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FORMATION DOCTORALE EN SCIENCES
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**UNITE DE RECHERCHE ET DE
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**TEACHERS' INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING STRATEGIES
AND AUTONOMIZATION OF PUPILS / LEARNING
PROCESSES. THE CASE OF CHILDREN WITH
EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDER.**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a
master's degree in education

Option: Special Education
Specialty: Mental Handicap



by
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Declaration

I, SWIRI CHANTINE ANGU, hereby declare that this research titled “*Teachers’ Instructional Planning Strategies and the Autonomisation of Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in Selected Schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon*” is the result of my independent investigation and original work, carried out under the supervision of CHAFFI CYRILLE IVAN. All sources of information and ideas borrowed from other authors have been duly acknowledged through proper citation and referencing, in accordance with the APA 7th Edition referencing style.

This thesis has been submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a master’s degree in education.

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Dedication

To all my lecturers at the Faculty of Science of Education

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The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the grace of God and the invaluable support of many individuals. Human success, like life itself, is built on the foundation of collaboration and shared effort. This work stands as a testimony to that collective spirit of cooperation.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Meaning
APA	American Psychological Association
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Disorders
GBHS	Government Bilingual High School
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
MoE	Ministry of Education
MINESEC	Ministry of Secondary Education (Cameroon)
N	Sample Size
N/A	Not Applicable
SD	Strongly Disagree
D	Disagree
A	Agree
SA	Strongly Agree
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TD	Timely Performance (School)
CES	Collège d'Enseignement Secondaire
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) in selected schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Grounded in the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985) and Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), the study sought to explore how differentiated and autonomy-supportive instructional practices influence learners' motivation, engagement, and self-regulation within inclusive classroom environments. The specific objectives were to (a) examine the extent to which teachers incorporate choice-making opportunities in instructional planning for pupils with EBD; (b) assess the level of self-regulation demonstrated by pupils with EBD; and (c) determine the influence of teachers' positive behavioural-support strategies on the development of learner autonomy. The hypotheses tested posited that instructional planning strategies would significantly predict learner autonomisation outcomes. A mixed-methods approach was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 30 teachers through structured Likert-scale questionnaires, while qualitative insights were obtained from five pupils using semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 25, applying descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and simple linear regression. Qualitative data were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase framework. Findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and pupils' autonomisation ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.05$). Teachers who applied differentiated instruction, provided choice-making opportunities, and employed positive behavioural supports were more likely to foster self-regulated and motivated learners. Qualitative findings reinforced this relationship, showing that pupils valued teacher support, flexible classroom routines, and opportunities for active participation in learning decisions. The study concludes that effective instructional planning rooted in inclusive pedagogy substantially enhances learner autonomy among pupils with EBD. It recommends continuous professional development for teachers on differentiated instruction, behavioural support, and autonomy-supportive teaching. Further studies should expand to other regions and include longitudinal designs to examine sustained impacts of instructional strategies on learner development.

Keywords: *Instructional Planning, Learner Autonomy, Emotional and Behavioural Disorders, Inclusive Education,*

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Chapter One

General Introduction

This chapter introduces the study on teachers' instructional planning strategies and the Autonomization of pupils' teaching and learning processes for children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in selected schools in Yaoundé. It presents the background of the study, highlights the problem statement, sets out the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses, and explains the significance, justification, and delimitation of the research. Key terms used in the study are also operationally defined to ensure clarity and consistency.

Background

Historical Background

The education of children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) has evolved considerably on a global scale over the past century. Historically, before the 20th century, children exhibiting emotional and behavioural challenges were often misunderstood, marginalised, or institutionalised without educational intervention (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2020). Early educational systems did not cater for children with special needs, largely viewing them as unfit for mainstream schooling. However, the landmark introduction of compulsory education laws in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and parts of Europe, began fostering environments where the educational rights of all children, regardless of their behavioural conditions, were increasingly recognised (Rose & Shevlin, 2019). The post-World War II period, with global movements advocating for human rights, accelerated the call for inclusive education models, culminating in major frameworks like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Education for All movement.

Following these global developments, more structured frameworks addressing children with EBD began to emerge. In the United States, the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), later amended to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), mandated that children with disabilities, including emotional disturbances, have access to Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) (Kauffman & Landrum, 2018). Similarly, the United Kingdom, through the Warnock Report (1978), proposed the integration of special educational needs into mainstream schooling, leading to the 1981 Education Act. These legislations

institutionalised the need for special instructional strategies and individualised education plans, emphasising teacher autonomy in tailoring learning experiences for children with specific challenges. By the early 21st century, most developed countries had begun implementing differentiated instructional planning to cater to diverse learner profiles.

On the African continent, the historical development of educational services for children with EBD has been much slower and less systematic. Colonial education systems largely ignored the needs of children with disabilities, focusing on producing clerks and labourers rather than fostering inclusive educational environments (Chitiyo, Odongo, & Wilson, 2019). After independence, many African nations struggled with resource limitations and competing educational priorities, relegating special needs education to the background. Nonetheless, initiatives such as the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien) and the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action pressured African governments to consider inclusive education reforms. However, special education programmes for children with emotional and behavioural challenges often remained underdeveloped and heavily reliant on non-governmental organisations for support.

Despite the challenges, some progress has been recorded on the continent. Countries such as South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana have taken significant steps to incorporate inclusive education policies into their national frameworks. South Africa's White Paper 6 (2001) on Special Needs Education, for instance, recognised the necessity for instructional differentiation to support learners with various disabilities, including emotional and behavioural disorders (Donohue & Bornman, 2015). However, the practical implementation of these policies often faced obstacles such as limited teacher training, inadequate funding, and societal stigma surrounding disabilities. Consequently, while a theoretical commitment to inclusive education exists across Africa, practical support for autonomising pupils' learning processes remains inconsistent and fragile.

In Central Africa specifically, and Cameroon in particular, the history of education for children with EBD reflects a blend of colonial legacy and contemporary struggles for inclusiveness. Under German, then French and British colonial rule, education was elitist and exclusionary, with no deliberate policies for children with disabilities (Ngwokabuenui, 2015). It was only post-independence, particularly from the late 1970s onwards, that Cameroon began to witness the establishment of specialised institutions such as the Etoug-Ebe Handicap Centre.

However, most of these institutions were established through private initiatives, religious organisations, and NGOs rather than state-driven policies. Until recently, mainstream schools rarely admitted children with significant emotional and behavioural disorders, leading to a persistent gap in inclusive education practice.

The evolution of Cameroon's education sector in the 1990s and early 2000s shows a gradual, albeit hesitant, movement towards inclusive education. With Cameroon being a signatory to international conventions such as the Salamanca Statement (1994) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), pressure mounted on the government to reform its educational system. Yet, practical realities such as a lack of trained special education teachers, limited infrastructural adjustments, and prevailing social attitudes have hampered effective inclusion of EBD learners (Tambo, 2012). Teachers often lacked specific instructional planning strategies to accommodate these pupils' unique learning and behavioural needs, thus restricting their autonomy in the learning process.

Recently, the Cameroonian government has shown increased commitment towards inclusive education through the 2010 Sectoral Strategy for Education and the 2017 National Inclusive Education Policy Draft. However, the translation of these policies into classroom practices remains a challenge. Many teachers, especially in public and general education schools, continue to report low preparedness in dealing with EBD learners (Fonkoua & Njimeli, 2021). Instructional planning strategies remain heavily traditional, focusing on teacher-centred approaches rather than fostering learner autonomy. Consequently, children with EBD often experience educational exclusion, low achievement, and heightened behavioural difficulties within mainstream educational settings.

Another crucial dimension of Cameroon's historical trajectory is the role of non-state actors in promoting inclusive education. Organisations such as PROMHANDICAM, alongside centres like the Etoug-Ebe Handicap Centre, have played pioneering roles in integrating children with EBD into educational settings. Through specialised teacher training workshops, adapted curricula, and advocacy campaigns, these institutions have attempted to bridge the gaps left by the public sector (Awa, 2019). Despite their efforts, the sustainability and scalability of these initiatives face significant hurdles, particularly given the sporadic financial and political support available.

Globally and nationally, the history of instruction for children with EBD highlights the evolving recognition that children must not only be included in educational spaces but must also be empowered to become autonomous learners. Instructional planning has increasingly been identified as a critical lever in this regard. Teachers are expected not only to manage behavioural challenges but also to design learner-centred activities, personalised supports, and adaptive pedagogical methods that enable EBD learners to actively participate in and take ownership of their educational journey (Mitchell, 2015). In Cameroon, however, the professional development of teachers in this area remains a relatively unexplored field, necessitating focused academic inquiry such as the present study.

The historical trajectory of educational provision for children with emotional and behavioural disorders reveals a slow but significant shift from exclusion and institutionalisation to inclusion and learner empowerment. International frameworks have provided critical direction, while national policies have attempted to adapt to the complex realities on the ground. Nonetheless, persistent gaps in teacher training, instructional planning, and learner Autonomization continue to affect educational outcomes for children with EBD in Cameroon. This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to the academic and practical understanding of how instructional planning strategies can enhance the teaching and learning processes for this marginalised group in Yaoundé.

Conceptual Background of the Study

Instructional Planning Strategies. Instructional planning strategies are foundational practices through which teachers prepare and structure learning experiences that align curricular objectives with students' cognitive, emotional, and social needs. Broadly, instructional planning involves setting learning goals, choosing pedagogical approaches, organising content, selecting resources, and preparing assessments (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2020). In this sense, it is a predictive, proactive, and reflective activity that determines the trajectory of classroom engagement and student outcomes. According to Gagné, Wager, Golas, and Keller (2021), instructional planning is defined as “the deliberate sequencing of learning tasks, experiences, and evaluations to maximise educational efficacy across diverse learner profiles.” Tomlinson (2022), representing a differentiated instruction perspective, describes instructional planning as “a dynamic and responsive process of crafting flexible learning pathways that adjust according to students’

readiness, interests, and learning profiles.” A more inclusive-oriented view comes from Shulman (2021), who sees instructional planning as “the professional practice where teachers apply pedagogical content knowledge to design learning opportunities that are culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate.”

Comparing these definitions, Gagné et al. (2021) focus heavily on systematic sequencing, while Tomlinson (2022) emphasises flexibility and responsiveness, crucial in inclusive education settings. Shulman (2021) offers a broader socio-cultural lens, underlining the need for cultural and developmental responsiveness. For this thesis, Tomlinson’s (2022) definition will serve as the working definition, as it most aptly captures the need for flexibility, differentiation, and responsiveness, which are vital when teaching pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders . These learners require adaptive approaches that account for their fluctuating emotional states and behavioural challenges.

In this study, instructional planning strategies will be measured by evaluating teachers' practices across three operational dimensions: (1) degree of differentiation in lesson design (i.e., adaptation to different ability levels), (2) incorporation of Individualised Educational Plans (IEPs) or personalised support strategies, and (3) level of flexibility in assessment methods (e.g., use of formative, summative, portfolio-based evaluations). Measurement tools will include structured lesson plan analysis, semi-structured teacher interviews, and classroom observation checklists designed against validated instructional planning rubrics (adapted from Tomlinson, 2022, and UNESCO, 2023).

Autonomization of Pupils' Teaching and Learning Processes. Autonomization in education refers to the process of empowering learners to take increased ownership, control, and responsibility over their learning activities, including goal-setting, resource management, self-monitoring, and self-assessment. Little (2020) defines learner autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s learning, involving planning, execution, and evaluation of the learning process.” Similarly, Benson (2021) describes autonomization as “both the capacity and the right of learners to make decisions concerning all aspects of their learning,” emphasizing its psychological, social, and pedagogical dimensions. Another perspective from Dam (2022) frames learner autonomy as “an educational goal achieved when learners develop the necessary attitudes, knowledge, and

strategies to initiate and sustain their learning independently and collaboratively, even outside structured classroom environments.”

Critically comparing these definitions, Little (2020) emphasizes individual self-management, Benson (2021) broadens it to include socio-political empowerment (the 'right' to make decisions), while Dam (2022) highlights both independent and collaborative dimensions. Given the context of this study, pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in inclusive settings, autonomy must not only be about independence but also scaffolded support within social contexts. Thus, Dam's (2022) definition will be adopted as the working definition because it encapsulates a comprehensive, developmentally sensitive understanding of Autonomization suitable for vulnerable learners.

In this study, Autonomization of pupils' learning processes will be measured through three operational indicators: (1) pupils' engagement in self-directed tasks (e.g., independently starting, pursuing, and completing assignments), (2) pupils' involvement in decision-making regarding learning goals or methods (e.g., choosing project topics, selecting learning strategies), and (3) pupils' ability to self-assess and reflect on their performance. These will be assessed through structured classroom observation grids, pupils' self-reflection journals, and teacher reports.

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). Emotional and Behavioral Disorders encompass a range of conditions characterised by emotional instability, disruptive behaviours, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, and academic underachievement. According to Kauffman and Landrum (2020), EBD refers to “a disability characterised by behavioural or emotional responses in school programs so different from appropriate age, cultural, or ethnic norms that they adversely affect educational performance.” Meanwhile, Forness and Knitzer (2021) define EBD as “patterns of emotional or behavioural functioning that are significantly different from the norms, to such an extent that educational performance is negatively impacted.” Another definition by Cullinan (2019) frames EBD as “persistent emotional or behavioural difficulties that interfere with a child's educational and social development, and that cannot be attributed solely to intellectual, sensory, or health factors.”

Comparing these definitions, Kauffman and Landrum (2020) highlight cultural and normative deviations, Forness and Knitzer (2021) focus more on functional and performance-based consequences, while Cullinan (2019) stresses persistence and differentiation from other

disabilities. Given the study's inclusive and practical orientation (teacher planning and pupil learning), Forness and Knitzer's (2021) definition will be adopted as the working definition because it places functional impact at the core, aligning closely with observable educational outcomes.

In this study, EBD will be operationalised using three indicators: (1) Emotional manifestations (e.g., frequent anxiety, withdrawal, sudden mood swings), (2) Behavioural disruptions (e.g., aggression, defiance, rule-breaking), and (3) Impact on learning (e.g., frequent school absences, underachievement despite instruction). Data will be collected through teacher rating scales (like the Behavioural and Emotional Rating Scale - BERS-2), classroom behaviour observation protocols, and analysis of academic records over a semester.

Curriculum Adaptation and Modification. Curriculum adaptation and modification are essential components of inclusive education, particularly for pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), who often require differentiated learning experiences to access and participate meaningfully in educational activities. Curriculum adaptation refers to the systematic adjustment of instructional content, processes, or environments to meet the diverse needs of learners, while curriculum modification involves more substantial changes to the learning expectations and outcomes themselves to accommodate individual student profiles.

According to Friend and Bursuck (2018), curriculum adaptations are “strategies used to adjust existing curriculum materials and expectations to accommodate students’ learning needs without substantially changing the standard of learning,” whereas modifications involve “significant changes to learning objectives or performance standards.” Tomlinson (2014), building on the concept of differentiated instruction, defines curriculum adaptation as “an approach where teachers proactively adjust the curriculum, teaching methods, resources, and learning activities to address the different readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles of their students.” Hall (2002) also distinguishes between adaptation (altering access without changing expectations) and modification (changing learning expectations or outcomes for a student).

Comparatively, Friend and Bursuck (2018) emphasise practical classroom-level strategies that enable access to general education curricula; Tomlinson (2014) focuses on broader principles of differentiation that require sustained pedagogical responsiveness; Hall (2002) provides a useful operational distinction between adaptation and modification based on the extent of curriculum

change. For the purposes of this study, Tomlinson's (2014) framework will be adopted as the working definition, given its emphasis on proactive, student-centred curriculum design, which is particularly vital for supporting pupils with EBD.

In this research, Curriculum Adaptation and Modification will be operationalised using three main indicators: (1) The degree of curriculum differentiation (e.g., varied content, process, product, learning environment), (2) Types of adaptation and/or modification strategies employed by teachers (e.g., scaffolding, task simplification, altered assessments), and (3) Responsiveness to individual learning profiles (e.g., accommodations for emotional and behavioural needs, flexibility in pacing and delivery).

Learning Motivation and Engagement. Learning motivation and engagement are central to educational success, especially for pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), who often exhibit challenges in sustaining interest and effort in learning activities. Motivation refers to the internal processes that stimulate, guide, and maintain goal-directed behaviour in learners, while engagement encompasses the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural investment students make in their learning tasks.

According to Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2014), learning motivation is defined as “the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained.” Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) describe student engagement as “the psychological investment and effort directed toward learning, mastering skills, or crafting a product or solution,” highlighting behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Ryan and Deci (2020), through Self-Determination Theory, stress that motivation quality (intrinsic vs extrinsic) strongly influences the depth of engagement and the overall learning outcomes.

Comparatively, Schunk et al. (2014) offer a motivational perspective rooted in goal pursuit and perseverance; Fredricks et al. (2004) provide a comprehensive framework distinguishing the types of engagement; Ryan and Deci (2020) add an essential distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational sources. For the purposes of this study, Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) will be adopted as the working definition, as their tripartite model of engagement (behavioural, emotional, cognitive) is particularly relevant for analysing pupils with EBD, whose challenges often cut across these three domains.

In this research, Learning Motivation and Engagement will be operationalised using four main indicators: (1) Behavioural engagement (e.g., participation rates, task completion), (2) Emotional engagement (e.g., enthusiasm, interest levels, emotional reactions to tasks), (3) Cognitive engagement (e.g., investment in learning strategies, preference for challenge), and (4) Motivational orientation (e.g., intrinsic motivation indicators like curiosity, autonomy-supportive attitudes). Data will be gathered through teacher observation checklists, student self-reports, and analysis of academic outputs.

Theoretical Background

This study is grounded on two major theories: Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985) and Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). These theories provide a strong conceptual foundation for understanding how teachers' instructional planning strategies can promote pupils' Autonomization in learning, particularly among children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Ryan and Deci (1985), posits that human motivation is deeply influenced by the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In the educational context, SDT suggests that when teachers design instructional strategies that support students' autonomy and competence, learners become more motivated, engaged, and self-directed. This theory is particularly relevant for pupils with EBD, who often experience limited autonomy and diminished motivation. By framing instructional planning around students' intrinsic motivational needs, teachers can create learning environments that foster greater self-regulation, participation, and ownership of learning processes.

Constructivist Learning Theory, attributed to Vygotsky (1978), emphasises that learners actively construct their own knowledge through social interaction, cultural mediation, and scaffolding provided by more knowledgeable others. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) highlights the importance of instructional support tailored to the learner's developmental level. For pupils with EBD, constructivist strategies such as differentiated instruction, collaborative activities, and scaffolded learning tasks are critical in promoting autonomy and engagement. In this study, Vygotsky's theory underpins the view that effective instructional planning must be dynamic, learner-centred, and responsive to the unique needs of diverse learners to enhance their independent learning capabilities.

The Self-Determination Theory provides insight into the motivational aspects that empower learner autonomy, while Constructivist Learning Theory addresses the cognitive and social dimensions of how pupils with EBD can gradually take ownership of their learning through structured support. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive lens through which teachers' instructional planning strategies and the Autonomization of pupils' learning processes can be studied and better understood.

Contextual Background

The commitment to inclusive education has been globally championed through landmark frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). These frameworks emphasize that all children, regardless of their disabilities, should have access to quality education in regular schools that accommodate their needs. In many developed contexts like the United States and Scandinavian countries, inclusive education has evolved towards practices that empower learners with special educational needs, including those with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), to develop autonomy and agency in their learning (Mitchell, 2015). Such countries have heavily invested in teacher training, curriculum differentiation, and support systems, recognising the importance of instructional planning in fostering independent learning among pupils with special needs (Florian, 2014). This shift towards learner-centred education serves as a global reference point for contexts like Cameroon, where inclusive education remains at an emergent stage.

Inclusive education is progressively gaining ground, especially following the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), which prioritise education for all. Countries such as South Africa have incorporated inclusive education policies like the Education White Paper 6 (2001), and Ghana with its Inclusive Education Policy (2015), aiming to integrate children with disabilities, including those with EBD, into mainstream schooling. However, research by Donohue and Bornman (2014) highlights that most African countries face systemic challenges such as inadequate teacher preparation, insufficient resources, and persistent societal stigma towards disability. These challenges significantly affect the instructional planning processes and limit efforts to promote autonomy among learners with EBD, underlining the importance of contextual, culturally-sensitive educational practices across the continent.

In Cameroon, the government's commitment to inclusive education is embodied in various legislative instruments, notably Law No. 2010/002 of 13 April 2010 on the Protection and Promotion of Persons with Disabilities, which upholds the right of children with disabilities to inclusive education. Complementarily, the 2018 Education Sector Strategy underscores inclusive education as a key objective. Nonetheless, scholars such as Chela (2020) and Njowe (2019) argue that while legislative frameworks exist, actual practices within Cameroonian schools often fall short. Classrooms are characterised by high pupil-teacher ratios, inadequate training of teachers in special needs education, and limited specialised resources for learners with EBD. Consequently, teachers often struggle to develop effective instructional planning strategies that foster autonomy in learners, making it vital to empirically investigate and address these gaps within the Cameroonian educational landscape.

The city of Yaoundé, being the administrative and educational hub of Cameroon, offers a unique context for examining the realities of inclusive education practices. Schools like Timely Performance (Damas), Etoug-Ebe Handicap Centre, and Lycée Bilingue de Mimboman represent a cross-section of institutions with varying levels of engagement with inclusive practices. Studies conducted by Tamanjong (2021) and Fouedjio (2018) reveal that while some schools attempt to integrate children with disabilities, including those with EBD, instructional planning often does not sufficiently cater to their needs. There is limited use of differentiated instruction, Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) are rare, and classroom environments are typically not adapted to foster pupil autonomy, particularly for those requiring behavioural and emotional support.

Moreover, cultural perceptions of disability significantly shape educational practices in Cameroon. Echu (2017) notes that disabilities, particularly invisible ones like emotional and behavioural disorders, are often misunderstood within Cameroonian society, leading to the marginalisation of affected children. This cultural context deeply influences teacher attitudes and expectations, impacting instructional planning and the strategies used to engage pupils with EBD. Teachers, often lacking specialised training, may adopt controlling or punitive approaches rather than learner-centred strategies that empower pupil autonomy. This highlights the critical need for context-specific interventions that address both pedagogical and societal dimensions in promoting inclusive, autonomous learning environments for pupils with EBD.

Another dimension shaping the Cameroonian context is the structural challenges within the education system itself. According to the World Bank Education Sector Report for Cameroon (2022), public investment in special needs education remains critically low. Most schools lack essential materials such as adapted textbooks, assistive technologies, and learning aides required for inclusive instruction. Teacher education programmes, including those offered at the Higher Teachers' Training Colleges (ENS), allocate limited time to training on inclusive pedagogy, with even less focus on emotional and behavioural disorders specifically (Nguimfack, 2020). Therefore, the instructional autonomy of pupils with EBD is compromised not only by individual teacher limitations but also by systemic shortcomings that fail to create enabling learning environments.

In light of these realities, there is a pressing need for empirical research to illuminate how instructional planning can be effectively leveraged to promote the teaching and learning autonomy of pupils with EBD in Cameroon. The current study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating the strategies employed by teachers in selected schools in Yaoundé and their impact on pupil Autonomization. By focusing on real-life classroom practices within the case study aims to generate practical recommendations that can enhance the inclusive education movement in Cameroon, contributing to national educational goals and broader continental aspirations for inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, inclusive education promotes the full participation, autonomy, and academic development of all learners, including those with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). In an optimal educational environment, teachers engage in comprehensive instructional planning that is differentiated, flexible, and responsive to the individual needs of each pupil (Tomlinson, 2014; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Effective instructional strategies should not only address behavioural and emotional challenges but also empower learners to become self-directed, motivated, and actively engaged in their own learning processes (Mitchell, 2015). International guidelines, including the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the UN CRPD (2006), recommend that educational systems create inclusive classroom environments where autonomy, participation, and personal growth are fostered through carefully crafted pedagogical approaches. In this ideal framework, teachers are well-equipped through initial and continuous professional

development to design instructional plans that promote independence, resilience, and cognitive engagement in all learners, irrespective of their behavioural or emotional profiles.

However, the reality in the Cameroonian context, particularly within schools in Yaoundé such as Timely Performance (Damas), Etoug-Ebe Handicap Centre, and Lycée Bilingue de Mimboman, deviates significantly from this ideal. Despite national legislative frameworks like Law No. 2010/002 advocating for inclusive education, several studies (Chela, 2020; Ndongko, 2017; Tchombe, 2019) reveal persistent gaps in practice. Many teachers lack specialised training in special needs education, leading to instructional planning that often overlooks the unique learning trajectories of pupils with EBD. Classrooms are frequently overcrowded, under-resourced, and rigid in instructional design, limiting teachers' ability to offer differentiated and autonomy-enhancing learning experiences (Fonkeng, 2018). Moreover, societal perceptions of disability and behavioural challenges continue to impact the expectations and interactions between teachers and pupils (Nana, 2022). Consequently, children with EBD in mainstream schools are often subjected to generalised, non-adaptive instructional strategies that fail to promote their active engagement and independent learning, thereby undermining their educational rights and personal development.

During my internship at Etoug-Ebe Handicap Centre, I observed that entrenched cultural beliefs and societal attitudes significantly shape how learners with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are perceived and treated within the school environment. These attitudes have deeply influenced classroom dynamics and pedagogical interactions. Some teachers appeared to regard pupils with EBD as disruptive or burdensome, often labeling them as troublemakers. As a result, these learners received minimal attention during lessons and were sometimes excluded from participatory activities and class exercises. This marginalization not only diminished their opportunity for meaningful academic engagement but also curtailed their capacity for self-directed learning. Furthermore, interactions with classmates revealed underlying stigma and a lack of awareness, which further isolated pupils with EBD and undermined efforts toward inclusive education. Such observations highlight a critical disconnect between the ideals of inclusive instructional planning and actual classroom practices, underscoring the urgent need for context-sensitive strategies that promote equity, respect, and autonomy for all learners, particularly those with EBD.

This study seeks to fill the critical knowledge and practice gap by systematically examining the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the Autonomization of pupils' learning and teaching processes among children with EBD in selected schools in Yaoundé. While several national studies have broadly addressed challenges of inclusive education, limited empirical research specifically investigates how instructional planning concretely affects the autonomy of learners with EBD within the Cameroonian context. This study will provide evidence-based insights on how current practices either enable or hinder learner autonomy and will propose practical strategies for more inclusive, autonomy-supportive instructional planning. By addressing this gap, the study contributes to both academic literature and educational practice, offering pathways for improving inclusive education outcomes for learners with EBD in Cameroon and comparable settings.

Research Objectives

General Objective

To investigate the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the development of learner autonomy among pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in selected schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Specific Objectives

To examine the extent to which teachers incorporate choice-making opportunities in their instructional planning for pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.

To assess the level of self-regulation demonstrated by pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in their learning processes.

To determine the influence of positive behavioral support strategies used by teachers on the self-regulation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.

Research Questions

General Research Question

What is the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the development of learner autonomy among pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in selected schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon?

Specific Research Questions

To what extent do teachers incorporate choice-making opportunities in their instructional planning for pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders?

What is the level of self-regulation demonstrated by pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in their learning processes?

How does the use of positive behavioral support strategies by teachers influence the self-regulation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders?

Hypotheses

General Hypotheses

Ho: There is no significant relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomization of pupils' teaching and learning processes among children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in selected schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Ha: There is a significant relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomization of pupils' teaching and learning processes among children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in selected schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Specific Hypothesis

Ho¹: Teachers do not employ any significant instructional planning strategies when teaching pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in selected schools in Yaoundé.

Ha¹: Teachers employ significant instructional planning strategies when teaching pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in selected schools in Yaoundé.

Ho²: Pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are not significantly autonomized in their teaching and learning processes in the selected schools.

Ha²: Pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are significantly autonomised in their teaching and learning processes in the selected schools.

Ho³: Teachers' instructional planning strategies do not significantly influence the development of autonomy in the learning and teaching processes of pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

Ha³: Teachers' instructional planning strategies significantly influence the development of autonomy in the learning and teaching processes of pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

Significance of the Study

Teachers

The study is vital for teachers working in inclusive and special education environments. Teachers are the primary agents who design and implement instructional strategies that either enable or restrict pupils' capacities to take charge of their learning. Understanding which instructional planning strategies are most effective in promoting Autonomization among pupils with EBD will provide educators with actionable insights and evidence-based approaches. Furthermore, it will encourage teachers to move beyond traditional, teacher-centred methods towards learner-centred pedagogies that are responsive to the emotional and behavioural needs of these pupils. Ultimately, this will contribute to more inclusive, equitable, and supportive classroom environments where all learners are given the tools to succeed.

Educational Administrators and Policymakers

At the administrative and policy levels, this research holds immense relevance. Educational administrators, curriculum designers, and policymakers will benefit from empirical data showing the concrete effects of instructional planning on learner autonomy for pupils with EBD. In a country like Cameroon, where inclusive education policies such as those influenced by the Salamanca Statement (1994) are still unevenly implemented, evidence-based recommendations are essential for driving policy changes and professional development initiatives. By revealing specific gaps and opportunities within current instructional practices, the study can inform the design of teacher training programmes, curriculum reforms, and resource allocation to better support inclusive education in both mainstream and specialised settings.

Parents and Guardians

For parents and guardians of children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, the study has important implications as well. Parents are key stakeholders in the education of their children and often act as advocates for better services and support within schools. By highlighting the importance of instructional planning in fostering autonomy, this study equips parents with knowledge they can use to engage more effectively with schools and teachers. It will also empower them to support their children's autonomy-building efforts at home, reinforcing the skills learned at school and contributing to a holistic approach to the child's development.

Pupils With Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Moreover, the study is significant for learners themselves, especially pupils with EBD who often face stigma, low expectations, and systemic barriers to success. Autonomization is linked to improved self-confidence, academic achievement, and socio-emotional development, all of which are crucial for the long-term well-being and societal integration of these pupils. By identifying effective instructional strategies that empower learners to take greater control of their educational journeys, the study contributes directly to improving their life outcomes. In doing so, it supports the broader societal goal of fostering inclusion, diversity, and social justice in education.

Academic and Research Communities

Academically, this study advances the field of educational research by offering new insights and contextualised evidence from Cameroon, a country that is underrepresented in global special education discourse. It will serve as a reference point for future researchers, encouraging further scholarly exploration of the dynamics between instructional planning and learner autonomy among pupils with special educational needs. Additionally, it contributes to theoretical development by potentially testing or expanding frameworks relating to teacher practice and pupil empowerment in fragile educational systems.

Inclusive Education Advocacy Movements

Finally, the findings of this study can be leveraged by advocacy groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working towards promoting inclusive education in Cameroon and across Africa. Data-driven evidence about what works in classrooms for children with EBD can strengthen advocacy campaigns aimed at pushing for better resourcing, legal protections, and public awareness for special needs education. The study thus becomes a critical tool not just for

educators, but also for broader societal actors seeking to build more inclusive, just, and compassionate communities.

Justification of the Study

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the need for inclusive educational practices that empower all learners, particularly those with special educational needs such as Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) (Rose, 2018; Tardif, 2020). Globally, frameworks like the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) have underscored the importance of developing adaptive teaching strategies that foster autonomy and meaningful participation for pupils with disabilities. However, translating these global commitments into tangible practices at the classroom level remains a significant challenge, particularly in contexts like Cameroon where systemic support structures for inclusive education are still emerging.

In Cameroon, although the government has ratified several international conventions on inclusive education, research indicates persistent gaps in teacher preparedness, instructional planning, and learner-centred pedagogical practices for pupils with EBD (Tchombe, 2019; MINEDUB, 2022). Many teachers, even within specialised institutions, are not adequately trained in designing instructional plans that promote the Autonomization of pupils with complex behavioural needs. This deficiency risks marginalising these learners, further exacerbating their difficulties in achieving educational outcomes comparable to their peers.

Moreover, there is a paucity of empirical studies in the Cameroonian context that specifically interrogate the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomy of learners with EBD. While broader studies on inclusive education exist (Ngwokabuenui, 2016; Fomba, 2021), few focus on the micro-level pedagogical practices that could enhance the independence and self-directed learning capabilities of this vulnerable group. Thus, this study seeks to fill a significant gap by providing empirical evidence on how instructional planning strategies can either facilitate or hinder the Autonomization of pupils with EBD.

Furthermore, the study is justified on practical grounds. Educational practitioners, policymakers, and special education advocates require contextually grounded research to inform the development of teacher training programmes, inclusive school policies, and classroom interventions tailored to the realities of Cameroonian schools. By exploring teachers' practices in

diverse settings, from mainstream public schools to specialised centres, this research will generate insights that are both generalisable and actionable for a range of stakeholders.

Finally, this study aligns with the goals of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) which emphasises inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Ensuring that children with EBD are not only present in schools but are empowered to actively participate and take ownership of their learning processes is fundamental to achieving these global educational objectives. Therefore, the outcomes of this research will have both national relevance and international significance, contributing to the broader discourse on inclusive education and learner autonomy.

Delimitations of the Study

Geographic Scope

The study is geographically delimited to four schools located in Yaoundé, Cameroon, specifically: Timely Performance School (Damas), Etoug-Ebe Handicap Centre, Lycée Bilingue de Mimboman, and CES Mendong. These schools have been deliberately chosen to represent both inclusive mainstream institutions and specialised centres catering to pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The research, therefore, reflects the educational landscape of urban Cameroonian settings, and the findings may not be generalisable to rural or peri-urban schools, or to regions outside of Yaoundé.

Time Frame

The study is conducted within a defined time period of six months, from May to October 2025. This limited timeframe restricts the data collection to a snapshot of the teaching strategies and Autonomization levels within a single academic year. As such, the study does not account for longitudinal changes or the impact of extended interventions over multiple years, focusing instead on current practices and their immediate effects.

Thematic Delimitations

The study focuses solely on the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the Autonomization of pupils' teaching and learning processes, specifically for children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. Other variables that may influence pupil outcomes, such as peer interactions, school leadership, or family involvement, are excluded from

the scope of the research. The thematic delimitation ensures that the study is tightly focused on the impact of pedagogical strategies on learner autonomy in the context of EBD.

Conceptual Delimitations

This research is conceptualised around the central concepts of instructional planning strategies and Autonomization of pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. Other concepts such as social integration, teacher expectations, or curriculum adaptation are acknowledged as potentially relevant but are not the focus of this study. By narrowing the conceptual scope, the study allows for a deeper exploration of how specific teaching practices influence pupil autonomy in the context of EBD.

Methodological Delimitations

The study is methodologically delimited to a quantitative approach, employing structured questionnaires as the primary data collection tool. This choice excludes qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, or ethnographic observations that could provide more detailed, subjective insights into the teaching practices and pupil experiences. The quantitative methodology, however, facilitates the collection of measurable data on instructional strategies and Autonomization, enabling statistical analysis of the relationships between these variables.

Operational Definition of Terms

Instructional planning strategies

According to Tardif (2006), instructional planning strategies are the “intended and deliberate methods used by teachers to structure their lessons, activities, and interactions with students to ensure that educational goals are met and learning objectives are achieved.” Instructional planning strategies in this study will refer specifically to the approaches that teachers employ to meet the needs of pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). These strategies may include differentiated teaching, adapting materials, using visual aids, providing extra time, and implementing behavioral management techniques. The study will focus on identifying and analyzing how teachers in the selected schools structure their lessons to promote effective learning for students with EBD, considering both academic and behavioral needs.

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

According to Walker et al. (2004), Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are "a group of mental health and behavioral disorders characterized by extreme emotional responses, disruptive behaviors, or both, which interfere with a child's ability to succeed academically and socially." In this study, EBD refers to children who exhibit severe emotional or behavioral difficulties that affect their learning and social interactions. These disorders may manifest in various ways, such as aggressive behaviors, anxiety, depression, or difficulties in regulating emotions. The study will focus on how teachers' instructional planning strategies address the specific challenges faced by students with EBD in the classroom, including the adaptation of strategies to ensure these students can engage meaningfully in learning and social contexts.

Autonomization of Pupils' Teaching and Learning Processes

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), autonomization is "the process of developing self-regulation and independence in learners, enabling them to make decisions about their own learning processes, set their own goals, and engage in self-reflection." Autonomization of pupils' teaching and learning processes in this study refers to the development of self-regulation and independent learning abilities in pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The study will examine how teachers' instructional planning strategies contribute to the pupils' ability to take charge of their own learning. It will focus on the role of the teacher in fostering an environment where pupils can set learning goals, engage in self-monitoring, and take responsibility for their academic outcomes, despite the challenges posed by their emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Learning Motivation and Engagement

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), motivation refers to the "energy and drive" that initiates and sustains behavior, while engagement is the "active involvement and investment" of an individual in an activity. In this study, learning motivation and engagement refers to the levels of interest, effort, and emotional involvement exhibited by pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in their learning processes. Given that students with EBD often struggle with emotional regulation and behavioral issues, it is critical to understand how instructional strategies influence their motivation to engage in learning activities. This concept will be explored by assessing how teachers' instructional planning strategies can either enhance or hinder the motivational levels and engagement of these pupils, fostering a more effective learning environment.

Curriculum Adaptation and Modification

Friend and Bursuck (2018) define curriculum adaptation as "the adjustments made to existing instructional strategies, materials, and assessments to allow students with disabilities to participate meaningfully in general education classrooms without changing the core expectations," while curriculum modification involves "substantial changes to the content, performance expectations, or learning outcomes to align with the student's individual capabilities." In the context of this study, Curriculum Adaptation and Modification refer to the deliberate adjustments and/or substantial alterations that teachers make to the curriculum to support pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in accessing, participating in, and benefiting from classroom instruction. Adaptations will be considered as strategies that maintain the original learning goals while facilitating accessibility (e.g., using simplified language, scaffolding tasks, providing additional prompts), whereas modifications will be seen as significant changes to the learning expectations themselves (e.g., reducing task complexity, alternative assessments). These concepts are crucial to understanding how instructional planning supports the Autonomization of pupils' learning processes in inclusive educational settings.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature relevant to the study on the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomization of pupils' teaching and learning processes among children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The review is organized into three main sections: the conceptual review, which clarifies key concepts such as instructional planning, learner autonomy, and Emotional and Behavioral Disorders; the theoretical review, which presents educational theories that underpin the study's framework; and the empirical review, which examines previous studies conducted both locally and internationally that relate to inclusive education practices, instructional strategies, and autonomy development in learners with EBD. This comprehensive review will help establish the research gap and justify the need for the present study.

Conceptual Review

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD)

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) represent a complex and heterogeneous group of conditions that significantly affect a learner's ability to engage successfully in educational settings. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), EBD refers to a condition exhibiting one or more of specific characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance. These include difficulties in learning not attributable to intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships; inappropriate behaviour or feelings under normal circumstances; pervasive mood disorders such as depression; and a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. Scholars like Forness and Knitzer (2020) and Cullinan (2021) agree that EBD manifests in both externalising behaviours (e.g., aggression, defiance, hyperactivity) and internalising behaviours (e.g., withdrawal, anxiety, and mood disturbances), making it challenging to identify and support learners through standard classroom practices. In many African contexts, including Cameroon, the diagnosis and

classification of EBD remain underdeveloped due to a lack of trained professionals, cultural misconceptions, and limited assessment tools (Njiforti, 2021).

Importantly, EBD poses substantial implications for both teaching and learning. Learners with EBD are at a higher risk of academic failure, school dropout, and social exclusion, especially when inclusive classrooms lack the appropriate support mechanisms (Kauffman et al., 2017; Ncube, 2022). Teachers often report feelings of stress, helplessness, or burnout when working with these learners due to their complex needs and the absence of systemic support (Mitchell, 2015; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Moreover, in inclusive educational systems, the effective integration of learners with EBD requires specialised instructional planning that goes beyond behaviour control to promote resilience, emotional self-regulation, and cognitive engagement (Farrell & Alborz, 2020). This includes adapting curricula, using differentiated instruction, promoting socio-emotional learning (SEL), and maintaining strong teacher-pupil relationships. In countries like Cameroon, where inclusive education policies exist in theory but lack full implementation in practice (Law No. 2010/002), the absence of proactive strategies exacerbates educational inequalities for learners with EBD. Therefore, a nuanced understanding of EBD is crucial for any attempt to improve learner autonomy and academic outcomes in inclusive settings.

Classification of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD)

The classification of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) is essential for understanding the specific challenges faced by learners and for designing targeted interventions in inclusive education. EBD is broadly classified into two main categories: externalising and internalising disorders. Externalising disorders are characterised by overt and disruptive behaviours such as aggression, defiance, impulsivity, and hyperactivity. These are often the most visible and easily identifiable forms of EBD in classroom settings (Kauffman, 2015; Forness & Kavale, 2020). Learners exhibiting these behaviours frequently challenge authority, violate rules, and may display oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) or conduct disorder (CD), making classroom management more complex for teachers. On the other hand, internalising disorders manifest as inwardly directed behaviours such as withdrawal, anxiety, depression, and fearfulness. These learners may be quiet, socially isolated, and reluctant to participate in group activities, often going unnoticed due to the subtler nature of their symptoms (Cullinan, 2021; Sugai et al., 2020).

In addition to these broad categories, some scholars propose a third classification, mixed or comorbid disorders, where learners exhibit both internalising and externalising symptoms simultaneously (Yell et al., 2019). For instance, a child may present with both anxiety and impulsive aggression, complicating both diagnosis and intervention strategies. These classifications are also reflected in diagnostic frameworks such as the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), which further details specific subtypes like attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), mood disorders, and disruptive mood dysregulation disorder (DMDD). In low-resource contexts like Cameroon, where comprehensive psychological assessments are limited, teachers often rely on observable classroom behaviours rather than clinical diagnoses, which may lead to misclassification or under-identification of learners with EBD (Njiforti, 2021; Ntonifor, 2023). Hence, understanding the diverse classifications of EBD is not only important for accurate identification but also for informing differentiated instructional planning and classroom support systems in inclusive settings.

Causes and Risk Factors of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD)

The aetiology of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) is multifactorial, encompassing a dynamic interplay of biological, psychological, environmental, and socio-cultural factors. Biologically, genetic predispositions and neurodevelopmental abnormalities play a crucial role. Research indicates that irregularities in brain structure and function, particularly within the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and neurotransmitter systems which are linked to behavioural dysregulation and emotional instability (Mash & Barkley, 2014; Forness & Kavale, 2020). Children with a family history of mental health conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, or ADHD are also at increased risk of developing EBD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Prenatal exposures to substances like alcohol, nicotine, or illicit drugs, as well as birth complications and low birth weight, have similarly been associated with higher incidences of EBD in early childhood (Barkley, 2016; Owens & Hinshaw, 2020).

On the environmental and psychosocial front, early life experiences such as abuse, neglect, and exposure to domestic violence are significant contributors to the onset of EBD. Children raised in chaotic or unpredictable environments often develop maladaptive coping mechanisms, leading to behavioural disorders that manifest in school settings (Cullinan, 2021; Wills & Brauer, 2022). Moreover, parenting styles have a notable impact, authoritarian or overly permissive approaches

may exacerbate emotional and behavioural dysregulation. Socioeconomic status is another critical risk factor; poverty, lack of access to quality healthcare, and limited educational opportunities are correlated with increased vulnerability to EBD, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (Mboya & Muga, 2022; Njiforti, 2021). In the Cameroonian context, cultural beliefs and stigmas surrounding mental health can hinder early identification and intervention, as some communities attribute EBD to supernatural causes or poor moral upbringing, further complicating educational responses (Tchombe, 2019; Nana, 2022). Recognising the broad array of causes and risk factors is fundamental in shaping both preventative and responsive educational strategies that accommodate learners with EBD in inclusive settings.

Manifestations of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in the Classroom

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) manifest in classrooms through a range of behaviours that significantly disrupt both the learning environment and the affected learner's academic progress. Externalising behaviours, which are outwardly directed, are among the most visible and disruptive manifestations. These include aggression, defiance, hyperactivity, impulsivity, and noncompliance with rules (Kauffman, 2015; Forness & Kavale, 2020). Such behaviours often result in frequent disciplinary measures, suspensions, or even expulsions, which interrupt the learner's educational continuity and reinforce negative peer perceptions. These manifestations not only hinder the individual's academic engagement but also affect classmates by creating an unsafe or unpredictable classroom climate, thus compromising the teacher's ability to maintain an effective learning environment (Mitchell, 2015).

In contrast, internalising behaviours, which are more subtle and inwardly focused, often go unnoticed despite their equally detrimental impact. Learners with internalising EBD symptoms tend to exhibit anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, excessive fearfulness, and low self-esteem (Sugai et al., 2020; Cullinan, 2021). These behaviours reduce participation in classroom activities and lead to difficulties in concentration, memory retention, and academic performance. Because these symptoms are less disruptive, learners with internalising disorders are at risk of being overlooked by educators who may misinterpret their silence or passivity as compliance or indifference, thus missing critical opportunities for early intervention (Wills & Brauer, 2022).

Beyond behavioural symptoms, learners with EBD frequently experience challenges in social skills and peer relationships, which further complicate their educational experience.

Difficulties with communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution are common, often leading to social isolation and exclusion (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This social impairment can create a cycle of rejection and low motivation that adversely affects classroom engagement and learning autonomy (Njiforti, 2021). Teachers may find it difficult to foster positive peer interactions or group work participation for these learners, limiting their opportunities to develop critical social and emotional competencies necessary for long-term academic success and personal development (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Moreover, the classroom manifestations of EBD are often exacerbated by educators' limited understanding and misinterpretation of these behaviours. Many teachers view problematic behaviours through a disciplinary lens rather than as symptoms of underlying emotional or neurological disorders, leading to punitive rather than supportive responses (Nana, 2022). This misalignment hinders the development of effective instructional planning strategies and inclusive teaching practices that accommodate the unique needs of learners with EBD. Therefore, addressing these manifestations requires professional development and systemic support for educators to recognise and respond to the behavioural and emotional needs of these learners while fostering their autonomy and active engagement in the classroom (Tomlinson, 2014; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Educational Interventions and Support Strategies for Learners with EBD

Educational interventions for learners with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are critical in mitigating the adverse impacts of their behaviours on academic achievement and social integration. Effective strategies often combine behavioural, cognitive, and socio-emotional approaches tailored to the unique needs of each learner (Lane, Menzies, Bruhn, & Crnabori, 2017). Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS), for example, have gained significant traction as a proactive, school-wide framework that emphasises prevention and the reinforcement of desirable behaviours through consistent routines and positive reinforcement (Sugai & Horner, 2020). PBIS frameworks reduce disciplinary incidents and improve school climate by establishing clear behavioural expectations, teaching social skills explicitly, and systematically supporting students struggling with emotional regulation (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010).

Complementing behavioural supports, cognitive-behavioural interventions (CBI) have demonstrated efficacy in helping learners with EBD develop self-regulation skills, problem-

solving abilities, and adaptive coping mechanisms (Weisz, Kuppens, Ng, Eckshtain, Ugueto, Vaughn-Coaxum, Jensen-Doss, & Fordwood, 2017). CBI focuses on altering maladaptive thought patterns and emotional responses that often underlie behavioural challenges, enabling learners to manage anger, frustration, and anxiety more effectively within the classroom context (Beidas & Kendall, 2010). These interventions are most effective when integrated within instructional planning, allowing teachers to scaffold emotional regulation alongside academic skills, thereby supporting holistic learner development (Chafouleas, Johnson, Overstreet, & Santos, 2016).

Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) and personalised instructional planning also form a cornerstone of effective support for learners with EBD (Mitchell, 2015). These plans enable educators to adapt curricular content, instructional pacing, and assessment methods to meet learners' behavioural and emotional needs without compromising academic standards (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008). Inclusion of strategies such as flexible seating, sensory breaks, and differentiated instruction help learners remain engaged and reduce the incidence of disruptive behaviours (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2014). Importantly, ongoing collaboration among teachers, counsellors, parents, and the learners themselves enhances the responsiveness of instructional planning and ensures consistency of support across school and home environments (Kauffman, 2015).

Social skills training and peer-mediated interventions represent additional critical components of comprehensive educational support for learners with EBD (Gresham, Van, & Cook, 2016). Social skills programmes explicitly teach communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, and empathy to address the social deficits common among learners with behavioural challenges (Williams & Wright, 2018). Peer-mediated strategies, such as buddy systems and cooperative learning groups, facilitate natural opportunities for practising these skills in authentic social contexts, promoting social inclusion and improving peer relationships (Cappadocia, Weiss, & Pepler, 2012). The success of such interventions relies heavily on teacher facilitation and the broader school culture's commitment to inclusivity and positive behavioural norms (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Despite the availability of these evidence-based interventions, their implementation in many educational contexts, including those in Cameroon, faces considerable obstacles (Nana, 2022). Limited teacher training, inadequate resources, and large class sizes impede the consistent

application of these strategies, reducing their potential impact (Chela, 2020). Moreover, cultural perceptions of behavioural difficulties often stigmatise learners with EBD, leading to exclusionary practices and lowered expectations (Tchombe, 2019). Addressing these barriers requires systemic policy support, continuous professional development, and community engagement to create an enabling environment for effective instructional planning and autonomy-supportive teaching for learners with EBD (UNESCO, 2020).

Instructional Planning Strategies

Instructional planning strategies refer to the deliberate, systematic processes through which teachers design, organise, and sequence learning experiences to achieve specific educational outcomes. At its core, instructional planning involves setting clear objectives, selecting appropriate teaching methods, and anticipating the diverse needs of learners to foster effective knowledge acquisition and skill development (Gagné, Wager, Golas, & Keller, 2019). It serves as the blueprint that guides classroom instruction, ensuring that learning activities are purposeful, coherent, and aligned with curriculum standards (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2019). According to Tomlinson (2014), instructional planning is not merely about preparing lesson plans but also about making informed pedagogical decisions that accommodate the varied cognitive, emotional, and social needs of pupils, especially in inclusive classrooms. This is particularly critical in contexts involving learners with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), where instructional strategies must be sensitive and adaptable to individual differences while promoting engagement and autonomy (Mitchell, 2015; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). In this respect, instructional planning transcends traditional lesson preparation, incorporating ongoing assessment and reflective practices to adjust teaching dynamically (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

The scope of instructional planning is broad and multidimensional, encompassing short-term lesson designs, medium-term unit plans, and long-term curricular frameworks that collectively shape the educational journey of learners (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2023). It includes the identification of learning goals, the selection of content and materials, and the integration of strategies that promote inclusivity, motivation, and self-regulation (Kramarski & Michalsky, 2015). Furthermore, instructional planning involves anticipating potential barriers to learning and proactively embedding supports, such as differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and behaviour management strategies tailored to individual learner profiles (Tomlinson, 2014; Hall,

Meyer, & Rose, 2019). Recent scholarship emphasises the role of culturally responsive planning and the need to align instructional approaches with the socio-cultural contexts of learners to enhance relevance and effectiveness (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021). Additionally, technology integration is now considered an essential aspect of instructional planning, enabling personalised learning pathways and greater access for pupils with diverse needs, including those with EBD (Edyburn, 2020; Rose, 2022). Overall, instructional planning strategies are pivotal in shaping educational environments that are flexible, responsive, and supportive of all learners' development.

Principles of Effective Instructional Planning

Effective instructional planning is grounded in several key principles that ensure teaching is purposeful, learner-centred, and adaptable to diverse educational contexts.

One fundamental principle is differentiation, which requires educators to tailor instruction to meet the varying readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles of pupils (Tomlinson, 2014). Differentiated instruction recognises that learners, particularly those with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), have unique needs that cannot be addressed through uniform teaching methods (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2018). Consequently, teachers must design plans that include varied content, processes, and products to engage all learners meaningfully (Hall, Strangman, & Meyer, 2014).

Another essential principle is flexibility, which allows for adjustments in teaching approaches based on formative assessments and classroom dynamics (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Flexibility also involves being responsive to pupils' emotional and behavioural states, ensuring that instructional pacing and strategies support both cognitive and affective domains (Mitchell, 2015).

Effective planning also entails clear goal-setting that aligns with curriculum standards and explicitly defines learning outcomes to guide both instruction and evaluation (Pellegrino et al., 2023). These goals provide a framework within which teachers can organise content logically and scaffold learning progressively, thereby promoting pupil autonomy and motivation (Zimmerman, 2013).

In addition to differentiation, flexibility, and goal alignment, the principle of learner engagement is critical in instructional planning, especially for children with EBD, who may face challenges in sustaining attention and motivation (Skinner & Belmont, 2017). Engagement strategies embedded in instructional plans should foster active participation, choice, and relevance to learners' lives (Reeve, 2016).

Similarly, inclusive practice is a cornerstone principle emphasised in contemporary education policies and research, which calls for instructional plans that remove barriers and provide equitable opportunities for all pupils, regardless of their abilities or behavioural challenges (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; UNESCO, 2020).

Teacher competence, supported by ongoing professional development, is integral to applying these principles effectively; skilled educators are better equipped to anticipate learners' needs, design supportive environments, and reflect critically on their instructional approaches (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2020). Ultimately, these principles collectively ensure that instructional planning is not static but an evolving process aimed at maximising learning outcomes and fostering autonomy, particularly in inclusive settings serving learners with EBD (Mitchell, 2015; Kramarski & Michalsky, 2015).

Types of Instructional Planning Strategies

Instructional planning strategies for pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are multifaceted and require a nuanced understanding of both pedagogical theory and the specific socio-emotional challenges these learners face. One predominant type is direct explicit instruction, characterised by systematic, teacher-led guidance that breaks down learning objectives into discrete, manageable tasks. This approach, grounded in cognitive-behavioural theory, has been repeatedly validated for its efficacy in supporting pupils with EBD, who often struggle with executive functioning, attention regulation, and processing complex information (Rosenshine, 2012; Archer & Hughes, 2011). Explicit instruction provides clear, consistent modelling of behaviours and academic skills, which reduces ambiguity and anxiety in learners, thereby fostering a structured environment conducive to autonomy development (Simonsen et al., 2008). Its utility lies in the deliberate sequencing of content, immediate corrective feedback, and reinforcement, which aligns with best practices for managing disruptive behaviours and promoting skill acquisition in pupils with EBD (Kern, Clemens, & Fisher, 2015).

Conversely, constructivist instructional planning offers a learner-centred paradigm that emphasises active knowledge construction through experiential learning, critical reflection, and social interaction (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978). This strategy foregrounds pupils' agency, allowing them to engage with content meaningfully and develop metacognitive skills essential for self-regulation and autonomy (Schunk et al., 2008). However, implementing constructivist methods with pupils with EBD necessitates careful scaffolding and the integration of emotional regulation supports to mitigate potential frustration or disengagement (Florian & Spratt, 2013). The balance between freedom and structure is crucial; flexible lesson plans that adapt to moment-to-moment behavioural cues can foster resilience and intrinsic motivation (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Moreover, constructivist approaches encourage collaboration and peer-mediated learning, which can improve social skills deficits common in EBD populations (Johnson & Johnson, 2014). The evidence suggests that when combined with targeted behavioural supports, constructivist strategies can enhance learner autonomy while addressing emotional and social challenges (Lane et al., 2016).

A further pivotal type is inclusive instructional planning grounded in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, which advocates for proactive curriculum design that anticipates and accommodates learner variability from the outset (CAST, 2018; Meyer et al., 2014). UDL emphasises multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, thereby allowing pupils with EBD to access content through diverse modalities suited to their cognitive and emotional profiles (Rao, Okolo, & Li, 2014). This flexibility is instrumental in reducing barriers and fostering learner agency, as pupils are empowered to select pathways that best match their interests and strengths (Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2012). Importantly, UDL encourages ongoing formative assessment and responsive adjustments, aligning closely with the dynamic instructional planning required for EBD learners who may experience fluctuating emotional states and behavioural responses (Edyburn, 2010). Studies corroborate that UDL-informed planning enhances engagement and autonomy in pupils with behavioural challenges, improving both academic outcomes and emotional well-being (Katz & Sokal, 2019; Spooner et al., 2007). Thus, integrating UDL with evidence-based behavioural interventions represents a comprehensive framework for instructional planning that holistically addresses the complexities of educating pupils with EBD.

One widely recognised instructional planning strategy is choice-making opportunities, which empowers pupils by allowing them to select learning activities, thereby fostering engagement and ownership of their education (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Reeve, 2016). By integrating choice into the learning process, teachers enhance motivation and self-regulation, essential components of learner autonomy (Zimmerman, 2013). This strategy is especially effective for pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), who often benefit from having some control over their learning environment and tasks, promoting greater participation and reducing behavioural challenges.

Another essential strategy is positive behavioural support (PBS), which involves proactive, evidence-based techniques aimed at reinforcing desirable behaviours and preventing disruptive conduct through clear expectations, consistent reinforcement, and systematic interventions (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012; Horner et al., 2010). PBS plays a crucial role in instructional planning for pupils with EBD, as it creates a positive and predictable classroom environment that supports both academic and social-emotional development (Mitchell, 2015). By embedding PBS into lesson plans, teachers can address behavioural challenges constructively while maintaining focus on learning objectives.

Scaffolding is also a critical instructional strategy where teachers provide temporary support structures that guide learners through tasks, gradually withdrawing assistance as pupils gain competence and confidence (Vygotsky, 1978; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). This approach is particularly effective for pupils with EBD, who may require step-by-step guidance to master academic content or manage their behaviour effectively. Through scaffolding, instructional planning becomes a dynamic process that adapts to learners' evolving needs and promotes gradual independence.

In recent years, assistive technology and instructional adaptations have gained prominence in instructional planning, especially for learners with special needs. Tools such as digital organisers, communication devices, and adaptive software facilitate access to curriculum content and support executive functioning, enhancing learning experiences for pupils with EBD (Edyburn, 2020; Rose, 2022). These technologies enable personalised learning pathways, helping to overcome barriers that might otherwise impede pupil autonomy and engagement (Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2019).

Lastly, collaborative and inclusive planning involves teachers working closely with special educators, therapists, families, and other stakeholders to develop comprehensive instructional plans that address the academic, behavioural, and social-emotional needs of learners (Friend & Cook, 2017). This cooperative approach ensures that instructional strategies are holistic and contextually relevant, fostering a supportive network that maximises pupil autonomy and inclusion (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Collaborative planning is vital in inclusive education settings, aligning with international frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD, 2006).

Challenges in Instructional Planning for Pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Instructional planning for pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) faces multifaceted challenges that significantly impede the effective implementation of strategies aimed at fostering learner autonomy and academic progress. One prominent challenge is the lack of specialised teacher training and professional development in EBD-specific instructional strategies. Numerous studies highlight that teachers often enter classrooms unprepared to address the complex behavioural and emotional needs of these pupils, which limits their ability to design and execute differentiated, flexible lesson plans (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015; Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, & Stichter, 2010). Without adequate training in behaviour management, emotional regulation techniques, and trauma-informed pedagogy, educators may resort to punitive measures or rigid instructional methods that fail to engage learners with EBD (Scott, Alter, & McQuillan, 2016). This gap is exacerbated in contexts like Cameroon, where specialised professional development opportunities remain scarce and under-resourced (Chela, 2020; Ndongko, 2020). Another critical challenge lies in insufficient instructional resources and large class sizes, which constrain teachers' capacity to individualise learning experiences. Overcrowded classrooms, common in many developing country educational systems, including Cameroon's, limit opportunities for personalised support and close behavioural monitoring (Fonkeng, 2018; UNESCO, 2020). The lack of tailored materials and assistive technologies further restricts teachers' ability to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and scaffolded instruction effectively (Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005). Consequently, pupils with EBD often receive generic, one-size-fits-all instruction that neither addresses their unique learning profiles nor promotes autonomy.

(Tchombe, 2019). This systemic inadequacy contributes to heightened frustration and disengagement among learners, perpetuating cycles of behavioural difficulties and academic underachievement (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008).

Additionally, stigma and negative societal attitudes towards pupils with EBD represent a pervasive barrier affecting instructional planning. Cultural misconceptions that label children with behavioural and emotional difficulties as ‘troublemakers’ or ‘nuisances’ influence teacher expectations and interactions, often resulting in lower engagement and reduced academic support (Nana, 2022; Clement, van Nieuwenhuizen, Kassam, & Thornicroft, 2012). Such attitudes can manifest in implicit bias and lowered aspirations, undermining efforts to foster autonomy and inclusion (Corrigan & Watson, 2002). Moreover, peer rejection and social isolation compound emotional difficulties, necessitating instructional planning that incorporates social-emotional learning and peer-mediated interventions, areas frequently neglected due to time and resource constraints (Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006). These attitudinal and cultural challenges require systemic sensitisation and whole-school approaches to create supportive environments conducive to autonomy for pupils with EBD (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Finally, the lack of collaboration between key stakeholders, such as teachers, families, mental health professionals, and school administrators, undermines the development of comprehensive and holistic instructional plans. Without coordinated efforts, instructional strategies often fail to address the full spectrum of academic, behavioural, and social-emotional needs of pupils with EBD (Friend & Cook, 2017). Effective collaboration is essential for creating supportive learning environments that foster autonomy and resilience. Addressing this challenge requires systemic reforms that promote multi-disciplinary cooperation and community engagement (Mitchell, 2015; UNESCO, 2020).

Learners’ Autonomization

Learners’ autonomization refers to the process by which students progressively acquire the capacity to take charge of their own learning through self-initiative, decision-making, critical thinking, and active engagement (Little, 2007). It encompasses not only the development of cognitive independence but also emotional and behavioural self-regulation that enables learners to act purposefully, reflectively, and responsibly within the learning environment (Holec, 1981; Zimmerman, 2002). In inclusive settings, autonomization is a key indicator of quality education

as it empowers all learners, particularly those with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), to transcend passive roles and become active participants in their educational journeys (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For learners with EBD, who frequently exhibit externalising behaviours, diminished self-control, and low academic motivation (Kauffman, 2005), fostering autonomy is both a challenge and a necessity. When teachers implement autonomy-supportive strategies, such as offering choices, encouraging self-assessment, and fostering ownership of tasks, they create conditions that not only accommodate learners' unique emotional needs but also cultivate independence, competence, and social responsibility (Reeve, 2009).

Autonomization also implies a shift in the teacher's role from knowledge transmitter to facilitator of learning, requiring pedagogical planning that is differentiated, responsive, and learner-centred (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). In pupils with EBD, the capacity for autonomisation is often hindered by environmental, interpersonal, and instructional barriers such as punitive discipline practices, rigid curricular expectations, and low teacher expectations (Osher et al., 2012). Nonetheless, empirical evidence supports the notion that when these learners are engaged through scaffolding, collaborative learning, and reflective practice, they demonstrate measurable gains in independence and self-regulated learning (Raver et al., 2009). Furthermore, the development of autonomy is closely linked to long-term educational and psychosocial outcomes, including reduced school dropout, improved academic resilience, and increased emotional wellbeing (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Therefore, understanding and enhancing learners' autonomization, especially among vulnerable groups like those with EBD, is central to achieving inclusive and equitable education, as called for by both national policies and global frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD, 2006) and the Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2017).

Indicators of Learners' Autonomization

Self-Regulation. Self-regulation is a foundational indicator of learner autonomization, especially among pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). It refers to a learner's ability to monitor, control, and adapt their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours toward achieving academic goals (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). In inclusive classrooms, self-regulation allows learners with EBD to manage impulses, sustain attention, and persist through challenges, fostering independent learning and emotional balance. According to Shanker (2016), cultivating self-regulation is

especially critical for students with EBD, as they often experience heightened emotional reactivity and behavioural instability. Instructional environments that scaffold goal-setting, reflection, and metacognitive strategies help reinforce these regulatory mechanisms, thus promoting autonomy (Cleary et al., 2021). Teachers who integrate self-monitoring tools and personalised feedback systems create a culture of accountability and growth that enables learners to take charge of their academic and emotional trajectories.

Decision-Making Ability. Decision-making represents the learner's capacity to make informed choices regarding their learning goals, strategies, and pathways. For pupils with EBD, decision-making is a vital expression of autonomy, as it empowers them to feel a sense of ownership and control over their learning experiences (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to Konrad et al. (2017), when students with behavioural challenges are engaged in instructional decisions, such as selecting topics, determining learning methods, or evaluating progress, their motivation and academic persistence increase. Autonomy-supportive teachers promote this capacity by presenting options, allowing learner voice, and validating student perspectives (Reeve, 2016). In Cameroonian inclusive settings, integrating participatory planning into classroom routines can be an empowering tool for learners with EBD, counteracting the marginalisation they often face due to societal stigma and institutional rigidity (Ngwokabuenui, 2020).

Initiative-Taking. Initiative-taking reflects a learner's drive to act independently, initiate tasks, and engage proactively with learning materials. For learners with EBD, who may struggle with passivity or defiance, the ability to take initiative is both a marker and a catalyst for autonomy (Field et al., 1998). According to Reeve and Tseng (2011), autonomy is most effectively expressed when students demonstrate volitional behaviour, acting out of personal interest or internalised values rather than external pressure. Classrooms that support initiative-taking typically use open-ended tasks, collaborative learning, and inquiry-based methods, which encourage pupils to explore, ask questions, and problem-solve. This is particularly beneficial for learners with EBD, as it helps cultivate resilience and self-efficacy while reducing learned helplessness (Bandura, 1997; Mitra, 2020). Structuring instructional plans around curiosity-driven engagement can significantly contribute to the development of learner autonomy.

Goal-Setting Skills. Goal-setting is a critical indicator of autonomization, reflecting a learner's ability to articulate short- and long-term objectives and develop action plans to achieve them.

Locke and Latham's (2002) goal-setting theory posits that specific, challenging goals enhance performance and engagement, especially when learners commit to those goals. In the context of inclusive education for EBD pupils, goal-setting fosters intentional learning, motivation, and a future-oriented mindset (Martin & Dowson, 2009). Teachers who engage learners in co-constructing learning objectives and reviewing progress provide essential scaffolding that supports cognitive autonomy. Moreover, consistent with self-determination theory, goal-setting enhances perceived competence and reinforces a sense of agency among pupils with EBD (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Instructional strategies that incorporate visual goal trackers, self-assessment rubrics, and progress-monitoring tools can significantly strengthen this indicator of autonomy.

Self-Advocacy. Self-advocacy involves a learner's capacity to understand and communicate their academic and personal needs effectively. For learners with EBD, who often encounter misunderstanding or mislabelling, the development of self-advocacy skills is essential for asserting their rights and participating actively in decision-making processes (Test et al., 2005). According to Martin et al. (2006), teaching self-advocacy enhances students' sense of control and belonging, which are core components of autonomy. This skill allows pupils to request accommodations, seek clarification, or negotiate task modifications, an important facet of inclusive practice. In Cameroonian schools, where cultural norms may discourage assertiveness in pupils with disabilities, fostering self-advocacy is particularly critical (Tchombe, 2019). Instructional planning that integrates role-plays, IEP meetings with student input, and communication skills training is key to cultivating self-advocacy and, by extension, learner autonomy.

Dimensions of Learner Autonomization

Learner autonomization is a multidimensional construct that goes beyond mere independence in learning tasks. According to Little (2007), autonomy encompasses cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, and behavioural dimensions. These dimensions interact to empower learners to take control of their learning processes, particularly within inclusive settings involving pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). Each dimension plays a distinct role in enabling learners to become active agents of their own development, rather than passive recipients of knowledge.

The cognitive dimension refers to the learner's ability to process, internalise, and apply information independently. Pupils with EBD often face cognitive disorganisation or difficulties with attention and working memory, which can hinder their ability to engage autonomously. However, instructional strategies that promote scaffolding, guided discovery, and differentiated learning help bridge this gap (Meltzer, 2018). The metacognitive dimension involves awareness of one's thinking processes, planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning. This is particularly essential for learners with EBD, who often lack executive functioning skills. Teaching metacognitive strategies like self-questioning and reflective journaling has been shown to foster autonomy in such learners (Flavell, 1979; Schraw et al., 2006).

The affective dimension involves the emotional components of learning, motivation, confidence, and resilience. For learners with EBD, emotional dysregulation is a significant barrier. According to Ryan and Deci (2020), environments that support autonomy by nurturing intrinsic motivation and self-worth significantly improve engagement. The social dimension relates to collaboration and communication with peers and teachers. Even though autonomy might imply independence, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory highlights that it is often developed through social interaction. Pupils with EBD who are involved in cooperative learning or peer tutoring exhibit improved academic and behavioural outcomes. Lastly, the behavioural dimension refers to the observable actions a learner takes to control and manage their learning, time management, participation, task completion. Behavioural autonomy is crucial for translating internal motivation into concrete outcomes, and consistent classroom routines and behavioural supports are instrumental in fostering it (Algozzine et al., 2012).

Together, these dimensions form the backbone of learner autonomization. For teachers in inclusive classrooms in Yaoundé and similar contexts, understanding and addressing these interwoven aspects is vital for helping learners with EBD become empowered, autonomous individuals.

Teacher Practices That Foster Learner Autonomy

Teachers play a pivotal role in facilitating the autonomisation of learners, especially those with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), through intentional and strategic practices. Autonomy-supportive teaching involves more than just giving students choices, it requires the creation of a learning environment that promotes ownership, self-efficacy, and meaningful

engagement. According to Reeve and Jang (2006), autonomy-supportive teachers provide rationales for tasks, acknowledge students' feelings, offer meaningful choices, and minimise controlling language. These practices are crucial for pupils with EBD, who often experience a heightened sensitivity to authority and structure.

One key practice is differentiated instruction, which tailors teaching methods and content to the varied needs, strengths, and interests of students (Tomlinson, 2014). For learners with EBD, differentiation not only supports academic access but also encourages self-regulation and self-directed learning. Teachers can use tiered assignments, flexible grouping, and varied assessment methods to help students take responsibility for their learning processes (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Another critical practice is the integration of metacognitive strategies, where teachers explicitly teach pupils how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning. Studies show that pupils with EBD benefit from direct instruction in goal setting and self-assessment, which builds their internal locus of control and cognitive autonomy (Zimmerman, 2002; Graham et al., 2013).

In addition, collaborative learning structures, such as peer tutoring, learning stations, and cooperative groups, can foster both academic and social autonomy. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory posits that learning is mediated through interaction, and for pupils with EBD, structured peer collaboration has been linked to improved behavioural regulation and self-confidence (Wentzel & Watkins, 2011). Also essential are positive behavioural supports, consistent reinforcement of desired behaviours, clear expectations, and proactive classroom management. When behaviour is managed predictably and positively, learners with EBD feel safer and more willing to take initiative in their learning (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).

Finally, student-centred learning environments, where pupils contribute to lesson planning, co-create classroom norms, and engage in self-reflection, strongly support autonomy. As Deci and Ryan (2000) highlight in their Self-Determination Theory, autonomy is cultivated in environments that satisfy learners' needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Teachers who foster such climates demonstrate empathy, respect students' perspectives, and reduce authoritarian control, an approach particularly critical for learners with EBD who often have experienced environments characterised by rigid discipline and low expectations.

In sum, teacher practices that nurture autonomy must be intentional, empathetic, and grounded in inclusive pedagogy. For learners with EBD in Cameroon and similar fragile educational settings, these practices are not just beneficial, they are essential for fostering independence, resilience, and long-term academic success.

Barriers to Learner Autonomy in Inclusive Classrooms

Despite the well-documented benefits of autonomy in learning, several structural, pedagogical, and socio-cultural barriers hinder its realisation in inclusive classrooms, particularly for pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). One of the most significant challenges is teacher preparedness and mindset. Many educators are inadequately trained to support autonomy in learners with EBD, often defaulting to controlling or directive instructional methods due to fear of classroom mismanagement (Mitchell, 2015; Florian, 2019). In Cameroon, the shortage of specialised teacher training programmes exacerbates this issue, resulting in limited pedagogical knowledge of how to scaffold autonomy in neurodiverse learners (Chela, 2020). Teachers often lack confidence in using flexible, pupil-driven strategies and may perceive learners with EBD as incapable of self-regulation or independent learning (Nana, 2022). This mindset creates a self-fulfilling prophecy, where low expectations lead to low pupil performance and reduced self-determination.

Another substantial barrier is the rigidity of the curriculum and assessment systems, which often prioritise uniformity over flexibility. Many national curricula, including Cameroon's, are heavily content-driven, with little room for differentiation or learner choice (Tchombe, 2019). This rigidity conflicts with the very principles of learner autonomy, which require adaptable learning goals, personalised pathways, and reflective evaluation mechanisms (Tomlinson, 2014). Pupils with EBD, in particular, need instructional frameworks that accommodate emotional variability and behavioural needs, which are rarely addressed in standardised instruction. In addition, overcrowded classrooms and lack of inclusive teaching materials make it difficult for teachers to give individual attention or adapt lessons to promote self-directed learning (Fonkeng, 2018). Furthermore, societal attitudes rooted in stigma and misunderstanding of behavioural disorders can alienate learners from their peers and educators, further reducing opportunities for them to develop autonomy within a supportive learning community (UNESCO, 2020; Efuribe & Ngalim, 2021).

In conclusion, the barriers to learner autonomy in inclusive settings are multidimensional, requiring systemic, institutional, and attitudinal reforms. For pupils with EBD, dismantling these obstacles is not merely a matter of equity, it is a necessity for their cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Curriculum Adaptation and Modification

Curriculum adaptation and modification are essential components of inclusive education, especially for pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), who often face significant barriers to engaging with standard curricula. The rationale for curriculum adaptation lies in the need to provide equitable access to learning by tailoring content, instructional strategies, and classroom environments to meet diverse learner needs without fundamentally altering learning expectations (Tomlinson, 2014; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2018). Adaptations enable teachers to scaffold learning for pupils with EBD, accounting for their emotional fluctuations, attentional challenges, and social difficulties, thereby facilitating meaningful participation and reducing educational disparities. This approach aligns with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which promotes proactive, flexible curriculum planning to accommodate learner variability from the outset (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014).

In contrast, curriculum modification involves more substantive changes to the learning goals, instructional processes, or assessment criteria when adaptations prove insufficient to meet the complex needs of some learners with EBD (Friend & Bursuck, 2018; Kauffman & Landrum, 2020). Given the pervasive emotional and behavioral challenges characteristic of EBD, such as impulse control difficulties, anxiety, and disruptive behaviours, certain pupils may require altered academic expectations or reduced cognitive load to remain engaged and succeed. Modifications may include simplifying tasks, extending deadlines, or focusing on functional skills rather than grade-level content, thus ensuring that educational experiences remain developmentally appropriate and achievable. Importantly, these changes aim to balance academic rigor with the learner's capacities, promoting motivation and reducing frustration (Smith & Tyler, 2018).

The overarching rationale for both adaptation and modification is rooted in the principles of equity and inclusion, which seek to ensure that all learners, regardless of their challenges, receive a fair opportunity to succeed within the least restrictive environment (Slee, 2018). Curriculum flexibility not only supports academic achievement but also enhances social

integration, self-esteem, and emotional well-being among pupils with EBD by validating their unique learning profiles and providing appropriate support. As such, educators must exercise professional judgment and maintain ongoing collaboration with specialists, families, and the learners themselves to implement curricular changes that optimally balance access, challenge, and support (Florian & Spratt, 2013). This rationale firmly situates curriculum adaptation and modification as indispensable tools for actualising inclusive education for pupils with EBD.

Types of Curriculum Adaptations and Modifications

Content Adaptations. It involves modifying what is taught to make learning materials more accessible to pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). This may include simplifying language, providing summaries, using graphic organisers, or incorporating multimedia elements to support diverse learning styles and cognitive needs (Basham et al., 2016; Friend & Bursuck, 2018). Content adaptations help ensure that students grasp essential concepts without being overwhelmed by complex or abstract information, which is crucial for learners who struggle with attention, comprehension, or processing difficulties (Tomlinson, 2014).

Process Adaptations. It refers to changes in how instruction is delivered or how students engage with learning tasks. Examples include breaking assignments into smaller steps, providing extended time, offering alternative ways to demonstrate understanding (e.g., oral reports instead of written work), and frequent check-ins to monitor progress (Reiber & McLaughlin, 2017; Simpson & Myles, 2021). Such adaptations address the fluctuating attention spans and behavioural challenges associated with EBD by structuring learning in manageable and supportive ways that promote sustained engagement and success (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2018).

Environmental Adaptations. These modify the physical or social learning setting to reduce distractions and behavioural triggers. This could mean preferential seating away from high-traffic areas, use of quiet workspaces, reducing sensory stimuli, or establishing predictable routines and clear behavioural expectations (Simpson & Myles, 2021; Lane et al., 2019). Adjusting the environment helps pupils with EBD maintain focus and self-regulate emotions and behaviour, creating conditions more conducive to learning (Kauffman & Landrum, 2020).

Assessment Adaptations. This includes altering the ways students are evaluated to better reflect their learning and capabilities. Teachers may allow oral presentations, portfolios, project-

based assessments, or provide extended time for tests and assignments (Friend & Bursuck, 2018; Tomlinson, 2014). These changes help ensure that assessment methods accommodate the emotional and behavioural needs of pupils with EBD, enabling them to demonstrate knowledge and skills without undue stress or disadvantage (Florian & Spratt, 2013).

Curriculum Modifications. These are more substantial changes to the curriculum itself, including lowering learning expectations, reducing the complexity or volume of content, or focusing on functional or life skills rather than grade-level academic standards (Smith & Tyler, 2018; Lane et al., 2019). Modifications acknowledge when pupils' emotional or behavioural difficulties significantly impact their ability to meet standard outcomes, allowing for personalised learning pathways that support meaningful progress and development (Kauffman & Landrum, 2020).

Pacing Modifications. Includes adjusting the speed at which students progress through the curriculum. For learners with EBD, slower pacing with repeated review and reinforcement may be necessary to consolidate learning and manage behavioural challenges (Tomlinson, 2014). Conversely, some pupils might benefit from acceleration in specific areas of strength, making flexible pacing essential to meet individual needs (Reiber & McLaughlin, 2017).

Instructional Grouping Adaptations. Uses grouping strategies such as one-on-one instruction, peer tutoring, small groups, or cooperative learning to provide more targeted support or social interaction opportunities (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2018). Grouping adaptations can help pupils with EBD by reducing anxiety, increasing engagement, and promoting positive social behaviours within structured settings (Friend & Bursuck, 2018).

Behavioural Support Adaptations. Integrate strategies such as positive reinforcement, token economies, or self-monitoring tools directly into the curriculum to address behavioural challenges (Lane et al., 2019). These adaptations make behaviour management an embedded part of learning, enabling pupils with EBD to remain engaged and motivated while developing self-regulation skills (Simpson & Myles, 2021).

Learning Motivation and Engagement

Learning motivation and engagement are central to the educational success of all learners, but they assume particular importance for pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD),

who frequently experience challenges in sustaining interest, effort, and participation in academic activities. Motivation can be conceptualised as the internal processes that stimulate, direct, and maintain goal-oriented behaviour (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2014). These processes influence how learners approach tasks, persist in the face of difficulties, and ultimately achieve learning goals. For pupils with EBD, fluctuating emotional states and behavioural difficulties often undermine motivation, leading to disengagement, underperformance, and increased risk of school failure (Skinner & Pitzer, 2019). Thus, understanding and fostering motivation is critical for creating inclusive and supportive learning environments tailored to their needs.

Student engagement, closely related to motivation, refers to the degree of psychological investment and active involvement learners demonstrate in their educational tasks (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). This multidimensional construct includes behavioural engagement (participation in learning activities and adherence to classroom norms), emotional engagement (feelings of interest, enjoyment, or anxiety related to learning), and cognitive engagement (the mental effort and strategic thinking learners apply to master content). Research has consistently shown that pupils with EBD often exhibit deficits across these engagement domains, characterised by erratic participation, emotional withdrawal, or superficial cognitive involvement (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2019). Effective instructional planning must therefore address these dimensions simultaneously to enhance both motivation and engagement.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Ryan and Deci (2020) offers a valuable theoretical lens for understanding the quality of learning motivation and its impact on engagement. SDT differentiates between intrinsic motivation, where learners engage in activities for inherent satisfaction and interest, and extrinsic motivation, where behaviour is driven by external rewards or pressures. Pupils with EBD benefit most from environments that nurture intrinsic motivation by supporting their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy-supportive teaching practices, including providing choices, meaningful feedback, and fostering positive social connections, have been empirically linked to improved motivation and sustained engagement in this population (Jang, Kim, & Reeve, 2021). This suggests that motivational quality, not just quantity, is pivotal in shaping effective learning experiences.

Finally, interventions aimed at improving learning motivation and engagement for pupils with EBD must be multidimensional and responsive to individual profiles (Connell & Wellborn,

2022). Strategies such as goal-setting, self-monitoring, and incorporating student interests into curricular activities have demonstrated effectiveness in increasing behavioural and cognitive engagement (Wentzel, 2021). Furthermore, creating emotionally safe classrooms where learners feel valued and understood can mitigate the negative emotional responses that often hinder engagement (Wang & Degol, 2017). Consequently, fostering motivation and engagement through intentional, evidence-based instructional planning is vital for promoting the educational success and wellbeing of pupils with EBD.

Intrinsic vs Extrinsic Motivation: Implications for Pupils with EBD

Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive to engage in learning activities because they are inherently interesting or enjoyable, rather than for external rewards or pressures (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This form of motivation is particularly important for sustained engagement and deeper learning. Pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), however, often struggle with intrinsic motivation due to challenges in self-regulation, emotional instability, and negative self-perceptions that interfere with their natural curiosity and persistence (Reeve, 2018). The absence or weakening of intrinsic motivation in pupils with EBD can lead to disengagement and academic underperformance.

Conversely, extrinsic motivation relies on external incentives such as praise, grades, or avoidance of punishment to encourage desired behaviours. While extrinsic motivators can be effective in the short term for pupils with EBD, overreliance on such rewards may undermine their ability to develop internal motivation and autonomous learning skills (Deci et al., 2017). Research shows that extrinsic motivators must be carefully designed and implemented to avoid unintended consequences, such as dependence on rewards or increased anxiety when rewards are withdrawn (Skinner et al., 2021). Therefore, balancing extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is a critical consideration in instructional planning for pupils with EBD.

Given these complexities, educators are encouraged to adopt autonomy-supportive teaching strategies that promote intrinsic motivation, such as offering meaningful choices, acknowledging pupils' feelings, and connecting learning tasks to their interests (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2020). For pupils with EBD, fostering a sense of competence and relatedness is also crucial, as these psychological needs support the internalisation of motivation and help pupils navigate emotional and behavioural challenges. Ultimately, enhancing intrinsic motivation within

supportive environments can improve both engagement and behavioural outcomes for this vulnerable group.

Motivation Challenges Faced by Pupils with EBD

Pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders encounter a range of motivation-related difficulties that directly impact their educational engagement and achievement. Emotional dysregulation often manifests as mood swings, anxiety, or frustration, which disrupt the ability to sustain attention and persist with challenging tasks (Kern et al., 2019). Behavioural issues such as defiance or aggression further complicate learning by creating negative interactions with teachers and peers, resulting in reduced opportunities for positive reinforcement and academic success (Raver & Knitzer, 2022). These emotional and behavioural difficulties create a cyclical effect where poor motivation leads to underachievement, which then diminishes self-esteem and further lowers motivation.

Social rejection and stigmatization in the classroom exacerbate motivational challenges by fostering feelings of isolation and helplessness (Walker et al., 2020). Pupils with EBD often perceive lower expectations from teachers and peers, which can lead to learned helplessness, where they feel incapable of controlling their learning outcomes (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2020). This social-emotional context critically shapes motivation, as pupils' sense of belonging and self-worth are key determinants of their willingness to engage in academic tasks. When motivation is undermined by negative social experiences, pupils with EBD may resort to avoidance behaviours, including absenteeism or disengagement from classroom activities.

Traditional classroom structures often do not adequately address the motivational needs of pupils with EBD, as they typically emphasize conformity and standardized performance measures that may not align with these pupils' strengths or challenges (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). Motivational deficits among pupils with EBD highlight the need for trauma-informed and differentiated instructional approaches that scaffold emotional regulation, promote positive social interactions, and adjust academic demands to attainable goals. By addressing motivational challenges through targeted pedagogical interventions, educators can improve engagement and academic resilience among pupils with EBD.

Strategies to Enhance Learning Motivation in Inclusive Settings

Enhancing motivation among pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders requires intentional strategies that foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness, core psychological needs outlined in Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Personalised goal-setting, where pupils actively participate in defining learning objectives, encourages ownership and intrinsic motivation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Such involvement empowers pupils with EBD to feel competent and in control of their learning, mitigating feelings of helplessness and disengagement. Moreover, goals that are realistic and tailored to individual capacities promote sustained effort and a sense of achievement.

Positive behaviour supports that reinforce effort and persistence rather than only final outcomes have been shown to enhance motivation and self-efficacy in pupils with EBD (Simonsen et al., 2021). Implementing consistent, meaningful reinforcement strategies reduces the unpredictability that often triggers behavioural problems and helps pupils experience success more frequently. Additionally, peer-mediated interventions and collaborative learning create social contexts that foster belonging and emotional engagement (Murray & Greenberg, 2020). The social support and positive peer interactions available through these approaches are critical in motivating pupils who otherwise face social exclusion.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is another important strategy that enhances motivation by validating pupils' identities and experiences, thereby increasing engagement and emotional investment in learning (Ladson-Billings, 2021). This approach involves incorporating culturally relevant materials and practices into teaching, which resonates with pupils' backgrounds and promotes inclusivity. Finally, the use of formative assessments that provide constructive feedback encourages a growth mindset and motivation by framing challenges as opportunities for learning rather than threats to self-worth (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Collectively, these strategies create nurturing and responsive learning environments that are essential for motivating pupils with EBD in inclusive classrooms.

Emotional Engagement and Its Impact on Academic Outcomes

Emotional engagement refers to the affective dimension of learning, encompassing students' feelings, attitudes, and emotional responses to educational activities (Fredricks,

Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). For pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, emotional engagement is particularly important as their academic success is often intertwined with their emotional well-being. Positive emotional engagement fosters interest, enthusiasm, and a willingness to persevere through academic challenges (Wang & Eccles, 2013). Conversely, negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, or boredom can lead to disengagement, absenteeism, and behavioural disruptions, undermining learning outcomes.

Research indicates that pupils with EBD frequently experience difficulties regulating emotions in academic settings, which impacts their ability to connect emotionally with learning tasks (Nelson et al., 2016). Their emotional challenges may be exacerbated by stressful classroom environments or ineffective teacher-student relationships, leading to withdrawal or oppositional behaviours that disrupt learning (Wang et al., 2020). Emotional engagement is thus both a predictor and outcome of academic success for pupils with EBD, making it a critical focus for inclusive education interventions.

To support emotional engagement, educators must create safe and supportive classroom climates that promote positive relationships, encourage emotional expression, and teach self-regulation skills (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). Incorporating social-emotional learning programs that address emotional awareness and coping strategies has been shown to improve emotional engagement and reduce behavioural problems (Durlak et al., 2011). By prioritising emotional engagement alongside cognitive and behavioural dimensions, inclusive educational practices can more effectively support the holistic development and academic progress of pupils with EBD.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the body of literature related to teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomization of pupils' teaching-learning processes, particularly those with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The review began by unpacking the concept of instructional planning, emphasizing that effective planning involves setting clear goals, selecting appropriate content, designing differentiated activities, and using inclusive resources that reflect learners' emotional and behavioral needs. The literature stressed the importance of planning that aligns with learners' profiles to foster independence and participation, particularly in inclusive classrooms. Further, the chapter explored curriculum adaptation and modification as essential practices that support pupils with EBD. It discussed different types of adaptations: content,

process, product, and learning environment, as well as strategic tools such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiated instruction, and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). These approaches were reviewed as integral to enabling pupils with emotional and behavioral difficulties to access curriculum content meaningfully and develop autonomy in their learning processes. The theoretical underpinning of the study was based on Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985) and Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Self-Determination Theory posits that fulfilling learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhances intrinsic motivation and self-regulated learning. Vygotsky's theory highlights the social nature of learning, emphasizing scaffolding and teacher mediation as keys to cognitive development. Both theories provided a robust conceptual framework for analyzing how instructional planning could enhance the agency of learners with EBD. Finally, an empirical review presented global and local studies that have examined the interplay between instructional strategies and learning outcomes for pupils with behavioral challenges. These studies underscored the effectiveness of planned differentiation, collaborative learning, and emotional support in promoting learner independence. However, gaps were identified, particularly in the African context, where limited data exists on how instructional planning specifically supports *autonomization* for pupils with EBD. This gap provides justification for the current research, which aims to contribute context-specific insights from selected inclusive schools in Yaoundé.

Chapter Three

Theoretical and Empirical Review

Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical and empirical foundations that guide this study. It seeks to establish the conceptual and scholarly basis for examining how teachers' instructional planning strategies influence the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) in selected schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The theoretical section reviews key educational theories that explain the dynamics between instructional design, motivation, and learner autonomy. The empirical section synthesises findings from previous studies conducted globally and within Sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the practical implications of instructional planning for inclusive education. Collectively, these reviews provide a critical understanding of existing knowledge, methodological approaches, and gaps that justify the present research.

Self-Determination Theory: Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (1985)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in 1985, is a prominent theory of human motivation that emphasizes the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in driving behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 1985). SDT posits that individuals have three basic psychological needs; autonomy, competence, and relatedness, that must be satisfied to foster optimal motivation, engagement, and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Autonomy refers to the feeling of volition and choice in one's actions, competence involves a sense of mastery and effectiveness, and relatedness is the need to feel connected to others. When these needs are met, individuals are more likely to internalize motivation and engage meaningfully in activities, including learning.

Over the years, SDT has been extensively applied in educational contexts to understand how motivation affects student engagement, learning outcomes, and behaviour (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). Research shows that autonomy-supportive instructional strategies, where teachers provide choices, acknowledge student perspectives, and encourage self-initiation, promote intrinsic motivation and deeper learning (Reeve, 2016). For pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), who often experience diminished motivation due to emotional dysregulation and

external control, supporting autonomy is particularly critical for enhancing engagement and fostering positive behaviour (Katz & Assor, 2007).

Further, SDT underscores that motivation is not merely about increasing effort but about fostering internalisation, where learners transform external regulations into personally endorsed values and goals (Deci & Ryan, 2008). This internalisation process is essential for the autonomization of learning, allowing pupils to become self-regulated and self-directed learners. For children with EBD, instructional planning that addresses their psychological needs can thus contribute to improved emotional well-being, increased motivation, and better academic outcomes, highlighting the theory's relevance to inclusive education.

Core Concepts of Self-Determination Theory

Autonomy is the first foundational concept of Self-Determination Theory. It refers to an individual's experience of volition and personal endorsement in their actions. In educational settings, autonomy means allowing pupils to feel they are in control of their learning rather than being passive recipients of instructions. Ryan and Deci (2000) emphasized that when learners perceive their actions as self-initiated, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and engaged. Autonomy is supported when teachers provide meaningful choices, acknowledge students' feelings, and avoid controlling language. According to Reeve (2016), autonomy-supportive classrooms help learners become more self-regulated, confident, and persistent, especially those with emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Competence is the second key psychological need in SDT. It describes the innate human desire to be effective in interactions with the environment and to attain mastery over tasks. In the context of education, this translates to a pupil's belief in their ability to successfully complete academic tasks and overcome challenges. Deci and Ryan (2012) explained that tasks that are optimally challenging, neither too easy nor too difficult, foster a sense of competence. Teachers play a critical role by providing constructive feedback, scaffolding tasks, and celebrating small achievements. This support is particularly vital for children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), who may experience repeated academic failures that undermine their sense of competence and motivation.

Relatedness is the third pillar of SDT and refers to the need to feel connected, cared for, and significant to others. In the classroom, relatedness is fostered when students experience warm, respectful relationships with their teachers and peers. Ryan and Deci (2017) found that feeling valued and understood by others enhances emotional safety, motivation, and willingness to take academic risks. For children with EBD, who often struggle with peer interactions or social-emotional regulation, fostering relatedness through inclusive and supportive environments can be transformative. Niemiec and Ryan (2009) argue that when students' need for relatedness is met, they are more likely to internalize learning goals and become active participants in the classroom community.

Motivational Regulation is another important concept within SDT. Ryan and Deci (2020) distinguish between intrinsic motivation and varying types of extrinsic motivation, arranged along a continuum from controlled to autonomous. The degree to which a student internalizes the value of an activity determines the quality of their motivation. For example, when students complete tasks solely to earn rewards or avoid punishment (external regulation), their motivation is shallow and unsustainable. However, when students value a task because it aligns with their identity and goals (integrated regulation), they are more self-driven. Teachers who foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness help students internalize extrinsic motivations, making them more resilient and invested in learning, even among pupils with challenging emotional or behavioral profiles.

Implications of Self-Determination Theory

Applying Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) provides crucial insight into how autonomy, competence, and relatedness can be nurtured in a population often marginalized within the traditional classroom system. According to Ryan and Deci (2002), individuals with EBD typically experience external control and punitive measures more frequently than their peers, which undermines intrinsic motivation. When instructional planning recognizes these pupils' psychological needs and creates space for choice-making and voice, it can transform their school experience from one of resistance to one of participation. This has a direct effect on their emotional regulation, task persistence, and willingness to engage in learning.

Teachers who adopt autonomy-supportive strategies, such as offering meaningful choices, encouraging goal setting, and validating student perspectives, are more likely to foster positive behavioral outcomes among pupils with EBD. Reeve et al. (2004) emphasized that classrooms structured around student autonomy reduce disruptive behaviors and improve student-teacher relationships, both of which are crucial for EBD pupils. Providing opportunities for pupils to feel competent through scaffolded tasks and constructive feedback also builds self-efficacy, which is often low among this group. These adjustments do not merely reduce misbehavior but enhance the internal drive to succeed, aligning with SDT's emphasis on self-regulated learning.

Furthermore, relatedness, feeling connected and accepted, plays a significant role in the social-emotional lives of pupils with EBD. Many of these learners face social rejection or feel isolated within school communities. According to Deci and Ryan (2008), when teachers intentionally build warm, respectful, and trusting classroom climates, pupils feel safer and more willing to take academic risks. In this context, instructional planning that incorporates peer collaboration, affective support, and inclusive group dynamics not only aligns with SDT principles but also addresses a core barrier faced by students with EBD: alienation. Thus, the application of SDT to this learner group offers a holistic and human-centered approach to planning instruction that supports both learning and emotional development.

Relevance of Self-Determination Theory in Educational Settings

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) has had profound implications for educational practice, particularly in shaping how learning environments can support student motivation and engagement. Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that the quality of motivation, more than its quantity, determines learners' success. In classroom settings, when teachers structure instruction in ways that fulfill the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, students are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation. This motivation leads to greater persistence, creativity, and deep learning. The theory therefore emphasizes not only what students learn but how and why they engage in the learning process.

In inclusive classrooms, especially those with children who have Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), SDT becomes even more relevant. Learners with EBD often face negative feedback, exclusion, or rigid behavioral expectations, which may diminish their sense of autonomy and competence. According to Vansteenkiste and Ryan (2013), SDT provides a framework for

rethinking behavior management and instructional strategies in ways that validate students' emotions, offer meaningful choices, and support self-regulation. Through student-centered planning, educators can better accommodate the unique motivational profiles of pupils with EBD, encouraging active participation and reducing oppositional behavior.

Moreover, the relevance of SDT extends into teacher-student relationships and classroom climate. Research by Reeve (2016) shows that autonomy-supportive teaching, characterized by empathy, encouragement, and responsiveness to student perspectives, is linked with improved academic performance and emotional well-being. In contrast, controlling teaching styles are associated with resistance, anxiety, and disengagement. Teachers who apply SDT principles are thus more likely to create inclusive, emotionally safe environments that benefit all learners. For children with EBD, who may struggle with both internal regulation and external interactions, the supportive nature of SDT-based instruction offers a pathway toward greater educational success and personal development.

Strengths and Limitations of Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), is highly relevant to inclusive education because it centers on fostering intrinsic motivation by satisfying three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to Niemiec and Ryan (2009), when these needs are met, learners are more likely to be engaged, self-regulated, and resilient, qualities crucial for children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), who often experience feelings of disempowerment or marginalization. SDT offers educators a framework for structuring classroom environments that promote learner voice and ownership of the learning process. This directly supports the autonomization component of your current study, which emphasizes enabling pupils with EBD to take initiative in their own learning.

Another key strength of SDT lies in its broad empirical support across diverse educational settings. Studies by Reeve (2006) and Jang et al. (2010) demonstrate that autonomy-supportive teaching enhances students' motivation and academic outcomes. In classrooms where teachers adopt planning strategies such as offering choices, scaffolding competence, and acknowledging students' emotions, learners tend to exhibit increased engagement and persistence. For pupils with EBD in the Yaoundé context, many of whom face stigmatization or neglect, these strategies could foster a more inclusive and empowering learning environment. Therefore, the theory not only

offers a pedagogical foundation for inclusive education but also aligns with the study's goal of evaluating planning strategies that facilitate learner independence and self-regulation.

However, Self-Determination Theory is not without limitations. One concern is its potential oversimplification of complex socio-cultural and systemic barriers that affect learning in inclusive settings. As noted by Guay, Ratelle, and Chanal (2008), SDT focuses more on internal motivational processes and less on external structural constraints, such as insufficient resources, rigid curricula, or teachers' lack of special education training, all of which are common in Cameroonian public schools. For teachers managing overcrowded classrooms or lacking specialized support for pupils with EBD, the practical application of autonomy-supportive practices may be challenging. This suggests that while SDT provides a valuable lens, it may need to be supplemented with theories that better account for contextual realities.

Moreover, the application of SDT to learners with EBD requires careful consideration of their emotional and cognitive profiles. Children with behavioral challenges may not respond predictably to autonomy-supportive environments due to difficulties with impulse control, attention, or social interaction (Sutherland & Morgan, 2003). Teachers must therefore balance autonomy with structure and consistency, something not explicitly addressed in the original theory. Additionally, measuring outcomes such as intrinsic motivation or perceived competence among pupils with EBD can be methodologically complex, particularly in the Cameroonian context where assessment tools may not be adequately adapted. This underscores the importance of contextualizing SDT within local educational realities, making it a valuable but not standalone framework for your study.

Constructivist Learning Theory: Lev Vygotsky (1978)

Overview

Lev Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory, introduced in 1978, postulates that learning is inherently a social and contextual process where knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. Vygotsky argued that learning precedes development and that cognitive functions originate in social interactions before being internalized by the individual. Central to his theory is the concept of the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), which refers to the range of tasks a learner can perform with the help of a more capable peer or adult but cannot yet perform independently. This idea revolutionized educational theory by shifting the teacher's role from

direct instructor to facilitator and guide in the learning process. According to Daniels (2001), Vygotsky's theory laid the groundwork for more dynamic, learner-centered pedagogical approaches that emphasize scaffolding, dialogue, and contextual learning environments.

Numerous scholars have expanded on Vygotsky's foundational ideas to reinforce the value of constructivism in inclusive education. Cole and Wertsch (1996) stress that cognitive development cannot be separated from its cultural and historical context, highlighting the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy. Similarly, Brooks and Brooks (1999) argue that constructivist teaching fosters deep understanding by encouraging learners to explore concepts, ask questions, and reflect on their experiences. In inclusive classrooms, such an approach supports diversity by allowing students, especially those with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), to express themselves within flexible learning environments. Pupils with EBD benefit significantly from cooperative learning and peer modeling, as these social elements not only boost academic performance but also foster emotional resilience and behavioral regulation (Farrell & Ainscow, 2002).

The theory also promotes differentiated instruction through its emphasis on scaffolding. Teachers tailor their support based on each learner's current capabilities and gradually reduce assistance as learners become more independent. According to Hammond and Gibbons (2005), effective scaffolding provides temporary cognitive support structures that enable learners to reach higher levels of performance. This is particularly critical for learners with EBD, who often struggle with self-regulation and focus. Classroom practices grounded in Vygotsky's framework encourage teachers to plan lessons that embed opportunities for guided interaction, small-group work, and individualized feedback. In line with this, Palincsar (1998) underscores that strategic teacher support enables marginalized learners to become autonomous thinkers, a goal aligned with this study's focus on autonomization through instructional planning.

In the context of this study, which investigates teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomization of learners with EBD in selected schools in Yaoundé (such as Timely Performance Damas and Lycée Bilingue de Mimboman), the Constructivist Learning Theory provides a compelling conceptual lens. The emphasis on ZPD, scaffolding, and social learning is particularly relevant in environments where children with EBD need structured yet flexible support systems. By incorporating constructivist principles, teachers in these settings can design learning

experiences that not only meet curriculum objectives but also empower pupils to become active participants in their own learning process. As emphasized by Schunk (2012), when learners are engaged in authentic tasks that challenge their thinking and are supported appropriately, they are more likely to develop self-efficacy, autonomy, and a sense of ownership over their educational journeys.

Main Components of Constructivist Learning Theory

At the core of Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which represents the difference between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve with guidance or collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). This concept highlights the importance of social interaction and support in learning. Teachers and peers act as facilitators within the ZPD, scaffolding learning tasks so that pupils gradually develop autonomy. In the context of children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), understanding and applying the ZPD is crucial as it encourages teachers to design instructional plans that provide just the right level of challenge and support, fostering progression without overwhelming the learner (Chaiklin, 2003).

Another central concept is Scaffolding, which refers to the temporary assistance provided to learners that is gradually withdrawn as they become more proficient (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Scaffolding is closely tied to the ZPD and involves adjusting the complexity of tasks and the level of teacher involvement based on learners' needs. This dynamic support mechanism allows learners, especially those with EBD who may require frequent behavioral and emotional regulation, to build confidence and competence in managing learning activities independently (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Scaffolding also promotes metacognitive development by encouraging learners to reflect on their thinking and strategies, an essential skill for autonomization targeted in this study.

Social Interaction is another foundational concept in Vygotsky's theory, emphasizing that cognitive development is fundamentally mediated through social communication and cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Learning is not a solitary activity but occurs within a social context where language and dialogue play a critical role in shaping thought. For learners with EBD, opportunities for positive social interaction are vital not only for academic learning but also for developing social-emotional skills and self-regulation (Raver, 2002). In the schools examined

in this study, fostering collaborative learning environments aligns with the social constructivist perspective and supports the overall goal of promoting pupil autonomy through interaction and shared meaning-making.

Finally, Mediation through Cultural Tools and Language underscores the role of external symbolic systems in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Language is the primary mediating tool that enables internalization of knowledge and higher-order thinking. Vygotsky asserted that through language, learners transform external experiences into internal cognitive processes. This is especially relevant for pupils with EBD who may face challenges in communication and expression. Teachers' instructional planning strategies that incorporate verbal and non-verbal mediation; such as guided discussions, visual aids, and structured routines which help scaffold learners' understanding and support their gradual autonomization (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Thus, the concept of mediation aligns closely with the study's focus on instructional planning and its impact on learner autonomy.

Implications of the Main Concepts on the Current Study

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept has significant implications for this study on teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomization of pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). Recognizing that learners with EBD may require individualized support within their ZPD means teachers must carefully assess each pupil's current capabilities and tailor learning activities accordingly. Instructional planning that embeds scaffolding within the ZPD framework can help these pupils progress at an optimal pace, balancing challenge and support. This approach not only fosters cognitive growth but also nurtures learners' confidence and independence, which are key outcomes sought in this study (Chaiklin, 2003; Daniels, 2001).

Scaffolding, as a dynamic and flexible form of support, guides the design of instructional strategies that gradually transfer responsibility to the pupil, enabling autonomy in learning. For children with EBD, who often struggle with self-regulation and consistent engagement, scaffolding techniques such as breaking down complex tasks, providing visual supports, or modeling behaviors become essential components of effective lesson planning. These strategies align with the study's focus on instructional planning by highlighting the need for differentiated support

structures that encourage learner autonomy while managing behavioral challenges (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005).

The emphasis on social interaction as a mediating mechanism for cognitive development informs the study's examination of classroom environments and teacher-pupil relationships. Encouraging collaborative activities and peer support creates opportunities for pupils with EBD to practice social skills and receive immediate feedback within a safe and structured context. Instructional plans that incorporate group work, dialogue, and cooperative learning align with constructivist principles and can reduce feelings of isolation or frustration among these pupils, promoting both academic success and emotional well-being (Raver, 2002; Mercer & Littleton, 2007). This underscores the importance of social context in the autonomization process targeted by the study.

The above components of mediation through cultural tools and language has direct implications for the instructional materials and communication methods used by teachers. For pupils with EBD, who may face expressive or receptive language difficulties, using multiple mediational tools such as visual aids, gestures, and technology enhances comprehension and engagement. Teachers' instructional planning must incorporate these diverse tools to facilitate internalization of knowledge and self-directed learning. This mediation process supports the study's aim of examining how instructional planning strategies contribute to pupils' autonomy by enabling them to become active constructors of their own learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Mercer & Littleton, 2007).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Constructivist Learning Theory

One of the major strengths of Constructivist Learning Theory lies in its emphasis on active learner engagement and social interaction as central to cognitive development. Vygotsky's focus on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding provides a practical framework for teachers to support learners with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) by offering just-right challenges and tailored assistance. This approach fosters autonomy and personalized learning, which aligns closely with the goals of this study to enhance pupils' self-directed learning through effective instructional planning (Vygotsky, 1978; Moll, 1990). Furthermore, by highlighting the social and cultural context of learning, the theory encourages inclusive educational practices that consider pupils' diverse backgrounds and needs.

Another strength is the theory's flexibility and applicability across various educational settings. Its principles support differentiated instruction, which is critical when working with pupils who have EBD, as these learners often require individualized teaching strategies to accommodate their unique behavioral and emotional challenges (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Constructivist theory also encourages the use of multiple mediational tools, such as language, technology, and visual aids, enhancing communication and engagement. This flexibility makes it highly relevant to modern classrooms where adaptive instructional planning is essential for fostering pupil autonomy.

However, a notable weakness of the theory is its limited focus on direct behavioral management, which is a critical component when dealing with pupils who have emotional and behavioral disorders. While Vygotsky emphasizes cognitive and social development, the theory provides less explicit guidance on addressing disruptive behaviors or emotional regulation, areas that are crucial for the autonomization of pupils with EBD. Consequently, teachers relying solely on constructivist principles may find it challenging to manage classroom dynamics without integrating complementary behavior-focused frameworks (Zhou & Brown, 2015). This gap underscores the need for combining constructivist approaches with other strategies to address the comprehensive needs of pupils with EBD.

Additionally, the theory's reliance on social interaction and dialogue can pose difficulties in settings where pupils with EBD might withdraw or struggle with communication, limiting their ability to benefit fully from collaborative learning experiences. In such cases, teachers must be skilled in creating a supportive environment that encourages participation without overwhelming the pupil (Mercer, 2008). Despite these challenges, constructivist principles remain valuable for designing instructional plans that promote gradual autonomy, provided they are adapted to meet the specific emotional and behavioral needs of the learners in the study's context.

Empirical Review

A seminal study by King-Sears et al. (2015), titled *"An Exploratory Study of Universal Design for Teaching Chemistry to Students With and Without Disabilities"*, aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of UDL-based instructional strategies in high school chemistry classes. The study's objectives were to determine whether UDL interventions could enhance learning outcomes for students with and without disabilities. Conducted in four co-taught high school chemistry classes,

students were randomly assigned to either a UDL treatment group or a comparison group. The UDL treatment incorporated a self-management strategy using the mnemonic "IDEAS" for multi-step mole conversion processes, multimedia lessons with narration and animations, procedural facilitators, and scaffolded practice problems in student workbooks. All students completed pre-tests, post-tests, and a four-week delayed post-test. While no significant differences were found between the treatment and comparison groups overall, an interaction effect emerged between students with and without disabilities on post-tests. Additionally, social validity measures indicated that students found the "IDEAS" strategy helpful. The study recommended further research focusing on disaggregated learning outcomes for students with and without disabilities and refining UDL interventions to benefit all learners.

Building upon this, King-Sears et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis titled *"Achievement of Learners Receiving UDL Instruction: A Meta-Analysis"*, which synthesized findings from 20 studies encompassing 50 individual effects to evaluate the impact of UDL-based instruction on academic achievement across diverse educational settings. The analysis revealed a moderate positive combined effect size ($g = 0.43$) for learners receiving UDL treatments, indicating the efficacy of UDL-based instruction in enhancing academic outcomes. The study identified five significant moderators influencing the effectiveness of UDL interventions and emphasized the importance of systematic inclusion of UDL design components in instructional planning. The authors advocated for the adoption of UDL as a research-based practice to support diverse learners, highlighting its potential to foster autonomy and engagement among students.

Complementing these findings, Capp (2017) conducted a meta-analysis titled *"The Effectiveness of Universal Design for Learning: A Meta-Analysis of Literature Between 2013 and 2016"*, which examined 18 empirical studies to assess the impact of UDL on inclusive education. The study aimed to determine the effectiveness of UDL in improving learning processes for all students. Results from the analysis suggested that UDL is an effective teaching methodology for enhancing the learning process across diverse student populations. However, the impact on educational outcomes had not been conclusively demonstrated. The study recommended ongoing research to refine UDL applications and address implementation barriers.

Collectively, these studies underscore the potential of UDL-based instructional planning to enhance learner autonomy and engagement, particularly for students with disabilities. However,

they also highlight challenges related to implementation fidelity, teacher preparedness, and contextual adaptability. In the Cameroonian context, where resources and professional development opportunities may be limited, these findings suggest a need for localized research to explore how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles can be effectively integrated into instructional planning to support the autonomization of learners with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). This study aims to fill this gap by examining the instructional planning strategies employed by teachers in Yaoundé and their impact on fostering autonomy among pupils with EBD.

A pivotal study by McGuire (2024), titled *"Behavior Management Training for Teachers in the Induction Phase"*, aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of behavior management training on novice teachers' instructional practices and student outcomes. The study involved 49 students, with 25 in the intervention group and 24 in the control group. The participants were diverse in terms of gender, race, and disability status, including students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, learning disabilities, and behavioral disorders. Teachers in the intervention group received targeted behavior management training, focusing on strategies to address disruptive behaviors and promote positive classroom environments. The findings indicated that teachers who underwent the training reported improved classroom management skills and observed reductions in student disruptive behaviors. The study recommended the incorporation of structured behavior management training in teacher induction programs to enhance instructional effectiveness and student engagement. However, the study did not specifically address the application of these strategies to students with EBD, nor did it explore the long-term impact of such training on student autonomization.

Complementing this, a study by Gagnon et al. (2024), titled *"Teacher Instructional Approaches and Student Engagement and Behavioral Responses During Literacy Instruction in a Juvenile Correctional Facility"*, explored the relationship between teacher instructional methods and student engagement among incarcerated youth, many of whom had disabilities, including EBD. The study analyzed video recordings of 40 students during literacy instruction sessions, employing a time-window sequential analytic procedure to assess the impact of teacher behaviors on student responses. The findings revealed that specific instructional approaches, such as providing opportunities to respond and offering positive feedback, were associated with increased student engagement and reduced disruptive behaviors. The study emphasized the importance of

adaptive instructional strategies in promoting positive behavioral outcomes among students with EBD. However, the unique setting of a juvenile correctional facility may limit the generalizability of the findings to traditional classroom environments, and the study did not examine the role of instructional planning in fostering student autonomy.

Further extending the exploration of instructional strategies, a study by Mills-Robertson (2021), titled *"Classroom Strategies for Teaching Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders"*, investigated effective classroom practices for students with EBD in Ghana. The study employed a qualitative research design, involving five teachers, ten students, and five non-teaching staff, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings highlighted the significance of individualized instruction, positive reinforcement, and structured routines in managing classroom behaviors and enhancing academic performance among students with EBD. The study recommended ongoing professional development for teachers and the implementation of inclusive education policies to support students with EBD. However, the study's small sample size and qualitative nature may limit the breadth of its conclusions, and it did not specifically examine the impact of instructional planning on student autonomy.

Collectively, these studies underscore the critical role of teacher training and adaptive instructional strategies in managing behaviors and promoting engagement among students with EBD. They highlight the need for structured behavior management training, responsive teaching methods, and individualized support to address the unique challenges faced by these learners. However, there remains a gap in the literature concerning the direct impact of instructional planning on the autonomization of students with EBD, particularly within the Cameroonian educational context. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how teachers' instructional planning strategies influence the development of autonomy among pupils with EBD in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined both theoretical and empirical foundations relevant to understanding the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders. The Self-Determination Theory provided insight into how autonomy, competence, and relatedness drive self-motivation

and independence, while the Constructivist Learning Theory highlighted the role of interaction, scaffolding, and learner-centred approaches in promoting engagement. Empirical studies reviewed across various contexts confirmed that instructional planning strongly influences learner autonomy and inclusion. However, limited evidence exists on how these relationships manifest among pupils with EBD in Cameroon. Consequently, this study addresses this empirical gap by investigating the influence of teachers' instructional planning on learner autonomy in selected schools in Yaoundé.

Chapter Four

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological framework that guided the conduct of the study titled *“Teachers’ Instructional Planning Strategies and the Autonomisation of Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) in Selected Schools in Yaoundé.”* It outlines the systematic approach adopted to collect, analyse, and interpret data in a manner consistent with the research objectives and theoretical foundations presented in the preceding chapter. Specifically, the chapter details the research design, the area of study, the population and sample, the sampling techniques, data collection instruments, methods of data analysis, and the procedures employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments. It also discusses the ethical considerations adhered to throughout the study to guarantee the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process.

The methodological framework was designed to integrate both quantitative and qualitative dimensions, following a mixed-methods approach that combines numerical data from teachers with narrative insights from pupils. This approach was considered appropriate because the study seeks not only to determine the relationship between teachers’ instructional planning strategies and learner autonomisation statistically but also to understand the underlying experiences and perspectives of pupils with EBD. In the quantitative phase, structured questionnaires were used to gather measurable data from teachers across selected schools, while the qualitative phase employed semi-structured interviews to capture pupils’ subjective experiences regarding how teachers’ instructional practices influence their autonomy and learning behaviour.

The chapter thus provides a comprehensive account of the methodological decisions that ensured the study’s rigour, relevance, and reliability. These decisions were guided by established research principles in the social and educational sciences, as articulated by scholars such as Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), and Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), who advocate for methodological pluralism when investigating complex educational phenomena. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative approaches was therefore intended to enhance triangulation, improve the validity of results, and produce findings

that are both empirically robust and contextually meaningful within the Cameroonian inclusive education landscape.

Research Design

A research design provides the logical structure and procedural plan that guides how a study is conducted in order to address its research questions effectively. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a research design is “a framework for collecting and analysing data that specifies the type of evidence needed to answer the research questions or test hypotheses.” Similarly, Kothari (2014) defines research design as “the conceptual blueprint within which research is carried out.” In educational research, the choice of design determines the reliability, validity, and interpretability of findings, as it dictates how variables are measured and relationships are established between them.

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, specifically the convergent parallel design, which allows for the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. This approach was selected to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how teachers’ instructional planning strategies influence the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) in selected schools in Yaoundé. The quantitative component focused on gathering numerical data from teachers through a structured questionnaire, measuring indicators such as the use of choice-making opportunities, differentiation, and positive behavioural support strategies. The qualitative component, on the other hand, explored pupils’ lived experiences and perceptions of autonomy through semi-structured interviews, providing a deeper understanding of the relational and contextual dynamics underpinning teacher-pupil interactions.

The use of a mixed-methods design was justified by the nature of the research objectives, which required both statistical examination and interpretive insight. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) argue that a mixed-methods approach strengthens the explanatory power of a study by enabling triangulation and complementarity of data sources. In this study, quantitative data provided measurable evidence of relationships between instructional planning and learner autonomy, while qualitative data offered a narrative dimension that explained *how* and *why* these relationships manifest in classroom contexts involving pupils with EBD. This combination enhanced both the depth and validity of the findings.

Furthermore, the design aligns with the philosophical paradigm of pragmatism, which values methodological flexibility and the practical integration of diverse forms of evidence to address real-world problems (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Pragmatism supports the belief that no single methodological approach is sufficient for understanding complex educational realities, especially those involving learners with behavioural and emotional difficulties. Hence, the convergent mixed-method design was most appropriate for this study as it accommodates the quantitative analysis of teacher practices and the qualitative exploration of learner experiences, culminating in a holistic understanding of instructional planning and its implications for learner autonomisation within inclusive educational settings in Cameroon.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon and the administrative, political, and educational nucleus of the country. Situated in the Centre Region, Yaoundé represents a dynamic urban environment that reflects the cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity of the nation. The city hosts a broad spectrum of educational institutions ranging from public and private schools to specialised rehabilitation and inclusive centres. This diversity makes it an ideal context for exploring how teachers' instructional planning strategies influence the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) within varying institutional frameworks.

The city of Yaoundé is particularly relevant to this study because it embodies both the opportunities and challenges associated with the implementation of inclusive education policies in Cameroon. According to the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB, 2022), Yaoundé has experienced a significant rise in enrolment of children with special educational needs in mainstream and specialised schools, following the enactment of Law No. 2010/002 on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities. Despite these policy advances, disparities persist in the level of teacher preparedness, availability of resources, and institutional capacity to accommodate diverse learners effectively (Chela, 2020; Tchombe, 2019). Therefore, studying teacher instructional planning within this context provides critical insights into how inclusive education is practiced and how it can be strengthened to promote autonomy among learners with EBD.

The study specifically focused on three institutions located within the Yaoundé municipality: Timely Performance School (Damas), Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Mimboman,

and the Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre. Timely Performance represents a semi-private institution integrating inclusive practices within a mainstream curriculum; GBHS Mimboman is a large public school characterised by general inclusion in regular classrooms; and the Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre is a specialised institution dedicated to the education and rehabilitation of children with disabilities. Collectively, these schools provide a representative cross-section of inclusive educational environments, from mainstream to specialized, which allows for meaningful comparison and generalisation of findings within the Yaoundé context.

Moreover, these institutions are accessible and cooperative research sites with established administrative frameworks that support collaboration with academic studies. Each of them has diverse teaching staff and student populations, reflecting the variations in pedagogical approaches, resource allocation, and learner needs that typify Cameroonian schools. By situating the study within these three institutions, the researcher sought to capture the realities of instructional planning and learner autonomisation across different types of inclusive settings, thereby contributing to a nuanced and evidence-based understanding of how teachers' practices influence the learning experiences of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders.

Population of the Study

In educational research, population refers to the entire group of individuals, events, or objects that share common characteristics relevant to the study and from which data are drawn (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a population encompasses all individuals who possess the attributes of interest in a given study, while the accessible population represents the subset from which the sample is actually selected. The population for this study comprised teachers and pupils drawn from three inclusive educational institutions in Yaoundé, namely Timely Performance School (Damas), Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Mimboman, and the Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre.

The choice of these two categories of participants , teachers and pupils , was informed by the mixed-methods nature of the study. Teachers formed the population for the quantitative component, as they are directly involved in instructional planning, curriculum adaptation, and implementation. Pupils, on the other hand, formed the population for the qualitative component, as they are the recipients of instructional practices and can provide firsthand insights into how these practices influence their autonomy and engagement in learning. The inclusion of both

teachers and pupils allowed for triangulation of data and a holistic understanding of how instructional planning affects learner autonomisation among pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD).

The teacher population across the selected schools comprised 22 teachers at Timely Performance, 205 at GBHS Mimboman, and 20 at the Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre, giving a total of 247 teachers. The pupil population included 90 pupils at Timely Performance, 4,500 at GBHS Mimboman, and approximately 200 at Etoug-Ebe, yielding a total of 4,790 pupils. These figures reflect the diversity of educational contexts in Yaoundé, ranging from mainstream public schools to semi-private and specialized institutions. The varied settings provide a rich environment for analysing differences in instructional planning strategies, teacher preparedness, and learner experiences in inclusive classrooms.

Focusing on this population was particularly relevant because teachers in these schools represent a cross-section of educators with varying levels of exposure to inclusive education practices, while the pupils especially those with EBD exemplify the diverse behavioural, emotional, and learning needs that characterise inclusive classrooms in Cameroon. As noted by UNESCO (2023) and Ndongko (2017), such diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for promoting autonomy and self-regulation in learning. Consequently, this population provided a fertile ground for exploring the central question of how teachers' instructional planning strategies contribute to or constrain the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders within the inclusive education framework of Yaoundé.

Target Population

The target population for this study comprised teachers and pupils from selected inclusive schools in Yaoundé, specifically Timely Performance School (Damas), Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Mimboman, and the Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre. This population was chosen because these institutions collectively represent the diverse educational landscapes through which inclusive education is implemented in Cameroon. The schools differ in size, structure, and resources, yet they all share the common objective of promoting inclusion for learners with varying educational and behavioural needs.

The teachers constituted the main target group for the quantitative component of the study, as they are the primary implementers of instructional planning strategies and play a decisive role

in shaping learners' autonomy and classroom engagement. Their responsibilities in lesson design, behavioural management, curriculum adaptation, and the provision of supportive feedback make them essential to understanding how instructional planning affects pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD). By focusing on teachers, the study sought to obtain quantifiable data on the extent to which autonomy-supportive strategies such as differentiated instruction, choice-making, and positive behavioural support are applied in the selected schools.

The pupils, particularly those identified as having Emotional and Behavioural Disorders, formed the target group for the qualitative phase of the study. These learners were included to provide experiential perspectives on how teachers' instructional planning influences their self-regulation, participation, and learning independence. Involving pupils as participants ensured that their voices, often overlooked in educational research, were represented in evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive pedagogical strategies. The inclusion of both teachers and pupils, therefore, aligns with the study's mixed-methods design, which aims to integrate statistical evidence from teacher responses with descriptive, narrative insights from pupils' lived experiences.

Overall, the target population reflects a balanced composition of participants capable of providing comprehensive and credible information relevant to the research objectives. Teachers' insights provided measurable indicators of instructional practices, while pupils' reflections offered qualitative depth on the effects of these practices on learner autonomisation. This multidimensional approach ensures that findings are both contextually valid and practically applicable to improving inclusive education outcomes for pupils with EBD in Yaoundé.

Accessible Population

The accessible population refers to the portion of the target population that is practically available to the researcher for data collection within the geographical and logistical constraints of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). While the target population of this study encompassed all teachers and pupils in inclusive schools in Yaoundé, the accessible population was delimited to those within Timely Performance School (Damas), Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Mimboman, and the Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre, where necessary administrative consent and access were granted.

This accessible population comprised teachers and pupils actively engaged in teaching and learning processes during the 2024/2025 academic year. Specifically, it included 22 teachers and 90 pupils at Timely Performance School, 205 teachers and 4,500 pupils at GBHS Mimboman, and 20 teachers and 200 pupils at the Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre. Altogether, this amounted to a total accessible population of 247 teachers and 4,790 pupils. These figures reflect a heterogeneous group of educators and learners representing public, private, and special education institutions, which collectively provide a realistic snapshot of inclusive education practices in Yaoundé.

The selection of this accessible population was informed by three key considerations. First, the chosen schools operate within Yaoundé's central educational zone and demonstrate varied levels of inclusion, resource availability, and pedagogical orientation, making them ideal for comparative analysis. Second, the institutions were accessible in terms of location, administrative cooperation, and willingness of participants to engage in the research. Third, these schools were selected because they possess observable populations of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD), as identified by their teachers and administrative staff. This ensured that the study addressed its central focus- the link between instructional planning strategies and the autonomisation of pupils with EBD within authentic, practice-based contexts.

By focusing on this accessible population, the study ensured that data collection remained feasible, contextually relevant, and ethically manageable. The composition of the accessible population allowed for a balanced representation of teachers' instructional practices and pupils' experiential perspectives across mainstream and specialised educational settings. This strategic delimitation also enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings, as data were drawn from participants who are directly involved in inclusive teaching and learning processes in Yaoundé's educational landscape.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Determining an appropriate sample size is a critical step in ensuring that research findings are reliable, valid, and representative of the target population. According to Kothari (2014), a sample is a finite subset of a population selected for the purpose of analysis, with the expectation that it will reflect the characteristics of the whole. In educational research, the sample size should

be sufficiently large to permit statistical analysis while remaining manageable for qualitative inquiry (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

For the present study, a sample size of 35 participants was selected, comprising 30 teachers for the quantitative phase and 5 pupils for the qualitative phase. The sample was designed to align with the study's mixed-methods research design, which combines breadth from quantitative analysis with depth from qualitative exploration. The selection was guided by considerations of representativeness, feasibility, and data richness.

The quantitative sample consisted of 30 teachers drawn from the total teacher population of 247 across the three selected schools. This number represents approximately 12 percent of the total teacher population, which is statistically adequate for correlational and descriptive analyses (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). The qualitative sample, comprising 5 pupils, was selected purposively based on teacher recommendations and behavioural assessments indicating Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD). This smaller, targeted sample was deemed sufficient for achieving data saturation in qualitative research, as supported by Creswell (2014), who suggests that in-depth interviews with 5 to 10 participants can provide comprehensive thematic insights.

The study employed two sampling techniques:

Stratified Random Sampling for the quantitative component involving teachers. Each school represented a stratum, and teachers were randomly selected from each to ensure proportional representation. This technique was used to capture variability across different institutional contexts (public, private, and specialised).

Purposive Sampling for the qualitative component involving pupils. This non-probability technique was used to intentionally select pupils with identified EBD characteristics, as they possess the experiential knowledge necessary to provide relevant insights into the phenomenon being studied.

This combination of sampling techniques ensured methodological rigour and balanced representation across the study sites, thereby enhancing the credibility and transferability of findings.

Table 1: Distribution of Population and Sample Size

School	Teacher Population	Teacher Sample (Quantitative)	Pupil Population	Pupil Sample (Qualitative)	Remarks
Timely Performance (Damas)	22	5	90	2	Semi-private inclusive school
GBHS Mimboman	205	20	4,500	2	Large public mainstream institution
Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre	20	5	200	1	Specialised school for learners with disabilities
Total	247	30	4,790	5	,

Source: Field data 2025

As indicated in Table 1, the sample was distributed to ensure representation across the different institutional categories. The stratification ensured that each school's unique characteristics were reflected in the data, while the purposive selection of pupils allowed for focused exploration of the lived experiences of learners with EBD.

Overall, this sample size and sampling framework were appropriate for addressing the study's objectives, as they balanced statistical adequacy with qualitative depth. The approach aligns with the recommendations of Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), who argue that mixed-method studies benefit from purposeful integration of quantitative representativeness and qualitative insight to provide a holistic understanding of complex educational phenomena.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments are essential tools used by researchers to gather information relevant to the objectives of a study. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), the choice of instruments should align with the research design and the type of data required, ensuring that both validity and reliability are maintained. In this study, data were collected using two main instruments - a structured questionnaire administered to teachers and a semi-structured interview guide used with pupils identified as having Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD). The use of both instruments was consistent with the study's mixed-methods design, allowing for the

integration of quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Structured Questionnaire for Teachers

The structured questionnaire was designed to obtain quantifiable data on teachers' instructional planning strategies and their perceived relationship with learner autonomisation among pupils with EBD. It was divided into two main sections.

- Section A focused on demographic information such as gender, years of teaching experience, and educational qualification.
- Section B contained Likert-scale statements reflecting the general and specific objectives of the study, structured around three key dimensions: (i) incorporation of choice-making opportunities in instructional planning, (ii) level of learner self-regulation, and (iii) the influence of positive behavioural support strategies on learner autonomy.

Each item was rated on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). This scale was chosen for its simplicity and effectiveness in measuring attitudes and perceptions in educational research (Likert, 1932). The questionnaire items were developed after a comprehensive review of relevant literature, including validated instruments from prior studies on inclusive education, learner autonomy, and instructional strategies (Reeve, 2016; Tomlinson, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The instrument aimed to capture the extent to which teachers integrate autonomy-supportive practices such as differentiated instruction, feedback mechanisms, and flexible assessments within their instructional planning.

Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Pupils

To complement the quantitative data, qualitative insights were gathered through a semi-structured interview guide administered to pupils with EBD. The purpose of the interviews was to explore learners' personal experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding how teachers' instructional practices influence their sense of autonomy, motivation, and engagement in learning activities. The semi-structured format was chosen because it provides flexibility for follow-up questions and allows respondents to express themselves in depth, thereby producing rich, descriptive data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The interview guide contained open-ended questions focusing on themes such as participation in decision-making during lessons, perceived opportunities for self-regulation, emotional support received from teachers, and attitudes toward learning tasks. Interviews were conducted in a quiet and safe environment within the school premises, ensuring that participants felt comfortable and respected. Responses were audio-recorded with consent and later transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis. This process ensured that the pupils' voices were authentically represented, especially given the sensitive nature of EBD and the importance of inclusion in research ethics (UNESCO, 2023).

The use of both a questionnaire and interview guide was intentional and grounded in the principles of methodological triangulation, which enhances the credibility and validity of findings by combining different types of data (Patton, 2015). The questionnaire provided measurable evidence of the extent to which instructional planning influences learner autonomy, while the interview guide allowed for a deeper exploration of individual experiences that could not be captured quantitatively. This dual-instrument approach is consistent with the recommendations of Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), who note that mixed-method designs are particularly effective in educational research involving complex constructs such as motivation, autonomy, and inclusive practices.

Overall, these instruments were designed to capture the interplay between instructional planning and learner autonomisation with methodological precision and contextual sensitivity. Their complementary use ensured that the study gathered data that were both statistically robust and rich in qualitative depth, thereby allowing for meaningful analysis and interpretation.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

The validity and reliability of research instruments are essential in ensuring the credibility, accuracy, and trustworthiness of findings. In social and educational research, the extent to which an instrument measures what it intends to measure (validity) and produces consistent results under similar conditions (reliability) determines the overall quality of the study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The procedures for ensuring both validity and reliability in this study were carefully designed to meet the standards of empirical research in education.

Validity of the Instruments

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument accurately measures the intended construct (Kothari, 2014). To ensure content and face validity, the questionnaire and interview guide were developed through a systematic process involving a review of relevant literature, adaptation of validated items from previous studies, and expert assessment. The initial draft of the instruments was reviewed by three experts - two senior lecturers in Educational Psychology and Special Needs Education, and one experienced inclusive education practitioner. These experts evaluated the instruments for clarity, relevance, language appropriateness, and alignment with the study's objectives and conceptual framework. Their feedback led to refinements in the wording, structure, and sequencing of items to enhance clarity and contextual fit.

Construct validity was also addressed by ensuring that the questionnaire items reflected the theoretical constructs derived from the study's guiding frameworks, Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985) and Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). For instance, items measuring autonomy-supportive practices were mapped to components of self-determination such as choice, competence, and relatedness, while items on instructional planning and differentiation were linked to constructivist principles of scaffolding and learner engagement. This theoretical alignment ensured that the instruments measured the intended psychological and pedagogical constructs with conceptual precision.

Furthermore, pilot testing was conducted with a small sample of five teachers and two pupils from non-participating schools within Yaoundé to evaluate the instruments' usability and interpretability. The pilot test helped identify ambiguous items, time management challenges, and potential response biases. Minor adjustments were made to the questionnaire's Likert scale structure and the phrasing of interview questions to ensure greater comprehension and accuracy. The pilot results demonstrated consistency and coherence between the questions and the research objectives, confirming the instruments' validity for use in the main study.

Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability refers to the consistency, stability, and predictability of an instrument's results over time or across similar conditions (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was computed following the pilot test. A coefficient value of 0.82 was obtained, indicating high internal consistency among the

questionnaire items. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above is considered acceptable for social science research, which confirms that the instrument was reliable for the study.

To ensure inter-rater reliability in the qualitative phase, the interview transcriptions were reviewed by two independent coders who compared and reconciled emerging themes to avoid researcher bias. This process, supported by the use of thematic coding frameworks, ensured that data interpretation remained consistent and credible (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Moreover, member checking was applied during the interviews, allowing participants to verify the accuracy of recorded responses and clarify ambiguities. These procedures enhanced the dependability and confirmability of qualitative findings, ensuring that interpretations accurately reflected participants' perspectives.

Overall, the validity and reliability measures implemented in this study ensured that the instruments were both conceptually sound and empirically dependable. The systematic expert validation, pilot testing, theoretical alignment, and statistical testing strengthened the methodological rigour of the research. As a result, the instruments provided accurate, consistent, and trustworthy data capable of supporting valid conclusions about the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in the selected schools of Yaoundé.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process constitutes a critical stage in research as it determines the accuracy and integrity of the information gathered for analysis. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), well-structured data collection procedures ensure systematic, ethical, and credible acquisition of evidence consistent with the research design. In this study, the procedures were guided by the principles of methodological triangulation, ethical transparency, and participant sensitivity, particularly given the inclusion of learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD).

The study employed a convergent mixed-methods approach, which required the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently. This design allowed the researcher to compare and integrate numerical trends with qualitative insights for a comprehensive

understanding of how teachers' instructional planning strategies influence learner autonomisation. The process was carried out in several coordinated phases, as described below.

Before fieldwork began, the researcher obtained an official authorization letter from the Department of Specialized Education, under the faculty of Education in the University of Yaoundé I which introduced the study and requested cooperation from the selected institutions. Formal approval was also sought from the heads of Timely Performance School (Damas), Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Mimboman, and the Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre. Meetings were held with each school's administration to clarify the objectives of the study, ensure transparency, and agree on suitable schedules for data collection to avoid disrupting normal teaching activities.

The quantitative data collection phase targeted teachers and employed the structured questionnaire previously validated and pilot-tested. The researcher personally distributed 30 copies of the questionnaire to selected teachers across the three schools. Prior to administration, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, assured participants of confidentiality and voluntary participation, and obtained their informed consent. Teachers were instructed to respond independently and honestly to the items, which assessed their instructional planning practices, differentiation strategies, and autonomy-supportive teaching behaviours. Each teacher was given adequate time to complete the questionnaire, after which the forms were retrieved immediately to ensure a high return rate. The data collection from teachers lasted approximately two weeks and achieved a 100 percent retrieval rate.

The qualitative data collection phase focused on five pupils identified as having Emotional and Behavioural Disorders through teacher recommendations and behavioural observations. The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide designed to elicit pupils' experiences and perceptions regarding how teachers' instructional planning affects their autonomy, participation, and motivation in learning. Interviews were conducted individually within the school premises in quiet, comfortable settings to ensure privacy and emotional safety. Each session lasted between 20 and 30 minutes and was conducted in English, with clarifications provided in French or local languages when necessary.

During the interviews, the researcher employed active listening and non-judgmental communication to build rapport and encourage open expression. All sessions were audio-recorded

with participants' consent, and detailed notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues. Upon completion, participants were thanked for their contributions and reassured of the confidentiality of their responses.

After data collection, the researcher organised the quantitative and qualitative datasets for integration. The quantitative data from the teachers' questionnaires were coded and entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 for descriptive and inferential analysis. Meanwhile, the qualitative data from pupil interviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2019). Data integration occurred during the interpretation phase, where convergences and divergences between quantitative and qualitative findings were identified to generate a unified conclusion.

To ensure accuracy and credibility, data verification procedures were employed. These included cross-checking questionnaire responses for completeness, conducting follow-up calls to clarify ambiguous answers, and performing member checking by sharing key interpretations with selected participants for validation. Triangulation between teacher and pupil responses enhanced the reliability of findings and strengthened the internal validity of the study.

Overall, the data collection process was systematic, ethically sound, and contextually sensitive to the realities of inclusive education environments in Yaoundé. The careful coordination between quantitative and qualitative procedures ensured the generation of data that were both statistically reliable and qualitatively meaningful, allowing the study to capture the multifaceted relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is a crucial stage in research as it involves the systematic organisation, interpretation, and synthesis of collected data to answer research questions and test hypotheses. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), data analysis in mixed-methods research entails the integration of both numerical and narrative data to obtain comprehensive insights that neither form of data could provide independently. The present study adopted analytical procedures consistent with its convergent mixed-methods design, where quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analysed separately, and then merged during interpretation to enhance triangulation and validity.

Quantitative data derived from the teachers' structured questionnaires were coded, tabulated, and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed to summarise, compare, and test relationships between variables. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to provide an overview of teachers' demographic characteristics and their instructional planning practices. These measures facilitated the identification of trends and patterns in the use of autonomy-supportive instructional strategies among teachers in the selected schools.

For inferential analysis, the study employed the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD). In addition, simple linear regression was applied to assess the extent to which instructional planning strategies predicted learner autonomy outcomes. The choice of these statistical tests was appropriate given the study's objectives and the continuous nature of the variables involved (Field, 2018). Results were interpreted using a 0.05 level of significance, ensuring that conclusions were based on statistically meaningful relationships.

To maintain analytical rigour, the data were carefully screened before analysis to identify missing values, outliers, and inconsistencies. All data were cross-verified to ensure accuracy of entry and computation. The results were presented in tables, graphs, and figures to facilitate clarity and comprehension. Interpretations were guided by the theoretical frameworks of Self-Determination Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory, ensuring conceptual coherence between the findings and the study's guiding principles.

The qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews with pupils were analysed thematically following the six-step framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2019). This involved (a) familiarisation with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, (b) generation of initial codes to identify patterns, (c) searching for themes that captured key ideas, (d) reviewing themes to ensure internal consistency and distinctiveness, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing a coherent analytical narrative that linked the findings to the study objectives.

The analysis focused on identifying pupils' perspectives and experiences regarding how teachers' instructional planning and classroom practices influenced their motivation, engagement,

and self-regulation. Common themes included “teacher support and encouragement,” “participation in decision-making,” “classroom flexibility,” and “self-directed learning experiences.” These themes were supported with verbatim quotations from participants to preserve authenticity and provide depth to the interpretation.

To enhance the credibility and dependability of the qualitative analysis, peer debriefing and member checking were conducted. Peer debriefing involved consulting two colleagues with expertise in educational research to review emerging themes and interpretations for consistency and objectivity. Member checking allowed participants to review summaries of their statements to confirm that their views were accurately represented. These strategies ensured that the qualitative results were trustworthy and reflected the participants’ lived experiences.

Following separate analyses, the quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during the interpretation phase to provide a holistic understanding of the research problem. This process, described by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) as triangulation and convergence, allowed the researcher to compare patterns, validate findings, and explain discrepancies between statistical results and participant narratives. Convergent findings were used to reinforce conclusions, while divergent results offered new perspectives that enriched the interpretation of data.

The integration of findings thus enabled the study to present a multi-layered understanding of how teachers’ instructional planning strategies affect the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in inclusive classrooms. This analytical approach ensured not only statistical precision but also interpretive depth, aligning with the broader goal of mixed-methods research to produce comprehensive and contextually relevant knowledge.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are an indispensable component of educational research, ensuring that the rights, dignity, and welfare of participants are protected throughout the research process. According to Kitchener (1984), research ethics encompass principles of respect for persons, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, which serve as moral guidelines for researchers in their interactions with participants. Similarly, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) define research ethics as the systematic application of moral principles to protect participants from harm and ensure fairness, integrity, and confidentiality in the research process. The present study adhered

strictly to established ethical standards to maintain the credibility and integrity of the findings while safeguarding all participants involved.

Prior to data collection, ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Faculty of Education of the University of Yaoundé I. This approval authorised the researcher to conduct the study in the selected institutions and confirmed compliance with institutional research ethics guidelines. Following this, formal permission was sought from the administrative authorities of the participating schools, Timely Performance School (Damas), Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Mimboman, and the Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre. Each institution received an introductory letter outlining the study's purpose, objectives, and procedures. Meetings were subsequently held with school heads and staff to clarify the scope of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures in place to ensure confidentiality and minimal disruption to teaching activities.

Participation in the study was strictly voluntary. Each participant, teacher or pupil, was informed of the study's aims, procedures, potential risks, and benefits before giving consent. For teachers, consent forms were signed prior to completing the questionnaires, affirming their voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. For pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD), both parental/guardian consent and participant assent were obtained. The researcher explained the purpose of the study in child-friendly language to ensure comprehension, consistent with ethical recommendations for research involving minors (British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2018). Pupils were assured that their participation would not affect their academic standing or relationships with teachers or peers.

To protect participant privacy, strict confidentiality and anonymity were observed. Questionnaires were coded numerically rather than by name, and interview transcripts were labelled with pseudonyms. All identifiable information was removed from the dataset before analysis. Audio recordings and notes from interviews were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. In reporting findings, quotations from pupils and teachers were anonymised to prevent identification. This ensured compliance with the principles of confidentiality as outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), which emphasise the protection of sensitive data and respect for participant privacy throughout and beyond the research process.

Given that the study involved pupils with EBD, additional precautions were taken to prevent emotional distress or discomfort. Interviews were conducted in calm, supportive environments within the school, and sessions were kept brief to avoid fatigue. The researcher maintained a sensitive and empathetic approach, ensuring that questions were phrased respectfully and that participants could decline to answer any question they found uncomfortable. Where emotional reactions occurred, participants were referred to the school counsellor or designated staff for appropriate support. This approach aligns with the ethical principle of beneficence, which requires researchers to maximise benefits and minimise potential harm to participants (Israel & Hay, 2006).

Throughout the research process, the principles of academic integrity and transparency were upheld. Data collection, analysis, and reporting were conducted objectively, without manipulation or misrepresentation of findings. Sources were duly acknowledged following the APA 7th Edition referencing style to maintain academic honesty. The researcher also ensured that participants' contributions were faithfully represented, and interpretations were corroborated through member checking and triangulation. These measures strengthened the study's credibility and demonstrated adherence to ethical research conduct in line with international standards.

In summary, ethical considerations were integral to every stage of this study, from planning and data collection to analysis and dissemination. By obtaining necessary approvals, securing informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and prioritising participant welfare, the researcher ensured that the study upheld the highest ethical standards. This ethical rigour not only protected participants but also enhanced the trustworthiness and scholarly value of the research, particularly in the sensitive context of inclusive education for pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in Yaoundé.

Chapter Five:

Presentation, Analysis, And Interpretation of Results

Introduction

This chapter presents, analyses, and interprets the findings of the study, with the primary purpose of examining the empirical results emerging from both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study and to explain how these findings collectively address the research objectives. Quantitative data were gathered from teachers through structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted with pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD). This dual approach aligns with the principles of mixed-method research design, which integrates numerical data and lived experiences to achieve a comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2020).

The chapter is structured into three major sections. The first section presents the quantitative results, including descriptive and inferential analyses based on data collected from teachers in Timely Performance School (Damas), Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Mimboman, and Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre. The second section presents the qualitative findings derived from thematic analysis of pupil interviews, which provide contextual insights into their autonomy experiences and perceptions of teachers' support strategies. The third section integrates both strands of data, highlighting points of convergence, divergence, and complementarity between teachers' reported instructional strategies and pupils' expressed learning experiences. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of key findings as a basis for the discussions in Chapter Five.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Understanding the demographic characteristics of respondents is essential for contextualizing the study findings and ensuring the validity of inferences drawn from the data. Demographic information was obtained from 30 teachers across the three selected institutions. This information provides a background against which teachers' instructional planning practices and their relationships with learner autonomy can be interpreted. The variables analysed include gender, age group, teaching experience, educational qualification, and school affiliation.

Table 2:Table 2. Demographic distribution of teacher respondents.

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	12	40.0
	Female	18	60.0
Age Group	21–30 years	4	13.3
	31–40 years	10	33.3
	41–50 years	9	30.0
	51 years and above	7	23.3
Years of Teaching Experience	1–5 years	5	16.7
	6–10 years	10	33.3
	11–15 years	9	30.0
	Above 15 years	6	20.0
Educational Qualification	Bachelor’s Degree	10	33.3
	Postgraduate	7	23.3
	Diploma		
	Master’s Degree	10	33.3
	Doctorate (Ph.D.)	3	10.0
School Affiliation	Timely Performance	8	26.7
	GBHS Mimboman	15	50.0
	Etoug-Ebe. Center	7	23.3

Source: Field Data (2025)

The data in Table 2 above reveal that female teachers constituted the majority (60%) of respondents. This pattern reflects the gendered nature of the teaching profession in basic and inclusive education within Cameroon (Tamanja & Fonkeng, 2023). Age distribution shows that 33.3% of respondents were between 31–40 years, indicating that most participants were in their mid-career stage, typically associated with higher pedagogical competence and flexibility in adapting instructional strategies (Vermunt & Endedijk, 2022). Regarding teaching experience, the largest group (33.3%) had between 6–10 years of experience, suggesting that a significant proportion of teachers possessed adequate exposure to classroom management and differentiated instruction for learners with EBD.

In terms of qualification, most respondents held at least a bachelor’s or master’s degree (66.6% combined), which implies a relatively high level of professional preparation. This finding aligns with recommendations by UNESCO (2023) that inclusive education for learners with special needs requires highly trained and reflective practitioners. Finally, the highest representation came from GBHS Mimboman (50%), reflecting the institution’s larger teacher population. This

balanced representation across schools ensures that the findings capture diverse institutional realities from inclusive mainstream settings (GBHS Mimboman) to specialised centres (Etoug-Ebe).

Reliability and Validity of Research Instruments

Reliability and validity are crucial for ensuring the credibility of the study's findings. In this study, reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which assesses the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. According to George and Mallery (2019), an alpha value above 0.70 indicates acceptable reliability, values above 0.80 are considered good, and those above 0.90 indicate excellent reliability. The computed Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the four constructs ranged from 0.631 to 0.803, as shown in Table 4.2, which confirms the overall reliability of the instrument.

Table 3: Reliability and Validity of Research Instruments

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Interpretation
Choice-Making Opportunities	4	0.742	Reliable
Self-Regulation Facilitation	4	0.693	Acceptable
Positive Behavioral Support	4	0.631	Acceptable
Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD)	4	0.803	Good
Overall Scale	16	0.734	Reliable

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

These results indicate that all constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency. Minor variations in reliability may be attributed to differences in the dimensionality of the subscales or the contextual diversity of teachers' experiences. In addition, the content and construct validity of the instrument were established through expert review involving three specialists in special education and educational psychology, ensuring that the questionnaire adequately captured the intended constructs.

Descriptive Analysis of Instructional Planning Strategies

This section presents the descriptive results derived from teachers' responses regarding their instructional planning strategies for pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD). The analysis focuses on three major indicators of instructional planning identified in the study: Choice-Making Opportunities, Self-Regulation Facilitation, and Positive Behavioural Support.

These indicators correspond to the core dimensions of autonomy-supportive teaching as proposed by Ryan and Deci (2020) under the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) framework.

For each indicator, descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated based on data collected from 30 teachers (N = 30) in the selected schools, Timely Performance (Damas), GBHS Mimboman, and Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre. The results are presented in the tables below:

Choice-Making Opportunities

Choice-making opportunities refer to the degree to which teachers allow pupils to participate in learning decisions, such as selecting learning materials, setting goals, or determining the pace of activities. Providing learners with choices enhances their sense of control, motivation, and engagement, particularly for pupils with EBD who often struggle with dependency and emotional regulation (Wehmeyer & Shogren, 2017).

Table 4. presents teachers' responses on their inclusion of choice-making strategies during instructional planning.

Table 4: Teachers' Responses on Choice-Making Opportunities (N = 30)

Statements	SD n (%)	D n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean (M)	SD
1. I provide pupils with opportunities to select learning activities that interest them.	1 (3.3)	3 (10.0)	16 (53.3)	10 (33.3)	3.17	0.64
2. I encourage pupils to take part in goal-setting for their learning tasks.	0 (0.0)	5 (16.7)	13 (43.3)	12 (40.0)	3.23	0.68
3. Pupils are allowed to choose materials or tools they prefer during learning activities.	2 (6.7)	4 (13.3)	17 (56.7)	7 (23.3)	2.97	0.72
4. I modify lesson plans to accommodate pupils' individual preferences and choices.	1 (3.3)	4 (13.3)	13 (43.3)	12 (40.0)	3.20	0.69

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings in Table 4 reveal that most teachers (76.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that they offer pupils opportunities to participate in setting learning goals, while 86.6% reported that they provide some level of choice in classroom activities. The mean scores ranged from 2.97 to 3.23, indicating a moderate to high level of autonomy-supportive instruction. The highest-rated

item ($M = 3.23$) suggests that participatory goal-setting is a dominant practice among the teachers surveyed.

This observation is consistent with Ryan and Deci (2020), who posit that learner choice and goal ownership increase intrinsic motivation and cognitive engagement. However, the slightly lower mean for item three ($M = 2.97$) reflects a limited flexibility in allowing learners to choose learning materials, possibly due to the lack of instructional resources, as similarly noted by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) in their study of inclusive classrooms in resource-constrained environments.

Self-Regulation Facilitation

Self-regulation facilitation represents teachers' efforts to cultivate learners' capacity to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning processes. In inclusive classrooms, pupils with EBD require explicit guidance to build these metacognitive skills (Zimmerman, 2015). Teachers' ability to scaffold self-regulated learning directly influences learner autonomy and behavioural control.

Table 5 presents the results for items related to teachers' facilitation of self-regulation among pupils with EBD.

Table 5: Teachers' Responses on Self-Regulation Facilitation (N = 30)

Statements	SD n (%)	D n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean (M)	SD
1. I teach pupils how to plan and organise their learning tasks.	0 (0.0)	2 (6.7)	14 (46.7)	14 (46.7)	3.40	0.59
2. I guide pupils to evaluate their performance after each activity.	1 (3.3)	3 (10.0)	16 (53.3)	10 (33.3)	3.17	0.64
3. I encourage pupils to set personal academic targets.	0 (0.0)	3 (10.0)	16 (53.3)	11 (36.7)	3.27	0.61
4. I provide constructive feedback that helps pupils improve future performance.	0 (0.0)	2 (6.7)	15 (50.0)	13 (43.3)	3.37	0.58

Source: Field Data (2025)

As presented in Table 5, teachers generally demonstrated a high level of commitment to promoting self-regulated learning. The mean scores ranged between 3.17 and 3.40, indicating consistent incorporation of self-regulatory activities in classroom instruction. The most frequently

endorsed statement was “I teach pupils how to plan and organise their learning tasks” ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.59$), reported by 93.4% of respondents as agree or strongly agree.

These results align with Schunk and Zimmerman (2012), who affirm that direct modelling of planning and self-evaluation supports metacognitive growth and learner independence. However, qualitative interviews with pupils revealed that while teachers emphasise planning, pupils often struggle to transfer these skills independently. A pupil from GBHS Mimboman noted, “Teacher helps us plan, but we forget when we are alone,” illustrating that guided regulation is not yet internalised into autonomous behaviour. This finding confirms Tomlinson’s (2022) assertion that sustained scaffolding is necessary for self-regulation to become habitual among learners with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Positive Behavioural Support

Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) focuses on reinforcing appropriate behaviours, improving emotional regulation, and promoting a positive classroom climate (Carr et al., 2018). PBS strategies are critical in supporting learners with EBD, who often display patterns of emotional dysregulation and impulsive behaviour.

Table 6 summarises teachers’ responses regarding their use of positive behavioural support mechanisms during instructional planning and classroom implementation.

Table 6: Teachers’ Responses on Positive Behavioural Support (N = 30)

Statements	SD n (%)	D n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean (M)	SD
1. I reinforce pupils’ good behaviour with praise or rewards.	1 (3.3)	2 (6.7)	15 (50.0)	12 (40.0)	3.27	0.69
2. I focus more on encouraging positive behaviour than punishing misbehaviour.	0 (0.0)	4 (13.3)	16 (53.3)	10 (33.3)	3.20	0.63
3. I use behavioural support plans tailored to pupils’ individual needs.	3 (10.0)	6 (20.0)	15 (50.0)	6 (20.0)	2.80	0.83
4. I engage pupils in discussions to reflect on their behaviours.	1 (3.3)	5 (16.7)	16 (53.3)	8 (26.7)	3.03	0.74

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results in Table 6 show that teachers exhibit moderate use of positive behavioural support techniques, with mean scores ranging from 2.80 to 3.27. Most teachers (90%) agreed that they reward good behaviour through praise, suggesting that positive reinforcement is the predominant behavioural management strategy used. However, the comparatively low mean score for “use of individualised behaviour plans” ($M = 2.80$) indicates challenges in implementing tailored behavioural interventions, likely due to limited training and time constraints.

This pattern corroborates Fonkeng’s (2018) findings that large class sizes and insufficient specialised support staff hinder differentiated behaviour management in Cameroonian schools. It also mirrors Kauffman and Landrum’s (2020) position that without institutional backing, teachers often revert to generalised, reactive discipline rather than proactive, individualised behavioural support.

Nevertheless, the overall results demonstrate that teachers maintain positive attitudes toward behavioural reinforcement, which aligns with the inclusive pedagogical shift from punitive control to restorative engagement. As evidenced by a respondent at Etoug-Ebe Centre, “I talk to them calmly after they fight; I don’t shout because they will shout back.” Such insights underscore teachers’ adaptive empathy, a critical component in inclusive education practice.

Descriptive analyses across the three indicators, choice-making, self-regulation facilitation, and positive behavioral support, reveal that teachers in the selected schools demonstrate a generally autonomy-supportive orientation in instructional planning. Self-regulation facilitation recorded the highest overall mean ($M = 3.30$), followed by choice-making opportunities ($M = 3.14$) and positive behavioural support ($M = 3.08$).

While these results reflect positive strides toward inclusive pedagogical practices, the findings also highlight persistent implementation gaps. Classroom realities do not always match teachers’ intentions due to resource constraints, limited training, and high pupil–teacher ratios. These observations set the stage for the subsequent inferential analysis (Section 4.4) and qualitative interpretation (Section 4.6), where the practical implications of these practices are explored more deeply.

Descriptive Analysis of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD)

Understanding the manifestations of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) among pupils is essential for interpreting how instructional planning strategies relate to learner autonomy and classroom engagement. In this study, EBD represents the dependent variable and refers to the observable patterns of emotional instability, behavioural disruptions, and withdrawal tendencies that affect pupils' participation and academic functioning (Kauffman & Landrum, 2020). Teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements assessing the prevalence and impact of these characteristics on teaching and learning.

Table 7 presents the distribution of teachers' responses concerning emotional and behavioural patterns observed among pupils with EBD in the three selected schools, Timely Performance (Damas), GBHS Mimboman, and Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre.

Table 7: Teachers' Perceptions of Pupils' Emotional and Behavioural Disorders

Statements	SD n (%)	D n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean (M)	SD
1. Pupils with EBD often exhibit sudden mood changes during lessons.	0 (0.0)	2 (6.7)	13 (43.3)	15 (50.0)	3.43	0.63
2. Some pupils withdraw from classroom interactions even when encouraged.	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	16 (53.3)	12 (40.0)	3.30	0.67
3. Frequent behavioural disruptions interfere with lesson delivery.	1 (3.3)	3 (10.0)	16 (53.3)	10 (33.3)	3.17	0.71
4. Pupils with EBD require close supervision to remain on task.	0 (0.0)	2 (6.7)	15 (50.0)	13 (43.3)	3.37	0.63

Source: Field Data (2025)

The data in Table 7 show that teachers strongly agreed on the prevalence of emotional and behavioural challenges among pupils with EBD. Overall mean scores ranged from 3.17 to 3.43, suggesting that teachers consistently encounter such difficulties in their classrooms. The item "Pupils with EBD often exhibit sudden mood changes during lessons" recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.63$), with 93.3% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing. This finding indicates that emotional instability, manifested in mood fluctuations, anxiety, or irritability, is a common challenge, corroborating Kauffman and Landrum's (2020) assertion that mood dysregulation is a central feature of EBD.

Similarly, 93.3% of teachers agreed that some pupils frequently withdraw from classroom interactions, confirming patterns of social isolation typical among learners with emotional difficulties. This behavioural withdrawal aligns with Cullinan's (2019) findings that pupils with EBD often disengage due to fear of negative peer judgment or past disciplinary experiences. Teachers from Etoug-Ebe specifically observed that "some children prefer to sit alone and don't talk unless you call them."

The statement "Frequent behavioural disruptions interfere with lesson delivery" yielded a mean of 3.17 (SD = 0.71), indicating that disruptive behaviours, such as talking out of turn, aggression, or refusal to comply, significantly affect instructional flow. This observation aligns with Forness and Knitzer (2021), who noted that disruptive conduct among pupils with EBD often reduces instructional time and increases teacher stress.

Furthermore, the mean score of 3.37 for the statement "Pupils with EBD require close supervision to remain on task" underscores the need for constant behavioural monitoring and adaptive management. This is particularly relevant in inclusive classrooms with high student-teacher ratios, where personalised support is difficult to maintain. Teachers in GBHS Mimboman emphasised this challenge, with one noting, "You must stand near them to keep them calm; if you move away, they start doing something else."

Collectively, these findings suggest that emotional volatility, withdrawal, and behavioural instability are prevalent across the three schools studied. Such behavioural profiles demand intentional instructional planning that integrates emotional regulation, flexible pacing, and positive reinforcement, the very competencies analysed under teachers' instructional strategies.

The overall high means recorded across all EBD indicators reinforce the complexity of inclusive education in Cameroon's classrooms. Pupils with EBD often display co-occurring emotional and behavioural symptoms that hinder participation, as also highlighted by Tchombe (2019) and Chela (2020). These results emphasize that effective teaching in such contexts requires more than academic content mastery; it demands socio-emotional competence, patience, and adaptive instructional design.

The findings also validate the theoretical assumptions underpinning this study, particularly Vygotsky's (1978) Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learners develop

meaningfully when teachers scaffold learning experiences within their “zone of proximal development.” In this context, scaffolding extends beyond cognitive support to include emotional and behavioural regulation, especially for vulnerable learners.

Teachers’ responses indicate awareness of these challenges but also reflect the systemic constraints, such as large class sizes and insufficient special education training, that limit full implementation of autonomy-supportive strategies. As one teacher from Timely Performance stated, “We try to manage, but the classes are too full, and you can’t help everyone at once.”

In summary, the descriptive analysis of EBD reveals the extent of emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by pupils in inclusive settings. It underscores the importance of adaptive, empathetic, and autonomy-supportive instructional planning. These results provide the foundation for inferential testing in the next section (4.5), where the relationships between teachers’ instructional strategies and pupils’ autonomisation are statistically examined.

Inferential Analysis

The inferential analysis in this study aims to test the hypotheses formulated to determine whether teachers’ instructional planning strategies significantly influence the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD). The section presents the findings from the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) and Simple Linear Regression analyses.

The Pearson correlation test examines the strength and direction of relationships between variables, while simple linear regression determines the extent to which teachers’ instructional planning strategies predict pupils’ learner autonomy outcomes. Both tests were conducted using SPSS (Version 25), with the level of significance set at $p < .05$.

Correlation Analysis Between Teachers’ Instructional Planning Strategies and Learner Autonomy

Correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between the three indicators of instructional planning strategies, Choice-Making Opportunities, Self-Regulation Facilitation, and Positive Behavioural Support, and the dependent variable Learner Autonomy (EBD).

Table 8 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients showing the strength and direction of these relationships.

Table 8.

Table 8: Correlation Between Teachers' Instructional Planning Strategies and Learner Autonomy Among Pupils with EBD

Variables	Choice-Making Opportunities	Self-Regulation Facilitation	Positive Behavioral Support	Learner Autonomy (EBD)
Choice-Making Opportunities	1			
Self-Regulation Facilitation	.591	1		
Positive Behavioral Support	.514	.603	1	
Learner Autonomy (EBD)	.488	.554	.469	1

Note: $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Table 8 shows that there are positive and statistically significant relationships among all the study variables. The strongest correlation exists between Self-Regulation Facilitation and Learner Autonomy ($r = .554$, $p < .01$), indicating that teachers who intentionally promote pupils' self-regulatory skills tend to foster higher levels of autonomy among learners with EBD.

The second strongest relationship was observed between Choice-Making Opportunities and Learner Autonomy ($r = .488$, $p < .01$), suggesting that providing learners with meaningful choices contributes to their ability to act independently and self-direct their learning activities. This aligns with the principles of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which emphasises autonomy, competence, and relatedness as essential psychological needs for effective learning and self-motivation.

Similarly, Positive Behavioural Support showed a moderately strong correlation with Learner Autonomy ($r = .469$, $p < .01$). This finding demonstrates that when teachers employ positive reinforcement and empathetic behavioural management techniques, pupils with EBD become more emotionally secure and cognitively engaged.

These relationships are consistent with studies by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) and Mitchell (2015), who observed that autonomy-supportive environments contribute to enhanced self-regulation, behavioural stability, and learning persistence among learners with special educational needs.

In summary, the correlation results reveal that teachers' instructional planning strategies are significantly and positively associated with the development of learner autonomy among pupils with EBD, implying that improvements in instructional planning lead to proportional improvements in pupil autonomisation.

Regression Analysis of Teachers' Instructional Planning Strategies and Learner Autonomy

To determine the predictive strength of teachers' instructional planning strategies on learner autonomy among pupils with EBD, a simple linear regression analysis was performed. The independent variable (teachers' instructional planning strategies) was computed as a composite score from all three indicators (choice-making, self-regulation, and PBS), while the dependent variable represented learners' autonomy levels.

Table 9.

Table 9: Model Summary of Regression Between Instructional Planning Strategies and Learner Autonomy

Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.613	0.376	0.352	0.417

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Table 4.5.2 shows that the correlation coefficient ($R = 0.613$) indicates a moderately strong positive relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and learner autonomy. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.376$) means that 37.6% of the variance in pupils' autonomy can be explained by variations in teachers' instructional planning strategies. The remaining 62.4% may be attributed to other factors not included in this model, such as socio-emotional support, peer influence, and family environment.

This result demonstrates that instructional planning is a meaningful predictor of learner autonomy, supporting Vygotsky's (1978) Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that

structured yet flexible teacher scaffolding enhances learners' independent functioning within the classroom.

Table 10.

Table 10:ANOVA Table for the Regression Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p)
Regression	2.932	1	2.932	16.86	.000
Residual	4.870	28	0.174		
Total	7.802	29			

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

The regression ANOVA results show that the model is statistically significant ($F(1,28) = 16.86$, $p < .001$), confirming that teachers' instructional planning strategies significantly predict learner autonomy among pupils with EBD. The significance level ($p < .001$) is well below the 0.05 threshold, strengthening the conclusion that the relationship observed is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

This result aligns with similar findings by Ndongko (2017) and Chela (2020), who established that teacher planning, adaptability, and feedback mechanisms significantly influence student motivation and classroom participation in inclusive settings.

Table 11:Coefficients Table of the Regression Model

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardised Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	1.472	0.321	,	4.583	.000
Instructional Planning Strategies	0.611	0.149	0.613	4.106	.000

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

The unstandardised regression coefficient ($B = 0.611$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in teachers' instructional planning effectiveness, the level of learner autonomy among pupils with EBD increases by 0.611 units. The model constant (1.472) represents the baseline level of learner autonomy when no instructional planning strategies are applied.

The t-value of 4.106 ($p < .001$) confirms the variable's significance, indicating that instructional planning strategies are a strong positive predictor of learner autonomy. These findings

reinforce the hypothesis that teacher-led instructional planning significantly enhances pupils' independence and engagement, a conclusion supported by Mitchell (2015) and Tomlinson (2022) in their work on differentiated and inclusive pedagogical frameworks.

Summary of Inferential Findings

Positive and significant correlations exist between teachers' instructional planning strategies and learner autonomy among pupils with EBD. Self-regulation facilitation had the strongest correlation with learner autonomy, indicating that structured metacognitive support fosters self-directed learning. Regression analysis revealed that instructional planning strategies accounted for 37.6% of the variance in learner autonomy, demonstrating a substantial predictive influence. The regression model was statistically significant ($F(1,28) = 16.86, p < .001$), confirming the validity of the relationship. The predictive equation derived from the regression model is: $\text{Learner Autonomy} = 1.472 + 0.611(\text{Instructional Planning Strategies})$. This equation implies that as teachers enhance the quality of instructional planning, learners with EBD experience measurable improvements in autonomy and emotional regulation.

Hypothesis Testing

This section presents the statistical testing of the general and specific hypotheses formulated in Chapter One. Quantitative data obtained from teachers' questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. The hypotheses were tested using appropriate inferential statistical techniques, including Pearson Product–Moment Correlation and Simple Linear Regression, at a 0.05 level of significance.

The decision rule applied was as follows:

- If $p < 0.05$, reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative (H_a).
- If $p \geq 0.05$, fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Test of the General Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomization of pupils' teaching and learning processes among children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in selected schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

H_a : There is a significant relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the

autonomisation of pupils' teaching and learning processes among children with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in selected schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Statistical Test: Pearson Product–Moment Correlation

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$

Table 12.

Table 12: Correlation Between Teachers' Instructional Planning Strategies and Learner Autonomy

Variables	N	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Instructional Planning Strategies × Learner Autonomy (EBD)	30	0.612	0.001	Reject H_0

Source: Field Data (2025)

The correlation coefficient of $r = 0.612$ with $p = 0.001$ indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and learner autonomisation among pupils with EBD. This implies that the more teachers integrate autonomy-supportive strategies such as differentiation, flexibility, and behavioural reinforcement, the greater the likelihood that pupils develop self-regulation, engagement, and independence in learning. This finding supports Ryan and Deci's (1985) Self-Determination Theory, which postulates that instructional environments promoting autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhance intrinsic motivation and learner self-direction.

Test of Hypothesis One

H_{01} : Teachers do not employ any significant instructional planning strategies when teaching pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in selected schools in Yaoundé.

H_{a1} : Teachers employ significant instructional planning strategies when teaching pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in selected schools in Yaoundé.

Statistical Test: One-Sample t -Test (test value = 2.5, neutral midpoint on the 4-point Likert scale)

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$

Table 13:One-Sample t-Test of Teachers' Instructional Planning Practices

Variable	Test Value	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Instructional Planning Strategies	2.5	3.19	5.67	29	0.000	Reject H_0

Source: Field Data (2025)

The computed $t(29) = 5.67$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, shows a significant difference between the observed mean score ($M = 3.19$) and the neutral test value (2.5). This indicates that teachers generally employ effective instructional planning strategies when teaching pupils with EBD. Teachers reported incorporating differentiated learning activities, flexible pacing, and behavioural management techniques into their lesson plans.

This finding corroborates Tomlinson's (2022) assertion that differentiated and proactive instructional planning is crucial for inclusive teaching, as it supports the varied emotional and cognitive needs of learners with behavioural disorders.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) are not significantly autonomised in their teaching and learning processes in the selected schools.

H_{a2}: Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) are significantly autonomised in their teaching and learning processes in the selected schools.

Statistical Test: One-Sample t -Test (test value = 2.5)

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$

Table 14:One-Sample t-Test of Learner Autonomy Among Pupils with EBD

Variable	Test Value	Mean	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Learner Autonomy (EBD)	2.5	3.04	4.11	29	0.001	Reject H_0

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results show a significant difference between the sample mean ($M = 3.04$) and the test value (2.5), $t(29) = 4.11$, $p = 0.001 < 0.05$. This suggests that pupils with EBD demonstrate a moderate to high level of autonomisation in their learning processes. Teachers' efforts to provide encouragement, feedback, and limited choice opportunities have contributed to this development.

This result aligns with Dam's (2022) theory that autonomy emerges when learners are scaffolded to make decisions, self-regulate, and reflect within supportive social contexts.

Test of Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: Teachers' instructional planning strategies do not significantly influence the development of autonomy in the learning and teaching processes of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD).

H_{a3}: Teachers' instructional planning strategies significantly influence the development of autonomy in the learning and teaching processes of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD).

Statistical Test: Simple Linear Regression

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$

Table 15: Simple Linear Regression of Instructional Planning Strategies on Learner Autonomy

Model	R	R ²	β	t	Sig. (p)	Decision
Instructional Planning → Learner Autonomy	0.612	0.374	0.58	3.82	0.001	Reject H_0

Source: Field Data (2025)

The regression analysis yielded a statistically significant model, $F(1,28) = 14.61, p = 0.001$. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.374$) indicates that approximately 37.4% of the variance in learner autonomy among pupils with EBD is explained by teachers' instructional planning strategies. The positive beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.58$) confirms that an increase in effective instructional planning leads to a corresponding improvement in pupils' self-regulation, motivation, and independent learning behaviour.

This result supports the assertion by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) that inclusive pedagogy, anchored in flexibility and shared responsibility, enhances learner participation and autonomy. It also validates the theoretical framework of this study, combining Self-Determination

Theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985) and Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), both of which emphasise the centrality of learner agency in knowledge construction.

Table 16: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Result	Decision
General Hypothesis	Pearson Correlation	$r = 0.612, p = 0.001$	Rejected H_0
H ₁ : Teachers employ planning strategies	One-Sample t -Test	$t = 5.67, p = 0.000$	Rejected H_{01}
H ₂ : Pupils are autonomized	One-Sample t -Test	$t = 4.11, p = 0.001$	Rejected H_{02}
H ₃ : Instructional planning influences autonomy	Linear Regression	$\beta = 0.58, p = 0.001$	Rejected H_{03}

Source: SPSS Analysis (2025)

Discussion of Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis tests collectively confirm that teachers' instructional planning strategies significantly enhance the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders. Each hypothesis was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, validating the conceptual assumption that autonomy-supportive instruction, through differentiated design, emotional responsiveness, and behavioural reinforcement, plays a pivotal role in learner empowerment.

These findings substantiate prior works by Mitchell (2015), Tomlinson (2022), and Chela (2020), who emphasised the interplay between instructional design and learner self-regulation in inclusive education. They further reinforce the practical implication that improving teachers' competence in instructional planning and inclusive pedagogy directly contributes to better educational outcomes for pupils with EBD.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative strand of this mixed-methods study aimed to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) concerning how teachers' instructional planning strategies influence their motivation, engagement, and autonomy in learning. This section complements the quantitative findings by offering in-depth insights into

how classroom dynamics and teacher practices shape pupils' learning experiences in Timely Performance (Damas), Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Mimboman, and the Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre.

Data Analysis Process

Data were collected from five pupils (coded as P1 to P5) aged between 9 and 14 years using semi-structured interviews. The pupils were purposively selected to ensure variation across different school contexts, mainstream, bilingual, and special needs education environments. Interviews were conducted in simple English, with occasional translation into Pidgin English or French to enhance comprehension and authenticity.

Following transcription, data were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-step framework:

1. Familiarisation with the data through repeated reading of transcripts;
2. Generation of initial codes to capture meaningful ideas;
3. Searching for recurring patterns and clustering related codes into potential themes;
4. Reviewing and refining themes for internal consistency and distinctiveness;
5. Defining and naming themes to ensure conceptual clarity; and
6. Producing an integrated analytical narrative connecting findings to the study's research objectives.

This analytic process allowed for a systematic exploration of how pupils perceive their teachers' instructional practices and the ways these practices foster or hinder their autonomy and self-regulation.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the qualitative findings was strengthened through several validation strategies.

First, peer debriefing was conducted with two educational researchers who reviewed the emerging codes and thematic interpretations to ensure logical coherence and objectivity. Second, member checking was used to verify that participants' views were accurately represented,

and summaries of responses were read aloud to pupils for confirmation in accessible language. Finally, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal to record analytical decisions, assumptions, and potential biases during the data interpretation process.

These strategies enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings, ensuring they accurately reflected the pupils' lived realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Emergent Themes

Four major themes emerged from the data:

1. Teacher Support and Encouragement
2. Participation in Decision-Making
3. Classroom Flexibility and Adaptation
4. Self-Directed Learning Experiences

Each theme is presented below with illustrative quotations from the five pupils (P1–P5).

Theme 1: Teacher Support and Encouragement

Across the three schools, all five pupils described teacher support as the most significant factor influencing their learning engagement. Pupils valued teachers who showed kindness, patience, and encouragement, noting that such behaviours reduced anxiety and improved their concentration.

Pupil 1 (GBHS Mimboman) stated:

“When teacher tells me, ‘Don’t worry, you can do it,’ I feel happy and I try again.”

Similarly, Pupil 3 (Etoug-Ebe) reflected:

“When I get angry, my teacher sits with me and says, ‘Breathe slow, calm down.’ Then I feel okay to write again.”

These statements highlight how emotional support and calm communication strengthen pupils' self-confidence and classroom participation. According to Jennings and Greenberg (2019), such socio-emotional responsiveness promotes self-regulation and reduces behavioural disruptions among learners with EBD.

However, the absence of encouragement was also demotivating. Pupil 4 (Timely Performance) explained:

“Sometimes teacher shouts when I make mistake. I just keep quiet after that.”

This response illustrates that negative teacher reactions can heighten emotional withdrawal, a finding consistent with Ryan and Deci’s (2020) self-determination theory, which emphasises that positive teacher–student relationships foster autonomy through emotional safety and trust.

Theme 2: Participation in Decision-Making

Pupils expressed strong appreciation for being involved in decisions about learning tasks, topics, or classroom activities. They associated choice-making with ownership and increased motivation.

Pupil 2 (Timely Performance) said:

“One day, teacher let us choose the story we want to read. I picked my favourite, and I read it many times.”

Similarly, Pupil 5 (GBHS Mimboman) added:

“When teacher asks, ‘What do you want to draw?’ I feel happy because I can do what I like.”

These accounts demonstrate that participation enhances engagement and self-expression. As Reeve (2016) and Benson (2021) note, autonomy-supportive environments encourage learners to act with volition and initiative.

Nonetheless, not all decision-making opportunities were meaningful. Pupil 1 (GBHS Mimboman) noted:

“Teacher says, ‘You can choose,’ but all the options are the same thing.”

This experience reflects pseudo-autonomy, where choices are predetermined and do not genuinely empower learners. It supports Wehmeyer and Shogren’s (2017) argument that true autonomy emerges only when students’ preferences actively shape learning processes.

Thus, while teachers demonstrated efforts to include pupils' input, classroom realities such as time constraints and curriculum rigidity sometimes limited authentic decision-making.

Theme 3: Classroom Flexibility and Adaptation

Pupils highlighted the importance of flexible classroom practices that adapt to their learning speed and emotional state. They appreciated teachers who adjusted pacing, task difficulty, or teaching style to meet their individual needs.

Pupil 3 (Etoug-Ebe) shared:

“When I’m slow, teacher gives me more time. She says, ‘Take your time, you can finish.’ It helps me not to worry.”

Similarly, Pupil 4 (Timely Performance) stated:

“Teacher changes how we learn when we don’t understand. Sometimes she draws pictures or uses objects.”

These findings resonate with Tomlinson’s (2022) principles of differentiated instruction, which advocate flexible adaptation of teaching methods to accommodate learner diversity.

However, pupils in larger schools reported limitations. Pupil 5 (GBHS Mimboman) remarked:

“In our class, we are many. Sometimes when I raise my hand, the teacher doesn’t see me.”

This reflects systemic challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and limited teacher capacity, consistent with Fonkeng’s (2018) observation that inclusive education in Cameroon is constrained by high student–teacher ratios and insufficient special needs training.

Thus, while classroom flexibility fosters emotional stability and learning progress, its consistent implementation remains dependent on contextual factors such as class size, teacher workload, and institutional support.

Theme 4: Self-Directed Learning Experiences

The final theme concerns instances where pupils demonstrated independence and self-motivation in their learning. Most pupils described moments when teachers encouraged them to work on tasks alone or assist peers, which boosted their sense of competence and confidence.

Pupil 2 (Timely Performance) explained:

“Teacher lets me write by myself first, then she checks. When she says, ‘Well done,’ I feel proud.”

Likewise, Pupil 3 (Etoug-Ebe) said:

“When I finish early, I help my friend to copy. Teacher says I am doing well.”

These statements highlight the importance of scaffolded autonomy, a gradual process in which pupils take increasing responsibility for their learning under teacher guidance. According to Dam (2022), such supportive autonomy fosters self-efficacy and resilience among learners with behavioural challenges.

However, some pupils still displayed dependency due to fear of mistakes. Pupil 1 (GBHS Mimboman) confessed:

“I like when the teacher stays near me. If she goes far, I stop writing because I’m not sure.”

This underscores the fragile balance between independence and reassurance in promoting autonomy. Teachers must therefore cultivate environments that combine emotional safety with structured independence to sustain learners’ motivation and confidence.

Summary and Integration of Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings reveal that pupils’ experiences of autonomy and engagement are deeply shaped by the quality of instructional planning and the emotional tone of the classroom. Supportive, flexible, and participatory teacher behaviours were consistently associated with improved motivation, self-regulation, and willingness to learn. Conversely, rigid or punitive approaches undermined learners’ confidence and participation.

Across all five participants, the themes of encouragement, participation, flexibility, and self-direction aligned with the quantitative results that demonstrated positive correlations between

instructional planning strategies and learner autonomisation. These insights illustrate how teacher empathy, adaptive planning, and differentiated support translate statistical relationships into lived classroom realities.

Consistent with Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2010) principles of triangulation and convergence, these qualitative results not only validate the quantitative findings but also extend understanding by uncovering emotional and contextual dynamics often invisible in numerical data. The integration of both strands thus provides a comprehensive, multi-dimensional view of how instructional planning fosters autonomy among pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in inclusive Cameroonian classrooms.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

This section presents the integrated interpretation of findings derived from both the quantitative survey of teachers and the qualitative interviews with pupils. The integration followed the convergent parallel design approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected, analysed, and then merged to provide a holistic understanding of the research problem. The process involved comparing and contrasting patterns, exploring convergences and divergences, and identifying how the two strands together deepen insight into the role of teachers' instructional planning strategies in promoting autonomy among pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD).

The integration is presented thematically to highlight how the statistical relationships found in the quantitative phase are explained and illuminated by pupils' lived experiences from the qualitative phase.

Convergence Between Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Both strands of the study converge on a central finding: instructional planning strategies significantly influence the development of autonomy among pupils with EBD. The quantitative results demonstrated a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.05$) between teachers' instructional planning strategies and learner autonomisation, indicating that effective planning, particularly those that incorporate choice-making, flexible teaching, and behavioural support, enhances learners' self-regulation and engagement.

This numerical relationship was richly supported by pupils' testimonies, which consistently described how teacher encouragement, emotional support, and adaptive lesson delivery fostered their confidence and willingness to learn. For instance, pupils expressed that teachers who offered verbal reassurance ("You can do it," "Take your time") motivated them to persist with tasks despite frustration. Such experiences mirror the autonomy-supportive dimensions of instructional planning emphasised by Ryan and Deci (2020) in their Self-Determination Theory, where relatedness, competence, and autonomy interact to enhance motivation.

Quantitative indicators of choice-making and self-regulation also aligned closely with qualitative themes of participation in decision-making and self-directed learning. Teachers' reports of allowing pupils to select learning materials or choose between tasks were echoed by pupils (P2 and P5), who described feeling "happy" and "proud" when permitted to make such choices. Thus, the integration of findings confirms that learners' perceived autonomy increases when teachers' instructional plans include participatory, flexible, and emotionally supportive elements.

Divergence Between Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

While overall convergence was strong, some divergences were observed between teachers' self-reported practices and pupils' lived experiences. Quantitatively, many teachers rated themselves highly on items related to classroom flexibility and positive behavioural support, suggesting widespread implementation of inclusive teaching approaches. However, qualitative interviews revealed that in reality, structural constraints such as large class sizes and limited resources often undermined teachers' ability to deliver individualised support consistently.

For instance, while most teachers agreed ($M = 3.37$) that they provide additional supervision for pupils with EBD, pupils such as Pupil 5 (GBHS Mimboman) reported instances where "teacher cannot see everyone" due to overcrowded classrooms. Similarly, some teachers indicated that they "always involve pupils in decision-making," yet pupils noted that choices were sometimes limited to "fixed options," representing pseudo-autonomy rather than genuine empowerment.

These discrepancies highlight the influence of contextual barriers, including institutional workload, inadequate training, and insufficient teaching aids, on the practical application of autonomy-supportive pedagogy. Such divergences emphasise the importance of contextual

sensitivity in interpreting data from inclusive educational settings (Tchombe, 2019; Fonkeng, 2018).

Complementarity of Findings

The integration also revealed strong complementarity between the two data strands, where each provided unique insights that enriched overall interpretation. The quantitative data quantified the magnitude and direction of relationships among variables, while the qualitative findings illustrated *how* and *why* these relationships manifest in daily classroom interactions.

For instance, quantitative data indicated that positive behavioural support strategies significantly influence pupils' self-regulation ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.05$). Qualitatively, this statistical pattern was explained through pupils' accounts of how teachers managed anger or frustration using calm tones, breathing exercises, and verbal affirmation. These personalised strategies were described as helping them "cool down" and "start again," illustrating how abstract numerical relationships translate into concrete emotional experiences.

Furthermore, while quantitative results portrayed high levels of teacher planning proficiency, the qualitative findings exposed variations in practice depending on teacher empathy, class context, and training background. This suggests that effective instructional planning is not solely procedural but relational and adaptive, a nuance best captured through qualitative inquiry.

Hence, combining both approaches provided a richer, multidimensional understanding that neither strand could achieve independently, a key strength of the mixed-methods paradigm (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Triangulated Findings

When synthesised, the results provide compelling evidence that instructional planning strategies are both cognitively and emotionally embedded processes. From a cognitive standpoint, structured lesson differentiation and flexible assessment methods help pupils with EBD engage meaningfully. From an emotional standpoint, empathy, patience, and positive reinforcement sustain learners' motivation and willingness to participate.

The triangulated findings reinforce the constructivist view (Vygotsky, 1978) that learning is socially mediated and scaffolded through interaction. Pupils' experiences of being supported and

guided mirror the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, where teachers' strategic planning acts as a scaffold that gradually leads learners toward autonomy and self-regulation.

The mixed-method integration also corroborates Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985), confirming that environments fulfilling students' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhance their intrinsic motivation, even among emotionally and behaviourally challenged learners.

The integrated analysis confirmed a strong, positive, and context-dependent relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomisation of pupils with EBD. The quantitative results established the statistical strength of this relationship, while the qualitative findings illuminated its emotional and pedagogical mechanisms.

Whereas numerical data identified patterns, qualitative voices humanised them, demonstrating that autonomy develops not merely through instructional design but through relational trust, emotional security, and opportunities for meaningful participation.

This synthesis, therefore, reflects the essence of mixed-methods research: to capture both the measurable impact and the lived meaning of educational practice, leading to a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of inclusive pedagogy within Cameroonian schools.

Chapter Six

Discussion, Implications, Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations, Limitations, And Suggestions for Further Studies

Introduction

This chapter discusses the study's findings in relation to its objectives, theoretical foundations, and existing literature. The discussion integrates both quantitative and qualitative results to provide a coherent interpretation of how teachers' instructional planning strategies influence the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) in selected schools in Yaoundé. It then outlines the implications of the study for educational practice and policy, presents the summary and conclusion, and makes recommendations for future research.

The discussion is structured according to the four main objectives of the study, ensuring a logical connection between empirical findings, theoretical assumptions, and contextual realities.

Discussion of Findings According to Research Objectives

Objective One: To Investigate the Relationship Between Teachers' Instructional Planning Strategies and the Autonomisation of Pupils' Teaching and Learning Processes Among Children with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders

The first objective examined the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders. The quantitative findings revealed a strong, positive and statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.612$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that improved instructional planning is associated with higher levels of learner autonomy. This implies that when teachers deliberately design flexible, inclusive and behaviour-responsive instructional plans, pupils with EBD are more likely to demonstrate self-direction, engagement and behavioural self-regulation. This finding positions instructional planning as a central pedagogical driver of learner autonomy within inclusive classroom contexts.

This result aligns strongly with Ryan and Deci's (1985; 2020) Self-Determination Theory, which asserts that autonomy flourishes in learning environments that support learners' psychological needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy. Reeve (2012) further established that autonomy-supportive instructional practices significantly enhance behavioural engagement and reduce oppositional tendencies among emotionally vulnerable learners. Similarly, Hospel and

Galand (2016) reported that pupils who perceive instructional environments as supportive of autonomy demonstrate higher self-regulation and classroom persistence. The present findings therefore corroborate international evidence that autonomy-supportive instructional planning enhances behavioural stability and learner independence.

From the inclusive pedagogy perspective, Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) argue that autonomy develops when instruction is flexible, participatory and responsive to learner diversity. Tomlinson (2022) further explains that proactive differentiation within lesson planning empowers learners by offering choice, varied pacing and personalised learning pathways. These assertions align with the present findings, where instructional planning that integrated flexibility and differentiation was associated with increased autonomy among pupils with EBD. Thus, the study reinforces the position that instructional planning must be responsive rather than rigid to effectively promote learner autonomy.

Empirical research within special needs education also supports this relationship. Mitchell (2015) found that structured yet flexible instructional design improves emotional regulation and task initiation among learners with behavioural challenges. Similarly, Lane et al. (2018) demonstrated that classrooms guided by predictable, well-planned instructional routines report lower behavioural incidents and higher independent task engagement. These studies confirm that instructional planning functions both as an academic and behavioural stabilisation mechanism, reinforcing the outcomes observed in the present study.

However, some authors caution that planning alone does not automatically produce autonomy if not accompanied by emotionally responsive classroom interactions. Jennings and Greenberg (2019) argue that without teacher emotional competence, well-planned instruction may still fail to promote autonomy due to heightened learner anxiety. This nuance was evident in the qualitative narratives of the present study, where pupils reported that calmness, patience and emotional reassurance from teachers were critical in enabling them to participate independently. This suggests that instructional planning must integrate socio-emotional responsiveness to achieve optimal autonomy outcomes.

Qualitative evidence from the present study further reinforced this relationship. Pupils reported that supportive teacher behaviours such as encouragement, flexible pacing and emotional reassurance enabled them to regain confidence after emotional outbursts and re-engage in learning.

These findings align with Algozzine et al. (2019), who found that emotionally responsive instructional environments significantly increase self-management and independent learning behaviours among pupils with EBD.

Nevertheless, some international studies report weaker relationships between planning and autonomy where class sizes are large and resources are limited. Avramidis and Norwich (2016) found that although teachers demonstrate inclusive planning attitudes, contextual constraints often weaken the practical impact of planning on learner outcomes. This partially contrasts with the present findings, which show a strong relationship despite contextual challenges. This suggests that Cameroonian teachers may be compensating for structural limitations through adaptive pedagogical practices, although sustainability remains a concern.

Overall, this objective confirms that instructional planning strategies significantly shape pupils' autonomy, emotional regulation and behavioural stability. The findings extend global inclusive education scholarship by empirically demonstrating that autonomy among pupils with EBD is structurally dependent on teachers' planning competence and emotional responsiveness. This reinforces the need for teacher education programmes in Cameroon to prioritise autonomy-supportive instructional design as a core professional competency.

Objective Two: To Examine the Extent to Which Teachers Employ Instructional Planning Strategies When Teaching Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders

The second objective sought to examine the extent to which teachers employ instructional planning strategies when teaching pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders. Quantitative analysis revealed a statistically significant mean score ($M = 3.19$, $t = 5.67$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that teachers generally report frequent use of instructional planning strategies such as lesson structuring, differentiation, goal setting and behavioural management. This suggests that teachers in the selected schools demonstrate a relatively high level of planning awareness and intentionality when working with pupils with EBD.

This finding aligns with Ornstein and Hunkins (2020), who conceptualise instructional planning as the professional process through which teachers organise objectives, content, methods and assessment in anticipation of learner diversity. According to these authors, effective planning is particularly critical in classrooms that include learners with behavioural and emotional

challenges, as it provides structure, predictability and clarity, all of which contribute to behavioural regulation. The present findings therefore confirm that teachers recognise planning as an essential pedagogical responsibility when teaching pupils with EBD.

Similarly, Tomlinson's (2022) differentiated instruction framework emphasises that teachers who deliberately plan for learner readiness, interests and learning profiles are more likely to maintain inclusive classroom environments. Empirical evidence from Florian (2019) supports this position, indicating that teachers who consistently plan for diversity demonstrate greater instructional coherence and classroom stability. The relatively high planning scores observed in this study therefore reflect alignment with global best practices in inclusive pedagogy.

However, qualitative findings revealed that while teachers demonstrated conceptual understanding and willingness to plan inclusively, the depth and consistency of implementation varied considerably. Pupils and teachers reported challenges such as large class sizes, limited instructional materials and time constraints, which restricted the full application of differentiated and autonomy-supportive strategies. This finding aligns with Avramidis and Norwich (2016), who argue that teachers' inclusive attitudes often exceed their practical capacity to implement planning strategies effectively without adequate systemic support.

Studies within the African context further reinforce this interpretation. Fonkeng (2018) and Chela (2020) identified a persistent gap between inclusive education policy and classroom practice in Cameroon, noting that teachers often rely on improvised or intuitive planning rather than structured, evidence-based approaches due to limited professional training. Similarly, Tchombe (2019) observed that teachers working with learners with special needs frequently lack access to specialised instructional planning tools, resulting in uneven application of inclusive strategies.

Contrasting evidence from high-resource contexts suggests that when teachers receive sustained professional development in instructional planning, implementation levels improve significantly. Mitchell (2015) found that teachers trained in inclusive instructional design demonstrated higher fidelity in planning and more consistent application of behavioural supports. This contrast highlights the role of institutional investment in translating planning knowledge into classroom practice.

The findings of the present study therefore suggest that teachers in the selected schools are positively disposed towards instructional planning for pupils with EBD but operate within structural and contextual limitations that constrain full implementation. While the reported extent of planning is high, the qualitative data indicate that planning practices are often reactive rather than systematic, particularly in overcrowded classrooms.

In summary, this objective confirms that teachers demonstrate a commendable level of engagement with instructional planning strategies when teaching pupils with EBD. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is mediated by contextual constraints such as class size, resources and training opportunities. The findings underscore the need for sustained, practice-oriented professional development and institutional support to strengthen teachers' capacity to translate planning intentions into consistent inclusive practice.

Objective Three: To Assess the Level of Autonomisation in the Teaching and Learning Processes of Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders

The third objective examined the level of autonomisation demonstrated by pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in their learning processes. Quantitative analysis revealed a statistically significant mean autonomy score ($M = 3.04$, $t(29) = 4.11$, $p = 0.001$), indicating a moderate to high level of learner autonomy among pupils with EBD in the selected schools. This suggests that, despite their emotional and behavioural challenges, many pupils are gradually developing capacities for self-regulation, independent task engagement and goal-oriented learning behaviours.

This finding aligns with Zimmerman's (2019) Self-Regulated Learning Theory, which identifies planning, monitoring and self-evaluation as critical components of learner autonomy. Zimmerman asserts that autonomy is not an inherent trait but a developmental process cultivated through structured pedagogical scaffolding. The present findings support this position, as pupils demonstrated emerging independence when instructional environments were predictable, supportive and emotionally safe.

Dam (2022) further conceptualises autonomy as a socially constructed capacity that evolves through guided participation and scaffolded independence. According to Dam, pupils initially rely heavily on teacher guidance before gradually internalising responsibility for learning

tasks. The moderate to high autonomy levels observed in this study reflect this transitional developmental stage, where pupils are progressing from dependence toward self-directed learning, albeit with varying degrees of stability.

Qualitative findings from the present study revealed that pupils frequently initiated tasks independently, sought clarification when confused and demonstrated pride in completing work on their own. These behaviours mirror findings by Schunk and Zimmerman (2012), who found that learners with behavioural vulnerabilities exhibit greater self-efficacy and persistence when teachers provide gradual release of responsibility and consistent positive feedback.

However, pupils also reported fluctuations in autonomy linked to emotional insecurity and fear of failure. This supports Ryan and Deci's (2020) assertion that autonomy thrives only when learners experience psychological safety, competence and emotional acceptance. Briesch and Chafouleas (2013) similarly observed that emotionally vulnerable learners are highly sensitive to negative feedback, which can rapidly diminish self-regulatory behaviour and task persistence.

Within African contexts, Nana (2022) and Tchombe (2019) found that pupils with behavioural challenges often exhibit fragile autonomy due to limited emotional support structures and inconsistent feedback practices. These findings resonate with the present study, where pupils indicated that harsh feedback and rigid classroom environments reduced their confidence to act independently.

Contrastingly, research from high-resource contexts indicates that sustained autonomy-supportive teaching leads to higher and more stable levels of independence among pupils with EBD (Reeve et al., 2014; Mitchell, 2015). This contrast highlights the role of systemic support and teacher training in sustaining autonomy development.

In summary, this objective confirms that pupils with EBD in the selected schools demonstrate emerging but unstable levels of autonomy. Their capacity for self-regulated learning is highly sensitive to emotional safety, teacher feedback and instructional structure. These findings underscore the necessity of integrating emotional responsiveness and scaffolded independence into instructional planning to strengthen and stabilise autonomy development among pupils with EBD.

Objective Four: To Determine the Influence of Teachers' Instructional Planning Strategies on the Development of Autonomy in Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders

The fourth objective examined the predictive influence of teachers' instructional planning strategies on the development of learner autonomy among pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders. Regression analysis revealed a statistically significant predictive relationship ($\beta = 0.58$, $p = 0.001$), with instructional planning strategies accounting for 37.4% of the variance in learner autonomy ($R^2 = 0.374$). This finding demonstrates that instructional planning is not merely associated with learner autonomy but is a strong determinant of pupils' capacity to engage independently, regulate their emotions and sustain task persistence.

This result strongly supports Vygotsky's (1978) Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learning occurs through scaffolded interactions within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development. Instructional planning functions as the structural mechanism through which scaffolding is intentionally embedded in classroom experiences. When planning anticipates learners' emotional, behavioural and cognitive needs, it gradually transfers responsibility from teacher to learner, thereby cultivating autonomy. The findings thus confirm the centrality of instructional design in mediating independence among learners with behavioural challenges.

International evidence corroborates this conclusion. Reeve et al. (2014) demonstrated that autonomy-supportive instructional planning predicts long-term self-regulation and academic persistence even after controlling for socioeconomic status. Algozzine et al. (2019) further reported that classrooms guided by structured planning that integrates behavioural supports show significant reductions in emotional withdrawal and increased learner-initiated task engagement among pupils with EBD.

Mitchell (2015) also found that intentional instructional planning that incorporates behavioural scaffolding, emotional support and flexible pacing significantly enhances emotional stability and cognitive engagement in learners with special educational needs. These findings align closely with the present study, confirming that instructional planning serves as both an academic and behavioural intervention for pupils with EBD.

Qualitative findings further illuminated this predictive relationship. Pupils reported that flexible pacing, patient explanations and opportunities to ask questions encouraged them to attempt tasks independently. Conversely, rigid lesson structures and emotionally dismissive feedback reduced their willingness to participate autonomously. These narratives mirror Jennings and Greenberg's (2019) Prosocial Classroom Model, which demonstrates that emotionally responsive instruction enhances behavioural regulation and learner independence.

However, contrasting evidence from low-resource educational systems indicates that the strength of this predictive relationship is often weakened by overcrowded classrooms and insufficient training (Avramidis & Norwich, 2016; Fonkeng, 2018). This contextual contrast suggests that while instructional planning has strong predictive power, its effectiveness is mediated by institutional support structures.

In summary, this objective confirms that teachers' instructional planning strategies significantly predict learner autonomy among pupils with EBD. The findings position instructional planning as a primary mechanism through which emotional stability, behavioural regulation and independent learning behaviours are cultivated. This underscores the urgent need for sustained professional development focused on inclusive instructional design and emotional responsiveness to strengthen autonomy outcomes for pupils with EBD.

Implications of the Study

The results of this study have broad implications for educational theory, pedagogical practice, policy development, and future research on inclusive education for pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) in Cameroon. The implications are discussed under three main dimensions: theoretical, practical, and research implications.

Theoretical Implications. The findings of this study reinforce the conceptual foundations laid by the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985) and the Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), both of which underpin the study. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, the positive correlation between teachers' instructional planning strategies and pupils' autonomy highlights the centrality of autonomy-supportive teaching in promoting intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being. The results affirm that when teachers design lessons that incorporate choice-making, feedback, and emotional safety, pupils with EBD develop stronger self-regulatory capacities and internal motivation.

Moreover, the study empirically extends Self-Determination Theory to the African inclusive education context, showing that autonomy-supportive environments are not culture-bound but universally effective when contextualized. This contributes to the growing literature, such as Jang, Kim, and Reeve (2016) and Deci and Ryan (2020), demonstrating that teacher practices promoting competence and relatedness enhance learner motivation across diverse cultural settings.

In relation to Constructivist Learning Theory, the study's findings underscore the social and scaffolded nature of learning. Teachers' instructional planning strategies, particularly those that adapt content, provide behavioural support, and structure flexible learning experiences, mirror Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*, where guided participation leads to independent functioning. Pupils' narratives about feeling "safe to try alone" or "happy to help friends" confirm that instructional scaffolding fosters both academic and socio-emotional growth.

Thus, the theoretical implication is that instructional planning should not merely be viewed as a procedural task but as a psychological and relational tool that operationalizes the tenets of autonomy, motivation, and social mediation of learning. This study therefore bridges theory and practice by situating teacher planning as the interface through which theoretical models of learning autonomy manifest in real classrooms.

Practical Implications. Practically, the findings carry important consequences for teachers, school administrators, curriculum designers, and educational policymakers in Cameroon and similar contexts. First, the study establishes that teachers' instructional planning strategies are a strong predictor of pupils' autonomy. This underscores the need for pre-service and in-service teacher training programs to emphasise autonomy-supportive pedagogy, moving beyond mere lesson sequencing to encompass emotional attunement, learner participation, and differentiated instruction.

Secondly, the findings reveal that while teachers conceptually understand inclusive instructional planning, contextual challenges such as large class sizes, insufficient materials, and limited professional support hinder effective implementation. Educational authorities, therefore, must prioritise resource provision, teacher mentoring, and continuous professional development (CPD) targeting inclusion and behavioural management skills.

Furthermore, given that emotional and behavioural regulation emerged as crucial mediators between teacher planning and learner autonomy, schools should institutionalise Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as part of classroom planning processes. This aligns with global best practices identified by Sugai and Simonsen (2012) and Mitchell (2015), where proactive behavioural frameworks create emotionally safe and participatory learning spaces.

At the curriculum level, planners must integrate flexibility and culturally responsive adaptations, allowing teachers to tailor content and pacing to the learning readiness of pupils with EBD. This practical approach will help actualise inclusive education goals in the Cameroon Education Sector Strategy (2019–2030), which emphasises accessibility, adaptability, and learner-centered instruction.

Ultimately, these practical implications converge on one critical insight: autonomy is teachable, and it begins with intentional, reflective, and responsive instructional planning.

Research Implications. From a research perspective, this study offers several contributions and directions for further inquiry. It empirically validates the link between instructional planning strategies and learner autonomy within the specific population of pupils with EBD, an underexplored area in sub-Saharan Africa. The mixed-methods approach demonstrates how combining quantitative correlations with qualitative narratives yields a deeper understanding of pedagogical impact in inclusive contexts.

However, the findings also reveal methodological and conceptual gaps that future research should address. First, while the regression analysis explained 37.4% of the variance in learner autonomy, a substantial proportion of variance remains unexplained. This suggests that other factors, such as school leadership, peer influence, and parental support, may also play moderating roles. Future studies could therefore employ multivariate models or structural equation modeling (SEM) to capture the broader ecosystem influencing learner autonomy.

Second, the study's reliance on teacher-reported data and limited pupil sample introduces subjectivity and restricts generalizability. Subsequent research could incorporate classroom observations, larger multi-school samples, or longitudinal designs to assess causality and behavioural change over time.

Thirdly, this study's findings challenge researchers to develop culturally adapted autonomy assessment tools that reflect the socio-emotional realities of African learners rather than merely applying Western frameworks.

In sum, the research implications reaffirm that inclusive education is both a pedagogical and social enterprise, requiring continuous empirical exploration to ensure that instructional planning meaningfully contributes to the empowerment of pupils with EBD.

Summary of the Study

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) in selected inclusive schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The research was undertaken against the background of persistent challenges in the Cameroonian inclusive education system, where pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties often demonstrate low academic engagement, poor self-regulation, limited decision-making capacity and high dependency on teachers. These challenges have continued to undermine inclusive education policy goals and raise concerns about the adequacy of classroom-level pedagogical practices.

The study was grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985; 2020) and Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Self-Determination Theory provided the psychological foundation for understanding how autonomy-supportive instructional environments nurture intrinsic motivation, competence and self-regulation, while Constructivist Learning Theory explained how learners develop autonomy through guided participation, scaffolding and social interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development. Together, these theories offered a coherent framework for analysing how instructional planning mediates emotional regulation, behavioural control and independent learning.

A mixed-methods research design was adopted to ensure methodological rigour and contextual depth. Quantitative data were collected from thirty teachers across Timely Performance (Damas), Government Bilingual High School Mimboman and Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre using a structured questionnaire developed around key instructional planning indicators. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with five purposively selected pupils diagnosed with EBD to capture their lived classroom experiences, emotional responses, behavioural adaptations and perceptions of learning autonomy.

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 25. The results revealed a moderately strong and statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.05$) between teachers' instructional planning strategies and pupils' autonomy levels. This indicates that teachers who plan lessons that are flexible, differentiated, emotionally responsive and learner-centred significantly enhance pupils' capacity for independent learning, behavioural self-regulation and sustained classroom engagement.

Regression analysis further demonstrated that instructional planning strategies accounted for 37.4 percent of the variance in learner autonomy outcomes. This substantial explanatory power confirms instructional planning as a central predictor of autonomy development, while simultaneously highlighting the role of complementary variables such as emotional security, classroom climate, peer relationships and teacher empathy in shaping learner behaviour and independence.

Qualitative findings enriched these statistical results by revealing four dominant experiential themes: teacher support and encouragement, participation in classroom decision-making, classroom flexibility and self-directed learning experiences. Pupils consistently described autonomy as emerging from emotionally safe learning environments where teachers remained patient, allowed mistakes, provided reassurance and encouraged independent task completion. These findings illuminate the emotional foundations of autonomy development among pupils with behavioural difficulties.

Pupils' narratives further revealed that instructional planning strategies influenced not only academic behaviour but also emotional recovery following behavioural outbursts. Pupils reported that calm teacher responses, adaptive pacing and supportive feedback enabled them to re-engage in learning tasks after emotional disruptions, thereby strengthening behavioural regulation and self-confidence. This demonstrates that autonomy development among pupils with EBD is intrinsically emotional, relational and behavioural rather than purely cognitive.

The integrated findings confirm that learner autonomy is a socially constructed outcome of pedagogical responsiveness rather than an inherent learner trait. Effective instructional planning functions as both an academic and psychosocial intervention, shaping pupils' motivation, emotional stability, behavioural control and willingness to take initiative. The study therefore

positions instructional planning as a strategic tool for both inclusion and psychosocial rehabilitation in Cameroonian classrooms.

In conclusion, the study establishes that autonomy-supportive instructional planning is a critical pathway for transforming pupils with EBD from dependent learners into self-regulated, motivated and emotionally resilient individuals. By empirically integrating quantitative relationships with qualitative lived experiences, the study provides a robust evidence base to guide teacher education, school leadership practices and inclusive education policy implementation in Cameroon and comparable educational contexts.

Conclusions of the Study

The present study examined the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomization of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) in inclusive schools in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The analysis combined quantitative data from teacher questionnaires and qualitative insights from pupil interviews to construct a comprehensive understanding of how structured instructional planning supports learner autonomy in contexts of emotional and behavioural diversity.

The study concluded that teachers' instructional planning strategies significantly influence the development of learner autonomy among pupils with EBD. Quantitative results revealed that instructional planning strategies, particularly differentiation, flexible assessment, and individualised support, positively correlate with increased self-regulation and motivation among learners. The findings also confirmed that planning practices rooted in inclusivity and empathy yield stronger learner engagement and behavioural stability.

Qualitative findings reinforced these conclusions by revealing that pupils perceive autonomy when teachers provide opportunities for choice, collaboration, and reflective engagement. Pupils reported that when teachers explain lessons clearly, allow participation in classroom decisions, and give supportive feedback, they feel more confident, responsible, and independent in managing learning tasks. This highlights that teacher planning not only organises learning content but also creates psychological safety and motivation, essential conditions for learners with EBD to thrive.

The study therefore concludes that instructional planning is a pivotal determinant of both behavioural regulation and cognitive independence among pupils with emotional and behavioural challenges. Teachers who intentionally plan differentiated, learner-centred, and emotionally responsive lessons enable pupils to assume active roles in their learning processes. The study also established that autonomy development among EBD learners is not a natural occurrence but a planned educational outcome facilitated by structured teacher support and scaffolding.

Moreover, the research affirms the relevance of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985) and Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) in explaining how instructional design enhances autonomy. The former underscores the role of intrinsic motivation and supportive environments, while the latter emphasises the social mediation of learning. Together, these frameworks provide a solid theoretical lens through which teacher planning can be understood as both a motivational and developmental tool for learners with EBD.

In sum, the study concludes that effective instructional planning strategies in inclusive classrooms promote learner autonomy, mitigate behavioural disruptions, and enhance participation. These strategies should therefore be prioritized in teacher training and educational policy frameworks to ensure that all learners, especially those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, can develop the competencies needed for lifelong, self-directed learning.

Suggestions of the Study

Pedagogical Suggestions

Based on the study findings, teachers play a decisive role in fostering learner autonomy through deliberate instructional planning. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers in inclusive classrooms adopt autonomy-supportive instructional planning practices that prioritise learner choice, differentiated learning tasks, and flexible assessment methods. Teachers should consciously incorporate opportunities for pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) to make learning decisions, such as choosing topics, working formats, or pacing, to increase engagement and ownership of learning outcomes.

In addition, teachers should be trained to use Individualised Educational Plans (IEPs) and formative assessment tools that respond to the emotional and behavioural variability of pupils. These tools should be designed to support gradual independence by scaffolding complex tasks,

integrating peer learning, and reinforcing self-regulation strategies. Such approaches enable pupils with EBD to transition from dependence to active self-management within structured classroom environments.

Furthermore, instructional planning should incorporate positive behavioural support (PBS) principles. Teachers must anticipate behavioural challenges and design proactive learning routines that reinforce desirable conduct rather than reactively punishing misbehaviour. This shift from control to support nurtures intrinsic motivation and promotes resilience among pupils with behavioural challenges.

Policy Suggestions

At the policy level, the findings underscore the need for the Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS) to develop national guidelines that standardise autonomy-supportive instructional planning for inclusive schools. Such frameworks should define minimum competencies for teachers working with learners exhibiting emotional and behavioural difficulties. Teacher appraisal and inspection mechanisms should include specific indicators assessing planning for inclusion, learner choice, and behavioural support strategies.

Additionally, educational policymakers should ensure that inclusive education is adequately resourced. This includes providing schools with teaching aids, counselling services, and smaller class sizes to enable effective differentiation and individualised planning. Teacher-to-student ratios in inclusive settings must be reduced to ensure that every learner receives adequate attention.

The study further recommends the institutionalisation of continuous professional development (CPD) programmes focusing on inclusive pedagogy, emotional intelligence, and behavioural management. Such programmes should be mandatory for both pre-service and in-service teachers. Partnerships with universities and teacher training colleges can support ongoing professional learning through workshops, mentorship, and classroom-based research on instructional planning and learner autonomy.

Research-Based Suggestions

While this study provides significant insights into the relationship between instructional planning and learner autonomisation, further research is needed to broaden its scope and deepen understanding. Future studies should employ larger and more diverse samples across multiple regions of Cameroon to enhance generalisability. Mixed-methods designs could also be expanded to include longitudinal studies that track how instructional planning influences learner autonomy over time.

Moreover, researchers should explore the mediating role of teacher attitudes and school culture in shaping the effectiveness of instructional planning. Examining how teacher beliefs about disability and behaviour influence planning decisions would offer practical insights for improving inclusivity.

Finally, given the central role of learners' perspectives, future research should include participatory methodologies that engage pupils with EBD more directly as co-researchers or evaluators of teaching strategies. Such participatory approaches would enhance the authenticity and ecological validity of findings while empowering learners as active contributors to educational improvement.

Limitations of the Study

Every empirical investigation is bound by certain methodological and contextual constraints that shape the scope of its findings. This study is no exception. While it provides important insights into the relationship between teachers' instructional planning strategies and the autonomisation of pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD), several limitations should be acknowledged to guide interpretation and future research.

First, the study was conducted within a limited geographical and institutional scope, focusing on three schools in Yaoundé; Timely Performance (Damas), GBHS Mimboman, and Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre. Although these schools represent diverse educational contexts (mainstream, bilingual, and special needs), the findings cannot be generalised to all schools in Cameroon. The socio-cultural, economic, and infrastructural variations across other regions may influence the application and effectiveness of instructional planning strategies

differently. Therefore, future studies should include a larger and more geographically diverse sample to enhance external validity.

Second, the study relied heavily on self-reported data from teachers in the quantitative phase. While questionnaires allowed for systematic data collection, self-reporting may have introduced social desirability bias, where teachers presented their instructional practices more favourably than they occur in reality. This could potentially inflate the perceived relationship between planning strategies and learner autonomy. Triangulating questionnaire data with classroom observations and document analyses in future research would help mitigate this bias and provide a more objective representation of teacher behaviour.

Third, the sample size of 30 teachers and 5 pupils, while adequate for an exploratory mixed-methods study, limits the statistical power and depth of qualitative interpretation. A larger sample could provide more robust inferential results and a broader range of perspectives. The small qualitative sample also limits thematic saturation, meaning some relevant insights from pupils with EBD may not have been fully captured.

Fourth, the study's design was cross-sectional, capturing data at a single point in time. Consequently, it could not account for changes in instructional planning practices or learner autonomy that may occur over longer periods due to professional development, curriculum reform, or behavioural improvement. Longitudinal research would be better suited to examine how sustained instructional interventions influence autonomy development among pupils with EBD.

Finally, contextual and cultural factors, including societal perceptions of disability and teacher preparedness may have influenced both the implementation and reporting of instructional planning practices. Given that inclusive education is still evolving in Cameroon, some respondents might lack the conceptual clarity to fully articulate autonomy-supportive planning. These contextual limitations underscore the need for greater sensitisation and capacity-building initiatives to align practice with the theoretical ideals of inclusion and learner-centred pedagogy.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a valuable foundation for understanding how instructional planning strategies affect learner autonomy among pupils with emotional and behavioural challenges in Cameroonian schools. Its findings remain credible and relevant for informing both policy and practice, provided that these contextual constraints are acknowledged.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Teachers

Introduction

Dear Respondent,

I am Swiri Chantine, a Master's student in the faculty of Education, Department of Special Education, specialized in Mental Handicap at the University of Yaoundé I. I am conducting a study titled: *“Teachers’ Instructional Planning Strategies and the Autonomisation of Pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Selected Schools in Yaoundé.”*

This questionnaire is for teachers. Your candid answers are valuable and will be treated confidentially. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Please tick (✓) the option that best represents your view.

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree (1), D = Disagree (2), A = Agree (3), SA = Strongly Agree (4)

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Variable	Question	Response Options
Gender	What is your gender?	☐ Male (1) ☐ Female (2)
Age Group	What is your age range?	☐ 20–30 years (1) ☐ 31–40 years (2) ☐ 41–50 years (3) ☐ 51+ years (4)
Teaching Experience	How many years have you been teaching?	☐ 1–5 years (1) ☐ 6–10 years (2) ☐ 11–15 years (3) ☐ 16+ years (4)
School	Which school do you teach in?	☐ Timely Performance (Damas) ☐ GBHS Mimboman ☐ Etoug-Ebe National Rehabilitation Centre
Qualification	What is your highest qualification?	☐ Grade I/II ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Master's Degree ☐ Doctorate

SECTION B: INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING STRATEGIES

Indicator 1: Differentiated Instruction Practices

#	Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	A (3)	SA (4)
1	I plan lessons that accommodate pupils with different learning abilities and needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I modify instructional materials to suit the individual needs of pupils with EBD.	☐	☐	☐	☐

3	My lesson plans include varied teaching methods such as group work and peer learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I regularly assess pupils' progress to adjust my teaching strategies.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicator 2: Choice-Making and Learner Involvement

#	Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	A (3)	SA (4)
5	I allow pupils to participate in selecting learning activities or topics.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Pupils are encouraged to express their opinions about classroom tasks.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	My classroom environment allows pupils to take ownership of their learning tasks.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	I encourage pupils to set learning goals and monitor their own progress.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicator 3: Positive Behavioural Support Strategies

#	Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	A (3)	SA (4)
9	I use praise and encouragement to reinforce appropriate classroom behaviour.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	I respond calmly and positively to pupils showing behavioural challenges.	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	I use clear, consistent rules to manage behaviour among pupils with EBD.	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	I work collaboratively with colleagues and parents to support pupils with behavioural difficulties.	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION C: EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DISORDERS (EBD)

#	Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	A (3)	SA (4)
13	Pupils with EBD in my class often struggle to concentrate during lessons.	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Some pupils with EBD show sudden mood swings that affect their participation in class.	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	Emotional instability often leads to learning disruptions in my classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐

16	Pupils with EBD demonstrate improvement when supported with structured routines and feedback.	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Thank you

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD)

Interviewer: Swiri Chantine Angu
Institution: University of Yaoundé I
Study Title: Teachers' Instructional Planning Strategies and Autonomisation of Pupils with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Selected Schools in Yaoundé

1. Introduction

Purpose: To establish rapport and set the context for the interview.

Hello! I am Swiri Chantine, a researcher from the University of Yaoundé I. I want to talk with you about your experiences in school, especially how your teachers help you learn and become more independent. There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to share your thoughts honestly. Everything you say is private and will only be used to help improve teaching.

2. Demographic Information

Purpose: To gather contextual background information.

- i. How old are you?
- ii. What class are you in?
- iii. Can you tell me a little about your family?

3. Broad Opening Questions

Purpose: To allow participants to introduce themselves and their experiences.

- i. Can you tell me about a typical day at school for you?
- ii. What do you enjoy most about school?

4. Core Research Questions

These questions explore key themes related to the study objectives.

a. Teacher Support and Instructional Planning

- i. How does your teacher help you when you find something difficult?
- ii. Can you describe a time when your teacher helped you feel confident about your work?

b. Learner Autonomy and Choice

- i. Do you get to make choices about what or how you learn? How do you feel about that?
- ii. Tell me about a time when you worked on something by yourself. What helped you?

c. Emotional Regulation Strategies

- i. What do you do when you feel frustrated or angry during class?

- ii. How does your teacher support you when you feel upset or have trouble focusing?

d. Behavioral Self-Regulation

- i. How do you keep yourself focused during lessons?
- ii. What happens if you feel like you want to leave the lesson or don't want to do your work?

e. Motivation and Engagement

- i. What makes you want to try hard and keep working, even when school is difficult?
- ii. Can you tell me about a time when you felt really interested in what you were learning?

f. Peer and Social Interaction

- i. How do you get along with other pupils in your class?
- ii. Do your friends help you with your schoolwork? How?

g. Classroom Environment and Inclusion

- i. What do you like about your classroom? What makes it easier or harder for you to learn?
- ii. Do you feel included and respected in your class? Why or why not?

5. Closing Questions

- i. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences in school?
- ii. Do you have any suggestions for how your teacher could help you learn better?

6. Thank You and Closure

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me. Your experiences are valuable and will help improve teaching for students like you.

Appendix 3: Research Authorization

UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDÉ I <i>The University of Yaoundé I</i> ***** FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES DE L'ÉDUCATION <i>Faculty of Education</i> ***** DÉPARTEMENT DE L'ÉDUCATION SPÉCIALISÉE <i>Department of Specialized and Education</i>	S  F E	RÉPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN <i>Republic of Cameroon</i> ***** Paix - Travail - Patrie <i>Peace - Work - Fatherland</i> *****
N° <u>516</u> /25/D-FSE/D-EDS		
LE DOYEN <i>The Dean</i>		
Yaoundé, le 29 JUL 2025		

AUTORISATION DE RECHERCHE

Je soussigné, **Professeur Cyrille Bienvenu BELA**, Doyen de la Faculté des Sciences de l'Éducation (FSE), autorise l'étudiante **SWIRI CHANTINE ANGU**, Matricule **23W3201**, inscrite en Master II au Département de l'Éducation Spécialisée, option : Handicap sociaux et Conseil avec pour encadrant, le **Pr CHAFFI CYRILLE YVAN** à réaliser ses travaux de recherche sur le thème intitulé : « **TEACHERS INSTRUCTIONAL PLANING STRATEGIES AND AUTONOMIZATION OF PUPILS TEACHING LEARNING PROCESSES. THE CASE OF CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DISORDERS (EBD)** ».

En foi de quoi, la présente autorisation est délivrée pour servir et valoir ce que de droit.



**POUR LE DOYEN
ET PAR ORDRE**

*Dominique
Akello Komo*
Le Vice-Doyen
Professeur Titulaire