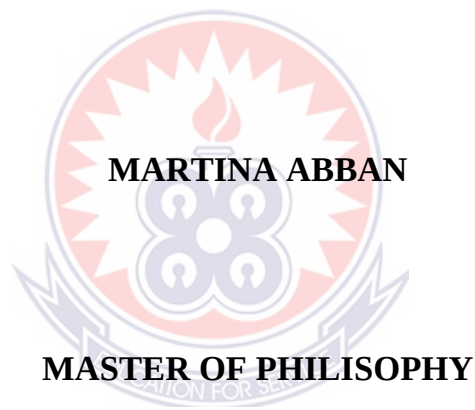


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**Experiences of headteachers about enforcement of educational rights of learners
with special needs at Kindergarten Centres in Awutu- Senya-East Municipality**



2024
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**EXPERIENCES OF HEADTEACHERS ABOUT ENFORCEMENT OF
EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AT
KINDERGATEN CENTRES IN AWUTU- SENYA-EAST MUNICIPALITY**



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**A thesis in the Department of Early Childhood Education,
Faculty of Applied Behavioural Science Education, Submitted to the School of
Graduate, in partial fulfilment
of the requirement for the award of
Master of Philosophy
(Early Childhood Education)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**SEPTEMBER, 2024
DECLARATION**

Student's Declaration

I, Martina Abban declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work which has not been submitted, either in part or whole for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:

Date:

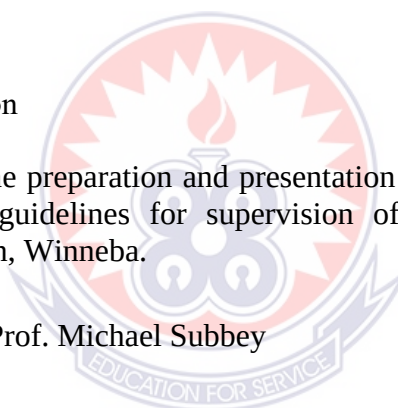
Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: Prof. Michael Subbey

Signature:

Date:



DEDICATION

To my son Rhema-Levi Fiifi Boaha and Family.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to God for the gift of life and good health. I thank all my lecturers who taught me throughout the programme. I single out my supervisor Prof. Michael Subbey who went the extra mile to see to it that my work was properly done. Thanks to my family for all the support given.

May God bless you all.



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ABSTRACT

The study examined headteachers' experiences in enforcing educational rights for special needs learners in kindergarten centers within the Awutu-Senya-East municipality. Employing an exploratory case study design and interpretative qualitative framework, it delves into dynamic issues using purposive and convenience sampling, totaling 14 participants. Data collected through interviews, field notes, and observations. Thematic analysis was used to analyzed data. The study revealed that most headteachers have received some training, concerns persist about duration and frequency, indicating a need for ongoing professional development. Also, Material resource constraints hinder effective teaching, exacerbating disparities in headteachers' awareness and understanding of inclusive education policies. Recommendations include enhancing policy implementation, promoting inclusive school cultures, addressing resource limitations, improving headteachers training, and raising awareness. Further research avenues include longitudinal studies, comparative analyses of policy implementation, and evaluations of teacher training programs, exploring parental perspectives, and investigating inclusive classroom practices.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Today, an ever-increasing number of infants and young learners, both with and without special educational needs, engage in play development and learning together in various settings such as homes, early childhood centers, neighborhoods, and other community-based environments (Gray, 2023). This inclusive approach emphasizes the belief that young learners with special needs and their families are integral members of the community. It reflects societal values aimed at promoting opportunities for development, learning, and a sense of belonging for every child. Additionally, it represents a departure from previous educational practices that involved segregating and isolating learners with special needs. Inclusive kindergarten centers should be places where every child feels valued, supported, and empowered to learn and grow regardless of their abilities and disabilities (Gray, 2023).

In 1994, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Conference on Special Needs Education issued the Salamanca Statement, signed by representatives of 92 countries and 25 organizations, which states that “those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools.” The statement affirms that inclusive regular schools “are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all.” The Salamanca Statement was part of a global movement toward inclusive education and offered guidelines for action at the national, regional, and international levels. It called for governments to promote, plan, finance, and monitor inclusive education programs within their education

systems (UNESCO, 2009). Since the Salamanca Statement, the international community has continued to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in society. Drafted in 2006, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) binds its 161 signatory states to ensure that “persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality, and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live.” Article 24 of the convention requires states to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels for people with disabilities, including opportunities for lifelong learning. This article also stipulates that students with disabilities must not be excluded from general education, reasonable accommodations and individualized supports must be provided for them, and they should have access to tertiary education, vocational training, and adult education on an equal basis with non-disabled students.

Many countries have developed national policies to support inclusion, and Ghana is no exception. Nigeria adopted a formal special education policy in 1988 and has since created additional legislation requiring that schools provide inclusive education services to learners with disabilities (Ajuwon, 2008; Tesemma, 2011). South Africa has developed a long-term plan to promote inclusive education by transitioning students from segregated placements into an integrated system of neighborhood, full-service, and specialized schools (Department of Education, 2001). Ghana fully endorses and supports the Education for All initiative through national and international commitments, including signing the UN

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Salamanca Accord. The Inclusive Policy in Ghana is the result of consultations and workshops involving key players in the field of education. The Ministry of Education's Standards and

Guidelines for the Practice of Inclusive Education in Ghana (2015) requires that all schools in Ghana adhere to these standards and [guidelines](#). Inclusive education seeks to guarantee a learning environment that is barrier-free, allowing all learners, including those with disabilities, to move about safely, use facilities, and participate in learning and all aspects of school life.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain. New UNESCO data show that 1 out of 4 learners aged 5 have never had any form of pre-primary education, representing 35 million out of 137 million 5-year-old learners worldwide. Only half of all countries guarantee free preprimary education (UNESCO, 2022).

According to the Global Report on Learners with Developmental Disabilities jointly published by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2023, the estimated number of learners with developmental disabilities worldwide is close to 240 million. This means approximately one child in every ten has a developmental disability.

In England, more than 1.2 million learners, or about 15% of all learners, have some kind of special educational needs. However, only about 253,000 of them have special educational needs statements or education health and care plans. Concerns are growing that learners with special needs are particularly vulnerable to being removed from school rolls by institutions facing financial pressure due to budget cuts or academic pressure to improve exam results (Sally & Niamh, 2018).

In the USA, speech-language impairments (S/LI) and specific learning disabilities (SLD) are the most common incidence disabilities in schools. More than 50% of all students with disabilities nationwide, grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12, have a primary disability of either SLD (34.5%) or S/LI (20%) (Sally & Niamh, 2018).

In Lebanon, Human Rights Watch interviewed 33 learners or their families who stated they were excluded from public schools due to disability, amounting to discrimination. Among them, 23 school-age learners with disabilities in Beirut and its suburbs, Hermel, Akkar, Nabatieh, and the Chouf districts were not enrolled in any educational program. The experiences faced by learners with disabilities in Lebanon highlight issues of discriminatory admission policies, lack of reasonable accommodations, shortage of adequately trained staff, absence of inclusive curricula, and discriminatory fees and expenses that further marginalize learners with disabilities from poor families (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Inclusive education has gained global recognition as a critical approach for ensuring a every learner, including those with special issues, receives equitable educational opportunities. The implementation of inclusive education is guided by international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and the Sustainable Development Goals 4 (2030), which advocate for inclusive, equitable quality education for all. The educational rights of learners with special needs in kindergarten centers within the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality, like in other parts of Ghana, are shaped by both national policies and international commitments such as the Education Strategic Plan (2018-2030), which outlines education for all as a key focus, and the Constitution of Ghana (1992), which guarantees equal rights to education for all citizens (UNICEF Ghana, 2015).

The enforcement of educational rights for learners with special needs in kindergarten centers within the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality involves a complex set of experiences and responsibilities. Headteachers play a key role in this process, navigating policy implementation, resource constraints, and training levels. National

legal frameworks and policies such as the Persons with Disability Act (2006) and the Inclusive Education Policy (2015) mandate equal access to education and facilities for persons with disabilities. Despite these policies, challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, and teacher shortages remain.

Key frameworks, such as the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), emphasize the importance of integrating special needs learners into mainstream education. National policies in Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa demonstrate different approaches, with Ghana's Inclusive Education Policy (2015) showing strong commitment. Reports from UNESCO (2022), WHO and UNICEF (2023), and Sally & Niamh (2018) highlight significant challenges, including accessibility gaps and financial constraints that hinder inclusive education worldwide.

While these studies provide valuable insights, they have limitations, such as insufficient long-term analysis, lack of regional specificity, and limited evaluation of teacher preparedness and funding allocation. Some studies identify teacher training and infrastructure challenges but fail to assess their effectiveness. While there are concerted efforts to support the educational rights of learners with special needs in Awutu-Senya-East Municipality, significant challenges remain. Continuous improvement in resource allocation, infrastructure, teacher training, and societal attitudes is essential to fully realize inclusive education.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to Ghana's Children's Act 560, every child is entitled to education, regardless of their situation or disability. In line with this, Ghana has implemented an Inclusive Education Policy to ensure that educational opportunities are for all learners. However, despite progress towards universal enrollment and gender parity in primary education, significant challenges persist, particularly for learners with disabilities. While various international frameworks and national policies advocate for inclusive education, there is limited research on the practical implementation of these policies at the kindergarten level in the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality.

The translation of policy commitments into tangible changes in school environments, teacher attitudes, learners' and headteachers' experiences remains unclear. Additionally, although studies provide general statistics on special needs learners globally and nationally, there is a scarcity of empirical evidence specific to Ghanaian early childhood centers. The 2008 Education for All Global Monitoring Report notes that over 69 million learners worldwide are out of primary school, with persistent inequities, including those associated with disability (UNESCO, 2007, 2011). The role of headteachers in enforcing educational rights for learners with special needs and the challenges they face in implementation also require further exploration.

The Awutu-Senya-East District Assembly's composite budget report for 2018 to 2021 highlights concerns regarding inadequate and inequitable access to education, especially for persons with special needs, and points to poor educational infrastructure and inadequate supervision as significant barriers. The Ghana Education Service (GES) 2022 report similarly indicates that many schools in the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality lack the necessary infrastructure and resources to support inclusive

education. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by examining the realities of enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs in Ghana's kindergartens, focusing on existing school rules, resource allocation, headteacher preparedness, and headteacher awareness.

A survey by the Inclusive Education Unit of the GES found that 70% of headteachers cited inadequate resources as a major barrier to the effective rollout of inclusive education in Awutu-Senya-East Municipality.(GES,2022) This is corroborated by studies showing that learners in inclusive education settings lack necessary resources and physical facilities for academic achievement (Oguntade, 2017; Adedoyin & Okere, 2017). Cortiella (2009) highlights that a significant constraint is the severe shortage of educational resources, including classrooms, desks, specialized textbooks for visually impaired students, and Braille machines. Outdated technology and the lack of embrace of assistive technology further exacerbate this issue (Akinyi, Nyangia, & Orodho, 2015). Additionally, the shortage of trained and qualified staff is a significant barrier to effective inclusive education practices.

The UNICEF and other stakeholders have backed the national policy of inclusive education, which demands the integration of learners with special needs and disadvantaged groups into ordinary schools. The policy obliges schools to identify and address the special needs of learners through various learning and teaching methods and approaches for the delivery of quality education to all learners. Despite these efforts, the researcher visited one of the schools within Awutu-Senya-East Municipality on Wednesday, 20th November,2019 revealed that the educational rights of learners with special needs in kindergarten centres are not adequately addressed. Learners with special educational needs use the same teaching

and learning resources just like their colleagues without special needs in the classroom. Discussions with headteachers revealed inadequate material resources and special needs resource teachers for learners with special educational needs.

Considering the findings from previous studies and reports, it is crucial to conduct an in-depth investigation into the experiences of headteachers about enforcement of educational rights of learners with special needs in kindergarten centres in Awutu-Senya-East Municipality.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine experiences of headteachers about enforcement of educational rights of learners with special needs in kindergarten centres in Awutu-Senya-East municipality.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. examine school rules regarding the safeguarding of educational rights of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres in Awutu-Senya-East Municipality.
2. investigate the nature of training provided to headteachers for effective enforcement of the educational rights of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres in Awutu-Senya-East Municipality.
3. ascertain the availability of material resources necessary for the enforcement of educational rights of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres in Awutu-Senya-East Municipality.

4. determine the level of awareness among headteachers regarding the policy on educational rights of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres in Awutu-Senya-East Municipality.

1.5 Research Questions

The study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What are the existing school rules in place to safeguard the educational rights of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres in Awutu-Senya-East Municipality?
2. What training have headteachers undertaken in handling the educational rights of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres in Awutu-Senya-East Municipality?
3. What are material resources required for enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs available in Kindergarten Centres in Awutu-Senya-East Municipality?
4. How are headteachers aware about the policy and legal frameworks on educational rights of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres in Awutu-Senya- East Municipality?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant importance in terms of policy development, research advancement, and social work practice. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights and information to policymakers and stakeholders involved in child-related matters, including the Ministry of Gender, Learners, and Social Protection, the Department of Social Welfare, UNICEF, and various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). By informing the design and implementation of policies, the

study can contribute to addressing experiences in enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs, as well as promoting and respecting learners' rights in Ghana.

Furthermore, this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and literature on the educational rights of learners with special needs in Ghana. While there is available literature on child rights, this study will fill gaps identified in the current literature, providing new insights and perspectives. The findings will again serve as a valuable reference for future researchers and scholars interested in the field of learners' rights.

In the context of social work, which is grounded in the principles of Human rights and social justice, the study findings can be utilized by social workers to develop advocacy tools. These tools can be used to advocate for policies that promote and protect the rights of learners in Ghana, particularly those with special educational needs. The study's findings can also enhance awareness and understanding of special needs educational rights among the general public, including learners themselves. By leveraging the study's outcomes, social workers can contribute to positive social change and empower learners with special needs to exercise their rights effectively.

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

This study had several delimitations that defined its scope and focus. Firstly, it was specifically conducted in Kindergarten Centres within Awutu-Senya-East Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. Therefore, the findings and conclusions drawn from this study may not be generalizable to other regions or municipalities in Ghana.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Firstly, the research findings were based on the responses provided by the participants. The accuracy and completeness of the data relied on the participants' understanding and willingness to provide accurate information. There is a possibility of response bias or incomplete responses, which could affect the reliability of the findings. Secondly, the study faced time constraints during data collection. The limited time available for data collection in schools, along with the tight schedules of participants, may have impacted the depth and extent of data that could be collected. This limitation could have restricted the researcher's ability to explore certain aspects in greater detail.

As a case study does not aim to implement changes or interventions, the findings may not directly lead to specific recommendations or actions (Yin, 2018). While the study may provide insights and suggestions, the responsibility for implementing changes lies beyond the scope of the research process. Despite these limitations, efforts were made to ensure consistency, reliability, and validity of the study. Measures such as maintaining clear research protocols, employing appropriate data collection methods, and analyzing data systematically were implemented to enhance the credibility and plausibility of the findings.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Learners with Special needs: learners with mild to moderate hearing, visual and physical impairment within the kindergarten centres.

Inclusive school: is a place that offers education programmes for all learners regardless of their background from three to 8 years which include kindergarten to class three.

Educational Rights: the rights to education that is legally guaranteed for all without any discrimination or denial.

Inclusive Education: education policies and practices that uphold the rights of every learners regardless of their background to belong and learn in regular education classrooms.

Kindergarten Centres: Refers to educational institutions or centres that provide early childhood education and care for learners typically between the ages of three to six years.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides the background of the study, problem statement, purpose, objectives, research questions, significance, delimitations, and organization of the study.

Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, highlighting existing knowledge and theories related to the study's objectives, while Chapter three describes the research methodology which includes the research paradigm, research approach, research approach design, target population, sample and sampling techniques, research instruments, reliability and validity, data collection Procedures measures, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four presents the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of data

Chapter Five provides a summary of the study's main findings, conclusion, and recommendations for the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter dealt with the review of the related literature under the following sub-headings:

- 2.1. Theoretical Framework
- 2.2. Conceptual Framework
- 2.3. Concept of Inclusive Education
- 2.4. History of Inclusive Education in Ghana
- 2.5. Legal and Policy Frameworks for Special Needs Education
- 2.6. School Rules Regarding the Safeguarding of the Educational Rights of Learners with Special Needs in Kindergarten Centers
- 2.7. Level of Awareness among Headteachers Regarding the Policy on Educational Rights of Learners with Special Needs
- 2.8. Availability of Material Resources Necessary for the Enforcement of the Educational Rights of Learners with Special Needs
- 2.9. The nature of training provided to headteachers for effectively enforce the educational rights of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres
- 2.10. Impact of Enforcement on Educational Outcomes of Special Needs Learners
- 2.11. Challenges and Best Practices in Enforcing Educational Rights of Learners with Special Needs.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Welfare theory

The theoretical framework guiding this study is grounded in the Interest Theory, also known as the Welfare Theory of learners' educational rights, which was propounded

by Bentham in 1987. This theory posits that the principal function of rights is to promote essential interests necessary for everyone to lead a minimally good life. According to the theory, rights are designed to protect basic human interests that are indispensable for well-being, extending this protection to the educational rights of learners, including those with special needs (Wall, 2010).

One of the core tenets of the Interest Theory is the promotion of essential interests. This theory emphasizes that rights exist to safeguard the fundamental interests of individuals (Bentham 1987). For learners with special needs, it means ensuring that their educational rights are protected so they receive the necessary support and resources to achieve a good quality of life. The theory further identifies the social prerequisites or conditions required for human beings to thrive. In the educational context, this involves ensuring that learners with special needs have access to appropriate educational facilities, trained educators, and supportive environments

The universality of human rights is another significant aspect of the Interest Theory. The theory argues that human rights are universal because they are based on basic, indispensable attributes of human well-being (Bentham 1987). This universality implies that learners' educational rights are fundamental and should be upheld universally, regardless of cultural or societal differences. The theory posits that respecting the rights of others is crucial for the protection of one's own rights, emphasizing reciprocal recognition and respect. In educational settings, this means that headteachers and other stakeholders must recognize and respect the educational rights of learners with special needs to create an inclusive and supportive environment.

Educational rights are justifiable according to the Interest Theory because they secure necessary conditions for the well-being of all learners. These rights help ensure that learners can develop their full potential and become healthy and productive adults. This perspective supports the study's first objective, which is to examine school rules regarding the safeguarding of educational rights. The Interest Theory supports the importance of protecting basic interests, which in this case includes the right to quality education for learners with special needs.

The second objective of the study is to assess the training provided to headteachers for effectively enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs. According to the Interest Theory, ensuring that those responsible for education are well-trained is crucial for the protection and promotion of the interests of learners with special needs. Proper training equips headteachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to support these learners effectively, aligning with the theory's emphasis on the social prerequisites for a good life

The third objective involves investigating the availability of material resources necessary for enforcing educational rights. The Interest Theory highlights the need for adequate resources to meet the basic needs and interests of all individuals, including learners with special needs. Ensuring that schools have the required resources is fundamental to supporting the educational rights of these learners and promoting their overall well-being (Wall, 2010).

The fourth objective is to ascertain the level of awareness among headteachers regarding policies and legal framework on educational rights. The Interest Theory underscores the importance of awareness and knowledge in safeguarding rights, making it essential for headteachers to be well-informed about educational rights

policies. This awareness enables them to better advocate for and protect the educational rights of learners with special needs.

While the Interest Theory has been criticized for its perceived lack of universality due to cultural and societal differences, it remains relevant to this study. The theory's focus on providing basic or minimum rights applicable to all learners aligns with the goal of ensuring that learners with special needs receive the necessary support and protection. The adaptability and contextualization of educational rights within various cultures further enhance the theory's applicability. Therefore, despite criticisms, the Interest Theory remains a robust framework for understanding and advocating for the educational rights of learners with special needs, emphasizing the protection of their fundamental interests.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework is on understanding experiences with the enforcement of educational rights of learners with special needs within inclusive early childhood centres. The arrows show a reflective path that the researcher adopted throughout the research process.

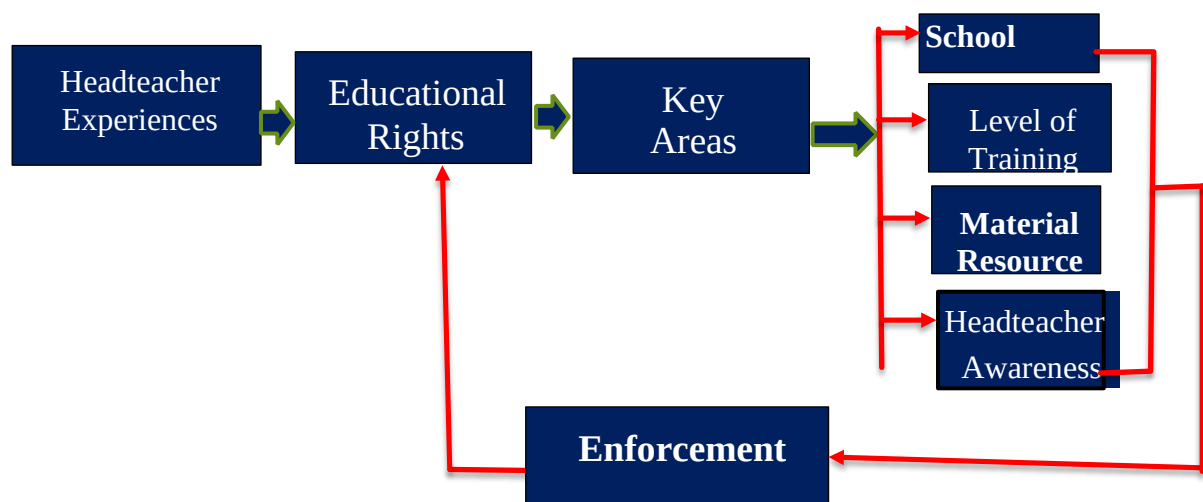


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: *Researcher's Own Construct*

The conceptual framework of this study is centered on the key elements that influence the enforcement of educational rights for learners with special needs. These elements include headteacher experience, headteachers awareness, material resources, level of training, and implementation policies. These components are critical in shaping the educational environment and ensuring that the rights of learners with special needs are effectively met. The conceptual framework is informed by the principles of the Interest Theory. Headteacher experience and awareness align with the theory's emphasis on recognizing and protecting basic human interests through informed and experienced leadership. This ensures that headteachers can effectively advocate for and implement policies that support learners with special needs. Training and professional development reflect the need for social prerequisites, such as adequate training, to support the well-being and educational success of these learners. Continuous professional development helps headteachers stay updated on best

practices and emerging trends in special needs education, promoting the overall well-being of learners. The emphasis on material resources highlights the importance of providing the necessary tools and facilities to protect and promote the educational rights of special needs students, ensuring they can access information and participate fully in the educational process. Finally, implementation policies support the theory's call for universal rights and reciprocal recognition, ensuring that policies are consistently applied to safeguard the educational rights of all learners. This integrated approach, informed by the Interest Theory, aims to create an environment where the educational rights of learners with special needs are actively supported through practical measures, addressing the challenges of inclusive education and promoting equitable access to learning opportunities for all students.

The study aims to examine the school rules regarding the safeguarding of educational rights of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres. The enforcement of these rules is crucial to ensure that all learners, regardless of their abilities, receive equitable educational opportunities. This involves understanding how existing policies are applied and identifying areas that require improvement to better protect the rights of these learners.

Assessing the nature of training provided to headteachers is vital for effectively enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs. Effective training programs should cover various aspects of special education, including the use of assistive technologies, modifications in teaching methods, and strategies for supporting students with different types of disabilities. Continuous professional development ensures that headteachers are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to manage inclusive education effectively.

Investigating the availability of material resources necessary for the enforcement of the educational rights of learners with special needs is another key objective. Essential resources include audio devices, Braille materials, ramps, and handrails, which support learners in accessing information and participating fully in the learning process. Ensuring that schools are well-equipped with these materials is fundamental to providing quality education for all students.

Determining the level of awareness among headteachers regarding the policy on educational rights of learners with special needs is critical. Awareness and understanding of special educational needs are crucial for headteachers to implement inclusive education policies effectively. This includes recognizing the diverse needs of students and adopting inclusive teaching strategies to address these needs.

2.3 The Concept of Inclusive Education

Globally, there has been a significant shift towards inclusive educational practices, highlighted by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). Since then, numerous conventions have reinforced its principles. For instance, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) emphasizes the importance of inclusive education systems. Concept of inclusion has evolved beyond addressing deficits, now encompassing issues like gender, ethnicity, class, social conditions, health, and human rights to ensure universal involvement, access, participation, and achievement (Ouane, 2008). The 2008 UNESCO International Conference in Geneva underscored the role of inclusion in addressing inequalities and cultural fragmentation. Garcia-Huidobro (2005) stressed that equity should be central to policy decisions, not just peripheral corrections. Inclusive education is linked with

broader reforms, including poverty alleviation, health improvement, gender equality, and sustainability initiatives.

In Ghana, special education began under British influence, with the first special school established by missionaries in 1936 (Avoke, 2001). The 1970s and 1980s saw rapid growth in special schools for the visual impaired, hearing impaired, and mentally disabled (Anthony, 2011). These schools often excluded other disabilities and led to an overrepresentation of children with mental disabilities, a common catch-all category in Ghana (Anthony, 2011).

Special education teacher training started in 1965, focusing initially on the deaf and later expanding to include the blind and mentally disabled. By 1992, these programs were integrated into the University of Education, Winneba, offering degrees and diplomas (Avoke, 2001). Inclusive education was introduced in the 1990s, aligning with the Salamanca statement's goals. Universities in Winneba and Cape Coast, along with several Colleges of Education, now offer specialized training in inclusive education (Avoke, 2001; Kuyini & Mangope, 2011).

The Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) program from 1996 significantly improved access to basic education, increasing gross enrollment rates from 87% in 2003 to 94% in 2006. However, completion rates were lower, at 85% in 2009 (Akyeampong, 2009, 2010; USAID, 2009). Factors such as poverty, child labor, school location, disabilities, health issues, and school organization affect school attendance and completion (UNESCO, 2010). Children with learning difficulties are often categorized as having visual, hearing, or mental disabilities, potentially marginalizing those outside these categories (Hayford, 2007).

The scope of inclusive education has expanded to include street children, those with health issues, dyslexia, behavior or communication problems, and talented children (Institute of Education, UCC, 2005). These children are at greater risk of being marginalized from educational opportunities. According to UNESCO (2010), marginalized children often miss out on quality education, further risking their learning opportunities. Schools must therefore accommodate all students, considering their diverse circumstances and needs.

2.4 History of Inclusive Education in Ghana

Inclusive education in Ghana began as a pilot project in 2003/04 in three regions: Central, Eastern, and Greater Accra, later expanding to Northern and Volta Regions, totaling 14 districts. Initially, the Special Education Division and the Health Sector collaborated with the Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), which withdrew in 2005 due to funding issues (Gadagbui, 2008).

The Inclusive Education Policy emerged from extensive consultations and workshops among key educational stakeholders. It draws on national legal documents such as the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda, the Education Strategic Plan (2010-2020), and the Disability Act (Opoku-Agyemang, 2013). The policy is focused on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model, complemented by the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) model, aiming to provide equitable quality education for all. The strategic focus includes improving access, providing necessary teaching materials, developing teacher capacity, and enhancing education service delivery (Opoku-Agyemang, 2013).

2.5 Legal and Policy Frameworks for Special Needs Education

International Conventions and Agreements

International conventions and agreements play an important role in advocating for inclusive education and protecting the rights of learners with special needs.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

The CRPD, adopted in 2006, is a landmark human rights treaty that reaffirms the equal rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Article 24 of the CRPD specifically addresses the right to education, emphasizing the importance of inclusive education systems at all levels. It calls for equal access to education, reasonable accommodation, and the provision of support services to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream education. The CRPD has been instrumental in shaping national policies and legislation related to special needs education worldwide.

Salamanca Statement

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, adopted in 1994, is a key international document that advocates for inclusive education. It asserts that every child has the right to education, and calls for the integration of learners with special needs into mainstream schools. The statement emphasizes the importance of providing appropriate support and resources to enable the full participation and achievement of all learners. It has served as a guiding framework for policymakers, educators, and advocates working towards inclusive education globally.

National Policies and Legislation

In Ghana, several national policies and legislative frameworks govern the education of learners with special needs, reflecting the country's commitment to inclusive education.

Ghana Disability Act 2006 (Act 715)

The Ghana Disability Act, enacted in 2006, aims to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, including their right to education. The act prohibits segregation against persons with disabilities and mandates reasonable accommodation in all aspects of life, including education. It recognizes the diverse needs of learners with disabilities and calls for the provision of appropriate support services to ensure their full participation in educational activities. The act also establishes the National Council on Persons with Disability to oversee the implementation of disability-related policies and programs.

2.6 School Rules Regarding the Safeguarding of the Educational Rights of

Learners with Special Needs in Kindergarten Centers

In Ghana, education is considered a right for all citizens, including those with special needs. The Inclusive Education (IE) Policy underscores the importance of fair access to high-quality instruction for all learners, transcending physical locations and promoting participation, friendship, and interaction. Central to this policy is the safeguarding of disabled learners, ensuring their protection from abuse, neglect, and harm within educational settings.

The Staying Safe: Action Plan (2008) in Ghana commits to target policies to protect disabled learners and promote their welfare. This includes launching practice guidance on safeguarding disabled learners, aligning with international standards such

as Working Together to Safeguard Learners (2006). The aim is to ensure that disabled learners have the same human rights to safety and well-being as non-disabled learners, while acknowledging their additional vulnerabilities due to negative attitudes, unequal access to services, and diverse impairments.

Despite policy commitments, there are significant challenges in safeguarding special needs learners. Research by Sullivan (2012) highlights that disabled learners are disproportionately abuse and neglect compared to non-disabled peers. However, there is a lack of comprehensive data on the prevalence of abuse among disabled learners, with limited local and national reporting mechanisms in place (Cooke & Standen, 2015). Negative attitudes and assumptions within society and among educators can further undermine the safeguarding of disabled learners, leading to institutional discrimination and a failure to acknowledge their human rights (Kennedy, 1992).

Effective safeguarding requires training and awareness among educators and professionals. Cooke and Standen (2015) found that only a third of local authorities in the UK had specific guidelines for safeguarding disabled learners, indicating a need for improved practices and protocols. Lack of understanding and training about safeguarding among professionals can result in a failure to recognize signs of abuse or neglect, particularly among disabled learners with complex needs (Kennedy, 1992). Partnerships between educational providers and health services are important to ensure that care for disabled learners is provided safely and competently.

School policies are instrumental in safeguarding the educational rights of learners with special needs by providing a framework for inclusive practices and ensuring equal access to education. The formulation of school rules involves a collaborative

process that takes into account the varied needs of all learners including those with special requirement, School administrators, teachers, parents, and relevant stakeholders collaborate to develop policies that promote inclusion, non-discrimination, and equal opportunities for all students. These policies are typically based on legal requirements, such as national laws and regulations governing special education, as well as international conventions advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities (UNESCO, 2009).

School rules are designed to protect the educational rights of learners with special needs by addressing issues such as access to education, reasonable accommodation, and support services. These policies outline procedures for identifying students with special needs, assessing their individual requirements, and providing appropriate support and accommodations. They also establish mechanisms for addressing instances of discrimination, bullying, or exclusion based on disability, ensuring that all students are treated with dignity and respect (Mittler, 2000).

Effective implementation of school policies requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure compliance and effectiveness. School administrators and teachers are responsible for enforcing policies related to special needs education and providing support to students with diverse learning needs. Regular review and revision of policies may be necessary to address emerging challenges, incorporate new research findings, and respond to feedback from stakeholders (Hodge, 2004).

Specific measures and practices are put in place within schools to ensure the rights of special needs learners are upheld and their educational experiences are positive and inclusive.

Anti-Discrimination Policies

Schools typically have anti-discrimination policies in place to prevent discrimination based on disability or any other characteristic. These policies promote a culture of inclusivity and respect for diversity, fostering an environment where all students feel valued and supported. Violations of anti-discrimination policies are taken seriously, and appropriate disciplinary measures are implemented to address discriminatory behavior (Hansen, 2013).

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are personalized plans developed for students with special needs to outline their educational goals, learning objectives, and support needs. IEPs are tailored to each student's unique strengths, challenges, and learning styles, ensuring that they receive the necessary accommodations and services to access the curriculum and participate fully in school activities. Regular review meetings are held to assess progress, adjust goals, and modify support strategies as needed (Bateman et al., 2017).

Support Services and Resources

Schools provide a range of support services and resources to meet the varying needs of learners including those with special needs. These may include specialized instructional support, assistive technologies, counseling services, and access to trained staff such as special education teachers, speech therapists, and occupational therapists. Schools also collaborate with external agencies and community organizations to access additional support and expertise as needed (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Enrollment Rules and Safeguarding Educational Rights

Enrollment rules are essential for safeguarding the educational rights of learners with special needs, ensuring equal access to education, individualized support, and nondiscrimination (Hansen, 2013). By establishing clear procedures and criteria for enrollment, educational institutions can effectively identify and support students with special needs, enabling them to thrive academically and socially (UNESCO, 2009). These rules play a pivotal role, first and foremost, in guaranteeing equal access to education for learners with special requirement, fostering an environment where they can enroll alongside their learners without disabilities (Mittler, 2000). Moreover, enrollment processes often incorporate the identification and assessment of students' special needs, facilitating institutions in providing tailored support and accommodations (Bateman et al., 2017). This ensures that individualized education plans (IEPs) can be developed and resources allocated to meet the unique needs of each learners (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Additionally, enrollment rules serve as safeguards against discrimination, establishing clear criteria and procedures to prevent bias based on disability (Hansen, 2013).

2.7 Level of Awareness among Headteachers Regarding the Policy on

Educational Rights of Learners with Special Needs

Headteachers play a pivotal role in the implementation and enforcement of policies regarding the educational rights of special needs learners. This review explores the levels of awareness among headteachers regarding these policies, examines the impact of awareness on implementation at the school level, and identifies challenges in knowledge dissemination along with strategies to address them.

Studies indicate varying levels of awareness among headteachers regarding policies on the educational rights of special needs learners. While some headteachers demonstrate a strong understanding of legal and policy frameworks, others may lack comprehensive knowledge (Hansen, 2013). Factors influencing awareness levels include access to training, professional development opportunities, and the clarity of policy documentation.

The awareness and understanding of policies regarding special needs education significantly influence their implementation at the school level. Headteachers who are well-informed about these policies are more likely to effectively enforce them, leading to better outcomes for special needs learners (UNESCO, 2009). They can ensure that appropriate accommodations are provided, support services are accessible, and inclusive practices are upheld within their schools. Conversely, a lack of awareness may result in inconsistent implementation, gaps in support provision, and challenges in meeting the diverse needs of learners.

Several challenges hinder effective knowledge dissemination among headteachers regarding policies on special education. These challenges include limited access to training and professional development opportunities, inadequate resources for dissemination, and the complexity of legal and policy documentation (Bateman et al., 2017). Additionally, competing priorities and workload pressures may divert attention away from professional learning opportunities related to special needs education.

The level of awareness among headteachers regarding the policy on educational rights of learners with special needs is a critical factor in the successful rollout of inclusive education. Inclusive education aims to provide equitable access to education for all

children, including those with disabilities, by integrating them into mainstream classrooms.

This concept has been increasingly promoted due to pressure from parents and disability advocates seeking systemic changes (Tassoni, 2003). However, the effectiveness of inclusive education largely depends on the perceptions and knowledge of school leaders, especially headteachers, who play a pivotal role in educational decision-making and policy implementation (Ramirez, 2006; Livingston, Reed & Good, 2001).

Research indicates that headteachers' perceptions of inclusive education significantly influence their actions and decisions. Studies by Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999) and Farris (2011) reveal a general consensus among headteachers that general education classrooms can effectively serve students with special needs, providing substantial academic and social benefits. These benefits include improved behavior among students with disabilities and enhanced learning experiences for all students (Burstein et al., 2004). Despite these positive perceptions, there are mixed views on the practicality of inclusive practices, with some headteachers expressing concerns about the potential impact on teachers' effectiveness and time management (Twohig, 2000).

The knowledge level of headteachers regarding inclusive education policies is another crucial aspect. For inclusive education to be effective, then it requires that headteachers must be well-versed in special education laws, assessment procedures, and various service delivery models (Garrison-Wade, 2005). This knowledge enables them to better support teachers and students, creating a more welcoming environment. Ramirez (2006) highlights the direct relationship between headteachers' knowledge of

special education laws and their positive attitudes toward inclusion. Increased understanding of these laws often leads to greater acceptance and readiness to implement inclusive education practices.

Moreover, headteachers' training and experience with special needs students significantly shape their perceptions and knowledge. Those with extensive training and experience tend to favor inclusive education more (Livingston, Reed & Good, 2001). Nonetheless, factors such as gender, age, and frequency of in-service training have indicated no significant impact on headteachers' perceptions of inclusive education (Booth & Ainscow, 1998).

Despite the general trend towards inclusive education, there remains a lack of uniformity in understanding and implementing inclusive practices across different regions and schools. The varying definitions of inclusive education and the recognition of the need for specialized settings for certain severe disabilities contribute to this complexity (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Scott & McNeish, 2013). Consequently, policymakers and educators face challenges in aligning their efforts to create truly inclusive educational environments.

To address challenges in awareness and knowledge dissemination, targeted strategies are needed. These may include:

1. Professional Development Programs: Providing comprehensive and accessible training programs tailored to the needs of headteachers, with a focus on policies related to special needs education (Mittler, 2000).
2. Clear Communication Channels: Establishing clear channels of communication to disseminate policy information effectively, such as regular updates, workshops, and online resources.

3. Collaborative Networks: Facilitating collaboration and knowledge-sharing among headteachers through professional networks, peer mentoring, and communities of practice.
4. Policy Simplification: Simplifying legal and policy documentation to enhance accessibility and understanding among headteachers, ensuring that key information is clear and concise.

2.8 Availability of Material Resources Necessary for the Enforcement of the Educational Rights of Learners with Special Needs

The availability of material resources is pivotal for the effective enforcement of the educational rights of learners with special needs. Resource materials, encompassing both movable and immovable items, are integral to teaching, learning, and other school activities. These materials include instructional resources such as audio and visual aids, printed materials, display materials, and consumables, as well as physical resources like buildings, furniture, equipment, and infrastructure (Olagboye, 2004). The broad classification of educational resource materials into school infrastructure, instructional facilities, and the physical environment underlines their significance in supporting inclusive education (Ojedeke, 2004). Functional and well-equipped school libraries are essential in fostering a culture of reading, which enhances literacy skills, vocabulary acquisition, and self-expression (Busayo, 2011). Libraries provide access to supplementary materials that complement prescribed textbooks, guide students in their academic endeavors, and develop their research skills (Krolak, 2005). However, the availability and effective utilization of library resources remain a challenge in many Sub-Saharan African schools, where libraries are often inadequate or underutilized (Seniwoliba, 2013).

The provision, utilization, maintenance, and improvement of educational resource materials are essential stages in managing these resources effectively. The successful execution of educational programs requires the active involvement of various stakeholders, including government, school proprietors, and parents, in providing necessary facilities (Olagboye, 2004). However, disparities in resource provision often exist, with urban schools typically better equipped than their rural counterparts. Utilization of resources is crucial, with different degrees ranging from non-utilization to over-utilization, each having implications for resource efficiency (Adeboyeje, 2000). Proper utilization ensures that facilities are used to their full capacity, enhancing the achievement of educational objectives. Maintenance, including preventive and corrective measures, is necessary to preserve the functionality and longevity of resources, preventing wastage and ensuring continuous operation (Adeboyeje, 2000).

Learners with special needs often rely on verbal information for learning, making audio devices like cassettes and compact discs essential in the teaching process (Salisbury, 2008).

However, audio formats are not suitable for content involving diagrams and tables (Salisbury, 2008). Puri and Abraham (2004) stress the importance of creating colorful and engaging classrooms to foster enthusiasm in learners. For easy access, physical accommodations such as ramps for learners who are physically impaired, handrails for the visually impaired, Braille materials, and wheelchairs are necessary. Additionally, basic hygiene can be maintained with simple facilities like a mug and bucket of water for handwashing after outdoor activities.

Eleweke and Rodda (2002) observed that many educational institutions lack adequate social facilities to support learners with special needs, especially in rural areas where such facilities are often non-existent. Although many colleges and universities provide training for both regular and resource teachers, there is concern about the adequacy of these programs and resources. These programs often focus on the pathology of disabilities rather than practical modifications to meet the needs of learners (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Stough, 2003). The curriculum should be adapted to allow learners with special needs to progress at their own pace, using their functional abilities and providing additional challenges for gifted learners (Ngugi, 2007).

The Task Force on Special Needs Education (2006) highlights the need for materials and facilities such as low vision devices, audio-visual equipment, enlarged print books, and strong felt pens for learners with low vision. Heward (2006) notes that no category of disability requires more coordination and resources than those for the blind or visually impaired. UNESCO (2008) emphasizes the importance of providing learning materials in formats that meet individual needs.

Randiki (2005) suggests pooling resources so that multiple schools can share them, and involving local artisans to create and repair devices. According to recent data, approximately 24,000 school-age learners in Ghana are eligible for special education services (Randiki, 2005). Gargiulo (2006) explains that in the past, vision professionals restricted pupils with low vision from using their sight for reading. However, Natalie Baraga's research in 1973 demonstrated that learners could improve their residual vision with practice, a concept known as visual efficiency. Training includes the use of spectacles, magnifiers, and other assistive devices (Hallahan,

Kauffman, & Pullen, 2009). Pupils with low vision should be taught to use optical devices to access print independently, enhancing their academic literacy skills. Instructional resources for teaching learners with special needs, such as sign language textbooks and diagrams, are crucial (Hallahan et al., 2009). Sign language is essential for the deaf or hearing impaired, using manual signs, finger spelling, and symbols to convey concepts. The availability and effective utilization of these resources are vital for effective teaching and learning.

Inclusion poses challenges, including the lack of early identification services, poorly trained teachers, and inadequate resource allocation. Headteachers often lack the training to adapt learners with difficulties, and support materials are scarce, leading some learners to prefer segregated systems where their needs are better met (USAID/Ethiopia, 2011-2015). Many studies indicate that much classroom learning is superficial, with facts, rules, and formulas memorized but not linked in a coherent framework that allows learners to use the information effectively in new situations (Alonge, 2005). Visual defects, such as restrictions in the visual field or convergence insufficiency, can significantly impact reading performance and overall learning (Garzia & Ralph, 2008).

The enforcement of educational rights for learners with special needs relies heavily on the availability and quality of educational resource materials. According to Adeboyeje (2000) and Emetarom (2004), these materials are crucial as they facilitate the teaching and learning processes, significantly enhancing educational outcomes. This literature review explores the impact of material resources on the education of children with special needs, emphasizing the necessity for appropriate resources to support their learning experiences effectively.

Educational material resource materials encompass a wide range of tools and infrastructure necessary for effective teaching and learning. Oyesola (2000) categorizes these resources into permanent and semi-permanent structures, including machinery, laboratory equipment, blackboards, teachers' tools, and consumables. These materials are vital in creating an inclusive and conducive learning environment for all students, particularly those with special needs.

Several studies have highlighted the varying impact of educational resources on student achievement based on the development level of a country. Fuller and Clarke (1994) suggest that in developing countries, factors related to school resources play a more significant role in determining academic success, whereas in developed countries, the social background of students is more influential. This indicates that in resource-constrained environments, the availability of educational materials is critical for the academic performance of learners with special needs.

The PISA report (Ministry of National Education, 2003) underscores the negative impact of a lack of physical resources on student learning, asserting that inadequate resources hinder the educational progress of students. This is particularly true for learners with special needs who often require specialized equipment and materials to support their learning. Conversely, human resources, including teachers and support staff, although essential, are not found to be significantly related to students' academic performance as per the studies reviewed.

Enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs involves ensuring that they have access to the necessary material resources. This includes specialized instructional materials, adaptive technologies, and physical accommodations that facilitate their learning. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the

United States, for example, mandates that children with disabilities have the right to a free appropriate public education, which includes the provision of necessary resources.

Despite the recognized importance of educational resources, there are significant challenges in ensuring their availability for learners with special needs. Financial constraints, lack of awareness, and inadequate policy implementation often hinder the provision of essential materials. Studies have shown that schools in low-income areas are particularly affected, leading to disparities in educational opportunities for students with special needs. The availability of material resources is fundamental to the education of learners with special needs. These resources enable effective teaching and learning, thereby enforcing the educational rights of these learners. Addressing the challenges in resource availability requires concerted efforts from policymakers, educators, and communities to ensure that all students, regardless of their needs, have access to the tools and materials necessary for their educational success. Continued research and investment in educational resources are essential to bridge the gap and ensure inclusive environment for all learners.

2.9 The Nature of Training provided for Headteachers to Effectively Enforce the Educational Rights of Learners with Special Needs

Training and professional development programs for headteachers are essential components in ensuring effective support and advocacy for learners with special needs within educational institutions. These programs, often tailored to address the complexities of special needs education, encompass a diverse range of topics aimed at enhancing headteachers' understanding and skills in fostering inclusive environments (Lambert, 2015). Modules within these programs typically cover areas such as

understanding various disabilities, legal and policy frameworks, instructional strategies, collaboration techniques, and individualized education plans (IEPs). They are designed to equip headteachers with the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively support special needs learners throughout their educational journey.

Research suggests that these training programs have a positive impact on headteachers' attitudes, knowledge, and practices related to special needs education (Shipway et al.,

2018). By engaging in real-world case studies, collaborative learning experiences, and practical application exercises, headteachers gain valuable insights and strategies that can be implemented within their schools. Furthermore, ongoing support and mentoring provided as part of these programs contribute to the reinforcement of learning and the resolution of implementation challenges.

Continuous professional development is imperative to ensure that headteachers remain abreast of advancements in special needs education and continue to refine their practices over time (Lambert, 2015). This ongoing training allows headteachers to adapt to evolving educational landscapes, implement evidence-based practices, and address emerging challenges effectively. It may include participation in conferences, workshops, online courses, and access to professional networks, all of which contribute to the enhancement of their knowledge and skills.

The inclusion of pupils with special needs in early childhood education settings is increasingly recognized as a global prerogative. Successful rollout of inclusive education policies relies heavily on the preparedness of headteachers to address the unique educational rights and needs of these learners. This literature review examines the nature of headteachers training for enforcing the educational rights of learners

with special needs in kindergarten centers, highlighting the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective inclusion.

Whitworth (2001) underscores the critical importance of equipping headteachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and experiences to support pupils with special needs in inclusive early childhood centers. Hardman, Drew, and Egan (2012) further elaborate that preparing headteachers for this role demands a careful examination and articulation of these competencies. This process ensures that headteachers are adequately prepared to address the diverse needs of learners in inclusive settings.

In Ghana, teacher training institutions have incorporated special needs education into their curricula as part of reforms towards inclusiveness (Darko, 2015). This approach contrasts with previous practices where special education was optional and segregated. The inclusion of special needs education in teacher training programs is critical for preparing headteachers to perform well in inclusive classrooms. Despite the positive attitudes of many headteachers towards inclusion, there remains a significant gap in preparedness. Avramidis and Norwich (2012) found that while most headteachers support inclusion, they often feel unprepared with severe learning difficulties and behavioral disorders. Oliver and Reschly (2010) highlighted the inadequacies in the preparation of special education headteachers compared to their general education counterparts, particularly in managing students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD).

Effective classroom management is important for the success of inclusion (Akalın, Sazak-Pinar, and Sucuoglu (2010) noted that headteachers must be trained in skills and strategies to support behavior management in inclusive classrooms. Effective

classroom management can significantly enhance academic achievement and reduce problem behaviors, creating a conducive learning environment for all students.

The challenges of headteachers readiness for inclusion are not unique to any one region. For instance, in Turkey, mainstreaming policies have expanded despite many headteachers lacking adequate training to satisfy the needs of learners with disabilities (Akalin, Sazak-Pinar, & Sucuoglu, 2010). Similarly, in Latin America, a notable number of primary school headteachers are not adequately trained to enforce the educational needs of learners with special needs (UNESCO IBE, 2011). Efforts are being made to incorporate inclusive education training into teacher preparation programs, but progress varies across different regions.

In Ghana, research states that while headteachers generally hold positive perceptions about inclusive education, urgency for greater knowledge and practical inclusive practices (Danso, 2009; Agbenyega, 2006). In Tanzania, a study revealed that trainee headteachers were not adequately prepared to enforce the educational rights of children with special needs in regular classrooms due to gaps in the curriculum (Kapinga, 2014). Such findings highlight the ongoing need for comprehensive training programs that equip headteachers with both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary for inclusive education.

The successful inclusion of learners with special needs in kindergarten centers hinges on the comprehensive training of headteachers. This includes developing the requisite knowledge, skills, and accepted attitudes towards inclusive education. While significant progress has been made in various regions, challenges remain in adequately preparing headteachers to enforce the diverse needs of all learners. Ongoing efforts to improve teacher training programs are essential to ensure that the

educational rights of learners with special needs are fully supported in inclusive early childhood education settings.

Training and professional development programs are instrumental in equipping headteachers with the competencies required to support and advocate for learners with special needs. By investing in these initiatives, educational institutions demonstrate their commitment to promoting inclusive education and ensuring that all students have equitable access to learning opportunities (Shipway et al., 2018). Continuous professional development further underscores the importance of ongoing growth and learning in effectively meeting the varying needs of learners within inclusive educational settings.

2.10 Impact of Enforcement on Educational Outcomes of Special Needs Learners

Educational Outcomes for Special Needs Learners

The effective enforcement of educational rights can have a profound impact on the academic and social outcomes of learners with special needs. Several studies have highlighted the positive correlation between inclusive educational practices and improved results for these learners.

Academic Achievement

Research suggests that inclusive education environments, where learners with special needs are fully integrated into mainstream classrooms, can better academic performance. For example, a meta-analysis by Wang and Baker (2018) found that students with disabilities in inclusive settings demonstrated higher academic achievement compared to those in segregated settings. Access to the general education curriculum, individualized support, and peer interaction contribute to enhanced learning outcomes for special needs learners (Alquraini & Gut, 2012).

Social Development

Inclusive education also fosters positive social development for learners with special needs. By interacting with learners without disabilities, these students have opportunities to develop social skills, build friendships, and establish a sense of identity. Research by Carter et al. (2017) indicates that inclusive classrooms promote social acceptance and reduce social isolation among students with special needs, leading to improved overall well-being.

Self-Efficacy and Confidence

Enforcing educational rights and providing appropriate support can boost the self-efficacy and confidence of learners with special needs. When students feel included and supported in their educational environment, they are more likely to believe in their abilities and strive for success. Studies have shown that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in academic achievement and future success (Bandura, 1997). The effective enforcement of educational rights for learners with special needs can significantly impact their academic achievement, social development, and overall well-being.

2.11 Challenges and Best Practices in Enforcing Educational Rights of Learners with Special Needs.

2.11.1 Challenges in Enforcing Educational Rights of Learners with Special Needs

Headteachers in kindergarten centres face several significant challenges in enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs. These challenges include resource constraints, lack of adequate training, and societal attitudes.

Resource Constraints

One of the primary challenges is the lack of adequate resources. Many kindergarten centres are underfunded and lack essential materials and infrastructure necessary to support special needs education. For instance, specialized teaching aids, assistive technologies, and accessible classrooms are often scarce or nonexistent. According to Lindsay (2007), insufficient resources can significantly hinder the effective inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream educational settings.

Lack of Training

Another critical challenge is the inadequate training of headteachers and teaching staff.

Many educators lack the necessary skills and knowledge to address the diverse needs of learners with special needs effectively. This deficiency is often due to limited access to specialized training programs and professional development opportunities. Florian and Linklater (2010) highlight that without proper training, educators may struggle to implement inclusive educational practices and support individualized learning plans.

Societal Attitudes

Societal attitudes and perceptions towards disabilities also pose a substantial barrier. Negative stereotypes and misconceptions about the capabilities of individuals with disabilities can lead to discriminatory practices and lower expectations. This societal stigma can influence the attitudes of both educators and parents, impacting the implementation of inclusive education policies. Research by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) indicates that societal attitudes play a pivotal role in the success of inclusive education initiatives.

2.11.2 Best Practices in Enforcing Educational Rights of Learners with Special Needs

Several case studies illustrate successful strategies for enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs.

Finland is renowned for its inclusive education system, where special needs education is integrated into mainstream schools. Finnish schools emphasize early identification and intervention, providing tailored support to learners with special needs from a young age. This approach ensures that children receive the necessary support promptly, enhancing their educational outcomes (Itkonen & Jahnukainen, 2010).

New Brunswick has implemented a province-wide inclusive education policy that mandates the inclusion in regular classrooms. The policy is supported by ongoing professional development for teachers and significant investment in resources and support services. As a result, New Brunswick has seen positive outcomes in student achievement and well-being, demonstrating the effectiveness of a comprehensive, well supported inclusive education model (Porter & Towell, 2017).

Despite these challenges, various best practices have been identified that can enhance the enforcement of educational rights for learners with special needs.

Inclusive Policy Development

Developing and implementing comprehensive inclusive education policies at both national and the school levels is crucial. These policies should outline clear guidelines and standards for the inclusion of learners with special needs. For example, the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) provides a framework for schools to develop inclusive practices and policies that promote the participation of all students.

Professional Development and Training

Focusing on professional development and training for headteachers and educators is essential. Effective training programs should focus on equipping educators with practical skills and strategies for inclusive teaching. Studies have shown that targeted training in special needs education can improve teachers' confidence and competence in managing inclusive classrooms (Forlin, 2010).

Collaborative Partnerships

Establishing collaborative partnerships with parents, communities, and specialized service providers can enhance support for learners with special needs. Engaging parents in the educational process and fostering community awareness can help mitigate societal stigma and create a more supportive environment. Additionally, partnerships with specialists such as speech therapists and occupational therapists can provide valuable resources and expertise (Friend & Cook, 2013). While headteachers face considerable challenges in enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs, adopting best practices and learning from successful case studies can provide valuable insights and strategies. Addressing resource constraints, enhancing training, and shifting societal attitudes are critical steps towards creating an inclusive educational environment that supports the rights and needs of all learners.

2.12 Comparing and Contrasting Various Studies

The literature review provides a comprehensive exploration of inclusive education for learners with special needs, balancing theoretical foundations with empirical evidence. It effectively employs the Welfare Theory to frame the discussion, linking the protection of fundamental interests to practical objectives such as safeguarding educational rights and enhancing headteacher training. The review highlights the

importance of international conventions like the CRPD and Salamanca Statement, as well as national policies such as Ghana's Disability Act, demonstrating a strong legal and policy framework. However, it also reveals significant gaps between policy and practice, particularly in resource-constrained settings like Ghana, where inadequate materials, uneven training, and societal stigma hinder implementation. Contrasting global models, such as Finland's early intervention system and New Brunswick's inclusive policies, with local challenges underscores the need for context-specific adaptations. While the review thoroughly examines academic and social benefits of inclusion, it could delve deeper into actionable solutions for overcoming systemic barriers. Overall, the literature offers valuable insights but would benefit from more focused strategies for translating theory into practice, particularly in low-resource environments. Future research could explore longitudinal studies on intervention impacts, comparative analyses across regions, and innovative approaches to resource limitations.

2.13 Summary of Literature

The literature review highlights several key themes relevant to the enforcement of educational rights for learners with special needs in Ghana. Central to the discussion is the Interest Theory (Welfare Theory), which underscores the importance of safeguarding the fundamental interests of learners with special needs to ensure their well-being and access to education. This theoretical foundation is complemented by a conceptual framework that identifies critical factors influencing enforcement, including headteacher experience, awareness, material resources, training, and policies. Together, these elements shape the educational environment and determine the extent to which the rights of special needs learners are upheld. The review emphasizes that inclusive education is not just a local priority but a global imperative,

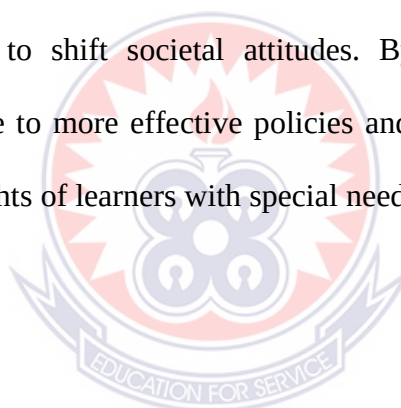
supported by international conventions such as the Salamanca Statement and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

In Ghana, while progress has been made, challenges such as resource disparities and persistent societal attitudes continue to hinder full implementation. Legal and policy frameworks play a pivotal role in promoting inclusive education. Ghana's Disability Act (2006) and Inclusive Education Policy provide a foundational structure for protecting the rights of learners with special needs. These are aligned with international frameworks like the CRPD, which advocate for inclusive systems and equal access. However, the review reveals gaps in policy enforcement, particularly at the school level. For instance, while anti-discrimination policies and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are essential tools for safeguarding rights, their implementation is often inconsistent due to varying levels of awareness among educators. The review also highlights the critical role of headteachers, whose awareness and training significantly influence the success of inclusive practices. Despite their importance, many headteachers lack adequate preparation, pointing to a need for more robust professional development programs.

Material resources emerge as another decisive factor in the enforcement of educational rights. The availability of assistive technologies, Braille materials, and accessible infrastructure is vital for creating an inclusive learning environment. However, significant disparities exist, particularly between urban and rural areas, where resource shortages are more pronounced. The review underscores that the lack of these resources not only limits access but also exacerbates existing inequalities. On a positive note, the review identifies the transformative impact of effective enforcement on learners' outcomes. When educational rights are upheld, special needs learners demonstrate improved academic achievement, enhanced social

development, and greater self-efficacy. These benefits underscore the urgency of addressing systemic barriers.

The review concludes by outlining both challenges and best practices in enforcing educational rights. Key challenges include resource constraints, inadequate training, and societal stigma, all of which impede progress. Conversely, successful models from countries like Finland and New Brunswick offer valuable lessons. These include the development of comprehensive inclusive policies, investment in ongoing professional development, and fostering collaborative partnerships among stakeholders. For Ghana, these insights suggest a need for targeted interventions, such as improving resource allocation, enhancing headteacher training, and launching awareness campaigns to shift societal attitudes. By addressing these areas, the research can contribute to more effective policies and practices, ultimately ensuring that the educational rights of learners with special needs are fully realized.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This Chapter dealt with the methodology of the study which includes research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, instrumentation, pilot testing, Trustworthiness, data collection procedures, data analysis procedure and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The study was situated within the interpretive paradigm, which emphasizes understanding the subjective meanings individuals attach to their social realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This paradigm aligns with qualitative research, as it prioritizes participants' perspectives and the socio-cultural contexts shaping their experiences. The interpretive approach was particularly suitable for this study, as it sought to uncover how headteachers perceive and navigate the enforcement of educational rights for learners with special needs, rather than seeking generalizable truths (Gray, 2009).

By utilizing an interpretative qualitative approach and an exploratory case study design, this study aimed to delve into the complexities and nuances of the experiences of headteachers with the enforcement of educational needs rights in the Awutu-Senya-East municipality. This research design facilitated the collection of comprehensive and contextualized data, allowing for a deeper exploration of the research topic.

3.2 Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was adopted to explore the complexities of enforcing educational rights in inclusive early childhood settings. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is well-suited for investigating human experiences, as it allows researchers to gather data in natural settings and analyze it inductively to identify emerging themes and patterns. This approach enabled the researcher to remain open to evolving questions, engage deeply with participants' narratives, and generate insights grounded in the actual experiences of headteachers (Sauro, 2015). The qualitative methodology thus provided a flexible yet rigorous framework for understanding the challenges and strategies related to inclusive education policy enforcement.

3.3 Research Design

The researcher employed an exploratory case study design, which was deemed appropriate for obtaining in-depth qualitative data from participants through their personal narratives and lived experiences (Gray, 2009). This design facilitated a detailed examination of headteachers' perspectives on enforcing educational rights for learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres within the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality. The case study approach allowed for a contextualized understanding of the phenomenon, as it enabled participants to share rich, detailed accounts of their experiences (Young & Kuo, 2012; Sauro, 2015).

3.2 Population

The population of interest comprises headteachers involved in kindergarten centres in the Awutu- Senya-East Municipality. The inclusive schools within the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality, encompassing Ofaakor Basic Schools (A, B, C, D), Odupongkpehe M/A Basic Schools (A, B, and C), Akweley

St. Mary Anglican Basic Schools (A, B, and D), Opeikuma St. Peter's Anglican Basic Schools (A and B), Kasoa Emmanuel Presby Basic Schools (A, B, and C), and Kasoa Methodist Basic Schools (A and B), each cluster of schools was considered for this study. These schools were selected because they represent a diverse range of inclusive education settings and have a history of implementing inclusive education programs. The estimated target population was seventy-five (75) headteachers. This includes all headteachers in the inclusive Kindergarten centres in Awutu-Senya-East Municipality.

The accessible population was estimated to be thirty (34) individuals, comprising two (2) headteachers from each school within the clusters

3.4 Sample and Sampling Techniques

To determine an appropriate sample size, the study adhered to the guidelines suggested by Adler and Adler (2011), which typically recommend a range of twelve (12) to sixty (60) participants for qualitative research. This range ensures a balance between data richness and manageability. Following these guidelines, the study aimed for a sample size that would provide in-depth insights while being practical for analysis.

The study employed a purposive sampling approach to select clusters of school in the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality. Purposive sampling was chosen to ensure fairness and representation by targeting specific schools that could provide relevant data for the research objectives. This method allowed for the deliberate selection of schools that were known to have headteachers with significant experience in implementing policies related to the educational rights of learners with special needs. (Creswell& Creswell,2018)

Headteachers were selected due to central roles in policy implementation and their expertise in special education. Convenience sampling was employed to facilitate easy access to headteachers who were available and willing to contribute to the study. This technique was particularly useful given the busy schedules of headteachers, ensuring that their insights could be gathered without undue burden.

Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) caution against using sample sizes that are too small, as it may be challenging to achieve data saturation, and sample sizes that are too large, as it may impede case-oriented analysis. To address this, headteachers were sampled and interviewed as they became available, using convenience sampling. Data saturation was achieved when the responses from the 13th and 14th participants began to mirror those of earlier interviews, indicating that additional interviews were unlikely to yield new information.

This process resulted in a total sample size of 14 participants. This sample size aligns with qualitative research guidelines, ensuring data richness while maintaining a diverse representation of key stakeholders in the study. The sample included headteachers providing a comprehensive view of the enforcement of educational

rights for learners with special needs at kindergarten centers in Awutu- Senya-East Municipality.

3.5 Instrumentation

The main instruments used for data collection in this study were observation checklist and Semi-structured interview guide.

3.5.1 Observation checklist

An observational checklist is a systematic tool used to record the presence or absence of specific behaviors, characteristics, or actions within a defined setting or during an activity (Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. 2018). It is often used in educational, clinical, and research settings to ensure that observations are standardized and reliable (Bell, 2005; Mertens, 2014; O'Leary, 2014). Observational checklists can help in gathering quantitative data from qualitative observations, making it easier to analyze patterns and trends (Bell, 2005; Mertens, 2014). The researcher utilized an observational checklist to gather information on various aspects, including the location of schools material resources, facility and equipment, School Policy, Headteachers Awareness, Nature of Training headteachers and co-curricular activities.

Observation checklist was an instrument because is a crucial tool in educational research to maintain consistency and reliability in observations. It allowed the researcher to gather information in its natural form, without imposing pressure on the participants. It allowed for the recording of events as they naturally occurred and provided data related to typical behavioral situations. Macmillan and Schumacher (2007) highlight the advantage of observation, as it eliminates concerns about self-

reporting bias, social desirability, and the limitations of information that can be recorded only as it occurs naturally.

3.5.2 Semi-structured interview

semi-structured interview guide is a flexible qualitative research tool that uses a pre-defined set of open-ended questions or themes while allowing the interviewer to adapt the flow, probe for deeper responses, and explore emerging topics. Unlike structured interviews (fixed questions) or unstructured interviews (free-flowing), semi-structured interviews balance consistency across participants with the flexibility to capture rich, nuanced data (Bryman, 2016). This approach is particularly useful for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Based on this premise, the researcher conveniently conducted interviews using a semi-structured interview guide for headteachers. The semi-structured interview is easy to administer, follows a specified pattern, and helps the researcher avoid unnecessary digressions (Kamwendo, 2018). Moreover, this type of interview allows for the measurement of attitudes and other relevant content, provides in-depth information, and allows for probing and great interpretative validity. Additionally, semi-structured interviews facilitate a more natural and conversational interaction, which can help build rapport with participants and encourage them to share more openly (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This is particularly important when dealing with sensitive topics, such as the challenges and successes headteachers face in inclusive education.

Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews allows for the discovery of new themes and issues that the researcher may not have initially considered, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Patton, 2015). This

adaptability ensures that the data collected is both relevant and meaningful to the study's objectives.

In summary, semi-structured interviews are a valuable tool for this study as they provide a flexible, in-depth, and participant-centered approach to data collection, enabling a thorough investigation on experiences of headteachers' with the enforcement of educational rights of learners with special needs in kindergarten centers (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

3.6 Pilot Testing

The researcher conducted a pilot test in an inclusive early childhood center located in a different municipality (Effutu Municipality). This pilot testing involved five participants: four headteachers. The primary purpose of this pilot testing was to evaluate whether the research instruments could effectively elicit the necessary responses to answer the research questions. Additionally, it aimed to refine the instruments to enhance their reliability. Importantly, neither the participants nor the school used in the pilot testing were included in the actual study.

The pilot testing provided several critical insights, particularly regarding headteachers' experiences in enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs. First, it allowed the researcher to fine-tune the interview guide, ensuring it was comprehensive and relevant. It also helped the researcher anticipate potential challenges and adopt appropriate measures to mitigate them during the actual study. For example, the pilot test helped determine the most suitable times to schedule interviews with participants in the selected schools, ensuring minimal disruption to their routines.

Findings from the pilot testing revealed that headteachers learned about the educational rights of learners with special educational needs from various sources, including headteacher training programs, colleagues, universities, media outlets, and personal readings. It also highlighted significant barriers to the enforcement of these rights, such as large classroom sizes and a shortage of special needs resource teachers. Participants indicated that they primarily learned about their duties and responsibilities from school and workshops organized by the Ghana Education Service.

The pilot test also provided practical solutions proposed by participants to address the challenges of enforcing educational rights for learners with special needs. These included public education campaigns through radio and television, leveraging social media, and forming clubs in schools to educate all headteachers on the rights of learners with special educational needs.

The pilot test was instrumental in preparing the researcher for the actual study by providing a clear understanding of potential issues and ensuring the research instruments were robust and reliable. The insights gained specifically highlighted the unique challenges faced by headteachers in enforcing educational rights, thereby allowing for a more focused and effective research approach in the actual study.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

The study utilized primary data collected through semi-structured interviews with the Headteacher and notes were also taken in the field. The interviews were also recorded using a digital audio recorder. The interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guide. Interviews with the Headteachers were all conducted in English

using open-ended questions to solicit data from the participants. Each interview session lasted an average of ten (10) minutes.

The Observation checklist collected data on the present or absent of adapted curricula, adapted course books, adapted text books and Special educational needs resource teachers in the classroom and their activities during breaks and co-curricular periods was conducted. This allowed the researcher to gain insight into the examination policy, favorable Enrolled policy, Retention policy, Guidance and counselling department, interactions that occurred during teaching and learning, teaching strategies as well as outside the classroom to observe the present or absent of Ramps, Assistive devices, wide corridor, wide doors, modified washrooms and water points.. It provided an opportunity to familiarize oneself with the methods, activities, and skills used by teachers in teaching learners with special needs, as well as the support provided to them outside the classroom. Qualitative methods often include interviews, focus groups, and observations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.8 Trustworthiness Criteria

Ensuring trustworthiness is crucial in qualitative research. The principle outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1985) was applied to ensure trustworthiness. Qualitative research conducted within the social constructivist paradigm often clashes with criteria such as validity, objectivity, and reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research focuses on rich subjective human experiences, which differs from other paradigms. Merriam (2002) suggests that qualitative research provides rich, thick accounts, and the researcher's words confirm the trustworthiness of the findings.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the accuracy level of the accounts that represent participants' realities and their views on social phenomena (Creswell & Miller, 2000). To establish credibility, the researcher employed techniques such as triangulation, which involves using the literature review, interview guide, and observation checklist (Maxwell, 2008). In this study, the researcher documented the collected data by transcribing interviews with participants and recording relevant events during the data collection phase. A trend chart was developed to track prominent trends, serving as a quality control measure. Accurate records were kept of the events and decisions made during the data collection process to ensure everything proceeded as planned. The researcher sampled transcribed data and compared it for similarities using the interview, and observation checklist, verifying if the data corresponded with the responses intended to be communicated. This process helped ensure the credibility of the data.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability allows readers to apply the findings of a study to other related contexts. It aims to achieve quality testing and assurance (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). In qualitative research, research findings can be generalized to other contexts. This study provides an accurate description of events and important participant responses, facilitating transferability to similar contexts. It is the reader's responsibility to establish the extent of parallelism between the study site and other settings. The researcher has provided sufficient detail, including a comprehensive account of the time, context, place, and participants' culture, enabling the reader to assess transferability accurately.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which readers can be convinced of the accuracy of research findings (Van der Riet, 2008). The researcher engaged with her supervisor and chosen peer reviewers to ensure the trustworthiness and dependability of the research findings. This process involved crosschecking the findings for verification and seeking suggestions for further analysis (Creswell, 2006). In the constructive or interpretive paradigm, change is expected, but it should be traceable and open to public inspection. Conducting a dependability audit is suggested to assess the quality and appropriateness of the research process, often referred to as maintaining a case study protocol (Yin, 1994, as cited in Mertens, 1998).

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which findings are a result of the study rather than the researcher's personal, subjective judgment (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Research procedures must be objective and free from potential researcher bias. Shenton (2004) emphasizes the value of an audit trail to establish confirmability, which assesses the inquiry process for reliability and checks for any bias.

To ensure the appropriateness of the findings, the research proposal was presented to the Department of Early Childhood Education (U.E.W), who offered suggestions and comments on the paper (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1989) argue that conducting a confirmability audit is important to demonstrate that data can be traced to its original sources and that the process of analyzing data and drawing conclusions can be confirmed. This is what Yin (1994, as cited in Mertens, 1998, p. 184) refers to as the "provision of evidence.

3.9 Data Analysis Procedures

A thematic approach was used to analyze the interview data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The first step involved gathering all the obtained information and reviewing the verbatim transcriptions and visual data to become familiar with the data. The second step was to identify and broadly categorize themes. In the third step, the researcher grouped potential themes into meaningful themes and subthemes.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were formulated to guide the process of grouping or categorizing themes (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Each theme was supported with sufficient evidence from various sources, including interview transcriptions, research journals and field notes, educators' reflective journals, and photographs. To minimize subjective bias, an observational checklist was used (Merriam, 2009). Conclusions were drawn based on the provided facts and identified themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The following diagram visually represents the steps followed in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation process.

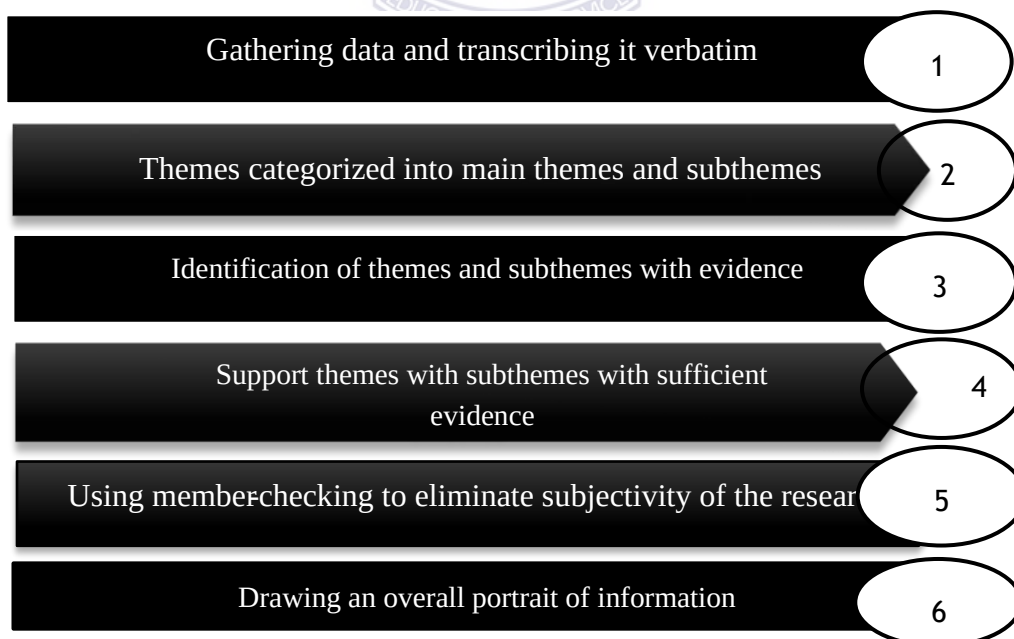


Figure 3.1: Six phases of data collection, analysis and interpretation

Source: (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

Gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data is an ongoing process that follows specific patterns to identify meaningful information. Additionally, a content approach was used to analyze the checklist data, enhancing the study's quality by providing an accurate reflection of the experiences of headteachers with the enforcement of Educational rights of learners with special needs at kindergarten centres in the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality. Throughout the data analysis and interpretation phase, emphasis was placed on the participants' responses during the interviews, observations, and examination of relevant documents.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a critical aspect of any research study, particularly when involving human participants.

In this study, the researcher ensured that ethical principles such as **informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality** were strictly followed to protect participants' rights and maintain the integrity of the research.

3.10.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is fundamental in research ethics, requiring participants to voluntarily agree to participate after understanding the study's purpose, procedures, and potential implications (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Education, Winneba, which helped establish credibility and formalize

the research process. Before conducting interviews, participants—in this case, Headteachers were briefed on the study's objectives, the nature of the semi-structured interviews, and the use of audio recordings. They were also assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without consequences (Bert et al., 2016). Securing proper consent is essential to avoid ethical violations that could compromise the study's trustworthiness (Vicars, Steinberg, McKenna & Cacciattalo, 2015).

3.10.2 Anonymity

Anonymity was another key ethical consideration in this study, ensuring that participants could not be identified in any published findings. Although the research involved direct interviews with Headteachers, measures were taken to remove identifying details from transcripts and reports. Observation data, such as classroom setups and infrastructure, were described in general terms to avoid revealing specific schools or individuals. While the study does not explicitly mention the use of pseudonyms, qualitative research best practices suggest that anonymizing participant identities helps protect their privacy (Merriam, 2002). Given that participants may have shared sensitive information about institutional policies, maintaining anonymity was crucial to prevent potential professional or reputational repercussions.

3.10.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality was equally important, requiring the researcher to safeguard participants' data and restrict access to authorized personnel only. Audio recordings from interviews were securely stored, and field notes and transcripts were handled with discretion. Digital files were likely protected through passwords or encryption to prevent unauthorized access. The study also employed member checking, a process

where participants verify the accuracy of the data, but this step was carefully managed to avoid unintended disclosures (Bert et al., 2016). A breach of confidentiality could have eroded trust between the researcher and participants, particularly in an educational setting where professional reputations are at stake (Rolfe, 2016). By adhering to these ethical principles, the researcher upheld the study's credibility while ensuring that participants' rights and dignity were respected.

The study's commitment to ethical research practices aligns with the broader principles outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1985), who emphasize that qualitative research must balance methodological rigor with ethical responsibility. Given the sensitive nature of educational research particularly when examining policies, teaching strategies, and institutional support for learners with special needs ethical safeguards were essential. The researcher's use of peer debriefing and member checking further reinforced the study's trustworthiness, as external scrutiny helped validate the findings while maintaining ethical standards (Mayan et al., 2002). Ultimately, the careful attention to consent, anonymity, and confidentiality not only protected participants but also strengthened the reliability and ethical integrity of the research outcomes.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of the study, organized according to the four research questions that guided the investigation. It also highlights the emerging themes within each question.

4.1 Analysis of Research Questions

4.1.1 Research Question 1

What are the existing school rules in place to safeguard the educational rights of learners with special needs at Kindergarten Centres in the Awutu- Senya-East Municipality?

The study aimed to identify the school rules that protect the educational rights of learners with special needs in the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality. Analysis of the interviews revealed that while there were few explicit school rules specifically addressing the enforcement of educational rights for learners with special needs, the headteachers demonstrated sufficient knowledge and understanding of inclusive education practices.

Several key themes emerged from the data:

Anti-Discrimination Rules

One headteacher commented:

"Our anti-discrimination policy specifically addresses the protection of learners with special needs. We have zero tolerance for any form of discrimination and have procedures in place to handle any incidents swiftly and effectively." (HT1).

Another headteacher mentioned:

"Despite having an anti-discrimination policy, there have been instances where discriminatory behavior was not adequately addressed, leaving some learners with special needs feeling marginalized."(HT2).

Similarly, another headteacher commented:

"While the policy exists, there is a lack of consistent enforcement and follow-through, resulting in ongoing issues with discrimination that negatively impact the learning environment for students with special needs." (HT3).

The responses provided by the headteachers reveal a range of experiences with antidiscrimination policies in their schools, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. The responses indicate that while anti-discrimination policies exist in schools, their effectiveness is often undermined by inconsistent enforcement and inadequate response to incidents. To address these issues, schools may need to invest in regular training for staff, establish clear protocols for handling discrimination, and create a culture of accountability to ensure that all learners, especially those with special needs, feel safe and supported.

These policies promote a culture of inclusivity and respect for diversity, fostering an environment where all students feel valued and supported. Violations of antidiscrimination policies are taken seriously, and appropriate disciplinary measures are implemented to address discriminatory behavior (Hansen, 2013).

Negative attitudes and assumptions within society and among educators can further undermine the safeguarding of disabled learners, leading to institutional discrimination and a failure to acknowledge their human rights (Kennedy, 1992).

School administrators, teachers, parents, and relevant stakeholders collaborate to develop policies that promote inclusion, non-discrimination, and equal opportunities for all students. These policies are typically based on legal requirements, such as national laws and regulations governing special education, as well as international conventions advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities (UNESCO, 2009).

Enrollment Rules

One headteacher commented:

"We have an enrollment rules in place to safeguard the educational rights of learners with special needs. Although we lack sufficient supportive materials, we still proceed to admit learners with special needs. We ensure equal access to education for all learners with special needs" (HT1).

Another headteacher mentioned:

"We provide various incentives to learners with special needs who enroll in our school. We also seek support from well-wishers, such as the PTA members" (HT2).

Similarly, another headteacher commented:

"It is a legal mandate for us to enroll learners with special needs. Currently, we are able to enroll blind students because we have some Braille materials available to support them. However, we are unable to enroll other learners with special needs due to inadequate supportive materials" (HT3).

The responses from the headteachers indicate a general consensus that education should be accessible to all individuals, including learners with special needs. Some schools have taken proactive measures by providing incentive packages and seeking additional support to help these learners enjoy their educational rights. This reflects

an understanding that the implementation of appropriate school policies can ensure that learners with special needs are not denied admission and can fully enjoy their educational rights.

Moreover, it was observed that some schools base their enrollment of learners with special needs on the availability of necessary supporting materials. This suggests that adequate provision of supportive teaching and learning materials is crucial for the full inclusion of learners with special needs. When such materials are available, schools are better equipped to safeguard the welfare and educational rights of these learners.

This perspective aligns with the views expressed by Professor Naana Jane Opoku Agyemang, the former Minister of Education. She emphasized that: "Inclusive policy locates inclusion as part of the wider reform of the education system, aiming to create learning environments that are responsive to all learners' needs and conducive to successful educational outcomes, ultimately leading to a more equitable society. It goes beyond the education system to the communities in which learners live to ensure that they are welcomed, nurtured, and given the opportunity to thrive to their fullest capacities and capabilities" (Opoku-Agyemang, 2013).

Additionally, the Equity Act (2010) supports this view by ensuring that learners with special needs receive special educational provision that is additional to or different from what is generally provided to others of the same age in mainstream settings. The Equality Act (2010) also protects individuals with learning disabilities from discrimination, mandating that schools make "reasonable adjustments" to ensure these learners are not substantially disadvantaged compared to their peers. Schools are required to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between learners with and without

disabilities.

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of adequate resources and supportive policies in ensuring the successful enrollment and education of learners with special needs, thus promoting a more inclusive and equitable educational environment

Welfare and Security

One headteacher commented:

"We ensure that learners with special needs have no financial obligations in the school. We also ensure they are fed and well attended to during school hours" (HT1).

Another headteacher mentioned:

"We always give them the first hearing because of their situation, aiming to avoid stigmatization" (HT2).

Similarly, another headteacher commented:

"We are unable to provide learners with special needs with more privileges due to inadequate support from stakeholders" (HT3).

The interviews highlighted that some schools go to great lengths to ensure the welfare and security of learners with special needs. These measures include waiving financial obligations, providing meals, and ensuring attentive care during school hours. Additionally, some schools prioritize these learners to avoid stigmatization and make them feel included and supported. Designated teachers often follow up with these learners to create a sense of belonging and ensure they are well-integrated into the school environment.

However, the responses also indicated that inadequate support from stakeholders hinders some schools from offering more extensive privileges to learners with special needs. This lack of support prevents these schools from fully implementing inclusive policies and providing the necessary resources and accommodations.

The findings suggest that with adequate support and appropriate privileges, the educational rights of learners with special needs can be fully realized. This is supported by the RYTHM Foundation (2022), which highlights that in the Central Region of Ghana, over 5,000 learners with special needs live in isolation and are excluded from mainstream education. Many of these learners struggle to attend school due to financial constraints, as their families often cannot afford basic educational materials. The foundation emphasizes that providing necessary support and resources is crucial for ensuring that these learners can stay in school and enjoy their educational rights.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of comprehensive welfare and security measures, alongside robust stakeholder support, to create an inclusive educational environment where learners with special needs can thrive and fully exercise their educational rights.

Academic Rules

One of the participants commented:

"In my school, I often ask my teachers to use verbal forms of communication for assessment" (HT1).

Another headteacher mentioned:

"I ask my teachers to assess learners with special needs individually based on what they can do. However, it sometimes becomes tedious for the teachers due to the class size" (HT2).

Similarly, another headteacher commented:

"We use the pragmatic assessment approach by assessing their verbal and non-verbal communication, personal social skills, and developing language skills" (HT3).

The study further aimed to identify the various academic policies related to assessment within the school that facilitate the educational rights of learners with special needs. It was found that various assessment approaches were used to assess learners with special needs, including verbal and non-verbal communication. The results of the study suggest that the experiences in implementing the educational rights of learners with special needs are not primarily related to the assessment of these learners.

Learners with special needs have a wide range of strengths and needs in various areas such as academic, social, emotional, adaptive and organizational, and communication. Understanding these diverse needs is essential for developing instruction specifically designed to meet their requirements. Their varied needs often result from difficulties with attention, memory, language, emotional and social regulation, and motivation due to repeated failures (Vaughn & Bos, 2014), and these underlying needs can impede their ability to achieve successful outcomes. Assessment, according to Gearheart and Gearheart (1990; cited in Pierangelo and Giuliani, 2006), is "a process that involves the systematic collection and interpretation of a wide variety of information on which to base instructional or intervention decisions and, when appropriate, classification and placement decisions. Assessment is primarily a problem-solving process."

A wide range of assessments are used to understand the learning levels of students, including those with special needs. Teachers employ various assessment methods, such as formative or summative approaches, norm-referenced or criterion-referenced tests, and self-assessment or peer assessment (Bourke & Mentis, 2014), depending on the purpose of the assessment. The same assessment tool can be used for summative or formative outcomes (Bourke & Mentis, 2014). Bourke & Mentis (2014) defines the fundamental purpose of assessment as establishing and understanding "where learners are in an aspect of their learning at the time of assessment. This usually means establishing what they know, understand and can do".

The principle of equity in education can be applied to assessments as well. Students with special needs require accommodations or alternative forms of assessment that provide evidence of their learning and help education systems address their specific needs through improved and targeted pedagogies. Learners with special needs require a range of pedagogical practices and diverse assessment approaches that can better inform and summarize their learning (Bourke & Mentis, 2014). As education systems transition from educating learners with special needs in segregated settings to mainstream settings, it is crucial for educational systems, schools, and teachers to ensure that the learning of learners with diverse educational needs is measured and their progress is reported appropriately.

School Support Services

One headteacher commented:

"We provide support services to learners with special needs through the Individualized Education Program, where we change what the student is taught or expected to learn" (HT1).

Another headteacher mentioned:

"We hardly are able to give them support services because all the teachers are mostly busy with various tasks, and the high teacher-student ratio hinders us from paying attention to these learners during class hours. It's not good, but we have no option" (HT2).

Similarly, another headteacher commented:

"Most teachers in this school don't have enough training about inclusive education, let alone helping learners read braille and use other assistive devices" (HT3).

The results reflect the participants' views on the support services provided to learners with special needs in schools. It was observed that various support services were identified and administered to learners with special needs. Some schools implemented Individualized Education Programs, where learners with special needs receive modifications in what and how they learn. Learners with special needs were also taught how to use assistive technology tools, such as recorders. However, it was also noted that some schools lacked adequate support services for learners with special needs due to high teacher-student ratios and insufficient training materials for inclusive education. This implies that if the necessary support services are provided to learners with special needs in a timely manner, the objectives of implementing inclusive policies can be better achieved, enabling learners with special needs to enjoy their educational rights. This is in line with the assertion made by Allsopp, Minskoff, & Bolt (2005) that the success of learners with special needs is directly influenced by their perceptions of school support.

Support services are services that are needed to assist a child with a disability in benefiting from regular or special education (Wood, 1993, as cited in Avoke, Hayford, Ihenacho & Ocloo, 1998). These services are provided alongside special

education programs to help individuals with special needs benefit from their school training (Avoke et al., 1998).

According to Lewis and Doorlag (1995), these support services supplement special education programs and can include psychological services, counseling services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, and diagnostic medical services. The specific support services offered to a student depend largely on their individual special needs. Garguilo (2005) states that these services may involve physical assistance and therapy, counseling and psychotherapy, modified learning environments and assistive learning devices, educational and psychological assessments, and behavioral modification techniques.

4.1. 2 Research Question 2

What training have headteachers undertaken in enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres within the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality?

Workshops

One of the Resource Teachers commented:

"I have received training on learners with special needs because I specialized in special education for my degree" (HT1).

Another commented:

"I have not received any training on how to handle learners with special needs. I rely on my teaching experience" (HT2).

Yet another commented:

"A two-day workshop was organized for us on how to handle learners with special needs. The training actually helped because before then, I

had one student in my class with such needs, but after the training, I can handle that child perfectly" (HT3).

The responses from the resource teachers (HT1, HT2, HT3) provide insights into their training experiences and preparedness to handle learners with special needs. HT1 indicates having received specialized training in special education as part of their degree, suggesting a strong foundation in the principles and practices of inclusive education. This specialized training likely equipped HT1 with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively support learners with special needs. In contrast, HT2 reports not having received any formal training on how to handle learners with special needs, relying solely on teaching experience. This lack of training highlights a potential gap in HT2's preparedness to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities. HT3 shares their experience of attending a two-day workshop specifically focused on handling learners with special needs. The positive impact of this workshop is evident in HT3's ability to effectively support a student with special needs in the classroom following the training. This underscores the value of targeted professional development opportunities in enhancing educators' ability to meet the needs of diverse learners.

The analysis also recognizes the importance of teachers' knowledge of inclusive education in providing appropriate modifications for pupils with diverse needs, as emphasized by Ocloo (2002). Additionally, Hardman, Drew, and Egan (2002) argue that preparing teachers to work with learners with special needs requires specialized skills, expertise, and knowledge.

In-service Training

One of the participants commented:

"The training was very helpful. I gained a lot of knowledge and strategies to handle learners with special needs, so as to help them enjoy their educational rights" HT1).

Another Resource Teacher commented:

"The training was not enough for me because it was only conducted for two days. I couldn't grasp everything at once" (HT2).

Yet another commented:

"The training would have been beneficial if it was conducted more frequently, but for about three years now, we have not attended any training on inclusive education" (HT3).

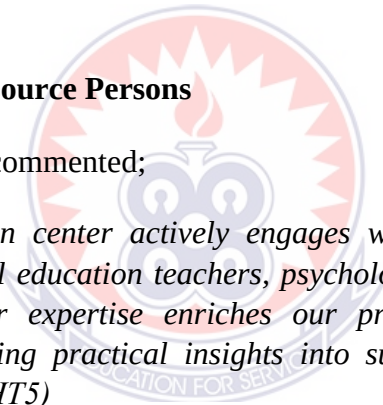
The responses from the headteachers (HT1, HT2, HT3) shed light on the effectiveness and adequacy of in-service training programs aimed at equipping educators with the skills and knowledge to support learners with special needs. HT1 expresses satisfaction with the training, highlighting its usefulness in gaining strategies to facilitate the enjoyment of educational rights among learners with special needs. This suggests that the training provided valuable insights and practical techniques for inclusive education practices. In contrast, HT2 indicates dissatisfaction with the duration of the training, noting that two days were insufficient to fully grasp the content. This sentiment emphasizes the need for longer and more comprehensive training sessions to adequately prepare teachers for the complexities of inclusive education. Similarly, HT3 voices concerns about the infrequency of training sessions, pointing out a three-year gap since the last training opportunity. This lack of ongoing professional development deprives educators of opportunities to enhance their skills and stay updated on best practices in inclusive education.

The analysis further indicates the significance of ongoing professional development and a whole school approach to inclusive education. Avramidis (2005), Ekins and Grimes(2009), Fullan (2007), and Peterson (2004) emphasize the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders to create an inclusive educational environment that promotes equal opportunities for all learners.

Moreover, the study underscores the apprehension among teachers regarding their preparedness to meet the needs of students with special needs, echoing findings from Lohrmann & Bambara (2006) and Desimone & Parmar (2006b). This underscores the importance of continuous professional development to address gaps in knowledge and skills.

Collaboration with Resource Persons

One of the headteacher commented;



Our kindergarten center actively engages with community experts, including special education teachers, psychologists, and occupational therapists. Their expertise enriches our professional development sessions, providing practical insights into supporting learners with special needs”(HT5)

Another headteacher also commented;

"We collaborate with resource persons from the Ministry of Education's Special Education Division and local disability support organizations to deliver targeted training sessions for our staff. This partnership enhances our understanding of best practices in catering to the diverse needs of learners with special needs."(HT7)

The responses from the headteachers (HT5, HT7) underscore the importance of collaboration with resource persons in enhancing educators' ability to support learners with special needs. One of the headteachers highlights the engagement of their kindergarten center with a variety of community experts, including special education teachers, psychologists, and occupational therapists. By tapping into the expertise of

these professionals, the center enriches its professional development sessions, gaining practical insights into effectively supporting learners with special needs. This collaborative approach not only broadens the knowledge base of educators but also ensures that strategies and interventions are evidence-based and tailored to the unique needs of learners.

Similarly, another headteacher emphasizes collaboration with resource persons from the Ministry of Education's Special Education Division and local disability support organizations. Through this partnership, targeted training sessions are delivered to staff, focusing on best practices in catering to the diverse needs of learners with special needs. By leveraging the expertise and guidance of these external partners, the kindergarten center enhances its understanding of effective strategies and interventions, ultimately improving outcomes for learners with special needs. This aligns with research emphasizing the importance of collaboration among stakeholders in creating inclusive learning environments (Avramidis, 2005; Ekins & Grimes, 2009; Fullan, 2007; Peterson, 2004). By working closely with professionals from various fields, educators can access specialized knowledge and resources, ensuring that their practices are informed by current research and evidence-based approaches.

4.1. 3 Research Question 3

Are material resources required for enforcing the educational rights of learners with special needs available in Kindergarten Centres within the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality?

Low-Tech Material Resource

One of the participants commented:

"The school used to be well equipped with squishy balls and Tactile objects but currently, they are outdated and not enough due to mishandling of the materials by the learners" (HT2).

Another commented:

"Currently, all picture cards, charts, and schedules are outmoded and in a deplorable state. Most of them are beyond repairs and management" (HT1).

Yet another commented:

"Our school has sufficient blocks, puzzles, beads, and shapes for learners, but not for other learners with special needs" (HT3).

The study aimed to understand the views of the participants regarding the availability of material resources in the sampled schools for learners with special needs. The results showed that the materials available in some schools do not meet the needs of all the learners with special needs. They often assist only a specific group of learners at a given time due to their outdated state and technological limitations. It was observed that some schools lack sufficient material resources, and the available materials are in poor condition, outmoded, and beyond repair or maintenance. During a visit to the schools, it was confirmed that many were not equipped with standard material resources for effective teaching.

The study also revealed that the majority of schools have material resources to assist learners with special needs while they are in school, thus helping them enjoy their educational rights. Teaching with instructional materials is critical for learning because these materials help learners see, hear, and engage with what they are

learning. Instructional materials improve communication and make the teacher's work easier by reducing the need for excessive verbal instruction (Ocloo, 2011).

According to Peters (2003), some of the challenges of inclusive education include a lack of resources and poverty, less conducive and enabling learning environments, and limited commitment to initiating change through research. Arrah and Swain (2014) reported in a study conducted in Cameroon that insufficient resources for special education, additional stress and anxiety when teaching students with special education needs, lack of training to work with students with special education needs, and the potential impact on the learning of other students are some of the challenges teachers face when implementing inclusive education. Difficulties in accessing necessary equipment may hinder teachers' ability to address these challenges effectively, potentially affecting their morale in the long run.

High-Tech Materials Resources

One of the participants commented:

"We have tape recorders, but they are outmoded.

We need educational tablets" (HT1).

Another participants commented:

"We have hearing aid for visually impaired learners but are outdated and so can be replaced smart hearing aids with noise-canceling capabilities to aid teaching and learning (HT3).

Yet another commented:

"We have projectors and televisions to aid us in teaching, but blending all forms of teaching in an inclusive class is very tedious, so we don't use them often" (HT2).

The responses from headteachers regarding high-tech material resources for learners with special needs illustrate significant challenges in terms of availability, condition, and usability. The study aimed to understand the nature of available material resources that support the educational rights of learners with special needs. It was found that some schools had braille materials, computers, tape recorders, magnifiers, and speakers, while others had books, charts, drawings, projectors, and televisions. The researcher's observations indicated disparities in the availability of these materials across different schools. Material resources encompass a wide range of items, including textbooks, charts, maps, audiovisual and electronic instructional materials such as radios, tape recorders, televisions, and video tape recorders, as well as paper supplies and writing materials like pens, erasers, exercise books, crayons, chalk, drawing books, notebooks, pencils, rulers, slates, and workbooks (Atkinson, 2000).

Research by Adeogun (2001) found a strong positive relationship between instructional resources and academic performance, indicating that schools with more materials perform better than those with fewer resources. This finding is corroborated by Babayomi (1999), who noted that private schools often outperform public schools due to the greater availability and adequacy of teaching and learning materials. Similarly, Mwiria (1985) supports the notion that students' performance is significantly affected by the quality and quantity of teaching and learning materials.

4.4 Research Question 4

How aware are Headteachers about the policy and legal frameworks on the educational rights of learners with special needs at Kindergarten Centres within the Awutu-Senya -East Municipality?

Educational rights Policy:

Informed

One of the headteachers commented:

"I am aware that we should not discriminate among these learners with special needs. Our school admits all learners with special educational needs" (HT1)

Another headteacher commented:

"I have not seen any child in this school who has special needs so far. All the learners in my class are okay and respond perfectly" (HT2).

Again, one of the participants commented:

"I studied special education, so I know that inclusive education is a right. Learners with special needs have rights that govern their education. They have the rights to trained professionals to handle them while they are in school" (HT3).

The study aimed to determine teachers' awareness of the educational rights of learners with special needs. The results, based on the opinions of the participants, indicated that the majority of teachers were aware of learners with special needs. Some teachers, as indicated by the results, were aware of the rights to quality education for learners with special needs. It was observed that teachers were aware of the learners with special needs' rights to assistive devices to enable effective learning.

Furthermore, teachers were aware of the educational rights of learners with special needs to a suitable environment for movement and studies. This implies that awareness of inclusive education has reached various target groups such as teachers. Positive teacher attitudes facilitate successful inclusion, while negative attitudes are directly linked to less frequent use of effective classroom accommodations (Mumthas & Shamina, 2011).

However, a lack of awareness and skills to include and support students with disabilities, alongside other learners in a regular classroom, can prove to be a major barrier in such a process (Charles, 2011). It not only affects the implementation of inclusive education in the classroom but also has an impact on teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards inclusive education. Teachers' perceptions of inclusive policies not only determine the level of acceptance they show towards inclusive practices but also affect their commitment to implementing such policies (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Policy and Legal Framework Awareness:

One of the headteacher commented;

"I am aware that the Ghana Education Act of 2008 emphasizes inclusive education for all learners, including those with special needs."(HT1) Again, another headteacher commented that:

"The Persons with Disability Act (Act 715) provides guidelines for accommodating learners with special needs in educational settings."(HT3)

Similarly, one of the headteacher commented;

"I understand the Ghana Inclusive Education Policy Framework, which aims to ensure that all children, regardless of their abilities, have access to quality education."(HT2)

Furthermore, another headteacher commented;

"The Ministry of Education's Special Education Division has guidelines for the identification, assessment, and placement of learners with special needs."(HT4)

The responses from the headteachers in the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality illustrate a commendable level of awareness concerning the policy and legal frameworks governing the enforcement of the educational rights of learners with special needs. Firstly, one headteacher (HT1) demonstrates familiarity with the Ghana Education Act of 2008, which prioritizes inclusive education for all learners, including those with special needs. This indicates a foundational understanding of the legal obligations surrounding education in Ghana. Additionally, another headteacher (HT3) acknowledges the significance of Act 715, the Persons with Disability Act, which provides guidelines for accommodating learners with special needs in educational settings. This awareness suggests a recognition of the specific rights and support structures in place for learners with special needs.

Furthermore, a different headteacher (HT2) showcases comprehension of the Ghana Inclusive Education Policy Framework, emphasizing its aim to ensure equitable access to quality education for all children, regardless of their abilities. This indicate a commitment to fostering inclusive education practices within the municipality. Lastly, one headteacher (HT4) displays familiarity with the guidelines outlined by the Ministry of Education's Special Education Division, indicating an understanding of

the procedures for identifying, assessing, and placing learners with special needs. Collectively, these responses underscore a comprehensive understanding of the policy and legal frameworks among headteachers, reflecting a dedication to promoting inclusive and equitable educational opportunities for all students within the municipality.

This aligns with the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, adopted in 1994, which is a key international document that advocates for inclusive education. It asserts that every child has the right to education, and it also calls for the integration of learners with special needs into mainstream schools. The statement emphasizes the importance of providing appropriate support and resources to enable the full participation and achievement of all learners.

Practical and Policy Implications of the Findings

The study's findings provide valuable insights into the current state of inclusive education for learners with special needs in the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality. These findings highlight both progress and persistent challenges, with significant implications for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders.

1. Strengthening Anti-Discrimination Policies

The study revealed that while anti-discrimination policies exist in schools, their enforcement is inconsistent. Some headteachers reported swift action against discrimination, while others acknowledged lapses in addressing incidents. This inconsistency undermines the safeguarding of learners with special needs and perpetuates marginalization. To address this, Ghana's **Persons with Disability Act (Act 715)** must be reinforced with clear enforcement mechanisms. The Ghana Education Service (GES) should develop standardized protocols for reporting and

addressing discrimination, including mandatory training for school staff on inclusive practices. Regular audits could ensure compliance and hold schools accountable.

Schools should foster a culture of inclusivity through awareness campaigns and student-led initiatives. Sensitivity training for teachers and students can help reduce stigma. Additionally, establishing student support teams to monitor and address discrimination cases can ensure timely interventions.

2. Improving Enrollment Practices and Resource Allocation

The availability of supportive materials, such as Braille resources, significantly influences enrollment decisions for learners with special needs. Some schools admitted students only when resources were available, while others relied on external support.

The Ghana Inclusive Education Policy Framework should mandate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, ensuring schools are equipped to accommodate diverse learners *before* enrollment. Budgetary allocations for assistive devices must be increased, and public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be encouraged to bridge resource gaps.

Schools can adopt interim measures, such as sharing resources within clusters or collaborating with NGOs. Advocacy for government and donor support is essential to ensure all schools have the necessary materials to support inclusive education.

3. Enhancing Teacher Training and Professional Development

Many teachers lacked formal training in inclusive education, relying instead on workshops or personal experience. While some found short-term training beneficial, others highlighted the need for ongoing professional development. The Ministry of Education should integrate **inclusive education modules** into pre-service teacher

training programs at Colleges of Education. Mandatory in-service training, conducted annually, would help teachers stay updated on best practices.

Schools should establish mentorship programs where trained special education teachers guide their peers. Collaboration with resource persons, such as psychologists and occupational therapists, can provide hands-on support. Peer-learning networks can also help disseminate effective strategies.

4. Addressing Material Resource Gaps

The study found that many schools lacked up-to-date low- and high-tech resources, such as tactile tools and educational tablets. Outdated or insufficient materials hindered effective teaching and learning.

The **Equity Act (2010)** should be operationalized with targeted funding for assistive technologies. Incentives for tech companies to donate or subsidize devices could improve access.

Teachers can employ improvisation techniques, such as creating low-cost teaching aids from local materials. Schools should also prioritize maintenance and timely replacement of outdated resources.

5. Raising Awareness of Legal Frameworks

While some headteachers demonstrated awareness of policies like the **Ghana Education Act (2008)**, others were less informed, leading to inconsistent implementation of inclusive practices.

The GES should conduct nationwide awareness campaigns and distribute simplified policy handbooks to schools. Compliance with international frameworks, such as the **Salamanca Statement**, should be regularly assessed.

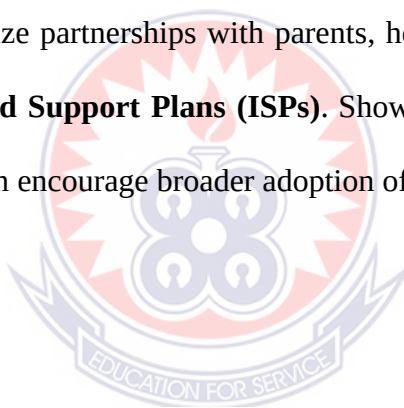
Headteachers with policy knowledge can train their peers, and schools can form **inclusion committees** to monitor adherence. Engaging parents and community leaders in policy discussions can also enhance awareness.

6. Prioritizing Welfare and Stakeholder Engagement

Learners with special needs often depended on discretionary support, such as waived fees or meal programs. However, stakeholder engagement was inconsistent, limiting the sustainability of these initiatives.

Local governments should incentivize community involvement through initiatives like tax breaks for businesses supporting inclusive education. The **National Disability Authority** could audit schools' welfare provisions to ensure equity.

Schools should formalize partnerships with parents, healthcare providers, and NGOs to create **Individualized Support Plans (ISPs)**. Showcasing success stories, such as free meal programs, can encourage broader adoption of inclusive practices.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This Chapter dealt with the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study

5.1 Summary of the findings of the study

The summary of the study revealed that;

Anti-discrimination policies in schools exist but are often ineffective due to inconsistent enforcement and inadequate responses to incidents. Also, the school acknowledged the legal mandate to enroll learners with special needs. Again, assessment approaches varied, including verbal and non-verbal communication methods, were not primary related to special needs assessment practices. The study also revealed that more training should be conducted to the headteachers handling learners with special needs. Finally, some headteachers expressed their awareness of the legal framework on the educational rights of learners with special needs

5.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that majority of participants are aware of inclusive education practices and school policies to protect the educational rights of learners with special needs. However, the full implementation of these policies is hindered by a lack of resources and inadequate funds. Schools acknowledge the legal mandate to enroll learners with special needs and provide incentives and support to facilitate enrollment. The availability of supportive materials influences the enrollment of learners with specific needs.

Inadequate support from stakeholders hinders the provision of additional privileges.

Creating an inclusive educational environment requires a "whole school approach" involving collaboration among various stakeholders. Multiple strategies with a unifying purpose and common values are necessary for promoting equal opportunities for learning and well-being.

Material resources are limited and often insufficient, leading to deterioration and mishandling. Some schools lack resources for specific types of special needs, while others have limited resources overall. Headteachers reported a lack of knowledge and experience in using material resources, indicating a need for further training and support.

The majority of headteachers are aware that they should not discriminate against learners with special needs and that their school admits all learners with special educational needs. However, some teachers lack awareness of the presence and specific educational rights of learners with special needs, especially if they have not encountered such learners in their school.

5.3 Recommendations

The study recommended that there is the need for improved implementation of existing policies to safeguard the educational rights of learners with special needs.

Also, there is the need to foster inclusive school culture where all stakeholders, including policymakers, teacher educators, teachers, parents, students, and the community, work together. A "whole school approach" is necessary to create an environment that promotes equal opportunities for learning and well-being.

Collaboration and a shared commitment to common values are vital for building inclusive educational settings.

Again, there is the need for more intense and continuous training, especially for regular teachers who may lack specialized knowledge and experience in handling learners with special needs.

Yet again, adequate resource allocation and support are crucial for the successful implementation of inclusive education policies.

5.4 Suggestion for Further Study

Other Researchers can;

- Conduct a longitudinal study to examine the long-term impact of inclusive education policies and interventions on the educational outcomes and well-being of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres. This study could track students over several years to assess their progress and identify factors that contribute to their success or experiences.
- Compare the implementation and effectiveness of inclusive education policies and practices in Kindergarten Centres within the Awutu-Senya-East Municipality with other regions or municipalities. This study could provide insights into the contextual factors that influence policy implementation and outcomes.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of different teacher training programs in preparing educators to support the educational rights of learners with special needs. Compare the outcomes of teachers who have undergone specialized training in special education with those who have received general training on inclusive education.

- Explore the perspectives and experiences of parents and caregivers of learners with special needs in Kindergarten Centres. Investigate their level of satisfaction with existing policies, the support they receive from schools, and their recommendations for improving the educational rights and welfare of their learners.
- Investigate specific inclusive classroom practices that have been effective in supporting the educational needs of learners with special needs. This study could examine instructional strategies, assessment methods, classroom accommodations, and the role of assistive technology in promoting inclusive learning environments.



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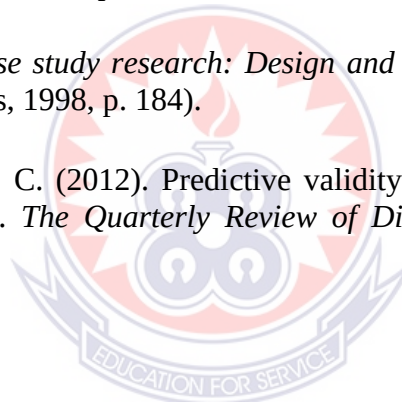
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide for Headteachers

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
FACULTY OF APPLIED BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES IN EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
SECTION A: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEADTEACHERS**

1. **School:**
2. **Location:**
3. **Duration of Interview:**
4. **Date:**

**School Rules regarding the Safeguarding educational right of learners with
Special needs in Kindergarten centres.**

5. Do practices in your school conform to safeguarding the educational rights of
learners with special needs? If **YES**
.....
 - a. What are some of the practices instituted by the school to safeguard the
educational right of learners with special needs?
 - b. If **NO**. Why are such school rules not implemented in your school?
6. Does your school have a rules governing the enrollment of learners with special
needs?
 - a. If **Yes**..... Why.....?
 - b. If **No**. Why.
7. Does your school give privileges to learners with special needs? If yes. what are
they and tell us how it is implemented.
If **No**. Why?

8. Does your school have Academic rules governing learners with special needs?
- a. If **Yes**. Tell me about it (assessment)
 - b. If **No**. Tell me Why
9. Does your school have rules on support services such as homework and carrier assistance for learners with special educational needs.? a. If **Yes**. why.
- b. If **No**. Why
10. Does your school put into consideration the educational rights of learners with special needs when building learning facilities and purchasing equipment for learners with special educational needs?
- a. If **YES**. What are the guidelines practices?
11. If **No** what prevent your school from adhering to such guidelines.?

Nature of Training provided to headteachers for effective enforcement of the educational rights of learners with special needs.

12. What is your level of Education?
13. What is your area of specialization?
14. Have you received any training on the educational rights of learners with special needs in your school?
- a. If **Yes**, What kind of training did you receive?
 - b. How has this training helped you handling the educational rights of learners with special needs in your school?
 - c. If **No**, how has the absence of this training affected your ability to handle the educational right of learners with special needs.

Availability of Material Resources for the Enforcement of educational rights of learners with special needs.

15. Does your school have material resources for teachers to use in teaching and also learners with special needs to learn with?
- IF **Yes**. Are they sufficient ?
 - If **NO**. why the absence of material resource for teaching by teachers and learning for learners with special educational needs?
16. What is the nature of those material resources available for learners with special needs that support their educational rights in your school?
- What is the state of those material resources available for learners with special educational needs in your school?
17. Do you know how to use the available material resources and how often are the material resource for learners with special educational needs used in teaching and learning in your school?
18. Do the available material resources meet the needs of special educational needs in your school?
19. Does your school have enough space for the storage of material resources for easy access by learners with special needs.

HeadTeachers Awareness of educational right learners with special needs

20. Are your teachers aware of the educational rights of learners with special needs in your school?
- If **Yes**. What are some of the educational rights enjoyed by learners with special needs in your school?
 - If **No**? Why are they not aware?
21. Are your teachers aware that the school is an inclusive setting?

a. If **Yes**. What are the categories of learners with special educational needs in your classroom?

b. If **No**. Why

22. Do you encounter any experiences in implementing educational rights of learners with special needs in your classroom?

a. If **YES**. What are some of experiences?

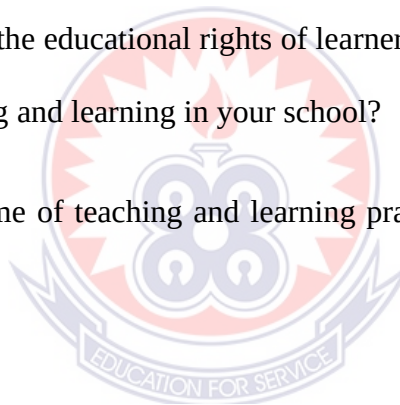
b. how you cope with these experiences?

b. If **NO**. Why ?

23. Are you aware of the educational rights of learners with special needs especially with regards to teaching and learning in your school?

If **YES**. What are some of teaching and learning practices of learners with special needs in your school?

If **No**. Why?



APPENDIX B OBSERVATION CHECKLIST SCHEDULE

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA FACULTY OF APPLIED BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES IN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

School:.....

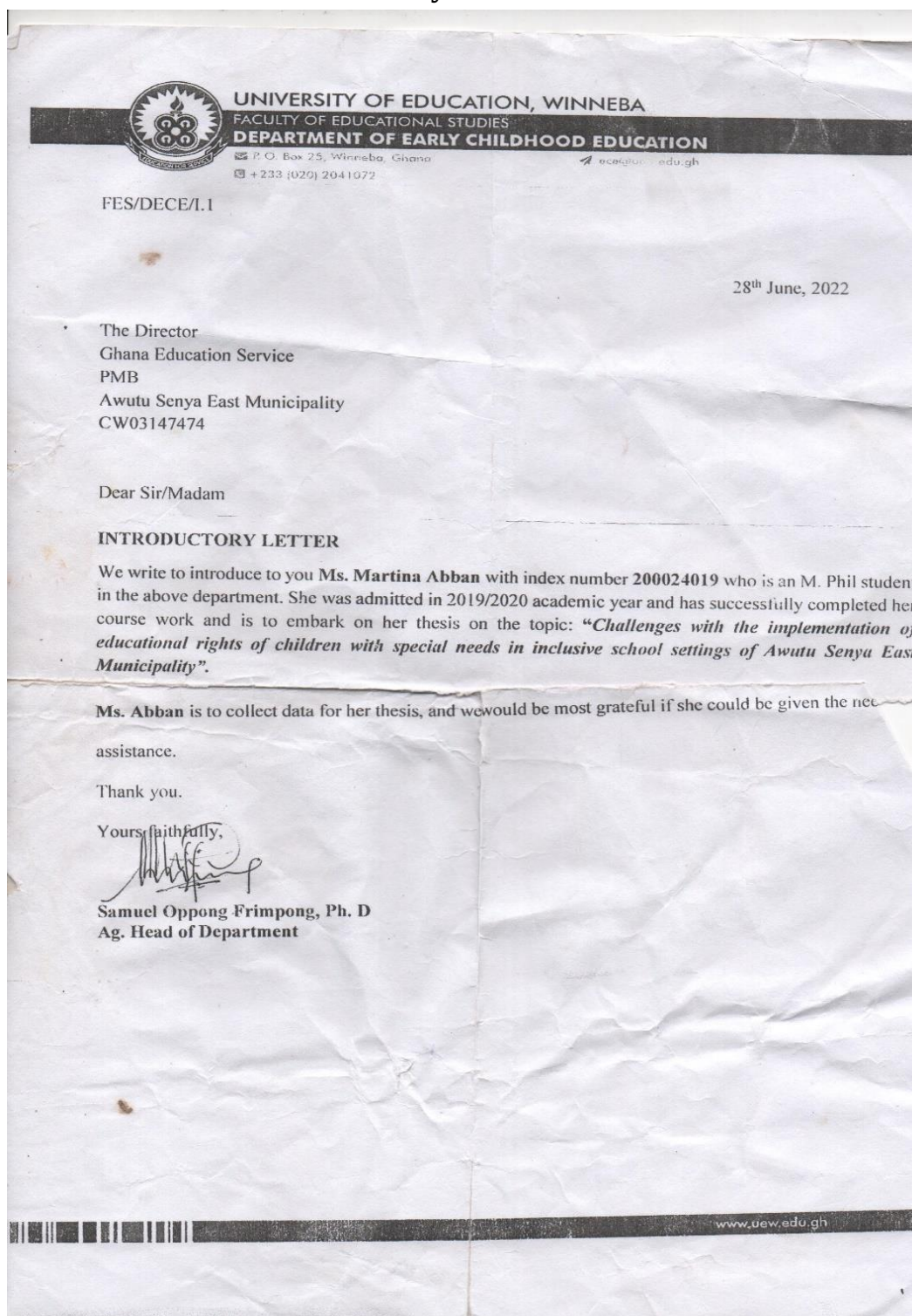
Location:.....

Date:.....

No	MATERIAL RESOURCES	Present	Absent	Remarks
24	Adapted curricula			
25	Adapted course books			
26	Adapted text books			
27	SEN teachers			
28	Support staff (Itinerant teachers, teacher aides, nurse, other medical staff)			
29	Resource room			
	FACILITY AND EQUIPMENT			
30	Ramps			
31	Assistive devices			
32	Wide corridors			
33	Wide doors			
34	Modified washrooms			
35	Modified water points			
36	Feeding programme			
37	Obstacle free environment			
	SCHOOL POLICY			
38	Examination Policy			
39	Favorable Enrolled policy			
40	Retention Policy			
41	Guidance and Counselling department			
	HEADTEACHERS AWARENESS			
42	Teaching–Learning Strategies	Teacher-centered ()	learner centered ()	
43	Classroom activities	(a) varied { }	(b) limited { }	

APPENDIX C

Introductory Letter



APPENDIX D

Permission Letter

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE
AWUTU SENYA EAST MUNICIPAL

In case of reply the number and the date of this letter should be quoted

Email: awutusenyacast@ges.gov.gh
Mobile: 0244374007/0244085749


Private Mail Bag
Kasoa

Digital Address -CW03147474

My Ref: GES/CR/KAS/P/VOL4/113
Your Ref:

5th August, 2022

INTRODUCTORY LETTER
MS. MARTINA ABBAN

I write to introduce to you Ms. Martina Abban, a final year post graduate student studying Master of philosophy in Early Childhood Education in the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Education, Winneba. She is in the process of undertaking a survey purposely to gather information on the 'Challenges with the implementation of educational rights of children with special needs in inclusive school settings

Permission has been granted to her to conduct her study by engaging early Grade Teachers (Kindergarten to primary three (3), Headteachers and all available Special Education Resource Teachers in the following schools within our Municipality

1. Ofankor M/A Basic Schools
2. Odupongkphe M/A Basic Schools
3. Akweley St. Mary's Anglican Basic Schools
4. Opekuma St. Peter's Anglican Basic schools
5. Kasoa Emmanuel Presby Basic schools
6. Kasoa Methodist Basic Schools

I count on your usual cooperation.

Thank you.


MS. FAUSTINA ALIMATI BRAIMAH
MUNICIPAL DIRECTOR OF EDUC.
AWUTU SENYA EAST - KASOA

Cc:

1. The Headteacher, Ofankor M/A Basic Schools - Kasoa
2. The Headteacher, Odupongkphe M/A Basic Schools - Kasoa
3. The Headteacher, Akweley St. Mary's Anglican Basic Schools - Kasoa
4. The Headteacher, Opekuma St. Peter's Anglican, Kasoa
5. The Headteacher, Kasoa Emmanuel Presby - Kasoa
6. The Headteacher, Kasoa Methodist School - Kasoa