

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
IN TANO SOUTH DISTRICT OF GHANA**

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**A thesis in the Department of Special Education,
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JUNE, 2023

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

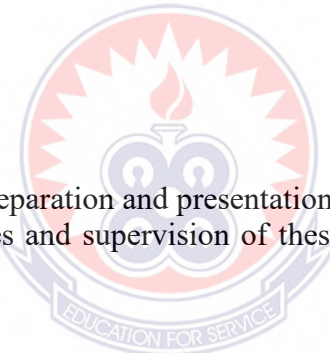
I, Linda Serwaah Wirekoh, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have been identified and acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:

Date:

Supervisor's Declaration

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



Supervisor's Name: DR. AWINI ADAM

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

To Samuel Ekow Brown my husband, Nkunim and Abotare Brown my daughters.



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My supervisor provided invaluable support in terms of direction and guidance to me in the course of this research. I am really glad I had you as my supervisor. I am sincerely grateful to all the lecturers.



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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the perception of teachers towards inclusive education in the Tano South District of Ghana. The convergent mixed method was employed for the study. The sample for the study was 200 teachers from 25 basic schools in the district. The 25 basic schools were chosen using the simple random technique whilst the respondents were chosen from the 25 basic schools using the census technique. The data were analysed with the help of SPSS. It was revealed among other things from the study that teachers had negative perceptions towards inclusion. It was again revealed that teachers lacked knowledge in inclusive pedagogy. The study further indicated that teachers were only ready to include learners with mild disabilities in their classrooms. It was again revealed that there are inadequate material resources to make inclusion a reality. The learning environments in these schools were also found not to be disability-friendly. The study further showed that teachers lacked the knowledge in curriculum modifications to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. Finally, the findings showed that female teachers were more ready for inclusion than male teachers. The researcher recommended among other things that the Ghana Education Service should organize periodic in-service training for teachers to minimize their negative perceptions towards learners with disabilities. It was again suggested that the service modifies the existing infrastructure in the schools to make them disability-friendly.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Education of children with disabilities has seen a shift from segregated special schools to inclusion in general education schools and classrooms. Educating children with disabilities in the regular schools is an important goal for many countries today. It is a national and international development that is supported in national legislation and in statements and reports that have been issued by international bodies such as the United Nations and Council of Europe (Odongo & Davidson, 2016). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into force in May 2008 and signatories (142 states by September 2009) were charged in article 24 with ensuring an inclusive education system at all levels. The convention recognizes that educational provision varies around the world, and so requires states to provide an inclusive, quality, and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live (UNESCO, 2006).

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) attempted to meet the „education for all“ demand, which can only be satisfied through the inclusion of all students in the general school. According to this Statement, the general school with inclusive orientation combats discrimination, creates open communities and helps to develop an inclusive society. The differences among people are recognized as normal and each child has specific characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs, while the emphasis should be on strengths rather than deficits. Therefore, schooling should be actualized in accordance with the specific needs of each child, rather than attempting to adapt them in the specifications of the existing curriculum (Adane, 2013; UNESCO, 1994).

According to World Health Organization (2005), approximately 10% of the world's population has a disability, and 80% of those with disabilities live in the developing world. Since the mid-twentieth century, there has been a growing international disability movement that has advocated for the inclusion of people with disabilities within society. Countries have developed policies related to education, employment, income support, anti-discrimination, and other policies intended to improve the position of people with disabilities within their own society. This is sometimes based on international agreements and programmes, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons of 1975 (UNESCO, 2018) and the African Decade of Disabled Persons, 2000-2009 (Agbenyega, 2011).

In recent times, extending access to education has been a global focus because education remains an essential tool for promoting empowerment and social cohesion (Malinen et al., 2013). According to Ainscow and Sandill (2010), the focus on human capital as a driver of economic growth for developed and developing countries alike, has led to excessive attention on school attainment. It is widely acknowledged that, the impact of human capital becomes strong when the focus of education turns to the role of school quality (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). The role of improved schooling has been a central part of the development strategies of most countries and contemporary studies shows significant improvements in school attainment across the developing world in recent decades (Botts, & Owusu, 2013). The UNESCO (2018) posits that education reduces inequalities, can break the cycle of poverty, foster tolerance, reach gender equality and equity, and empower people to live healthier lives and attain productive livelihoods.

According to Engelbrecht and Savolainen (2014), the 21st century has seen several agenda, deliberations and programmes towards improving and harnessing education across several spheres, endeavours and industries. A typical global agenda was leveraged through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNDP, 2018). The Education for All (EFA) initiative from the United Nations was an essential element of the Millennium Development Goals, in part, because education was seen as being crucial to human development, and also because so many children did not have access to education (UNESCO, 2006). The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 also seeks to „ensure and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunity for all“ (UNESCO, 2018). The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) advocated that children with special educational needs (SEN) should have access to mainstream education so as to provide a basis to combat discriminating perceptions. The statement is therefore conceived as forming the basis for inclusion and a shift from segregation by creating a welcoming community, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.

Inclusion in education means “full inclusion of children with diverse abilities in all aspects of schooling that others are able to access and enjoy” (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2005, p.2). Inclusion has a variety of benefits for those students with disabilities (Adane, 2013). For inclusion to be effective, all stakeholders, especially teachers, must have a strong desire to educate students with disabilities in a general setting and believe that these students are capable of high educational achievement (Acedo, Ferrer, and Pamies, 2009). If the will of the teachers is in place, the assumption would be that the teachers’ perception about the performance of the students with disabilities is consistent with their will and as a result student will perform at high levels.

Inclusive education has been a global task to which school system across the world respond. It is perhaps understood as a process towards school systems that welcome all learners despite their background, disability or other personal characteristics (Malinen et al., 2013). This move has been identified as a catalyst for educational transformation towards realising quality education for all, although, there are clear differences in national policies and transformation of schools (Graham & Spandagou, 2011). According to Hollins (2011), the growth and spread of education has come with inclusiveness and equity in assessment agenda. The Dark World Education Forum in 2000 reiterated that “school should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions (Butakor et al., 2018). That is, school should include children with special educational needs and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized backgrounds (Abe & Adu, 2013). Inclusive education embraces the concept of diverse backgrounds of learners with varied characteristics, such as different learning capacities and cognitive development.

The government of Ghana has since attained independence from the British in 1957, regarded education as a fundamental human right for its citizens, and it has enshrined this right in the legal framework of education. The 1961 Act is the principal legislation concerning the right to education for all children in Ghana which states that: Every child who has attained the school going age as determined by the minister shall attend a course of instruction as laid down by the minister in a school recognized for the purpose by the minister (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Inclusion is a widely accepted programme, according to United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2006). Gadagbui (2008) opined that inclusive education ensures the participation of all students in school and involves restructuring the culture, policies and practices in schools so that they can respond to the diverse needs of students in their localities. The goal of inclusive education is to break down barriers that separate general and special education and make the included students feel liked, and become members of the general education classroom. This inclusive system provides individual students with disabilities opportunities and confidence in learning independently concepts, skills and strategies that their counterparts without disabilities are exposed to. The fundamental principle of inclusive education is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of difficulties or differences they may have. As such, inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different learning needs, pace and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnership with their communities.

The Act 715 of the Republic of Ghana, entitled Disability Act, 2006, emphasizes inclusive education for children with disabilities. Section 20 of the Act states that; A person responsible for admission into a school or other institution of learning shall no refuse to give admission to a person with disability on account of the disability unless the person has been assessed by the Ministry responsible for education in collaboration with the Ministries responsible for health and social welfare to be in a special school for children or persons with disability (Asante & Sasu, 2015). In recent times, Ghana has ratified its commitment to Education for All (EFA) and to reaching marginalised students through inclusive education (Anthony, 2011). This shows clear

evidence that the government of Ghana has committed itself, at both the international and national levels, to the human rights, equalization of opportunities and provision of educational services for individuals with learning needs (Anthony, 2011).

Including all children in education has been a major challenge facing educational systems around the world (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Despite the push for educational inclusion for all learners across the globe, the case of Africa is less told as it is estimated that, only 10% of children with learning needs in Africa attend school (UNESCO, 2018). Ghana, like many other developing and Sub-Saharan African countries struggle to achieve goals for inclusive education (Butakor, Ampadu & Suleiman (2020). It is estimated that, only about 3% of children with learning needs receive any form of education. This translates to the fact that, either children and youth with learning needs drop out of basic education in a very short time or have never had the opportunity to go to school at all (Idol, 1997).

Despite the progress in establishing inclusive educational system across the length and breadth of Ghana, its realization seems far behind. The country is nowhere near achieving the target of an inclusive system of education (Butakor, Ampadu & Suleiman, 2020). Therefore, there is the need for extra effort in awareness and effective governmental responses to improve the quality of life of persons with special educational needs as an urgent step toward realising the inclusive educational goal (Botts, & Owusu, 2013).

According to Kuyini et al. (2016), major challenges militating against Ghana realization of inclusive education includes negative perceptions in society about students with special needs, lack of facilities, logistics and infrastructures, teachers' negative perception and lack of special training for teachers in handling students with learning needs as well as challenges with proper assessment of students in all-inclusive setting. This current

study however focusses on teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education in Tano South District of Ghana.

According to Jerlinder, Danermark and Gill (2010), children with disabilities deserve proper education; and they have a right to it, so those who are able to work in the normal classroom environment should be included. As teachers who are willing to teach these children would face many challenges and issues, they may need specialized training, and develop personal attributes such as patience to deal with these children. To achieve this, teachers need to work with children's disabilities and develop awareness of inherent challenges and changes it could lead to.

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Service's thirty-five years of progress in educating children with disabilities through IDEA (Asante & Sasu, 2015) agreed as a whole that special education has not produced the desired results, yet progress has been made. In spite of the funding spent to support special education, outcomes and benefits for students in special classes have shown little to no benefits to students (Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011). Unfortunately, sometimes the lack of funds and resources has had detrimental effects for those students placed in separate settings for special education (Woodcock, 2013).

Weston (2004) argued that even when considering those students with severe disabilities in comparison to the special education classrooms, general education classrooms have the benefit of providing more instruction. Also, within the inclusive setting, more whole class instruction is utilized, a pleasant amount of one-to-one instruction is provided, academic content is addressed more, and nondisabled peers are utilized more as special education teachers are utilized less (Ocloo & Subbey, 2008). However, new policies such as those detailed in No Child Left

Behind and IDEA (Asante & Sasu, 2015) state that the accountability of the performance of students with exceptionalities rest on the shoulders of the general education teacher, as special education is a subset of general education. Along with the pressure from teacher accountability came teacher resistance, misconceptions, and perceptions not favourable to the idea of educating students with disabilities within the general education classroom/inclusion setting (Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011).

Ali et al. (2009) argued that successful implementation of any inclusive policy or programming is extremely dependent upon the educators (implementers) being receptive and positive. Westwood and Graham (2003) and Woodcock (2013) have sought to examine the perceptions teachers have towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs/disabilities. Just in recent years, the notion of inclusive education has gained momentum. It has been found that key elements in the success of inclusion and the implementation of inclusive education are the views, perspectives, and perceptions of the personnel who have the major responsibility for implementing it, which are teachers (Resnik, 2009). It has been argued that teachers' beliefs and perceptions are critical in ensuring the success of inclusive practices since teachers' acceptance of the policy of inclusion is likely to affect their commitment to implementing it (Elliot, 2008).

Many regular education teachers who feel unprepared and fearful to work with learners with disabilities in regular classes display frustration, anger and negative perceptions. Additionally, access to resources and specialist support affects teachers' confidence and perceptions towards inclusive education (Kong, 2008). Another relevant study was conducted by Vaughn et al, (1996) and it

examined mainstream and special education teachers' perceptions of inclusion through the use of focus group interviews. The majority of teachers participating in the focus group interviews were not active participants of the inclusive programme, yet they were characterized as having strong, negative feelings about inclusion and felt that the policy and decision makers were out of touch with the realities of the classroom (Vaughn et al., 1996). These teachers were adamant as they argued that class size, inadequate resources, extent to which all students would benefit from inclusion and the lack of adequate teacher preparation would all be factors that would negatively affect the success of inclusion (Vaughn et al., 1996).

Teachers' perceptions are influenced by the nature and severity of the disabling condition resented to them (child-related variables) and less by teacher-related variables (Avoke, 2008). Furthermore, educational environment-related variables, such as the availability of physical and human support are associated with perceptions to inclusion.

Teachers are vital components for ensuring that inclusion programmes are being implemented successfully with the presence of equal opportunities that will promote the success of all students (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). As general education teachers work with a more diverse population, they may find it difficult to work with the differing learning styles and disabilities adequately, mainly because of the lack of knowledge, training, and preparation (Asamoah-Gyimah & Doudu, 2007). As a result, general education teachers may begin to form perceptions and beliefs that are not favourable to the inclusion programme. According to Ross-Hill (2009), substantial studies have been conducted that support the idea that the perceptions of teachers are essential to the inclusion program. Martinez (2003) supported the concept of teachers supporting inclusion programmes but that the realities of this model within daily practices are conflicting. Many teachers support

the idea of students with disabilities receiving instruction in a general setting but when administrators assign teachers to instruct the inclusion classrooms, their perceptions may become questionable (Van Reusen et al. 2001).

The Director of the National Center on Educational Outcomes, Harvey & Kamvounias (2008), testifies:

We know how to educate all children, including those with disabilities, if we have the will to do so. The discussion should not be about whether students with disabilities can learn to proficiency, and thus, it should not be about whether they should be included in assessment and accountability measures, it must be about whether we have the will and commitment to make it happen. (p. 41).

Therefore, there is the assumption that the successful implementation of any inclusive policy is largely dependent on educators being positive about it. However, general classroom teachers need to be willing and able to teach children with disabilities in their classrooms. If these teachers are unwilling to teach children with disabilities or have unrealistically low expectations of themselves when considering teaching children with disabilities, mainstreaming will not be successful. This current study seeks to investigate the perceptions of teachers towards inclusion of children with special educational needs in inclusive basic schools within Tano South District of Ghana.

There are only few special education resources teachers attached to regular schools that work hand in hand with general education teachers and are responsible for teaching and meeting the learning needs of children with disabilities in classrooms in the Tano South District specifically. Special education resource teachers are trained to operate in inclusive schools, where they serve children with their specific categories of disabilities whereas regular classroom teachers are trained to operate in regular education classrooms. Gadagbui (2008) was of the view that, “unless all teachers are fully prepared, inclusive education will not be realized” (p. 2). This suggests that teachers’

perceptions are critical in ensuring the success of inclusive practices since teachers' acceptance of the policy of inclusion is likely to affect their commitment to implementing it.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The implementation of inclusive education in the Tano South District of Ghana raises the question of how teachers perceive and experience this educational approach. Inclusive education aims to provide equal opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, within mainstream classrooms. However, there is a need to understand the perceptions of teachers towards inclusive education in order to identify potential barriers, challenges, and areas for improvement in its implementation. According to Kankam & Weiler, 2010;, it has been observed that regular education teachers do not send children with disabilities on errands during break time because they presume that it is unpleasant to send them. In the classrooms, regular teachers hardly put such children in the same group with their non-disabled peers during group work. In the nutshell, perception of regular education teachers towards children with disabilities remain unknown for successful implementation of inclusive education. In the district, many children with disabilities do not attend school regularly, and they usually do not stay at school until closing time (Adane, 2013).

Many countries have struggled to implement inclusive practices in schools partly because teachers, who are the leaders in education, do not have the required trainings (Kathleen & Norla, 2011; Kauffman et al., 2016; Sharma & Jacob, 2016). The Ministry of Education in Sierra Leone has experienced similar challenges in implementing inclusive education for special needs children in general education classrooms. Traditionally, schools provide

educational services for this population in either self-contained institution for students with similar disabilities or general education schools. Generally, teachers do not have the required training to deal with children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, nor do they have the understanding of what inclusionary practices entails (Kauffman et al., 2016; Sharma & Jacob 2016). Moreover, teachers find the provision of proper services to students with disabilities a complex challenge in the implementation of inclusive education for students (Kuyini & Mangope, 2011).

Teachers' perceptions of and lack of knowledge about inclusion are also a problem for its establishment in schools (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). Although the theory of inclusionary practices is grounded in the belief of providing equal, accessible education for all, teachers find it difficult to provide a successful foundation for students with disabilities in their general education classrooms (Bosea-Gyinantwi, 2009; Sharma & Jacob 2016). To improve inclusionary practices in classrooms, governments and other education stakeholders have intensified efforts to improve teachers' skills and knowledge required to handle the growing demands of students' needs in inclusive classrooms. Some teachers have also expressed negative perceptions toward the education of students with disabilities in the same classroom as their abled peers (Kuyini, Desai, & Sharma, 2020).

To this end, effective implementation of inclusive education in Ghana is a matter of concern. There is a need to determine the status of implementation of inclusive education in terms of the general perceptions of teachers towards inclusive education. Although research related to inclusive education has been conducted, there are limited studies on perceptions of teachers towards inclusive education in Tano South District precisely. For example, the most common issues have been factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools (Flick, 2014),

effectiveness of the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools (Forlin, & Chambers (2011) and challenges experienced by educators in the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools (Flick, 2014). However empirical data on perceptions of teachers towards inclusive education is limited in the context of Ghana in general and Tano South District in particular. In an attempt to fill this gap, this study sought to assess the perceptions of teachers towards inclusive education in the Tano South District. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is to investigate the teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education in the Tano South District of Ghana. By exploring their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences related to inclusive education, this research aims to shed light on the factors influencing teachers' acceptance and effective implementation of inclusive practices. Understanding teachers' perceptions is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems that promote inclusive education and enhance the learning experiences of all students in the district.

1.3 Purpose of this Study

The rationale behind this study was to investigate the perception of general education teachers towards inclusion of children with special educational needs in inclusive basic schools within the Tano South District in the Ahafo Region of Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study sought:

- 1 To determine how teachers perceive the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in Tano South District.
- 2 To ascertain the influence of teachers' perception towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district.

- 3 To examine factors that influence the perception of regular education teachers towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district.
- 4 To explore the teachers' perceived challenges in teaching children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guide the research;

- 1 How do teachers perceive the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in Tano South District?
- 2 In what ways do regular classroom teachers' perceptions influence the teaching of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district?
- 3 What factors influence the perception of regular education teachers towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district?
- 4 What are teachers' perceived challenges in teaching of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study contributes immensely to educational policy development by providing insight into effective formulation and implementation of policies on inclusive education because, the insightful discovery of this study would provide vital information to the ministries, departments and agencies that are directly or indirectly responsible for educational policy formulation, implementation, evaluation and resource mobilization. This study however helps to find out regular classroom

Teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education and children with disabilities in inclusive schools within the Tano south district. This would also enable the school to find suitable means of including all children in the teaching and learning process. In addition, the results of the study would reveal how perceptions of regular teachers in the district influence their teaching of children with disabilities in inclusive schools. The findings would also enable the teachers to find ways of eliminating any inherent challenges which they face in teaching children with disabilities in inclusive schools.

Also, this study serves to create awareness among policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders of the specific challenges that teachers face in the inclusive classrooms in the aftermath of the implementation of inclusive education in Ghanaian schools. Also, it is expected that the findings and suggestions of this study are important in designing teacher preparation and development programmes. In this sense, it is expected that the findings address the teachers needs and concerns regarding the implementation and development of inclusive education in Ghanaian schools.

Furthermore, the outcome from this research serves important purposes. The study is useful to future researchers who might want to conduct further studies in this subject area. In other words, the study will be significant to academic literature on inclusive education in Ghana and the world at large. More importantly, the study provides empirical literature for a developing economy like Ghana.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The study is delimited to teachers in inclusive schools in Tano South District in the Ahafo Region of Ghana. Besides, the study focused on the perceptions of general education teachers towards inclusion and children with disabilities in inclusive schools in the Tano South District.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

The following section provides definitions of pertinent terms in relation to this study.

Perception: It refers to the way people think about something, a phenomenon, or an event, and their idea of what it is like.

Children with Special Educational Needs: These are children who, for various reasons, are not benefiting from regular schooling and, therefore, require special education services.

Disability: It refers to the loss or greatly reduced ability to perform a function or some functions due to damage or loss of body part or organ.

Impairment refers to any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function. It can affect various aspects of an individual's physical, cognitive, sensory, or emotional functioning.

Inclusion involves providing all students, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, with the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of school life. This includes access to quality education, supportive environments, and accommodations or modifications needed to meet individual needs.

Basic school covers the initial years of formal education, from kindergarten to primary and junior high schools.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study will be in five chapters. The first chapter covers the background of the research, problem statement, and the purpose of the study, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, delimitations of the study and the operational definition of terms. Literature related to the study is reviewed in chapter two. The review involves a theoretical framework and review of previous studies. The third chapter covers the design, methodology and procedures employed for the study.

The sample and the instrumentation is also captured in the third chapter. The chapter also explains the procedures adopted for gathering and analysing the data. The fourth chapter contains the raw data presentation, analysis and discussions of findings of the research and the final chapter discusses summary of the key findings of the study, recommendations as well as suggestions for future research.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

The chapter two presents the literature reviewed for the study. The review first covers the theoretical framework followed by a review on the key themes raised in the research questions. These are:

- 1 Theoretical framework
- 2 The concepts of inclusive education
- 3 Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education
- 4 Influence of teachers' perception towards inclusive education
- 5 The factors that influence teacher's perception towards inclusive education
- 6 The challenges teachers face in teaching children with disability in inclusive schools

2.1 Theoretical Approaches

There is a great amount of theoretical approaches concerning inclusive education. In this sense, many discussions and debates have taken place among the scholars, sociologists, psychologists and experts in the field of education about whether IE should be held in high regards or not, about the way it affects and is affected by students and other people involved in their education and about factors that hinder inclusive education. Cameron and Valentine (2001, cited in Hollins, 2011, p.10) point out that IE, being seen as a means of making it possible for all the children to gain knowledge and develop their capacities and their communication and social skills in inclusive school environments, seems to constitute a relatively complex issue for discourse, with the different views being sometimes complementary and other times in conflict with each other.

In this part of the study, the approaches that are in favour of IE are presented first, followed by those against it. Forlin (2003) claims that inclusion of students with SEN in regular classrooms, viewed from its social perspective, has a double positive impact on the disabled and the non-disabled children. The first benefit student is given is the opportunity to communicate, cooperate, support and interact with each other on a daily basis, and through this process they learn to accept the diversity, to use the differences as a means of gaining knowledge and to see all the people as equals (UNESCO, 2006, p.17). The second reason why children benefit from the inclusive classrooms has to do with their academic progress and cognitive development. This is facilitated by the existence of well-educated, competent teachers that are aware of the needs of children with disabilities and know how to address them successfully. This can be accomplished through the implementation of teaching practices and methods that are indicated as suitable for the type of the disability they have to deal with. Among them, the division of the children into small groups is considered as one of the most efficient methods for several types of SEN (Forlin, 2003). Shifting the attention to the teachers, Hollins (2011) asserts that IE helps them being more productive and competent in their job, because they always have to look for new ways of teaching and innovative techniques to meet children's special needs, apply them to the classroom, assess their efficiency and try new ones.

The above-mentioned perspectives are supported by Metts as well. He strongly advocates IE and recognizes the importance of it, by contending that the advantages of including disabled students in the primary school range from the social and personal to the economic ones. He mainly focuses on the economic benefits for the education sector, and supports his statement by saying it costs less money to the governments' inclusion in the already existing mainstream schools, when they are well-equipped

and ready to accommodate every student, than the establishment of several types of schools for the same reason (Martinez, 2003, cited in Hollins 2011, p.10). Malinen et al. Page (2013) sees the economic benefit from another point of view, this of the welfare of students with SEN in their adult life. It is stated by her that, by attending ordinary schools and by feeling that they are an integral part of the society, there is a high possibility for them to find a job, compared to their placement to special schools that leads to isolation and segregation.

In order for IE to have all these positive impacts and to succeed, it has to demonstrate some specific characteristics. The literature shows that the factors contributing the most to this result, as they are pointed by the scholars, are 3: qualified teachers, fruitful cooperation between teachers and other stakeholders engaged in the provision of education and last, but not least, the appropriate resources at schools" disposal. Teachers seem to be a fundamental factor for successful inclusion, because they hold a key position in education. They serve as mediators between the state, various stakeholders in education, the parents and, the policies and the legislation and the students, since they are responsible for implementing the policies in inclusive settings and sharing and promoting the principles of inclusion in the classroom (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). When the aim is the full inclusion, it is prerequisite for teachers to be competent, willing to work with disabled children and well-informed and aware of the crucial aspects of both IE and SEN.

Apart from teachers, other people that can have an impact on inclusion and students with SEN are children's family, the assistant teacher, the school principal or administrator, government officials, as well as counsellors and psychologists (Stubbs, 2008); for better results in Inclusive Education the continuous cooperation of all of

them is a matter of utmost importance. Martinez (2002) talks about collaboration, concerning policies and practices, at three levels: between school units and communities (micro-level), education systems and supportive agencies (meso-level) and national legislation and international policies (macro-level).

The last key component to successful implementation of the policies and legislation, which, in essence, is a result of fruitful cooperation among the stakeholders involved in education at all its levels, is the provision and efficient allocation of several material and human resources to schools. UNESCO gives examples of the fundamental supplies to assist the learning development of students with SEN and create more space for the improvement of their social skills. As such, the provision of special equipment and teaching materials and, also, the placement of additional personnel in key positions are considered as being of great importance (UNESCO, 2005, p.18). When all these prerequisites are present in an education system, inclusion of SEN students is characterized by success. Enhancement is witnessed in the quality of education and in disabled and non-disabled students' school performance. Moreover, in a broader context, societal integration is achieved through the process of changing perceptions and values of the society toward people with special needs (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2003, cited in Hollins 2011, p.10).

However, when the previously listed contributors do not function properly, they are converted into obstacles that prevent students with SEN from being part of the ordinary school. The exclusion of these children of the regular school is usually attributed to negative and discriminatory perceptions towards SEN being expressed in the society, to the absence of well-structured policies or clear legislation, which sometimes not even provide a specific definition for IE and SEN, to the bad implementation of them, to the

scarce funding and resources, to the non-inclusive teaching methods used by the regular teachers and to the centralized education systems that make it difficult for the local authorities to make decisions and allocate the resources according to the local needs (Graham & Spandagou, 2011).

Despite the fact that inclusion seems to be widely supported in the literature, it can be claimed that if the quality of the provided in special schools' education is higher than this in the mainstream schools, then placement of the children with some specific SEN in the former ones may give better results than the meaningless inclusion in the latter ones (UNESCO, 2005). In coherence with this viewpoint, many educators have declared their opposition to inclusion or, at least, full inclusion, by offering strong arguments against it. Speaking on the level of classroom, it is argued that, when full inclusion is pursued, it has to be taken into account that not all regular teachers are qualified or have received adequate training and, besides that, in many cases resources are missing. By this are negatively affected both the students with SEN, who do not have the opportunity to receive attention they need, and the non-disabled students, since the teaching-learning process is always disrupted from the existence of the former ones in the classroom (Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2001). In this way, all the students end up experiencing low academic performance and slow progress in their cognitive development. Tornillo continues by asserting that the smaller the range of abilities inside a classroom is, the easier is for the teacher is to accommodate everyone's needs and help all the children to maximize their capacities.

Anthony (2011) points out that the uneven division of teacher's attention into the students is likely to annoy the nondisabled children and, thereby, can cause violent behaviour and conflicts among the students.

.In addition, shifting the attention to cost - effectiveness, he believes that the motive behind the promotion of the concept of IE in many countries is government's intention to save money and allocate it elsewhere, while schools are struggling to educate all the children to fit all environment (Ross-Hill, 2009; Ryan, 2009).

On the whole, it is obvious that the complex issue of IE for children with SEN, as controversial, is strongly debated in the literature. On the one hand, the advocates of inclusion emphasize on the advantages of learning together for the students, setting as priority the development of children with SEN social capacity, the creation of the feeling of belonging and the forging of strong bonds among the students, as well as the building of well-rounded personalities, and, afterwards, focusing on the development of students learning capabilities through the active engagement and interaction. On the other hand, there are also educators that raise concerns about the conceptualization and the implementation of inclusive education, basing their perspectives to the negative impact inclusion can have on the learning progress of the children.

2.1.1 Theory of social inclusion/exclusion

Inclusive education seems to possess points stronger than the education provided in special schools, since the first one, if well-performed, can eliminate social exclusion of the people with SEN. This stems from the widely accepted notion that education is a miniature of the society within which it operates and, as such, inclusive education is the basis for the building of inclusive society, while an education that segregates students and places them in special schools separately from their peers leads to the marginalization of these people, their labelling as the others and their subsequent exclusion from the civic society of the 21st century. Social inclusion is characterized

by equality among the people and incorporation of their diverse elements by respecting their individual characteristics. Contrary to that, social exclusion derives from the treatment of some groups of people as aliens, something that has as a result their institutionalization and marginalization (Harvey & Kamvounias, (2008).

Most of the times, inclusion is not clearly defined, because it is considered as the ethical good. However, numerous sociologists have explained social exclusion in many ways and, thereby, more aspects of inclusion can be illustrated. Odongo and Davidson, (2016) states that, when exclusion occurs, the others or strangers and in this case the disabled people, who are seemingly involved in the social activities, are assumed as being close and at the same time far for the rest of the people . Since the strangers have been spending their whole life living in this specific social context, they are eventually an integrated part of it but, in essence, it has not been to them the feeling of belonging because they are seen as different; they struggle with their incomplete inclusion/incomplete exclusion (Hollins, 2011). O'Connor (2007, p.7) analyses exclusion from a postmodern perspective and claims that giving social identities to people, based on their ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, is a way to put them into groups and suppress their voice.

To combat exclusion, it is of the essence to recognize, accept and welcome the differences among the several groups of people living in the same society, and this can be achieved with interaction on a daily basis that brings individuals closer and actively involves them on the getting to know each other process. Other sociologists, like Arbuckle and Williams, (2003) assert that social exclusion entails deprivation of access to material goods, while Allen (2005) expand Cass's ascertainment to include also obstruction of their access to health facilities and education

It is evident in this last statement that social exclusion has the power to prevent people with SEN from participating to education or to quality education provided in inclusive environment. On the other way around, education, if successfully moved from the concept of segregation and/or simple integration towards inclusion, can have the capacity to change the mentality about people with SEN inside and out of the education sector and, as a long-term goal, to create a society that will be inclusive from all aspects.

2.1.2 Self efficacy theory

Bandura's self-efficacy theory originates from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). The theory evolved when Bandura became aware that there was a missing element in social learning theory. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy beliefs are fundamental to human functioning. Babbie (2010) posits that a person must possess the necessary knowledge and skills, as well as the motivation and perception, required for successful exhibition of the required behaviour under difficult circumstances. Bandura (1977), theorized that perceived self-efficacy makes a difference in how people think, feel, and behave. His theory states that people faced with constant rejection must possess high self-efficacy, or self-worth, in order to persist. His theory further states that self-efficacy is based on one's judgment of one's capacity to execute on a given responsibility (Brady & Woolfson, 2008). It is important to note that people's beliefs in their efficacy can have diverse effects. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) argues that these beliefs influence the courses of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavours, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their resilience to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding.

Educational research has examined the truth in the correlation where one's efficacy beliefs dictate performance and performance determines outcome (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. These beliefs affect behaviours and ultimately performance outcomes (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) described four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective responses. Bandura (1982) maintained that mastery experiences (performance accomplishments) are the most effective way to develop a strong sense of efficacy. Successful performances serve as positive examples that may shape perceptions about future capability to perform the same or a similar task again (Bandura, 1977). This positive shaping of perceptions is what Bandura considered improving self-efficacy. On the other hand, failing at a task can weaken self-efficacy by serving as a negative past performance that may negatively shape perceptions about capability (Bandura, 1977).

Another way to develop self-efficacy is through vicarious experiences, which are generated through social models (Bandura, 1977). Bandura and Barab (1973) noted that observing others perform intimidating responses without adverse consequences can reduce fears and inhibitions, thus motivating action. As a result, people who observe others performing intimidating responses without adverse consequences are more apt to believe their attempts at the same action would be successful. A third way to develop self-efficacy is through verbal persuasion, commonly used to influence behaviour because it is easy to use and readily accessible (Bandura, 1977). Through other people's suggestions, people are prompted to believe that they have the capability to accomplish a task that they previously felt ill-equipped to accomplish (Bandura, 1977). However,

verbal persuasion alone will not prompt effective performance; people also must receive the appropriate tools needed to perform a given task (Bandura, 1977).

The last way to develop self-efficacy is through physiological and affective states. Bandura (1997) suggested that one's physical and mental states can impact one's perception about performance, thus affecting self-efficacy and ultimately performance outcomes. Emotional arousal to stressful situations may promote fear and anxiety, which negatively influences performance (Bandura, 1977). In a reciprocal manner, those negative performance outcomes affect a person's physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1977). In addition to the four sources of self-efficacy Bandura also distinguished between efficacy expectation and outcome expectation. An outcome expectation is a person's estimate that a given behaviour will lead to certain outcomes. An efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcomes (Bandura, 1977). Thus, a person can believe that a certain behaviour will have a certain outcome, but if the person seriously doubts his or her ability to be successful performing the activity, outcome expectancy will not influence his or her behaviour (Bandura, 1977). This is particularly applicable to verbal persuasion, which will not be successful in influencing behaviour unless a person's efficacy expectations match his or her outcome expectations.

Tait and Purdie (2000) notes that Bandura's self-efficacy theory is one of the few conceptualizations of human control that describe a distinction between competence and contingency. These theoretical connections between one's perception of teacher efficacy and one's organizational commitment are relevant in investigating the problem of practice since they highlight a cognitive link in dissatisfaction-quit sequence (Jerlinder, Danermark & Gill, 2010). Because a teacher's affective reaction to work and

subsequent feelings of commitment are major theme in attrition (Heiman, 200), and the dissatisfaction-quit sequence (Hemmings & Woodcock, 2010), developing practical insight into the thought process preceding actions, such as lack of commitment, can support the development of effective teacher commitment. Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainment (Bandura, 1997).

Once people develop a perception of a given situation, their expectation of that situation is processed into a given behaviour that leads to an outcome. Bandura (1997) continues to note that an outcome expectation is defined as one's estimate that a given action will lead to a desired outcome. This means that how a person feels about a circumstance will determine not only the behaviour, but also the outcome, once a person evaluates what kind of outcome to expect. One's perceived self-efficacy and the subsequent expectations about a given situation determine how much effort to put forth and how long to persist in challenging situations.

Bandura (1982) further argues that one's perceived self-efficacy, or one's sense of control of an environment and behaviour, will determine the amount of effort, if any, to put forth and how long to persist through challenges and negative experiences. The reason why Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy was relevant for this study was on the main assumption that people's beliefs in their efficacy have varied effects on behaviour such as commitment. A person's efficacy beliefs influence their course of action, efforts toward a given goal, how long they will persevere through adverse situations, levels of stress and depression in coping with some external demands, and the level of success they are able to attain.

2.1.3 Tolerance theory

Tolerance theory posts that, teachers can match their instruction to a limited variety of learning characteristics. Since teachers cannot optimally address the needs of all students at any given time, it is essential to align the teaching methods to the learning needs for effective assessment. Tolerance theory posits that, teachers can match their instruction to a limited variety of learning characteristics. Since teachers cannot optimally address the needs of all students at any given time, it is essential to align the teaching methods to the learning needs for effective assessment within a teacher's instructional tolerance. In a typical classroom, some students will invariably fall outside of teacher tolerance (Cook et al., 2000). Students who fall outside of instructional tolerance respond relatively poorly to teachers' instruction, which is likely to influence teachers' perceptions. By virtue of their referral and identification for special services, it appears logical to assume that students with learning needs are at the limits or outside of the instructional tolerance of most teachers.

Including students with severe and obvious learning needs may, therefore, be accepted because of, rather than despite, their obvious differences. Alternatively, students with mild or hidden learning needs do not exhibit obvious signs of their educational needs and are therefore expected to attain modal performance and behavioural standards. Thus, when students with mild learning needs engage in atypical behaviour, they are frequently rejected for violating the modal, or non-adjusted, expectations other group members hold for them. It is paradoxical, then, that students with mild learning needs may be rejected precisely because they are perceived to be just like everyone else. The model of differential expectations is examined in regard to teachers for the first time in the present investigation and, in combination with tenets of tolerance theory, is used to generate predictions regarding teachers' perceptions toward including students with

hidden and obvious learning needs. It is posited that inclusive teachers nominate a higher proportion of their students with obvious learning needs in the attachment category in comparison to their included students with hidden learning needs. Teachers are likely to hold perceptions of attachment toward students with obvious learning needs because of the protected group roles they fulfill in virtue of the overt nature of their learning needs (Cook et al., 2000).

Moreover, even though students with obvious learning needs are likely to fall well beyond teachers' tolerance boundaries, their performance is likely to accord with teachers' adjusted expectations and therefore will not prohibit attachment. Finally, because teachers, as well as classmates, are theorized to hold differentiated expectations toward included students with obvious learning needs, it is predicted that inclusive teachers reject their included students with hidden learning needs significantly more often than their included students with obvious learning needs. In contrast to included students with hidden learning needs, poor response to modal instruction and anomalous behaviour (i.e. falling outside of teachers' instructional tolerance) is expected and does not engender rejection for included students with obvious learning needs (Cook et al., 2000).

2.2 The Concepts of Inclusive Education

Inclusion is the provision of services to children with disabilities including those with severe impairments in the neighbourhood school in age appropriate general education class with the necessary support services and supplementary aids to ensure child's success- academic, behavioural and social, and to prepare the child to participate as a full and contributing member of the society (Martinez, 2003). Inclusive education is used to describe educational policies that uphold the rights of students with disabilities to belong within mainstream education (Guo et al., 2007). Lewis and Doorlag (1995), on other

hand, postulate that inclusion is sometimes used to describe the mainstream process, and they highlight that the advocates of full inclusion maintain that the general education classroom is the most appropriate fulltime placement for all students with disabilities including those with severe disabilities. They further postulate that support, in this model, is provided within regular classroom setting.

They are also aware that other special education professionals do not concur with the assumption that full-time inclusion is the appropriate placement for students with disabilities. Their strong contention is that professionals who are opposed to full-time inclusion advocate those other options, like resource rooms, should be available so that educational programmes could be tailored down to the specific needs of individual students. Inclusion, in their view, tend to be biased towards students with disabilities that negatively affect their school performance and they are of the view that that the concept should be expanded to include other groups whose learning needs are more important in such a way that they warrant special consideration. In their illustration, for instance, they included gifted and talented students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and students at risk for school failure that have special needs that could be accommodated within the regular classroom. They are also of the opinion that special students differ, some may learn faster and easily while others may learn with difficulty. Another important issue they highlight is that students' behaviour may be beyond reproach and frequently inappropriate, while others may have problems stemming from their speech, language or culture.

Among all the factors that account for the growth and development of education is significantly and indisputably the teacher factor. Hence, no country can afford to neglect the education and training of teachers. The quality and standard of education

provided will primarily depend on the quality of teachers. In Ghana, teacher training in respect to inclusive teaching has not received the recognition and importance that it deserves. The existing patterns and programmes of teacher training follow the traditional teacher education with emphasis on teaching general education students and little regard for inclusive pedagogy. Lindsay et al. (2014) espoused that quality teacher training should be available before and during the implementation of an inclusive programme.

This training should be grounded in sound inclusive pedagogy. Education of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in inclusive settings is an emerging venture involving several challenges. The range and complexity of changes taking place in the field of special education implies that there should be a transformation of teacher training curricular to include materials and methods that are relevant to meet the challenges of inclusive education. Teachers' knowledge, emotions and skills about inclusive education are particularly important in the successful implementation of the inclusive education programme. Over the past decades, inclusive education approaches have been proposed and accepted for the education of children with SEN.

The move towards inclusive education has been promoted as a reaction to segregated schooling, against children with special needs (UNESCO 1994). The argument for inclusive education is that it largely hinged on human rights as well as social issues. Inclusive education more generally, has dominated public policy and social discourse and this is an attempt to make education more meaningful and accessible to children with SEN, who otherwise, would not benefit from the regular school programme. Inclusive education can therefore be conceptualised as good education for everyone and the best way to educate children with SEN (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Botts & Owusu, 2013).

The concept of inclusive educational programming is based on the premise that children of exceptional abilities and backgrounds benefit both academically and socially in a learning environment where they are served alongside normally achieving learners as opposed to being segregated from them (Lewis & Doorlag, 1995). In this regard they defined the full inclusion programme as a model of service delivery characterized by six criteria: All students attend schools to which they would go if they had no disability; A natural proportion of learners with disabilities occurs at each school site; A zero rejection philosophy exists so that typically no student would be excluded on the basis of type and extent of disability; School and general education placement are age and grade appropriate with no self-contained special education classes operative at school site; Cooperative learning and peer instructional methods receive significant use in general instructional practice; Special education supports are provided within the context of the general education class.

Inclusive education is about educating all children so that they reach their potential. Although the physical location of students in schools and classrooms is not about where children sit as much as about how adults and classmates welcome all children to access learning and recognize that the diversity of learners in today's schools dictates that no single approach is appropriate for all. Inclusive education is based on the principle that school should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional linguistic and other conditions (Harlen, 2005).

To guide the practice of inclusive education in Ghana, the Government developed a policy to guide its operation (Ministry of Education, 2015). Another initiative taken by the Government of Ghana was to pass a disability law (Act 715), which made provisions for inclusive education (Republic of Ghana, 2006). Notwithstanding this, the Special

Education Division of the Ghana Education Service (GES) also developed a policy on special education in 2005 based on the key policy objectives of the Education Strategic Plan - 2003 (Ministry of Education, 2012). The special education policy seeks to address the challenges of marginalisation, segregation, and inequality that have constituted barriers to inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream activities.

The follow up to these initiatives by the education authorities was the initial national support programmes including series of workshops for teachers, supervisors including the blind instructors as well as courses in sign language (Deku & Mensah 2004). The Ministry of Education also adopted a „trainer-the-trainer approach“ whereby teachers who received the initial training were required to train other teachers in inclusive education approaches. A resource team of eight resource teachers was set up to provide subsequent training for resource teachers appointed and new teachers in the districts where the initial inclusive programme began. Again, more resource teachers were employed and posted to the district education offices. For example, in 1999, there were only 65 resource teachers, in 2000 the number increased by 12.3% and in 2001, the Ghana Education service recorded 40% increase (Deku & Mensah 2004). It is noteworthy that a number of UNESCO Resource Pack for teachers on inclusive education was printed and distributed to teachers in four regions. This set the stage for the implementation of the pilot schools in 2003.

From the initial 35 inclusive schools in 10 districts that began on a pilot basis, by the close of 2011 the number of pilot inclusive schools in the country increased to 529 in 34 districts (Ministry of Education, 2015). Since 2012, UNICEF in collaboration with The Ministry of Education implemented inclusive education in 14 additional districts.

All the 2,493 schools in these districts are practicing inclusive education. As a result of this, currently there are 3,022 inclusive schools in 48 out of the 216 districts in Ghana. In Ghana, five types of inclusive programmes exist. These are:

- 1 Units for children with intellectual disability within regular education complexes.
- 2 Integrated educational programme for children with low vision.
- 3 Hostel support, units for the blind in schools for the deaf
- 4 Inclusive schools with special resource teacher support and
- 5 Inclusive schools without resource teacher support.

Based on a quality perspective, Forlin and Chambers (2011) described inclusion as a more accurate way of describing the quality of education offered to students with special needs within an integrated setting. He argued that to be regarded as fully included, learners with special needs should take a full and active part in the life of the mainstream school and they need to be valued as members of the community and be perceived as internal part the school. The frame of equality, according to Elliot (2008), is about a genuine commitment to inclusion which includes among other things, changing culture of the institution to make it more responsive to differences, receptive to change and sensitive to language imagery and the presentation of ideas.

She further asserts that inclusion is about creating culture which welcomes supports and nurtures diverse needs as well as accepting people as they are, not expecting them to struggle to be normal. This view agrees with that of Leyser and Kirk (2004) who believe that education is inclusive if schooling is organized in such a way that all learners can be educated together even when they are different.

Research suggests that, given the necessary legislation and resources, teachers play a pivotal role in the effective implementation of inclusion (Botts & Owusu 2013; de Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2011). It is therefore important to study teachers' views on inclusive schools. Daane, Beine-Smith and Latham (2008), in support of this idea, claimed that „clear distinctions between comprehensive and coherent inclusive practices and partial fragmented efforts must be made. According to these authors, many initiatives that are implemented under the guise of inclusion are based on “faulty conceptions of ability and disability and outmoded special education practices.” (p. 31). From this perspective, it is imperative to make a critical appraisal of the inclusive programme in Ghana.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) opined that teacher's perceptions are important to successful implementations of inclusive education. Furthermore, Cross, Traub, Hutter-Ametepee & Anastasiou (2015) pointed out that one of the important conditions needed for successful inclusion of children with SEN is the positive perspective of school staff members who work with these children. On the other hand, the negative perspective of these professionals could be the main factor that impedes the process of inclusion of children with SEN in the regular classrooms.

Many studies have been done on inclusion. Reviews of these studies have highlighted child outcomes, classroom practice variables, teachers and family belief systems, social and educational policy implications (Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Baffoe, 2013; Yan & Sin, 2014). Similarly, much of the professional literature on inclusion has focused on the importance of the beliefs and perceptions of both special and regular education teachers (Ainscow, 2020; Odongo, & Davidson, 2016) and on recommended practices that are seen as essential to making inclusion

work (Forlin, 1995). The elements of teacher preparation, the curriculum and the physical environments therefore have the potential to impact significantly on the implementation of the inclusive education programme in Ghana. Although these studies stressed the importance of investigating teachers' perceptions, few studies have explored teachers' perspectives on the curriculum, the physical environment and teacher preparation in Ghana. In recent years, it appears that the desire to measure and improve the quality of inclusive education practices has been impeded by the need to provide a common understanding of what is meant by inclusive education. Although the practice of inclusive education is known to be broad, it however depends on the perspective of the individual (Engelbrecht & Savolainen, 2014).

Inclusive education is an educational reform program, and not an advocacy of good school/classroom practice. The eventual purpose of the reform is supposed to be the reorganization and restructuring of educational system (Acedo, Ferrer & Pamies, 2009). The authors also point out the need to see the interconnection between inclusive education and the wider variety of issues such as social and economic goal of education. Deku & Mensah (2004) sees inclusive education as primarily political. Based on Terzi's argument, the political dimension of inclusive education arises from two major points, namely: from its determination to avoid exclusionary policies and practices; and from its political convergence with the social model of disability and the political struggle and movement of people with disabilities. She also asserts that inclusive education could be political because it tries to take care of all citizens in a participatory democracy.

Inclusive education is considered as a means to an end (Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011). For them, it is the fundamental instrument which contributes to the realization of an inclusive society. The demand of inclusion is essentially the issue of human right,

equity, social justice, and the fight for non-segregating society. That is why these values and notions are the hubs of inclusive educational policy and practice. There have been also endeavours in framing the meaning of inclusive education in terms of the developed world and the developing world. One such attempt is meaning given by Harlen (2005). According to these authors, the idea of inclusive education in the developed world was an immediate challenge to the customary view and role of special education. The initiative is said to be pushed substantially by the movement of people with disability in the UK, USA, and other parts of Europe.

Several researchers have suggested that the concept of inclusive education is more involved than providing education for all children within the classroom, and is related to the much larger concept of social inclusion and valued status for all people in society irrespective of differences or disability (Forlin et al., 2009; Forlin, 2003; Guo et al., 2007; Harlen, 2005). It has also been suggested that an inclusive approach to education is beneficial for all children, and the rewards of an inclusive environment are not limited to children with special education needs (Ellins & Porter, 2005). This then points to the fact that with inclusion, all teachers in schools will be involved hence knowing their perceptions towards inclusive education will be important hence the relevance of this study.

Inclusion has academic and social benefits for both students with and without disabilities and their teachers and families as well (Elliot, 2008; Graham & Spandagou, 2011). This entails increased communication and social interaction opportunities, age-appropriate models of behaviour skills, more active participation in the life of school community, individualized education goals as well as access to the rich core curriculum. Forlin & Chambers, 2011) continue to note that inclusive model

of education requires the establishment of a collaborative ethic as well as shared ownership of all students. They maintain that through collaborative team effort, specialized support can follow learners to general education classrooms and allow all learners to develop and learn. For them such kind of support may include assistance from a specialist to adapt activities from the core curriculum to meet the individual needs of the diverse learners in the general education classroom.

Inclusion therefore, should be regarded as a shared responsibility for both generalist and specialist teachers in providing a full continuum of services delivery options to all students with special educational needs within the school context as well as responding to diversity and being open to new ideas, empowering all members of community and celebrating differences in a dignified way (Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Kauffman et al., 2016). Lindsay (2003) identified four factors that are embodying inclusive education. These factors are: Nondiscriminatory education in terms of disability, culture and gender; Involvement of all students in a community with no expectations; Equal rights for students to access culturally valued curriculum as full-time members of age-appropriate regular classroom; Emphasis on diversity rather than assimilation.

The origin of inclusive education can be traced back as far as 1960s when the struggle for civil rights and equity for emancipation was taking place in several countries of the world. The early attempts for inclusion and inclusive education are believed to have originated in diverse groups who have diverse practices and diverse understandings (Elliot, 2008). The collective effort in critiquing the then existing and emerging issues of education is believed to have helped in shaping the conception of inclusion and inclusive education. According to Botts & Owusu (2013) the critique is said to be noticeable in contexts where mainstreaming and integration were already recognized.

The North America, England, Australia, and New Zealand were some of those contexts mentioned. In the process of the critique, teachers, parents, and advocates of students with disabilities are said to have begun questioning the barriers to access and participation. The explicit international developments including the Jomtien declaration, 1990; the Salamanca Statement, 1994; and the Dakar framework, 2000 are indicators of the effort that was growing across the globe in developing the notions of inclusive education.

2.3 Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education

Global views pertaining to the provision of education for children with disabilities have been shaped over the years by local and international legislation and national policies. Abe and Adu (2013) indicated that although one-third of the participants agreed that there is lack of support and resources for teachers, about 42% believed that inclusive education would not succeed in the Bethlehem school district. Ainscow & Sandill (2010) found that resistance among teachers to accept students with disabilities in their classrooms was high. Ainscow & Sandill revealed that due to the absence of necessary components, inclusion will remain an unachievable idea.

The display of negative tendencies toward children with special needs integrated in general education classrooms have encouraged researchers to examine the reasons spurring the negativity (Ainscow & Sandill 2010). Ainscow and Sandill (2010) concluded that when every member in the school environment (teachers, students and parents) are involved in school activities, the value and acceptance of diversity in the school culture increases. Several other countries (i.e., Jordan, South Africa, and Kenya) have taken steps to include children with disabilities in the mainstream educational programme (Malinen et al., 2013; Odongo & Davidson, 2016). Although inclusive education in Sierra Leone

has not gained similar momentum as in Western and other African countries, one component that can foster a more effective implementation of inclusion in Sierra Leone is understanding the perceptions of the teachers who have the responsibility to provide instruction in inclusive environments. Teacher's views and perceptions relating to inclusion are just as important as material and policy support in implementing inclusion successfully (Butakor, Ampadu, & Suleiman, 2020).

A teacher will show a high level of commitment to his or her beliefs and values about students in a classroom. Odongo and Davidson (2016) posited that educators in any country are the driving force behind inclusive education. Lindsay et al. (2014) maintained that the voices and opinions of teachers are critical on issues regarding inclusion because teachers are vital to the implementation in their classrooms. The successful implementation of inclusion depends on teachers' beliefs and perceptions.

Perceptions toward students with disabilities play a part in their assimilation in regular classrooms. Just as positive teachers' perceptions foster an easier integration of students with disabilities, the same is true for the perceptions of regularly abled students (Sharma & Jacobs, 2016).

When students in the general education body demonstrate positive perceptions towards students with disabilities, it creates a positive and welcoming environment for all (De Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015). An unfriendly and negative perception from teachers or nondisabled students towards those with disabilities can create a destructive environment resulting in further problems (Baffoe, 2013) With classroom educators bearing the primary responsibility for the accommodation of students with special needs, information on their perceptions would be invaluable in designing professional

development programs for them to support inclusionary practices and in implementing officially mandated inclusive strategies. Teachers who have had multiple special education trainings have been shown to demonstrate mainly positive perceptions towards inclusion (Sharma & Jacobs, 2016).

Baffoe (2013) noted that although majority of scholars claim that teachers are generally positive regarding inclusion of students with disabilities, there are other researchers who have taken positions against inclusion. Yan and Sin (2014) maintained that teachers view the concept of inclusion, favourably, which is supported by the analysis Flick (2014). Nevertheless, Baffoe (2013) found that teachers do tend to have negative perceptions towards inclusion. Although teachers would want to see fairness and equitable distribution of education, teachers still view children with disabilities as different, and not well prepared to teach them.

2.3.1 Cultural perception towards disability

Many scholars have examined teachers' views on children with disabilities (Ametepee & Anastasiou (2015). World Bank (2020) pointed to societal perceptions as a factor hampering the education of children with disabilities in the country. Ametepee and Anastasiou (2015) maintained that the traditional or cultural beliefs of a community are one of the many variables that affect the opportunities available to students with special needs. It is critical to understand how the perceptions of teachers toward inclusion influence their behaviours in the classroom (Baffoe, 2013). Prejudices and stereotypical behaviour towards this community continue to be endemic in the society (UNICEF, 2020). UNICEF (2020 confirmed that in developing countries like Sierra Leone, disability is perceived as the work of evil forces. In Sierra Leone, UNICEF (2020)

showed that stigmatization of and discrimination toward children with disabilities continue to be an issue in the country.

The UNICEF (2020) found that different perceptions about children with disabilities existed in different cultural enclaves within African society. They also maintained that negative perceptions toward students with disabilities stem from stereotypical perceptions and not factual evidence. Baffoe (2013) found that the marginalization of children with disabilities reflected prejudice in the society. Braunsteiner and Yan and Sin (2014) maintained that exclusion of children with disabilities from mainstream education stifles students' maximum potential to excel at school.

Ametepee and Anastasiou (2015) noted that some African communities marginalized children with disabilities and their parents. The challenges for children with disabilities within Sierra Leone and West Africa continue to pose a threat to a just life for children with disabilities (Botts & Owusu, 2013). In Senegal, Kuyini et al. (2014) observed that stereotyping children with disabilities does not end with the family but is also a common practice in the society. As a result, this negative communal stigma regarding the ability and performance of children with disabilities has impeded access to increased social acceptance and positive self-esteem. In Senegal, parents are afraid for the general wellbeing of their children and are left with little option but to keep them away from public schools and other gatherings (Kuyini et al., 2014). Agbenyega (2007) also found that some parents prefer to keep their abled children at home to beg for the family's living instead of allowing them to sit in the same class as children with disabilities.

Cultural beliefs of non-acceptance of children with disabilities in Sierra Leone continue to shape the society's perceptions about children with disabilities. According to Article 4 of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the responsibilities of signatories, includes promoting and guaranteeing that the human rights of all persons with disabilities, are respected without any form of discrimination or prejudice (United Nations, 2016). Disabilities within the African culture are seen as the result of a curse (Baffoe, 2013). The UN (2016) noted that acts of negativity against children with disabilities were the norm rather than the exception. Such negative cultural perceptions were at variance with the parameters set for inclusive educational reforms in some of these communities. Engelbrecht & Savolainen (2014) added that when a society is unwilling to break with age-old cultural values, expectations, and interpretations, the idea of implementing inclusive education with fidelity would be difficult to achieve. In contrast, the World Bank (2020) reported indicated that the world has seen some changes over the last decade, particular from those who have worked with children with disabilities in their classrooms.

2.4 The influence of Teachers' attitudes towards the Teaching of Children with Disability in Inclusive Schools

The Salamanca Statement highlights the need to provide education for all children in an inclusive school (UNESCO, 1994). As a result, the implementation of inclusive schools has been a goal in many countries (Leyser & Kirk, 2004). Inclusion is based on the concept of social justice; wherein all students are entitled to equal access to all educational opportunities, irrespective of disability or any form of disadvantage (UNESCO, 2006). In Australia, the Commonwealth and State educational governments advocate for the inclusion of children with disabilities within regular classrooms (UNESCO, 1994). Nevertheless,

advocacy alone does not ensure that the policy is favourably accepted by those on the frontline of implementation, namely, classroom teachers. UNESCO reported about studies that concluded that teacher perceptions and expectations are significant barriers to the successful implementation of inclusive classrooms (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002) and equitable participation of all students.

Perceptions are conceptualised as relatively stable constructs comprising cognitive, affective, and behavioural components (Lindsay et al., 2014). Teachers' perceptions towards inclusion are often based on practical concerns about how inclusive education can be implemented, rather than be grounded in any particular ideology (Morley, Bailey & Tan, 2005). Common practical concerns raised by teachers include: accommodating the individualised time demands of students with disability without disadvantaging other students in the classroom; being apprehensive of the quality and quantity of work output of children with disabilities; lacking adequate support services; and limited training and competence in supporting inclusive educational practice (Janney et al., 1995).

The severity of the disability that teachers are required to accommodate within their classroom is inversely associated with their perception towards inclusion. That is, the more severe the child's disability; the less positive their perception is towards inclusion (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). The type of disability also appears to influence teachers' perceptions. For example, teachers were found to generally be more supportive of including children with physical and sensory disabilities than those with intellectual, learning, and behavioural disabilities (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Elliot, 2008).

Teacher education is viewed to be pivotal in developing the affirmative perceptions and skills required for successful inclusion, with formal educational training being identified as one of the main factors that promote an inclusive perception (Janney et al., 1995). Similar findings have been found with trainee teachers Westwood and Graham (2003) where the inclusion of a compulsory module on diversity in a postgraduate degree promoted having an inclusive perception. Pedagogies that combine formal training and planned hands-on experience with people with disabilities have been shown to improve preparedness and positive perceptions towards inclusion. Moreover, irrespective of degree type, trainee teachers had a better understanding of the potential of children with disabilities after completing a unit of study with a strong focus on inclusive education (Woodcock, 2013).

However, some authors argue that improving knowledge of and confidence in inclusive education alone is insufficient in improving a positive perception towards inclusion and reducing related anxiety. They highlight the finding that there is a gradual decline of positive perceptions towards inclusion in trainee teachers as they advance in their training years (Woodcock, 2013). Perhaps an increased awareness of the challenges one is likely to face by including all students with disabilities might dampen teachers' openness towards being inclusive (Weston, 2004).

The influence of age, gender and role on having an inclusive perception is largely mixed. Some studies reported no significant effect of teachers' age on having an inclusive perception (Westwood & Graham, 2003)). While others suggest training in inclusive practices significantly improves the perceptions of younger trainee teachers, but not older ones (Forlin et al., 2009). Female teacher trainees

are reported to be more tolerant in implementing inclusive education. (Avramidis, & Norwich, 2002) while other studies reported no effect of gender (Alghazo Dodeen & Algaryouti, 2003; Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2000). Following training, teachers with less experience have been shown to have a more positive perception towards inclusion when compared with their more experienced counterparts" education (Campbell et al,2003), while other studies reported no effect of gender (Alghazo, Dodeen & Algaryouti, 2003; Van Reusen et al., 2000). Following training, teachers with less experience have been shown to have a more positive perception towards inclusion when compared with their more experienced counterparts (Campbell & Collins, 2007).

Conversely, some studies found that teachers who have been exposed to people with disabilities (i.e., friend or family member) were found to be more open to inclusion (Campbell, Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2003) whereas other studies do not report any influence of prior exposure to disability (Alghazo, Dodeen & Algaryouti, 2003). A recent cross-cultural study on trainee teachers" perceptions toward multiple aspects of diversity found that overall perceptions toward people who differed from them were predominantly acceptance regarding disability, gender and special talents; with over 80% of the participating trainee teachers upholding a positive perception (Baffoe, 2013).

In recent years, there has been growing interest in studying the pragmatic side of implementing inclusive education by measuring teachers" sense of self-efficacy of implementing inclusive education (Sharma, Loreman & Forlin, 2012). Self-efficacy in teaching is the belief that one's teaching can influence how well all students learn, including those who are unmotivated or demanding. Sharma and colleagues observed that the importance of self-efficacy emerges from its cyclic nature, whereby proficiency in performance

creates a new mastery experience which, in turn, influences self-efficacy beliefs. Empirical findings validate the associations between high self-efficacy in teachers and openness to implement varied instructional strategies for students of all ability levels, including those with learning difficulties (Ross-Hill, 2009), and more positive perceptions toward inclusive education (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). Conversely, teachers with low self-efficacy in their teaching are more likely to see difficulties in learning to be attributable to the child (i.e., internal to the child) and less willing to adapt their teaching methods to suit the needs of students with learning difficulties (Ryan, 2009). Teachers with a higher efficacy attribute students' difficulties more to external factors than those with a lower efficacy, suggesting that teachers who feel more competent are more comfortable in accepting some responsibility for students' difficulties (Hemmings, & Woodcock, 2011). Emerging evidence suggests that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are a better predictor of the attributes they uphold regarding inclusive education than their role (i.e., whether a teacher works in a university special education setting, a mainstream setting, or a learning support setting). Inclusion of students with and without disabilities requires changes in classroom infrastructure, the teaching methodologies, the perception of teachers and instructional materials since the classroom contains mixed students with different disabilities, teachers will therefore need some in order to handle the classroom diversity.

Heiman (2002) noted that, despite the apparent benefits of inclusion, and regardless of teachers' commitment and positive perception, and notwithstanding their having the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the educational needs of diverse students with disabilities, teachers were concerned about the academic, social, and behavioural adjustment of the students with disabilities in inclusive classroom. Osion (2003) studied special and general education teachers' perception toward inclusion using survey as the

research design. The researcher sampled 65 teachers and administered close-ended and open-ended questionnaires for the respondents to show their level of agreement. The researcher observed that the general education teachers lacked training and in-services for successful inclusion of students with disabilities in the general classroom.

The 27.2% of the teachers surveyed indicated they agreed that general education teachers and other staff were provided with the training and in-services needed in order to feel competent to teach students with disabilities. The 72.8% of the teachers indicated that they lacked appropriate training to handle students with disabilities. It must be noted that, Olson's study is similar to this one where the researcher also used survey as the research design, and questionnaires as the instrument for the survey. A study by Layser and Tappendorf (2001) reported that teachers needed various activities included in in-services or pre-services such as simulations, discussions, panel presentation, and relevant information about disabilities. Other teachers stressed their concern that, as more students were included, teachers would need additional tools and skills for coping with the social and emotional problems that accompany inclusive schooling (Idol, 1997). This is because of the changes that inclusion demands in general education classrooms.

Some researchers have attributed teachers' negative responses toward inclusion to the teachers' lack of positive experience with well-designed inclusive programs (Elliot, 2008; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002; Vaughn et al., 1996) inclusion will therefore require training of general education teachers to manage the classrooms that contain students with and without disabilities. McLeskey et al. (2001) further compared the perspectives of teachers, who were not working at the time

of the investigation, were not working in inclusive settings with those who were working with well-designed inclusive programs. The results indicated that teachers in well-designed inclusive programs had significantly more positive perspectives and understanding toward inclusion compared to teachers who lacked this experience. Center and Ward (1997) indicated that teachers who were anxious about including student with disabilities in their general education classroom exhibited lack of confidence in their instructional skills and the quality of support services available at the classroom and school levels.

Center and Ward (1997) indicated that teachers who were anxious about including student with disabilities in their general education classroom exhibited lack of confidence in their instructional skills and the quality of support services available at the classroom and school levels. Similarly, Scruggs and Mactropieri (1996) reported that teachers believed that sufficient resources were not available to support inclusion efforts, although more teachers agreed they were provided physical support than human support. Because positive perception and understanding towards inclusion among teachers appear to be a necessary factor for successful inclusion, teacher education should invest in teacher preparation activities that can help teachers to teach students with disabilities in inclusion settings (Bullough, 1995; Hutchison & Martin, 1999).

These programmes have adopted many reforms to impact positively the perception, understanding and the instructional skills of the future teachers. The majority of these programs have examined the impact of special education courses on the perception of general education teachers towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Ryan, 2009; Shade & Steward, 2001). Several studies in general and special education have reported that teachers“

preparation has been characterized by a lack of effectiveness to meet the challenge of inclusive education. Lambard, Miller, and Hazelkorn (1998) conducted a study in 45 states in the U.S to explore the perception of teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. The researchers reported that in general, teachers did not feel prepared to meet of students with disabilities, especially those who had received little or no in- service training regarding inclusive practices, and had not participated in developing individual education programs for students with disabilities.

Similarly, in Northern Ireland and Scotland, 231 teacher trainees were surveyed and almost all believed that their preparation did not enable them to meet the demands of inclusive education (Westwood & Graham, 2003). Agbenyega (2007) also noted that, teachers as a result of their level of training are unable to teach adequately students with disabilities. Matinez (2003) sought to assess the effectiveness of an introductory special education course of student teachers' perception towards inclusion, their sense of teaching efficacy and their knowledge about adapting instruction of children with disabilities. The result revealed that the special education course did not have statistically significant positive effects on the teachers' perception towards inclusion or their perception of teaching competence.

Tait and Purdie (2000) investigated 1626 general education pre-service teachers' understanding toward people disabilities at Australian university. The respondents were either in the final semester of their fourth year or enrolled in one-year postgraduate diploma in education. There were no mandatory courses related to students with disabilities offered to pre-service teachers. However, in the final semester of their fourth year of study, students attended lectures and tutorial about students with disabilities. Tait and Purdie concluded that the one-year general teacher training course was

ineffective in influencing students' perception in a positive way. Moreover, the authors were not sure whether a longer teacher training program would lead to positive results, and recommended that further research was needed to address this issue. Heiman (2002) noted that teachers may resist inclusive practices on account of inadequate training. It would appear that teachers perceive themselves as unprepared for inclusive education because they lack appropriate training in this area (Janney et al., 1995; Daane et al., 2000).

Inadequate training relating to inclusive education may result in lowered teacher confidence as they plan for inclusive education (Schumm et al., 1994). Teachers who have not undertaken training regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities, may exhibit negative perceptions toward such inclusion (Van Reusen, et al., 2001), while increased training was associated with more positive perception towards inclusion of students with disabilities (Briggs et al., 2002; Powers, 2002). Training in the field of special education appears to enhance understanding and improve perception regarding inclusion (Forlin, 2003; Power, 2002). Introductory courses offered through teacher preparation programs may sometimes be inadequate in preparing the general educator for successful inclusion (Bones & Lambe, 2007).

On the other hand, some studies also reported that, there are no significant differences between special educators and general classroom teachers. Dicksons-Smith (1995) studied the perception of 200 general and special educators toward inclusion of all students, regardless of their disabilities. The results indicated that both groups of teachers exhibited more positive perception towards inclusion after the in-service training than they did before. The studies and the findings above indicate that, more

teachers are of the view that, when given appropriate training and skills, they can teach effectively in inclusive settings.

2.5 Factors Influencing Teachers' Perception toward Inclusive Education

Research has suggested that teachers' perceptions might be influenced by a number of factors which are, in many ways, interrelated. For example, in the majority of integration perception studies reviewed earlier, responses appeared to vary according to disabling conditions. In other words, the natures of the disabilities and/or educational problems presented have been noted to influence teachers' perceptions. In conclusion, even though in Anthony's (2011) study the opposite was true, teachers seem generally to exhibit a more positive perception towards the integration of children with physical and sensory impairments than to those with learning difficulties and emotional-behavioural difficulties (EBD).

2.5.1 Teacher-related variables

A great deal of research regarding teacher characteristics has sought to determine the relationship between those characteristics and perceptions towards children with disabilities. Researchers have explored a host of specific teacher variables, such as gender, age, years of teaching experience, grade level, contact with disabled persons and other personality factors, which might impact upon teacher acceptance of the inclusion principle (Harlen, 2005).

2.5.2 Gender

With regard to gender, the evidence appears inconsistent; some researchers noted that female teachers had a greater tolerance level for integration and for disabilities persons than did male teachers (Hemmings, & Woodcock, 2011). Harlen (2005), for example, found that there was a marginal tendency for female teachers to express more positive

perceptions towards the idea of integrating children with behaviour problems than male teachers (Beh-Pajoo, 1992; Leyser & Kirk, 2004). However, did not report that gender was related to perceptions (see also reviews by Hammond & Ingalls, 2003; Heiman, 2002).

2.5.3 Teaching experience

Teaching experience is another teacher-related variable cited by several studies as having an influence on teachers' perceptions. Younger teachers and those with fewer years of experience have been found to be more supportive to integration (Lindsay, 1991). Forlin's (1995) study, for example, showed that acceptance of a child with a physical disability was highest among educators with less than six years of teaching and declined with experience for those with six to ten years of teaching. The most experienced educators (greater than 11 years of teaching) were the least accepting. Forlin also obtained a similar result for the integration of a child with intellectual disability. His study seemed to indicate that as educators gained experience in teaching, they became less accepting of integration.

Heiman (2002) also found that, in general, teachers with 14 years or less teaching experience had a significantly higher positive score in their perception to integration compared with those with more than 14 years. They found no significant differences in perceptions to integration among teachers whose teaching experience was between one and four years, five and nine years and ten and 14 years (no mention was made based on individual country). Another study by Harlen (2005) compared the willingness of teacher trainees and primary teachers to accept children with SEN in their classes. His findings indicated that there was a clear reluctance on the part of the more experienced primary teachers compared to teacher trainees in their willingness to integrate such children. In this respect, it would not be unreasonable to assume that newly qualified

teachers hold positive perceptions towards integration when entering the professional arena. However, although the above studies indicated those younger teachers and those with fewer years of experience are more supportive of integration; other investigators have reported that teaching experience was not significantly related to teachers' perceptions (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

2.5.4 Grade level taught

The variable grade level taught and its influence on teachers' perceptions towards integration has been the focus of several studies. Leyser & Kirk (2004) international study found that senior high school teachers displayed significantly more positive perceptions towards integration than did junior high school and elementary school teachers, and junior high school teachers were significantly more positive than elementary school teachers (again, no mention was made based on individual country).

Other American studies revealed that elementary and secondary teachers differed in their views of integration and the kinds of classroom accommodations they make for students who are integrated (King, 2008), with elementary teachers reporting more positive views of integration and its possibilities than did their secondary counterparts (Kuester, 2000). Daane et al., (2000), in their review, concluded that as children's age increased, teacher perceptions became less positive to integration, and attributed that to the fact that teachers of older children tend to be concerned more about subject-matter and less about individual children's differences. This was also supported by Costello & Boyle (2013) who claimed that, for teachers more concerned with subject-matter, the presence of children with SEN in the class is a problem from the practical point of view of managing class activity. In this, it could be argued that primary school ethos is more holistic/inclusive, while secondary is subject-based, and

that might impinge on teachers' perceptions. Although there are studies which have not found a relationship between grade and perception (Cook et al., 2000)).

2.5.5 Experience

Experience of contact with children with SEN or disabled persons was mentioned by several studies as an important variable in shaping teacher perceptions towards integration. Here, the "contact hypothesis" suggests that as teachers implement inclusive programmes and therefore get closer to students with significant disabilities, their perceptions might become more positive (Costello & Boyle, 2013). Janney et al. (1995) found that experience with low ability children was an important contributing factor to their eventual acceptance by teachers. Already wary of reforms and overloaded with work, general education teachers' initial balancing of the anticipated high cost of integration against its uncertain benefit created hesitation or resistance. Following their implementation experiences, teachers re-evaluated the balance between the cost of teachers' time and energy as compared to the benefit for students, and judged the integration effort successful (p. 436).

Leyser and Kirk (2004) found that, overall; teachers with much experience with disabled persons had significantly more favourable perceptions towards integration than those with little or no experience. Findings of several other studies conducted in the USA by Leyser and Tappendorf (1995) and in the UK Ross-Hill (2009), have also stressed the importance of increased experience and social contact with children with SEN, in conjunction with the attainment of knowledge and specific skills in instructional and class management, in the formation of favourable perceptions towards integration. These studies seem to suggest that contact with students with significant disabilities, if carefully planned (and supported), results in positive changes in educators'

perceptions. These studies, coupled with more recent ones on teachers' perceptions towards inclusion presented earlier, indicate that as experience of mainstream teachers with children with SEN increases, their perceptions change in a positive direction (Leyser & Kirk, 2004).

However, it is important to note here that social contact per se does not lead to favourable perceptions. Stevens and Slavin (1995), for example, found no significant correlation between reported contact with students with significant disabilities and teachers' perceptions towards integrating these students into regular classrooms. Another study by Center and Ward (1997) showed that primary teachers were more tolerant of integration if no special class or unit was attached to their school: they claimed that contact experience with children with SEN did not result in the formation of more positive perceptions. Surprisingly, there is evidence in the literature that social contact could even produce unfavourable perceptions; Forlin's (1995) study, for example, indicated that there were differences between teachers who were currently involved with the policy of inclusion and those who were not. Those not involved (but who were aware of the concept of inclusion) believed that coping with a child with SEN and with a mainstream child was equally stressful. Those who were involved considered the stress of coping with the child with SEN to be greater than for dealing with a mainstream child. Thus, this study indicated that experience of a child with SEN might not promote favourable acceptance for inclusion, due to the stress factor.

2.5.6 Training

Another factor which has attracted considerable attention is the knowledge about children with SEN gained through formal studies during pre- and in-service training. This was considered an important factor in improving teachers' perceptions towards the

implementation of an inclusive policy. Without a coherent plan for teacher training in the educational needs of children with SEN, attempts to include these children in the mainstream would be difficult.

The importance of training in the formation of positive perceptions towards integration was supported by the findings of Beh-Pajoo (1992) and Elliot (2008), based on teachers in colleges. Both studied the perceptions of college teachers in the UK towards students with SEN and their integration into ordinary college courses. Their findings showed that college teachers who had been trained to teach students with learning difficulties expressed more favourable perceptions and emotional reactions to students with SEN and their integration than did those who had no such training.

Several other studies conducted in the USA Van-Reusen, Shoho and Barker (2001), and the UK Avramidis et al. tend to reinforce the view that special education qualifications acquired from pre- or in-service courses were associated with less resistance to inclusive practices. Dickens-Smith (1995), for example, studied the perceptions of both regular and special educators towards inclusion (not integration). Her respondents were given a perception survey before and after staff development. Both groups of respondents revealed more favourable perceptions towards inclusion after their in-service training than they did before, with regular education teachers showing the strongest positive perception change. Dickens-Smith concluded that staff development is the key to the success of inclusion.

2.5.7 Teachers' beliefs

More recently, Canadian research has identified another factor that influences not only teachers' reported perceptions towards inclusion, but their actual teaching styles and adaptations in heterogeneous classrooms; that is, their views about their

responsibilities in dealing with the needs of students who are exceptional or at risk. Jordan, Lindsay and Stanovich (1997) found that teachers holding a „pathognomonic“ perspective, in which the teacher assumes that a disability is inherent in the individual student, differed in their teaching instruction from those closer to an „interventionist“ perspective, in which the teacher attributes student problems to an interaction between student and environment. Teachers with the most pathognomonic perspectives demonstrated the least effective interaction patterns, whereas those with interventionist perspectives engaged in many more academic interactions and persisted more in constructing student understanding.

This finding was further reinforced by another study by Stainback and Stainback, (1990), which attempted to predict the performance of teacher behaviours associated with effective teaching in heterogeneous classrooms. This investigation on Teacher perceptions to integration/inclusion was more sophisticated than previous ones because it was not only based on self-reports and interviews, but also on observation of actual teaching behaviours. The results revealed that the strongest predictor of effective teaching behaviour was the subjective school norm as operationalized by the principals“ perceptions and beliefs about heterogeneous classrooms and his or her pathognomonic, interventionist orientation. Moreover, teachers“ responses on the pathognomonic / interventionist interview scale were also found to be important predictors of effective teaching behaviour.

The above studies provide evidence that the school’s ethos and the teachers“ beliefs have a considerable impact on teachers“ perceptions towards inclusion which, in turn, are translated into practice. It can be said that teachers who accept responsibility for teaching a wide diversity of students (recognizing thus the contribution their teaching

has on the students' progress), and feel confident in their instructional and management skills (as a result of training), can successfully implement inclusive programmes (Soodak, Podell & Lehman, 1998, where receptivity towards inclusion was associated with higher teacher efficacy).

2.5.8 Teachers' socio-political views

There have been a few studies of integration perceptions in relation to educators' wider personal beliefs (political outlook, socio-political views) and perceptions. Stevens and Slavin (1995), in a US study, found that perceptions to integration were more positive when teachers believed that publicly funded schools should educate exceptional children. Sharpe, York and Knight (1994), in another study in the United States, found that classroom teachers with abstract conceptual systems held more positive integration perceptions depending on the ethnic origin of the integrated child. Teachers with abstract conceptual systems showed less need for order, less pessimism and less interpersonal aggression, characteristics which have been related to low levels of authoritarianism.

In his comparative study of educators in Devon, England, and Arizona, USA, Thomas and Loxley (1995) found that educators with low scores on conservatism tended to have less negative perceptions to integration. Norwich (1994), in his comparative study of educators in rural and urban areas in Pennsylvania, USA, and Northampton shire, England, compared the relationships of integration perceptions to political outlook, socio-political views and other situational factors (contact with disability, professional position). In this study, integration perceptions were related to sociopolitical views only in the UK sample. Norwich concluded that while educators' socio-political or ideological beliefs and values have some relation to integration,

perceptions cannot be considered as a strong predictor alone and other situational factors (provision in the two areas and cultural issues) needed to be taken into consideration.

2.5.9 Educational environment-related variables

A number of studies have examined environmental factors and their influence in the formation of teachers' perceptions towards inclusion. One factor that has consistently been found to be associated with more positive perceptions is the availability of support services at the classroom and the school levels (Costello & Boyle, 2013). Here, support could be seen as both physical (resources, teaching materials, IT equipment, a restructured physical environment) and human (learning support assistants, special teachers, speech therapists).

Janney et al. (1995) found that the majority of teachers in their study were hesitant initially to accept children with SEN in their classes, because they anticipated a worst case scenario where both they and the children with SEN would be left to fend for themselves. Later, these teachers were receptive towards these children after having received necessary and sufficient support. Respondents acknowledged that the support received from the relevant authorities was instrumental in allaying their apprehension that part-time integration would result in extraordinary workloads. A significant restructuring of the physical environment (making buildings accessible to students with physical disabilities) and the provision of adequate and appropriate equipment and materials were also instrumental in the development of these positive perceptions.

Besides those mentioned by Janney et al. (1995), other forms of physical support, such as availability of adopted teaching materials (Baffoe, 2013), and smaller classes (Costello & Boyle, 2013), have also been found to generate positive

perceptions towards inclusion. Another type of support, that of the continuous encouragement from the head teacher, has also been mentioned in several studies as being instrumental in the creation of positive perceptions to inclusion. In the Janney et al. (1995), the enthusiastic support from head teachers was an attributing factor to the success of the part-time integration programme in the schools they studied. Cook et al. (2000) in his review of relevant literature, concluded that mainstream teachers have a greater tolerance of integration if head teachers are supportive. Similarly, Centre and Wards (1997) study reported that mainstream teachers whose head teachers had provided some form of support for the integration programme exhibited a more positive perception towards its implementation than those who had not received any (Thomas & Loxley, 1995).

Support from specialist resource teachers was also identified as an important factor in shaping positive teacher perceptions to inclusion (Kauffman et al., 2016). Janney et al. (1995) found that one of the factors cited by their respondents that had contributed to the success of the part-time integration programme they were implementing was the existence of effective support, both interpersonal and task related, provided by the school's special education teachers. Costello and Boyle, (2013) argued that special education specialist teachers are important co-worker's in providing advice to subject specialist teachers on how to make a particular subject accessible to children with SEN. Centre and Ward (1997) found that children with a mild sensory disability integrated in mainstream classes did not cause anxiety to mainstream teachers because of the confidence generated by the presence of itinerant teachers for these children. Their study showed that experience of working with itinerant teachers positively affected teachers' perceptions. The importance of support from specialist resource teachers was also highlighted in another study conducted in the USA (Cornoldi et al., 1998), which

compared the perceptions towards inclusion and the perceptions of self-efficacy, competence, teaching satisfaction and judgments of the appropriateness of teaching adaptation of regular education teachers who co-taught with resource teachers in inclusive classrooms and their counterparts in traditional classrooms. Regular teachers in inclusive classrooms reported positive perceptions towards inclusion and high perceptions of self-efficacy, competence and satisfaction. Regular teachers in traditional classrooms held less positive perceptions and viewed classroom adaptations as less feasible, and less frequently used, than did teachers in classrooms with the protected resource of two teachers.

Other aspects of the mainstream school environment have also been identified in the above studies as being obstacles that have to be surmounted in order for inclusive programmes to be successfully implemented; for example, more often than not, teachers report overcrowded classrooms, insufficient pre-prepared materials (differentiated packages), insufficient time to plan with learning support team, lack of a modified/flexible timetable, inadequately available support from external specialists and lack of regular INSET (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). In particular, the need for more non-contact time so they can plan collaboratively has been stressed in a number of American studies (Baffoe, 2013; Kauffman et al., 2016)

In the Campbell, Gilmore and Cuskelly (2003) investigation, for example, 48 out of 55 teachers (87.2 per cent) reported their perceived need for 1 hour or more of daily planning time for inclusion. It could be said that mainstream teachers feel that implementing an inclusive programme would involve a considerable workload on their part, as a result of increased planning for meeting the needs of a very diverse population. In this respect, human and physical support can be seen as important factors in generating positive perceptions

among mainstream teachers towards the inclusion of children with SEN.

2.6 Challenges Teachers Face in Teaching Children with Disability in Inclusive Schools

Some teachers are of the view that educating students with and without disabilities in the same classroom faces some challenges such as modification in the curriculum and instruction, teachers' confidence level, collaboration between the teachers and the school administration, experience in dealing with students with disabilities and assessment and grading practice in an inclusive classroom. Loreman, Forlin and Sharma (2007) found that, factors such as close contact with a person with disability, teaching experience, knowledge of policy and law, and confidence levels of significant impact on student teachers' perception towards inclusion. Bones and Lambe (2007) have reported that training in special or inclusive education and experience teaching or relating to students with disabilities have positive impact on perception and perception.

In addition, such positive perception supports the potential for more successful inclusive programs or experiences for students (Kuyini & Desai, 2008; Subban & Sharma, 2006). Possessing previous experience as an inclusive educator appears to positively predispose teachers toward inclusive education (Hodge & Jasma, 2000). It would appear that previous contact with persons with disabilities allows regular education teachers to feel comfortable within the inclusive classrooms. Direct experience of including students with disabilities into mainstream settings appeared to be an essential factor in shaping teachers views toward inclusive settings (Guo et al., 2007) Brown (1996), in her 4-nation UNESCO study of approximately 1000 teachers with experience in teaching children with disabilities, reported a wide difference in perceptions regarding inclusive education. These teachers favoured

inclusion of different types of children with disabilities into the general classroom.

Brown noted that in countries that had a law requiring inclusion, teachers expressed favourable views ranging from 47% to 93%. However, teachers from countries that offered mostly segregation education were less supportive to inclusion with their favourable views ranging from 0% to 28%. These findings show that, when teachers are exposed in teaching student with disabilities, they will develop positive perceptions for inclusion. Cook et al. (2000) found that teachers with seven or more years of teaching experience with students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms felt that they could potentially meet the needs of more students with disabilities in their classrooms than did teachers with fewer years of inclusive experience.

Costello and Boyle (2013) also documented that experienced teachers provide students with disabilities in inclusive settings with more teacher praise, encouragement to do their best, opportunities to answer questions, and more carefully monitoring their performance. However, other researchers have noted that the mere experience of contact with students with disabilities not lead to the formation of more positive perception toward inclusion (Center & Ward, 1997). Stevens and Slavin (1995) reported a non- significant correlation between contact with student with disabilities and teachers' perception towards inclusion. In contrast, some studies reported that teachers with more experience hold more negative perception towards inclusion (Forlin, 2003).

Some mainstream teachers claimed that they had chosen to teach a specific discipline and not special education, and inclusion policy forced them to enter areas they were unsure about or not interested in it (Vaughn, 1999). Forlin (1995) found that the most experience educators (i.e., teachers with more than 11 years of teaching experience)

reported the lowest level of acceptance for inclusion. Moreover, the highest level of acceptance was found among teachers with less than six years of teaching experience in an inclusive classroom. Based on these inconsistent findings, it seems that nature of the inclusion practice or experience, whether pleasant or not, is what determines the impact on perception.

Successful implementation of inclusive education demands collaboration between the school administration and the teachers. The administration should be committed in providing the appropriate materials necessary for inclusive practices as this could be a challenge to teachers. Administrative support has also been cited as a significant factor in determining teacher perception towards inclusion, as the teacher feels Reaffirmed if the school principal fosters a positive learning environment for both teachers and students (Idol, 1994; Larrivee & Cook, 1979).

Teachers believe that the support of the principal and other school leaders are critical in order for them to implement inclusive practices (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003). Principals need to accept ownership of all students and support inclusive placement in order to inspire these feelings among other school's personnel (Gameros, 1995; Idol, 1994). However, research suggests that administrators' perception towards students with disabilities is less than positive; thereby impacting on the process of inclusion in schools (Daane et al., 2000). Clayton (1996) noted that the administrative staffs lack sufficient understanding and expertise regarding the delivery of services to students with disabilities. Further research commented that administrators may hold positive views of inclusion as they are further away than mainstream teachers, in terms of actual experience (Larrivee & Cook, 1979). Lack of administrative support may lead to lack of teachers' confidence and may feel reluctant to give their best in an inclusive

classroom.

Sigafoos and Elkins (1994) concluded that mainstream educators generally lacked confidence as they attempted to include students with disabilities into their classes. This may be as a result of lacking proficiency about modifying the regular education curriculum to suit students with individual learning needs. Further, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) supports the view that teachers who perceive themselves as competent inclusive educators often have more positive perception towards inclusive education. The authors also asserted that teachers acquire increased competence as a result of increased training in the field of inclusive education. Inadequate knowledge with regard to instruction techniques of curricular adaptations which contribute to decreased confidence may be factors which influence teachers' perception toward inclusive education (Janney et al., 1995; Lesar et al., 1997). For teachers to feel confident to teach disabilities student, they should be able to modify the curriculum to suit every individual in an inclusive classroom.

Miller and Savage (1995) indicated that, the success of inclusive schooling efforts is largely dependent on the general education teachers' ability and willingness to make appropriate modifications to accommodate the individual differences. Ensuring that the needs of all students will be met with inclusion, McLeskey et al. (2001), reviewed some challenges along with possible solutions when integrating students with disabilities into the regular classroom.

These challenges include; 1) providing functional curriculum in a regular classroom, and 2) providing community-based instruction. For example, a student with severe disability such as an intellectual disability may have trouble with routine hygiene skills. These deficits may alienate the child more if not addressed. The teacher can use this

opportunity to reinforce appropriate behaviour for the disabled student as well as the entire class. The issue of hygiene, whether it is daily grooming skills or appropriate table manners can be incorporated in the class, "health" curriculum. The disabled student will then work on the area of deficit without being singled out in front of their peers while the rest of the class has the benefit of having these skills reinforced.

Another strategy outline was providing community-based instruction. This can be defined as allowing the community, whether individual or agencies the opportunity to enhance a lesson with real-life experiences. For example, if there is a fire safety lesson in the curriculum, this may provide the perfect opportunity for local fire fighters to present to the class. Often the professionals will bring fire equipment or a video, which will help reinforce the lesson. All students benefit from this type of multi-sensory approach (i.e. coordinating the visual aids with the lecture. If teachers are able to adapt the curriculum in this way, they could enhance inclusive practices.

Assessing and grading of students with and without disabilities in the general classroom seems to be difficult to many teachers. Assessment is a complex process for teachers. Teacher training in assessment is important because, ultimately, classroom practices result in grades that impact promotion, standing, and future opportunities for students, (McMillan, 2007; O'Connor, 2007). Teachers use assessment tools to monitor learning and then they assign grades to students which are supposed to summarize and capture the extent to which students have learned. Grading is the most common method of communicating student learning whether a student has learned something or not (Allen, 2005). Grades summarize assessment, made by teachers and professionals for students at the end of a specified time (Allen, 2005; McMillan, 2007; O'Connor, 2007; Tomlison, 2005).

Classroom assessment and grading practices are meant to enhance the learning process, facilitate instruction, and encourage opportunities for new knowledge to be gained (Campbell & Collins, 2007; De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). Assessment in an inclusive classroom could be formative which means that, the assessment should focus on the individual learners and incorporate wide variety strategies that teachers and learners use in collaboration or summative which is called assessment of learning (Harlen, 2005; Klecker, 2002). It is used to confirm what students know and how well they have met curriculum guidelines (McMillan, 2007; York, 2003). It assesses how well students have met their own personalized programme goals or determines future placement in programs. It is used to communicate achievement to parents, other teachers and institutions, employers, government, and general public (McMillan, 2007; OECD, 2005). These assessment practices seem to be difficult as the individual teachers may not be competent enough to carry out this type of assessment. Formative assessment is typically called assessment for learning (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011).

Formative assessment acknowledges that students learn in diverse and individual ways, but there are still predictable patterns that they will follow in increasing their proficiency. Teachers are aware of this universal process and effectively guide students and adapt to meet them where they are at their learning process. This requires time, knowledge and understanding of student development and ability to adapt regularly and appropriately (Boston, 2002; Klecher, 2002; McMillan, 2007). Formative assessment maintains that the student is in the central learning process. Students take ownership for their own learning as the teacher provides direction, guidance and feedback to achieve the desired outcomes.

This a complete time consuming, and challenging task for educators in inclusive classrooms (Weston, 2004). These assessment practices will therefore require changes which enhance learning for students and to make inclusive classroom assessment meaningful. Even though it may be challenging, teachers can develop assessment tools that create reliable, valid and meaningful learning opportunities that communicate achievement. Some teachers have not been exposed to disabilities classrooms and this can be a disadvantage. Educators need to coordinate efforts and understand the needs of the classroom in terms of developing skills and lesson plans (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Students with severe and profound disabilities require more adaptation and medical attention than the average student. Teachers must be skilled in handling severe disabilities and create lesson plans based on individual abilities and adhere to dietary needs of the child. Lack of experience can lead to the child not progressing with skills or cause of adverse medical incidents (Ross-Hill, 2009).

Disability inclusion classrooms must be able to involve its students in all classroom activities. Teachers need to address how the classroom will communicate with each other and encourage participation. If there is a lack of adaptive equipment or adaptive communication and language tools, it makes it difficult for teachers to function as a united classroom (Burke & Sutherland, 2004). When there are children of all abilities in the classroom, both physical and academic, children in the middle can easily fall between the cracks. These children can have learning disabilities, hearing impairments, ADD or language delays to name a few. Providing the right amount of attention and adaptation can be challenging, especially if there is a higher teacher to student ratio (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). Normally, inclusive classrooms have a regular educator and special needs educator. Due to the nature of the classroom and size, it is imperative that there be an appropriate number of teacher aides to assist the teachers with day to

day activities (Burke & Sutherland 2004). Not all students have been exposed to persons with disabilities and this becomes a challenge to teachers.

Teachers must not tolerate insensitiveness and cruelty and teach that all students are to be treated with respect, regardless of ability (Ross-Hill, 2009). As some students are not used to dealing with persons with disabilities, parents are no exception. Teachers need to convey to parents how the classroom is conducted and that all educational needs will be met. Further because there are varying abilities in the classroom, teachers can be challenged to address individual academic needs based on ability (Westwood & Graham, 2003).

Although many schools are moving towards disability inclusive classrooms, there are a number of issues or challenges that need to be addressed. Preparing and training a teacher is the first step in making disability inclusive classrooms a success.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review

This chapter reviewed the related literature on the research topic, the theoretical framework. The chapter was discussed under the following subthemes: (1) the concepts of inclusive education; (2) teachers' perceptions of inclusive education; (3) influence of teachers' perception towards inclusive education; (4) the factors that influence teacher's perception towards inclusive education; and (5) The challenges teachers face in teaching of children with disability in inclusive schools. In addition, the challenges teachers face in teaching of children with disability in inclusive schools was also looked at. Even though the literature on perceptions of regular or general education teachers towards inclusion of children with special educational needs in the inclusive basic schools have revealed the benefits of inclusive education, perceptions of teachers towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools, influence of teachers' perception

towards teaching of children with disability in inclusive schools, factors that influence teachers' perception towards inclusive education and challenges teachers face in teaching of children with disability in inclusive schools and educators, those findings cannot be emphatically related to the situation in Ghana because almost all of the studies were done outside Ghana.

Furthermore, none of the few studies done in Ghana have tried to look into the perceptions of regular or general education teachers towards inclusion of children with special educational needs in the inclusive basic schools within the Tano South District of Ghana. Therefore, there is a need for further research on teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Tano South District and Ghana in general.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section presented the methodology that guided the study. Specifically, the section covered research design, study setting, population (target), sample size and sampling technique, data collection instruments, issues of validity and reliability, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research (Pragmatist) Paradigm

The pragmatist paradigm, also known as pragmatism, is a philosophical framework that emphasizes practical consequences and the value of experience in guiding actions and beliefs (Creswell, 2022). The research was grounded in the pragmatist paradigm, which emphasizes practical consequences, experiential knowledge, and problem-solving orientation. This paradigm acknowledged that teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education are shaped by their practical experiences and the outcomes they observe in their classrooms. The focus was on understanding how teachers' perceptions are influenced by their day-to-day experiences with inclusive education and how these perceptions can inform the improvement of inclusive practices.

Experience-based approach: Pragmatism emphasizes the significance of experiences in shaping individuals' beliefs and actions. In the context of teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education, a pragmatist perspective would consider the experiences teachers have had with inclusive education in the Tano South District. This includes the practical challenges they have encountered, the successes they have witnessed, and the overall impact on their teaching practices.

Focus on practical consequences: Pragmatism places importance on the practical consequences of actions and beliefs. When examining teachers' perceptions, a pragmatist perspective would look at the tangible outcomes of inclusive education in the district. This includes considering factors such as improved learning outcomes, increased social integration, and the overall benefits for students with diverse needs.

Openness to adaptation: Pragmatism encourages flexibility and adaptability in response to changing circumstances. Applying this perspective to teachers' perceptions, it would involve exploring how teachers in the Tano South District have adjusted their instructional strategies, classroom environments, and support systems to accommodate inclusive education. The emphasis is on the willingness to learn from experience, adapt teaching methods, and collaborate with other stakeholders to enhance inclusivity.

Problem-solving orientation: Pragmatism promotes a problem-solving approach to challenges. In the context of inclusive education, a pragmatist perspective would involve examining how teachers in the Tano South District identify and address obstacles to inclusivity. This could include addressing resource constraints, addressing attitudinal barriers, and seeking practical solutions through collaboration with colleagues, administrators, and the community.

3.2 Research Approach: Mixed Methods Approach

A mixed method approach was employed in this study to capture a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education in the Tano South District. By combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, this approach allowed for a more nuanced exploration of teachers' perceptions, integrating statistical trends with rich narratives and experiences. The quantitative

phase provided a broad overview and identification of patterns, while the qualitative phase delved deeper into the underlying factors and provided contextual insights. The integration of both approaches led to a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education in the district.

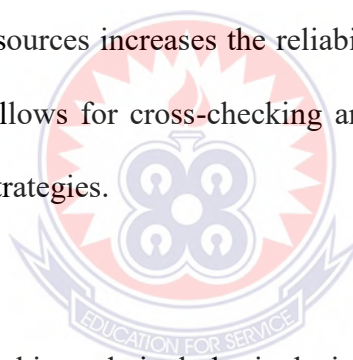
3.3 Research Design

A research design refers to a comprehensive plan outlining the procedures and conditions for data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is widely recognized that a well-designed research study enhances validity and ensures consistent results (Yin & Sin, 2014). Researchers have various established design options to choose from, including comparative design, cross-sectional design, longitudinal design, case study design, and traditional experimental design (Creswell, 2014). However, due to the complex and diverse nature of social phenomena, social science researchers often face challenges in selecting appropriate research approaches and methods to investigate specific problems within different environments.

In light of this, the present study employed a convergent mixed methods design. The convergent mixed methods design involves the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, which are separately analysed and then compared to determine if the findings support or contradict each other (Creswell, 2014). This design is often referred to as a side-by-side approach, as the researcher presents one set of findings followed by the other during the discussion. The underlying assumption of this design in the current study was that both quantitative and qualitative data would provide distinct types of information. Qualitative data, obtained through interviews, would offer detailed insights into participants' perceptions of inclusive education, while quantitative data, in the form of scores on measurement instruments, would provide

numerical data. The combination of these data types was expected to yield consistent results.

The rationale for employing this design was to gain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions of inclusive education, including their experiences of teaching children with disabilities in regular classrooms and the challenges they encounter. The qualitative data collected through interviews served to confirm and further elucidate the responses obtained from the qualitative scale. By using mixed methods, the study aimed to leverage the strengths and mitigate the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, thereby enhancing the richness of the findings. This utilization of multiple data sources aligns with Yin and Sin 's (2014) assertion that triangulating evidence from different sources increases the reliability of the data. Furthermore, the use of mixed methods allows for cross-checking and validation of findings derived from different research strategies.



3.4 Target Population

The target population for this study includes inclusive basic schools in the Tano South District, consisting of a total of 103 schools. Among these, are 59 primary schools and 44 Junior High Schools. The population of teachers within these schools amounts to 1,168 individuals, with 428 female teachers and 740 male teachers.

3.5 Sample Size

The sample size for the study consists of all staff in 25 basic schools. The total sample size for the study was 175 classroom teachers and 25 head teachers making a total of 200 participants. A multi sampling technique was used to determine the sample size. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the research setting; that is the 25 schools selected for the study while census sampling technique was used to

select the participants from the schools. Purposive sampling techniques was also used to select teachers for the qualitative phase.

3.6 Sampling Technique

A multi sampling technique was used to determine the sample size. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the research setting; that is the 25 schools selected for the study while census sampling technique was used to select the participants from the schools.

3.7 Research Instrument

The study employed questionnaire for the quantitative phase and semi-structured interview schedule for the qualitative phase. Both instruments were used to collect data from classroom teachers. The use of questionnaires helped the researcher to cover large number of respondents in the study (Kusi, 2012). The questionnaire contained close-ended questions which were designed by the researcher. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argues that questionnaires are popular and fundamental tools for acquiring information on public knowledge and perception. The questionnaire was of four sections. Section “A” gathered demographic information of the respondents such as age, academic qualification, and teaching experience. Section “B” contained items on teachers’ perception of inclusion of children with disabilities in the classrooms. The questionnaire used a four-points Likert scale such as “Agree”, “Strongly Agree”, “Disagree”, and “Strongly Disagree” to rate their response. Section “C” also used a four-points Likert scale such as “Agree”, “Strongly Agree”, “Disagree”, and “Strongly Disagree” to ascertain the influence of teachers’ perception towards teaching children with disability. Section “D” also covered factors that influenced the perception of regular education teachers about inclusive education and the final

section “E” focused on the challenges teachers face in teaching children with disabilities in inclusive schools respectively.

Also, Patton (2002) noted that in semi-structured interview, the researcher specifies issues and topics to be covered and the interviewer decides the sequence and wording in the interview process.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

3.6.1 Validity

An instrument is said to be valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure (Creswell, 2014). To ensure face validity, the questionnaire was given to colleagues and other graduates of special education to determine whether the items appeared to measure the underlying variables. These colleagues made suggestions relating to grammatical errors, typographical mistakes, and ambiguities which were considered to reshape the instruments. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was submitted to the supervisor who checked that the questions reflected the concepts being studied and that the scope of the questions was adequate as suggested by (Creswell, 2014). Hence, supervisor’s guidance helped the researcher to make corrections to the questionnaire.

3.6.2 Reliability

To ensure reliability in the study, the researcher pre-tested the instruments in about three schools which were not part of the sampled schools but have similar characteristics in order to test the instruments before the actual collection of data. The instruments were pilot-tested and revised to eliminate inaccuracies appropriately to enhance their efficacy. A reliability analyses of the pre-tested questionnaires was carried out using Cronbach’s Alpha statistics. According to Cronbach’s Alpha reliability, coefficient values 0.70 and above are considered reliable (Creswell, 2014). Three inclusive

JHSs, which comprised 15 teachers, were selected for the pre-test to help to address any possible ambiguities in the interview guide items.

3.7 Data Collection

Before the fieldwork, I acquired an introductory letter from the Department of Special Education, University of Education, Winneba, to help secure permission from the schools. I visited the head teachers of the schools and introduced myself and the purpose of the study was explained, and how they will be involved in the study. Due to the large scope of the study, I recruited two field assistants who helped me with the data collection procedures. The field assistants were trained to help in the administration of the questionnaires and coding of the data. The assistants were selected from the study area. In addition, I conducted the interview by myself with the participants in a safe from disturbance setting. I explained the purpose of the study, ethical responsibilities and method of sampling participants during the training.

3.8 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Quantitative data of the study was analysed using descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS version 20. The researcher used descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to analyse the quantitative data of the study. The items of the questionnaire were structured to reflect the research questions of the study.

In addition, the qualitative data from the interview was categorized according to themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to reflect the research questions and the purpose of the study. The analysis followed a systematic process of coding, categorizing and interpreting of data to provide clarifications in relation to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2021) using Atlas.ti 7.5.18 version, a qualitative research data analysis software.

3.9 Establishing the Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data

The trustworthiness of every qualitative research depends largely on the ability and effort exhibited by the researcher. Trustworthiness is the validity and reliability of qualitative research. The trustworthiness is what is used to evaluate the quality of any qualitative research (Hollins, 2011). Creswell (2014) noted that the terms validity and reliability are inseparable in qualitative research. To ensure trustworthiness in a qualitative study, Creswell and Creswell, (2018) noted the followings as key ingredients; credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability. The researcher in an attempt to ensure trustworthiness in this study, adopted Creswell and Creswell's model of evaluating the worth of the study. The model was adopted due to the fact that it is developed conceptually and is widely used by qualitative researchers.

Credibility: Hollins (2011) defined credibility as the confidence that can be placed in research findings. To ensure credibility in this study, the researcher spent sufficient time with participants in the various sampled schools in order to gain knowledge into the context of the study (prolonged engagement), presented collected data to participants to verify (member checking), and finally exposed the collected data to colleagues for constructive criticism (peer debriefing). These constructive criticisms from colleagues were used to improve upon the quality of the findings.

Transferability/Applicability: Transferability or applicability according to Babbie (2010) is the degree to which qualitative research findings/results can be applied to different participants with similar characteristics. To ensure transferability of this research results, the researcher provided vivid description of the steps taken throughout the study.

Confirmability/Neutrality: Babbie (2010) noted that confirmability/neutrality tries to prove that data and interpretation of any research findings are not the researcher's fabrications or imaginations, but rather natural and truly derived from participants. The researcher in an attempt to ensure confirmability in the study highlighted every step of data analysis that was made in order to provide justification for every single decision taken (audit trial).

Dependability: Hollins (2011) explained that dependability is the stability of any research findings over a period of time. To ensure the study dependability, the researcher submitted the work for external audit by a lecturer in the Department of Basic Education who was not involved in the research process to examine the process and product of the study. The feedback generated from the external audit was used to improve upon the trustworthiness of the study.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) explained that the word "ethics" is derived from the Greek word "ethos", which means one's character. It has to do with the term "morality". A moral issue is concerned with whether behaviour is right or wrong, whereas an ethical issue is concerned with whether the behaviour conforms to a set of principles. Creswell (2014) noted that ethical issues are integral to the research process and therefore need to be carefully considered before executing the research process. The researcher among other things assured the respondents/participants of anonymity and confidentiality. This was done to make sure that their privacy and integrity was highly respected and protected. The information given to the researcher was used solely for the purposes of this study. The researcher throughout the study avoided the use of enticement (giving out money or gift). This was done to ensure that the responses that

came from the respondents were genuine. Throughout the period of the study, researcher was sceptical and adhered strictly to ethical issues to ensure reliability and accuracy of data.

i. Informed consent

Participants were verbally informed about the procedures of the study and they voluntarily agreed to participate. The researcher provided information on the purpose of the study, expected duration of performance and procedures to be followed. As part of the ethical issues, the researcher had to seek the consent of the participants. The researcher assured them (participants) that the information they provided would solely be used for the purpose of this study and that confidentiality was strictly key as far as this study is concerned.

ii. Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality, information particularly personal information provided by the participants, was protected and not made available to anyone other than the researcher. All participants were assured of confidentiality by means of a written notice. Participants were given pseudonyms so as to protect their identities. The researcher reassured the participants that their real names would be kept anonymous and all data gathered would be kept confidential.

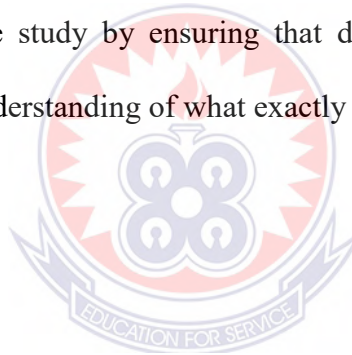
iii. Anonymity

Creswell and Creswell (2018) agrees that participant's data must not be associated with his or her name or any identifier; rather, the researcher may assign a number or alpha symbol to a participant data to ensure that the data remain anonymous. The researcher further assured participants about the fact that no one, except the researcher and the study leader would be able to access the raw data. The raw data did not contain the names of

the schools and participants.

iv. Objectivity

Collecting the data from different sources, at different times and using varied methodologies in checking ensured that the data collected was objective and of high quality. More so, participants were selected from both urban and rural schools as well as males and females. This was done to ensure fairness and reduced possible biases in the study. The researcher also checked and verified questions and other information gathered during the process of data collection to ensure accuracy. This involved constant editing of the data and results to ensure there was a minimal incidence of error. The researcher ensured that the data collection instruments also provided suitable findings for the study by ensuring that during the collection of the data, participants had clear understanding of what exactly they were being asked to do.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

This section provided analyses of the data generated from the questionnaire administered to the participants. The data was analysed based on the research questions raised to guide the study. In the analysis of the questionnaire data, the two extremities of the responses were combined, such as Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A) as one idea, and Strongly Disagree (DS) and Disagree (D) as one, for the purposes of discussions. The results of the frequency distributions of opinions expressed by respondents to each set of items for each research question were used for the data analysis.

4.1 Research question 1: How do teachers perceive inclusion of children with disabilities in the classrooms in Tano south district?

Table 4.1 represents data on the perception of teachers about the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular classrooms at Tano South District. It covers questionnaire items 1 to 7.

Table 1: Teachers' perceptions about the inclusion of children with disabilities

| Statement | Agree | Disagree |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| Students with disabilities should not be taught in regular classroom on full-time bases. | 150(75%) | 50(25%) |
| It will be difficult for me to handle learners with disabilities because I have little knowledge on inclusive pedagogy | 180(90%) | 20(10%) |
| IE is good for everyone, and it is the best way to educate learners with disabilities | 175(88%) | 25(12%) |
| The school should adopt a changing culture that will make it more responsive to differences | 192(96%) | 08(04%) |
| I see inclusion as a shared responsibility for both generalist and specialist teachers in providing a full continuum of services. | 188(94%) | 22(06%) |
| There is a lack of support and resources for teachers to be able to handle learners with disabilities | 195(98%) | 05(02%) |
| the ability and performance of children with disabilities is compared to their peers without disabilities | 105(53%) | 95(47%) |

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table 4.1 represents the frequency distribution of the responses of teachers on their perception about inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. From the data, it would be noted that teachers in Tano South are of the view that learners with disabilities should not be included in regular classrooms for a full-time bases as 150 participants, representing 75% of the participants agreed to the statement that learners with disabilities should not be included in regular classrooms on a full -time base whilst 50 participants representing 25% disagreed to the statement. It further stated from Table 1 that “it will be difficult for me to handle learners with disabilities because I have little knowledge on inclusive pedagogy”. Majority of the participants 180(90%) of them agreed to the statement that it would be difficult for them to actually, handle learners with disabilities in their classrooms because they are deficit when it comes to the pedagogy on how to handle learners with disabilities. Only 20 participants representing 10% of the respondents were ready to handle learners with

disabilities in their classrooms.

Furthermore, item 3 sought to find out the perception of the teachers about the IE policy. It was worth noting from the data that 175 (88%) responded that the policy is the best way to educate all learners and that it is a good policy whilst 25 participants representing 12% were of the view that it is not the best way to educate to educate all learners. The results from the data further indicated that majority of the teachers were of the view that the school needs to change to a responsive culture that will embrace diversity in learning as 192 representing 96% expressed that view whilst 08 participants (04%) saw it not being necessary for a changing school culture that will be more responsive to differences.

From the data, it further showed that 188 (94%) see inclusion as a shared between a specialist and a general curriculum teacher in providing the continuum of services whilst 22 (06%) see otherwise. Items 6 of the items sought to find out the availability of support and resources for teachers in the general classroom for them to be able to handle learners with disabilities. Participants of 195, representing 98% agreed that there are no resources and support for them in the classroom so assist them handle learners with disabilities. Also, 5 respondents (02%) disagreed with the statement that there are resources for them to handle learners with disabilities in the regular classroom.

Finally, the last item sought to enquire the perception of teachers on the academic abilities of learners with disabilities vis-à-vis their counterparts with disabilities. With 105 of the respondents representing 53% agreed to the statement that the ability and performance of children with disabilities is comparative to that of their peers without disabilities whereas 47% (95) of the respondents were of the view that the abilities and performance of those two groups of learners are not comparable.

In the same vein, the researcher conducted a face-to-face interview with participants. Data from their responses show that some regular school teachers have positive perception of inclusive education. Through the interview, the respondents said;

I believe all learners with disabilities can benefit from inclusive education

Another person added saying;

Learners with disabilities improve their social skills when placed in the regular classrooms

In the same vein, a female teachers mention;

Learners with disabilities can do better academically in inclusive education

This finding showed that regular primary school teachers were positive on the benefits of inclusive education but not very sure if learners with disabilities can do better academically in inclusive settings. Generally, the results showed that respondents agreed with the principles of inclusion and have a favourable perception of inclusive education. This was evident by the revelation given by one of the teachers to illustrate the current situation of inclusive education practice of some of the schools:

You can see there are many students with various disabilities in the school, even some types of disabilities you mentioned I did not hear them before. Now, I am only wondering why some students were lagging or keep on performing poorer. Therefore, this shows that we are including them but not correctly addressing their problems. The solution seems that if we put them together, we have to help them learn the way they learn. However, with the types of teachers, we now have it is challenging. Some of us are even not trained to become special needs teachers. Finally, inclusive education is not practiced because some of us do not know how to practice it. (Teacher No. 6, 2022)

Another teacher of a primary school put his complaint about the training and inclusive education as follows:

We know that inclusive education is written in the curriculum only. So how can you expect a teacher to practice inclusive education without any training? Now it is not about practice. First, we have to know that teachers are not trained, do not know how to deal with a learner with disabilities. I have seen the questionnaire, and you might get some response from other teachers that says they practice inclusive education, but it is not true. I know they have the will to help, but this does not mean we practice inclusive education. (Teacher No.1, 2022).

Qualitative data from the teachers confirmed that the practice of inclusive education in the schools was very low. However, the teachers claimed that lack of practice in inclusive education in their respective schools does not mean that teachers are against the movement, but they do not practice due to various reasons. The teachers claimed that lack of training and resources were their problems.

Two other teachers (T4, T5) described students with disability as children unable to cope with what the school grade, the curriculum and their age require and, thus, with “...huge problems in their communication with the rest of the students and their participation in discussions and projects that take place in the classroom during school day”. T1 claimed that inclusion of a child with disability is the incorporation of the child in the general classroom, but also highlighted the importance of child’s self-sufficiency as a key factor for the placement to the regular school. A similar point was made by T2, T4 and T5, who also added the significance of child’s ability to adjust to the mainstream school environment, to build good relationships with the non-disabled students and to complete the tasks as set by the teachers, when it comes to child’s inclusion. Unlike to the teachers above, T3 felt that inclusion should be seen from a different perspective. As such, she defined inclusion as follows

Inclusion is not something that requires from all the students to be able to perform the same tasks in the classroom or to act the same way. The teacher is responsible for accommodating all the diverse needs in the classroom, either they are demonstrated by disabled or non-disabled students, so that a balance can be kept. A child with mental difficulties receives inclusive education, through the interaction with its peers. Inclusion is a very challenging process. It all starts with the child's character; if it is willing to cooperate, then it can easily become an integrated part of classroom's group of students. But what the teacher should always keep in mind is that the child should not be forced to do exercises or participate in activities only because everyone else does. All the school exercises given by the teacher should be suitable for student's level of cognitive development and aim at eliciting its strong features so that he/she doesn't consider him/herself as weak. And this is a successful inclusion.

Very interestingly, only this last teacher explicitly mentioned that children with disabilities are not obliged to try to conform to the classroom; it's teacher's responsibility to meet its individual needs and make it feel an important part of the classroom's community. However, practices of individual learning should be applied in all the students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

After teachers provided the relevant to the research definitions, they were asked "What are your attitudes towards the concept of IE for students with SEN?" and, this way, they revealed their thoughts about the placement of these children to mainstream classrooms. In the beginning, all of them supported that the advantages of inclusion far outweigh the disadvantages. However, their opinions and turned out to be pretty diverse when started explaining their stances. T1 seemed to strongly brace full inclusion by stating that their right to inclusion should not even be questioned but it should be taken for granted and, as she added, separated special programs and classrooms should not even exist within the schools. T2, talking specifically about the child she has in the classroom, pointed out that although she currently is in favour of inclusion, in the beginning of the school years she was sceptic about the benefits of

it for the child. She attributed this belief to the fact that she had never had to deal with mental retardation prior to the placement of this child in her classroom, and as a result, she was not feeling qualified enough to educate efficiently the student.

On the other hand, T4 and T5 highlighted that when inclusion occurs, it is accompanied by a notable disadvantage; the interaction of children with SEN with the rest of the students frequently ruins the peaceful atmosphere in the lessons. Both were seeing these kids as different“ and this became obvious when T4 concluded that “normal children are benefited because they get to know what kind of problems they might encounter in society as adults while T5 changed her mind in the end of her answer and said that it would be better if these children would be placed in special classrooms with other children similar to them so that they have the feeling of belonging. Later on, the researcher posed a question to figure out whether teachers are in favour of the inclusion of all the children with mental difficulties and behavioural problems in mainstream settings, regardless of the severity and the nature of the disability. They all agreed that, except for the kids with a very profound type of mental disability, none of the others should be placed to special schools. This perception is summarized in the following comment of T1:

When I visited a special school, I realized that children there have severe mental disabilities and cannot look after themselves. If other children are not in this condition, it's a pity to put them in these schools; they would be segregated and their learning development would be inhibited... From all the aspects they are wronged. There is no place appropriate for them. But if we compare the two types of schooling, regular school is by far better than special school.

In essence, all participants seemed to be against the placement of children in special schools, when they have the potential to be integrated in regular primary schools. The majority of them did also agreed on their full inclusion in the classroom, with some of them pointing out some drawbacks of it and others being wholeheartedly advocating

incorporation. With this in mind, interviewer felt the need to inquire into their points of view about the factors that promote and enable successful inclusion. As seen before, they all defined inclusion differently. Accordingly, their responses to this question were in line with the way they described the process of inclusion and their general views on it. In general, the factors identified by the interviewees are: 1). Small number of students in the classroom, so as teacher to be able to pay sufficient attention to all children (T1), 2).welcoming atmosphere and friendly classroom environment, that makes the child with SEN feel that is similar to the others (T2), 3).regular teacher's close cooperation with a special education teacher, in order to ask for advice when needed, and with the parents (T2, T3, T4). Concerning the cooperation with the latter ones, T3 put the emphasis on this between the teacher and the parents of the disabled student, by pointing out that parents can turn out to be the biggest deterrent factor for inclusion, especially when they hide the disability.

From a different point of view, T4 regarded as important the informing of non-disabled students' parents about their children's interaction with them. This teacher claimed that parents' attitudes and thoughts about inclusion have a great impact on children's attitudes and, as a consequence, on successful inclusion. All the teachers above, through their responses, revealed how crucial the contribution of teacher is, since is the only person being able to intervene for emerging issues both inside and outside the classroom. Finally, one teacher shifted the responsibility out of school, by declaring that if parents teach their child with disability how to behave, then this will likely make a difference in the process of inclusion in school (T5).

4.2 Research question 2: In what ways do regular classroom teachers' attitudes influence their teaching of children with special needs in inclusive schools?

Table 2 represents the responses of teachers on how their attitudes influence their teaching of children with special needs inclusive schools. It covers questionnaire items 1 to 7.

Table 2: The influence of Teachers' perception on the inclusion of children with disabilities

| Statement | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Only learners with mild disabilities should be brought to inclusive classrooms | 175(88%) | 25(12%) |
| 2. I have not taken any detailed course on learner diversity to be able to handle learners with disabilities | 180(90%) | 20(10%) |
| 3. There will be greater challenges in handling learners with disabilities in the general classroom | 195(98%) | 05(02%) |
| 4. I do not have any training or in-service training in handling learners with disabilities in the classroom. | 103(52%) | 97(48%) |
| 5. I need additional material resources as well as human skills to be able to handle learners with disabilities | 200(100%) | 00(00%) |
| 6. My school environment is well designed and appropriate for me to include learners with disabilities in my classroom | 00(00%) | 200(100%) |
| 7. Our higher institutions should rather train more teachers in disability issues for them to come and handle learners with disabilities | 195(98%) | 05(02%) |

Source: Fieldwork Data, (2022).

Table 4.2 presents the views of teachers in Tano South District on how their perception influences the inclusion of children with disabilities in their classrooms.

From the data gathered, teachers were of the view that only learners with mild disabilities should be included in the classroom as 175 (88%) of the participants agreed to that statement whilst only 25 participants representing 12% of the participants disagreed to the statement. Item two elicited responses from teachers as to whether they have undertaken courses of study on learner diversity to be well

equipped to handle learner diversity or not., and 90% of the respondents (180) agreed to that statement that they cannot handle learner diversity in their classrooms because they have not studied any detailed courses on that. 20 respondents (10%) were of the view that they have undertaken detailed courses that have equipped them to be able to handle the learners.

Furthermore, the data sought to find out if the teachers' perceptions would be influenced by the work expected from them. Therefore item 3 stated that there would be greater challenges in handling learners with disabilities in the general classroom and 195 (98%) of the respondents agreed that handling learners with disabilities will be very challenging to them whereas 05 (02%) disagreed that it will be challenging to them. With item 4, 103 participants representing 52% agreed that they have no training or in-service training in handling learners with disabilities in the general classroom, but 97 representing 48% of the respondents disagreed to that statement.

Moreover, all the respondents; 100% agreed that they would need additional material resources as well as human skills to be able to handle learners with disabilities. They further disagreed (100% of the respondents) that their school environments are well designed and appropriate for them to include learners with disabilities. Finally, 195 participants that is 98% agreed that our higher institutions of learning should rather train more teachers in disability issues for them to come and handle learners with disabilities. 12 (02%) respondents however disagreed that our higher institutions of learning need to train more teachers on disability issues.

During the interview conducted by the researcher with the participants, it was learned that the kind of attitude teachers exhibit influence their teaching and how they will include students with disabilities in school.

For instance, a teacher remarked as follows:

Education is the right of all children, and inclusive schools aim to ensure that all children have equal access to education. I consider the needs of all the children when teaching (Teacher 1)

Another teacher intimated that:

Inclusive education means giving opportunity to students with special needs to attend general or regular school to be taught by the same teachers, the way I teach is child centred because I have the needs of the pupils in the classroom at heart. I always try to portray positive attitude towards my students in order for them to feel at home (teacher 2)

The view of one teacher is noteworthy here:

Inclusive schools strengthen the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and my attitude in teaching is very important for positive result (teacher 3)

Another teacher stated that:

In the past, students with disabilities were taught in separate classrooms, and in some cases separate schools. Due to the inclusion education, students with disabilities are attending public school with typically developing peers and this has influenced my methods of teaching, I make sure that all pupils are able to perform the instructional objectives of lessons taught (teacher 4)

A teacher also has this to say:

Inclusive schools' places students with disabilities in classrooms with peers who do not have disabilities now I teach all pupils in a way they understand I show concerned about the children with disabilities (teacher 5)

The view of another teacher is noteworthy here:

Inclusive education accommodates all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. It is education for all so the programme has really influenced my method of teaching (teacher 6)

Responses captured from the teachers suggested that inclusive schools ensure that all children have equal access to education. Also, education is a right for all children; therefore, they exhibit positive attitude toward their student. Inclusive education has influence their methods of teaching, they make sure that all pupils are able to perform

the instructional objectives of lessons taught.

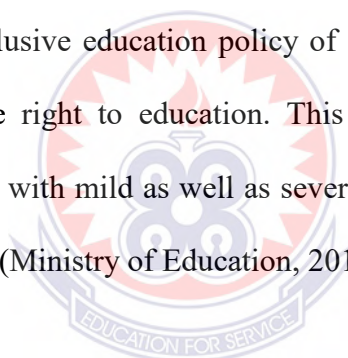
The interview data presented and analysed in this section showed that the teachers believed their attitudes influenced their teaching methodology. They therefore exhibited positive attitude toward their students. They seemed to suggest that children with disabilities have a right to education just like any other regular children as stipulated in the Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Education is a fundamental human right: Every child is entitled to it. This is in consonance with Adane (2013) defined inclusive education as a process of increasing the participation of all students in schools including those with disabilities. According to Adane the inclusive education concept focuses on those groups which, in the past, have been excluded from educational opportunities.

These groups include children living in poverty, those from ethnic and linguistic minorities, girls, children from remote areas, children with disabilities and other special educational needs, and children who are gifted and talented. Adane concluded that, children with disabilities, as well as children who are gifted and talented, are often the most marginalized, both within education and society, in general. Adane's assertion also supports the findings of UNESCO (2016) that described inclusive education as a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners.

The right to education is now accepted as a fundamental human right for everyone and important developments have taken place which aim at addressing the educational needs of persons with disabilities (Abe & Adu, 2013). The 1994 Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education Framework for Action stated that ordinary schools should accommodate all students, regardless of their physical,

intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions (UNESCO, 1994). The framework emphasized on the education for all disabled children in an inclusive environment within the regular education system.

The Salamanca Statement has been a considerable source of influence in the formulation of local educational policies and has rekindled Ghana's commitment to improve the access, quality and provision of equal educational opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities. In particular, the Education Strategic Plans (ESP) of 2005 to 2015 and 2010 to 2020 have decreed inclusive education as the most appropriate educational provision for students with disabilities, with the goal of achieving an inclusive education system by 2015 (Ministry of Education, 2012, 2013). The recently drafted inclusive education policy of Ghana is founded on the premise that every child has the right to education. This policy therefore seeks inclusive education for all persons with mild as well as severe Special Education Needs (SEN) at all levels of education (Ministry of Education, 2013).



4.3 Research question 3: What factors influence the perceptions of regular education teachers towards inclusion?

Table 4.3 below presents responses of teachers in Tano South District on the factors that influence their perceptions towards inclusion. It contains 8 items.

Table 4.3: Factors Influencing Teachers' perception towards inclusive education

| Statement | Agree | Disagree |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| More female teachers than male teachers should be trained to handle learners with disabilities | 112(56%) | 88(44%) |
| Newly trained teachers should handle learners with disabilities than the old teachers in the system. | 130(65%) | 70(35%) |
| Only learners in their adolescent ages and above should be included in general classroom, but not the infants | 195(98%) | 05(02%) |
| Including learners with disabilities will be very expensive to practice. | 130(65%) | 70(35%) |
| There should be improved pre- and in-service training of teachers about children with special educational needs | 200(100%) | 00(00%) |
| The disability of the learner is inherent, and nothing can be done by the teacher to change it | 110(55%) | 90(45%) |
| A significant restructuring of the physical environment and the provision of adequate and appropriate equipment and materials will make inclusion possible in my school | 200(100%) | 00(00%) |
| Specialist resource teacher should be posted to my school to augment our services | 165(83%) | 35 (17%) |

Source: Fieldwork Data, (2022).

Table 4.3 shows data gathered from the respondents on the factors that influence their perception towards inclusive education. From the data, 112 (56%) of the teachers agreed that more female teachers should be made to handle learners with disabilities than male teachers whereas 88 participants representing 44% disagreed to the statement that more female teachers should be trained to handle learners with disabilities than male teachers. 130 participants, representing 65% of the respondents further agreed that newly trained teachers should handle learners with disabilities than old teachers in the system. In this same statement, 70 participants (35%) disagreed that newly trained teachers should be made to handle learners with disabilities than the old teachers in the system.

Again, item 3 sought the views of teachers on the age limit of a learner with disability that they may admit in their classrooms. 195 representing 98% of the respondents agreed that only learners in their adolescent ages and above with a disability should be included in general classrooms, but not infants. However, 05 (02%) of the respondents rather disagreed.

On the issue of cost, 65% (130) participants agreed that inclusive education will be very expensive to practice in their schools whilst 70 (35%) disagreed that inclusive education is an expensive policy. All the participants (100%) agreed that there should be improved both pre-service and in-service training of teachers about children with special educational needs. 110 (55%) agreed that disability is an inherent factor in the child and the teacher can do nothing through the environment to change it whereas 90(45%) disagreeing to the statement that the teacher can do nothing to change the inherent nature of the disability in the child. Moreover, all the participants 200 (100%) agreed to the statement that a significant restructuring of the physical environment and the provision of adequate and appropriate equipment and materials will make inclusion possible in their schools. Finally, on this, 165 (83%) of the respondents agreed that a specialist resource teacher should be posted to their schools to augment their services as general curriculum teachers, whereas 35 (17%) disagreed to the statement.

However, the data gathered from the interviews were categorized under these themes: training, availability of educational resources, age teaching experience, motivation and encouragement from head teachers and disability education coordinators, past experiences and Gender.

4.3.1 Training

Some of the teachers said training influence their attitude towards inclusive education.

This was considered an important factor in improving teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of an inclusive policy. Without a coherent plan for teacher training in the educational needs of children with SEN, attempts to include these children in the mainstream would be very challenging.

For instance, a teacher remarked as follows:

Training is very important, I have not acquired enough special or comprehensive training on how to teach children with disabilities, and that makes my attitude towards them unsatisfactory, the government and other policy makers should come to our aid (teacher 1)

Another teacher intimated that:

Training is very important in determine our attitude towards inclusion, but I have not acquired enough special or comprehensive training on how to teach children with disabilities, and that makes my attitude towards them unsatisfactory (teacher 2)

The view of one teacher is noteworthy here:

Inadequate knowledge, skills and training discourages me from accepting inclusive education and playing my part well. The Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service should organize regular inclusive education training for teacher for us to develop attitude towards the inclusive program. (teacher 3)

Another teacher asserted that:

Those teachers who have some level of knowledge and training about inclusive education tend to and skills in handling special need children exhibit positive attitude towards inclusive education compared to those of us who have little or no training at all. (teacher 4)

Deducing from the above, it is clear that regular training for teachers help develop towards inclusive education this is because training about inclusive education help them to develop skills in handling special need children and therefore exhibit positive attitude towards inclusive education. The above findings support to Gallagher

(2004), despite the efforts of policy-makers, head teachers and teachers, many children still need teachers who are adequately trained and supported to meet their needs.

Besides, the importance of training in the formation of positive attitudes towards integration was supported by the findings of Bones and Lambe (2007) and Lindsay et al. (1990), based on teachers in colleges. Both studied the attitudes of college teachers in the UK towards students with SEN and their integration into ordinary college courses. Their findings showed that college teachers who had been trained to teach students with learning difficulties expressed more favourable attitudes and emotional reactions to students with SEN and their integration than did those who had no such training.

Also, Dickens-Smith (1995), for example, studied the attitudes of both regular and special educators towards inclusion (not integration). Her respondents were given an attitude survey before and after staff development. Both groups of respondents revealed more favourable attitudes towards inclusion after their in-service training than they did before, with regular education teachers showing the strongest positive attitude change. Dickens-Smith concluded that staff development is the key to the success of inclusion.

4.3.2 Availability of educational resources

Availability of educational resources emerged as one of sub theme on factors which influence the attitudes of regular classroom teachers in the district towards inclusive education

The view of one teacher is noteworthy here:

We have not been provided with enough resources to support inclusive education, so how do you expect me to take inclusive education serious. When we have enough educational resources, they make teaching and learning in the inclusive setting less cumbersome (Verbatim comment from teacher 1)

Another teacher intimated that:

If government expects positive attitude from teachers towards inclusive education, then the Ministry of Education should be committed and provide all the necessary educational resources. When adequate and relevant teaching and learning materials are made available in school, they augment teaching because they cater for all senses (Verbatim comment from teacher 2)

Grounded from the comments above, teachers acknowledged that availability of educational materials make teaching and learning in the inclusive setting less cumbersome here, participates identified resources and support as both physical (resources, teaching materials, IT equipment, a restructured physical environment) and human.

The above findings support Chester and Beaudin (1996) who opined that a number of studies have examined availability of resources and their influence in the formation of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. One factor that has consistently been found to be associated with more positive attitudes is the availability of resources or support services at the classroom and the school levels (Chester & Beaudin, 1996). The study revealed availability of educational resources as one of the factors that influence the attitudes of regular teachers in the district towards inclusive education.

More so, Odongo and Davidson (2016) found that the majority of teachers in their study were

hesitant initially to accept children with SEN in their classes, because they anticipated a worst case scenario where both they and the children with SEN would be left to fend for themselves. Janney et al further asserted that these teachers were receptive

towards these children after having received necessary and sufficient support. Respondents acknowledged that the support received from the relevant authorities was instrumental in allaying their apprehension that part-time integration would result in extraordinary workloads. A significant restructuring of the physical environment (making buildings accessible to students with physical disabilities) and the provision of adequate and appropriate equipment and materials were also instrumental in the development of these positive attitudes.

4.3.3 Age and teaching experience

Teaching experience and age is another teacher-related variable identified by respondents as having an influence on teachers' attitudes.

Some interviewees intimated that:

Some of the teachers especially the older ones feel reluctant to accept the children with disabilities in class meanwhile they are more experienced and must have positive attitude. (Verbatim comment from teacher 2)

Another teacher opined that

The young teachers who have just been posted have very good attitude towards the children with disabilities and always willing to assist. (Verbatim comment from teacher 2) Grounded from the comments above it is clear that the young teachers who have just been posted have very good attitude towards the children with disabilities and always willing to assist. This could be due to introduction of special education to most University programmes.

The findings support Lindsay et al. (2014) who observed that younger teachers and those

with fewer years of experience have been found to be more supportive to integration.

Forlin's (1995) study, for example, showed that acceptance of a child with a physical disability was highest among educators with less than six years of teaching and declined with experience for those with six to ten years of teaching. The most experienced educators (greater than 11 years of teaching) were the least

accepting. Leyser and Kirk (2004) also found that, in general, teachers with 14 years or less teaching experience had a significantly higher positive score in their attitude to integration compared with those with more than 14 years.

They found no significant differences in attitudes to integration among teachers whose teaching experience was between one and four years, five and nine years and ten and 14 years (no mention was made based on individual country). Another study by Hammond and Ingalls (2003) compared the willingness of teacher trainees and primary school teachers to accept children with SEN in their classes. Harvey's findings indicated that there was a clear reluctance on the part of the more experienced primary school teachers, compared to teacher trainees, in their willingness to integrate such children. In this respect, it would not be unreasonable to assume that newly qualified teachers hold positive attitudes towards integration when entering the professional arena. However, although the above studies indicated those younger teachers and those with fewer years of experience are more supportive of integration; other investigators have reported that teaching experience was not significantly related to teachers' attitudes (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000).

4.3.4 Motivation and Encouragement from Head Teachers and Disability

Education Coordinators

Motivation and encouragement were found to generate positive attitudes towards inclusion. Other interviewees brought the following issues to bear.

For instance, a teacher remarked as follows:

Encouragement from my head teacher and the disability education coordinators have been my source of inspiration for teaching children with disabilities. (Teachers 1)

Another teacher asserted that:

The disability education coordinators have played a very vital role in shaping my attitudes towards disabled pupils. Their advice and motivation have helped me develop a good perception about disabled pupils. (Teachers 2)

The view of one teacher is noteworthy here:

Our headmaster has demonstrated excellent leadership by helping us develop a positive and favourable attitude towards inclusive. He is always ready to listen to our concerns and take action (Teachers 3)

Another teacher intimated that:

Support and encouragements from the disability education coordinators have been exceptional; they provide orientation for non- specially trained teachers to manage special children alongside the normal children. They also support teachers in selecting appropriate materials for teaching special children and help address educational challenges of disabled pupils. They also encourage children with disabilities to keep their dreams and aspirations alive, Motivate pupils with disabilities to be active class participants and encourage regular pupils to do group studies and share ideas with special children without difficulties based on the advice of the children with disabilities coordinators. This has really assisted me to be supportive of inclusion education (Teachers 4)

The continuous encouragement from the head teachers as well as teachers is very crucial in ensuring of successful inclusive education has been mentioned in several studies as being instrumental in the creation of positive attitudes to inclusion. This is because motivation of pupils with disabilities helps them to be active s participants and encourage regular pupils to do group studies and share ideas with special children without difficulties.

The views expressed by these respondents are in conformity with Hammond and Ingalls (2003),

who asserted that the enthusiastic support from head teachers was an attributing factor to the success of the part-time integration programme in the schools they studied.

Chester and Beaudin (1996), in his review of relevant literature, concluded that mainstream

teachers have a greater tolerance of integration if head teachers are supportive.

Similarly, Center and Ward's (1997) study reported that mainstream teachers whose head teachers had provided some form of support for the integration programme exhibited a more positive attitude towards its implementation than those who had not received any.

Support from specialist resource teachers was also identified as an important factor in shaping positive teacher attitudes to inclusion (Kauffman, Lloyd and McGee, 1999). Hammond and Ingalls (2003) found that one of the factors cited by their respondents that had contributed to the success of the part-time integration programme they were implementing was the existence of effective support, both interpersonal and task related, provided by the school's special education teachers. Lindsay et al. (2014) argued that special education specialist teachers are important co-workers in providing advice to subject specialist teachers on how to make a particular subject accessible to children with SEN. Centre and Ward (1997) found that children with a mild sensory disability integrated in mainstream classes did not cause anxiety to mainstream teachers because of the confidence generated by the presence of itinerant teachers for these children. Their study showed that experience of working with itinerant teachers positively affected teachers' attitudes.

The importance of support from specialist resource teachers was also highlighted in another study conducted in the USA (Miller & Savage, 1995), which compared the attitudes towards inclusion and the perceptions of self-efficacy, competence, teaching satisfaction and judgments of the appropriateness of teaching adaptation of regular education teachers who co-taught with resource teachers in inclusive classrooms and their counterparts in traditional classrooms. Regular teachers in inclusive classrooms reported positive attitudes towards inclusion and high perceptions of self-efficacy,

competence and satisfaction. Regular teachers in traditional classrooms held less positive perceptions and viewed classroom adaptations as less feasible, and less frequently used, than did teachers in classrooms with the protected resource of two teachers.

4.3.5 Past experiences

Some of the teachers recounted their past experiences as an important factor influencing their attitude towards inclusive education.

For instance, a teacher remarked as follows:

I think in the past I have not been successful teaching in an inclusive class so it has affected my acceptance of inclusive education (Verbatim comment from teacher 1).

The view of one teacher is noteworthy here:

Last year I had about two pupils with disabilities in my class, I encountered some challenges during teaching because they were slow learners and portrayed some undesirable behaviours, if I had my way, I will avoid teaching them (Verbatim comment from teacher 2).

Another teacher stated that:

I took a postgraduate programme in special education last year because I felt that previously I was lacking the knowledge and experience in handling special education. Now I will fully appreciate inclusive education. (Verbatim comment from Teacher 3)

Another teacher intimated that:

My previous encounter with a particular pupil with disabilities in the neighbouring school changed my attitude towards inclusive education totally. Now I have gained new knowledge about inclusive education and develop positive attitude towards inclusive education and will do everything possible to support it. (Verbatim comment from Teacher 4).

From the discussions above it was very evident that respondents past or previous experiences are contributed to their attitude towards inclusive

education. The findings are in consonance with Mahat (2008) who notes that in order

to find out the attitudes of teachers towards students with disabilities, In his view,

Mahat (2008) suggest that the attitudes of mainstream teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities are influenced by past experiences (previous experience with teaching students with disabilities), previous knowledge (training in the field of inclusive education) and newly acquired knowledge (professional development or training modules).

4.3.6 Gender

From the discussions below, gender appears to be a factor that influences the attitudes of regular teachers in the district towards inclusive education.

Some teachers shared similar views relating to the issue of gender, they contended that:

A respondent commented on this sub-theme by saying that:

I have realized that the female teachers especially are very patients and sympathetic towards the children with disabilities than the male teachers (Verbatim comment from teacher 1).

Another respondent asserted that:

The female teachers understand inclusive education better; they understand the special children and handle them better. They are more responsive to their needs than the male teachers (Verbatim comment from teacher 2).

Inferring from the above, it is clear that the female teachers understand inclusive education better and exhibit positive attitude towards it. These findings corroborate Anthony (2011), who found that there was a marginal tendency for female teachers to express more positive attitudes towards the idea of integrating children with behaviour problems than male teachers. Female teachers had a greater tolerance level for integration and for special needs persons than did male teachers (Ryan 2009).

4.4 Research question 4: What challenges do teachers face in teaching of children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Tano south district?

Table 4 is the data gathered from teachers in regular classrooms in Tano South District on the challenges they face in teaching children with disabilities in inclusive schools. 7 items were posed to the respondents.

Table 4.4: Challenges Teachers Face in Teaching Children with Disability in Inclusive Schools

| Statement | Agree | Disagree |
|---|-----------|----------|
| It will be difficult to modify the educational curriculum to meet the needs of learners with disabilities | 122(61%) | 78(39%) |
| I don't have enough experience in handling learners with disabilities | 170(85%) | 30(15%) |
| The assessment procedure for learners with disabilities is challenging | 155(78%) | 45(22%) |
| There is inadequate administrative support for inclusive classroom. | 180(90%) | 20(10%) |
| There are inadequate material resources as well as human skills to be able to handle learners with disabilities | 190(95%) | 10(05%) |
| there is no functional curriculum in the classroom for learners with disabilities | 110(55%) | 90(45%) |
| I am not competent, so I am not ready to handle children with disabilities in my classroom. | 140 (70%) | 60(30%) |

Source: Fieldwork Data, (2022).

Data from Table 4.4 are the views of teachers about the challenges they face in teaching children with disabilities in inclusive schools. Item 1 on the table stated that it will be difficult to modify the educational curriculum to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. In response to that, 122 participants representing 61% agreed to that and 78 participants representing 39% disagreed to the statement. The data further sought to elicit the views of respondents on their level of experience in handling learners with disabilities; 170 (85%) participants agreed to the statement that “I don't have enough experience in handling learners with disabilities while 30 (15%)

disagreed to the statement. Furthermore, 155 participants, representing 78% agreed that the assessment procedure for learners with disabilities is challenging to them and 45 participants; 22% disagreed. A greater percentage of the participants (190, 90%) agreed that there is inadequate administrative support for inclusive classrooms whilst 10 (05%) disagreed to the statement. On the subject of curriculum adaptation and modification, 110 participants representing 55% agreed that there is no functional curriculum in the classroom for learners with disabilities whilst 90 participants representing 45% disagreed that there is no functional curriculum for learners with disabilities. The last item; questionnaire item 7 stated that “I am not competent, so I am not ready to handle children with disabilities in my classroom”. 140 respondents (70%) agreed to the statement and 60 respondents (30%) disagreed to the statement.

During the interview with the respondents, teachers agreed that they experience some challenges in trying to implement inclusive education. Same results were obtained from questionnaires and interviews. They include;

4.5 Lack of Regular Training

Lack of teachers’ training emerged as sub theme on inherent challenges regular classroom teachers face in teaching of special needs children in inclusive schools. A teacher commented that:

In order to achieve professional skills, one has to go through training. When teachers do not receive regular training, it does not help them in discharging their duties because constant training equips teachers with the necessary skills to handle the students with diverse needs (teacher 1)

A respondent commented on this sub-theme by saying that:

I am not trained for inclusion education therefore I am not well equipped about how to handle an inclusive classroom. Workshops should be on ongoing basis until we feel that we are well equipped to teach inclusive classrooms effectively. In service training also goes a

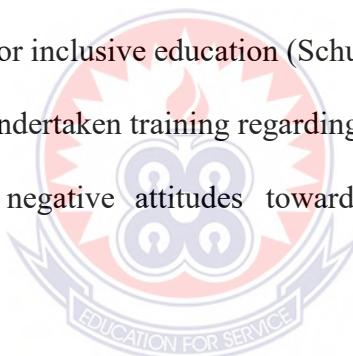
long way on the part of an inclusive curriculum. (teacher 2)

Deducing from the above it is clear that most teachers do not have the requisite training as far as inclusive education is concerned and this poses much problem to the implementation of the programme.

The findings above are in line with Heiman (2002) who noted that teachers may resist inclusive practices on account of inadequate training. It would appear that teachers perceive themselves as unprepared for inclusive education because they lack appropriate training in this area (Daane, Beine-Smith & Latham, 2000).

Inadequate training relating to inclusive education may result in lowered teacher confidence as they plan for inclusive education (Schumm et al., 1994).

Teachers who have not undertaken training regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities, may exhibit negative attitudes toward such inclusion (Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2001),



4.5.1 Lack of Competencies

Lack of competencies also emerged as sub theme on inherent challenges regular classroom teachers face in teaching of disabilities children in inclusive schools.

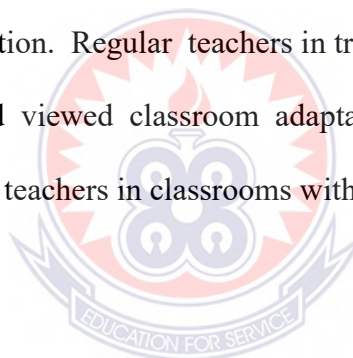
The view of one teacher is noteworthy here:

Competency and satisfaction are panacea to successful inclusion. In order for the inclusion to be successful the teachers who are handling them should be competent so as to help achieve the aim of inclusive education. (teacher 1)

Another teacher intimated that:

Teaching in the inclusive classroom is very tedious therefore it requires teacher who are competent in order to handle all children equal. Thus, the lack of training will impede the effective implementation of the programme. (teacher 2)

Judging from the above it is clear that Competency helps in successful inclusion of students. Without competency the teachers cannot achieve their competency. The assertion above is in line with Ainscow and Sandill (2010) who contended that the importance of support from specialist resource teachers was also highlighted in another study conducted in the USA (Ryan, 2009), which compared the attitudes towards inclusion and the perceptions of self-efficacy, competence, teaching satisfaction and judgements of the appropriateness of teaching adaptation of regular education teachers who co-taught with resource teachers in inclusive classrooms and their counterparts in traditional classrooms. Regular teachers in inclusive classrooms reported positive attitudes towards inclusion and high perceptions of self-efficacy, competence and satisfaction. Regular teachers in traditional classrooms held less positive perceptions and viewed classroom adaptations as less feasible, and less frequently used, than did teachers in classrooms with the protected resource of two teachers.



4.5.2 Lack of Teaching and Learning Materials

Lack of teaching and learning materials emerged as another sub theme on inherent challenges regular classroom teachers face in teaching of children with disabilities in inclusive schools.

The view of one teacher is noteworthy here:

Unless the government of Ghana has enough funds to provide learning facilities like computers, tape recorders, Braille, hearing aids, overhead projectors the issue of inclusion will always remain on paper. (Teacher 1)

Another teacher intimated that:

Teachers rely heavily on a diverse range of materials to support their teaching and their student s' learning. These are essential to effective instruction as they assist to reinforce and supplement the instructor's communication during the presentation of the lesson. Therefore, if the materials are not available it will it will not help to achieve the

objective of the inclusive education programme. (Teacher 2).

Grounded from the above it is obvious that TLMs enhances teaching and learning because pupils are able to see and often feel what the teacher teaches and this go a long way to stimulate pupils' interest and increase understanding and retention. TLM therefore serve as multi-sensory approach of teaching.

One factor that Lindsay et al (2014) consistently found to be associated with more positive attitudes is the availability of support services at the classroom and the school levels. Here, support could be seen as both physical (resources, teaching materials, IT equipment, a restructured physical environment) and human (learning support assistants, special teachers, speech therapists) (Lindsay et al., 2014).



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of results for the study. The results are discussed in line with the research questions raised to guide the study.

5.1 How do teachers perceive the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in Tano South District?

From the data gathered in Table 1 about how teachers perceive the inclusion of children with disabilities in the classroom, it was revealed that majority of the teachers (150 respondents, 75%) in Tano South District feel that students with disabilities, even if they would be included in regular classrooms, that should not be on a full-time base. The findings from this study fell within the postulation of Lewis and Doorlag (1995) when they noted that inclusion, in their view, tend to be biased towards students with disabilities that negatively affect their school performance. They further stated that special education professionals do not concur with the assumption that full-time inclusion is the appropriate placement for students with disabilities. Their strong contention is that professionals who are opposed to full-time inclusion advocate those other options, like resource rooms, should be available so that educational programmes could be tailored down to the specific needs of individual students. From the findings in this study, it is clear that teachers in Tano South still oppose the view that learners with disabilities should be admitted in the regular classroom on a full-time base. The findings further showed that teachers did not have adequate pedagogical skills to be able to handle learners with disabilities in the regular classroom, hence their unpreparedness to admit those learners in their classrooms. Respondents numbering 180, representing 90% agreed to the statement that it will be

difficult to handle learners with disabilities because they have little knowledge on inclusive pedagogy. This finding confirms what Sharma, Forlin, Loreman and Forlin (2012) espoused that the existing patterns and programmes of teacher training follow the traditional teacher education with emphasis on teaching general education students and little regard for inclusive pedagogy and that quality teacher training should be available before and during the implementation of an inclusive programme. From these findings, it was clear that teachers are not ready for inclusive practice because of inadequate quality teacher training before and during the inclusive programme implementation.

Furthermore, the findings from the study revealed that teachers agreed to the view that inclusive education is the best way to educate learners with disabilities as 88% of the respondents agreed to that statement. Hence, this confirms the notion postulated by researchers such as Ainscow (2020) and Anthony (2011) that Teacher' knowledge, emotions and skills about inclusive education are particularly important in the successful implementation of the inclusive education programme. They further concluded that inclusive education can therefore be conceptualised as good education for everyone and the best way to educate children with SEN.

Inclusion therefore, should be regarded as a shared responsibility for both generalist and specialist teachers in providing a full continuum of services delivery options to all students with special educational needs within the school context as well as responding to diversity and being open to new ideas, empowering all members of community and celebrating differences in a dignified way (Heiman, 2002; Kong,2008). Results from this study also revealed that teachers have acknowledged that inclusion is a shared responsibility between specialist teachers and general curriculum teachers.

This will go a long way to make teachers responsible provided the system and the structures are put in place to ensure diversity in their learning environments, hence, what Kusi (2012) concluded, that when every member in the school environment (teachers, students and parents) are involved in school activities, the value and acceptance of diversity in the school culture increases.

The findings from this study further indicated that teachers see the ability and performance of children with disabilities comparable to their peers without disabilities (53% agreed whereas 47% disagreed). These findings are however in contrast with the observation of Adane (2013) that stereotyping children with disabilities does not end with the family but is also a common practice in the society. As a result, this negative communal stigma regarding the ability and performance of children with disabilities has impeded access to increased social acceptance and positive self-esteem. In this study, teachers believe that children with disabilities can perform equal tasks just as their peers without disabilities. The findings from this study further disagrees with that of De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert. (2011) which opined that teachers do tend to have negative perceptions towards inclusion. Although teachers would want to see fairness and equitable distribution of education, teachers still view children with disabilities as different, and not well prepared to teach them.

In conclusion, the findings from this study indicated that teachers are of the view that children with disabilities should not be included in the regular classroom for a full-time base. It also indicated that teachers think they are not competent enough to handle learners with disabilities because they have little knowledge in inclusive pedagogy. The findings further indicated that teachers see inclusion as shared responsibility between the general curriculum teacher and the special education

teacher. Finally, the findings showed that respondents see children with disabilities as having the same abilities with their peers without disabilities.

5.2 In what ways do regular classroom teachers perceptions influence the teaching of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district?

The question 2 which sought to find out how regular teachers' attitudes influence their teaching of special needs children in inclusive schools showed that teachers are ready for only learners with mild disabilities in their classrooms as 88% of the respondents agreed to that statement. They also stated that the school learning environment is not appropriate to include learners with disabilities. The findings from this study confirmed that of Forlin and Chambers (2011) that the severity of the disability that teachers are required to accommodate within their classroom is inversely associated with their perception towards inclusion. That is, the more severe the child's disability, the less positive their perception is towards inclusion.

Again, teachers were of the view that they have not taken any detailed course of study on learner diversity to be able to handle learners with disabilities (80% agreed as against 20% who disagreed) This revelation agrees with what Graham and Spandagou (2011) observed that the inclusion of a compulsory module on diversity in a postgraduate degree promoted an inclusive perception. Pedagogies that combine formal training and planned hands-on experience with people with disabilities have been shown to improve preparedness and positive perceptions towards inclusion. The findings further proved what Campbell, Gilmore and Cuskelly (2003) stated that, irrespective of degree type, trainee teachers had a better understanding of the potential of children with disabilities after completing a unit of study with a strong focus on inclusive education

(Campbell, Gilmore and Cuskelly, 2003).

Furthermore, results from the data indicated that 52% of the respondents agreed that they cannot handle learners with disabilities because they have not been given any in-service training in handling learners with disabilities in the classroom. This result is in line with what Oslon (2003) observed that the general education teachers lacked training and in-services for successful inclusion of students with disabilities in the general classroom.

The results further showed that all the respondents (100%) agreed that they needed additional resources as well as human skills to be able to handle learners with disabilities. The findings from the data showed that teachers have the perception that they do not have adequate skills to be able to handle learners with disabilities. They are also of the view that there are inadequate material resources that will augment their human skills in educating learners with disabilities. These findings agreed with other research findings that other teachers stressed their concern that, as more students were included, teachers would need additional tools and skills for coping with the social and emotional problems that accompany inclusive schooling (Idol, 1997).

Inversely, all the teachers in this study (100%) disagreed that their school learning environments were well designed and appropriate for them to include learners with disabilities. This falls in line with the findings of McLeskey et al. (2001) who indicated in their survey study that teachers in well-designed inclusive programs had significantly more positive perspectives and understanding towards inclusion compared to teachers who lacked this experience. The findings also showed that teachers lacked the confidence to include the learners due to the nature of the learning environment as it agrees with what Center and Ward (1997) indicated that teachers

who were anxious about including student with disabilities in their general education classroom exhibited lack of confidence in their instructional skills and the quality of support services available at the classroom and school levels.

Finally, results from the study showed that teachers are of the view that pre-service teacher preparation should be improved in order to improve perception and readiness of the service teacher to handle learners with disabilities. Respondents representing 98% agreed that our higher institutions of learning should rather train more teachers in disability issues for them to come and handle learners with disabilities. These findings agreed with other researchers who indicated that because positive perception and understanding towards inclusion among teachers appear to be a necessary factor for successful inclusion, teacher education should invest in teacher preparation activities that can help teachers to teach students with disabilities in inclusion settings (Bullough, 1995; Hutchison & Martin, 1999).

In conclusion, the findings from research question 2 showed that teachers agreed that learners with mild disabilities should be included in regular classrooms and that there should be an improved in-service training for teachers on disability issues. The findings further revealed that our regular learning environments are not appropriate for the inclusion of learners with disabilities.

5.3 What factors influence the perception of regular education teachers towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district?

To answer this research question, respondents were given 8 questionnaire items which revealed among other things that teachers have the view that handling learners with disabilities should be more of the responsibility of female teachers than male teachers.

These views from the respondents are in consistence with what Ryan (2009) noted about gender role in inclusion. With regard to gender, the evidence appears in consistence with some researchers who noted that female teachers had a greater tolerance level for integration and for disability persons than did male teachers (Ryan, 2009). The findings further agreed with that of OConnor (2007) who noted that there was a marginal tendency for female teachers to express more positive perceptions towards the idea of integrating children with behaviour problems than male teachers.

Again, research indicates that younger teachers and those with fewer years of experience have been found to be more supportive to integration (Lindsay, 2003). The findings in this study also revealed that 65% of the respondents agreed that newly trained teachers should handle learners with disabilities than the older teachers in the system. This finding from the study further agreed with the research conducted by Harvey and Kamvounias (2003) who compared the willingness of teacher trainees and primary teachers to accept children with SEN in their classes. His findings indicated that there was a clear reluctance on the part of the more experienced primary teachers compared to teacher trainees in their willingness to integrate such children.

Moreover, the study revealed that teachers of Tano South could have a positive perception towards inclusion if specialist resource teachers are posted to their schools to augment the efforts of the regular classroom teacher. This was evident in the results when the respondents, 83% agreed to the statement that specialist resource teacher should be posted to their schools to augment their services. The findings from this study justified what Kauffman et al. (2016) noted that support from specialist resource teachers was also identified as an important factor in shaping positive teacher

perceptions to inclusion. Janney et al. (1995) further supported this claim when they found that one of the factors cited by their respondents that had contributed to the success of the part-time integration programme, they were implementing was the existence of effective support, both interpersonal and task related, provided by the school's special education teachers.

The study further revealed that there is the need for a significant restructuring of the physical environment and the provision of adequate and appropriate equipment and materials in order to make inclusion possible in their schools. This result was confirmed as 100% of the respondents agreed to that view. This view expressed by the respondents situates itself with what Janney et al. (1995) stated that a significant restructuring of the physical environment (making buildings accessible to students with physical disabilities) and the provision of adequate and appropriate equipment and materials were also instrumental in the development of positive perceptions towards the integration of learners on part-time into mainstreaming.

In conclusion, the results from research question three, which was to ascertain the factors that influenced the perception of teachers towards inclusion revealed that there was gender influence where teachers thought that female teachers could be in a better position to handle learners with disabilities than male teachers. The study also revealed that long serving teachers were of the view that the younger ones should practice inclusion. Teachers were also of the view that a significant restructuring of the physical environment and the provision of adequate and appropriate equipment and materials will make inclusion possible to them. Finally, the study revealed that the availability of specialist resource teachers in various schools to augment the effort of the regular classroom teachers influenced the perception of teachers in Tano South

District about the inclusion of learners with disabilities.

5.4 Research question 4: What challenges do teachers face in teaching of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district?

From the analysis of the results on the challenges that teachers face in teaching children with disabilities in inclusive schools in the Tano South District, it was evident that teachers encountered challenges in areas of curriculum adaptation and modifications, assessment procedures or processes, material availability and self-competency of the teachers, among others. On the issue of curriculum adaptation and modifications, 61% of the respondents (166) expressed their views that it was difficult to modify the educational curriculum to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. These findings from this study aligned with that of Loreman, Forlin and Sharma (2007) who stated that some teachers are of the view that educating students with and without disabilities in the same classroom faces some challenges such as modification in the curriculum and instruction, teachers' confidence level, collaboration between the teachers and the school administration, experience in dealing with students with disabilities and assessment and grading practice in an inclusive classroom.

It was again evident from this study that teachers felt they do not have enough experience to handle learners with disabilities. This was shown in the data when 85% of the teachers said they do not prior experience in handling learners with disabilities, so they were not ready to handle children with disabilities in their classrooms. These results from this study confirm that of other researchers such as Kuyini and Desai (2008) and Subban and Sharma (2006). In their findings, they stated that possessing previous experience as an inclusive educator appears to positively predispose teachers toward inclusive education (Hodge & Jasma, 2000). It would appear that previous

contact with persons with disabilities allows regular education teachers to feel comfortable within the inclusive classrooms (Kuyini & Desai, 2008; Subban & Sharma, 2006).

The findings further showed that there was inadequate administrative support towards inclusion as the respondents (90%) stated inadequate administrative support as their barrier to inclusion. This revelation is not different from What Idol; Larrivee and Cook stated in their findings that successful implementation of inclusive education demands collaboration between the school administration and the teachers. The administration should be committed in providing the appropriate materials necessary for inclusive practices as this could be a challenge to teachers. Administrative support has also been cited as a significant factor in determining teacher perception towards inclusion, as the teacher feels reaffirmed if the school principal fosters a positive learning environment for both teachers and students (Idol, 1994; Larrivee & Cook, 1979). It is on this base that Larrivee and Cook (1979) warned that lack of administrative support may lead to lack of teachers' confidence and may feel reluctant to give their best in an inclusive classroom.

The results from the study further showed that teachers lack the confidence to handle learners with disabilities as the data show that 70% of the teachers see themselves as not being competent to handle learners with disability, hence they are not ready to include them in their classrooms. It is in this vein that Sigafos and Elkins (1994) concluded that mainstream educators generally lacked confidence as they attempted to include students with disabilities into their classes. This may be as a result of lacking proficiency about modifying the regular education curriculum to suit students with individual learning needs. Further, Avramidis et al. (2000) supports the view that

teachers who perceive themselves as competent inclusive educators often have more positive perception towards inclusive education. The authors also asserted that teachers acquire increased competence as a result of increased training in the field of inclusive education.

In conclusion, the results showed that teachers faced a number of challenges in including learners with disabilities in their classrooms which included the difficulties they face in modifying the educational curriculum, their lack of prior experience in teaching learners with disabilities, inadequate administrative support for inclusion and their lack of confidence in their competency on disability education.



CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of general education teachers towards inclusion of children with disabilities and special educational needs in basic schools within the Tano South District in the Ahafo Region of Ghana. It specially sought the following:

1. To determine how teachers perceive the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in Tano South District.
2. To ascertain the influence of teachers' perception towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district.
3. To examine factors that influence the perception of regular education teachers towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district.
4. To explore the challenges teachers face in teaching children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district.

6.1 Summary of Major Findings

The major findings are summarised below:

6.1.1 Teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education

The results from the data revealed that teachers in Tano South District have negative perceptions towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in their classrooms. The data revealed that teachers were ready to accept students with disabilities only on part-time base but not full inclusion. The results again showed that teachers had little knowledge on inclusive pedagogy even though they agreed that inclusive education is

the best way to educate all learners. The study further showed that the regular teachers in the district see inclusion as a shared responsibility between specialist teachers and the general curriculum teacher in providing a continuum of support for learners with disabilities. Finally, the study revealed that there is a need for the schools to adopt changing cultures that will be responsive for learner diversity as teachers have the view that learners with disabilities can equally perform academically as their counterparts without disabilities.

6.1.2 The influence of Teachers' attitudes towards the Teaching of Children with Disability in Inclusive Schools

From the findings on research question two which sought to ascertain the influence of teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of children with disabilities, the findings indicated that teachers were only ready to teach learners with mild disabilities in their regular classrooms. It also revealed that regular classroom teachers did not have adequate knowledge on learner diversity as the finding showed that there was neither a detailed pre-service nor in-service training course undertaken by the teachers in the district on learner diversity. The results also showed that there are inadequate resources both material and human to augment the little efforts put in by the general classroom teachers on inclusivity. Data from the study also showed that the learning environments in the Tano South District were not disability friendly.

6.1.3 Factors influencing teachers' perception towards inclusive education

The results from the study indicated that the gender of the classroom teacher had influence on the perception of the teacher towards inclusive education as the teachers were of the view that female teachers should be trained to handle learners with disabilities than male teachers. From the data, it was again evident that the teaching

experience of the classroom teacher was influential on the perception towards inclusion. The data showed that newly trained teachers were assumed to be the best professionals to handle learners with disabilities than old teachers. Furthermore, the age of the learner with a disability was another determinant for inclusion as teachers were ready to accept learners who were at least at their adolescent stage than learners at their early and middle adolescents. Moreover, the data showed that there is inadequate pre-service as well as in-service training of teachers about children with special educational needs. It was again evident that the special education teachers in the district are woefully inadequate to augment the strength of the general classroom teachers to ensure the effective education of learners with disabilities. Finally, the results indicated that the physical learning environment, the provision of adequate and appropriate materials were factors that again influenced the perception of teachers towards inclusion in the district. Teachers were of the view that these resources were lacking in the district, and the environment was not a disability friendly to accommodate learners with disabilities.

6.1.4 Challenges Teachers Face in Teaching Children with Disability in Inclusive Schools

The results from this study indicated that teachers find it difficult to modify the educational curriculum to meet the learning needs of learners with disabilities. It was again revealed that teachers have little or no prior experience in handling learners with disabilities hence assessment procedures and classroom learning adaptations were challenging. Also, there is inadequate administrative support for inclusive classroom in the district. The results again showed that teachers lacked confidence in handling learners with disabilities because they saw themselves as not competent on issues of disability. Finally, there are inadequate material resources as well as human

resources to be able to handle learners with disabilities.

6.2 Conclusion

This study has attempted to assess teacher attitudes towards inclusion and identify the factors that influence these attitudes. The success of inclusion largely depends on teachers' attitudes towards students with special educational needs (SEN) and their knowledge on how to properly educate them. In this study the general attitude of inclusion was not very encouraging; teachers appear to recognise the value and benefits associated with inclusive practice in mainstream classrooms. The study did report significant barriers to successful inclusion; the most common concern being inadequate training in inclusive practice. Overcoming this barrier requires the development of teachers' competences to better meet the needs of students with special educational needs. Thus, appropriate training and professional development are significant to the success of inclusion. Support is also required, on a regular basis to ensure successful inclusive practice within mainstream schools. These findings may help to highlight the importance of teacher attitudes and efficacy beliefs to successful inclusion in Ghana.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the researcher makes the following suggestions:

- 1 The Special Education Unit of the Ghana Education Service in the district should organize in-service training and sensitization fora on issues of disabilities and inclusivity that can influence the negative perceptions of regular teachers in the district towards inclusion.
- 2 The head teachers at the various basic schools should liaise with the district education office to supply adequate material resources that would make the

inclusion of learners with disabilities friendlier to the teachers

- 3 The Ghana Education Service should as a matter of urgency liaise with the higher institutions of learning to train and post more special educators to the basic schools.
- 4 The Ministry of Education, through the Ghana Education Service, restructure the physical design and/or modify the existing ones (UDL) to be disability friendly that can make inclusion possible for teachers and the learners.
- 5 The district education office should organize in-service training for head teachers and other management members of the schools so that they would be supportive of the teachers to facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities.



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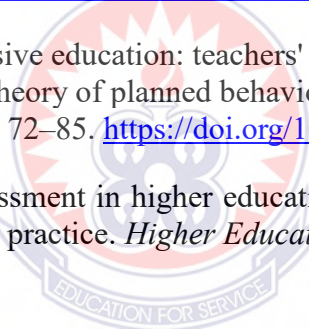
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction

| | |
|---|---|
|  | UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION <small>P.O. Box 25, Winneba, Ghana Tel: +233 (0)20 2043046</small> |
|---|---|

16th March, 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MRS. LINDA SERWAAH WIREKOH

I write to introduce to you Mrs. Linda Serwaah Wirekoh an M. Phil Student of the Department of Special Education with index number 202122460.

She is currently working on her thesis on the topic: **“Teachers’ Perception towards Inclusive Education in Tano South District of Ghana”**. She needs to administer questionnaire and conduct interview in your school.

I should be grateful if you could give her the needed assistance to enable her collect the data

Thank you for the consideration and assistance.

Yours faithfully,


MRS. FLORENCE AKUA MENSAH
(Ag. Head of Department)

Appendix B

Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this questionnaire on teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education in the Tano South District of Ghana. Your valuable insights will contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools.

Please note that your participation in this questionnaire is voluntary, and all responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. The information collected will be used solely for research purposes and will be reported in aggregate form to ensure anonymity.

Inclusive education aims to create equitable learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of all students, including those with special educational needs. By understanding teachers' perceptions, we can identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to enhance inclusive practices in the district.

The questionnaire consists of a series of questions regarding your beliefs, experiences, and challenges related to inclusive education. Please provide your responses based on your personal experiences and perceptions. There are no right or wrong answers, and we value your honest opinions.

We kindly request that you respond to the questionnaire to the best of your ability, considering your experiences as a teacher in the Tano South District. Your participation is vital in shaping the future of inclusive education and promoting quality learning for all students.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the questionnaire or the research study, please feel free to reach out to us. Your feedback and input are highly appreciated.

Thank you once again for your valuable contribution.

Sincerely, [Researcher's Name] [Research Institution/Organization]

Teachers' perceptions about the inclusion of children with disabilities

| Statement | A g r e e | Disa gree |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|
| Students with disabilities should not be taught in regular classroom on full-time bases. | | |
| It will be difficult for me to handle learners with disabilities because I have little knowledge on inclusive pedagogy | | |
| . IE is good for everyone, and it is the best way to educate learners with disabilities | | |
| . The school should adopt a changing culture that will make it more responsive to differences | | |
| . I see inclusion as a shared responsibility for both generalist and specialist teachers in providing a full continuum of services. | | |
| . There is a lack of support and resources for teachers to be able to handle learners with disabilities | | |
| . the ability and performance of children with disabilities is compared to their peers without disabilities | | |

The influence of Teachers' perception on the inclusion of children with disabilities

| Statement | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| Only learners with mild disabilities should be brought to inclusive classrooms | | |
| I have not taken any detailed course on learner diversity to be able to handle learners with disabilities | | |
| . There will be greater challenges in handling learners with disabilities in the general classroom | | |
| . I do not have any training or in-service training in handling learners with disabilities in the classroom. | | |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| . I need additional material resources as well as human skills to be able to handle learners with disabilities | | |
| . My school environment is well designed and appropriate for me to include learners with disabilities in my classroom | | |
| . Our higher institutions should rather train more teachers in disability issues for them to come and handle learners with disabilities | | |

Factors Influencing Teachers' perception towards inclusive education

| Statement | Agree | Disagree |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| More female teachers than male teachers should be trained to handle learners with disabilities | | |
| . Newly trained teachers should handle learners with disabilities than the old teachers in the system. | | |
| . Only learners in their adolescent ages and above should be included in general classroom, but not the infants | | |
| . Including learners with disabilities will be very expensive to practice. | | |
| . There should be improved pre and in-service training of teachers about children with special educational needs | | |
| . The disability of the learner is inherent, and nothing can be done by the teacher to change it | | |
| . A significant restructuring of the physical environment and the provision of adequate and appropriate equipment and materials will make inclusion possible in my school | | |
| . Specialist resource teacher should be posted to my school to augment our services | | |

Challenges Teachers Face in Teaching Children with Disability in Inclusive

Schools

| Statement | Agree | Disagree |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| It will be difficult to modify the educational curriculum to meet | | |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| the needs of learners with disabilities | | |
| I don't have enough experience in handling learners with disabilities | | |
| . The assessment procedure for learners with disabilities is challenging | | |
| . There is inadequate administrative support for inclusive classroom. | | |
| . There are inadequate material resources as well as human skills to be able to handle learners with disabilities | | |
| . there is no functional curriculum in the classroom for learners with disabilities | | |
| . I am not competent, so I am not ready to handle children with disabilities in my classroom. | | |



Appendix C

Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank the participant for their willingness to participate in the interview and provide a brief overview of the study's purpose, which is to explore teachers' perceptions towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the Tano South District. Assure the participant of confidentiality and explain that their responses will be used for research purposes only.

1. How do teachers perceive the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the Tano South District?
 - Can you share your general understanding of inclusive education and its significance in the context of basic schools in the Tano South District?
 - In your opinion, what does inclusive education mean to you as a teacher in this district?
 - How do you perceive the inclusion of children with special educational needs in your regular classroom?
 - Are there any specific challenges or opportunities you associate with the inclusion of these children in your classroom?
2. In what ways do regular classroom teachers' perceptions influence the teaching of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district?
 - How do your perceptions of children with special educational needs affect your teaching approach and strategies?
 - Do you feel adequately prepared and supported to meet the needs of these children in your classroom? Why or why not?
 - Are there any specific instructional methods or resources that you find effective in facilitating the inclusion of children with special educational needs?
 - How do your perceptions of these children influence your interactions with other students in the classroom?
3. What factors influence the perception of regular education teachers towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district?

- Can you identify any factors that shape or influence your perception of inclusive education and the inclusion of children with special educational needs?
 - How do the attitudes and beliefs of your colleagues and school administrators impact your perception and implementation of inclusive practices?
 - Are there any existing policies, resources, or support systems that either facilitate or hinder the inclusion of these children in your classroom?
 - Have you received any training or professional development related to inclusive education? If so, how has it influenced your perception and practice?
4. What are teachers' perceived challenges in teaching children with special educational needs in basic schools in the district?
- What specific challenges do you encounter when teaching children with special educational needs in your regular classroom?
 - How do these challenges impact your ability to meet the individual needs of these children and provide a supportive learning environment?
 - Are there any particular areas where you feel additional support or resources would be beneficial in addressing these challenges?
 - Have you witnessed any successful strategies or initiatives implemented in the district that have effectively addressed the challenges of inclusive education?