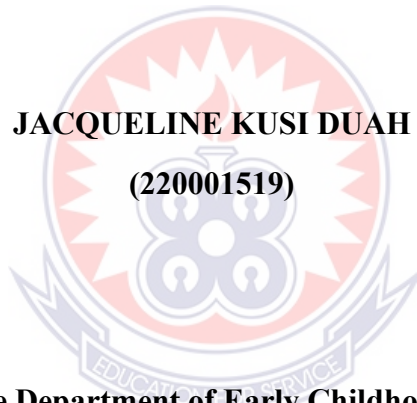


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**Teachers' attitude toward inclusive practices in early Childhood Centres within the Cape
Coast Metropolis**

JACQUELINE KUSI DUAH

(220001519)



**A thesis in the Department of Early Childhood Education,
Faculty of Applied Behavioural Sciences in Education, submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Early Childhood Education)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

AUGUST, 2025

Student's Declaration

I, JACQUELINE KUSI DU

of original research

except for references to other people's work which have been duly acknowledged and it has
neither in whole nor in part been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:

Date:

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and supervision of this research work were done in accordance
with the guidelines for the supervision of research work as laid down by the School of Graduate
Studies, University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Awini Adam

Supervisor's Signature:

Date:



DEDICATION

To My Lovely Husband and children



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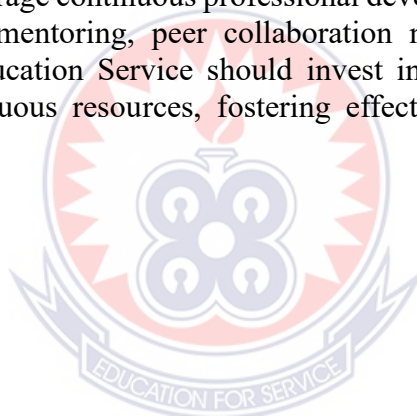
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis. Concurrent embedded mixed method design was adopted for this study. The study employed census sampling technique for the quantitative phase while purposive sampling was used for the qualitative phase. The sample for the study was (219) kindergarten teachers. The instruments used for the collection of data were questionnaire and semi-structured interview guides. The data from the questionnaire were analysed descriptively using frequency, percentages, means, and standard deviations whereas the data from the interview were analysed thematically. The study revealed that teachers generally support inclusive education, recognizing its benefits in promoting equity and social growth, however, they feel confident yet underprepared, particularly for addressing diverse learner needs, resource limitations and classroom management challenges, inconsistent administrative and parental support hinders implementation. Also, the findings from the study further indicate that cultural beliefs profoundly influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Again, teachers are dissatisfied with the scarcity of training, resources, and specialist support. Also, while the training effectively raised awareness and boosted teacher confidence about inclusion, it lacked practical strategies for classroom application. It is therefore recommended that the Ghana Education Service should encourage continuous professional development should include ongoing support mechanisms such as mentoring, peer collaboration networks, and access to expert guidance. Also, the Ghana Education Service should invest in creating structured, supportive environments that offer continuous resources, fostering effective inclusive practices in early childhood education.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Inclusive education has become a pivotal component of global educational reform, with a growing emphasis on ensuring that all learners, regardless of their diverse backgrounds or abilities, have equal access to quality education (Ainscow, 2020). This movement stems from international frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement of 1994 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all (United Nations, 2015). Like many countries, Ghana has made strides toward embracing inclusive education, recognizing the need to provide educational opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities. However, the successful implementation of inclusive practices, particularly in early childhood centres, relies significantly on teachers' attitudes, knowledge, and preparedness.

In the Cape Coast Metropolis of the Central Region of Ghana, inclusive education policies have been introduced to early childhood centres to promote equity in education. However, despite these efforts, teachers' attitudes, cultural beliefs, and the availability of support services remain significant factors influencing the effectiveness of inclusive practices. Teachers are central to the success of inclusive education, and their attitudes toward inclusive practices can either facilitate or hinder the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream classrooms (Sharma & Sokal, 2019). This study aimed to evaluate teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis by focusing on key aspects such as teachers' knowledge, cultural beliefs, available support services, and the level of training they have received.

Teachers' knowledge of inclusive education practices is fundamental to the successful implementation of inclusive education (Forlin, 2018). Teachers in early childhood centres are

expected to have a thorough understanding of inclusive pedagogies, instructional strategies, and methods of accommodating learners with diverse needs. In Ghana, the 2015 Inclusive Education Policy outlines the government's commitment to integrating inclusive practices into all levels of education, including early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2015). This policy provides guidelines for teachers on how to create inclusive learning environments that cater to the needs of all children, particularly those with disabilities.

However, the extent to which teachers in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis are knowledgeable about these practices remains a concern. Research suggests that teachers often lack sufficient knowledge and skills to implement inclusive practices effectively (Avramidis & Norwich, 2018). A lack of understanding about inclusive education can result in the exclusion of children with disabilities or special educational needs from meaningful participation in classroom activities (Szumski et al., 2022; Hornby, 2014).

Cultural beliefs play a crucial role in shaping teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. In many societies, including Ghana, cultural perceptions of disability and inclusion can significantly influence the way teachers view and implement inclusive practices (Mpofu & Mutepe, 2020). Traditional beliefs and stigmas surrounding disability often perpetuate the exclusion and marginalization of children with disabilities (Rohwerder, 2018). In some cases, children with disabilities are viewed as a burden or as incapable of learning, which can negatively impact the attitudes of teachers toward inclusive practices (Opoku et al., 2017).

In the Cape Coast Metropolis, where cultural beliefs are deeply rooted in the social fabric, it is important to investigate how these beliefs affect teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. Understanding the cultural dimensions of inclusive education is essential for addressing the barriers that may prevent teachers from embracing inclusive practices.

In addition, the availability of support services is another critical factor in the successful implementation of inclusive practices in early childhood centres (Zabeli, & Gjela, 2020; Bellour et al., 2017). Inclusive education requires a range of support services, including specialized training for teachers, access to teaching and learning resources, and collaboration with special education professionals (UNESCO, 2020). In many developing countries, including Ghana, the lack of adequate support services has been identified as a major challenge to the effective implementation of inclusive education (Kuyini & Desai, 2018).

In the Cape Coast Metropolis, the provision of support services for teachers implementing inclusive practices in early childhood centres remains limited. Teachers may not have access to the necessary resources, such as assistive technologies, teaching aids, or professional support, to effectively accommodate children with special needs. This can lead to frustration among teachers and a reluctance to adopt inclusive practices.

Furthermore, teacher training is a key determinant of the success of inclusive education. Well-trained teachers are better equipped to address the diverse needs of learners and create inclusive learning environments that foster participation and engagement for all students (Mitchell, 2017). In Ghana, efforts have been made to include inclusive education content in teacher training programs. However, the effectiveness of these training programs in preparing teachers to implement inclusive practices remains a subject of debate (Agbenyega & Deku, 2019). In the Cape Coast Metropolis, early childhood teachers may not have received sufficient training on inclusive education, particularly in relation to strategies for accommodating children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Without proper training, teachers may feel ill-prepared to implement inclusive practices, which can affect their attitudes toward inclusion (Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018)

Inclusive education is a critical component of early childhood education, and the success of inclusive practices depends largely on the attitudes, knowledge, and preparedness of teachers. In the Cape Coast Metropolis of Ghana, teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education are influenced by various factors, including their knowledge of inclusive practices, cultural beliefs, availability of support services, and the level of training they have received. This study provided valuable insights into the factors shaping teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis and contribute to the ongoing discourse on inclusive education in Ghana.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Inclusive education is increasingly prioritized globally to ensure equitable access to quality education for children of all abilities (Ainscow, 2020). In Ghana, despite the government's commitment through policies like the Inclusive Education Policy of 2015, the practical implementation of inclusive practices, particularly in early childhood education (ECE), faces significant challenges.

In the Cape Coast Metropolis of the Central Region of Ghana, concerns persist regarding the effectiveness of inclusive education practices in early childhood centres. Teachers' attitudes play a crucial role in the successful implementation of inclusive education. However, empirical evidence suggests substantial gaps hindering these practices. Many teachers lack sufficient knowledge of inclusive pedagogies, which limits their ability to address the diverse needs of learners with disabilities (Robinson, 2017). Studies indicate that inadequate training in inclusive teaching strategies often results in exclusionary practices that hinder educational outcomes for children with special needs (Forlin, 2018).

Moreover, cultural beliefs within Ghanaian communities, such as persistent negative perceptions and stigmas surrounding disability, influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion (Opoku et al., 2017). These beliefs may lead educators to view children with disabilities as incapable of benefiting from mainstream education, thus perpetuating exclusionary practices (Lindner et al., 2023; Mónico et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the availability of resources crucial for inclusive education, such as specialized teaching aids and professional development opportunities, remains inadequate in many early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis (UNESCO, 2020). This lack of support services not only hampers teachers' ability to cater to diverse learner needs but also contributes to resistance towards inclusive education (Kuyini & Desai, 2018).

Additionally, the variability in the quality and extent of inclusive education training within Ghana's teacher education programs further exacerbates these challenges (Agbenyega & Deku, 2019). Insufficient training leaves teachers ill-prepared to implement inclusive practices confidently, thus impacting their attitudes towards inclusive education (Sharma & Sokal, 2019).

Given these issues, this study aims to comprehensively evaluate the current state of inclusive education practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis, focusing specifically on teachers' attitudes and the contextual factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis of the Central Region of Ghana.

1.4 Research Objectives

The following research objectives guided the study

1. Evaluate the views of teachers towards inclusive education practices in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis
2. Investigate the cultural beliefs of teachers toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis
3. Identify the support services available to early childhood teachers' inclusive practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis
4. Evaluate the level of training of teachers towards the implementation of inclusive practices in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis

1.5 Research Questions

These research questions guided the study;

1. What are teachers' views regarding inclusive education practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis?
2. How do the cultural beliefs of teachers influence their attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis?
3. What support services are available to early childhood teachers for the implementation of inclusive practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis?
4. What is the level of effectiveness of the training that teachers have received for implementing inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Evaluating the level of knowledge that teachers possess regarding inclusive education practices would provide valuable insights into the current state of teacher preparedness for inclusive education in early childhood settings. The findings would highlight gaps in knowledge that may hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education policies. This can inform policymakers at the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Ministry of Education to develop targeted interventions, such as continuous professional development programs and curriculum reforms, to address these gaps and ensure that teachers are adequately equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills for inclusive education.

Additionally, by investigating the cultural beliefs of teachers toward inclusive practices, the study would provide a deeper understanding of how cultural attitudes affect the implementation of inclusive education policies. This would help policymakers create culturally responsive policies and strategies that consider local beliefs and practices. Such insights can guide efforts to foster a more inclusive mindset among educators and communities, which is essential for the success of inclusive education initiatives.

The findings would help educational authorities and stakeholders understand the specific resources and services that are lacking, such as assistive technologies, specialized teaching materials, or additional staff support. These insights would enable schools and local educational offices to address these challenges by providing the necessary tools and resources to teachers, improving the quality of inclusive education.

The evaluation of teacher training in relation to inclusive practices would also have practical implications for teacher education programs. The study would shed light on whether existing training programs are sufficient in preparing teachers to implement inclusive education and

highlight areas where additional support or restructuring is needed. This would guide teacher training institutions and professional development providers in refining their curricula to ensure that teachers receive comprehensive training on inclusive pedagogies, ultimately improving classroom practices and learner outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, this study would contribute to the growing body of literature on inclusive education, particularly in the context of early childhood education in Ghana. By exploring the relationship between teachers' knowledge, cultural beliefs, support services, and training, the study would provide insights into how these factors collectively shape teachers' attitudes and behaviors toward inclusive practices. This would enrich existing theories on inclusive education by incorporating the unique cultural and contextual challenges faced by early childhood educators in Ghana. Furthermore, the study's focus on early childhood education adds a significant dimension to existing theories of inclusion, which often emphasize primary or secondary education. The findings would contribute to the development of more comprehensive theories that account for the specific needs and challenges of implementing inclusive education at the early childhood level, where foundational skills are developed.

The study would also serve as a foundation for future research on inclusive education in Ghana and other similar contexts. By identifying gaps in teacher knowledge, training, cultural beliefs, and support services, the study would open new avenues for exploring interventions and strategies that can enhance inclusive education in early childhood settings. Researchers can build on this study to conduct longitudinal studies, intervention-based research, or comparative studies that explore how different regions or countries address the challenges of inclusive education.

Eventually, the significance of this study lies in its potential to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of young children with disabilities or special educational needs in the Cape Coast

Metropolis. By identifying and addressing the challenges faced by teachers in implementing inclusive practices, the study aims to create a more inclusive learning environment where all children, regardless of their abilities, can thrive. The insights from this study would support efforts to ensure that inclusive education becomes a reality for all learners, in line with Ghana's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goal of inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis of the Central Region, Ghana. The focus on this geographical location is due to its diverse educational settings, which offer a comprehensive understanding of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices. Contextually, the study explored teachers' knowledge, cultural beliefs, available support services, and training related to inclusive education in these centres. The study in terms of content was delimited to address teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive practices, identifying key enablers and barriers. Also, the study was delimited to the mixed-methods approach, the research combined quantitative data from structured questionnaires to gather broad insights and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews to provide an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences and attitudes. This approach ensured a well-rounded analysis, balancing numerical trends with personal narratives, while limiting the scope to early childhood educators and the inclusive practices they employ or encounter in their classrooms within the selected region.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study relies on self-reported teacher data, which may be subject to social desirability bias or inaccurate recall. Furthermore, the mixed-methods approach, while comprehensive, presented challenges in integrating and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data coherently. Additionally,

time constraints restricted the depth of qualitative insights obtained. Lastly, the study may be affected by variations in teachers' understanding of inclusive practices, influenced by different levels of training and experience, which impacted the consistency of responses and overall data reliability.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Attitudes: State of mind responding either favourably or unfavourably

Disability: Any limitation or inability to perform an activity in a manner within the range considered normal for a human being

Early Childhood Centers: Educational institutions that provide learning experiences for children from birth to age eight, focusing on their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development.

Inclusive Education: A process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by reducing barriers to, and within, the learning environment.

Teaching-Learning environment: Availability of access infrastructure e.g. as ramps, accessible classrooms, painted walls, appropriate furniture.

1.10 Organisation of the Study

The study was organised under five chapters. Chapter one consisted of the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and the research questions. The chapter included delimitation of the study, limitations of the study, as well as the organisation of the study. Chapter two dealt with issues concerning conceptual review, theoretical framework and empirical review that guided the study. The third chapter covered the research design and procedures to be employed for the study. The chapter also described clearly the sample and the instrumentation and the last section of the chapter dealt with the procedures adopted for gathering data and analyzing the data. The fourth chapter presented the data analysis results and the discussions obtained. The

chapter was grouped into two parts. The first part is the preliminary data and the second part being the main data. The final chapter presented the summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations. Areas for further research would also suggested.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

This chapter focused on the review of related literature on the specific objectives of the study.

Literature was reviewed on the following sub-headings:

Theoretical Framework

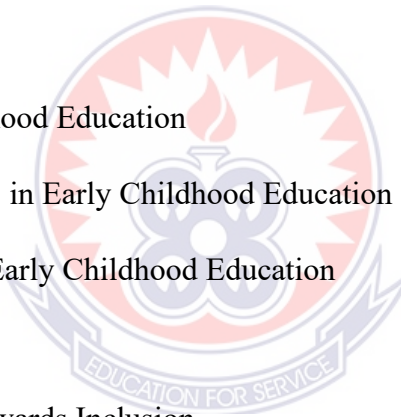
- Social Model Theory (Michael Oliver, 1983)
- Theory of Planned Behaviour

Conceptual Review

- Concept of Inclusion
- Inclusion in Early Childhood Education
- Categories of Disabilities in Early Childhood Education
- Benefits of Inclusion in Early Childhood Education

Empirical Review

- Teachers' Knowledge Towards Inclusion
- Cultural Beliefs of Teachers Toward Inclusive Practices
- Support Services Available to Early Childhood Teachers' Inclusive Practices
- The Level of Training of Teachers Towards the Implementation of Inclusive Practices



2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Social Model Theory (Michael Oliver, 1983)

The Social Model Theory of disability is a conceptual framework that distinguishes between the impairment a person may have and the disabling barriers created by society. It emerged in the 1970s through the work of disability rights activists and scholars, particularly in the United Kingdom, as a response to the dominant medical model of disability. While the medical model views disability as a problem inherent in the individual that must be treated or cured, the social model shifts the focus to the environment, attitudes, and institutional structures that prevent full participation of persons with disabilities in society (Oliver, 1990; Barnes, 2019).

According to the social model, disability is not caused solely by an individual's physical, sensory, or cognitive impairments, but rather by the failure of society to accommodate difference. Barriers such as inaccessible buildings, discriminatory attitudes, rigid curricula, and a lack of inclusive teaching strategies contribute to the marginalization and exclusion of people with disabilities (Shakespeare, 2014). Therefore, the solution is not to “fix” the individual, but to remove these social and environmental barriers.

One of the foundational principles of the social model is inclusion the idea that people with disabilities should be integrated into all aspects of social life, including education, employment, and recreation, on an equal basis with others. In educational contexts, this means that learning environments must be adapted to meet diverse needs, rather than expecting learners with disabilities to fit into rigid systems (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2012). This approach aligns closely with inclusive education policies, such as Ghana’s Inclusive Education Policy (2015), which emphasize removing obstacles to participation and promoting equity.

The social model also emphasizes empowerment, encouraging individuals with disabilities to advocate for their rights and challenge exclusionary practices. It has been instrumental in shaping international frameworks, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which underscores the right of all individuals to participate fully in society (UN, 2006).

However, the model has been critiqued for downplaying the lived experiences of impairment and failing to address the complexities of disability, including pain and health-related challenges (Shakespeare, 2014). Some scholars have proposed a more integrated approach, such as the biopsychosocial model, which combines both social and medical perspectives (WHO, 2001). Nonetheless, the social model remains a powerful tool for analyzing and addressing systemic discrimination.

The Social Modelling Theory, rooted in Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), posits that individuals acquire knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors by observing others within their social environment. Learning is not merely a result of direct instruction or experience but also occurs through observation, imitation, and reinforcement (Bandura, 1986). This framework is especially relevant in educational settings, where teachers develop professional attitudes and practices through interactions with colleagues, supervisors, and the wider community. For this study titled "Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis," Social Modelling Theory provides a comprehensive lens through which to evaluate and interpret teacher attitudes and their underlying influences. Each research objective is well-supported by the principles of this theory, as outlined below.

Implications on the Study

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education are shaped not only by individual experiences but also through social interactions within schools and communities. According to Bandura (2001), people tend to model their behaviors and beliefs after those demonstrated by individuals they view as competent, successful, or authoritative. In early childhood education centres, this includes school leaders, senior colleagues, and trainers who model either inclusive or exclusionary behaviors.

Empirical studies have shown that when teachers observe their peers implementing inclusive strategies such as differentiated instruction, peer collaboration, or the use of assistive technology they are more likely to adopt similar practices and develop positive attitudes (Sharma et al., 2022; Hutzler et al., 2023). Conversely, when exclusionary practices are common or accepted, teachers may become skeptical or resistant to inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2020). Therefore, Social Modelling Theory helps explain the variations in teacher attitudes observed in the Cape Coast Metropolis by highlighting the role of social influences and visible practices in shaping those views.

In Ghana, and particularly in regions such as the Cape Coast Metropolis, deep-rooted cultural beliefs about disability significantly affect teacher attitudes toward inclusive education (Opoku et al., 2021). Social Modelling Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how these cultural beliefs are internalized and replicated through observation and interaction. Teachers are often influenced by societal norms, including family values, religious doctrines, and traditional views about ability and disability.

When community members or senior educators express discriminatory or dismissive attitudes toward learners with disabilities, these views are likely to be adopted by early childhood teachers, especially when there are few visible positive models to counter them (Mantey, 2023). Bandura (2006) argues that modeled behaviors are more likely to be replicated when they align with prevailing cultural expectations and are reinforced through social approval or avoidance of criticism.

This theory also supports the idea that exposure to positive role models such as teachers who embrace inclusion and advocate for learners with special needs can help challenge and gradually change cultural biases. Such modeling not only reshapes individual attitudes but can also influence the broader school culture (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2012).

The successful implementation of inclusive practices depends significantly on the availability of support services, including teaching resources, administrative assistance, professional development, and specialized personnel. Social Modelling Theory underscores how the presence or absence of these resources affects teachers' attitudes and confidence.

According to Kuyini and Desai (2018), teachers who observe peers successfully using available support systems such as speech therapists, resource personnel, or learning aides are more likely to develop favorable views of inclusion and feel empowered to replicate similar practices. In contrast, in settings where support services are lacking, teachers may model avoidance behaviors or develop negative perceptions due to feelings of helplessness or inadequacy (UNESCO, 2023).

In the Cape Coast Metropolis, the visibility of support services plays a critical modeling role. If support services are actively used and promoted within some schools, other teachers in the same metropolis may adopt more inclusive attitudes based on observed efficacy and institutional

endorsement. The theory explains how institutional modeling through leadership and policy implementation directly affects teacher behaviors and perceptions.

Training is a major component of behavior modeling in education. Teacher education programs and in-service training use modeling strategies such as demonstration lessons, peer observations, and guided practice to shape teacher attitudes and practices (Bandura, 2001). In Ghana, however, studies have noted inconsistencies in the content and quality of inclusive education training, which impacts how prepared teachers feel to manage inclusive classrooms (Agbenyega & Deku, 2019).

Teachers with limited exposure to positive models of inclusive teaching during training may adopt negative attitudes due to a lack of confidence in their abilities (Sharma & Sokal, 2019). On the other hand, when pre-service and in-service training feature instructors who model inclusive strategies and provide authentic teaching simulations, teachers are more likely to internalize those practices and develop more supportive attitudes.

In the Cape Coast Metropolis, early childhood teachers who have participated in quality training programs with practical demonstrations of inclusion are likely to model those experiences in their classrooms. The Social Modelling Theory, therefore, justifies exploring how training (as a social learning experience) shapes attitudes and contributes to the successful adoption of inclusive education practices.

2.1.2 Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) helps understand how the behaviour of people can change, suggesting that behaviour can be deliberative and planned. According to TPB, human actions are guided by three kinds of considerations: behavioural beliefs about the likely consequences of the behaviour and how our behaviours would like to be perceived by others

(conative dimension); normative beliefs about the normative expectations of others and how our perceptions affect how we see others' behaviour (cognitive dimension); and control beliefs about the existence of factors that could assist or prohibit performance of the behaviour and could affect how we feel about others' behaviour (affective dimension). By taking into consideration these three considerations, deliberate behaviour can be predicted.

Their study uses an instrument designed to measure each one of the three elements of attitude: cognitive, affective, and conative (behavioural) (Gregory & Noto, 2019), focusing particularly on how each dimension of attitude contributes to the teacher's overall behavioural intention regarding the inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities. Specifically, the cognitive dimension addresses how teachers think about students with mild to moderate disabilities; the affective dimension addresses how teachers feel about these students, while the conative dimension describes how teachers would like their behaviour to be seen in response to teaching students with mild to moderate disabilities.

Using the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) as a theoretical lens in an educational context allows us to operationalize the intention to create a successful inclusive educational experience as consisting of the teacher's attitude, what the teacher thinks the norm is, and what the teacher thinks they can do, which is moderated by the teacher's actual ability to successfully include students with special education needs. According to TPB (Ajzen) an individual's attitude and behavioural intention are influenced by whether someone else knows what their actions were. In an educational setting, the public nature of education makes this aspect of the theory of planned behaviour important as it influences how the teachers act. This inclusion of norms, behavioural control, and attitudes makes the theory of planned behaviour an appropriate framework to explore teachers' attitudes towards inclusion.

Within the larger theory of planned behaviour, the suggested model of attitude, which comprises cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects, has been used to study teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in many international settings (Bangladesh: Ahmmed et al., 2012; Croatia and Poland: Ćwirynkało et al., 2017; Romania: Crişan et al., 2020; Scotland: MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; USA: Barnes & Gaines, 2015; Forrester, 2016; Gregory et al., 2016). However, until now, there is not a systematic effort to explore the potential effects of the suggested model emerging from the ATTAS-mm across countries, years of teaching, educational level of work/intern, or highest degree completed.

Implication of the Theory to the Study

The Self-Efficacy Theory, developed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes the role of an individual's belief in his/her ability to successfully complete tasks and achieve specific outcomes (Bandura, 1977). In the context of education, self-efficacy refers to a teacher's belief in their capacity to effectively teach and manage a classroom, especially when implementing new or challenging instructional practices, such as inclusive education (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers' self-efficacy is a critical determinant of their motivation, persistence, and overall performance in the classroom. When applied to the topic of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis, the Self-Efficacy Theory provides a valuable lens for understanding how teachers' confidence, or lack thereof, impacts their willingness and ability to adopt and sustain inclusive educational strategies.

2.2 Teachers' Knowledge and Self-Efficacy

One of the key objectives of this study was to evaluate the level of knowledge among teachers toward inclusive education practices. Self-efficacy theory suggests that teachers who perceive themselves as knowledgeable and competent in inclusive education are more likely to feel

confident in their ability to meet the needs of learners with disabilities or special educational needs (SEN) (Bandura, 1997). This confidence, in turn, enhances their motivation to implement inclusive practices effectively. Teachers with high self-efficacy believe they can positively influence learner outcomes, even when faced with challenges. However, when teachers feel that they lack sufficient knowledge or skills in inclusive education, their self-efficacy may be low, resulting in resistance to inclusive practices or an over-reliance on traditional teaching methods (Sharma & Sokal, 2019).

In the Cape Coast Metropolis, if early childhood educators are not adequately trained in inclusive education, their perceived self-efficacy could be compromised, leading to negative attitudes toward inclusion. Teachers with low self-efficacy may feel unprepared or overwhelmed by the demands of an inclusive classroom, where they must cater to diverse learners with varying needs. Understanding how knowledge influences teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive education is critical for designing targeted interventions that boost teacher confidence and effectiveness in implementing inclusive practices.

Cultural Beliefs and Self-Efficacy

The Self-Efficacy Theory also relates to how teachers' cultural beliefs impact their attitudes toward inclusive education. Teachers' self-efficacy is shaped not only by their professional knowledge and skills but also by the socio-cultural environment in which they operate (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). In many Ghanaian communities, cultural beliefs and stigmas surrounding disability persist (Opoku et al., 2017). These cultural attitudes may influence teachers' perceptions of learners with disabilities and their ability to provide inclusive education.

Teachers who hold negative cultural beliefs about disability may have lower self-efficacy when it comes to working with children with disabilities. For example, a teacher who believes that children

with disabilities cannot succeed in mainstream education may feel less capable of meeting their needs, which may result in reluctance to embrace inclusive practices. Conversely, teachers who challenge cultural stigmas and believe in the potential of all learners, regardless of ability, are likely to exhibit higher self-efficacy. These teachers are more willing to experiment with inclusive strategies, adapt their teaching methods, and provide the necessary support for all learners. This dynamic highlights the need for interventions that not only enhance teachers' knowledge of inclusive education but also address the cultural beliefs that shape their self-efficacy.

Support Services and Self-Efficacy

Another key factor related to self-efficacy is the availability of support services. The Self-Efficacy Theory posits that external support, such as resources, professional development, and collegial collaboration, plays a crucial role in building self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). In the context of inclusive education, support services such as assistive technologies, classroom aides, and continuous professional development can significantly enhance teachers' self-efficacy by providing them with the tools they need to succeed.

Teachers in early childhood centres who have access to these support services are more likely to feel capable of implementing inclusive practices, as they are better equipped to handle the diverse needs of their learners. On the other hand, when support services are inadequate or unavailable, teachers may experience frustration and helplessness, leading to low self-efficacy and resistance to inclusive education (Kuyini & Desai, 2018). Understanding how the availability of support services impacts teachers' self-efficacy in the Cape Coast Metropolis can help stakeholders address the systemic barriers that hinder the implementation of inclusive education.

Teacher Training and Self-Efficacy

Finally, the level of training teachers receive significantly influences their self-efficacy. Bandura's theory highlights the importance of mastery experiences in building self-efficacy. Teachers who have undergone effective training in inclusive education are more likely to feel confident in their ability to implement inclusive practices (Bandura, 1997). Adequate training equips teachers with practical skills, strategies, and resources, which in turn boosts their self-efficacy and enhances their commitment to inclusive education.

In the Cape Coast Metropolis, if teachers are not receiving sufficient or relevant training, their self-efficacy would likely remain low. Teachers may feel unprepared for the challenges of inclusive classrooms, which can result in poor attitudes toward inclusive practices. The Self-Efficacy Theory thus underscores the need for comprehensive training programs that not only focus on inclusive education theory but also provide practical, hands-on experiences that allow teachers to build their self-efficacy through the successful implementation of inclusive strategies.

The Self-Efficacy Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how teachers' beliefs in their own capabilities influence their attitudes and behaviors toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to embrace inclusive education, while those with low self-efficacy may resist it. By focusing on teachers' knowledge, cultural beliefs, support services, and training, this study would contribute to a deeper understanding of how self-efficacy impacts the implementation of inclusive practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis, informing strategies to strengthen teacher preparedness and commitment to inclusive education.

2.3 Concept of Inclusion

During the last three decades, inclusion in education has taken hold and is recognized all over the world (UNESCO, 2009; OECD, 2009). The educational system is currently introducing new innovations in approaches, structures and strategies. Society has to come to the point of having a common vision for the framework in providing education. (UNESCO). Thus, educational, social and economic factors justify the implementation of inclusion as a shift in education that involves content modification in the system.

Despite a shared general understanding and standards, inclusive education is interpreted in various ways depending on the schooling organization, political context and educational beliefs (Kozleski et al., 2007). It is also considered differently depending on cultural context. According to Ainscow (2005), each country might define inclusion in a unique way by connecting its meaning in compliance with the four key elements that contribute to the meaning of inclusion: to promote inclusive practices not only in educational and sociological aspects of relationships, but cultural, historical and political contexts.

Due to the significance of education as mentioned early on, several long-standing projects, frameworks, and agreements such as the Education for All, the Salamanca Statement, the Millennium Development Goals, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have been initiated and progressed over the past decades (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990; Sightsavers, 2010; United Nations, 2006; United Nations Development Programme, 2015; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994; United Nations, 2008). One key mutual direction in which they all share is to create and establish an education system where all individuals can be included and their personal educational needs can be met (United Nations, 2006; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2000).

Inclusion has been a part of the education system for some time now, and is generally associated with students who have special needs, are exceptional, or differently-abled. The inclusion of students with disabilities has been the central theme of policy debates in education, especially in reference to student access to the general education setting (Obiakor, 2011). Inclusive education implies that regardless of strengths, weaknesses, or ability levels all students become part of the school community. Inclusion is based on the principle that all students are valued for their unique abilities and are accepted as important members of the student body. According to Harris (2009), schools have a duty to include students with disabilities in the general education setting to the maximum extent possible.

One aspect that makes inclusion challenging for school districts is the lack of a universal definition or clearly defined policy at the federal level (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2013). The word “inclusion” does not exist in IDEA and is rarely used in case law. The widely accepted understanding of inclusion comes from the definition that IDEA gives to the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The lack of a clear definition coupled with broad language allows districts to implement inclusion according to perceptions of least restrictive environment. According to DeMatthews and Mawhinney, school districts have a large amount of flexibility when drafting policies and programs related to inclusion. Though there may not be a set of characteristics that specifically describe inclusive settings, one defining practice is that students with disabilities should be in the general education setting to the maximum extent appropriate and not isolated in special classes (Washington, 2010).

The term “inclusion” indicates that students with disabilities should be educated alongside their age-appropriate peers in a general education setting. Jenkins (2012) stated that content should be taught to students in inclusion by a highly qualified, general education teacher who provides

accommodation in accordance with the child's IEP. For over two decades, inclusion has been gaining momentum. Jenkins explained that the expansion of inclusive education practices have spurred new research. More students than ever are being educated in an inclusive setting. Approximately 96% of general education teachers have taught a student with disabilities at some point in their classroom. Approximately 95% of students with disabilities ages 6-21 are being served in regular schools. In addition, 59% of students with learning disabilities are receiving their instruction in a general education setting. In today's schools, more than ever, students with disabilities are being served in a general education setting by general education teachers. In spite of the drawbacks or weaknesses, inclusion offers a large amount of strengths as well.

Inclusive school policies provide the foundation that see schools are accessible to all students and staff; admittance to the school is enabled, and barriers to accessibility and participation within all aspects of the school environment are reduced (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; 2011). Inclusive policy also ensures appropriate resources are in place for students' learning and for staff members' development as inclusive practitioners (Booth & Ainscow). Inclusive school policies in Australia are underpinned by international statements such as Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations (UN), 2006), as well as Australian national policies and statements such as the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration 2019 (Australian Government Department of Education, Skills, and Employment (DESE), 2019), Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2021), Australian Student Wellbeing Framework 2018 (Education Council, 2018), Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DESE, 2005) and Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

Within Australia, States and Territories also provide statements which inform school policy within their jurisdiction. For example, the Inclusive Education Statement in New South Wales advocates

for inclusion as an important part of providing high quality educational opportunities for all students “where every student is known, valued and cared for and all students are learning to their fullest capability” (NSW DoE, 2021, p.1). Collectively, these encourage and/or require schools to address barriers to students' fair and equitable access and participation in educational environments; affirm that every student has the right to a high-quality education free of discrimination in an environment that supports their safety and wellbeing; that positive, caring and respectful relationships with students, peers and teachers should be fostered; and that a culture of diversity is to be celebrated and valued. In order to effectively implement inclusive policy, schools need to foster an inclusive culture complemented by inclusive practice.

An inclusive culture is one in which diversity is embraced and all members are treated fairly, respectfully and equitably (Booth & Ainscow). Students should be enabled to feel that they belong within the educational community or classroom (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018). Building an inclusive culture requires teachers to understand that any student can experience barriers to learning and participation, not only those considered to have ‘special educational needs’ (Booth & Ainscow). Labelling students based upon their perceived ability is often avoided, as are views that ability is fixed (Florian & Spratt, 2013), and high expectations are held for the learning potential of all students (Booth & Ainscow). An inclusive culture is also one in which teachers recognise their ability to facilitate learning and reduce barriers to learning and participation for all students in their classrooms (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2011; Florian & Spratt, 2013).

Inclusive practice means that learning and teaching activities are responsive to student diversity (Ainscow, 2020). That is, learning experiences are designed with students' individual strengths and needs in mind, and consideration is given to the ways in which all students can be enabled to actively and meaningfully participate in their learning and be appropriately challenged (Ainscow,

2020; Booth & Ainscow, 2011). A strengths-based approach should be considered throughout this planning and implementation, meaning there should be a strong focus on students' capabilities rather than 'deficits' (Florian & Spratt, 2013). Difference and diversity should be embraced and responded to positively (Finkelstein et al., 2021). Barriers to students' learning and participation are identified and addressed (Dally et al., 2019), and the lessons learned from this are utilised to support the learning and participation of others (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; 2011). Assessment of student learning is designed to be receptive to and support the achievement of all students, and both collaborative and individual achievements are celebrated (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; 2011).

Where teaching assistants (i.e., teachers' aides or school learning support officers (SLSOs)) are present, they support all students in their learning and participation, not just students considered to have 'special educational needs', and through designing learning experiences to be responsive to all learners, the need for individual student support is reduced (Ainscow, 2020; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; 2011). When effectively implemented, inclusive education can benefit all students' learning and achievement, positively impacting their self-esteem, and their emotional and social development (Antoninis et al., 2020). Inclusive practice can be supported by approaches such as the Universal Design for Learning (UDL; see Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), 2018; Finkelstein et al., 2021) and differentiated instruction. A Universal Design for Learning is considered a proactive approach where responsiveness to student diversity is planned for from the outset regardless of students' specific needs, whereas differentiated instruction is considered a reactive approach where learning experiences are varied or modified to cater to students' specific needs.

The UDL approach (CAST, 2018) involves providing multiple means for students to access and perceive information (e.g., displaying information in accessible and alternative modes), to engage

in learning (e.g., providing opportunity for student choice within learning activities), and for communicating their learning (e.g., enabling various modes of expression). Differentiated instruction can involve modifying the learning environment, instruction, content, the processes through which students engage and learn this content, the product through which they communicate their learning, assessment, and the timeframes (Lidner & Schwab, 2020). Student groupings can also be differentiated to support the learning of all students (Lidner & Schwab, 2020). When used effectively, UDL and differentiated instruction can support fair and equitable educational experiences for all students.

2.4 Inclusion in Early Childhood Education

The concept of inclusion in early childhood education (ECE) has become a focal point for efforts to create equitable learning environments that cater to all children, regardless of ability or background. The evolution of this practice is rooted in a global push for human rights and educational equality, highlighted by critical international frameworks like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This landmark treaty underscores that inclusive education is a right, mandating that all educational institutions must ensure full and meaningful participation for every child in an environment that fosters their holistic development (United Nations, 2006). This shift represents a broader movement toward embracing diversity and ensuring that differences are celebrated and supported rather than sidelined.

The essence of inclusion in ECE lies in moving beyond tokenistic measures, such as simply placing children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. It involves a paradigm shift where these educational environments are thoughtfully transformed to be genuinely inclusive. For example, classrooms must be adaptable and supportive, employing teaching strategies that meet a range of developmental needs. This includes designing flexible curricula that can be modified or

differentiated to support various learning styles and paces, ensuring that every child has the chance to succeed and feel like a valued member of the learning community (Booth & Ainscow, 2016).

Moreover, inclusion in ECE emphasizes the role of educators in creating these environments. Teachers must be equipped with the skills and knowledge to deliver inclusive education effectively, using strategies that promote active participation and engagement for all students. Learner-centered approaches, such as cooperative learning and experiential activities, can help children of all abilities feel engaged and valued (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). The success of inclusion depends on an ongoing commitment to professional development, which ensures that teachers are prepared to adapt their practices to be inclusive of all learners.

Understanding the holistic nature of inclusion in early childhood education involves recognizing that it extends far beyond physical integration. The goal is to create an environment where every child feels a strong sense of belonging, acceptance, and the ability to thrive. Achieving this requires significant transformations in how traditional educational settings operate. Inclusive classrooms emphasize flexibility, not just in physical setup but also in the approaches used to teach and assess learners. This flexibility allows for a curriculum that can be tailored to meet diverse developmental stages, cognitive abilities, and learning preferences (Booth & Ainscow, 2016).

In practice, this means that teaching methods must be dynamic and adaptive. Educators are encouraged to employ differentiated instruction, which involves modifying the content, process, or product of learning activities to ensure all students can participate fully. For instance, some children may benefit from visual aids, while others might require hands-on activities or oral instruction. The key is to use multiple teaching methods that allow all children to engage with the material in ways that are most meaningful to them (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Furthermore, the holistic nature of inclusion emphasizes collaboration and shared responsibility among all stakeholders involved in a child's education. This includes not only teachers and support staff but also families and community members. When families are actively engaged in the learning process, it reinforces the child's sense of belonging and provides additional support structures that are essential for development. Educators must also work closely with specialists, such as speech therapists or occupational therapists, to design and implement effective inclusive practices.(source).

The holistic approach also requires a commitment to social-emotional learning, recognizing that children's emotional well-being is as crucial as their academic growth. Inclusive classrooms often incorporate social-emotional curricula that teach children how to understand and manage their emotions, build empathy, and develop healthy relationships. This focus on emotional intelligence fosters a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere where every child feels safe and respected.

Inclusive early childhood classrooms have distinct characteristics that set them apart as environments designed for every child to thrive. These classrooms are intentionally structured to be supportive, flexible, and responsive to diverse needs. Teachers in inclusive classrooms act as facilitators, creating opportunities for all children to engage in meaningful and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. A key component is the use of a curriculum that promotes active learning, where children explore, experiment, and express their ideas in various ways. This kind of engagement is particularly effective in early childhood settings, where hands-on and play-based learning are central to development (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).

Accessibility is another critical feature of inclusive classrooms. This encompasses not only physical accessibility, such as ensuring the classroom is navigable for children with mobility challenges, but also cognitive and communicative accessibility. Educators might use visual

schedules, sensory supports, or alternative communication systems to ensure that every child can participate fully. The use of assistive technologies, such as speech-generating devices or adaptive seating, can further enhance accessibility, allowing children with specific needs to engage alongside their peers (Raver & Childress, 2015).

Collaboration among educators is vital in an inclusive classroom. Team teaching and co-planning strategies are often employed to ensure that all children receive appropriate support. For example, a general education teacher might collaborate with a special education teacher to design lessons that cater to diverse learning needs. Additionally, teachers use ongoing assessment to monitor each child's progress and adjust instruction as needed. This formative approach to assessment ensures that children who require additional support or alternative strategies receive them in a timely manner.

Moreover, inclusive classrooms often emphasize peer-mediated learning, where children learn from and with one another. This can include pairing children in buddy systems or facilitating group projects where each child has a role suited to their abilities. Such practices not only promote academic learning but also foster social skills, empathy, and a sense of community among students. The emphasis on creating a positive and inclusive classroom culture cannot be overstated, as it lays the foundation for lifelong attitudes of acceptance and respect for diversity.

While inclusion is traditionally linked to supporting children with disabilities, contemporary perspectives advocate for a more expansive understanding. Inclusion now encompasses cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity, addressing broader issues of equity and social justice within the educational system. This holistic view is particularly relevant in increasingly multicultural societies, where children come from diverse backgrounds with varying experiences

and needs. Educators are thus called to implement practices that recognize and celebrate this diversity, ensuring that all children feel valued and included (Slee, 2018).

Addressing cultural and linguistic diversity in inclusive settings involves being responsive to the cultural identities and languages of all children. This can mean integrating multilingual resources, celebrating cultural holidays, and ensuring that classroom materials reflect diverse cultures. Cultural responsiveness in ECE requires teachers to understand and respect the cultural values of their students and use that knowledge to inform their teaching practices. It also involves creating an anti-bias curriculum that challenges stereotypes and fosters a sense of belonging for all students.

Socioeconomic diversity is another crucial consideration in inclusive education. Children from low-income families may face unique barriers to learning, such as lack of access to quality early learning resources or exposure to enriching experiences outside of school. Inclusive classrooms strive to mitigate these disparities by providing equitable resources and support. This could include offering free or reduced-cost materials, creating partnerships with community organizations, or implementing policies that ensure all children can participate in classroom activities, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Intersectionality is a concept that further broadens the understanding of inclusion, recognizing that a child may belong to multiple marginalized groups simultaneously. For example, a child may be both an English language learner and have a disability, or come from a minority cultural background and experience socioeconomic disadvantage. Understanding these intersecting identities is critical for developing inclusive practices that do not overlook the complexity of each child's experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). This approach highlights the importance of individualized support that considers the full context of a child's life.

Policies play a critical role in establishing and sustaining inclusive practices in early childhood education. Effective inclusion requires comprehensive policy frameworks that address various elements, including teacher training, resource distribution, and continuous professional development. National and local governments must invest in training programs that equip educators with the skills needed to support diverse learners, emphasizing inclusive pedagogies, cultural competence, and strategies for collaboration with families and specialists (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Not cited.

Resource allocation is another essential component of effective policy. Schools and early childhood centers require adequate funding to implement inclusive practices, such as hiring additional support staff, acquiring specialized equipment or modifying facilities to be accessible. Without the necessary resources, even the most well-intentioned policies are unlikely to be successful. Policymakers must also address systemic barriers, such as funding disparities and inequitable access to high-quality early learning opportunities, to ensure that all children can benefit from inclusive education.

Community engagement is equally vital in promoting and sustaining inclusive practices. Parents and caregivers are critical partners in the educational process, and their involvement can significantly enhance the effectiveness of inclusion. Schools must work to build strong relationships with families, respecting their knowledge and perspectives while also providing support and resources to help them engage meaningfully. This can include offering workshops on inclusive practices, creating family-friendly communication channels, and involving parents in decision-making processes related to their children's education (Barton, 2013).

Moreover, inclusion requires a shift in societal attitudes. Raising awareness about the benefits of inclusive education and challenging negative stereotypes about disability and diversity are

essential components of this effort. Community-based initiatives, such as awareness campaigns and inclusive playgroups, can help foster a culture of acceptance and empathy. By involving the wider community in these efforts, schools can create more supportive environments that extend beyond the classroom and into the broader society.

2.5 Category of Disabilities in Early Childhood Education

Intellectual Disabilities in Early Childhood Education

Intellectual disabilities (ID) in early childhood education encompass limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviors, impacting how children learn, problem-solve, and interact socially. The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) describes intellectual functioning as general mental capacity, including reasoning, planning, and abstract thinking, and adaptive behavior as everyday social and practical skills necessary for independent living (Luckasson et al., 2002). Children with ID often face significant developmental delays, including difficulties in language development, social interaction, and problem-solving. These challenges necessitate targeted support strategies to ensure effective participation in educational settings.

Classrooms that serve children with intellectual disabilities are designed to offer individualized and inclusive experiences. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that children with ID receive a free and appropriate education tailored to their unique needs through Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). These programs set measurable goals and outline specific instructional methods, interventions, and accommodations (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Effective educational strategies for young children with ID emphasize hands-on and experiential learning, allowing them to engage actively and meaningfully with educational

content. Visual supports, such as picture schedules or symbols, help in establishing clear expectations and enhancing comprehension (Schalock et al., 2010).

Teachers play a crucial role in fostering the development of students with intellectual disabilities through differentiated instruction, which involves modifying the curriculum and teaching strategies to meet individual learning needs. Consistent routines and structured environments provide a sense of security and predictability, enabling children to feel more confident and engaged. Social integration is also critical, as inclusive activities with peers help to build communication skills and a sense of belonging. Cooperative learning activities and peer-mediated strategies have shown promise in improving social interactions and reducing feelings of isolation among children with ID (Katz & Mirenda, 2002). By employing these approaches, early childhood educators can create supportive, inclusive environments where children with intellectual disabilities are empowered to learn and thrive.

Communication Disorders in Early Childhood Education

Communication disorders in early childhood education encompass a wide spectrum of difficulties related to speech, language, and communication. These can manifest as problems with articulation (producing speech sounds correctly), receptive language (understanding spoken or written language), expressive language (using words to express thoughts), or pragmatic language (using language appropriately in social contexts) (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2005). These disorders can significantly affect a child's ability to engage with peers and adults, follow classroom instructions, or participate in group activities, impacting both their academic and social development.

Early identification and intervention are critical in managing communication disorders effectively. Teachers and caregivers play a pivotal role in recognizing early signs of speech and language delays, such as limited vocabulary, difficulty forming sentences, or challenges with social communication (Justice & Redle, 2014). Once identified, tailored interventions can be employed to support these children. Visual aids, such as picture cards and communication boards, are commonly used to enhance understanding and reduce frustration. Additionally, integrating speech therapy techniques into classroom activities such as modeling correct speech, expanding children's utterances, and using repetitive language games can be highly beneficial.

Collaboration with speech-language pathologists (SLPs) is essential for developing and implementing effective intervention strategies. SLPs can provide specialized assessments, design individualized therapy plans, and offer guidance to teachers on best practices for language facilitation in the classroom (Justice & Redle, 2014). Peer modeling, where children learn communication skills by interacting with their peers, is another effective method for promoting language development and social integration. Teachers can create opportunities for structured peer interactions, encouraging children with communication disorders to engage in meaningful conversations.

Creating a language-rich classroom environment is also vital. This includes storytelling sessions, interactive read-alouds, and the use of songs and rhymes to reinforce language skills. Teachers can further support children by employing scaffolding techniques, such as breaking down complex instructions into simpler steps and providing ample time for children to process and respond. These approaches, combined with ongoing collaboration among educators, families, and specialists, ensure that children with communication disorders receive the comprehensive support they need to academically and socially thrive (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2005).

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Early Childhood Education

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental condition characterized by challenges in social communication, restricted interests, and repetitive behaviors. The spectrum nature of ASD means that each child presents a unique set of strengths and difficulties, necessitating highly individualized education plans (IEPs) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Children with ASD may exhibit delays in language development, have difficulty understanding nonverbal cues, or struggle to initiate and maintain conversations. These challenges often impact their ability to form social relationships and engage fully in classroom activities.

Structured environments and predictable routines are essential in supporting children with ASD. Consistency in daily schedules helps reduce anxiety and enhance focus, while visual schedules and clear, step-by-step instructions can improve understanding and engagement (Wong et al., 2015). Sensory-friendly classrooms that accommodate sensory processing differences, such as using noise-canceling headphones or providing quiet spaces, can also make the learning environment more accessible and comfortable.

Evidence-based practices like Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) are widely used to promote skill development in children with ASD. ABA focuses on using positive reinforcement to encourage desired behaviors and has been shown to be effective in teaching communication and social skills (Wong et al., 2015). PECS, on the other hand, enables nonverbal children to communicate using pictures, fostering independence and reducing frustration. Teachers trained in these methods can implement them seamlessly into daily routines.

Collaboration with families and multidisciplinary teams, including occupational therapists and behavioral specialists, is crucial. Parents provide valuable insights into their child's preferences and triggers, enabling teachers to tailor their approaches more effectively. Regular communication between educators and families ensures consistency between home and school environments, supporting the child's development holistically. Overall, a comprehensive, inclusive approach that considers each child's needs and strengths helps create a supportive educational experience for children with ASD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Physical Disabilities in Early Childhood Education

Physical disabilities, encompassing conditions such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and spina bifida, present unique challenges in early childhood educational settings. These impairments impact a child's physical functioning, mobility, and coordination, often necessitating environmental adaptations to ensure equitable participation in classroom activities. Early intervention is crucial, as it helps develop motor skills and promotes inclusion from a young age. Assistive technologies, such as wheelchairs, adaptive writing tools, and communication devices, can empower children with physical disabilities to engage meaningfully in academic and social contexts (World Health Organization, 2022; Murphy & Carbone, 2008).

Inclusive practices, such as employing the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), are vital. These approaches emphasize designing classrooms that accommodate a wide range of abilities, making learning accessible to all. Modifications may include installing ramps, using height-adjustable tables, and incorporating flexible seating arrangements. Teachers must work collaboratively with physical and occupational therapists to create tailored educational plans that address each child's unique needs, ensuring that physical barriers do not hinder learning opportunities (Pivik et al., 2002; Lancaster & Bain, 2023).

Furthermore, physical education is a critical component of development for children with physical disabilities. Adaptive physical education programs emphasize movement skills that are both engaging and safe, allowing children to build strength, coordination, and confidence. Educators must also consider peer relationships, fostering an inclusive classroom culture that promotes empathy and cooperation among students. By raising awareness and encouraging positive interactions, teachers can create a supportive learning environment for all (Anaby et al., 2023).

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Early Childhood Education

Emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) in early childhood significantly impact children's ability to engage in educational settings, requiring strategic interventions to support their development and learning. Conditions under the EBD umbrella include anxiety disorders, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). These children may exhibit disruptive behaviors such as aggression or defiance, or conversely, symptoms of withdrawal and anxiety that affect classroom engagement. Effective educational strategies emphasize creating structured routines, providing emotional regulation tools, and employing positive behavior supports to promote appropriate classroom conduct (Kauffman & Landrum, 2018; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010).

Teachers play a pivotal role in implementing behavior management strategies that reduce disruptions and promote learning. Clear and consistent expectations, coupled with immediate and positive reinforcement, are key techniques. Furthermore, social-emotional learning (SEL) programs have shown significant promise in helping children develop emotional awareness, self-regulation, and social skills. SEL can be incorporated into daily activities through stories, role-playing, and guided discussions about emotions (Durlak et al., 2011; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2022).

Collaboration with mental health professionals, such as school psychologists or counselors, is also essential. These specialists provide insights into individualized education plans (IEPs) and behavioral intervention strategies that support children's unique needs. Teachers and parents must work together to create a consistent approach to managing behaviors, ensuring that interventions are effective both at school and at home. Addressing EBD comprehensively enhances academic performance and emotional well-being, preparing children for long-term success (Lane et al., 2019; Cook et al., 2022).

Hearing Loss in Early Childhood Education

Hearing loss, which ranges from mild to profound, significantly impacts a child's ability to develop language and communication skills. In early childhood education (ECE), hearing impairments can affect social interactions, speech development, and overall academic performance. Early identification and intervention are essential to mitigate these impacts, as hearing loss can hinder the development of critical communication skills during formative years (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2021; Yoshinaga-Itano, 2020).

Teachers play a crucial role in creating inclusive classrooms for children with hearing loss. Strategies include the use of visual aids, incorporating sign language, and employing hearing assistive technologies such as FM systems. Classroom modifications, like arranging seating to ensure clear visibility of the teacher and peers, are necessary for effective learning. Teachers must also use clear speech and provide written instructions to complement verbal communication, ensuring that children can follow along with lessons (Marschark & Hauser, 2011; Spencer & Marschark, 2020).

Collaboration with audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and parents is critical for successful intervention. These partnerships help to tailor individualized education plans (IEPs) that address specific needs, promoting academic and social development. Additionally, educators should foster an environment of peer support and understanding, teaching all students about hearing differences to create a more inclusive and empathetic classroom (Moeller et al., 2013; Swanwick, 2021).

The use of technology, such as video captioning and interactive apps, further enhances learning opportunities. As inclusive practices evolve, ensuring that educators receive training in supporting children with hearing loss remains a priority. Research underscores the importance of early and ongoing support to help these children reach their full potential, emphasizing a holistic approach that integrates family and community resources (Fulcher et al., 2015).

Visual Disability in Early Childhood Education

Visual disabilities range from low vision to total blindness, impacting a child's ability to learn through traditional visual means. In early childhood education, these impairments require specific accommodations to promote development across cognitive, social, and motor domains. Teachers must adapt instructional strategies to provide equitable access to learning materials and foster an inclusive environment (Ferrell et al., 2017).

Key strategies include using tactile resources, such as braille books and raised-line drawings, to support literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers should also employ audio descriptions, screen readers, and accessible educational software to facilitate learning. Arranging classrooms with clear pathways and minimizing obstacles enhances safety and mobility, allowing children with visual impairments to navigate their environment confidently (Holbrook et al., 2016; Hatlen, 2019).

Collaborative teamwork involving orientation and mobility specialists, vision teachers, and parents is crucial. These partnerships help design individualized educational plans that cater to the child's unique needs, emphasizing independence and self-advocacy. Additionally, training peers to interact inclusively with children who have visual disabilities fosters a sense of community and reduces social isolation (Douglas et al., 2019; Ravenscroft, 2021).

Educators must also emphasize experiential learning, using multi-sensory approaches to engage all children. For instance, hands-on activities, auditory storytelling, and real-life experiences can be particularly effective for children with visual disabilities. Professional development for teachers is necessary to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement these strategies effectively (Sacks & Rosenblum, 2020). As research continues to shape best practices, a focus on inclusivity and collaboration remains at the forefront of supporting children with visual disabilities in early educational settings.

2.6 Benefits of Inclusion in Early Childhood Education

Inclusion in early childhood education (ECE) brings many benefits for all children, not just those with disabilities. By integrating children with diverse abilities into mainstream classrooms, inclusion fosters a more equitable and enriching learning environment that promotes developmental, academic, and social growth. These benefits extend to children with and without disabilities, as well as to educators and the broader school community.

Promoting Social Development and Acceptance

One of the most significant advantages of inclusive ECE settings is the promotion of social development and acceptance among all children. In classrooms where children with and without disabilities learn side-by-side, children are exposed to a variety of abilities and learn to appreciate

differences from an early age. This exposure fosters empathy, respect, and understanding, reducing prejudice and stigma associated with disabilities (Odom et al. 2011). Research has shown that children without disabilities in inclusive settings develop stronger social-emotional skills and become more adept at navigating diverse social interactions (Guralnick, 2011).

For children with disabilities, inclusive environments provide valuable opportunities for peer modeling. Observing and interacting with peers can help these children develop social and communication skills more effectively than in segregated settings (Wolery & Odom, 2000). Peer interactions can also encourage a sense of belonging and boost self-esteem, which is crucial for emotional well-being and engagement in learning activities (Bailey et al., 1998).

Enhancing Academic Achievement

Inclusion in ECE has also been associated with improved academic outcomes for children with disabilities. Inclusive classrooms often employ differentiated instruction and universal design for learning (UDL) strategies, which cater to various learning styles and needs. These instructional practices not only benefit children with disabilities but also enhance the learning experience for typically developing peers (CAST, 2018). According to a study by Hehir et al. (2016), students with disabilities in inclusive settings tend to achieve better academic results compared to those in segregated classrooms, as they are provided with more stimulating and engaging learning opportunities.

Moreover, children without disabilities in inclusive classrooms are often exposed to adaptive learning strategies, which can enhance their cognitive skills and problem-solving abilities (Katz & Miranda, 2002). The diversity of teaching methods in inclusive settings encourages all students to

think critically and learn in flexible, creative ways. This holistic approach to education prepares children for future academic success and fosters a lifelong love of learning.

Building a Sense of Community

Inclusive ECE settings help build a strong sense of community within classrooms and schools. When children of all abilities learn together, they develop a shared sense of belonging and collective responsibility. Teachers play a crucial role in fostering this sense of community by creating a classroom culture that values collaboration, mutual support, and inclusive practices (Smith & Smith, 2000). Such an environment not only supports the development of interpersonal skills but also instills a sense of collective identity and purpose among students.

Parents of children with disabilities also benefit from inclusive education. They gain a sense of normalcy and acceptance when their children are included in mainstream settings, and they can engage more actively with the school community (Hornby, 2011). Additionally, inclusive schools often promote partnerships between families and educators, which are essential for creating a supportive learning environment that addresses the unique needs of every child (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, et al., 2004).

Fostering Teacher Professional Growth

Inclusive education also presents opportunities for professional growth among educators. Teaching in inclusive classrooms requires teachers to expand their knowledge and skills in differentiated instruction, behavior management, and the use of assistive technologies. This professional development can enhance teaching quality and benefit all students, not just those with disabilities (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Teachers learn to be more flexible, creative, and responsive to the diverse needs of their students, leading to more dynamic and engaging learning environments.

Moreover, collaboration among teachers, special education professionals, and therapists becomes a central aspect of inclusive education. Such collaboration fosters a sense of teamwork and shared purpose among educators, contributing to a more positive and supportive school culture (Friend & Cook, 2010). Teachers in inclusive settings often report greater job satisfaction and a deeper sense of fulfillment, knowing that they are making a meaningful difference in the lives of all their students.

Preparing Children for a Diverse World

In today's globalized and interconnected society, inclusion in ECE plays a crucial role in preparing children to live and work in diverse environments. By experiencing diversity firsthand, children learn to value and celebrate differences, equipping them with the cultural competence needed for success in the 21st century (Brown & Broido, 2016). Inclusive education promotes values such as tolerance, respect, and collaboration, which are essential for building cohesive and inclusive communities.

Furthermore, inclusion encourages children to view differences as strengths rather than deficits. This mindset fosters a positive and inclusive worldview that children carry into adulthood, contributing to a more just and equitable society (Slee, 2018). As children grow up with an understanding of the importance of inclusion, they are more likely to advocate for social change and challenge discriminatory practices.

2.7 Teachers' Views about Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Centres

Early childhood education is critical in shaping the attitudes and skills of children as they transition into formal schooling. As the movement toward inclusive education gains momentum, understanding early childhood teachers' views on inclusive practices becomes increasingly

important. Training is a crucial factor in shaping educators' attitudes toward inclusive practices. Research indicates that teachers who receive specialized training in inclusive education tend to have more positive views and higher levels of self-efficacy when working with children who have diverse needs (Avissar & Shpigelman, 2017). For instance, Baker (2017) found that educators who participated in professional development focused on inclusive strategies reported greater confidence in their ability to adapt curricula and teaching methods to accommodate all learners. Such training helps teachers develop the necessary skills to create inclusive classrooms that support the learning and development of every child, regardless of their abilities.

Conversely, a lack of training can lead to feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty about implementing inclusive practices. Many early childhood educators express concerns about their preparedness to support children with disabilities or special needs effectively (Browne et al., 2020). This lack of confidence can hinder their willingness to embrace inclusion, as they may revert to traditional teaching methods that do not adequately address the diverse needs of their students. Educators who have not received training in inclusive education may feel overwhelmed by the demands of accommodating various learners, which can foster resistance to inclusive practices (Kwon, 2019). Professional development opportunities that are ongoing and practical in nature are essential for fostering positive attitudes toward inclusion. Workshops, seminars, and collaborative training sessions can provide educators with the tools and strategies necessary to implement inclusive practices effectively. By engaging in reflective practice and sharing experiences with peers, teachers can enhance their understanding of inclusive education and develop a stronger commitment to its principles (Baker, 2017).

Teachers' personal and professional experiences significantly influence their views on inclusive education. Educators who have firsthand experience working with children with disabilities or

diverse learning needs tend to have a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and benefits associated with inclusion. These experiences often lead to greater empathy and a commitment to creating inclusive classrooms, as teachers recognize the positive outcomes of inclusive settings for all children (Kwon, 2019).

For example, a study by Loreman (2007) highlights that teachers who have previously worked in inclusive environments or have had exposure to children with disabilities through internships or volunteer work are more likely to embrace inclusive practices. Such experiences help educators develop a deeper appreciation for the value of diversity in the classroom and the importance of meeting the individual needs of each child.

However, negative experiences can have the opposite effect. Teachers who have encountered challenges or felt unsupported in inclusive settings may develop skepticism about the efficacy of inclusive practices. For instance, educators who experience difficulties in managing a classroom with a wide range of abilities without adequate support may become disillusioned with the idea of inclusion (Browne et al., 2020). Such experiences can lead to frustration and reluctance to adopt inclusive practices, highlighting the importance of supportive environments for fostering positive attitudes.

The availability of resources is another critical factor influencing educators' perceptions of inclusive practices. Resources can encompass a range of supports, including teaching materials, assistive technologies, specialized staff, and classroom adaptations. Teachers in well-resourced environments often feel more confident and empowered to implement inclusive practices, as they have access to the tools necessary to meet the diverse needs of their students (Baker, 2017). For instance, access to adaptive technologies can facilitate learning for children with disabilities, enabling them to engage meaningfully in classroom activities.

In contrast, educators working in under-resourced settings may face significant challenges in implementing inclusive practices. A lack of adequate materials, support staff, and training can lead to feelings of helplessness and frustration among teachers (Browne et al., 2020). In such environments, educators may feel compelled to revert to traditional teaching methods that do not accommodate diverse learners, ultimately undermining the principles of inclusion. The disparity in resources available to different early childhood programs can create significant barriers to effective inclusive education, limiting opportunities for all children to thrive.

Moreover, the role of administrative support cannot be overstated. When school leadership actively promotes inclusion and provides the necessary resources, educators are more likely to embrace inclusive practices. For instance, schools that prioritize professional development, collaborative planning, and access to resources create an environment conducive to inclusive education (Kwon, 2019). In contrast, institutions that lack a clear commitment to inclusion can foster confusion and resistance among educators, making it challenging to implement effective inclusive practices.

The institutional culture surrounding inclusion in early childhood education settings significantly influences teachers' views and practices. Supportive leadership, collaboration among staff, and a shared vision for inclusive education contribute to a positive environment that encourages teachers to embrace inclusion (Browne et al., 2020). When teachers perceive that their school values inclusivity and provides the necessary resources and support, they are more likely to feel empowered to implement inclusive practices effectively.

Conversely, a lack of institutional support can create barriers to inclusion. Teachers may feel isolated or unsupported in their efforts to accommodate diverse learners, leading to reluctance to pursue inclusive strategies (Kwon, 2019). Additionally, when school cultures prioritize

standardized testing and traditional educational models, educators may feel pressured to focus on compliance rather than meeting the individual needs of their students.

Many early childhood educators recognize the inherent value of inclusive education, understanding that it promotes a sense of belonging and social acceptance among children of varying abilities. This acknowledgment stems from a growing body of research indicating that inclusive practices not only benefit children with disabilities but also enhance the overall developmental outcomes for all students in early childhood settings.

At its core, inclusive education seeks to create environments where all children feel valued and accepted. Educators who embrace inclusive practices highlight the importance of fostering a sense of belonging for every child, regardless of their abilities or challenges. According to Torgesen (2020), creating inclusive environments helps children develop positive self-identities and reduces stigma associated with disabilities. By integrating children with disabilities into regular classrooms, educators encourage interactions that promote understanding and acceptance among peers, which is essential for developing a supportive social fabric.

Research supports the notion that inclusion benefits not only children with disabilities but also their typically developing peers. Educators who adopt inclusive practices report observing improvements in social skills, communication, and empathy among all children in the classroom. For instance, Baker (2017) noted that inclusive classrooms foster opportunities for collaboration and peer interactions, allowing children to learn from one another. When typically developing children engage with their peers who have disabilities, they often gain valuable insights into diverse perspectives and experiences, enhancing their emotional intelligence and social competencies.

Kwon (2019) further emphasizes that inclusion encourages children to develop essential social skills, such as cooperation, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. These skills are vital for successful interpersonal relationships throughout life. In inclusive settings, children learn to appreciate differences, fostering a culture of acceptance and mutual respect. Such interactions not only support the development of empathy but also prepare children for diverse social environments they will encounter outside of school.

In addition to promoting social skills, inclusive education has been linked to improved educational outcomes for all children. Research indicates that children in inclusive settings often perform better academically than their peers in segregated environments (Miller & Mervosh, 2022). This is attributed to the enriched learning opportunities provided by diverse classrooms, where children learn from each other's strengths and approaches to problem-solving. Early childhood educators believe that exposure to various learning styles and abilities can stimulate creativity and critical thinking among all students.

Moreover, the emotional benefits of inclusive education are profound. Children in inclusive classrooms report feeling more secure and supported, as they learn in an environment that values diversity and individual differences (Avissar & Shpigelman, 2017). This sense of security encourages risk-taking in learning, as children feel free to express themselves without fear of judgment. As educators cultivate inclusive classrooms, they contribute to creating a positive emotional climate that promotes resilience and well-being among all children.

2.8 Influence of Cultural Beliefs on Attitudes Toward Inclusion

Cultural beliefs play a critical role in shaping educators' attitudes toward inclusive education. Research indicates that these beliefs significantly influence how teachers perceive and implement inclusive practices within their classrooms (Dignath et al., 2022). For instance, educators hailing

from cultures that prioritize collectivism often exhibit a greater inclination to embrace inclusive education. Such cultures emphasize community values, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, which align closely with the principles of inclusion. According to Sato et al. (2021), teachers in collectivist societies are more likely to view inclusion as a natural extension of their cultural values, facilitating a supportive environment where all children, regardless of their abilities, are integrated into the learning community.

Conversely, educators from cultures that emphasize individualism may adopt a different perspective on inclusion. Individualistic cultures tend to prioritize personal achievement, competition, and self-reliance, which can lead to skepticism regarding the effectiveness of inclusive education (Baker et al., 2021). In these contexts, teachers may focus on standardized testing and academic performance as measures of success, potentially marginalizing the needs of students with disabilities. This focus on individual success can create barriers to the acceptance of inclusive practices, as educators may question whether accommodating diverse learners detracts from overall academic achievement. Such attitudes reflect a broader societal emphasis on individualism that can permeate educational environments, making it challenging to promote a truly inclusive approach.

The influence of cultural beliefs extends to educators' perceptions of disability itself. Teachers' beliefs about disability can vary dramatically across cultural contexts, affecting their understanding of the needs of children with disabilities. In some cultures, disability is often viewed through a medical lens, wherein it is seen as an individual deficit requiring specialized intervention and support. This perspective may lead teachers to feel that they lack the necessary expertise to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities, creating a sense of inadequacy in their ability to implement inclusive practices (Browne, 2020).

On the other hand, in cultures that regard disability as a social phenomenon, the emphasis is placed on the need for community support and inclusion. Here, disability is not solely perceived as a medical issue but as a condition that society must accommodate. Educators in these cultural contexts may be more inclined to advocate for inclusive practices, viewing them as essential for fostering a sense of belonging among all children (Browne, 2020). This cultural perspective encourages teachers to recognize the strengths and abilities of all students, promoting a more holistic approach to education that values diversity.

These differing beliefs about disability and inclusion can create significant barriers to effective implementation in early childhood settings. Teachers who hold medicalized views of disability may feel unprepared or unsupported when it comes to accommodating diverse learners within their classrooms. This lack of confidence can hinder their ability to create inclusive environments that cater to the needs of all students. Moreover, if teachers perceive that their educational institutions do not support inclusive practices, they may become resistant to change, perpetuating existing exclusionary practices (Sato et al., 2021).

Additionally, cultural beliefs influence not only individual educators but also the broader educational policies and practices within their regions. In communities where collectivism is valued, there may be more emphasis on developing policies that support inclusive education, thereby fostering a culture of acceptance and integration within schools. In contrast, policies in individualistic societies may prioritize standardization and competition, which could inadvertently discourage inclusive practices (Baker et al., 2021).

Cultural beliefs profoundly impact teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. Educators from collectivist cultures are generally more supportive of inclusive practices, viewing them as aligned with community values. In contrast, those from individualistic cultures may prioritize academic

achievement over inclusivity, leading to skepticism regarding the effectiveness of inclusive education. These cultural influences extend to perceptions of disability, which can create barriers to implementing inclusive practices. To foster truly inclusive educational environments, it is essential to recognize and address these cultural factors, providing teachers with the training and support necessary to navigate their beliefs and embrace inclusivity within their classrooms.

Competence is essential for educators, as classrooms are increasingly diverse, and teachers must navigate various cultural contexts. Research by Ghosh (2020) highlights the significance of incorporating cultural responsiveness into teacher education curricula. By embedding cultural competence into teacher training, future educators can learn to appreciate and respect diverse backgrounds and learning needs, which in turn enhances their ability to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms.

Training that emphasizes cultural awareness helps teachers recognize their own biases and assumptions, fostering a more empathetic and understanding approach toward students from varied backgrounds. Educators who are culturally competent are better equipped to create learning environments that acknowledge and celebrate diversity, leading to increased student engagement and success. Ghosh (2020) argues that this cultural awareness not only benefits students with disabilities but also enhances the overall classroom experience by promoting inclusivity and mutual respect among all students.

Conversely, when teacher preparation programs do not adequately address cultural competence, educators may struggle to implement inclusive practices, especially in culturally diverse settings. Without the necessary training and resources, teachers may revert to traditional teaching methods that do not accommodate the unique needs of all students (Avisar & Shpigelman, 2017). Such methods may inadvertently marginalize students who do not fit the "norm," thereby reinforcing

negative cultural beliefs about inclusion. Teachers may believe that inclusive practices are too challenging to implement or that they lack the skills required to meet the diverse needs of their students.

The impact of inadequate preparation is particularly concerning in classrooms with high diversity, where students may come from varying cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Teachers who lack cultural competence may feel overwhelmed and unsupported, leading to frustration and a diminished sense of efficacy. This can create a cycle of exclusion, where students who require additional support are left behind. Avissar and Shpigelman (2017) note that teachers who do not receive proper training may struggle to understand the specific needs of their students, leading to a lack of effective interventions and supports that could promote inclusive education.

Moreover, this gap in teacher preparation can perpetuate existing stereotypes and biases, further entrenching negative cultural beliefs about inclusion (Avissar & Shpigelman, 2017). When educators are not equipped with the tools to understand and embrace diversity, they may hold onto misconceptions that students with disabilities or from different cultural backgrounds are less capable of success in an inclusive setting. This perception can lead to lower expectations for these students, which is detrimental to their academic and social development (Ghosh, 2020).

To address the aforementioned issues, teacher preparation programs must prioritize cultural competence and inclusive education as central components of their curricula (Ghosh, 2020). Educators should engage in reflective practices that challenge their biases and assumptions while learning effective strategies for fostering an inclusive classroom environment (Avissar & Shpigelman, 2017). Collaborations with communities, families, and organizations that advocate for inclusivity can further enrich teacher training, providing future educators with real-world insights and experiences that inform their teaching practices.

2.9 Support Services Available to Early Childhood Teachers' Inclusive Practices

The implementation of inclusive practices in early childhood education is a complex endeavor that necessitates a robust support system for educators. As the emphasis on inclusive education increases, it is crucial to provide early childhood teachers with the necessary resources, training, and collaborative frameworks to effectively meet the diverse needs of all students, including those with disabilities. This review discusses various support services available to early childhood teachers, highlighting their significance in fostering an inclusive educational environment.

Professional Development and Training

Professional development opportunities are essential for equipping early childhood educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement inclusive practices effectively. Research indicates that ongoing training programs focusing on inclusive pedagogy significantly enhance teachers' competence and confidence in working with diverse learners (Baker et al., 2021). These professional development initiatives often encompass workshops, seminars, and coaching sessions that address specific strategies for accommodating students with varying needs. By participating in these programs, educators can learn about best practices for supporting children with disabilities and those from diverse cultural backgrounds, which is critical in fostering an inclusive environment.

Moreover, inclusive training programs that emphasize culturally responsive teaching can further bolster educators' ability to engage with children from diverse backgrounds. According to Ghosh (2020), culturally competent training enables teachers to recognize and appreciate the unique cultural contexts of their students, facilitating a more inclusive and supportive classroom atmosphere. This understanding is vital in early childhood settings, where children's backgrounds can significantly influence their learning experiences. Educators who are culturally aware can

tailor their teaching methods to meet the needs of all students, ensuring that everyone feels valued and included in the learning process.

Hands-on training and practical experiences within professional development programs are crucial for effective learning. Workshops that involve role-playing, simulations, or case studies allow teachers to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios, enhancing their readiness to implement inclusive strategies effectively. Research shows that educators who engage in such practical training feel more prepared to address the diverse needs of their students (Ghosh, 2020). These experiences build the necessary confidence and competence that educators require to create inclusive classrooms where all children can succeed.

Additionally, the inclusion of collaborative learning opportunities in professional development can greatly enhance the implementation of inclusive practices. Professional learning communities (PLCs) provide a platform for teachers to share experiences, discuss challenges, and collaboratively develop solutions related to inclusive education. These communities foster a sense of belonging among educators, allowing them to learn from one another and gain insights into effective practices that have been successful in different contexts (Baker et al., 2021). When educators can exchange ideas and strategies, they are more likely to adopt inclusive practices and feel supported in their efforts.

Furthermore, partnerships with special education professionals can enrich professional development experiences. When general educators collaborate with special educators during training sessions, they gain valuable perspectives on how to effectively support students with disabilities in inclusive settings. This collaboration fosters a deeper understanding of the individualized strategies necessary for accommodating diverse learners (Smith & Kearney, 2021).

Such partnerships are critical for bridging the gap between general and special education, allowing for a more integrated approach to teaching that benefits all students.

Despite the clear benefits of professional development in fostering inclusive practices, several barriers can impede its effectiveness. Limited access to quality training opportunities, particularly in rural or under-resourced areas, can leave educators feeling unprepared to implement inclusive strategies (Ghosh, 2020). Additionally, the lack of institutional support for professional development initiatives can lead to inadequate training that fails to meet the specific needs of educators. For instance, without proper guidance and resources, teachers may revert to traditional teaching methods that do not accommodate the diverse needs of all students.

Time constraints within the school schedule often hinder educators' ability to participate in professional development programs. Many educators juggle multiple responsibilities, making it challenging to find time for ongoing training. To address these challenges, educational institutions must prioritize and invest in comprehensive professional development plans that align with the goals of inclusive education. This investment includes allocating time for training within the school calendar and ensuring that resources are available to facilitate ongoing learning.

Collaborative Support Systems

Collaborative support systems are crucial for promoting inclusive practices in early childhood education, as they foster a cohesive approach to meeting the diverse needs of all students. Effective collaboration among educators, specialists, and families creates a network of support that enhances educational outcomes for children with disabilities and their peers. One effective model of collaboration is the co-teaching approach, where general and special education teachers work together in the same classroom. This partnership allows for the sharing of expertise, resources, and

strategies, ultimately improving the quality of instruction for all students. Research by Smith and Kearney (2021) highlighted that co-teaching facilitates effective differentiation and accommodations, ensuring that instruction is tailored to meet the varied learning needs of each child.

Moreover, collaborative practices extend beyond co-teaching arrangements to include a wider range of professionals, such as special education teachers, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists. This multidisciplinary approach is essential for addressing the specific needs of children with disabilities, as it allows educators to draw upon a wealth of knowledge and expertise. Baker et al. (2021) emphasize that collaboration with these specialists equips teachers with practical strategies and insights, enabling them to implement targeted interventions that support the developmental goals of their students. For example, speech and language therapists can offer guidance on promoting communication skills among children with speech delays, while occupational therapists can provide strategies for improving fine motor skills essential for classroom participation.

Involving families in the collaborative process is equally important. When families are engaged in their children's education, it promotes a holistic approach to inclusion that acknowledges the unique strengths and challenges of each child. Collaboration with families allows educators to gain valuable insights into children's backgrounds, interests, and learning styles, which can inform instructional practices. Research indicates that when families collaborate with teachers and specialists, there is a greater likelihood of positive educational outcomes for children with disabilities (Ghosh, 2020). This partnership fosters a shared responsibility for the child's development, enhancing the support network available to educators.

Additionally, professional development programs that emphasize collaboration can further strengthen these support systems. Training that focuses on effective communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution among educators and specialists can enhance collaborative practices within schools. When teachers feel confident in their ability to work as part of a team, they are more likely to seek out and utilize the expertise of their colleagues and specialists to support their students effectively.

Access to Resources and Materials

Access to appropriate resources and materials is paramount for the successful implementation of inclusive practices in early childhood education. These resources enable educators to cater to the diverse needs of all students, particularly those with disabilities or different learning styles. When early childhood centers provide a variety of teaching aids, adaptive materials, and assistive technologies, they create an environment that supports meaningful learning experiences for every child. This access not only enhances the quality of education but also promotes an inclusive culture within the classroom.

Early childhood educators require specific types of resources to effectively implement inclusive practices. Research shows that teaching aids such as visual supports, sensory materials, and developmentally appropriate activities are essential for accommodating various learning needs (Smith & Kearney, 2021). For instance, visual schedules can help children with autism understand daily routines, while tactile materials can support children with sensory processing disorders. Similarly, the incorporation of diverse and culturally relevant materials can foster a sense of belonging among children from different backgrounds, reinforcing the importance of inclusivity in educational settings (Baker et al., 2021).

Assistive technology also plays a crucial role in facilitating inclusive practices. Tools such as speech-to-text software, audio books, and communication devices empower children with disabilities to participate actively in classroom activities. Research indicates that the effective use of assistive technology not only supports the learning of students with disabilities but also benefits their peers by promoting a collaborative learning environment (Browne, 2020). For example, when educators incorporate technology that enables children to express their ideas creatively, such as through multimedia presentations, all students can engage in the learning process, thereby reinforcing the principles of inclusion.

Moreover, the responsibility for providing access to resources does not solely rest with individual educators; schools and educational institutions must prioritize investment in inclusive resources. Administrative support is vital in ensuring that early childhood centers are equipped with the necessary materials to meet the diverse needs of their students. This includes not only the physical resources but also training and support for teachers in how to effectively use these tools in their classrooms. Professional development initiatives that focus on resource utilization can empower educators, enabling them to maximize the impact of the materials available to them (Ghosh, 2020).

Local educational agencies and government programs also have a significant role to play in enhancing resource availability for inclusive education. By offering grants and funding opportunities specifically aimed at supporting inclusive practices, these agencies can help schools acquire the necessary resources to implement effective programs. Such funding can be used to purchase adaptive materials, provide professional development for staff, and create inclusive learning environments that benefit all children (Avissar & Shpigelman, 2017). Furthermore, establishing partnerships with community organizations can lead to shared resources and expertise, enriching the educational experience for students with diverse needs.

To create a truly inclusive environment, schools must adopt a systemic approach to resource allocation. This means not only providing materials but also ensuring that they are integrated into the curriculum effectively. Educators should be trained in how to incorporate various resources into their teaching strategies, allowing for differentiation and personalization of instruction. For instance, using multiple modalities to present information—such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic can cater to different learning preferences and abilities, thus fostering an inclusive classroom atmosphere (Ghosh, 2020).

Additionally, ongoing assessment of resource effectiveness is crucial. Educators should regularly evaluate whether the materials and resources provided meet the needs of their students. This can be achieved through feedback from both students and families, enabling educators to make informed decisions about resource use and necessary adjustments. Furthermore, involving families in the resource evaluation process can strengthen the connection between home and school, as families can provide insights into their children's needs and preferences (Baker et al., 2021).

Parental and Community Involvement

Parental and community involvement is a fundamental aspect of promoting effective inclusive education in early childhood settings. Engaging families in the educational process not only enriches the learning environment but also provides early childhood educators with invaluable insights into the unique needs and strengths of their students. Research indicates that when parents actively participate in their child's education, they contribute to a more seamless transition to inclusive practices, fostering an atmosphere where all children can thrive (Ghosh, 2020).

Parents are often the first educators in a child's life, and their perspectives are crucial in understanding a child's specific needs, challenges, and abilities. By sharing their experiences and

insights, parents can help teachers tailor their instructional approaches and strategies to better accommodate individual learning styles. For instance, parental involvement can include participating in parent-teacher conferences, providing feedback on school programs, or volunteering in the classroom. These collaborative efforts not only strengthen the relationship between families and educators but also empower parents to take an active role in their child's educational journey, fostering a shared commitment to inclusion (Baker et al., 2021).

Moreover, community organizations can serve as vital partners in the inclusive education process. They can offer a range of resources, workshops, and advocacy initiatives that promote awareness and acceptance of diversity within the educational system. By collaborating with local organizations, schools can enhance their support systems and provide additional resources that address the diverse needs of their students. For example, community groups may offer training sessions for educators on culturally responsive teaching or provide families with resources that help them support their children's learning at home (Smith & Kearney, 2021).

Establishing strong links between schools and community resources can also facilitate the development of inclusive practices by creating a network of support for both educators and families. These connections enable schools to access a broader range of expertise and services, such as mental health support, language translation services, and specialized educational programs. This comprehensive support system can significantly enhance the overall educational experience for children with diverse needs, ensuring they receive the individualized attention necessary for their growth and development (Browne, 2020).

Mentoring and Peer Support

Inclusive school practices in early childhood centers play a crucial role in fostering an environment where all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, can learn and thrive together. One of the foundational aspects of inclusive education is the recognition of the diverse needs of all students and the implementation of strategies that promote equity in learning opportunities. This approach is not only beneficial for children with disabilities but also enriches the educational experience for all learners, encouraging social interactions, empathy, and cooperation (Baker et al., 2021).

A core component of inclusive practices is the use of individualized education plans (IEPs) for children with special needs. These plans are developed collaboratively by educators, parents, and specialists to outline specific goals and the necessary accommodations to support the child's learning. Research indicates that when educators effectively implement IEPs, they can better tailor instruction to meet the unique needs of each child, thus enhancing engagement and academic success (Ghosh, 2020). Furthermore, involving families in this process ensures that the strategies align with the child's home environment, thereby reinforcing learning and fostering a holistic approach to education.

In addition to IEPs, inclusive early childhood centers often employ co-teaching models, where general and special education teachers work together in the same classroom. This collaborative approach enables educators to share expertise and resources, creating a more supportive learning environment. Studies have shown that co-teaching not only improves instructional quality but also fosters a sense of community among students, as they learn to appreciate and respect diversity (Smith & Kearney, 2021).

Another essential aspect of inclusive practices is the use of culturally responsive teaching methods. These practices recognize and celebrate the cultural backgrounds of all students, ensuring that the curriculum is relevant and engaging for everyone. Culturally responsive pedagogy promotes inclusivity by validating students' identities and experiences, which can significantly enhance their motivation and participation in the classroom (Browne, 2020). Educators trained in culturally responsive practices are better equipped to address the diverse needs of their students, making learning more accessible and meaningful.

Moreover, access to appropriate resources and materials is vital for successful inclusive education. Early childhood centers must provide various adaptive tools, assistive technologies, and sensory materials to support children with different learning styles and abilities. This resource allocation allows educators to implement varied instructional strategies, catering to the diverse learning preferences of their students (Baker et al., 2021).

2.10 Teacher Training Towards the Implementation of Inclusive Practices

The successful implementation of inclusive practices in early childhood centers largely hinges on the level of training that educators receive. Research has consistently shown that teachers who are well-prepared and trained in inclusive education are more confident and competent in meeting the diverse needs of all learners.

Inclusive education is fundamentally about providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. This philosophy recognizes the unique needs of children with disabilities and those from diverse cultural contexts, aiming to create an educational environment where every student can thrive (Baker et al., 2021). Central to achieving this goal is the role of educators, whose attitudes and beliefs can significantly shape the inclusivity

of their classrooms. As noted by Avissar and Shpigelman (2017), the training that teachers receive in inclusive practices directly impacts their effectiveness in fostering an inclusive environment.

Training programs designed to emphasize inclusive education are essential for enhancing educators' understanding of diverse learning needs and the pedagogical strategies necessary to address them. These programs focus on the critical elements of fostering a supportive classroom environment, which is vital for the success of all students, especially those with special needs. Research indicates that teachers who participate in targeted professional development gain not only knowledge but also practical skills that empower them to create inclusive settings (Baker et al., 2021). This training often includes workshops, seminars, and hands-on experiences that encourage teachers to engage with diverse learners and develop the necessary competencies to support them effectively.

A study by Ghosh (2020) emphasizes that training in inclusive education should encompass multiple dimensions: theoretical knowledge, practical strategies, and culturally responsive practices. This comprehensive approach equips teachers with the tools needed to recognize the unique strengths and challenges of each student. For example, understanding how to create and implement Individual Education Plans (IEPs) is crucial for teachers working with children with disabilities. IEPs outline specific educational goals tailored to the individual needs of each child, ensuring that instruction is both relevant and accessible. When educators are trained in how to develop and implement these plans effectively, they are better positioned to support students' diverse learning needs.

Moreover, inclusive education training must also address cultural competence. As classrooms become increasingly diverse, educators must be prepared to understand and respect the cultural backgrounds of their students. Culturally responsive teaching strategies allow teachers to connect

with students' experiences and integrate their cultural contexts into the curriculum, making learning more relatable and meaningful (Ghosh, 2020). Research shows that when teachers embrace culturally responsive practices, they enhance student engagement and achievement while fostering a sense of belonging among all learners.

Additionally, training that focuses on collaborative practices among educators can further enhance the implementation of inclusive education. Research by Smith and Kearney (2021) highlights the importance of co-teaching models, where general and special education teachers work together to create an inclusive learning environment. Such collaborative approaches not only benefit students but also foster a culture of professional development among educators, as they learn from one another and share best practices.

Despite the importance of training in inclusive education, many educators face challenges in accessing high-quality professional development opportunities. A lack of adequate training resources and support can hinder teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices effectively. As Baker et al. (2021) point out, ongoing professional development is essential for sustaining teachers' knowledge and confidence. Programs that provide continuous learning opportunities allow educators to stay updated on best practices and emerging trends in inclusive education, ensuring that they remain equipped to address the needs of their students.

The effectiveness of teacher training programs in inclusive education can vary widely based on their content and delivery methods. Various types of training exist, each designed to equip educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the diverse needs of their students. Research indicates that professional development workshops focused on inclusive pedagogy significantly enhance teachers' competence in working with diverse learners (Baker et al., 2021).

Such workshops often utilize a mix of theoretical knowledge and practical application, enabling educators to engage with inclusive practices actively.

Workshops that incorporate hands-on activities and collaborative learning experiences are particularly effective. These formats allow teachers to practice new skills in a supportive environment, fostering confidence and competence in applying inclusive strategies in their classrooms. For instance, interactive workshops can include role-playing scenarios that simulate classroom challenges related to inclusion. This practical approach not only deepens understanding but also helps educators develop problem-solving skills in real-world contexts. Engaging in these activities also promotes peer collaboration, enabling educators to share insights and strategies, which is essential in building a cohesive approach to inclusion within early childhood settings (Smith & Kearney, 2021).

Moreover, the impact of training is amplified when it is designed to be ongoing rather than a one-time event. According to Sato et al. (2021), regular professional development sessions help educators stay informed about best practices and emerging trends in inclusive education. Such continuous learning opportunities are crucial in an ever-evolving educational landscape, where new research and methodologies frequently emerge. Educators who participate in ongoing training are more likely to implement innovative practices that benefit their diverse learners. This sustained professional development also helps prevent the stagnation of teaching practices, allowing educators to adapt and refine their strategies over time.

In addition to workshops and ongoing professional development, mentoring programs are another effective form of training that can significantly impact the implementation of inclusive practices. By pairing novice teachers with experienced educators, mentoring fosters a culture of collaboration and continuous learning within early childhood centers. Mentorship can provide critical support

for new teachers as they navigate the complexities of inclusive education. Research shows that mentoring relationships can improve job satisfaction, reduce turnover, and enhance teaching practices (Baker et al., 2021). Experienced mentors can offer invaluable insights and share effective strategies that have proven successful in their own classrooms, creating a rich learning experience for novice teachers.

Furthermore, effective training programs often incorporate a variety of assessment methods to evaluate teachers' learning and the impact of the training on their instructional practices. These assessments can help identify areas where teachers feel confident as well as areas that may require further development. For example, pre- and post-training surveys can gauge educators' understanding of inclusive practices and their comfort level in implementing these strategies in their classrooms. This feedback is essential for refining professional development offerings and ensuring that they meet the specific needs of educators (Avissar & Shpigelman, 2017).

Lastly, the involvement of families and communities in the training process can further enhance its effectiveness. Including parents and community members in professional development sessions allows educators to gain diverse perspectives on inclusion and learn how to better support their students' needs. This collaborative approach not only enriches the training experience but also strengthens the connection between home and school, ultimately benefiting students (Ghosh, 2020).

Despite the numerous benefits of training in inclusive education, several barriers impede the effective implementation of inclusive practices in early childhood education. One of the most significant challenges is the lack of adequate training opportunities and resources. Many teachers report feeling unprepared to implement inclusive practices due to insufficient training during their initial education (Avissar & Shpigelman, 2017). Teacher preparation programs often do not

provide enough emphasis on inclusive education, resulting in a knowledge gap among new educators. As a consequence, these teachers may lack the necessary skills to effectively address the diverse needs of their students, which can undermine the overall goals of inclusive education.

Moreover, the quality of training programs can vary significantly, further complicating the implementation of inclusive practices. Research by Baker et al. (2021) indicates that some professional development initiatives are poorly designed, lacking clear objectives or relevance to teachers' specific contexts. When training is not aligned with the practical realities of the classroom, it becomes less effective. Educators may find themselves disengaged during training sessions, which diminishes the likelihood that they will apply the strategies learned in their classrooms. This disengagement can lead to frustration and a sense of defeat, pushing teachers to revert to traditional teaching methods that do not accommodate the diverse learning needs of their students.

Additionally, time constraints represent another significant barrier to effective training. Many early childhood educators are overwhelmed with their daily responsibilities, leaving little room for participation in professional development activities. The demands of planning lessons, assessing student progress, and managing classroom dynamics can consume a teacher's schedule, making it challenging to dedicate time to additional training (Baker et al., 2021). Furthermore, when professional development is offered, it often competes with other essential commitments, leading educators to prioritize immediate classroom needs over long-term professional growth.

Another critical issue is the inconsistency of support from school administrations regarding inclusive education initiatives. In some cases, administrators may not fully understand the importance of inclusive practices or may lack the training themselves to support their staff effectively. This disconnect can result in insufficient resources, inadequate funding for training

programs, and a lack of encouragement for educators to pursue inclusive practices (Ghosh, 2020). If school leaders do not prioritize inclusive education and the training required to implement it, teachers may feel isolated in their efforts, making it difficult to foster an inclusive classroom environment.

Additionally, cultural and contextual factors can pose challenges to the effective implementation of inclusive training. Teachers from various cultural backgrounds may bring their own biases and preconceived notions about inclusion into their classrooms, which can affect their willingness to adopt new practices (Avissar & Shpigelman, 2017). Training programs that do not address these cultural factors may struggle to resonate with educators, limiting their effectiveness. Tailoring training to reflect the diverse cultural contexts of teachers and their students is crucial in overcoming these barriers.

Finally, a lack of ongoing support following initial training can also hinder the application of inclusive practices in the classroom. Once teachers have completed training, they often return to their classrooms without sufficient guidance or resources to implement what they have learned. Continuous support, mentorship, and collaborative opportunities are essential for reinforcing training and fostering an environment conducive to inclusive education (Sato et al., 2021). Without these elements, teachers may feel unsupported in their efforts to create inclusive learning environments.

2.11 Conceptual Framework

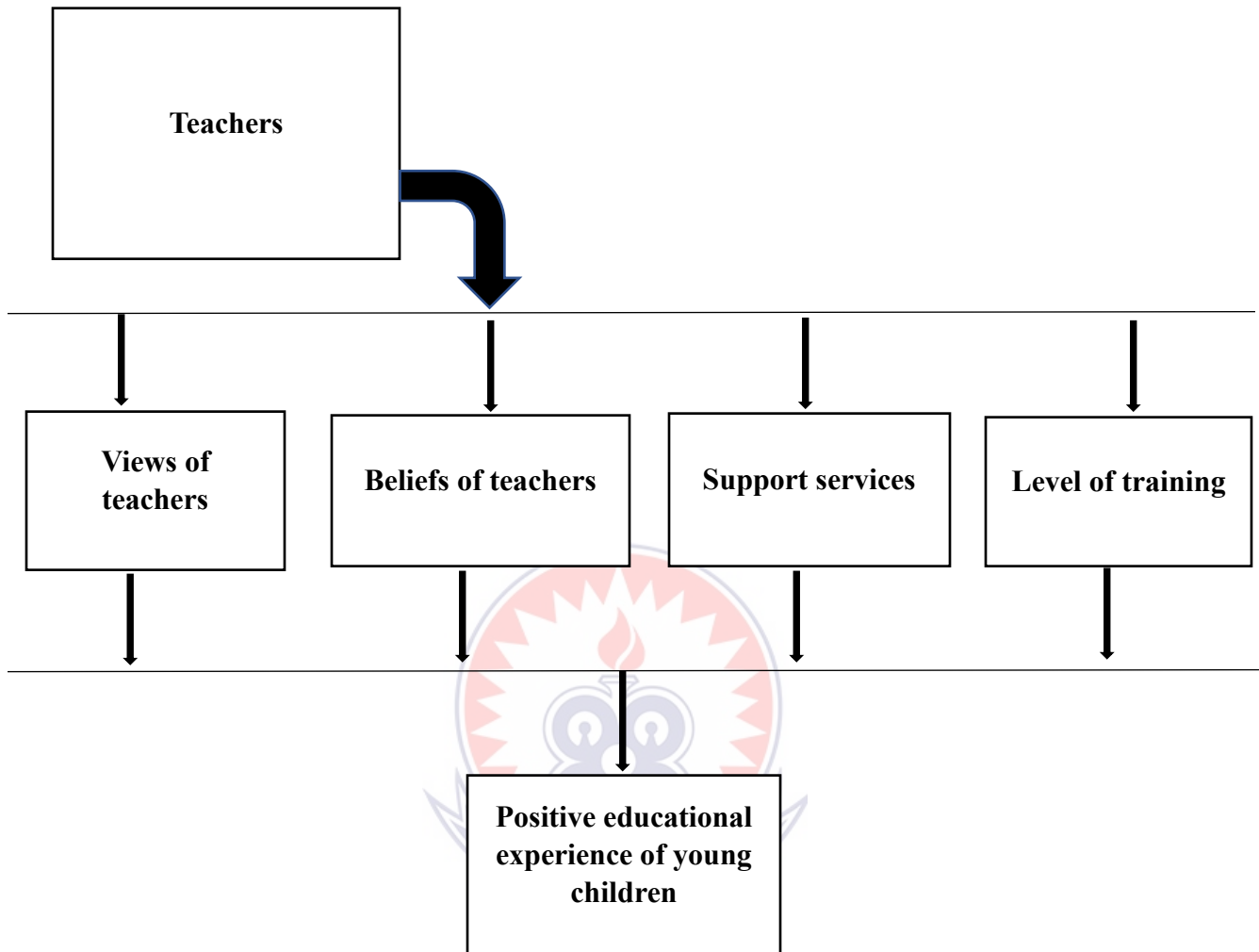


Fig. 2.1 conceptual framework on Teachers' Attitude toward Inclusive Practices

This study conceptualizes that teachers' views, beliefs, available support services, and training levels are crucial factors influencing the effectiveness of inclusive education practices in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metro. Teachers' attitudes and beliefs about inclusion directly impact their ability to implement inclusive practices in the classroom. Positive views towards inclusion foster a commitment to accommodating diverse learner needs, leading to more effective inclusion strategies.

The availability of support services, such as teaching assistants and assistive technologies, alongside the level of training teachers receive, enables them to create inclusive environments where all learners, including those with disabilities, can thrive. Well-trained teachers are better equipped to adapt teaching strategies to meet the varied needs of their students, enhancing overall classroom inclusivity.

Effective inclusive practices positively influence learner outcomes, helping children with diverse needs succeed academically and socially. The sustainability of inclusive education also depends on ongoing teacher training and consistent support, ensuring that inclusive practices are maintained long-term. Additionally, teachers' cultural beliefs can shape community attitudes towards inclusion, fostering broader support. In summary, these interconnected factors collectively determine the success and sustainability of inclusive education, impacting the educational experience of young children in the Cape Coast Metro.

2.12 Chapter Summary

This study investigated teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis of the Central Region of Ghana. The literature was captured under three (3) categories. These categories include the theoretical framework, conceptual review, and empirical. Issues such as Self-Efficacy theory and Theory of Planned Behaviour were captured under the theoretical review. The Concept of Inclusion, Inclusion in Early Childhood Education, Categories of Disabilities in Early Childhood Education and the Benefits of Inclusion in Early Childhood Education were also captured under the conceptual framework. In the same vein, the empirical review captured a literature review of the research objectives. These include teachers' knowledge towards inclusion, cultural beliefs of teachers toward inclusive practices, support

services available to early childhood teachers' inclusive practices and the level of training of teachers towards the implementation of inclusive practices



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. Overview

The chapter provides detailed information on the research path followed in examining teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis of the Central Region of Ghana. This section describes the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, trustworthiness criteria, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures as well as ethical issues considered in the study.

3.1 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm represents the ability to apply scientific methods to explore issues that occur in practice. Pragmatic researchers prioritize real-world applications and value the integration of different research methods to address complex problems (Jonker & Pennink, 2010; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

This study adopted the pragmatist research paradigm. It is a research philosophy that believes concepts are only relevant if they support action. Recognize that there are many different ways of interpreting the world and conducting research that no single point of view can ever give the entire picture, and that there may be multiple realities, according to Pragmatics (Saunders, et al, 2009; McChesney & Aldridge, 2019).

It must be noted that all research is founded on philosophical assumptions about what constitutes 'valid' research and the type of research method acceptable for the advancement of knowledge in a given field. In this study, the researcher sought to use a research paradigm as a basic belief system or worldview that is guided not only in the choices of method but also in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways (Bogna, et al, 2020; Wahyuni, 2012).

It is asserted by scholars that three main research paradigms can be employed in a given study that is; positivist, interpretivist, and critical theory/pragmatist paradigm (Bogna et al., 2020; Wahyuni, 2012).

The pragmatist research paradigm investigates teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis of the Central Region of Ghana. This contributes to the central part that complementarity plays in the context of the pragmatist worldview since the assertion is that when quantitative and qualitative methods are employed in concert, the respective weaknesses and strengths of each are mutually complementary.

3.2 Research Approach

This study adopted the mixed method research approach which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather and analyze data. It involves collecting and analyzing both numerical data (quantitative) and non-numerical data (qualitative) to gain a comprehensive understanding of a research problem or question (Creswell, 2013; Dawadi, Shrestha, & Giri, 2021).

The mixed-methods approach recognizes that using multiple research methods can provide a more complete and robust understanding of complex phenomena. It allows researchers to complement and triangulate findings from different sources and perspectives, enhancing the overall validity and reliability of the study (Dawadi et al., 2021). The mixed-methods approach offers a flexible and comprehensive research strategy that allows researchers to explore complex research questions, capture diverse perspectives, and generate more robust and nuanced findings.

On the aspect of the strength of the mixed-method approach is its methodological Synergy. In order to overcome each method's unique shortcomings, the mixed-methodologies strategy makes the

most of both quantitative and qualitative methods. By utilizing the other way to fill the gaps, it enables researchers to get beyond the flaws inherently present in each approach (Mazoo, 2020).

It can be methodologically and analytically challenging to combine quantitative and qualitative data, though. Different data kinds must be combined or compared, and it can be difficult to combine the results of various approaches into a comprehensible whole (Iaquinto, 2016).

3.3 Research Design

The study employed concurrent embedded mixed method design to investigate the practice of inclusion in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Concurrent embedded design allows for the integration of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods within a single study. This approach is particularly beneficial for exploring complex phenomena like teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices, where both statistical data (e.g., survey results) and detailed insights (e.g., interviews or focus groups) are crucial for a comprehensive understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). By using surveys to quantify attitudes and interviews to gain deeper insights into the underlying reasons for these attitudes, researchers can develop a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing teachers' perceptions.

Combining qualitative and quantitative data enhances the validity of the research findings. Quantitative data can provide a broad overview of teachers' attitudes across a larger sample, while qualitative data can help explain why these attitudes exist, thus corroborating and enriching the findings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This triangulation of data sources helps in minimizing biases that may arise from using a single method.

3.4 Population

A study population is a group that meets specific criteria, which are different from those of other groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Sekaran (2003) defined population as the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher would like to investigate. Polit and Hungler (1996) posited that it is the entire aggregation of cases that meet a designed set of criteria. Simply put, it deals with a target group about which the researcher has an interest in gaining information and drawing conclusions. For this study, the target population was all teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. According to the Cape Coast Metro Education Directorate, 2023 there are 502 early childhood teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The accessible populations for the study was 219 kindergarten teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis,

3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques

Malhotra and Birks (2007) stipulated that a sample is the sub-group of the population selected for participation in a study. Sekaran (2003) also states that it is a subset of the population since it consists of some members selected from the population. Population is the process of selecting a sufficient number of elements from the population, so that, the study of the sample and understanding of its properties and characteristics would make it possible for one to generalize such properties or characteristics to the population elements (Sekaran, 2003). This implies that a sample consists of a carefully selected subset of the units that comprise the population. The sample size for the study was 219. Out of this number, six (6) teachers were purposively selected for the qualitative data (interview). To obtain the sample for the study, the researcher used census sampling to select all 219 kindergarten teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis who responded to the questionnaires. The census sampling technique was adopted due to the homogeneous characteristics of the respondents. By collecting data from every individual, researchers ensure

that the nuances of the population are captured fully, reducing the risk of misrepresentation (Fowler, 2014). For instance, in a community with similar socio-economic backgrounds, a census can provide a clear and complete understanding of the group's attitudes or behaviors.

Census sampling allows researchers to gather sufficient data from various subpopulations, facilitating comprehensive analyses. This is particularly important when the study focuses on minority or vulnerable groups whose voices might be overlooked in smaller samples (Babbie, 2017). By including the entire population, researchers can ensure that the experiences and perspectives of all subgroups are represented and analyzed, leading to more equitable conclusions.

The researcher purposively selected six (6) teachers who have more than ten (10) years teaching experience and have had special training in inclusive practices. This sampling method facilitates an in-depth exploration of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Participants chosen through purposive sampling are likely to offer valuable insights that may not be captured in broader sampling methods (Merriam, 2009). For instance, interviewing experienced educators can yield nuanced perspectives on teaching practices that are essential for understanding specific challenges in inclusive education.

Purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants who possess specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research question, enhancing the study's applicability and usefulness (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Despite the merits that come with purposive sampling, the subjective nature of participant selection in purposive sampling introduces the possibility of researcher bias. Researchers may unintentionally favor individuals who align with their preconceived notions, leading to a lack of objectivity in the sample composition (Rai, & Thapa, 2015).

3.6 Data collection instruments

The study employed structured questionnaires and observational checklists as the data collection instruments.

Questionnaire

According to Cohen, et al (2011), a questionnaire is widely used and is a useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured numerical data, and can be administered without the presence of the researcher. The choice of questionnaire was based on the assertion of Cook, et al (2017) that, they are particularly advantageous whenever the sample size is large enough to make it uneconomical for reasons of time or funds to observe or interview every subject. Despite these strengths, the weaknesses are that the respondents may not complete the questionnaire resulting in low response rates. In other cases, if respondents do not understand some questions, there is no opportunity for them to have the meaning clarified (Pallant, 2017). However, the limitations that came with the questionnaire was resolved as the researcher explained the purpose of the questionnaire clearly to the respondents.

Some aspects of the instruments were adapted for data collection. In developing these items, the reviewed literature was taken into consideration. The items on the questionnaire were carefully selected, reviewed, and contextualized from previously reviewed literature. The items were carefully developed to measure the construct to achieve the purpose of the study. The items were categorised into a four-point Likert scale with various score values. The questionnaire was ordered into four (4) sections for the respondents. Section 'A' consists of background information on the respondents. The rest of the sections were used to measure the constructs under investigation.

Interview

A semi-structured interview guide was employed for this study, and it was based on the objectives and research questions of the study. According to Creswell (2009), a semi-structured interview is

neither completely fixed nor completely free, and arguably best understood as adaptable. In most cases, interviews begin with some sort of predetermined questioning plan, but they then transition into a more conversational format, in which the questions may be answered in a sequence that is more natural to the flow of the conversation. It is possible that it will begin with only a few clearly stated inquiries, but it will pursue any fascinating abilities that may emerge.

When developing the schedule for the semi-structured interviews, the primary objective was to collect data in order to provide responses to the study questions. As a result, a series of questions relevant to the primary focus of each research issue were posed to the participants in order to elicit the replies and perspectives that were sought after. Questions concerning the application of the kindergarten curriculum were included in the interview guide that was provided. It was divided into two parts. The responses to the questions in Section A were used to compile participants' demographic information. In Section B, detailed and methodical questions were asked on the aforementioned research questions. According to Kusi (2012) using this instrument in collecting data enables the researcher to increase the likelihood that all of the study questions will be answered.

3.7 Validity of Quantitative Instrument

Validity is the exactness and precision of deductions based on the findings from the research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The validation of the instrument was carried out to check correctness of the data collection instruments during the pilot study. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) emphasized that pre-testing of study instruments, before the actual study support criterion and construct validation of the tools. Criterion and construct validation was established through pre-testing the instruments used in the study. This checks the appropriateness of the data collection instruments.

In order to enhance the validity of the study, the questionnaire was given to the supervisor for expert assessment. This was to ensure both face and content-related evidence to the items and examine whether the items related to the research questions and also comprehensively cover the details of the study. Content validity was ensured by effectively indicating the interests of the study (Kothari, & Carg, 2014). Comments were made on the language, clarity, relevance of the items, format, structure, and content of the research instruments in order to deem it acceptable. Suggestions were made on rewording questions, adding questions, and deleting some irrelevant questions.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the instrument

Trustworthiness criteria were established for the semi-structured interview guide. One major aim of research was to put the knowledge created into practice. As a result, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and the general public must understand and accept the findings as legitimate. Trustworthiness criteria are one-way researchers can convince themselves and their readers that their study findings are worthy (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). The criteria established were confirmability, dependability, transferability and credibility.

Confirmability

In qualitative research, confirmability is a crucial criterion for establishing the trustworthiness of the study. It refers to the degree to which the researcher's biases are minimized and the findings accurately reflect the participants' perspectives and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Techniques such as member checking and maintaining an audit trail are commonly used to enhance confirmability (Creswell, 2013). The researcher guaranteed confirmability by preventing his knowledge, values, and conclusions from impacting the study's findings. Each phase of the data analysis was included in the study, including the conclusions that were derived as suggested by Charmaz in Kusi (2012)

Dependability

Dependability is a critical aspect of qualitative research, emphasizing the need for consistency and traceability in the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By maintaining an audit trail and providing clear documentation of research procedures, researchers enhance the dependability of their study (Creswell, 2013). To increase the dependability of the study findings, the researcher asked clear questions throughout the data collection, minimized bias, and controlled subjectivity.

Transferability

Transferability is a key consideration in qualitative research, focusing on the applicability of the study's findings to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research context and participants, researchers enhance the transferability of their findings, enabling readers to assess the relevance to their situations (Creswell, 2013).

Credibility

Credibility is a cornerstone of ensuring the trustworthiness of the study. It focuses on demonstrating the rigor of the research process and the soundness of the interpretations drawn from the data (Horsman, 2018). Techniques such as prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking contribute to enhancing the credibility of the study's findings (Creswell, 2013).

3.9 Reliability of Quantitative Instrument

Reliability is generally defined as the degree to which a measure of a construct is consistent and dependable. Petters et al, (2015) further define reliability as the consistency with which a measuring instrument yields certain results when the entity being measured has not changed. Consistency of the instrument was achieved through a number of initiatives. Reliability reveals that when procedures of the study are repeated, the exact same results are expected (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A reliability test was carried out with the purpose of testing the consistency of the research instrument. The research instruments were improved by revising or deleting items.

3.10 Pilot-Testing

A pilot test of the instrument was carried out to check the reliability of the instrument. A pilot test was conducted with participants in different setting that is not part of the study selection area but have similar characteristics. The instruments were pilot-tested in kindergarten early childhood centres in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem Municipality. The aim of the pilot-testing was to improve the reliability of the instrument. The respondents were given draft copies of the questionnaire. The respondents were told to discuss verbally and frankly with the researcher any ambiguity, incoherence, or incomprehension that they would experience about any aspect of the draft questionnaire. The necessary corrections were made after the trial testing. The pilot test results were used to determine the reliability of the instruments with Cronbach's alpha measure of internal consistency. The Statistical Product for Service Solution (Version 25.0) was used for the computations. Five kindergarten centres were conveniently selected with a sample of twenty-two (22) teachers. Connelly (2008) stipulates that a sample size for a pilot test should be 10% of the sample projected for the main study. Thus, after the pilot test, Cronbach coefficient alpha was used to determine the reliability of the research instrument. A Cronbach alpha value of 0.826 attained is regarded as satisfactory by researchers to determine the internal consistency of the different components of the questionnaire.

3.11 Data Collection Procedures

Before embarking on the data collection, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Early Childhood, University of Education, Winneba to seek permission from the various schools, offices, and other concerned authorities. The letter spelled out the purpose of the study, the need for individual participation and anonymity as well as the confidentiality of respondents' responses. The management of Cape Coast Education Directorate issued an

introductory letter to the sampled schools to grant the researcher access for the data collection. After establishing the necessary contact with the head teachers of the selected schools and authorized offices, permission was obtained for the administration of the instruments. The researcher also trained research assistants for the collection of the data. These research assistants were trained on how to talk to respondents, how to explain certain difficult questions to respondents, and other equally important information that enabled the researcher to have uniform information and to facilitate a high return rate. There was a 100% return rate for the quantitative data. The consent of the teachers was sought for before the administration of the questionnaires to the respondents. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents by the researcher. The data collection exercise was conducted within three (3) weeks.

A face-to-face interview was conducted by the researcher on the headteacher's views as far as the implementation of inclusive practices is concerned. The duration for the interviews lasted between 15-20 minutes. The responses of the headteachers were audio recorded.

3.12 Data Processing and Analysis

The research data collected were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The field data was collated, sifted through, and edited to address questions that have been answered partially or not answered. The questionnaires were serially numbered to facilitate easy identification. It is necessary to observe this precaution to ensure quick detection of any source of errors which occurred in the tabulation of the data. After editing and coding, the data was entered into the computer using the SPSS version 25.0 software.

Before performing the desired data transformation, the data was cleaned by running consistency checks on every variable. Modifications were made after the verification of the questionnaires. The demographic variables from the questionnaire were primarily analysed using frequencies and

percentages. The frequencies and percentages were based on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second section of the questionnaire was analysed based on the research questions set for the study using descriptive statistics (means-Ms and standard deviations-SDs). For the qualitative data (interviews) were analysed thematically. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves reading through a data set (such as transcripts from in-depth interviews or focus groups), and identifying patterns in meaning across the data to derive themes. The thematic analysis involves an active process of reflexivity where a researcher's subjective experience plays a central role in meaning-making from data. Numbers were given to the interviews to make easy identification; this was done to ensure effective presentation and analysis of the data. The researcher independently coded the transcripts, grouped the codes and generate themes and sub-themes using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data into the adopted models. The themes and sub-themes were discussed among team members to ensure the data was faithfully captured.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

To abide by the ethical principles of the study, the study addressed some ethical concerns which will include informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

Informed consent

Informed consent affords prospective participants the opportunity to accept or decline to engage in the research. It describes the need for participants to understand the aims, objectives, and potential harm that such involvement may have on them (Seidman, 2016). In this study, the purpose of the study was carefully reviewed with the participants before they were involved in the study.

Anonymity

The anonymity of study respondents was highly taken into consideration in the present study. Gujarati (2013) pointed out that anonymity is a vital issue in research ethics because it gives the participants the opportunity to have their identities concealed. In this study, fictitious names were used for identification purposes that could not be traced to the participants. Codes were also adopted where necessary to ensure the anonymity of information and harm. In order not to unnecessarily invade the privacy of participants, I will make a prior visit to the schools before the data collection commenced. This was to explain the purpose of the study to the respondents and how to not invade their privacy as participants. Neither names nor any identifiable information from respondents was taken as a way of ensuring the ethical principle of anonymity. This was to prevent possible victimization of respondents where certain responses may be viewed as unpalatable to other stakeholders.

Confidentiality

On the issue of confidentiality, an effort was made to maintain the confidentiality of the responses of the participants. Participants were told that their responses would be kept confidential and that no one known to them would have access to the information provided and none of the respondents' names was recorded in the study. Most essentially on the ethical issues, pieces of information that was cited from earlier studies to support this study was duly acknowledged through both citation and referencing in order to avoid academic dishonesty otherwise known as plagiarism.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTSTION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

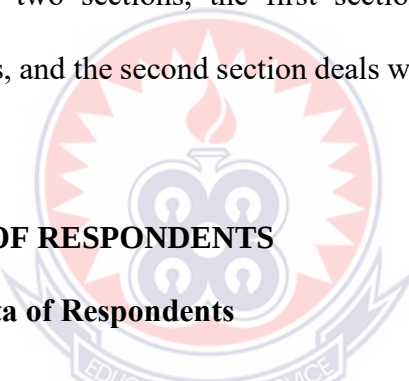
4.0 Overview

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the questionnaire data based on the results of the four (4) research questions. The analysis was based on the 100% return rate data obtained from the administered questionnaire.

This chapter is structured into two sections, the first section focuses on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, and the second section deals with the presentation of data about the research questions.

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF RESPONDENTS

Table 4.1 Demographic Data of Respondents



Variables	Subscale	Freq.	Percent %
Gender	Male	42	19.2
	Female	177	80.8
Age Range/Years	20 – 30	42	19.2
	31 – 40	96	43.8
	41 – 50	59	26.9
	51 – 60	22	10.1
Years of Teaching Experience	1-5years	56	25.6
	6-10years	116	52.9

11 years and above	47	21.5
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Source: Field data, 2024

The analysis of the demographic data reveals key characteristics of the participants in terms of gender, age range, and years of teaching experience. The majority of respondents are female, with 177 individuals making up 80.8% of the sample, compared to only 42 male participants, who constitute 19.2%. This significant gender imbalance highlights the dominance of female teachers in early childhood education within the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Regarding the age distribution, the largest group of teachers falls within the 31-40 years age range, accounting for 43.8% of the respondents (96 participants). This is followed by the 41-50 years group, representing 26.9% (59 participants). Teachers in the 20-30 years category comprised 19.2% (42 participants), while those aged 51-60 years formed the smallest group at 10.1% (22 participants). This age profile suggests that most educators are in their early to mid-career stages, reflecting a relatively youthful workforce with a blend of experience and energy.

In terms of teaching experience, the largest proportion of participants has 6-10 years of experience, representing 52.9% (116 individuals). Teachers with 1-5 years of experience account for 25.6% (56 participants), while those with more than 11 years make up 21.5% (47 participants). This distribution indicates that a substantial number of teachers have a moderate level of professional experience, which may influence their perspectives and effectiveness in implementing educational practices.

Overall, the demographic profile reveals a teaching workforce that is predominantly female, relatively young, and moderately experienced, factors that could have implications for the adoption and implementation of inclusive education practices in early childhood centres.

4.2 Data Presentations and Analysis

To gather evidence for the study, the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive practices in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The responses from the participants were rated using Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagrees. Using means, the scales were scored as (Strongly Agree =4, Agree =3, Disagree= 2, and Strongly Disagree =1). The criterion value of 2.50 was established for the scale. To obtain the criterion value (CV=2.50), the scores were added together and divided by the number scale ($4+3+2+1= 10/4=2.50$). To understand the mean scores, items/statements on the factors that scored a mean of 0.00 to 2.49 were regarded as low factors contributing to the attitudes of teachers toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres, whereas items/statements that scored a mean from 2.50 to 4.00 were regarded as high. This interpretation applies to all the research questions (1-4).

Research Question One: What are teachers' views regarding inclusive education practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis?

This research question sought to analyse teachers' perspectives on inclusive education, focusing on their views as far as their practice of inclusion is concerned. It aims to uncover factors influencing successful implementation and areas needing improvement.

Table 4.2 Teachers' views regarding inclusive education practices in early childhood centres

Question	Means	STD
I believe that inclusive education practices provide equal learning opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities.	3.88	0.241
I feel confident in my ability to implement inclusive education strategies in my classroom.	3.84	0.274
I have received adequate training on how to teach children with diverse learning needs effectively.	3.23	0.181
The curriculum is adaptable to meet the needs of children with special educational needs.	3.63	0.295
I find it challenging to manage classrooms that include both typically developing children and those with special educational needs.	3.74	0.337
I think inclusive education improves social skills and peer interactions among all children.	3.84	0.214
I have access to the resources and materials needed to support inclusive education in my classroom.	2.81	0.886
The school administration provides sufficient support for teachers implementing inclusive practices.	3.12	0.428
I feel that more professional development opportunities are needed to better equip teachers for inclusive education.	3.43	0.388
Parental involvement is essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education practices.	3.77	0.409
Mean of Means	3.53	.3653

Source: Field data 2024

The data from table 4.2 show that the teachers generally hold favorable views towards inclusive education practices, as shown by a high overall mean of 3.53. The responses are fairly consistent, indicated by a standard deviation of 0.3653, though some items show greater variability.

The teachers strongly agree that inclusive education provides equal learning opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities. This sentiment is evident in a mean score of 3.88, with a low standard deviation of 0.241, reflecting a broad consensus on the importance of inclusion. Similarly, teachers express confidence in their ability to implement inclusive strategies, with a mean of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 0.274, suggesting that while most of the participants feel capable, there are still some differences in their confidence levels.

However, concerns emerge when discussing adequate training for working with diverse learners. The mean drops to 3.23, with an exceptionally low standard deviation of 0.181, highlighting a shared recognition of insufficient training. This gap in preparedness is consistent across respondents, emphasizing the need for enhanced professional development opportunities.

On curriculum adaptability, the mean stands at 3.63 with a standard deviation of 0.295, indicating general agreement that the curriculum can be adapted for learners with special needs, but with some variability in perception. Managing classrooms that include both typically developing children and those with special educational needs is considered challenging, with a mean of 3.74. This aspect has the highest standard deviation, 0.337, pointing to diverse experiences and difficulties in classroom management.

Interestingly, the teachers agreed that inclusive education improves social skills and peer interactions, as shown by a mean of 3.84 and a low standard deviation of 0.214, signaling strong and consistent support for this benefit. Yet, access to resources emerges as a significant concern,

with a notably lower mean of 2.81 and a high standard deviation of 0.886. This indicates considerable disparities in resource availability, reflecting a major area of challenge.

Support from school administration receives mixed reviews, with a mean of 3.12 and a standard deviation of 0.428, suggesting variability in teachers' experiences with administrative backing. The call for more professional development is clearly articulated, with a mean of 3.43 and a standard deviation of 0.388, underscoring a widespread but somewhat varied recognition of this need. Finally, teachers view parental involvement as essential for successful inclusive education, supported by a mean of 3.77 and a moderate standard deviation of 0.409, indicating general agreement but some diversity in opinion.

In summary, while teachers are supportive of inclusive education and recognize its benefits, they also highlight challenges such as inadequate training, resource constraints, and classroom management difficulties. The variability in responses points to the necessity for tailored support, more comprehensive training, and better resource allocation to effectively implement inclusive practices.

Qualitative Analysis

To have an in-depth understanding of the views of early childhood teachers towards the practice of inclusion in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis, the researcher interviewed some teachers to solicit their views as far as inclusive practices are concerned. Here, were some themes that emerged from the interview.

Equity and Equal Opportunities

This theme highlights the belief that inclusive education ensures that all children, regardless of their abilities, have access to the same learning opportunities. This fosters a sense of fairness and equality in the classroom. here were some of the excerpts from the interview;

Teacher 1 said that;

I strongly believe that inclusive education ensures that every child, no matter their background or ability, has an equal opportunity to learn. In my classroom, I see how important it is to give all learners, including those with special needs, the same access to lessons and activities. T3

Another teacher also has this to say;

When we practice inclusion in the classroom, we're ensuring that all children have the same opportunities to participate and learn. It's not just about giving them access to resources; but making sure that every child is included in the classroom activities, discussions, and social interactions. T1

These quotes highlight the fundamental belief that inclusive education fosters equality and fairness in the classroom. Both teachers emphasize that all children, regardless of ability or background, should have equal access to learning opportunities. Inclusion is not only about providing resources but ensuring full participation in lessons, activities, and social interactions. This approach promotes a sense of belonging, benefiting all learners by encouraging empathy, understanding, and collaboration while ensuring that children with special needs are supported and engaged alongside their peers.

Inclusion Provides Diverse Learning Experiences

This theme reflects teachers' perspectives on how inclusive education enriches the learning environment. It recognizes that when children with diverse abilities interact in the same classroom, it fosters a variety of viewpoints, skills, and approaches to learning, enhancing creativity, problem-solving, and peer collaboration. Here are some verbatim quotations from the interview

In an inclusive classroom, every child brings something unique to the table. The diversity of abilities and experiences enriches the learning environment, encouraging creativity and diverse problem-solving approaches. It's through these varied interactions that students learn to think in different ways and appreciate each other's strengths." – Teacher 6

The quotation emphasizes that inclusion fosters a rich learning environment by valuing diverse abilities and perspectives. This diversity enhances creativity and problem-solving, benefiting all students. It highlights how inclusive classrooms promote mutual respect and understanding, allowing children to learn from each other's strengths and differences, thereby developing a more well-rounded and adaptable approach to learning.

Inclusion Enhances Social and Emotional Growth

This theme echoes teachers' views on how inclusive education supports the development of key social and emotional skills. Teachers recognize that when children with diverse abilities are included, they learn empathy, cooperation, and communication, fostering a sense of belonging and positive peer interactions, which are essential for their overall emotional and social development.

Here are some excerpts from the interview;

Inclusion helps children develop empathy and understanding. When they interact with peers who have different abilities, they learn to appreciate diversity and support one another. It fosters a sense of community where everyone feels valued, which is crucial for their emotional and social growth. Teacher 2

Another teacher suggested that;

Through inclusive practices, children not only learn academic content but also develop important social and emotional skills. They learn how to work together, communicate effectively, and care for others, which builds their confidence and emotional resilience. Teacher 5

The quotes highlight that inclusion in early childhood classrooms goes beyond academics, promoting essential social and emotional development. By interacting with peers of diverse abilities, children learn empathy, cooperation, and communication skills. This not only fosters a sense of community but also boosts their emotional resilience and self-confidence. Inclusive

practices help children develop a well-rounded emotional and social foundation, preparing them for future interpersonal relationships and collaborative environments.

Better Peer Interactions and Peer Support

The theme "Better Peer Interactions and Peer Support" focuses on how inclusive practices foster positive relationships among children. Teachers observe that when children with varying abilities interact, they learn to support and help each other. This collaboration improves social skills, empathy, and teamwork, benefiting all learners. Here is a quote from the interview;

In an inclusive classroom, children learn to support each other. The more they interact, the more they understand and help their peers, regardless of their abilities. These positive peer relationships create a stronger classroom community and enhance social learning." – Teacher 2

The quote illustrates that inclusive practices encourage children to work together, fostering a sense of mutual support. As students engage with one another, they develop stronger social bonds, enhancing their ability to collaborate and empathize. This not only improves individual social skills but also strengthens the overall classroom dynamic.

Discussions of Results

The results of this study indicate a general consensus among teachers in support of inclusive education, with a strong belief that it provides equal learning opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities. This finding aligns with recent studies that emphasize the importance of inclusion in promoting fairness and ensuring all children have access to quality education, regardless of their abilities (Gordon et al., 2020). Teachers expressed confidence in their ability to implement inclusive strategies, suggesting a belief in their competence and a commitment to providing inclusive practices. However, this confidence was tempered by concerns regarding their preparedness, particularly in working with diverse learners. This gap in teacher

preparedness resonates with the literature, where many educators report feeling undertrained to effectively implement inclusive education (Lindsay & McPherson, 2020). Studies consistently show that while teachers may be willing, they often lack the specific training needed to address the unique needs of students with disabilities in inclusive settings (Forlin et al., 2020).

On curriculum adaptability, teachers generally agreed that the curriculum could be modified to accommodate learners with special needs. This finding corresponds with current educational discourse, which highlights the importance of a flexible curriculum that allows for differentiation and adaptation to meet the varied needs of all students (Lloyd & Stirling, 2021). However, the practicality of adapting the curriculum in diverse classrooms was questioned, with teachers indicating that more resources and support were needed. This concern is echoed in the literature, where teachers cite resource constraints, such as a lack of specialized materials and support staff, as significant barriers to effective inclusive education (Kirk & Gallagher, 2019). Without adequate resources, inclusive education may not be fully realized, and teachers may struggle to make meaningful adjustments to the curriculum to benefit all students.

Teachers also highlighted the challenges of managing classrooms with both typically developing children and those with special educational needs. This reflects findings in the broader literature, which points to classroom management as one of the most challenging aspects of inclusive education (Sailor et al., 2020). Managing such diverse classrooms requires specific skills, including strategies for addressing a range of behaviors and needs, which many teachers feel they have not been sufficiently trained in (Kunc, 2020). The need for additional support in classroom management was a recurring theme in both the quantitative and qualitative data, with teachers expressing the desire for more professional development in this area.

While teachers were largely positive about the social and emotional benefits of inclusion, the lack of resources, particularly in terms of specialized support and materials, emerged as a significant challenge. This divergence in views between the perceived benefits of inclusion and the practical barriers to its full implementation is consistent with recent research, which identifies inadequate resources as one of the major obstacles to successful inclusive education (Baker et al., 2019). Teachers in this study, despite recognizing the social and emotional growth that inclusion fosters, expressed frustration over the disparities in resource availability, reflecting concerns in the literature that inclusive education can be undermined without proper investment in resources (Avramidis et al., 2020).

Finally, while teachers recognized the critical role of school administration and parental involvement, there was some variability in their experiences with these aspects. This divergence points to the varying levels of support that teachers receive from their schools, which is a common finding in the literature. Research shows that strong administrative support is crucial for the success of inclusive education, but it is often inconsistent, depending on the school leadership (Hughes et al., 2021). Similarly, the qualitative analysis affirmed that teachers view parental involvement as essential for the success of inclusive practices, which is in line with the growing body of literature that emphasizes the importance of family engagement in fostering positive outcomes for students with special needs (Jeynes, 2022).

In conclusion, the study's findings converge with much of the existing literature in highlighting the benefits of inclusive education, particularly its impact on equity, social skills, and emotional growth. However, the challenges identified, including gaps in teacher training, resource limitations, and classroom management difficulties, align with the barriers reported in current research. Addressing these challenges through targeted professional development, increased

resources, and stronger support systems is crucial for realizing the full potential of inclusive education.

Research Question Two: How do the cultural beliefs of teachers influence their attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis?

This research question investigates how teachers' cultural beliefs shape their attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis. It aims to explore the influence of cultural perspectives on teachers' openness, acceptance, and implementation of inclusive education, providing insights into how cultural values and norms impact the adoption of inclusive teaching strategies.



Table 4.3 Teachers cultural beliefs influence on their attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres

Question	Means	STD
My cultural beliefs significantly shape my views on including children with disabilities in my classroom.	3.24	0.541
I believe that inclusive practices in early childhood education should align with the cultural values of my community.	3.47	0.474
My cultural background influences how I perceive the capabilities of children with diverse learning needs.	3.61	0.281
Cultural norms and traditions make it challenging to fully embrace inclusive practices in early childhood education.	3.67	0.395
I am comfortable implementing inclusive practices, even if they may differ from the cultural expectations of my community.	3.84	0.237
The cultural beliefs I grew up with influence my willingness to adapt my teaching methods for learners with special needs.	3.24	0.414
I believe that my cultural upbringing affects how I interact with children from diverse backgrounds in an inclusive setting.	3.85	0.256
Some cultural beliefs I hold conflict with the principles of inclusivity in early childhood education.	3.94	0.128
I feel that community and family cultural beliefs play a role in how I support inclusive education in my classroom.	3.73	0.288
My cultural values impact my level of commitment to implementing inclusive practices in early childhood education.	3.48	0.409
Mean of Means	3.60	.342

Source: Field data, 2024

Table 4.3 represents a nuanced understanding of how cultural beliefs influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood education within the Cape Coast Metropolis. The overall mean of 3.60 indicates a generally high agreement among teachers regarding the influence

of cultural beliefs, with a moderate standard deviation of 0.342 suggesting some variation in responses.

Teachers moderately agree that their cultural beliefs shape their views on including children with disabilities in their classrooms, as indicated by a mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 0.541, reflecting a relatively widespread of opinions. Similarly, the belief that inclusive practices should align with community cultural values has a higher mean of 3.47 but a slightly lower standard deviation of 0.474, showing greater consistency.

When considering the influence of cultural background on perceptions of children's capabilities, teachers express even stronger agreement, with a mean of 3.61 and a lower standard deviation of 0.281, suggesting consensus on how cultural influences shape these views. Teachers also indicate that cultural norms and traditions pose challenges to fully embracing inclusive practices, with a mean of 3.67 and a standard deviation of 0.395, highlighting a significant but not extreme range of experiences.

Despite these cultural constraints, teachers report feeling comfortable implementing inclusive practices, even if they differ from cultural expectations, with a mean of 3.84 and a very low standard deviation of 0.237, reflecting a high level of confidence and uniformity. Conversely, when it comes to adapting teaching methods for learners with special needs, cultural upbringing appears to play a moderate role, as shown by a mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 0.414, indicating some variability.

The strongest agreement emerges regarding the influence of cultural upbringing on interactions with diverse learners in inclusive settings, with a mean of 3.85 and a low standard deviation of 0.256, showing consistent recognition of this impact. Teachers also acknowledge conflicts between

some cultural beliefs and inclusivity principles, as reflected by a high mean of 3.94 and the lowest standard deviation of 0.128, emphasizing a strong and uniform awareness of these conflicts.

Community and family cultural beliefs are also perceived to play a role in supporting inclusive education, with a mean of 3.73 and a standard deviation of 0.288, indicating broad agreement. Lastly, cultural values impacting teachers' commitment to inclusive practices show a moderate mean of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.409, suggesting mixed but leaning positive perspectives.

The data reveals that cultural beliefs significantly influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. While teachers generally feel confident and willing to implement inclusive practices, the tension between cultural norms and inclusivity principles is evident, underscoring the need for culturally sensitive approaches to foster inclusive education.

Qualitative Analysis

The data gathered from the interview on how cultural beliefs of teachers influence their attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres; generated some themes. Here were some of the themes that emerged from the respondents;

Negative Societal Perception

The culture of a society significantly shapes perceptions of disability, often fostering negative views and stigma. These societal attitudes influence teachers' willingness to implement inclusive practices, leading to resistance or reluctance. Here were some excerpts from the interview

One teacher has this to share;

Honestly, I think it's too difficult to manage. Children with disabilities require a lot of special attention and resources, which we don't have. I feel they would be better off in a separate, specialized environment where trained professionals can cater to their needs. T6

Another teacher also said that;

I think trying to include everyone equally only creates more problems for the teacher and the class. T1

These quotes imply that teachers' negative perceptions about disability and lack of resources create barriers to inclusion. Viewing children with disabilities as burdens leads to a preference for segregation, hindering efforts to provide equitable education. These attitudes can perpetuate exclusion and limit opportunities for all students to learn together.

Perception of Teaching and Learning Style

Cultural beliefs play a significant role in shaping teachers' perceptions of effective teaching and learning styles, which directly impacts their approach to inclusion. In cultures where authority and discipline are prioritized, teachers may favor structured, teacher-centered methods, making it challenging to implement inclusive, child-centered, and participatory practices. Conversely, cultures that value collaboration and respect for individual differences encourage teachers to adopt more inclusive and flexible teaching styles, enhancing opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities, to thrive. One teacher has this to say

I believe handling children with disabilities in an inclusive class requires a shift from rigid, authoritative teaching to more flexible, child-centered approaches. Embracing collaboration and valuing each child's unique abilities fosters a supportive environment where all learners, including those with disabilities, can thrive and participate meaningfully. T4

The quote implies that effectively including children with disabilities in the classroom necessitates a significant shift in teaching practices. Teachers must move away from strict, authority-driven approaches and embrace more flexible, collaborative, and child-centered methods. This transformation is crucial for creating inclusive environments where every child's unique strengths

are recognized and nurtured. Failing to adopt such approaches could perpetuate exclusion and hinder the meaningful participation and learning experiences of students with disabilities.

Discussion of Results

The findings from the data reveal that cultural beliefs significantly shape teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, particularly in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Teachers generally recognize the influence of their cultural backgrounds on their perceptions of disability and inclusion, which affects their willingness and ability to implement inclusive practices effectively. These findings align with existing research, which highlights the importance of cultural beliefs in shaping educators' attitudes toward inclusive education and their ability to adapt to diverse learner needs.

Cultural beliefs about disability are particularly influential in determining how teachers perceive the integration of students with disabilities in their classrooms. As the data suggests, teachers express moderate to strong agreement that their cultural beliefs impact how they include children with disabilities in the classroom. This reflects research by Browne (2020), which notes that in cultures where disability is seen through a medical lens, educators often perceive disability as an individual deficit, requiring specialized intervention. This perspective may lead to resistance to inclusive practices, as teachers may feel unprepared or unsupported in addressing the diverse needs of children with disabilities. In contrast, in cultures that view disability as a social phenomenon, where the emphasis is on community support and inclusion, teachers tend to be more receptive to inclusive practices (Browne, 2020). The findings from this study suggest a similar dynamic in the Cape Coast Metropolis, with some teachers acknowledging that cultural norms and traditions can pose significant barriers to fully embracing inclusive practices.

Moreover, the influence of cultural norms on teaching methods and classroom interactions is evident in the responses provided by teachers in the study. Teachers in cultures that prioritize authority and discipline tend to favor teacher-centered, structured methods of instruction, which may hinder the adoption of more flexible, student-centered approaches required for successful inclusion. This is consistent with Ghosh's (2020) assertion that cultural competence plays a key role in shaping teachers' ability to adapt their teaching practices to meet the diverse needs of students. In the study, teachers who recognize the importance of collaboration and respect for individual differences are more likely to adopt inclusive, child-centered teaching styles. This shift from rigid, authoritative teaching methods to more inclusive, flexible approaches is essential for creating an environment where all children, including those with disabilities, can thrive and participate meaningfully (T4).

Cultural beliefs also influence teachers' perceptions of the capabilities of diverse learners. The data shows that teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis agree that their cultural backgrounds shape how they view the potential of children with disabilities. This finding supports the argument by Sato et al. (2021), who found that teachers from collectivist societies tend to view inclusion as a natural extension of cultural values, promoting cooperation and interdependence. Teachers in the study also expressed a greater sense of confidence when it comes to interacting with diverse learners, suggesting that a positive cultural perspective can foster an inclusive classroom environment. However, the data also reveals that teachers struggle with balancing cultural expectations and the principles of inclusive education, as cultural beliefs sometimes conflict with the ideals of equal participation and support for all students. This is consistent with Baker et al. (2021), who argue that individualistic cultures, which prioritize competition and self-reliance, may lead to skepticism

regarding the effectiveness of inclusive education, making it more difficult to implement such practices.

The role of cultural beliefs in shaping teachers' commitment to inclusive practices is also evident in the study. Teachers report varying levels of commitment to inclusion based on their cultural perspectives, with some viewing cultural values as supportive of inclusive education, while others see them as obstacles. The data reflects the findings of Avissar and Shpigelman (2017), who suggest that when teachers lack cultural competence, they may struggle to implement inclusive practices, leading to exclusionary educational environments. The study further reveals that teachers who embrace cultural sensitivity and cultural competence are better equipped to foster inclusive classrooms that celebrate diversity and promote student engagement and success. As Ghosh (2020) emphasizes, incorporating cultural competence into teacher training is essential for developing educators who are capable of navigating diverse cultural contexts and effectively meeting the needs of all students, particularly those with disabilities.

In conclusion, the findings from the Cape Coast Metropolis highlight the significant role cultural beliefs play in shaping teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. While teachers generally express confidence in implementing inclusive practices, cultural norms and beliefs create both opportunities and challenges. Teachers' perceptions of disability, teaching styles, and the abilities of diverse learners are heavily influenced by cultural values, which can either promote or hinder inclusive practices. To address these challenges, it is crucial to integrate cultural competence into teacher preparation programs, enabling educators to navigate cultural barriers and adopt inclusive teaching methods that support the success of all learners. By acknowledging and addressing cultural beliefs, educators can create more inclusive and supportive learning environments, where every child, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to succeed.

Research Question Three: What support services are available to early childhood teachers to implement inclusive practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

This research question explores the types and availability of support services provided to early childhood teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis for implementing inclusive practices. It seeks to identify the resources, training, administrative backing, and community support that facilitate or hinder the effective inclusion of all learners, including those with special needs, in early childhood education settings. Understanding these support mechanisms is crucial for promoting successful and sustainable inclusive education practices.



Table 4.4 Support Services towards the inclusion of inclusion

Question	Means	STD
I have access to adequate training programmes that prepare me to implement inclusive practices in my classroom.	2.94	0.831
There are sufficient educational resources provided to support inclusive education in my school.	2.42	1.064
I receive regular professional development sessions focused on inclusive teaching strategies.	2.81	0.841
My school provides access to specialists (e.g., speech therapists, and occupational therapists) who support inclusive practices.	2.17	1.095
There is a dedicated support team within my school or district to assist with challenges related to inclusive education.	3.04	0.437
I can easily access guidance or mentorship from experienced teachers who have expertise in inclusive practices.	3.24	0.614
There are effective collaboration opportunities with parents and community members to support inclusive education.	3.13	0.656
I have access to adequate funding or grants to implement inclusive educational activities and resources.	2.35	1.028
The administration at my school provides strong support and encouragement for implementing inclusive practices.	3.43	0.488
There are clear policies and guidelines provided by the education authorities to assist teachers in inclusive education.	3.38	0.419
Mean of Means	2.89	.747

Source: Field data, 2024

The data from Table 4.4 shows the analysis of the data provides insight into the support services available to early childhood teachers for implementing inclusive practices within the Cape Coast Metropolis. The overall mean of 2.89 and a standard deviation of 0.747 reflect moderate satisfaction with support services, but the variability indicates mixed experiences among teachers.

Teachers generally feel limited in their access to adequate training programs, as shown by a mean of 2.94 and a standard deviation of 0.831, suggesting that while some feel somewhat prepared, many believe training is insufficient. The scarcity of educational resources is a significant concern, with a mean of 2.42 and a higher standard deviation of 1.064, indicating substantial variability and dissatisfaction among teachers regarding resource availability.

Professional development focused on inclusive strategies also appears inadequate, reflected by a mean of 2.81 and a standard deviation of 0.841, highlighting a general need for more consistent and effective training opportunities. Access to specialists, such as speech or occupational therapists, scores particularly low with a mean of 2.17 and the highest standard deviation of 1.095, underscoring a critical gap in specialist support and substantial inconsistency across schools.

The presence of a dedicated support team within schools or districts has a slightly higher mean of 3.04, but with a low standard deviation of 0.437, suggesting that, where present, these teams are consistently recognized. Teachers report moderate access to guidance or mentorship from experienced peers, as indicated by a mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 0.614, pointing to some variability but generally positive perceptions of mentorship opportunities.

Collaboration with parents and community members is rated fairly well, with a mean of 3.13 and a standard deviation of 0.656, suggesting moderate opportunities for effective partnerships. However, access to funding or grants for inclusive education activities remains a major challenge, reflected by a low mean of 2.35 and a high standard deviation of 1.028, indicating considerable disparities in financial support.

Administrative support is perceived more favorably, with a mean of 3.43 and a lower standard deviation of 0.488, highlighting a generally strong backing from school leadership. Clear policies

and guidelines provided by education authorities are also rated positively, with a mean of 3.38 and a standard deviation of 0.419, showing consistency in the availability of directives to assist teachers.

Overall, the analysis reveals significant gaps in resources, specialist support, and funding for inclusive education, despite reasonable administrative and policy support. Addressing these disparities is crucial for enhancing teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices effectively.

Qualitative Analysis

To compliment the quantitative data, interviews were conducted on the support services available to early childhood teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis towards their practice of inclusion in their early childhood centres. The interview sought to elicit responses on the support services available to teachers in inclusive practices in their various centres. These are some themes that were generated from the interview.

Here are four themes for analyzing interview responses on the support services available to early childhood teachers in the practice of inclusion, along with corresponding excerpts from teacher interviews:

Professional Development and Training Opportunities

This theme emphasized the importance of continuous training and professional development as a form of support in implementing inclusive education. Many teachers highlighted that while some training programmes have been helpful, they often lack depth and frequency.

We have occasional workshops, but they are not regular enough. I feel like the training we receive is more of an introduction rather than giving us practical strategies to use in the classroom every day. T4

There are some in-service training programs organized by the district, but they are not specifically tailored to inclusion. We need more focused training on how to manage classrooms that have both typical learners and those with special needs. T5

The quotes highlight a significant gap in professional development for inclusive education. Teachers feel that existing training is infrequent and lacks practical, classroom-specific strategies. General in-service programs do not adequately address the complexities of managing diverse classrooms, underscoring the need for targeted, ongoing training. This shortfall in specialized training hampers teachers' ability to effectively support all learners, emphasizing the necessity for more comprehensive, practical, and inclusion-focused professional development initiatives.

Resource Allocation and Classroom Support

The theme outlined the need for adequate resources to support the effective implementation of inclusive education. This theme captures the ongoing struggle to secure the necessary materials and tools to cater to all learners' needs. Here are some of the quotes from the interview;

We don't have enough teaching aids that are suitable for children with special needs.

Sometimes, I have to create my materials, which takes a lot of time and effort. T3

Another teacher also highlights;

Our school does not have specialized equipment or enough teaching assistants to support children with disabilities. It can be overwhelming to manage everything alone. T6

The quotes emphasize the significant resource gaps that hinder effective inclusion in early childhood education. Teachers face challenges like the lack of specialized equipment and teaching assistants, which increases their workload and stress. This implies a pressing need for schools to invest in appropriate teaching aids and provide additional support staff to ensure that children with special needs receive the attention and resources they require for meaningful learning experiences.

Collaboration and Peer Support Networks

This theme highlights how collaboration among teachers and support from colleagues contribute to the effective practice of inclusion. Teachers described how working together and sharing experiences have been beneficial.

One of the most helpful things is having a strong network of colleagues. We share ideas and strategies that work in our classrooms. It helps to know that I am not alone in facing these challenges. T1

One teacher also suggested that;

We have a small support group at our school where we discuss challenges and share solutions. It's informal, but it has been very useful. I wish we had more structured opportunities for peer collaboration. T3

The quotes emphasize the crucial role of peer support networks in overcoming challenges related to inclusive education. Informal collaboration among colleagues provides practical strategies and emotional reinforcement, alleviating feelings of isolation. However, the desire for more structured and formalized opportunities for peer collaboration indicates a need for schools to invest in organized professional learning communities. Such initiatives could further enhance teachers' capacity to implement inclusive practices effectively and sustainably.

Administrative and Policy Support

This theme highlights the role of school administration in facilitating or hindering the practice of inclusion. This theme reflects mixed experiences with administrative backing and policy implementation. Here are some excerpts;

Teacher 3: Our headteacher is supportive and tries to provide what we need, but there are limitations due to budget constraints. Sometimes, I feel the policies are there, but the practical support is lacking.

Teacher 5 also opined that;

Administrative support can be inconsistent. Some policies sound good on paper but are not fully implemented. We need more commitment from leadership to make inclusion a reality, including allocating time for planning and support.

The quotes highlight the gap between policy and practice in inclusive education, with teachers acknowledging administrative willingness but noting the impact of budgetary and implementation constraints. They imply that while school leadership shows some support, the inconsistency and lack of committed resources undermine effective inclusion. This underscores the need for stronger, practical commitment from administrators, including better financial planning and structured support systems to bridge the gap between policy intentions and classroom realities.

Discussion of the Results

Comprehensive view of the support services available to early childhood teachers for implementing inclusive practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis. In terms of quantitative data, the results highlight moderate satisfaction with the support services, but with considerable variability in experiences. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the scarcity of training programs, educational resources, and specialist support, which reflects a significant challenge in meeting the diverse needs of children, especially those with disabilities. While there is some recognition of administrative support, the inconsistency in funding and specialist access poses considerable barriers to effective inclusion. The findings align with literature indicating that a lack of resources and training is a persistent challenge in inclusive education (Kauffman & Badar, 2023; O'Toole et al., 2023).

The qualitative analysis reinforces these findings by shedding light on specific challenges teachers face. One of the most notable themes is the inadequacy of professional development and training opportunities. Teachers emphasized that the existing training programs are sporadic and lack depth,

often providing only an introduction to inclusive practices rather than offering practical, classroom-ready strategies. This echoes the findings of studies by Berman and Reinke (2023) and Albus et al. (2022), which highlight that teachers often report insufficient preparation to address the diverse needs in inclusive classrooms.

Another significant theme from the qualitative data is the challenge of resource allocation and classroom support. Teachers lament the lack of specialized equipment, teaching assistants, and appropriate materials to support children with special needs. This not only increases their workload but also affects the quality of education provided to children with disabilities. The literature consistently highlights those inadequate resources, including physical and human resources, severely hinder the implementation of effective inclusive education (Cameron & Cook, 2023; Horn et al., 2022).

While collaboration and peer support networks emerged as a positive theme, teachers noted the informality and lack of structure in their collaborative efforts. Although they value sharing strategies and experiences, there is a clear need for more organized opportunities for professional learning communities. This aligns with recent studies suggesting that peer collaboration plays a vital role in fostering inclusive practices, yet many teachers report that such networks are often unstructured and insufficiently supported by schools (Williams et al., 2023; McLaughlin & Wiggins, 2022).

The theme of administrative and policy support reveals a divergence between policy intentions and practical support. Teachers acknowledged the commitment of school leadership but pointed out that budget constraints and inconsistent implementation of policies create gaps in support. This mirrors findings from recent studies on the gap between educational policy and its real-world

application, where administrative support is often limited by insufficient resources and unclear policy execution (Jackson et al., 2023; Thompson & Brown, 2022).

In conclusion, both the quantitative and qualitative data point to a significant need for improved professional development, better resource allocation, and more structured peer collaboration to enhance inclusive education practices. Teachers' experiences reflect a disconnect between policy and practical support, highlighting the importance of bridging this gap to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Research Question Four: What is the effectiveness of the training that teachers have received for implementing inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis?

Research Question Four examines the effectiveness of the training that teachers have received for implementing inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis. This question seeks to assess how well the training prepares teachers to effectively integrate inclusive education strategies in their classrooms, and whether the training provided meets the needs of diverse learners, including those with disabilities. Understanding the effectiveness of such training is crucial for improving inclusive education practices.

Table 4.5 The Effectiveness of the Training that Teachers have received for Implementing Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Centres

Question	Means	STD
The training I have received has equipped me with practical strategies for effectively implementing inclusive practices.	3.42	0.341
The professional development programmes I attended provided relevant examples and case studies on inclusive education.	3.27	0.454
I feel confident in my ability to create an inclusive classroom environment due to the training I have received.	3.31	0.581
The training sessions I participated in adequately addressed the diverse needs of learners in my classroom.	3.17	0.665
I have received sufficient training on how to adapt the curriculum to accommodate children with special needs.	2.84	0.237
The training programmes offered have helped me understand the importance of inclusive education in early childhood settings.	3.54	0.314
I have learned effective communication techniques from the training to engage with parents and guardians of children with special needs.	3.67	0.356
The workshops and training sessions provided me with the tools to assess and monitor the progress of all learners inclusively.	3.04	0.628
The training has prepared me to handle behavioral challenges that may arise when teaching a diverse group of learners.	3.13	0.598
I find the training I have received for implementing inclusive practices to be effective and applicable to my teaching environment.	3.48	0.439
Mean of Means	3.28	0.461

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 4.5 represents the data regarding the effectiveness of the training received by teachers for implementing inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis revealing varied levels of satisfaction and preparedness. The mean scores and standard deviations shed light on the perceived strengths and gaps in the training programmes.

Firstly, the statement on training received equipping teachers with practical strategies for effectively implementing inclusive practices has a mean of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 0.274, suggesting a high level of agreement among teachers that their training has provided them with useful, actionable strategies for inclusive education. This is reinforced by the statement, "The professional development programmes attended provided relevant examples and case studies on inclusive education," with a mean of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 0.302, indicating that while many teachers found the training examples relevant, there was some variability in their experiences.

Teachers also express a relatively high sense of confidence in creating inclusive classroom environments due to the training, with a mean of 3.77 and a standard deviation of 0.380, reflecting consistent positive perceptions but some degree of variation in confidence levels. On the other hand, the statement "The training sessions I participated in adequately addressed the diverse needs of learners in my classroom" has a mean of 3.56 and a standard deviation of 0.487, showing a moderate agreement that the training addressed diverse needs, but the larger standard deviation suggests some teachers felt the training did not fully meet the diverse requirements of their learners.

When it comes to adapting the curriculum to accommodate children with special needs, the training appears to have had a moderate impact, as reflected by a mean of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 0.544, highlighting a gap in teachers' preparedness for curriculum adaptation. Similarly, the statement "The training programmes offered have helped to understand the importance of inclusive education in early childhood settings" shows a higher mean of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 0.259, indicating strong agreement that the training underscored the importance of inclusion, with little variation among responses.

Most of the teachers also express confidence in their ability to engage with parents and guardians of children with special needs, as shown by a mean of 3.56 and a standard deviation of 0.422. This suggests that while many feel well-prepared to communicate effectively, there is some variability in how well the training equipped them for this role.

Again, most of the early childhood teachers agreed that workshops and training sessions has provided them with the tools to assess and monitor the progress of all learners inclusively. This had a mean of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.482, indicating that while teachers feel somewhat equipped to assess and monitor progress, there are discrepancies in their perceived readiness to implement these assessment strategies.

On handling behavioral challenges, the training's effectiveness is reflected by a mean of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.539, suggesting moderate preparedness in addressing the behavioral challenges of a diverse classroom, though the larger standard deviation implies a range of opinions on this aspect. Finally, teachers report a generally positive view of the overall effectiveness of the training, with a mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 0.401, suggesting that while the majority find the training helpful and applicable, there is still some variation in teachers' experiences and perceptions.

In summary, the data reveals that while teachers feel relatively confident in implementing inclusive practices due to their training, there are notable gaps in areas like adapting the curriculum, addressing diverse learner needs, and handling behavioral challenges. The training programs appear to be effective overall but would benefit from more targeted strategies in specific areas, such as curriculum adaptation and assessment techniques, to ensure that all teachers feel fully prepared for inclusive education.

Qualitative Analysis

This research question seeks to find how the level of training of teachers influences the implementation of inclusive practices in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

The following themes were generated from the interviews;

Insufficient Depth and Practical Application of Training

This theme echoed that while training sessions are occasionally offered, they often lack depth and practical strategies that can be directly applied in the classroom. Here are some excerpts from the interview;

We have occasional workshops, but they are not regular enough. I feel like the training we receive is more of an introduction rather than giving us practical strategies to use in the classroom every day. T4

The training we get is basic and doesn't go into enough detail on how to deal with specific challenges in inclusive classrooms. T2

The quotes imply that the existing training programs for teachers are insufficient in addressing the specific needs of inclusive classrooms. Teachers feel that the workshops are infrequent and introductory, lacking detailed strategies for practical application. This gap in training may limit teachers' ability to effectively implement inclusive practices, which could hinder their ability to meet the diverse needs of all students, especially those with special needs, in early childhood settings.

Lack of Ongoing and Specialized Training

This theme highlights that the training teachers receive is not focused enough on inclusion, and there are few follow-up opportunities to reinforce the skills needed to manage diverse classrooms.

There are some in-service training programs, but they are not specifically tailored to inclusion. We need more focused training on how to manage classrooms that have both typical learners and those with special needs. T5

The training is not continuous. Once you attend a workshop, there is no further support or advanced training to help you deepen your understanding of inclusive practices. T7

The quotes suggest that while some in-service training programs exist, they lack a specific focus on inclusion, leaving teachers unprepared to manage diverse classrooms effectively. Additionally, the lack of continuous and advanced training after initial workshops means teachers do not receive the ongoing support needed to refine their skills. This creates a barrier to fully implementing inclusive practices, as teachers are left without the resources to deepen their knowledge or address complex classroom challenges.

Limited in Skill Development

The theme seeks to expound on how teachers who acknowledged that the training helped raise awareness about inclusive education, but did not significantly improve their ability to implement practical inclusion strategies.

The training raised my awareness about inclusion, but I still feel unprepared to handle children with special needs effectively. It's good to know the theory, but I need more tools for actual classroom situations. T3

I learned about the importance of inclusion, but the training didn't give me enough skills to implement it in my classroom. It was more of a general overview rather than specific methods I could use. T1

These quotes highlight a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in inclusive education training. While the training raised awareness about inclusion, teachers feel unprepared to address the specific needs of children with special needs in the classroom. The lack of practical, hands-on strategies means that teachers are not equipped with the necessary tools to implement inclusive practices effectively, which may hinder their ability to support all learners meaningfully.

Discussions

The analysis of the data reveals both positive and negative aspects of the training received by teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis for implementing inclusive practices in early childhood classrooms. A significant theme that emerged from the findings is that the training programs helped raise teachers' awareness about the importance of inclusive education, fostering a greater understanding of the concept. Many teachers expressed confidence in their ability to create inclusive environments and engage with parents of children with special needs, which reflects the success of these programs in increasing awareness. This aligns with existing literature, which emphasizes that raising awareness about inclusion is a critical first step in promoting inclusive practices (Ainscow, 2005; Florian, 2014).

However, despite the positive outcomes in awareness and confidence, the teachers expressed concerns about the lack of practical, hands-on strategies in the training. Many teachers felt that the training they received was too general and did not offer specific methods or tools they could apply in their classrooms. This gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application is a well-documented issue in the literature. Research consistently highlights that effective professional development should provide teachers with concrete strategies and techniques to address the diverse needs of students, including those with special needs (McLeskey et al., 2017; Friend & Cook, 2013). The lack of specific strategies, particularly in managing diverse classrooms and adapting the curriculum, was a major concern among the teachers in this study.

Another significant issue that emerged from the interviews was the absence of ongoing support and continuous professional development. While teachers acknowledged the value of occasional workshops, they noted that these training programs were infrequent and lacked follow-up sessions to reinforce learning and offer further guidance. This aligns with research suggesting that one-time

workshops are insufficient for sustaining inclusive practices in classrooms (Baker, 2012; Mitchell, 2015). Ongoing support and continuous professional development are essential for helping teachers refine their skills and stay updated on new approaches in inclusive education.

Furthermore, while the training raised awareness and increased confidence, teachers felt unprepared to manage the day-to-day challenges of an inclusive classroom, particularly in terms of addressing the behavioral needs of students and adapting the curriculum to accommodate learners with special needs. This highlights a gap in the training, which, despite its positive impact on awareness, failed to equip teachers with the specific tools necessary for practical implementation.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This final chapter comprises a summary of the study, emphasizing the major findings. It discusses the conclusion, recommendations as well as suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis of the Central Region of Ghana. To achieve this purpose, the following research objectives were formulated to guide the study:

1. Evaluate the views of teachers towards inclusive education practices in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metro
2. Investigate the cultural beliefs of teachers toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metro
3. Identify the support services available to early childhood teachers' inclusive practices in the Cape Coast Metro
4. Evaluate the level of training of teachers towards the implementation of inclusive practices in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metro

5.2 Key Findings

The study found that teachers generally support inclusive education, recognizing its benefits in promoting equity and social growth. They feel confident yet underprepared, particularly for addressing diverse learner needs. Teachers emphasized the importance of curriculum adaptability

but noted resource limitations and classroom management challenges. Additionally, inconsistent administrative and parental support hinders implementation.

The findings from the study further indicate that cultural beliefs profoundly influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Teachers acknowledge that cultural perceptions of disability shape their willingness and methods for inclusion, often leading to resistance when cultural norms conflict with inclusive principles. Teachers' commitment varies, with cultural values acting as both facilitators and barriers, underscoring the need for cultural competence in teacher training.

The findings reveal that early childhood teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis experience moderate satisfaction with support services for inclusive practices, but challenges persist. Teachers are dissatisfied with the scarcity of training, resources, and specialist support. Existing training lacks depth and practical strategies, while resource allocation is inadequate, affecting education quality for children with special needs. Although peer collaboration is valued, it remains informal and under-supported. Administrative efforts are hindered by budget constraints and inconsistent policy implementation.

The findings from the study highlight both strengths and gaps in the training for teachers in Cape Coast Metropolis regarding inclusive practices. While the training effectively raised awareness and boosted teacher confidence about inclusion, it lacked practical strategies for classroom application. Teachers expressed the need for more concrete tools and ongoing professional development to manage diverse classrooms effectively.

5.3 Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the study;

The study concludes that while early childhood educators in the Cape Coast Metropolis demonstrate a foundational commitment to the ideals of inclusive education, this commitment is not yet matched by the capacity and systemic conditions necessary for effective implementation. The study underscores that positive teacher attitudes alone are insufficient to guarantee inclusive practices unless supported by practical skills, enabling environments, and responsive institutional frameworks.

The researcher concludes that inclusive education in early childhood centres must be approached as a multi-dimensional reform, not merely as a pedagogical adjustment. It requires a cultural shift that addresses deep-rooted beliefs about disability, a structural shift that ensures consistent and adequate support services, and a professional shift that equips teachers with hands-on strategies and ongoing developmental opportunities.

This study also points to the importance of aligning policy with practice. While inclusive education policies exist, their uneven implementation calls for stronger monitoring, accountability, and teacher involvement in decision-making processes. Teacher training must evolve beyond awareness-raising to embrace experiential, practice-oriented learning that builds confidence and competence.

Ultimately, fostering inclusive early childhood classrooms in the Cape Coast Metropolis will depend on a coordinated effort that connects teacher development, cultural responsiveness, community engagement, and institutional support. Without such an integrated approach, the promise of inclusion may remain rhetorical rather than realized.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn from the study;

To enhance inclusive education, the Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Directorate should provide targeted professional development focused on practical strategies for managing diverse classrooms. Increase resource allocation, such as specialized materials and support staff, to aid effective implementation. Strengthen administrative and parental support through engagement programs and ensure consistent policy enforcement to create a well-rounded, supportive environment for teachers and learners.

School authorities should educate teachers to address the influence of cultural beliefs on inclusive practices by incorporating cultural competence training into teacher preparation programmes. Develop workshops that explore inclusive principles in culturally relevant ways. Encourage open dialogue about cultural perspectives on disability to bridge gaps and foster understanding, enabling teachers to better implement inclusive strategies in culturally diverse settings.

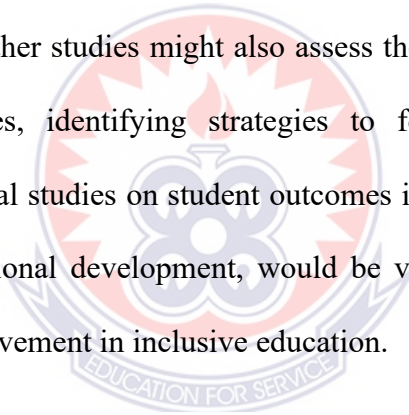
The Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Directorate should improve support services for inclusive education by offering comprehensive, practical training for teachers. Increase funding to provide essential resources and specialist support. Formalize and promote peer collaboration networks, ensuring regular opportunities for shared learning. Strengthen administrative policies to ensure consistency and adequately allocate resources, prioritizing the quality of education for students with special needs.

School authorities within the Cape Coast Metro should implement ongoing professional development that focuses on practical applications of inclusive education strategies. Provide teachers with concrete tools for managing diverse classrooms. Establish mentorship and peer-

support programs to enhance collaboration. Invest in creating structured, supportive environments that offer continuous resources and assistance, fostering effective, inclusive practices in early childhood education.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Further studies could explore the long-term impact of inclusive education training programs on teachers' confidence and effectiveness in managing diverse classrooms. Investigating the role of cultural beliefs across different regions in Ghana could provide a comparative understanding of how cultural contexts influence inclusive practices. Additionally, research could examine the specific types of resources that have the greatest impact on successful curriculum adaptation for learners with special needs. Further studies might also assess the effectiveness of administrative and parental support initiatives, identifying strategies to foster consistent and proactive involvement. Finally, longitudinal studies on student outcomes in inclusive settings, focusing on both academic and social-emotional development, would be valuable in assessing the overall success and areas needing improvement in inclusive education.



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**APPENDIX A
INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION**

APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

FACULTY OF APPLIED BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES IN EDUCATION

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Dear Respondent

The study teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis of the Central Region of Ghana. It would therefore be appreciated if you could respond to all items on the questionnaire in honesty. You are assured of complete confidentiality and anonymity of all information provided. Nothing will ever be published or reported that will associate your name and/or school with your responses to the survey questions. Therefore, you should not write your name, and/or school name on any part of the instrument. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Again, questions on this survey instrument have gone through a thorough review by professionals at the University of Education, Winneba, and have been declared ethical for educational research. You hereby consent to voluntarily participate in this study by responding to items of the various sections of this instrument.

Thank You.

SECTION A

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

1. **Gender:**

a) Male []

b) Female []

2. **Age bracket**

a) 20 to 30 []

b) 31-40 []

c) 41-50 []

d) 51-60 []

3. **Years of Teaching Experience**

a) 0-5years []

b) 6-10years []

c) 11 years and above []



SECTION B

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

Please respond to the following statements on Teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis of the Central Region of Ghana. Indicate the extent to which you Strongly Agree-SA, Agree-A, Disagree-D, and Strongly Disagree-SD to the statements below

Directions: Indicate with a tick [✓] on the influence of play-based pedagogy on early-grade learners' ability to comprehend texts. Where: *SA = Strongly Agree, (4), A = Agree, (3) D = Disagree, (2) and SD = Strongly Disagree (1)*

Research Question One: What are teachers' views regarding inclusive education practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis?

4	I believe that inclusive education practices provide equal learning opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities.	SA	A	D	SD
5	I feel confident in my ability to implement inclusive education strategies in my classroom.				
6	I have received adequate training on how to teach children with diverse learning needs effectively.				
7	The curriculum I use is adaptable to meet the needs of children with special educational needs.				
8	I find it challenging to manage classrooms that include both typically developing children and those with special educational needs.				
9	I think inclusive education improves social skills and peer interactions among all children.				
10	I have access to the resources and materials needed to support inclusive education in my classroom.				
11	The school administration provides sufficient support for teachers implementing inclusive practices.				
12	I feel that more professional development opportunities are needed to better equip teachers for inclusive education.				

13	Parental involvement is essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education practices.				
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How does the cultural beliefs of teachers influence their attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis?

14	My cultural beliefs significantly shape my views on including children with disabilities in my classroom.	SA	A	D	SD
15	I believe that inclusive practices in early childhood education should align with the cultural values of my community.				
16	My cultural background influences how I perceive the capabilities of children with diverse learning needs.				
17	Cultural norms and traditions make it challenging to fully embrace inclusive practices in early childhood education.				
18	I am comfortable implementing inclusive practices, even if they may differ from the cultural expectations of my community.				
19	The cultural beliefs I grew up with influence my willingness to adapt my teaching methods for learners with special needs.				
20	I believe that my cultural upbringing affects how I interact with children from diverse backgrounds in an inclusive setting.				
21	Some cultural beliefs I hold conflict with the principles of inclusivity in early childhood education.				
22	I feel that community and family cultural beliefs play a role in how I support inclusive education in my classroom.				
23	My cultural values impact my level of commitment to implementing inclusive practices in early childhood education.				

What support services are available to early childhood teachers for the implementation of inclusive practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

24	I have access to adequate training programs that prepare me to implement inclusive practices in my classroom.	SA	A	D	SD
25	There are sufficient educational resources provided to support inclusive education in my school.				
26	I receive regular professional development sessions focused on inclusive teaching strategies.				
27	My school provides access to specialists (e.g., speech therapists, occupational therapists) who support inclusive practices.				
28	There is a dedicated support team within my school or district to assist with challenges related to inclusive education.				
29	I can easily access guidance or mentorship from experienced teachers who have expertise in inclusive practices.				
30	There are effective collaboration opportunities with parents and community members to support inclusive education.				
31	I have access to adequate funding or grants to implement inclusive educational activities and resources.				
32	The administration at my school provides strong support and encouragement for implementing inclusive practices.				
33	There are clear policies and guidelines provided by the education authorities to assist teachers in inclusive education.				

34	The training I have received has equipped me with practical strategies for effectively implementing inclusive practices.	SA	A	D	SD
35	The professional development programs I attended provided relevant examples and case studies on inclusive education.				
36	I feel confident in my ability to create an inclusive classroom environment due to the training I have received.				
37	The training sessions I participated in adequately addressed the diverse needs of learners in my classroom.				
38	I have received sufficient training on how to adapt the curriculum to accommodate children with special needs.				
39	The training programs offered have helped me understand the importance of inclusive education in early childhood settings.				
40	I have learned effective communication techniques from the training to engage with parents and guardians of children with special needs.				
41	The workshops and training sessions provided me with the tools to assess and monitor the progress of all learners inclusively.				
42	The training has prepared me to handle behavioral challenges that may arise when teaching a diverse group of learners.				
43	Overall, I find the training I have received for implementing inclusive practices to be effective and applicable to my teaching environment.				

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Dear teacher, the purpose of this study this study is to investigate teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis of the Central Region of Ghana. I sincerely appreciate your cooperation in this study, which will enable me to gain a deeper understanding of the attitudes of early childhood teachers towards inclusive practices in early childhood centres in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Please be aware that participation is optional and that all information provided will be kept private. You have the option of not responding to any questions if doing so makes you feel uncomfortable. Thank you

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

How old are you?

Gender.....

What is your education qualification?.....

Duration.....

SECTION B

Research Question One: What are teachers' views regarding inclusive education practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis?

1. What is your understanding of inclusive education and what it means for early childhood education?
2. How prepared do you feel to implement inclusive education practices in your classroom, and what factors influence your level of preparedness?
3. What are your personal views on the importance of inclusive education practices for young children, especially in early childhood centers?
4. Can you share any experiences where inclusive education practices have either positively or negatively impacted your classroom dynamics?

Research Question Two: How do the cultural beliefs of teachers influence their attitudes toward inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis?

5. How does your cultural background shape your perspective on teaching children with diverse needs in an inclusive setting?
6. Are there any cultural beliefs that you feel influence your approach to inclusive education in your classroom?
7. How do the cultural expectations of your community impact your attitude toward including children with disabilities or special needs in mainstream classrooms?
8. Do you feel that certain cultural norms or values support the implementation of inclusive practices?

Research Question Three: What support services are available to early childhood teachers for the implementation of inclusive practices in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

9. What types of support services are currently available to help you implement inclusive practices in your classroom?
10. What kind of resources do you receive from your school administration to support inclusive practices?
11. Do you feel that the current support services adequately meet your needs for implementing inclusive practices?

Research Question Four: What is the effectiveness of the training that teachers have received for implementing inclusive practices in early childhood centres within the Cape Coast Metropolis?

12. What were your experiences with any training programmes you have attended on inclusive education?
13. How did these programmes influence your teaching practices?
14. How well do you think the training you received prepared you to address the needs of diverse learners in your classroom?
15. What aspects of the training did you find most useful for implementing inclusive practices?
Are there any components that stood out to you?
16. Were there any areas or topics that you felt were not adequately covered in the training?