intellectual disability is nevertheless capable of learning, even though the reason for the developmental delay in those who are thought to have it is unknown. To improve the development process and integrate these students into the mainstream, several strategies and tactics, including UDL, have been created over time (Al Hazmi & Che Ahmad, 2018).

UDL Implementation in Educational Settings

UDL framework is positioned as an educational paradigm for inclusive practice (Fauziyah et al., 2019; Meyer et al., 2016). Despite having its roots in special education, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is now used in inclusive education classes, encouraging students

to approach learning from diverse perspectives (Fovet, 2020; Galkienė & Monkevičienė, 2021; Khofidotur et al., 2023). According to Navaitienė and Stasiūnaitienė (2021), UDL helps students reach their maximum potential, in contrast to the more conventional reactive approach's design, which adjusts only after needs are found. The UDL framework is proactive, strategic, and anticipatory because it recognizes learner variability from the outset, removing the need for retrofitting, in contrast to current education systems that require students to have medical diagnoses or proof of needing additional support or accommodations (Sewell et al., 2022). According to (King-Sears et al., 2023), students with disabilities, gifted students, English language learners, and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse learn side-by-side in today's classrooms, which are defined by ever-increasing diversity and learner variability. In addition, King-Sears et al. (2023) mentioned that anticipating, preventing, and overcoming obstacles before they ever materialize is made easier when proactive planning for unpredictability is implemented and students' prospective requirements are taken into account throughout the planning phase. This is consistent with the assertion made by Bray et al. (2023) that UDL approaches inclusive education proactively by emphasizing learner diversity, flexibility, and choice as well as how students participate and engage in the educational process.

Previous research has highlighted that although UDL is not reliant on technology, it offers a pedagogical approach within which the affordances of technology to increase inclusive practice and to address barriers to learning are possible (Bray et al., 2023). While using technology to support UDL implementations across all three principles has its benefits, Bray et al. (2023) makes clear that "technology is simply the delivery system" and that intentionality in intervention design and technology integration within the UDL framework are necessary.

Recent findings from Almeqdad et al. (2023) and King-Sears et al. (2023) found the advantages of UDL on student learning outcomes. Using these principles in any future planning and implementation, as they interact well and provide rich and active learning experiences, aiming to achieve optimum and desired educational outcomes for all learners (Almeqdad et al., 2023). In a similar vein, King-Sears et al. (2023) emphasizes that UDL significantly affects students' learning results. Furthermore, the results show that using UDL-based instruction has a considerable impact on students' academic progress, which is why the authors highlight UDL as a research-based approach (King-Sears et al., 2023).

Using UDL to Promote Inclusive Education

UDL is an innovative strategy that may be included in schools to extend learning to promote inclusive education to students with a variety of variances in learning capacity. The framework that offers the chance to create a flexible environment that considers the students' learning variabilities is the UDL approach. Due to its capacity to make education more accessible to all, UDL plays a significant role in expanding learning to promote an inclusive learning environment for all students, including those with intellectual disabilities (Frolli et al., 2020). Building on this, Sewell et al. (2022) position UDL as a comprehensive theory of inclusive practice, emphasizing its potential to create flexible learning environments that accommodate diverse learner needs. Their work highlights UDL's capacity to bridge the gap between inclusive education policies and their practical implementation in varied educational settings. The idea of UDL enables teachers to adapt their objectives and methods of instruction to the requirements of their students. According to Al Hazmi & Che Ahmad (2018) it is composed of three parts namely numerous means of interaction; multiple means of expression; various means of representation. These components also include textual, audio, video, and image formats and methods for teaching learning to ID students. These elements assist in lowering educational obstacles without sacrificing accomplishment criteria (Goegan et al., 2024).

Regardless of the students' ability, UDL enables the teacher to involve them in the learning process. For example, education is usually given in writing and through books in schools. Some students could struggle with reading, while others might struggle with writing. Students may get education using a variety of media, including audio, video, and images, with the use of the UDL framework. This approach gives teachers and learners several ways to convey information and gain knowledge, respectively (Meyer et al., 2016).

UDL employs the scaffolding technique, which modifies the activity as needed while balancing the child's interest with it. In order to create a curriculum that maximizes students' learning, UDL takes into account each student's strengths and limitations (Al Hazmi & Che Ahmad, 2018). This method helps a challenged youngster tackle an issue that is above his normal level of independence if significant support is given. A teacher can create a plan by first looking at the obstacles with UDL. In general, UDL aims to lower obstacles to avoid teachers to adapt their classes to meet the requirements of students with intellectual disabilities (AlRawi & Alkahtani, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study that employed two main data collection methods: document analysis and semi-structured interviews. For the document analysis, relevant documents related to UDL and inclusive education practices in Malaysia were carefully selected and analyzed. This process helped establish the context and current state of inclusive education and UDL implementation in the country.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 4 special education teachers who have experience working with ID students in inclusive classroom settings in Sarawak, East Malaysia. These teachers were purposively selected based on their extensive experience (minimum 5 years) in teaching at SEIP classes. This selection criteria ensured that the informants could provide rich, in-depth insights into the challenges and strategies of implementing UDL for ID students. In-depth interviews explored the teachers' experiences, challenges faced, and strategies used in implementing UDL principles with ID students.

The data from both document analysis and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns, challenges, and effective practices in UDL implementation for ID students in the Sarawak context. The data from both document analysis and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase

approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process involved: (1) familiarizing ourselves with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report as shown in Figure 1.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical research practices. Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics committee. All participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose and procedures, and informed consent was obtained before their participation. To ensure confidentiality, all data was anonymized, and participants were assigned codes (e.g., Informant 1, Informant 2) in the reporting of results. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. All data collected was stored securely and will be destroyed after the stipulated retention period.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following themes emerged from the analysis addressing the research questions on the difficulties faced by ID students and the strategies used by special education teachers to implement UDL principles.



Figure 1. Phases of Thematic Analysis
 Source: Based on Braun & Clarke (2006), p. 87.

Difficulties of ID Students in Inclusive Classroom

ID students may struggle with reading, writing, or understanding information. Each student may have a specific learning disability, such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, or dyscalculia, requiring tailored teaching methods and accommodations. ID students may have difficulties understanding complex concepts and require simplified instructions. The range of intellectual disabilities varies, requiring individualized education plans, specialized instruction, and adaptations to the curriculum (Monteiro et al., 2021).

The following themes emerged from the analysis, directly addressing the research questions about the difficulties faced by ID students and the strategies used by teachers to implement UDL principles:

“One difficulty I’ve observed is the diverse learning paces within the classroom. ID Students may require more time to grasp concepts. Balancing the needs of all students, especially when some need additional time and support, can be challenging.” – Informant 1

Students with sensory processing disorders may struggle with sensory input such as hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity to light, sound, touch. Tailored learning environments, sensory-friendly spaces, and accommodations like noise-canceling headphones or fidget tools are necessary to support these students. Besides, students with intellectual disabilities may face difficulties in social interactions, communication, and sensory sensitivities. Varied levels of support and accommodation are required such as visual schedules, social skills training, and sensory breaks to meet individual needs.

“Social interactions can be a hurdle. My ID students may struggle with social cues and forming connections. It’s essential to create a supportive environment where peer relationships can develop naturally.” – Informant 2

Furthermore, the social dynamics within inclusive classrooms can significantly impact students with intellectual disabilities. Hofmann (2023) found that staff-perceived social acceptance or rejection in the classroom environment can influence anxiety levels in students with intellectual disabilities. This highlights the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive social atmosphere to promote the emotional well-being and academic success of these students.

Some ID students may exhibit behavioral or emotional difficulties that affect their learning and classroom dynamics. Individualized behavior plans, counseling, and support services are necessary to address emotional and behavioral needs effectively.

“Behavioral concerns are not uncommon. ID Students may exhibit behaviors stemming from frustration or communication difficulties. Identifying the triggers and implementing strategies to address behavioral difficulties is crucial.” – Informant 3

ID Students frequently struggle to adjust to changes in behavior and function. Their inability to learn new skills, remember objects or experiences, and engage in generalizing tasks is a result of their intellectual handicap, which limits their access to inclusive education. Additionally, the changes in conceptual, social, and practical skills are challenging for ID students to adjust to, which slows down and limits their learning potential. It is typical for individuals to treat ID students unequally and not recognize their existence in general (Safari et al., 2023).

The accessibility of inclusive education for ID students is influenced by several variables. In comparison to their more intellectually gifted peers, ID students have comparatively lower comprehension and acceptance levels. In this regard, several techniques are employed to educate, improve learning, and transfer information to student with intellectual disabilities (Bonnici, 2022).

There are also students with speech and language disorders that may struggle with communication and articulation.

“Effective communication can be a barrier. Some students may face difficulties expressing themselves verbally or in writing. Implementing alternative communication methods and fostering a communicative environment is essential.” – Informant 4

“... students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) might face difficulties in social interactions and communication. Creating an environment that fosters understanding, offering structured routines, and implementing visual supports are crucial to support their learning and well-being.” – Informant 2

It is crucial for legislators and teachers to decide whether to teach these students in special education environments created with their unique needs in mind, or in regular classrooms among other students their own age. The ID students frequently experience unwelcome treatment from their parents, siblings, classmates who are normal, in social situations, and at the community level (Cheng & Toran, 2022). This lowers their social acceptance and, as a result, lowers their self-confidence and self-respect (Al-Hazmi & Che Ahmad, 2018). Many people’s preconceived notions and prejudiced attitudes are a big problem since they prevent these students from

developing mentally and from accessing basic education. These students' inferiority complex, which they formed because of socially unacceptable conduct, also manifests itself in the classroom (Al-Hazmi & Che Ahmad, 2018).

Speech therapy, augmentative and alternative communication devices, and adapted teaching methods help support these students. Also, SEN students with ADHD may face difficulties in attention, focus, and impulse control. Strategies such as visual aids, clear routines, and accommodations to help manage attention and impulsivity are required.

“One of the primary issues is maintaining sustained attention. These students may find it challenging to concentrate on tasks for extended periods. For instance, during teaching or independent work, their minds might easily wander, affecting their ability to grasp and retain information.” – Informant 3

Findings from studies on students with intellectual disabilities' access to inclusive education suggest that there are problems in developing and successfully executing instructional plans. The selection of themes to be studied, the techniques to be used for teaching abilities, and the choice of teachers to transfer information are the main concerns with instructional design and execution. Given each student's unique learning style and intellectual capacity, the subjects and teaching strategies chosen must be highly targeted (Eng & Keong, 2019; Smith et al., 2020).

In this regard, one of the most important decisions made by teachers is whether the materials used are acceptable for reading, functional language, and math skills. Furthermore, teachers frequently struggle with setting priorities and creating lessons that foster these students to develop their daily life abilities. Living skills comprise a range of skill sets, such as how to walk, eat, write by hand, take care of oneself, and handle personal items (Frolli et al., 2020).

To effectively meet the learning requirements of children with intellectual disabilities, it is necessary to prioritize technology infrastructure and assistance, as well as administrative support, community participation, teacher training, and innovative funding (AlRawi & Alkahtani, 2022). The teachers also did not deny that there are limited resources, such as assistive technologies that include multiple strategies aimed at fostering learning and collaboration. Supporting ID students within the educational system in Sarawak, East Malaysia, can be very challenging. Access to modern technology is increasingly important in education. Students with special

needs may require assistive technologies to participate fully in the learning process. These technologies can include tools for communication, mobility, and specialized software. Insufficient provision of assistive technologies can hinder the educational experience for ID students (AlRawi & Alkahtani, 2022).

The analysis revealed several key themes regarding the difficulties faced by ID students and the strategies employed by teachers. These themes provide valuable insights into the implementation of UDL principles in the Sarawak context. These findings align with previous research by Monteiro et al. (2021), who also found that ID students face significant challenges in comprehension and social interaction in inclusive settings. However, the current study extends this understanding by highlighting the specific contextual challenges in Sarawak, such as limited resources and support services.

“Resource allocation can be a constraint. Ensuring that there are adequate resources, including creativity in producing its own materials and assistive technologies, is vital. Limited resources can impact the ability to provide tailored assistance to every student.” – Informant 1

“One of the persistent challenges we encounter is the limited resources and support services available. Sometimes, despite our efforts, there might be a lack of specialized resources or trained personnel needed to adequately support ID students. Also, ensuring that inclusive practices are fully embraced by all stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and fellow students, remains an ongoing endeavor” – Informant 2

Students must demonstrate the ability to make judgments and choices that promote their entire development, progress, and well-being to be eligible for inclusive learning environment. However, it is noted that intellectual disabilities significantly impair students' capacity for self-determination, which has an impact on their ability to make decisions, manage their time, make choices, solve problems, and set goals (Al Hazmi & Che Ahmad, 2018).

In this way, students find learning new material to be a difficult undertaking. Because educational institutions lack the necessary resources to meet the unique needs of ID students, revisions to the legislation governing special needs students' admission and access to inclusive education must be prioritized (Galkienė & Monkevičienė, 2021). The quantity of funding needed to address the demands for instructional materials, transportation, infrastructure, and a comfortable and convenient learning environment for students with intellectual disabilities is

not provided to the schools (Galkienė & Monkevičienė, 2021). The use of electronic media and information technology, which has emerged as a crucial method of communication in the modern world, is not readily available in schools as a means of obtaining knowledge and instruction (Warnes et al., 2021).

Using UDL to Enhance Learning for ID Students

Integrating and enhancing Information Technology (IT) in the classroom is essential for implementing UDL in inclusive learning environments. In order to enjoy the benefits of IT, instructors must become familiar with its elements (Warnes et al., 2021). It is necessary for teachers to modify the different teaching methods used with the ID students. Additionally, in order for instructors and students to exploit information technology elements in their classrooms and lessons, appropriate managerial assistance must be given. In addition, educational institutions that do not have a high degree of IT development must devote a large portion of their resources to using technology. To help ID students learn, it is also necessary to modify the teaching approaches and place adequate emphasis on providing computers and televisions in every classroom (Haleem et al., 2022).

“I incorporate visual supports like charts, diagrams, and graphic organizers to assist in comprehension. Visual aids help in breaking down complex information into more digestible components.” – Informant 2

“I leverage technology to enhance accessibility. Using apps and adaptive software, students can engage with the curriculum in ways that suit their learning styles... or I just include simple technology in my teaching like interactive simulations, simple recording my own voice on PowerPoint slides presentation, or voice-to-text tools available online.” – Informant 1

Teachers may significantly improve the learning capacities and knowledge levels of their ID students by incorporating new and creative teaching methods that adhere to the frameworks and principles of UDL. The goal of UDL is to give every student equitable access to and participation in inclusive learning environment (Al Hazmi & Che Ahmad, 2018). One of the informants mentioned she allows for flexibility in her classroom by providing multiple means of representation, engagement, as well as information so that the students may access information better. Meanwhile, another informant mentioned that he takes sensory needs into consideration, in which he tries to create an environment that is good for learning and better focus for the ID students.

“One of the key strategies is understanding that every student is unique. I think it is great if I can provide flexibility for the students to learn. As for now, I try to use a variety of teaching methods and teaching aids. Besides that, I try to give exposure to different types of learning styles. I believe the students are allowed to access information and showcase their understanding in various ways.” – Informant 2

“Adapting assessments is a vital strategy. I provide options for students to demonstrate their understanding. This could be through verbal presentations, visual projects, or interactive demonstrations, allowing each student to showcase their strengths.” – Informant 3

“Considering sensory needs is essential. Some students benefit from fidget tools, sensory breaks, or a quiet corner in the classroom. By acknowledging sensory preferences, we create an environment where students can focus and learn effectively.” – Informant 1

This gives the ID students more self-assurance and allows them to advance at a comparatively faster rate. According to Dalton et al. (2019), the incorporation of UDL can facilitate the creation of strict regulations that oversee the hiring of teachers, curriculum selection, and instructional strategies. Additionally, it may be made sure that the resources are distributed appropriately so that unique demands related to the development of infrastructure and the support system for ID students are met first (Frolli et al., 2020).

As one of the informants mentioned, he makes sure to be able to address the specific needs and strengths of each student. To make this happen, collaborating with professionals is important to facilitate better understanding and strategies (Zyta et al., 2023).

“Developing Individualized Learning Plans is a cornerstone of my strategy. Collaborating with special education professionals, we create personalized plans that address the specific needs and strengths of each student. This ensures that the learning environment is tailored to support individual growth.” – Informant 4

For effective implementation of UDL to serve ID students, educational institutions must make fundamental adjustments. This goes beyond improvements in instructional strategies made by teachers and school administrators. Using technology and pedagogical strategies, UDL presents a unified paradigm that includes several strategies for promoting learning through cooperation (Frolli et al., 2020). Hence, Bowman-Perrott et al. (2023) mentioned Class wide peer tutoring (CWPT) is thought to

be a successful intervention strategy for improving the efficacy of instruction and lowering disruptive behavior in classrooms. It was shown that CWPT was more successful than teacher-led education. But it's also been shown that emotional problems and behavioral disorders make it harder for students to communicate with their peers, which hinders their capacity to learn in inclusive classroom environments (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2023). However, Klang (2023) argues that interaction between SEN and students without disabilities can help the SEN to adapt better to surroundings and not feel isolated in the room.

Assessments that are focused on the curriculum are also used to lessen disruptive behavior by classmates and students' propensity to act out in class. According to research on the effects of classroom-based evaluation, students who get education using effective methods have less behavioral issues (Monteiro et al., 2021). It might be difficult to include students who have behavioral and emotional issues or intellectual challenges. In this sense, teachers who use instructional techniques to support learning can help intellectually impaired students in inclusive education classes perform better (Silva et al., 2020).

One of the informants mentions that she deliberately uses clear and simple language to assist the ID students to understand better.

"I consciously use clear and simple language when delivering instructions or explanations. Breaking down information into smaller steps and using concrete examples helps ensure that all students, including those with intellectual disabilities, can follow along." – Informant 3

CONCLUSION

ID students encounter difficulties when it comes to embracing social or educational modifications that restrict-

ed their ability to learn. As a result, unique arrangements must be made to provide specialized curricula, include new teaching techniques, state and federal legislation, and integrate infrastructure with assistive technologies that includes multiple strategies aimed at fostering learning and collaboration, to support ID students within the educational system in Sarawak, East Malaysia. Incorporating UDL into the learning framework may have a significant positive impact on guaranteeing that all students, regardless of their cognitive ability to learn, have access to basic education. Gaining access to inclusive education will guarantee improved learning and growth in the areas of reading, writing, comprehension, making decisions, life skills, and social skills, all of which help students lead decent, respected lives.

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of UDL by demonstrating its applicability and challenges in a non-Western context, suggesting that teachers in Sarawak need more support and resources to effectively implement UDL principles. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of UDL implementation on academic achievement and social integration of ID students in similar cultural contexts, potentially informing more inclusive educational policies and practices.

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