UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

TEACHER   PERCEPTIONS   OF THE PRACTICE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SELECTED BASIC SCHOOLS IN THE BEKWAI MUNICIPALITY IN THE   ASHANTI REGION OF GHANA.

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Winneba in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of

Philosophy (Special Education) Degree.

**MAY, 2017**

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

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

DATE………………………………

SIGNATURE……………………….

Supervisor's Declaration

I declare that, I have supervised the student on the underlying study submitted herein and I confirm in constant consultation with me and have my permission to present the work for assessment.
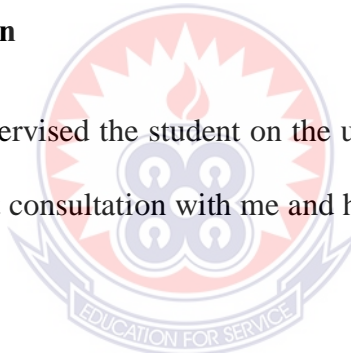
SUPERVISOR'S NAME: Dr. Yao Yekple

DATE:.…………………………………

SIGNATURE:.…………………………

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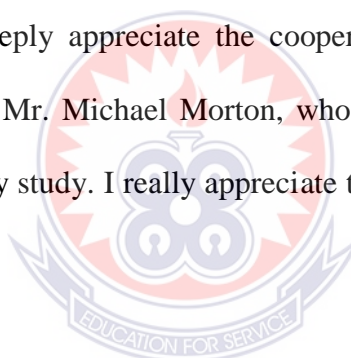
DEDICATION

To my daughter, Christable Tuffour Birago, Obrempong Kwadwo Dr. Yao Yekple and Mr. Michael Morton for their support and encouragement and cooperation throughout my study.
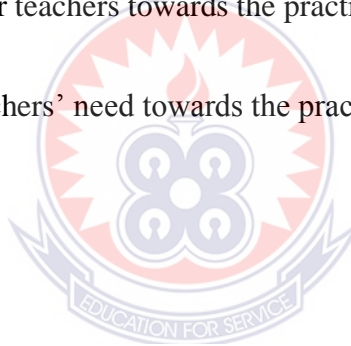
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to sample the opinions of teachers on the practice of inclusive education in the Bekwai Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Sixty regular education teachers, who were randomly selected to participate in the study, responded to a questionnaire developed for the study. The participants' responses were analyzed through descriptive statistics which included frequency distributions and simple percentages. The findings from the study indicated that (1) general education teachers generally did not have positive attitudes toward inclusive education, though they agreed that inclusive education improves the learning of regular children and also demonstrate a significant progress in the learning of special needs children; (2) general education teachers were not prepared well enough for inclusion; and (3) general education teachers were not adequately supported to teach students with special needs. Recommendations made that would enhance the development of inclusive education in the schools include the following: (1) teachers must develop positive attitude towards inclusive education practices; (2) teachers should be supported adequately so they can effectively teach in inclusive classrooms; and (3) teachers must be provided in-service training and other professional training opportunities to teach in inclusive settings.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

The purpose of education, informal or formal, is to enable children acquire the necessary skills for living effectively in their respective communities. Even though, formal education has been recognized as crucial for the development of children with or without disabilities, research results suggest that most children with disabilities have for years experienced some exclusionary practices that have alienated them from attending their regular community schools (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespear, 2005). The exclusionary practices that led to lack of access to education for children with disabilities have led to the increasing awareness and the need to eliminate such practices. Inclusive education has therefore, become the agenda to create access to education for children with disabilities globally (Haskell, 2000). The current wave of thinking that seeks to open educational opportunities to all children is derived from the principles of the Salamanca Statement (1994). Legislation by national, regional and international agencies is aggressively finding ways to support and promote the educational opportunities for all children in general education (Haskell, 2000).

In Ghana, the government has recognized the need for inclusive education practices as a major educational policy, and has accordingly been making some significant efforts toward its development in some schools across the country. The success of inclusive education could be at risk without making efforts to examine inherent issues, especially those concerning teachers' perceptions (Andrews & Frankel, 2010). To a large extent, teachers make up an integral component in the implementation of a successful inclusive education (Haskell, 2000). Haskell further indicated that it is imperative to conduct empirical studies on teachers' perceptions on

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inclusive education. This is because they are critical to the process of accepting the inclusion of children or students with disabilities into their regular education classrooms. Also, it is important to examine the opinions teachers have towards the implementation of inclusive education. Haskell explained that whatever perceptions teachers hold, is likely to influence their behaviors towards the acceptance of the practice of inclusive education and for the acceptance of children with special needs in their classrooms.

Hammond and Ingalls (2003) have noted that inclusive education cannot be successfully implemented if classroom teachers do not support it. In other words, inclusive education will likely face significant challenges without the support of teachers (Van Reusen, Schoho, & Barker, 2001). Inclusive practices, irrespective of divergent opinions or perceptions teachers' may hold, can be determined about other inherent factors. As noted by Leatherman and Niemeyer (2007), teachers' opinions about inclusive education appear to be influenced by their previous experiences in inclusive classrooms. While according to these authors, teachers may accept the implementation of inclusive practice, this may depend upon their appropriate pre-service training, support from administrators, support from resource personnel, as well as available resources. Opinions often influence perceptions and teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education often are based on their concerns about how inclusive education can be implemented, if they are aware of challenges already affecting their teaching. A common practical concern raised by teachers concerning inclusive education is the accommodation of individualized learning demands of students with disabilities and those without disabilities in the same classroom (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000a).

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Another concern raised by teachers is about apprehension of the quality and quantity of work output by children with disabilities that would be placed in inclusive classrooms. In addition, the lack of adequate support services and limited training and competency skills development in supporting children with disabilities have been identified as some of the major underlying inherent factors influencing the opinions of teachers when it comes to the practice of inclusive education. Wiggins (2012) stated that teachers' perceptions about the practice of inclusive education have a direct link with how they are expected to accept the differing degrees of disabilities in their classrooms. Wiggins further explained that the type of disability also appears to influence teachers' perceptions. For example, Wiggins concluded that teachers generally were more supportive of including children with disabilities such as physical and sensory impairments than those with intellectual, learning and behavioral disabilities (Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995). The success of inclusive education, according to Avramidis and Norwich (2002), is often based on how teachers regard their training or skills they have to meet the learning needs of included children. This underscores the need for effective teacher preparation.

According to Brandy and Woolfson (2008), in recent years and with the emergence of the inclusive agenda, 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. Lack of self-efficacy can make teachers to believe that they cannot teach in inclusive classroom (Meijer & Foster, 1988).

According to Meijer and Foster (1988), 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. Meijer and Foster argued

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that empirical findings from various studies appear to validate the association between high self-efficacy in teachers and their opinions to implement varied instructional strategies for inclusive children. Conversely, teachers with low self-efficacy in their teaching are more likely to see difficulties in learning to be attributable to the child with disabilities (Bender et al., 1995). High self-efficacy is crucial in teachers' acceptance or rejection of the practice of inclusive education. Other issues critical to successful implementation of inclusive education have been mentioned in the special needs education literature, and they include (a) level of training teachers receive and, (b) support services teachers' consider as important for the effective teaching in inclusive classrooms. Andrews and Frankel (2010), recognized that inadequate training and skills are likely to make teachers to feel reluctant in accepting the practice of inclusive education .Several studies regarding training skills and teacher competencies, support why teachers teaching regular children would perceive inclusive practice differently (Sharma, Forlin, Loreman & Earle, 2006).
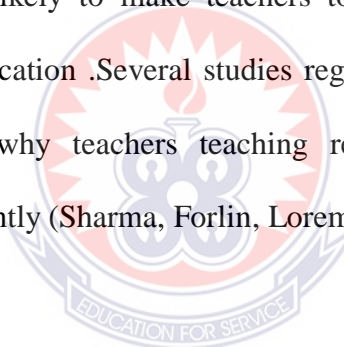
1.1 Statement of the Problem

The lack of access to regular schools for children with disabilities has led to the general agenda for the practice of inclusive education across the world. Within the views of those who cherish the implementation of inclusive agenda, there are certain core elements that are crucial for the success of inclusive practice. These include the perceptions teachers hold about inclusive practice. However, it appears that perceptions teachers hold have not been well factored into the implementation of the inclusive agenda in Ghana, particularly in the Bekwai Municipality of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Additionally, it seems that there are some inherent factors that

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influence teachers' perceptions about the practice of inclusive education that have not been considered in the implementation of the inclusive agenda.

The success of inclusive education also depends upon the preparations made for teachers towards the implementation of inclusive education. However, it appears teachers in the Bekwai Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana have not been given sufficient preparation towards the implementation of inclusive education in their schools. Finally, it seems teachers in the Bekwai Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana have not been given any training, skills and support services they needed for effective practice of inclusive education.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out the perceptions teachers have about the practice of inclusive education in selected Basic Schools in the Bekwai Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.
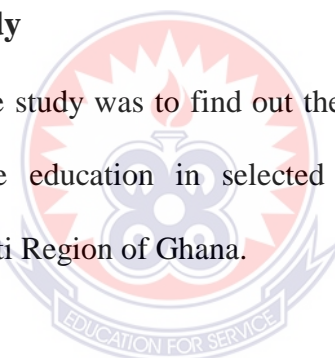
1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to explore:

- General education teachers' perceptions on the practice of inclusive education in Bekwai Municipality.

- Inherent factors that influence the perceptions teachers hold on the practice of inclusive education in the Bekwai Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

- How teachers generally have been prepared for the practice of inclusive education in the Bekwai Municipality.

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- Support services teachers' need towards the practice of inclusive education in the Bekwai Municipality.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What perceptions do general education teachers' have about the practice of inclusive education in the Bekwai Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana?

2. What inherent or underlying factors influence teachers' perceptions about the practice of inclusive education in the Bekwai Municipality?

3. What types of preparation have teachers in the Bekwai Municipality received in teaching in inclusive classrooms?

4. What support services do teachers need towards the practice of inclusive education in the Bekwai Municipality?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Results of the study would help in revealing the perceptions teachers' hold about the practice of inclusive education in regular classrooms in the Bekwai Municipality in the Ashanti region of Ghana. Also, the findings enable the Ghana Education Service (GES) to find means of factoring teachers' perceptions in the implementing of inclusive education in the district. Furthermore, the results of the study would help in identifying the inherent or underlying factors that influence teachers' perceptions about the practice of inclusive education in the District. This would also enable the Ghana Education Service to find out such inherent factors and means of improving on them towards the effective practice of inclusive education in the District. The results of the study would further help in revealing how teachers are generally prepared for

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inclusive education. The results would also enable Ghana Education Service develop professional improvement strategies, such as in-service training, for teachers towards effective inclusive education practices in the District. Also, the results of the study would help in revealing the support services are available for teachers' in the practice of inclusive education in the district. The results would enable the school authorities, in collaboration with the district assembly, to provide needed support services for teachers towards the effective practice of inclusive education in the district. Finally, the results of the study would add to the existing literature for any researcher interested in similar studies.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

Since this study only focused on the perceptions of teachers towards the practice of inclusive education in some selected basic schools, it is however proposed that subsequent studies be conducted into the perceptions of students towards inclusive education. The position of students in the inclusive classroom as well as its impact on their academic performance needs to be explored. There are many municipalities in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. However, this study was carried out only in the Bekwai Municipality, and was focused on teachers; perceptions about the practice of inclusive education in selected regular schools.

1.7 Limitations

Access to information from some respondents, at times seemed to be difficult because they were not ready to provide the information needed for the research work. Also, because of some financial constraints, the study was unable to cover all teachers in junior high schools within the district.

Operational Definition of Terms

Inclusive education: The agenda to create access to education for children with disabilities.

Informal or formal: Enabling children to acquire the necessary skills for living effectively in their respective communities.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study is arranged in five (5) chapters. The Chapter One is the Introduction which deals with the background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, delimitation and limitation of the study. Chapter Two covers the review of literature, which mostly deals with the writing of scholars in the interest to the study. Chapter Three discusses the methodology and deals with issues such as the research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, instruments for data collection, data correction procedure and data analysis. The results and discussion are found in the Chapter Four. Chapter Five summarizes the findings, conclusion and recommendations. Suggestions for further research conclude the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature reviewed for the study. The areas covered include: the theoretical framework and the key themes raised in the research questions such as:

1. Perceptions general education teachers have about the practice of inclusive education.

2. Inherent factors influencing teachers' perceptions about the practice of inclusive education.

3. Preparations teachers need to effectively practice inclusive education.

4. Support services teachers need to practice inclusive education.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theory that guided this study was that of Vygostsky's socio-cultural theory (1978). Vygostsky's theory is a theory in psychology that looks at important contributions that society makes to the development of an individual. This theory stresses the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live. Socio-cultural theory grew from the work of seminal psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, who believed that parents, caregivers, peers, and the culture at large were responsible for the development of higher order functions. Socio-cultural theory focuses on how adults and peers influence an individual's learning. It is a theory of social interaction which will be applied to the problem of educating all children with and without special educational needs in the same classroom.

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The research on inclusion for students with disabilities has a consistent theme running through most of the studies; namely, inclusion is beneficial for students with disabilities. Not only do students benefit academically when included in the general education classroom, they also benefit socially. If one is to accept and embrace Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, then one must accept and embrace inclusion for students with disabilities. Kearsley (2009) also states that learning is embedded in social interaction, and this observation further supports inclusions of students with disabilities. Self- contained settings limit the amount of social interaction for students with disabilities.

Kearsley (2009) posited that the range of skills that can be developed with adult guidance or peer collaboration exceeds what the child can master on his or her own. Dahms et al. (2007) stated that when a student with disabilities copies a typically-developing peer, the student with disabilities will have higher performance. Vygotskian theory explores learning, human action, and socio-cultural influences. According to Udvari-Solner (1996), Vygotsky believed that (a) education is intended to develop one's personality, (b) personality is linked to potential, and (c) inner values are developed through teaching. The teacher guides and directs and the learning must correspond to individual characteristics.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory helps educators to see the differences in learning styles and promote differentiated curriculum. Vygotsky's theories offer the fundamental basis for inclusion by showing the importance of interactions that facilitate learning. To facilitate learning through effective interactions among learners with and without special needs, regular education teachers ought to have positive perceptions towards inclusive education. By embracing inclusion, regular education teachers will be more able to show commitment, preparation and planning by

recognizing and responding to the diverse needs of their students with and without special needs, accommodating different styles and rates of learning, and ensuring quality education to all learners through appropriate classroom arrangements and teaching strategies. Any discussion of teachers' perception towards inclusion should include the teachers' attitudes towards Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory.

2.2 Perceptions Teachers hold about the Practice of Inclusive Education

General education teachers seem to be generally positive about the philosophy of inclusion, but negative about the implementation (Taylor, Smiley, & Ramasamy, 2001). A key element in a successful inclusion program is the positive attitudes of teachers (Clampit, Holifield, & Nichols, 2004). Special education teachers have been found to be more supportive of inclusion than general education teachers. However, since general education teachers themselves are the ones who implement inclusion, it is important to examine teachers' understandings and feelings regarding inclusion (Taylor et al., 2001). General education teachers' positive or negative attitudes toward students with disabilities are the most important ways for success or failure of any attempt at inclusion (Smith & Leonard, 2005).

Larrivee and Cook (1979) identified three factors underlying teacher attitudes toward inclusion. First, Larrivee and Cook concluded that the general education teacher might have academic concerns, including possible negative educational consequences that could impact inclusive education. Second, the general education teacher might have administrative concerns over issues of support without which inclusive education would be unsuccessful. Third, the general education teacher might have pedagogical concerns related to their training and experience necessary to educate students with disabilities in an inclusive setting.

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Previous research has found several variables, which influence individuals' attitudes towards inclusion (Atiles, Jones, & Huynin, 2012).A review of literature by Avramidis, and Norwich (2002) showed that teacher's attitudes could become more positive if more resources and supports are provided. This review of literature indicated that a key element in the successful implementation of the Inclusive Education policy is the views of the personnel who have the major responsibility for implementing it that is, teachers. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes 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 (Avramidis & Norwich). Similarly, research conducted by De Boer et al. (2011) mention that, although teachers may agree on a theoretical level with inclusion, they have negative attitudes as far as its implementation is concerned. According to De Boer et al., teachers' negative attitudes towards disability lead to low expectations from their students, which results in decreased learning opportunities and low academic performance.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) also discovered that teachers who have no direct experience with integration, have very negative attitudes whereas those with more experience with people with disabilities adopt more positive attitudes towards integration. De Boer et al. (2011) also showed that educational environment-related variables, such as the availability of physical and human support, were consistently found to be associated with attitudes to inclusion. According to Avramidis and Norwich, various studies concur that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are strongly influenced by the nature of the disabilities and/or educational problems being presented, the professional background of teachers, limited or non-existent training for teachers to acquire integration competencies, and teachers lack of confidence, both

in their own instructional skills and in the quality of support personnel available to them.

In accordance with the framework of Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, Brown, Odom, and Conroy (2001) suggest that positive interactions among students with and without disabilities determine the success of inclusive education within any given classroom. Vygotsky's social constructivist theory supports that learning is a social advancement that involves language, real world situations, and interaction and collaboration among learners (Brown et al.).Despite the continued movement toward inclusive practices, however, recent studies such as Dupoux, Wolman, and Estrada (2005), Loreman, Forlin, and Sharma (2007), Ross-Hill (2009) have found that many teachers have less than positive attitudes towards students with disabilities and their inclusion in general education classrooms. Several studies have shown that primary and high school teachers share similar perceptions regarding inclusive education; some negative, and some positive as well (Dupoux et al.; Ross-Hill, 2009).

Wiggins (2012) found out that a significant relationship exited between high school teachers' perceptions of inclusion and classroom setting. Wiggins concluded that teachers with experience in teaching within inclusive classrooms held more favorable perceptions toward inclusive education than those teachers who did not teach in inclusive classrooms. Recent studies have also shown that much has not changed over the past two decades regarding high school teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. For example, Ross-Hill (2009) conducted a study, which investigated the perceptions of general education in grades K-12 found that overall, teachers expressed more positive attitudes toward mainstreaming than inclusion. Sharma, Ee, and Desai (2003) found out that training in special education appeared to lessen pre-service teacher's concerns regarding inclusive education.

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Similarly, Subban and Sharma (2001) revealed that teachers who reported having undertaken training in special education were found to hold more positive perceptions about implementing inclusive education. Loreman et al. (2007) reported similar findings which showed that teachers' perceptions of inclusive education were negatively impacted by their training, or lack thereof, in special/inclusive education. In contrast, Ali, Mustapha, and Jelas (2006) also found out that, generally, teachers held positive attitudes towards inclusive education. According to the findings of their study, the teachers agreed that inclusive education enhanced social interaction and inclusion among students, thus minimizing negative stereotypes about students with special needs.

Antonak and Larrivee (1995) stated that teachers' perceptions about education play major role in determining educational practices. Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999) and Smith (2000) also indicated that, it is therefore imperative that teachers hold positive thoughts about inclusion in order to ensure its smooth implementations. Talmor, Reiter and Feigin (2005) argued that the most important prerequisite for successful implementation of inclusive education policies is to have teachers change their negative beliefs about inclusions to positive believes. Janney and Snell (2004) also posited that in order for inclusive schools to be conducive and accommodative for all categories of students, a positive culture of inclusion must exist. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of inclusion and found that it is important to determine relevant for general education teachers to be receptive to the principles and demands of inclusion. Miller, Fullmer, and Walls (1996) and Worrell (2008) supported the findings of Scruggs and Mastropieri by arguing that teachers' opinions strongly impact inclusion practices, and as such negative perceptions affection the practice of inclusion negative and vice versa.

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Antonak and Larrivee (1995) posited that inclusion and the acceptance of students with disabilities can only be accomplished through long-term changes in the perceptions of teachers. Daam, Burne-Smith, and Latham (2000) indicated that research supports the reality that teacher perceptions influence students' achievement, behavior, and self-esteem. Giangreco and Doyle (2000) also mentioned that the attitudes, decisions, and actions of general education teachers are critical factors in the success of students with disabilities in an inclusive setting. The general education teacher may be the most important asset of a school in determining the success of the students with disabilities. However, general education teachers have expressed negative attitudes from the beginning of the implementation of inclusion, especially when dealing with feelings of inadequacy. Kavale and Forness (2000) indicated that some of the concerns of general education teachers about inclusion involve the severity of the disability and the amount of teacher responsibility. Roach and Salisbury(2006) stated that although, the mandate for a least restrictive environment (LRE) has existed for over50 years, local school districts have experienced difficulties with its implementation.

A divided education system evolved for students with disabilities, characterized by failure to master IEP goals, high dropout rates, low graduation rates, high unemployment rates, and lack of integration into the community (Lipsky, 2005). Recurring negative teacher perceptions include lack of time, lack of training, lack of awareness of specific disabilities, and lack of interest, among others (Smith &Smith, 2000). Because teachers are characteristically overloaded, they tend to view change with skepticism (Carter & Hughes, 2006). Teachers need to understand that inclusive programs will benefit the students. One of the major concerns that teachers have is

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that they will not be able to implement the program successfully (Van Reusen et al., 2001).

According to Daam et al., (2000), teachers support the concept of inclusion, but remain uncertain about the reality, wanting to retain some version of the special education classroom. By understanding the attitudinal barriers to inclusion, general education teachers will be able to shift to a better understanding of the benefits of inclusion, creating acceptance for all students (Anderson, 2006). Also, Freytag (2008) noted that truly loving teachers cannot help but think first of the needs of their students. In order to facilitate the practice of inclusion, a frank discussion must occur on the perceptions of general education teachers on the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings.

Some studies have been done regarding the perceptions of teachers towards students with disabilities in both developed and developing countries (Fakolade, Adeniyi, & Tella, 2009; Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010). Findings from those studies generally suggest that teachers' attitudes contributed to the success of students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Dupourx et al. (2006) concluded that attitudes and beliefs of teachers contributed to their abilities to accommodate students with disabilities in their classes. Kataoka, Kraayenoord, and Elkins (2004) also researched principals' and teachers' perceptions of learning disabilities in Japan The authors analyzed five factors of principals' and teachers' perceptions of learning disabilities; namely, (1) changes in the family and social situation, (2) insufficient knowledge of and support for learning disabilities, (3) teachers' abilities and professional development, (4) teacher's situation, and (5) government issues. The authors concluded that the busy lives of teachers and the

pressure of teaching contributed to the difficulties of teaching students with disabilities.

On the other hand, principals perceived that learning disabilities were caused by family and social issues, which included parental discipline of the students. Lopes, Monteiro, Sil, Rutherford, and Quinn (2004) surveyed first through ninth grade general and special education teachers' perceptions about teaching problem students in general education classrooms in Portugal. The majority (85%) of the general and special education teachers indicated that resources were limited to teach students with learning and behavior problems in general education classrooms and more than 90% of the teachers indicated that inclusive education is a set of services and not a specific place. These authors also suggested that even with collaboration with special education teachers, general education teachers do not see much improvement in the academic performance of problem students. Ocloo and Subbey (2008) investigated the factors that influenced teachers' perceptions and attitude, and teachers' views towards the placement of students with disabilities in general education classrooms in Ghana. The results indicated that teachers were aware of inclusive education and also had a positive disposition towards inclusive education, but that inadequate resources were a challenge to implement inclusive education.

A study by Mamah, Deku, Darling, and Avoke (2011) indicated a positive perceptions towards including students with vision loss in three Ghanaian universities McLeskey, Waldron, So, Swanson, and Loveland (2001) found that inclusion teachers had significantly more positive perspectives toward inclusion than the regular education teachers. Another study conducted by De Boer et al. (2011) revealed that the majority of teachers have neutral or negative attitudes towards inclusion. There were no results reporting clear positive results in the De Boerand colleagues'' study.

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A study by Santoli, Sachs, Romey, and McClurg (2008) found out that despite the fact that almost all teachers interviewed were willing to make necessary accommodations for students with disabilities, the majority of those teachers felt that students with disabilities should not be educated in general classrooms no matter what the simplicity or severity of the disability, especially students with behavioural disorders and/or mental retardation. However, the majority of the teachers had a positive attitude toward inclusion which could only be successful with enough training and administrative support. On the other hand, Vlachou (1997) found out that regular school teachers feel that they have nothing much to offer students with mental disabilities in inclusion setting as compared to specialist teachers. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) established that some teachers have the conviction that special schools have more to offer and that they can relieve students from the stress of continuous performance pressure of failure and under achievement in regular schools. As such these teachers have negative unsupportive attitudes towards inclusion.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) established that some teachers have the conviction that special schools have more to offer and that they can relieve students from the stress of continuous performance pressure of failure and under achievement in regular schools. As such these teachers have negative unsupportive attitudes towards inclusion. Similarly, Ainscow (2003) points out that the majority of teachers feel they have got a difficult enough job without having to think about learners with mental disabilities who are viewed as an extra burden. These teachers are not comfortable with the large numbers, poor working conditions and remuneration; hence their resistance against the inclusion of learners with mental disabilities in ordinary classes. The same arguments are provided by Avramidis and Norwich that teachers cannot

promote inclusion while they experience conflicting constraints and expectations, insecurity and a general lack of encouragement.

2.3 Inherent Underlying Factors Influencing Teachers Perceptions about the Practice of Inclusive Education

There are many factors that may influence teachers' perceptions about the practice of inclusive education. Some of the factors include: nature and severity of the disability condition, class size, experience and belief, demographics, level of education, amount of responsibility, Scarcity of teacher training and knowledge of inclusive education, grade level taught.

<u>The nature and severity of the disability condition</u>

Although it appears that teachers tend to be in favor of inclusion as a social and educational principle, their support of the practical implementation of inclusion is dependent on the type and severity of disability, with more reluctant views expressed towards the inclusion of students with more severe disabilities and students with behaviour disabilities (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).The nature and severity of the disability appears to be related to teachers' willingness to accommodate students with disabilities in general classrooms. Scruggs and Mastropieri noted that the highest level of support was given to the inclusion of students with mild disabilities who require the least amount of modification in curriculum and instruction.

The researchers indicated that the severity level of student disability and the amount of additional teacher responsibility required were the two factors that seemed to influence teachers' perspectives toward inclusion. These two factors appeared to be

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related to the belief that including students with special needs would have a negative effect on general education classroom. Conversely, children with emotional and behavioural problems have typically been rated less positively in relation to perception about inclusion (Soodak, Podell, & Lehman 1998, Stoiber, Gettinger, & Goetz, 1998).

In general, teachers believe that students with the most challenging behaviour require additional teacher responsibility and that they are difficult to support. The type of disability that a student has can also impact teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. In a study conducted in the United Arab Emirate (UAE), Algazo and Gaad (2004) found that teachers were more accepting of students with physical disability for inclusion than students with other disabilities such as specific learning difficulties, visual impairments, hearing impairments, behavioral difficulties and intellectual disability, on descending order. Qaraqish (2008) however found that teachers in Saudi Arabia showed positive attitudes towards including students with learning problems in the regular classroom while they showed negative attitudes towards the inclusion of students with physical and behavioral problems in classroom.

Ellins and Porter (2005), and Hastings and Oakford (2003) have pointed out that the acceptance of inclusive education policies among teachers is contingent on the type and degree of disability a child has. Forlin et al. (1996), Mushoriwa (2001), Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996), Smith (2000) and Ward, Center and Bochner (1994) also added that teachers generally accept students who have mild disabilities than those with severe disabilities in inclusive education settings. Avramidiset al. (2000a), Heflin and Bullock (1999), and Stoiberet al. (1998), also stated that the situation is even compounded when the child has emotional and behavioral disorders, teachers are often less interested in admitting such students in their classrooms.

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Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) reviewed 28 reports on surveys conducted on teachers' perceptions in the USA and Australia. A sample of 7,385 teachers in seven states in the USA and one Australian province were surveyed. When teachers were asked about their perceptions regarding inclusion, approximately 65% of general education teachers' perceptions differed based on the state of the disability. While 71.9% of the teachers supported inclusion for students with learning disabilities, approximately 30% of the educators supported inclusion for students with emotional/behavioral disorders, and 23% supported inclusion for students with educable mental retardation. Likewise, Forlin (1995) indicated that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion appear to vary depending upon the type and severity of the disability. Kuester (2000) also conducted a search and found out that educators' attitude toward the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning and learning disabilities may also be influenced by the severity of the disability experienced by such learners.

The inclusion of learners with behavioural disorders and emotional difficulties appear to attract the least favourable responses from mainstream educators (Kuester, 2000). Avramidisetal. (2000a) reported that previous studies support the view that educators perceive learners with emotional and behavioural disorders as more challenging in the classroom, and most mainstream educators believe that they lack the skill, knowledge and competence to effectively include these learners. There evidence that educators are reluctant to include learners with emotional and behavioural disorders, while preferring to include learners with learning disabilities (Briggs et al., 2002). The literature also suggests that educators are more willing to include learners who present with speech and language disorders than they are to include learners with physical disabilities. Teachers are often unwilling to teach

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students with special needs, consistent with their support for inclusion, appears to be related to the severity of the disability. Previous studies have indicated that, in general, teachers are not supportive of the inclusion of students with behavioral disorders, intellectual disabilities, and multiple disabilities (Cook, 2002). The highest level of support is for students with mild disabilities who require the least amount of modification in curriculum and instruction (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). The next studies investigated whether pre-service teachers' attitudes are influenced by the level of disability they were asked to accommodate within their classroom.

Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden (2000b) investigated pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in general, their emotional reaction when dealing with children with special needs, and the effect of institutional and personal variables on their attitudes. The study consisted of 135 pre-service teachers who were studying at a university school of education in the UK. A questionnaire consisting of four components (viz., cognitive, affective, conative, and perceptions of possessed skills) was used to measure the participants' attitudes toward the general concept of inclusion. This multi-component questionnaire was administered during supervised lecture times at the end of the semester. The researchers concluded that pre-service teachers appeared to hold positive attitudes toward the overall concept of inclusion. However, students with emotional and behavioral difficulties (EBD) were seen as causing more concern and stress when compared to other students with special needs. The authors recommended that pre-service teachers should be exposed to comprehensive training in classroom management to meet the needs of students with EBD. Moreover, early exposure to students with special needs through field experience in inclusive classrooms was strongly recommended for pre-service teachers. Hastings and Oakford (2003) also explored pre-service teachers' attitudes

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toward the inclusion of students with emotional and behavioral problems as well as students with intellectual disabilities, and arrived at similar conclusions.

The Hastings and Oakford study included 93 university students who were being trained to work with either children of 4-11 years of age or with children and adolescents 11-19. Of the participants, 31 had previous experience working with students with special needs, and 27 had had social contact with people with special needs. A two-section questionnaire was used in the study; the first section was designed to collect demographic information about participants and their experience with people with special needs, and the second part was a scale designed for this study, called the Impact of Inclusion Questionnaire (IIQ). It was developed to allow comparisons between different student teacher groups and consisted of 24 items. Two versions of the questionnaire were randomly distributed to the participants. One version urged respondents to focus on intellectual disabilities while the second invited them to consider children with emotional and/or behavioral problems in inclusive settings. The results of the study indicated that pre-service teachers' attitudes measured by the IIQ were influenced by the nature of the disability of children who were included. Additionally, children with intellectual disabilities were more acceptable than children with behavioral and emotional problems. Pre-service teachers reported significantly more negative attitudes toward including students with EBD. The researchers concluded that the success of an inclusion program does not depend solely on the teachers' attitudes. For example, supports and appropriate resources were seen as important elements in a successful inclusion program.

Cook (2002) examined the effects of a teacher preparation program on pre-service general educators' attitudes and self-reported weaknesses and strengths related to inclusion. The author analyzed pre-service teachers' attitudes by disability type

because students with disabilities were frequently seen as a homogenous group. One hundred and eighty-one preservice teachers from a large Midwestern university that infused special education content into four seminar courses participated in the study. However, the author reported that there was no systematic procedure to ensure that special education content was covered by instructors, and there was no requirement for the pre-service teachers to work with students with special needs in an inclusive environment. Most of the pre-service teachers were assigned to inclusive classes by chance. For collecting data, pre-service teachers in 16 seminar classes completed a slightly modified version of the Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) scale (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). In addition, 136 participants provided written comments on their main strengths and weaknesses regarding teaching students with special needs.

To ensure uniformity, instructions were scripted and participants were asked to read short definitions of disability categories (e.g., intellectual disability, learning disability, EBD). After analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data, the author reported that participants were in favor of inclusion and believed that it was beneficial for students with EBD, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, and multiple disabilities. Pre-service teachers, however, pointed out that general education classrooms might not be the best settings for all students with disabilities, especially those with severe disabilities. The main effect of disability category was statistically significant for three ORI factors of attitudes toward inclusion (i.e., perceived ability to teach students with disabilities, integrated classroom management, and special versus integrated general education). Students with learning disabilities received significantly higher ratings than students with other disabilities. Moreover, there were statistically non-significant differences between pre-service teachers as a function of

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class standing for three ORI factors (i.e., integrated classroom management, benefits of inclusion, and special versus integrated general education). Pre-service teachers indicated that general educators may not be able to accommodate students with disabilities in their classrooms as they might face classroom management problems.

In summary, although pre-service teachers were found to have positive attitudes toward students with disabilities, they were concerned about the nature and severity of the students' disabilities. Students with EBD were seen as the most problematic group in relation to inclusion. They were associated with more concern and stress compared to other students (Avramidis et al., 2000b), while students with intellectual disabilities were more acceptable in relation to inclusion (Hastings & Oakford, 2003). In addition, pre-service teachers believed that general education classrooms might not be the best settings for students with EBD, mental retardation, or multiple disabilities (Cook, 2002).

These findings suggest that general education pre-service teachers may need extensive training to meet the needs of students with more severe disabilities in inclusive settings. The nature and severity of a student's disability appears to be related to teachers' willingness to include students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Two factors that seem to influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusion are severity of the students' disability and the amount of teacher responsibility needed to facilitate inclusion. Teachers also tend to believe that students with severe disabilities may require more teacher attention. Teachers appear to favor the inclusion of students with mild disabilities because they require the least amount of support in general education settings. The inclusion of students with EBD appears to be less favorable among teachers because of their perceived disruption and negative impact on the inclusive environment.

Class Size

Some studies have found that inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom results in larger class sizes, which increase teachers' workload. Agran, Alper, and Wehmeyer (2002) explained that large class sizes are seen as barriers to successful implementations of inclusive education. Agran et al. further reiterated that large class sizes do not offer teachers the opportunity to pay individual attention to the needs of each student. Cornoldi, Terreni, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) however suggested that, for an inclusive education class to be more effective, the class size should not exceed 20 students. Some teachers were also with the view that the classroom time will be insufficient when students with special needs are included in the general classroom.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) also indicated that teachers believed that the classroom time is insufficient for inclusion efforts. Similarly, Downing, Eichinger, and Williams (1997) found generally positive perspectives toward inclusion as teachers were more concerned about the classroom time required to support students with special needs that might limit their ability to provide an appropriate education for general education students in the inclusive classroom

Avramidis et al. (2000a) conducted a study on the class sizes that is most desirable for teachers. Avramidis et al. found that 35% of educators agree that their class sizes should be reduced to fewer than 20 students, for the practices of inclusive education. The teachers complained about overcrowded classes which caused a lack of space. Insufficient classroom time available for teachers in inclusive classroom was a concern to teachers.

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Also, teachers' commitment, preparation, and planning are key component to look at when discussing successful implementations of inclusive education policies. Mclaughlin et al. (1998) and Sharma(2001) stated that majority of teachers at different levels of education complain about the quantum of work they would have to attend to when the class size increases. However, class size and student-to-teacher ratio are factors in teacher perceptions of inclusion. One group of teachers expressed the belief that collaborative teaching strategies are effective for all students, citing reduced student-to-teacher ratio as the principal benefit (Austin, 2001). Generally, teachers agree that inclusive classes should be less than twenty students (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Teachers interviewed by Smith and Smith (2000) who had reported successful inclusion experiences taught smaller classes and fewer students than the teachers who reported unsuccessful inclusion experiences. One study on teacher perceptions done in Hong Kong reported that general education teachers highlighted large class size as a major cause for concern.

They found out the teachers often find it a challenge to work with a large class comprised of students with and without disabilities (Tam et al., 2006). Short and Martin (2005) also found that class size was an important factor in teacher perceptions of the success of inclusion. Their recommendations include decreasing class size and accessing community volunteers to enhance the learning environment. Rose et al. (2007) stated that respondents to their study were in agreement that class size was a factor in successful inclusion. Although one study by Avramidis et al. (2000b) found that class size was not a factor in preservice teacher attitudes toward inclusion, the overwhelming evidence supports the view that class size is a factor in teacher perceptions of inclusion.

Experience and Belief

Experience also extends to contact with children with special educational needs. This alone can cause negative attitudes. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) contend that teachers with much experience with disabled persons had significantly more favourable attitudes towards integration than those with little or no expense. This is manifested in the study conducted on educators' attitudes towards inclusive education. Peresuh et al., (1997) conducted a study in perspectives on special needs education in Nigeria., Kenya and Zimbabwe. Their study indicated that educators in these countries cope well with learners with special educational needs, since educators are sent to different colleges for in-service training. The three countries used strategies such as workshops, seminars, exchange visits and distance education. Such strategies could also be useful in South Africa to assist educators in handling diversity.

In their study, Avramidis et al. (2000a) included the variable of the ages of educators and although their findings concluded that age did not reveal significant differences in the attitude component; it did affect the teaching-learning situation, especially given the demands of diversity. Aging educators seem to be incapable of acquiring new skills, even if they are exposed to in-service training courses. They tend to continue using teaching methods that they were taughtwhen they were at colleges or universities and this may contribute to a negative approach in an inclusive education. According to Avramidis and Norwich (2002) were also interested in determining the attitudes of educators towards inclusion based on the variable of age. Their findings showed that younger teachers have been found to be more supportive of integration because they came from pre-service training and were well equipped

with skills that are required to teach the LSEN. Their preparedness could also be seen as a reason for their acceptance of integration.

The study of educators' attitudes by Avramidis and Norwich (2002), which included the experience variable, indicated that teachers with fewer years of experience tend to be more supportive of integration. The study also reveals that acceptance of a child with a physical disability was ranked highest among educators with less than six years of teaching experience and declined among those with six to ten years of teaching experience. The conclusion may be made that the most experienced educators were the least accepting. Exposure to children with disabilities appears to affect attitudes toward inclusive education. In a qualitative study by Arbeiter and Hartley (2002), participants included 28 teachers with 1 to 7 years of teaching experience in inclusive classrooms, three principals, and 23 students with disabilities in three inclusive primary schools in different districts of Uganda. Data sources were direct observations of the teachers, individual interviews, focus group discussions, and logbooks.

The results of this study revealed that the teachers viewed the process of inclusion as "getting used to" having students with disabilities included in general education classrooms. The teachers described inclusion as a personal change process, starting from an initial state of ignorance, fear, prejudice, or lack of confidence to the development of a relationship, confidence, skills, and coping strategies. The teachers reported that their attitude change was related to exposure to children with disabilities and positive experiences with inclusion. Other research has shown that teachers who have implemented inclusion in their classrooms for a longer period of time are more likely to have positive attitudes toward students with disabilities.

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In an attempt to identify factors related to teachers" attitudes toward inclusion, Avramidis and Kalvya (2007) investigated the attitudes of 155 general education primary teachers from 30 primary schools in Northern Greece. Thirty-nine teachers were from ten schools that offered inclusive education and had staff with substantial experience teaching students with disabilities. One hundred-sixteen teachers were from 20 general education schools randomly selected across the region. Questionnaire data were collected that included demographics and the *My Thinking about Inclusion Scale* (Stoiber et al., 1998), a 28-item self-report instrument.

The development of the *My Thinking about Inclusion Scale* was informed by earlier attitudinal studies. Participants indicated the extent of their agreement with statements 36 about inclusion on a 5-point Likert scale. Results indicated that teachers who were actively involved in teaching students with disabilities had significantly more positive attitudes compared to their counterparts with little or no experience. Similarly, Avramidis et al. (2000a) explored the extent to which previous experience with inclusive education led to more positive (or negative) attitudes toward inclusion. Participants were 81 teachers from 12 primary and four secondary schools in the UK. A survey consisting of personal and situational variables was administered to participants toward the end of the school year. Results indicated that teachers who had experience with inclusion had significantly more positive attitudes toward inclusion than teachers without experience.

In addition, teachers who had implemented inclusive programs for longer periods of time held significantly more positive attitudes than teachers with little or no experience. Teacher beliefs regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in the classroom may also be influenced by school board policies on inclusion, as well as the beliefs and practices of colleagues and the school culture itself (Jordan &

Stanovich, 2004). Jordan and Stanovich noted the methodological challenges inherent in studying beliefs, but also affirm the importance of this form of research. For example, Jordan and Stanovich observed that specialized training in teaching students with special needs may influence teacher beliefs about inclusion; however teachers' own interests and beliefs may have led them to pursue such specialized training to begin with.

They further speculate that personal experience may contribute to teachers' professional beliefs. As justification for the importance of research into teacher beliefs regarding inclusion, Jordan and Stanovich (2004) stated that "differences in beliefs are associated with differences in practice" (p. 40), which in turn contributes to differences in student success. Jordan and Stanovich found anecdotal evidence to suggest that successful practices in inclusive classrooms can lead to changes in teacher beliefs regarding inclusion. They suggest that encouraging teachers to change their practices may lead them to modify their beliefs as a result of positive experiences, which would be an intriguing path for future study. Qualitative data from Smith's (1997) study into teachers' perspectives regarding high school inclusion supports Jordan and Stanovich's suggestion that successful inclusive practices can have a positive impact on teachers' beliefs about inclusion. In conclusion, research indicates that teachers with more experience working with students with disabilities have more favorable attitudes toward inclusion than teachers with little or no experience.

Also, researchers have noted that mere contact with individuals with special needs may not lead to the formation of positive attitudes toward inclusion. Not surprisingly, it seems that exposure and experience working with students with disabilities is related to one's attitudes. Again, it was found that older, more

experienced educators appear to foster less positive attitudes than younger educators (Subban & Sharma, 2006). Also, the lack of training in the field of inclusive or special education may lead to less positive attitudes toward the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning into mainstream schools, while increased training has been associated with more positive attitudes in this regard (Briggs, Johnson, Shepherd & Sedbrook, 2002). Avramidis et al. (2000a) stated that another variable makes reference to the perceived confidence of mainstream educators. Teachers who perceive themselves as confident enough to include students with barriers to learning appear to hold more positive attitudes toward inclusive education; and, previous experience educating learners experiencing barriers to learning may allow the mainstream teacher to view inclusive educational practices more positively (Avramidiset al., 2000a).

Scarcity of teacher training and knowledge of inclusive education

To implement inclusive education in classrooms, it is important that teachers provide an effective and stimulating educational environment for all pupils. In addition, teachers" experience and their training significantly influence their attitudes (Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Meng, 2008).Despite the fact that it is essential to staff inclusive classes with skilled and trained teachers, there is a shortage of inclusive teacher training programmes. This is a major problem to be solved if the quota of trained teachers is to be met in Bangladesh (Hossain, 2004; Kibria, 2005).

Research outcome indicates that adequately trained professionals are required for students with special needs (Eleweke&Rodda, 2002). In addition, support personnel for training programmes such as audiologists, psychologists, speech and language pathologists, communication support workers and interpreters are very scarce in many

developing countries. Fullan and Miles (1992) suggested that reform in professional development is essential.

On the other hand, Eleweke and Rodda (2002) suggested that a Western model of training from a developed country could be inappropriate for the existing situation in developing countries. As a result, Singal (2008) believes that training is not the sole solution for this challenge; it is also essential to change teachers' values, beliefs and attitudes. Also, teachers existing knowledge is not always sufficient for inclusive teaching. Many teachers have claimed that inclusion policies forced them to enter areas they were unsure about or not interested in (Aliet al., 2006). On the hand, the appropriate educational background of teachers does have positive impact on inclusive teaching (Meng, 2008).

Teachers' knowledge is the key to successfully implementing any educational program. In this study knowledge was defined as the way teachers conceptualize inclusive education. Hodkinson (2005) strongly believed that the implementation of inclusive education is dependent upon the way individual teachers conceptualize an idea or concept such as inclusive education. There are several studies on this issue and Lawson, Parker and Sikes (2006) used a qualitative approach in order to understand their experiences and conceptualizations of inclusive education. Their findings revealed that conceptualization of inclusion varied among participants and teachers' narratives about inclusive education focused on the human as pact of day-to-day involvement with individual pupils.

Another study by Singal (2008) focused on knowledge and aimed to understand inclusive education at various levels of the Indian education system by conducting a qualitative study. She focused on the perceptions, practices and

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experiences of professionals in an inclusive classroom situation in India. The central concern of this research was to listen to participants in order to know more about what actually goes on in inclusive classrooms. She suggested that teachers' knowledge and skills for developing inclusive teaching practices, as well as the encouragement of a change in existing values, beliefs and attitudes, were essential to ensure full participation of all children in a school setting.

Similarly, another study by Hodkinson (2006) examined secondary teachers' knowledge and understanding of inclusion. His aim was to find out how teachers in England, especially newly qualified teachers, conceptualized inclusive education, as well as discovering their attitudes towards it. The author found that this population also had diverse conceptualizations of inclusion, which were mediated by classroom practices. Hodkinson and Devarakonda (2009) examined how inclusion is understood by teachers in India through a literature review and in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The study findings revealed that inclusion is often not well understood and seen by teachers as a vague and complex concept. The authors argue that if inclusive education is to truly become effective, then there is a requirement for teachers to be able to gain more knowledge and understanding of it. Most research revealed that teachers' conceptualization of inclusive education is diverse. Hodkinson (2006) reported that 40% of participants conceptualize inclusive as "education for all".

These participants believed that all mainstream schools should be inclusive. In contrast, Leung and Mak (2010) found that 60.8% of participants interpreted inclusive education as education involving students with special educational needs in mainstream schools and programmes. Sadler (2005) found that 87.6% of teachers

reported that they have "limited" or "very limited" knowledge of inclusive education. None of the teachers rated themselves as having sufficient knowledge. Similarly, Gaad and Khan (2007) found out that teachers do not have enough knowledge and training to address the needs of students in integrated settings. Participants considered their limited knowledge to have an influence on their attitudes, suggesting that lack of knowledge may be an attitudinal barrier, as well as a practical barrier, to the implementation of inclusion.

Demographics

The relationship between teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and their age, gender, and years of experience was investigated in several international and regional studies such as Botswana, Italy, the United Kingdom, UAE and Saudi Arabia. For example, the Botswana study found no significant correlation between attitudes and age (Chhabra et al., 2010) while the Italian study found that teachers' attitudes were significantly associated with their age (Cornoldi et al., 1998), in which younger teachers showed more positive attitudes. Regarding gender, studies conducted in Botswana, Italy and China found no significant relationships between teachers' attitudes and their gender (Chhabra et al., 1998;Cornoldi et al., 1998; Peng, 2000; Wan & Huang, 2005;Wei & Yuen, 2000) while studies conducted in the UAE, UK, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia found a significant relationship between the two variables in favor of female teachers (Algazo & Gaad, 2004;Avramidis et al., 2000a; Fakolade & Adeniyi, 2009;Qaraqish, 2008).

Also, gender and age have both been researched as factors that underlie teachers' perception about inclusive education. These studies, however, have been inconsistent with regards to their findings. Some studies have found no significant relationship between teachers perceptions and gender (Alghazo, Dodeen, and

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Algaryouti, 2003; Koay et al., 2006; Treder, Morse, & Ferron, 2000; Van Reusen et al., 2001). However, Jobe et al. (1996) found out that males were significantly more confident in their ability to teach students with disabilities. This is in agreement with a study conducted by Ernst and Rogers (2009) reported that male teachers also attested to having more positive feelings about inclusion than their female counterparts. While this finding is similar to Jobe et al.'s, it is not clear why male and female teachers differ in their attitudes.

On the other hand, Avramidis et al. (2000b) found out female prospective teachers to be more accommodating for students with disabilities than male prospective teachers. Forlin et al (2009) also analyzed attitudes of teachers towards inclusion and their relationship to age and gender. These researchers found that when considering the age of the pre-service teachers, there were no significant differences in attitudes or levels of concern at either pre-or post-training. They also found no significant gender differences. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) found inconsistent evidence in their literature review of research on teacher attitudes with respect to gender. In their study, Avrarnidis et al. (2000a) included the variable of the ages of educators and although their findings concluded that age did not reveal significant differences in the attitude component, it did affect the teaching-learning situation, especially given the demands of diversity. Aging educators seem to be incapable of acquiring new skills, even if they are exposed to in-service training courses. They tend to continue using teaching methods that they were taught when they were at colleges or universities and this may contribute to a negative approach in an inclusive education.

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2.4 Preparations made for Teachers toward the Practice of Inclusive Education

Burke and Sutherland (2004) found out that giving teachers enough training to prepare them to work with students with special needs in inclusive classrooms helps foster positive attitudes toward inclusion and makes teachers feel prepared to teach in this setting. Alquraini and Gut (2012) describe a range of successful practices as identified in numerous studies on inclusive education, including "effective instruction practices to improve access to core general curriculum, peer support for students with severe disabilities, assistive technology, and administrative support and professional development.

Pre-service training and professional development in inclusive education are very important if inclusive practices are to be implemented successfully in schools (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004). Bosi (2004) stated that teachers should be adequately equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students, as students with special needs

are increasingly being included in classrooms to learn with other students. Choate (1997) also stated that pre-service and in-service teachers need to be trained in special education and inclusive practices which will enable them to provide assessment and teach academic and social skills to all students.

Some researchers (e.g., Al-Zyoudi, 2006; Haider, 2008) found out that general teachers" lack of training, knowledge and skill in inclusive education resulted in teachers developing negative attitudes. Therefore, the need for teachers to be adequately trained is a concern for many advocates of inclusive education. For example, Dickens-Smith (1995) studied the perception of teachers towards inclusive education. She surveyed their attitudes towards inclusive education before and after the training programme. The respondents revealed more favourable attitudes to inclusive education after the training than they did before. Dickens-Smith then concluded that staff development through training and other support opportunities is key to the success of inclusive education practices. As a consequence, descriptions of pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher education need to be discussed in the next two sections.

Pre-service teacher education

According to O'Neill et al., (2009), special education ideology is still very dominant in thought, policy and practices, so special education is at present deeply rooted in most teacher education programmes. For example, a recent study done in New Zealand by Morton and Gordon (2006), which examined the nature and extent of initial teacher education and ongoing professional learning around inclusive education, identified that teacher educators uphold the theory of inclusion but not its practice.

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There were contradictory definitions and contrasting policies and practice of inclusion in teacher education. Therefore they concluded that the up-and-coming teacher might not always have a clear view of what inclusion means in New Zealand. This shows that inclusive education has to be clearly defined and understood by all policy makers and educators and that they need to ensure that they make provisions for inclusive practices in their training programmes. Therefore, teacher education programmes must be geared towards preparing teachers in order to help them meet the challenges of inclusion when they begin teaching in regular classrooms (Smith, Polloway, Patton, Dowdy, 2005).

However, Hodkinson (2005) conducted a study in England, examining final year pre-service teachers' knowledge and understanding of inclusion, and found that while the majority of pre-service teachers do understand that inclusive education is a complex and multi-faceted concept, their understanding of the implementation of inclusionary practices within an applied education setting was limited. Therefore, Hodkinson suggested that effective implementation of inclusive education depends very much on how individual teachers define it and whether they have received the necessary training to inspire a belief that they can deliver in inclusive practices in their classroom.

A similar study was undertaken in the Solomon Islands, studying both teacher educators' and pre-service teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards inclusive education. Semi (2008) interviewed student teachers and lecturers and found out that they had a limited knowledge and understanding on what constitutes inclusive practices. The idea of teaching children with special needs in an inclusive classroom was never introduced to pre-service teachers in the course of their teacher training. Semi consequently concluded that teaching children with special needs in inclusive

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classrooms should be introduced into the curriculum of pre-service teacher training for beginning teachers. This shows that institutions offering pre-service teacher training programmes need to ensure that they make provision for special education and inclusive practices in their programmes.

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There is a significant corpus of international research confirming that pre-service teacher education programs have not traditionally prepared teachers well for inclusive teaching (Abu-Heran, Abukhayran, Domonigo & Perez-Garcia, 2014; Bhatnagar & Das, 2014; Das,Kuyini & Desai, 2013; Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2014). As an example, Das et al. found that 70% of their sample of 349 primary school teachers in Delhi had neither received any training in special education nor had experience with teaching students with disabilities. This finding is supported by Bhatnagar and Das (2014) who conducted focus group interviews with 20 secondary teachers selected from four administrative zones in New Delhi. The secondary teachers in this study did not feel prepared to teach students with disabilities in their

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classrooms. Similarly, Bukvić (2014) surveyed 86 Croatian teachers who were employed in regular schools where students with special needs were enrolled. The findings indicated that 70% of this group reported having no or very little knowledge about teaching students with special education needs. Abu-Heranet al. (2014) presented a questionnaire to 340 teachers randomly sampled from the teaching population of Palestine, where the process the researchers described as 'integration' was in its infancy. Palestinian teachers were generally concerned about the inadequacy of their preparation.

In Cyprus, Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2014) also found that teachers were dissatisfied with their initial teacher education for inclusion. Reporting on a study conducted in the United States, Burke and Sutherland (2004) reached different conclusions. Surveying initial teacher education (ITE) candidates and in-service teachers in New York, they found that pre-service teachers believed their teacher preparation programs provided them with the skills to work with diverse learners, but in-service teachers believed that the ITE programs were inadequate. The differences between the views of pre-service and in-service teachers could be due to the fact that many of the teachers surveyed were trained before inclusive education was included in coursework. It is also possible that while pre-service teachers thought their courses provided the knowledge and skills required, when they had full responsibility of planning for and teaching classes they may have found that this was not the case.

In terms of what teachers need to know and be able to do, Florian's (2012) position was that educational administrators and decision-makers should move beyond debating whether beginning teachers need to know how to improve teaching and learning, or whether they need more specialist knowledge about disability and the learning needs of specific groups of students. According to the author, "One thing is

clear: the adults who work in schools need to be better at sharing their professional knowledge and skills with each other" (p.219). Florian called for the development and research of new forms of professional knowledge that target inclusive education and which outline ways of working with and through others. It is her belief that the skills and knowledge required for working with adults, and children, should form an essential element of all teacher preparation courses. Ashan, Depple, and Sharma (2013) note that ITE shouldaim at equipping teachers who are willing to teach in inclusive classrooms.

These researchers found that female pre-service teachers showed more positive attitudes towards inclusive education than males. Overall, they concluded that simply attending inclusive pre-service teacher preparation courses is not sufficient for developing positive values and beliefs. Curriculum content, practicum opportunities and experience with children with disabilities were all deemed to contribute to the better preparation of teacher candidates for inclusive classrooms. In terms of a pre-service teacher education curriculum, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education completed a literature review on teacher education for inclusion in 2010.This group recommended that an initial teacher education curriculum should include information about diversity amongst the school population and also how to translate theory about responding to diversity into practice. Specific suggestions included that initial teacher education should promote "reflection on issues of norm, difference, inclusion, intercultural education, positive attitudes and high expectations, innovative skill in assessment, good communication and information communication technology".

Additionally, Di Gennaro, Pace, Iolanda,and Aiello (2014) advocated the training of pre-service teachers in critical reflection as a means of assisting them to become

perpetual problem solvers who analytically question what is happening in their classrooms. Suggested means of developing reflective practice for pre-service teachers include the use of reflective journaling, portfolios, mind-mapping, storyboarding, scenario based role plays, micro-teaching and video reflection. These researchers note that teacher education courses should "aim at reorienting teaching methods to be in line with inclusive values and support teachers in handling the complexity characterizing the educational context of the twenty-first century" (p.62).

In an attempt to map gaps in teacher education programs for inclusive education across the United States, Zion and Sobel (2014) undertook a comprehensive series of research and evaluation activities, which included gathering data from 17 focus groups comprising 102 current pre-service teachers, recent graduates, clinical teachers, principals, students and families of students with diverse needs. The aim was to identify the skill sets needed by teachers to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities. Zion and Sobel pinpointed disparities across pre-service program in four critical areas such as: socio-cultural, knowledge, affirmative attitude, collaborative skills, and pedagogy.

In another American study Harvey et al. (2010) surveyed 703 faculty members from teacher training institutions across 50 states and the District of Columbia in order to explore pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion. The results of 124 surveys were analyzed, with researchers concluding that education institutions in the United States had made an effort to address concerns in the literature about the preparation of teachers for inclusive education. There was significant agreement that institutions represented in this study were offering coursework to teacher education majors regarding exceptional children across all departments or program areas and that all students were taking introductory courses in this area.

A concern of the researchers, however, was that some departments did not provide a course specifically on collaborative teaching. Respondents in this study identified the need for additional time to develop collaborative initiatives across institutions and for financial resources to support these activities. As a specific example of a response to the need for teacher versatility in inclusive settings, Portland State University in Oregon developed a merged secondary and special education program. Among the goals of this program was preparation for teaching differentiated units, developing lessons and tiered assessments; teaching reading and supporting reading comprehension across content areas; using positive behaviour support strategies; co-planning and co-teaching to strengthen the content acquisition of students with learning disabilities; and for graduates to become change agents and leaders for responsible inclusion.

Fullerton et al. (2011) collected information from 44 of the 2006/7 and 2008/9 Portland State graduates, seven of their supervisors and three employing principals. Candidates were encouraged to describe their growth in learning throughout their studies. The researchers reported that evidence from multiple sources indicated that, when working as content area teachers, graduates of the combined secondary and special education program competently gathered and used information about their students to develop differentiated objectives and instruction, and used formative assessment to inform instructional decisions.

In Scotland, Florian, Young and Rouse (2010) reviewed the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) – a one-year full time or two-year part time course offered jointly by the University of Aberdeen and associated schools. The PGDE program was revised to ensure that social and educational inclusion was addressed within the core of the program rather than being an optional pathway

selected by a few pre-service teachers. The focus of this course was on inclusive pedagogy or "the creation of lessons and learning opportunities that enable all learners to participate in classroom life" (p.712). The researchers reported that the reformed course addressed three challenges: (i) How inclusive teacher education might take difference into account from the outset (knowing); (ii) How teachers might be convinced that they are qualified to teach children with additional needs (believing); and, (iii) How teachers might learn new strategies for working with and through others (doing).

In order to better understand whether the course was meeting the three challenges posed, Florian and her colleagues collected extensive data from lectures and two tutor groups. They analyzed video recordings of 15 hours of lectures, 30 hours of audio material from tutorials and 14 hours of audio material from seminars. They also included opportunities for university academic staff to discuss their teaching. Some lecturers were happy to support the project by reading their own transcripts and debriefing about the pre-coded and coded documents. Often these conversations led them to interrogate parts of their own practice as they reread their own words and reflected on the project aims. For those lecturers who taught on the PDGE course in its second year, the researchers held a series of quarterly meetings to discuss issues of inclusion.

The focus of the initial analysis of the data was on the intentional messages sent to students through lecturer talk. The researchers reported that they discovered ways in which the theoretical ideas underpinning the course intersected with the ways that lecturers used tools at their disposal to convey ideas. For example, they found that 48% of lecture time was devoted to theory and practice while 30% of lecture time was spent talking about strategies with students. In 14 of the 15 lectures personal stories of

varying length were also used as a vehicle to make a theoretical point. Florian and her colleagues, through their research into the PGDE, actively encouraged the reflective practice of lecturers and students.

Institutes of higher education and teacher education institutions throughout the world are also seeking better ways to prepare pre-service teachers for inclusive education through targeting teaching practicum experiences. As an example, Kim (2012) conducted research in the mid-west of the United States, at a university that had an inclusive laboratory school. The aim of Kim's research was to determine the optimal amount of time early childhood pre-service teachers should spend in an inclusive setting. Kim (2012) surveyed 146 early childhood pre-service teachers at the university.

Findings were that those students with field experience in the lab school showed stronger teaching efficacy than their counterparts who had their field experience in less controlled settings. Co relational analyses revealed that field experience at the lab school was positively related to teacher efficacy in teaching children with disabilities with regard to student engagement; instructional strategies; and, in classroom management. Kim concluded that the best way to provide teachers with knowledge and skills for teaching children with disabilities was to provide pre-service teachers with firsthand experience in an inclusive setting where the curriculum and program are professionally established according to disciplinary knowledge of best practice specific to inclusion. (p.174)

Hamman et al. (2013) found out those practicing teachers who serve as mentors during field experience represent one of the most important sources of information accessed by pre-service teachers regarding how to provide instruction to

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students with disabilities. In Hamman et al's study, three questionnaires were distributed to 337 pre-service teachers at a south-western US university on completion of their teaching practicum. One questionnaire asked pre-service teachers about inclusive education in the practicum. The second questionnaire focused on collaboration with supervising teachers, and the third questionnaire targeted evidence of teaching efficacy. Findings of this study were that both scaffold collaboration and a focus on inclusion contributed to pre-service teachers' sense of efficacy for implementing inclusive practices. Importantly, Hamman et al. concluded that, "conscientious, collaborative co-operating teachers make an important contribution to the capabilities of their students" (p.253).

In another study that examined the self-efficacy of pre-service teachers, Leyser, Zeiger, and Romi (2011) surveyed 992 general and special education pre-service teachers training in Israel. The participants were enrolled in 11 different teacher education colleges representing different national and religious affiliations in Israel. The study found that experience or contact with children and adolescents with special educational needs during field experience in the program and out of college (through activities such as mentoring, tutoring or working in camps) was associated with higher self-efficacy scores in the areas of general teaching, socialization and teaching low achievers. While single subjects in inclusion may not be sufficient to change pre-service teachers' beliefs, it appears that incorporating a service component, such as mentoring or tutoring experiences with students who experience disabilities or learning difficulties, can assist pre-service teachers to develop positive mindsets towards inclusion. While it has been established that field experience or teaching practicum's in inclusive classrooms are important.

Similarly, Atileset al. (2012) were interested in accurately estimating how much direct field experience early childhood pre-service teachers actually had with students who experienced developmental delays or disabilities. These researchers surveyed 165 pre-service teachers attending a mid-west university in the United States. The measures of positive efficacy made by these pre-service teachers related to the amount of time they spent in inclusive classrooms. However, the results were not simply contingent on the number of hours the pre-service teachers spent in inclusive settings: Instead, high efficacy was found to be systematically related to the ratio of children with developmental delays or disabilities to typically developing peers in their practicum classrooms. However, Atilesetal acknowledged that it may not always be possible to find placements with high ratios of students who present with learning delays or disabilities. They suggest, instead, that the focus should be on identifying mentoring teachers who model best practice interventions and that teacher candidates be guided to reflect on their observations of, and experiences with, these mentors.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) produced a report titled "*Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework*" that was inconsistent with Atiles' (2012) findings. In this report, the AITSLE called for the creation of a performance and development culture, described as "being characterized by a clear focus on improving teaching as a powerful means of improving student outcomes" (p.4). One of the means of improving teaching is to provide pre-service education that is responsive to the changing environment of the 21st century classroom. Alongside rapid technological change, the 21st century classroom is characterized by the diversity of the student population. The report post a question, "how do Australian Universities prepare teachers to teach diverse learners in their pre-service education courses?" Stephenson, O'Neill, and Carter (2012) tackled

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this question by collecting and examining information about the content of Australian university courses that prepare teachers to educate students with disabilities. Stephenson et al.'s findings were compared to those from Dempsey's (1994) research.

Dempsey found out that only 59% of the 53 campuses of 39 universities offered a teacher education course that had a compulsory unit in special education. In2009, Stephenson et al. (2012) focused on the 35 institutions across Australia that offered a four-year bachelor program. All except three courses included a core unit on inclusion or special needs education. An additional 20 electives were offered. Stephenson et al. concluded that the increase was driven by the emphasis on inclusion in Australian education and also by teacher registration requirements across the states and territories. Of concern to Stephenson et al. (2012), however, was the lack of relevant qualifications held by the academics convening the courses. Whilst there were more subjects offered in 2009, fewer appeared to be taught by academics with active research profiles in special education.

A web search revealed information about 72% of the course conveners and further research concluded that just under a half of these teacher educators had qualifications in special education or expertise in special education demonstrated through a relevant higher degree or recent publication. This finding led the researchers to conclude that it is possible that Australian pre-service teachers are less well prepared to teach students with disabilities and special needs than they were two decades ago. In a series of studies also examining this issue, staff at Charles Sturt University explored their pre-service education courses at the design level. Bain, Lancaster, Zundans and Parkes (2009) completed a series of studies focused on features of embedded design. They wanted the pre-service teachers in their courses to "experience the essential features of inclusive practice repeatedly and in a manner that

profoundly affects their own learning experiences" (p. 216). In this research, embedded design involved a four-part process: knowledge and awareness raising: developed through lectures; skill building through active experience: in this case, through 11 x 2-hour skill-building workshops; real world application with feedback: students were placed in collaborative practice communities and practiced a collaborative problem-solving process together; and personal impact or consequence identification: students used independent study, peer assisted learning and co-operative learning groups to prepare for quizzes undertaken as part of the assessment of the course.

Participants in the Bain, Lancaster, Zundans and Parkes (2009) study were 90 volunteer pre-service teachers in their second year of a primary Bachelor of Education program. They were all enrolled in a mandatory inclusive education course. The researchers found that participation in the embedded design course co-varied with at, or near, mastery level performance on three quizzes administered to test the students' knowledge for the majority of the pre-service teachers. There was some limited evidence that peer assisted and co-operative learning resulted in better quiz scores than individual study. An important course outcome was that the pre-service teachers reported increased confidence in using evidence based practice to develop differentiated instruction. Further to this study, Lancaster and Bain (2010) investigated the effect of program design on the self-efficacy of teacher education students. Participants in this study were 36 pre-service teachers in the second year of their primary Bachelor of Education program. Students on campus A were involved in an embedded design course. Students on campus B were involved in a course designed using the principles of applied direct experience.

These students were exposed to a range of teaching strategies, including developing running records and using cognitive strategies to enhance learning. Lecturers modeled these strategies in workshop sessions. Pre-service teachers were then provided with instruction on how to develop their own lessons. There was some informal feedback from peers, but this group did not follow the embedded design sequence.

Instead of engaging in the four levels of embedded design, students participated in a classroom support activity during weeks 3 to13 of the semester. Students' self-efficacy ratings on the *Future Interactions with People with Disabilities Scale*w as used to compare the two groups. Results showed that pre-service teachers in both group A and group B increased self-efficacy from pre to post-test. Even though the applied experience condition included an additional 11 hours of engaged time working with students, this did not translate into gains in self-efficacy that exceeded those recorded by students in the embedded design condition.

A third study conducted at Charles Sturt University in USA investigated the professional language use of pre-service teachers. Lancaster and Auhl (2013) used the principles of embedded design to try to further the development of a common language for sharing professional understandings about teaching and learning amongst pre-service teachers in inclusive courses. In this research, 103 pre-service teachers, again enrolled in the second year of the primary Bachelor of Education program, engaged in reflective writing about their lesson designs at the end of each of three teaching cycles. The reflections were analyzed in two ways: (i) frequency counts of the number of common language terms, and (ii) improvement in the sophistication of the patterns of language used.

Findings were that pre-service teachers increased their capacity in terms of both the frequency and the sophistication of pattern of language related to inclusive education over the course of the study. Again, results of pre-service teachers in the embedded design and applied direct experience groups were compared. Results of the quizzes on this occasion showed significant differences in favor of the students who participated in the embedded design course. In their discussion, Lancaster and Auhl (2013) emphasized the importance of ensuring that learning communities include attention to professional language as a way of underpinning effective collaboration between teaching staff. If early career educators are equipped with clear understandings of professional language, it is posited that they will be better able to contribute to dialogue about inclusion and collaborate with colleagues to improve their students' learning and their teaching. Systematic attention to building collaborative practice was also shown to be effective.

A research conducted by Rayner and Allen (2013) report how the teaching team developed an alternative to lectures through the creation of a series of online video dialogues between the academic course co-coordinator and a range of professionals in the field of special education and inclusion. The aim was to demystify inclusive education and enhance accessibility of the learning content for pre-service teachers. A survey was prepared to gauge how 154 pre-service teachers responded to the videos. Results showed that 83% of the respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the interviews improved their understanding of the course content and assisted them to connect theory and practice. In addition, 77% 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the videos were engaging and interesting. It was found that pre-service teachers studying online were especially positive about the recordings. Those in the 40-49 year

age bracket were most positive, while respondents aged below 24 years of age were least positive.

Course evaluation data showed that, in general, pre-service teachers who accessed the learning resources, including the interviews, achieved higher grades than those who did not. In terms of the effects of specific service learning, Forlin and Chambers (2011) surveyed pre-service teachers undertaking an undergraduate degree in education at a Western Australian university. Data were collected from 31 early childhood and 36 primary pre-service teachers prior to and following their involvement in a 39-hour unit of study on diversity.

In addition to classes, pre-service teachers could opt to engage in 10 hours of social experience with a person with a disability. Seventeen students took this option and 50 students elected to critique inclusive programs in the community as an alternative activity. At the completion of the course the pre-service teachers completed a survey that measured their attitudes to and concerns about inclusion. Generally, respondents were positive towards including all students, although they expressed the least support for including those students who were physically aggressive. An unexpected outcome was the lack of significant gain in positive attitude following engagement with people with disabilities during the applied experience. It seemed that once pre-service teachers became more familiar with students with disabilities, even though they were more confident in teaching these students, they were also more aware of their responsibilities as teachers, which increased their levels of stress. Greater engagement with people with disabilities highlighted what these pre-service teachers would need to do to accommodate all their students once they graduated.

However, Hemmings and Woodcock (2011) were interested in enhancing the preparation of pre-service teachers for inclusive education and, subsequently, administered a survey twice, over a five-month period, to pre-service teachers enrolled in the third year of the primary Bachelor of Education course at Charles Sturt University. These researchers wanted to determine whether there were changes in students' reporting of issues and concerns relating to inclusion across this time frame. The main finding of this study was that although the overall preparedness of the pre-service teachers increased throughout the five-month period, by the end of their third year of university study, 70% of those surveyed indicated they felt either only partly prepared or not sufficiently prepared to teach in inclusive settings. The pre-service teachers in this study acknowledged the key role that the individual teacher plays in effective inclusive education. This was demonstrated by high ratings for teacher quality as an important factor on the survey, and an increase in this rating over the semester.

In another study that tracked pre-service teacher beliefs and efficacy, Ng, Nicholas, and Williams (2010) examined the evolving beliefs of pre-service teachers by collecting practicum data throughout all phases of their professional placements. Participants in this study were pre-service teachers enrolled in a one year secondary Diploma in Education course at a Victorian university. Questionnaires were completed at the start of the course, after fieldwork observations, after a four-week practicum, and again after a five-week practicum. The overall priority revealed by these pre-service teachers' general teaching efficacy beliefs was the management of student learning through good pedagogy. This priority remained constant throughout the course. A multi-method study carried out by Grima-Farrell et al. (2014) aimed to bridge the gap between university and schools in preparing teachers for inclusion. In

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collaboration with the Sydney Catholic Education Office, academics at the Australian Catholic University Strathfield developed a special education immersion project. This study focused on the experiences of ten 4th year primary B.Ed. pr-eservice teachers who had completed a unit on 'Diversity in the Classroom' and worked in schools with mentor teachers during literacy and numeracy sessions for four days a week.

Data were gathered through individual surveys, semi-structured interviews and reflective journal entries. Information was collected on roles of participants in each setting and their experiences using research-based approaches when working with students with special needs. All pre-service teachers reported that their experiences strengthened their depth of knowledge and skills in responding to student needs. They agreed that what they had learnt at university could be put into practice and tria0lled in schools. Another reported strength of this project was the long-term links that the pre-service teachers made with personnel from their assigned schools.

In summary, the research informs us that pre-service teachers require information about developing curriculum that is responsive to diversity, and allows all students to participate in learning and demonstrate growth. The development of collaborative skills is also important in pre-service teacher education. Teacher candidates who are well versed in sharing knowledge and skills and who can communicate about inclusive practices are more likely to rate their classroom interactions as efficacious and engage in continuing professional learning. Ideally, teaching, practicum and community service experiences all provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to learn from quality examples of inclusion and to employ critical reflective practices.

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Teacher in-service or professional development

Idol (2006, p. 94) indicated that "practice enables teachers to develop the skills necessary to deal with the challenges of students with disabilities and effectively meet their educational needs". Idol further stated that teachers felt that they needed more professional development regarding how to include modifications, and how to effectively support teachers'. Proper training means that, all staff are guided to explore a variety of service delivery options.

Similarly, Avramidis et al. (2000a) observed that teachers felt they needed more training as they completed their college preparation programs. College courses on teacher education are meant to provide pre-service teachers the knowledge they need to be successful in contemporary classrooms. Training pre-service teachers is a predominate factor that impacts teacher acceptance of inclusion (Wilkins & Neitfield, 2004). Leatherman and Niemeyer observe that pre-service teachers believe that hands-on experiences in inclusive classrooms are important during their training programs (2005). Leatherman and Niemeyer stated that, "Teacher training programs should require students to investigate resources for children with disabilities and their families" (p. 34).

Austin (2001) stated that many special education co-teachers felt that placing student teachers in collaborative settings for student teaching assignments, pre-service coursework in collaborative teaching, and pre-service special education courses for general education teachers was beneficial by preparing the pre-teachers to work in inclusive classrooms. Professional development is important in the creation of successful inclusive environments. Many teachers are apprehensive about teaching special education students because they feel that workshops (Desimone & Parmar, 2006; Lohrmann, & Bambara, 2006).

In Idol's 2006 study, teachers wanted professional development in the areas of instructional and curriculum modifications, methods of supporting teachers in inclusive classrooms, professional development for instructional assistants, visiting schools practicing inclusion, disciplinary practices, and using reading tutor programs. The roles of general and special education teachers have been redefined to meet the requirements of inclusion (Carpenter, & Dyal, 2007). Traditionally, special education teachers have been extensively trained to meet the needs of students with disabilities and provided instruction for content courses. Special education teachers are no longer qualified to teach core academic areas in which they have not proven competency in due to the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (U.S. Doe, n.d.). Teachers who had training outside of school were more confident in meeting Individualized Education Plan requirements more than teachers with school based training or no training at all (Avramidis et al., 2000a).

According to Avramidis et al. (2000a), professional development increased teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusion. When 81 primary and secondary teachers were questioned about inclusion, it was revealed that teachers with first-hand experience in inclusion were more positive than teachers who had little experience with inclusion. Teachers who have the proper training are confident in their ability feel they can meet the needs of students with disabilities. Teachers are overwhelmed when they are faced with challenges they do not feel they are equipped to handle. Monahan and Marino (1996) state that they lacked training necessary to meet student needs, and that they had not learned appropriate skills in their career or at professional development many general education teachers do not have the instructional skills or background to teach special education students .

Oslon (2003) studied special and general education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion using survey as the research design. The researcher sampled 65 teachers and close-ended and open ended questionnaires were administered for the respondents to show their level of agreement. The researcher observed that the general education teachers lack training and in services for successful inclusion of students with disabilities in the general classroom. Twenty-seven point two percent (27.2%) of the teachers surveyed indicated they agree that general education teachers and other staff are provided with the training and in-services needed in order to feel competent to teach students with disabilities. Seventy-two point eight percent of the teachers indicated that they lack appropriate training to handle students with disabilities. The study is similar to this one where the researcher also used survey as the research design, and close and open ended questionnaires as the instrument for the survey.

One study by Leyser 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 are included, teachers would need additional tools and skills for coping with the social and emotional problems that accompany inclusive schooling (Idol 1997). Because of the changes that inclusion demands in classrooms, some researchers have attributed teacher's negative responses toward inclusion to the teachers' lack of positive experience with well-designed inclusive programs (McLeskey, Waldron, So, Swanson & Loveland, 2001; Vaughn, Schumm, & Saumell. 1996). Inclusion will therefore require training of general education teachers to manage the classrooms that contain students with and without disabilities.

McLesky et al (2001) sought to compare the perspectives of teachers who were at the time of the investigation 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 toward inclusion compared to teachers who lacked this experience. In-service training for teachers also was found to influence teachers' perceptions toward inclusion. Research indicated that teachers who had training to teach students with disabilities exhibited positive perception towards inclusion compared to their counterparts who had not trained (Beh-Pajooh, 1992; Dickson-Smith; 1995).

2.5 Support services teachers' need towards the practice of inclusive education.

Rose (2001) explored teachers" perceptions about necessary conditions for including students with disabilities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 teachers and seven principals. All teachers had a minimum of three years teaching experience. Study participants were asked to identify supports that would lead to greater inclusion. The interviewees noted the importance of classroom support. Nine of the teachers regarded the provision of additional staffing as a critical factor in enabling the success of inclusion. The principals expressed similar concerns, that additional support staff was needed to enable children with disabilities to access the curriculum.

Twenty-five percent of the interviewed teachers believed that behavior management of students with disabilities took an inordinate amount of time compared to the management of students without disabilities. Only one head-teacher perceived the need for extra time for planning, although several participants commented on

being distracted from giving adequate time to other students in their classrooms. Likewise, Snyder (1999) conducted a qualitative study on general education teachers" attitudes and concerns about special education in their schools.

Data were drawn from in-service teachers in graduate level classes and from workshops in approximately one third of the counties in South Carolina. The teachers were asked to reflect on the status of special education in their respective schools and the type of support they received from their administrators and special education faculty regarding working with students with disabilities. Seventy-five percent of the teachers indicated that the administration was not supportive while 25% of the teachers perceived their administration as being supportive of the general education teachers. Regarding special education faculty's support for general education teachers, 55% of the teachers stated that special education faculty was not supportive while 45% of the teachers indicated that the special education faculty was supportive of the needs of the general education teachers.

More recently, Lohmann and Bambara (2006) investigated the supports needed by elementary school teachers to successfully include students with behavioral challenges in their classrooms. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 teachers whose classes included children with developmental disabilities who exhibited challenging behaviors. Findings indicated that teachers most frequently cited insufficient time for planning and implementing strategies, conflicts with parents, and disagreements with administrators and other school staff as inhibitors to successful inclusion. The researchers identified two categories of supports: school wide and situation specific. At the school-wide level, teachers identified a need for an articulated school vision for inclusion, the willingness or positive attitudes of colleagues, and the availability of paraprofessionals. For situation-specific levels of

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support, teachers listed interpersonal support, established collaboration, parental supports, and training opportunities to increase their expertise as important.

2.6 Summary of Literature Review

From the literature reviewed, it was found out that teachers' can have both positive and negative perceptions towards inclusion of students with special needs in the general classroom. This is important for consideration in the implementation of inclusive education. For example, Clampit et al (2004) noted that, a key element in a successful inclusion program is the positive attitudes of teachers. It was also found out that, the following factors underlie teachers' perception towards inclusion of students with special needs in the general classroom: (1) the nature and the severity of the disability condition, (2) class size, (3) experience and beliefs, 94) demographics, (5) level of education, (6) amount of teacher responsibilities, (7) grade level taught, and (8) scarcity of teacher training and knowledge of inclusive education. Some teachers also think that they lack the skills and training to modify the curriculum and assess the students with and without disabilities together in the general classroom. However, some teachers are also of the view that, there should be support services to assist them in teaching students with and without disability in the regular classroom. Those studies were basely fisted in this work to find out the perception of teachers on inclusion of students with and without special needs in the general classroom, but there is insufficient literature on perceptions that teachers have concerning the practice of inclusive education, so this study was designed to fill that gap in the literature.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology for the study. The areas covered are: research design, population, sample size, sampling technique, instrumentation, validity, reliability, procedure for data collection and data analysis

3.1 Research Design

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Soanes (2007) defined descriptive survey research design as a way of sampling a particular group of people for their opinions on an issue, which is usually done by asking them questions. Gay (1992) defines survey as an attempt to collect data from members of a population to determine current status of that population with respect to one or more variables. According to Van Delen (1997), survey is appropriate for a research that aims at seeking people's views about issues, events, policies and others.

Morrison (1993) also opined that, survey is used to gather on a one-shot basis and hence it is economical and efficient. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2003) also maintain that, surveys are used to gather data at a particular point in time, purposefully at describing the nature of existing conditions and identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared and or determine the relationship that exist between specific event. It was thought appropriate to use the survey method because it is a dominant form of collecting data in education and other social sciences (Fink, 2002).

Creswell (2002) also noted that a survey study can be done in a short time in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of

people in order to describe the opinions of the population. It also has the potentiality of providing a lot of information that will be gathered from participants. The design was considered useful for generating data that would help find out teachers' perceptions about the practice of inclusive education in selected basic schools in the Bekwai Municipality in the Ashanti region of Ghana.

3.2 Population

The total population of the study comprised of 150 basic school teachers in the Bekwai Municipality of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. These were teachers teaching at both primary and junior high schools. Table1 below presents the population involved in the study.

Table 1.Population of Respondents Involved in the Study

S/N	Name of School	Number of Teachers
1	Experimental M\A Primary School	17
2	Experimental M/A J H S	15
3	Presbyterian Primary School	15
4	Roman Catholic Primary 'A'	17
5	Roman Catholic JHS 'A'	12
6	Awiam Presby Primary School	14
7	Anglican Primary School	16
8	Anglican JHS	12
9	Islamic Primary School	16
10	Amoamo M/A Primary School	16
Total		**150**

Hundred and eleven (111) teachers were from junior high school and thirty nine (39) were teachers from the primary schools.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size out of the total population for the study was sixty (60) basic schools teachers which comprises of 40 male teachers and 20 female teachers Table 2 below presents the sample size selected for the study.

Table 2. Sample size that constituted the study

S/N	Name of School	Number of Teachers
1	Experimental M\A Primary School	7
2	Experimental M/A J H S	6
3	Presbyterian Primary School	5
4	Roman Catholic Primary 'A'	5
5	Roman Catholic JHS 'A'	8
6	AwiamPresby Primary School	5
7	Anglican Primary School	5
8	Anglican JHS	6
9	Islamic Primary School	6
10	Amoamo M/A Primary School	7
Total		**60**

3.4 Sampling Technique

A convenience probability sampling technique was used. The researcher used lottery method in selecting the sample. The sampling technique was easy, fast, inexpensive, and the subjects were readily available and accessible to the researcher. To achieve this, 40 "YES" and 60 "NO" were written on pieces of paper that were then mixed together for the male teachers to randomly pick a piece of paper. Those

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who picked YES were included in the study. A similar process was used to select 20 female teachers from a pool of 50 female teachers in the district. The random sampling technique was employed because the researcher wanted the sampling method to be free from preconception and unfairness (Sidhu, 2002). All those who picked the "YES" probability were selected for the study.

3.4 Instrumentation

Questionnaires were used in collecting the appropriate data for this research paper. The items on the questionnaire were closed ended questions. The instrument was designed in a Likert scale format where the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement by selecting one of the following five choices: Strongly Agree (SA) = 5, Agree (A) =4, Neutral (N) =3, Disagree (D) =2, and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) noted that, questionnaires are useful, in that, they can generate frequencies of response amenable to treatment and analysis. They also enable comparisons to be made across groups in the sample (Oppenheim, 1992). Additionally, questionnaires are quicker to code up and analyze (Bailey, 1994).

3.5 Procedure for data Collection

An introductory letter was written by the Head of Special Education Department in order to seek permission from heads of the selected schools involved in the study to conduct the study. Furthermore, an approval from the Bekwai Municipality Directorate of Education to conduct this study was secured using a similar letter. An administrative contact to various heads was also made and permission granted to distribute questionnaires to teachers in the basic schools in the district. The selected basic school teachers, as well as the heads, were briefed on the

purpose of the study together with assurance of absolute confidentiality of the data to be collected before the questionnaires were distributed. Questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents by the researcher by hand. The questionnaires consisted of twenty-nine (29) close ended items.

3.6 Validity

In developing and evaluating or measuring instrument, validity is the most important factor to consider (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). Validity of instrument is used to determine if an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Therefore, to ensure the validity of the questionnaires, drafted copies were sent to researcher's supervisor for review and face validity before it was piloted. From the responses in the pilot study, it was clear that respondents understood the questions since they were fully answered. Also, the necessary suggestions proposed were corrected and the items were given to the study supervisor for further judgment.

3.7 Reliability

To ensure the reliability of the instrument used for the study, a pilot testing was conducted. According to Macmillan (1996), the validity of instrument should be established before the research is carried out and the type of reliability should be consistent with the results. In view of this, one of the Junior High Schools in the Bekwai Municipality was used for the pilot study. The researcher chose the said school because the teachers shared the same characteristics as those chosen for the study. The research gave the drafted copy of the questionnaires to six teachers. Time was made by the researcher and the respondents to discuss any ambiguity and doubt that the respondents might face with any aspect of the questionnaires. The respondents were given time to complete and return the questionnaires to the

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researcher. Those completed questionnaires were collected and studied closely by the researcher. The pilot study helped the researcher to make all the necessary adjustments and corrections before the final study was carried out. The pilot study was important because according to Seidu (2007), piloting among other things, enables the researcher to test for how long it will require information to complete the instrument.

3.8 Data Analysis

The completed questionnaires gathered were given serial numbers for easy identification based on the schools. A tally system was created according the serial numbers in order to find out the number of respondents that responded to each of the items based on the schools. Additionally, all the responses to each item were coded with scores to make them possible to be fed into the computer. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0. The data collected was analyzed quantitatively. Furthermore, in the discussions, the responses to Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A) on the scale were combined and those with Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D) were also combined to have the same meaning.

3.9 Conclusion

The study was a descriptive survey that made use of a questionnaire in the form of a Likert-scale type. The questionnaire instrument was employed to gathered data from the selected sixty (60) basic school teachers in the Bekwai Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana on teachers' perceptions about the practice of inclusive education. This instrument was piloted to justify the accuracy and consistency of responses. In all, the sixty (60) questionnaires issued, fifty-five (55) were collected

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representing 92% return rate. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in analyzing and interpreting the collected data into frequencies and tables for easier interpretations.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussions of findings. A questionnaire in the form of Likert scale type was used to collect data. The questionnaire contained 29 items based on a five point involving strongly agree (SD) = 5, agree (A) =4, neutral (N) =3, strongly disagree (SD) =2 and disagree (D) = 1. The items in the statement were developed on a multi-dimensional basis that reflected on the key themes raised in the research questions. The analysis and discussions were based on the research questions in relation to the purpose of the study which was on perceptions of teachers about the practice of inclusive education in selected basic schools.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage %
1.Sex		
A. Male	40	66.7
B. Female	20	33.3
2.Age		
A.20-30	16	26.6
B.31-40	30	50
C.36-41	14	23.4
3.Class taught		
Prim 1-6	45	75
JHS 1-3	15	25
4.Teaching experience		
1-5 years	15	23.4
6-10 years	34	56.6
11 and above	11	20
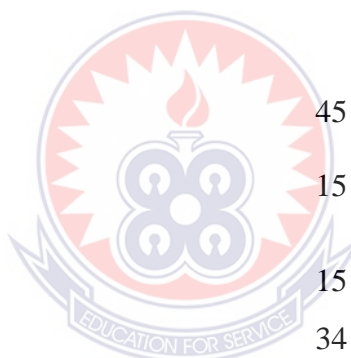
The analysis was based on the responses, comprising 40 male and 20 female teachers. The demographic characteristics of the respondents included sex, age, class taught, and teaching experience of the teachers as shown in table 1. From Table 1, out of the total number of the 60 respondents, (66.7%) were males while (33.3%) were also females. The demographic analysis revealed a female dominance than males. Moreover, sixteen (16) respondents constituting (26.6%) of them were between the ages of 20 – 30 years and thirty (30) respondents representing (50%) of them were between 31 -40years. However fourteen (14) respondents resulting (23.4%) of them

were between 41 – 60 years. Furthermore, forty-five (45) respondents constituting (75%) of them were at the primary schools while fifteen (15) of the 60 respondents representing (25%) of them were also at the junior high school.

Furthermore, twenty-three (23) respondents constituting (57.5%) of them were at the basic schools while seventeen (17) of the 40 respondents resulting (42.5%) of them were also at the junior high school. Finally, the collected data also revealed that fourteen (14) of the respondents representing (23.4%) of them were having 1-5 years teaching experience, thirty-four (34) respondents constituting (56.6%) of them were also having 6-10 years teaching experience while twelve (12) of the respondents representing (20%) of them were having more than 10 years teaching experience.

In conclusion, twenty-two (22) of the respondents representing (36.6%) of the respondents were males while thirty-eight (38) respondents constituting (63.4%) of them were also females indicating females as the majority of the sampled population. From the findings majority of the selected basic schools teachers were between (31-40) years of age. The findings also revealed that a greater percentage of the selected basic schools teachers were teaching in the primary schools. Finally, most of the selected basic schools teachers were having between (6-10) years teaching experience.

Table 2: Perceptions teachers hold about the practice of inclusive education

S/N	Statement	Agree		Disagree	
		F	P(%)	F	P(%)
5	Inclusive education cannot affect the learning of regular children in the classroom	45	75	15	25
6	Inclusive education will enable both "normal" children and inclusive children learn better	35	58.4	25	41.6
7	The practice of inclusive education cannot enable those with special needs to progress in learning	40	66.6	20	33.4
8	Inclusion promotes social independence among students with special needs and those without special needs	34	56.6	26	43.4
9	The practice of inclusive education will allow all categories to share experiences	42	70	18	30
10	Inclusion of students with special needs can benefit both students with and without disabilities in the regular classroom	56	93.4	4	6.6
11	Inclusion promotes self-esteem among students with special needs	50	83.4	10	16.6
12	All general education teachers do understand the meaning and have knowledge about inclusion education	16	26.6	44	73.4

From Table 2, Item five was on whether inclusive education cannot affect the learning of regular children in the classroom. 45 of the respondents out of the total number representing 75% of them agreed to the statement that inclusive education cannot affect the learning of regular children while 15 respondents, constituting 25% of the respondents also disagreed to the statement that inclusive education cannot affect the learning of regular children. This is an indication that majority of the teachers' belief that inclusive education cannot affect the learning of regular children in the classroom.

As regards item six that sought to find out whether inclusive education will enable both "normal" children and included children learn better, 35 of the respondents representing 58.4% of respondents agreed whereas 25 respondents

constituting 41.6% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. This is an indication that quite a number of teachers have positive views about inclusion.

The seven statements was to find out whether inclusive education cannot enable those with special needs to progress in learning, a total of 20 respondents, representing 33.4%, of the respondents agreed while 40 of the respondents, constituting 66.6% of them, also disagreed to the statement.

Furthermore, item eight was directed to find out whether inclusion promotes social independence among students with and without special needs, 34 of the respondents, representing 56.6%, of them agreed while 26 respondents, constituting 43.4%, of the respondents disagreed to the statement.

Also, the results of item nine depicted that, 42 of the respondents, representing 70%, of them agreed to the statement that the practice of inclusive education will allow all categories to share experiences while 18 respondents, constituting 30%, of the respondents also disagreed to the statement.

With regards to item ten which sought to find out whether inclusion of students with special needs can benefit both students with and without disability in the regular classroom, it was indicated that 56 or 93.4% of the respondents agreed while 4 or 6.6% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. This shows majority of the teachers have positive opinion about the benefit derived from the practice of inclusive education.

Furthermore, 50 (83.4%) of the respondents agreed that inclusion promotes self-esteem among students with special needs while 10 (16.6%) of the respondents disagreed that inclusion promotes self-esteem among students with special needs.

Finally, the data showed that 16 (26.6%) of the respondents agreed that all general education teachers understood the meaning of inclusive education and were knowledgeable about the concept of inclusion while 44 (73.4%) of the respondents constituting indicated that all general education teachers did not understand nor were knowledgeable about the inclusive education.

In conclusion, the data revealed that, majority of the selected basic schools teachers agreed that inclusive education cannot affect the learning of regular children. Most of the selected basic schools teachers also agreed that inclusive education will enable both "normal" children and inclusive children learn together. Also, a greater number of the selected basic schools teachers disagreed to the statement that the practice of inclusive education cannot enable those with special needs to progress in learning. Moreover, majority of the general education teachers agreed that inclusion promotes social development among students with and without special needs. Furthermore, an appreciable number of the general education teachers agreed to the statement that the practice of inclusive education will allow all categories to share experiences meanwhile majority of them also agreed that inclusion of students with special needs can benefit both students with and without disability in the regular classroom.

Again, most of the selected basic schools teachers in the Bekwai municipality confirmed that inclusion promotes self-esteem among students with special needs whereas majority of them disagreed to the statement that all general education teachers do understand the meaning and have knowledge about inclusive education. The above illustrations and discussions are in line with the review that, general education teachers seem to be generally positive about the philosophy of inclusion, but negative about the implementation (Taylor et al., 2001).

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The findings of research question 1, that sought information on perceptions of teachers about the practice of inclusive education based on teaches responses to statements indicated that majority of the teachers hold positive views about the practice of inclusive education. This may suggest that it can be practiced in the Bekwai Municipality of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The findings present study corroborate those of Avramidis and Norwich (2002) who concluded that teachers who had no direct experience with integration hade very negative attitudes, whereas those with more experience with individuals with disabilities adopted more positive attitudes towards integration. This general view about inclusion has been projected by Clampitet al. (2004) who noted that a key element in a successful inclusion program is the positive attitude of teachers.

Table3: Inherent or underlying factors that Influence Teachers Perceptions about the Practice of Inclusive Education.

S/N	Statement	Agree		Disagree	
		F	P(%)	F	P(%)
13	Overcrowded classrooms cannot support inclusive practice.	48	80	12	20
14	The needs for special needs children cannot be met by regular classroom teachers in inclusive classroom.	21	35	39	65
15	Children with special needs have their special schools to attend.	29	48.4	31	51.6
16	Regular education teachers are not trained to teach children with special needs.	35	58.4	25	41.6
17	Teachers in regular classroom cannot adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of special needs children.	42	70	18	30
18	Teachers need adequate exposure in order to accommodate special needs children in inclusive classroom.	55	91.6	5	8.4
19	Resources are inadequate to allow for the practice of inclusive education.	56	93.4	4	6.6
20	Inclusion of students with special needs pose extra amount of work for general education teachers.	54	90	6	10

Key S/N = Serial Numbers of Items F = Frequency P (%) = Percentage

4.2 Inherent or underlying factors that Influence Teachers Perceptions about the Practice of Inclusive Education

The statistical analyses on the factors influencing teachers' perceptions about the practice of inclusive education in Table 3 above are illustrated and discussed below:

The results presented in table 3 above revealed that 48 or 80% of the respondents agreed that overcrowded classrooms cannot support inclusive practice while 12 or 20% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. Also, data showed that, 21 or 35% of the respondents agreed that the needs of children with special needs children cannot be met by the regular classroom teachers in inclusive classroom whereas 39 or 65% of the respondents disagreed.

Moreover, the data revealed that 29 (48.4%) of the respondents agreed that children with special needs have their special schools to attend while 31 (51.6%) of the respondents disagreed. Furthermore, the data revealed that 35 (58.4%) of the respondents representing agreed that regular education teachers were not trained to teach children with special needs whiles 25 (41.6%) of the respondents indicated that regular education teachers were trained to teach children with special needs.

Also, the data disclosed that42 respondents, representing 70% of the respondents, agreed to the statement that teachers in regular classroom cannot adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of special needs children whereas 18 of the respondents, constituting 30%of them, disagreed to the statement that teachers in regular classroom cannot adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of special needs children. On the other hand, the data revealed that, 55 (91.6%) of the respondents agreed that teachers need adequate exposure in order to accommodate special needs

children in inclusive classroom, while 5 (8.4%) of the respondents disagreed that teachers need adequate exposure in order to accommodate special needs children in inclusive classroom.

Another convincing finding was that fifty-six (93.4%) of the respondents agreed that resources are inadequate to allow for the practice of inclusive education while 4 (6.6%) of the respondents stated that resources in their schools are adequate for the practice of inclusive education. Finally, the data revealed that 54 (90%) of the respondents representing (agreed that inclusion of students with special needs pose extra amount of work for general education teachers, while 6 (10%) of the respondents disagreed that inclusion of students with special needs pose extra work for general education teachers.

In conclusion, the analysis above revealed that, majority of the general education teachers agreed that overcrowded classrooms cannot support inclusive practice meanwhile most of them disagreed with the statement that the needs for special needs children cannot be met by regular classroom teachers in inclusive classroom. Also, the collected data have confirmed that, majority of the selected basic schools teachers disagreed with the statement that children with special needs have their special schools to attend while a greater number of the regular classroom teachers also agreed that regular education teachers are not trained to teach children with special needs. Moreover, the collected data signified that, most of the regular education teachers agreed that teachers in regular classroom cannot adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of special needs children. It is noted in the data collected that, majority of the general education teachers confirmed that teachers need adequate exposure in order to accommodate special needs children in inclusive classroom. However, many of the selected basic schools teachers agreed that resources are

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inadequate for the practice of inclusive education whiles majority of them also indicated that, the inclusion of students with special needs will pose extra work to the general education teachers.

The findings on research question 2 based on the analysis above on the factors influencing teachers perceptions about the practice of inclusive education revealed that most of the teachers were in agreement that inclusive education increases their class size which as a result posed extra amount of work on them. This view expressed are in line with the argument by Agran et al. (2002) stated that large class sizes are seen as barriers to successful implementations of inclusive education. Agran et al., further commented that large class sizes do not allow teachers to pay vivid attention to the needs of each student. Davies and Green (1998) also contend that teachers are more accepting of special needs if the class numbers are decreased - proving that attitudes of educators are affected by the size or number of children that they are engaged in.

The results also reveal that, teachers believe that students with the most challenging behavior require additional teacher responsibility and that they are difficult to support. The students' types of disability can also impact teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. In Algazoand and Gaad's (2004) study in the UAE, it was found that teachers were more accepting students with physical disability for inclusion than students with other disabilities such as specific learning difficulties, visual impairments, hearing impairment, behavioral difficulties and intellectual disability, on descending order. In Qaraqish's (2008) study, the results found out that teachers' in Saudi Arabia showed positive attitudes towards including students with learning problems in the regular classroom while they showed negative attitudes towards the inclusion of students with physical and behavioral problems in classroom.

The findings also revealed that greater number of the regular classroom teachers also agreed that regular education teachers are not trained to teach children with special needs which will affect the practice of inclusive education in the Municipality. This view is in line with the argument by Ali et al.(2006) noted that teachers existing knowledge is not always enough for inclusive teaching .Also many teachers claimed that inclusion policies forced them to enter areas they were unsure about or not interested in.

Table 4: Preparations made for Teachers towards the Practice of Inclusive Education

S/N	Statement	Agree		Disagree	
		F	P(%)	F	P(%)
21	General education teachers have been given the needed training for the practice of education.	23	38.4	36	61.6
22	Pre-service teachers have the needed exposure towards the practice of inclusive education.	10	16.6	40	83.4
23	Professional development activities can prepare regular classroom teachers in teaching inclusive children.	47	78.4	13	21.6
24	Regular classroom teachers require adequate preparations in how to teach children with special needs.	51	85	9	15
25	The initial teacher courses attended have fully prepared me for the practice of inclusive education.	39	65	21	35
26	General education teachers do not have sufficient training to teach students with special needs in inclusive classroom.	49	81.6	11	18.4

Key S/N = Serial Numbers of Items F= Frequency P (%) =   Percentage

4.4 Preparations made for Teachers towards the Practice of Inclusive Education

The statistical analyses on the general preparations made for teachers towards the practice of inclusive education in (table 4) above are illustrated and discussed below:

Responding to item 21 that focused on finding out whether general education teachers have been given the needed training for the practice of inclusive education, twenty-three (23) respondents out of the total number representing (38.4%) of them agreed while thirty-six (36) of the respondents constituting (61.6%) of them disagreed to the statement.

Also, item 22 that sought information on whether pre-service teachers have the needed exposure towards the practice of inclusive education, ten (10) of the respondents representing (16.6%) of them only agreed whereas forty (40) of the respondents constituting (83.4%) of them disagreed to the statement. This response is in with Mastropier and Scruggs (2004) who stressed that pre-service training and professional development are very important in inclusive education practice are to be implemented in schools.

Moreover, the data also indicated that forty-seven (47) respondents representing (78.4%) of the respondents agreed to the statement that professional development activities can prepare regular classroom teachers in teaching inclusive children while thirteen (13) of the respondents making (21.6%) of them disagreed to the statement.

With regards to item 24 that sought views on whether regular classroom teachers require adequate preparations in how to teach children with special needs ,

fifty-one (51) of the respondents representing (85%) of them agreed whiles nine (9) respondents constituting (15%) of the respondents also disagreed to the statement.

However, thirty-nine (39) of the respondents representing (65%) of them agreed to the statement that the initial teacher courses attended have fully prepared them for the practice of inclusive education whereas twenty-one (21) respondents constituting (35%) of the total number disagreed to the statement.

As regards item 26 that sought information on whether general education teachers do not have sufficient training to teach students with special needs in inclusive classroom, forty-nine (49) respondents representing (81.6%) of the respondents agreed while eleven (11) of the respondents constituting (18.4%) of them disagreed to the statement.

In conclusion, the collected data have revealed that, majority of the general education teachers disagreed to the statement that general education teachers have been given the needed training for the practice of inclusive education while most of them also agreed that professional development activities can prepare regular classroom teachers in teaching inclusive children. However, a greater number of the selected basic school teachers disagreed that pre-service teachers have the needed exposure towards the practice of inclusive education. From the data collected, it has also been revealed that, majority of the regular education teachers confirmed that regular classroom teachers require adequate preparations in how to teach children with special needs. Finally, most of the general education teachers agreed that the initial teacher courses attended have fully prepared them for the practice of inclusive education meanwhile majority of them suggests that the general education teachers do

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not have sufficient training to teach students with special needs in inclusive classroom.

The findings on research question 3 based on the analysis on the preparations made for teachers towards the practice of inclusive education has revealed that teachers in the Bekwai Municipality felt they were not adequately prepared to practice inclusive education. The views expressed are in line with the argument by Hodkinson (2005) who conducted a study in England, examining final year pre-service teachers" knowledge and understanding of inclusion, and found that while the majority of pre-service teachers do understand that inclusive education is a complex and multi-faceted concept, their understanding of the implementation of inclusionary practices within an applied education setting was limited. Therefore, Hodkinson also suggests that effective implementation of inclusive education depends very much on how individual teachers define it and whether they have received the necessary training to inspire a belief that they can deliver in inclusive practices in their classroom.

Also, the findings on the preparations for teachers about the practice of inclusive education revealed that most of the teachers are not been given the needed exposure towards the practice of inclusive education which will help them acquire the skills and the diverse needs of students in the classroom. This is in relation to the review by Semi (2008) who interviewed student teachers and lecturers and found out that they had a limited knowledge and understanding on what constitutes inclusive practices. The idea of teaching children with special needs in an inclusive classroom was never introduced to pre-service teachers in the course of their teacher training. Semi consequently concluded that teaching children with special needs in inclusive classrooms should be introduced into the curriculum of pre-service teacher training for beginning teachers. This shows that institutions offering pre-service teacher

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training programs need to ensure that they make provision for special education and inclusive practices in their programs.

Table 5. The support services that teacher's need for the practice of inclusive education

S/N	Statement	Agree		Disagree	
		F	P(%)	F	P(%)
27	General classroom teachers have the needed support services towards the practice of inclusive education.	6	10	54	90
28	Administrative support is very important for inclusive practice.	53	88.4	7	11.6
29	Availability of material resources is necessary for inclusive practice.	55	91.6	5	8.4
30	Regular classroom teachers need support from special teachers for the success of inclusive practice.	47	78.4	13	21.6
31	Adequate teacher motivation is crucial for inclusive education.	48	80	12	20
32	Teachers need support from parents for the practice of inclusive education.	51	85	9	15
33	Reduction in large class sizes can support teachers in inclusive practice.	46	76.6	14	23.4

Key S/N = Serial Numbers of Items F = Frequency P (%) = Percentage

4.5. The support services that teacher's need for the practice of inclusive education

The statistical analyses on the support services that regular education teachers need for the practice of inclusive education in (table 5) above are illustrated and discussed below:

According to the data collected on the support services that teachers need for the practice of inclusive education; six (6) of the respondents representing (10%) of them agreed to the statement that general education teachers have the needed support services towards the practice of inclusive education while fifty-four (54) respondents constituting (90%) of the respondents also disagreed to the statement that general education teachers have the needed support services towards the practice of inclusive education.

Moreover, the data collected on the needed support services for teachers have revealed that, fifty-three (53) of the respondents representing (88.4%) of them agreed to the statement that administrative support is very important for inclusive education whereas seven (7) respondents constituting (11.6%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement that administrative support is very important for inclusive education. Furthermore, the gathered data have also shown that, fifty five (55) of the respondents representing (91.6%) of them agreed to the statement that the availability of material resources is necessary for inclusive practice while on the other hand, five (5) respondents constituting (8.4%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement that the availability of material resources is necessary for inclusive practice.

However, the data also disclosed that, forty-seven (47) of the respondents representing (78.4%) of them agreed to the statement that regular classroom teachers need support from the special teachers for the success of inclusive practice while thirteen (13) respondents constituting (21.6%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement that regular classroom teachers need support services from special teachers for the success of inclusive education. It is also noted in the data that, forty-eight (48) of the respondents representing (80%) of them agreed to the statement that adequate teacher motivation is crucial for inclusive education whiles on the other hand, twelve

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(12) respondents constituting (20%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement that adequate teacher motivation is crucial for inclusive education.

Last but not least, the collected data revealed that, fifty-one (51) of the respondents representing (85%) of them agreed to the statement that teachers need support from parents for the practice of inclusive education whereas on the other hand, nine (9) respondents constituting (15%) of the respondents also disagreed to the statement that teachers need support from parents for the practice of inclusive education. Finally, the analysis also revealed that, forty-six (46) of the respondents representing (76.6%) of them agreed to the statement that reduction in large class sizes can support teachers in inclusive practice while fourteen (14) respondents constituting (23.4%) of them disagreed to the statement that reduction in large class sizes can support teachers in inclusive practice.

In conclusion, the collected data suggests that, majority of the general education teachers confirmed that general classroom teachers are not having the needed support services for the practice of inclusive education while most of them also agreed that administrative support is very important for inclusive practice. Moreover a greater number of the regular education teachers also proposed that the availability of material resources is necessary for the practice of inclusive education meanwhile majority of them suggests that the regular classroom teachers need the support of special teachers for the success of inclusive practice. Furthermore, it is noted in the collected data that, many of the selected basic schools teachers in the Bekwai municipality agreed that adequate teacher motivation is very crucial for the practice of inclusive education.

Findings on research 4 from the data collected, majority of the regular education teachers suggests that teachers need support for the practice of inclusive education in Bekwai Municipality. The major concern of the teachers on the support services for teachers towards the practice of inclusive education are related to the argument by Rose (2001) who explored teachers" perceptions about necessary conditions for including students with disabilities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 teachers and seven principals. All teachers had a minimum of three years teaching experience. Study participants were asked to identify supports that would lead to greater inclusion. The interviewees noted the importance of classroom support. Nine of the teachers regarded the provision of additional staffing as a critical factor in enabling the success of inclusion. The principals expressed similar concerns, that additional support staff was needed to enable children with disabilities to access the curriculum.

However, the results also revealed the importance of administrators, school staff and parents support for inclusive education practice to be effective. This view has been expressed long by Lohman and Bambara (2006) that conflicts with parents, disagreements with administrators and other school staff as inhibitors to successful inclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The primary objective of the study was to investigate and examine the perceptions that teachers hold about the practice of inclusive education in the Bekwai Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study concentrated on the teacher's perceptions about the practice of inclusive education, the factors that influence their perceptions, the preparations made towards these perceptions as well as the support services needed for the practice of inclusive education. The study focused on these areas because they formed the objectives of the study.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The summary of results as well as the findings are presented based on the research questions of the study. Consequently, the major findings are stated to reflect the research questions of the study.

5.2 Research Question 1

The first research question was seeking to assess the perceptions that teachers hold about the practice of inclusive education in the Bekwai Municipality. From the data collected, analyzed and discussed, it was revealed that, majority of the selected basic schools teachers agreed that inclusive education cannot affect the learning of regular children. Most of the selected basic schools teachers also agreed that inclusive education will enable both student with and without special needs learn together. Also, a greater number of the selected basic schools teachers disagreed to the

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statement that the practice of inclusive education cannot enable those with special needs to progress in learning. Moreover, majority of the general education teachers agreed that inclusion promotes social independence among students with and without special needs. Furthermore, an appreciable number of the general education teachers agreed to the statement that the practice of inclusive education will allow all categories to share experiences meanwhile majority of them also agreed that inclusion of students with special needs can benefit both students with and without disability in the regular classroom. Finally, most of the selected basic schools teachers in the Bekwai municipality confirmed that statement that inclusion promotes self-esteem among students with special needs whereas majority of them disagreed to the statement that all general education teachers do understand the meaning and have knowledge about inclusive education.

5.3 Research Question 2

The second research question also concentrated on the Inherent underlying factors that influence teachers' perception about the practice of inclusive education in those selected basic schools. Responses gathered from the teachers have shown that, majority of the general education teachers agreed that overcrowded classrooms cannot support inclusive practice meanwhile most of them disagreed with the statement that the needs for special needs children cannot be met by regular classroom teachers in inclusive classroom. Also, the collected data have confirmed that, majority of the selected basic schools teachers disagreed with the statement that children with special needs have their special schools to attend while a greater number of the regular classroom teachers also agreed that regular education teachers are not trained to teach children with special needs. Moreover, the collected data signified that, most of the

regular education teachers agreed that teachers in regular classroom cannot adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of special needs children. It is noted in the data collected that, majority of the general education teachers confirmed that teachers need adequate exposure in order to accommodate special needs children in inclusive classroom. However, many of the selected basic schools teachers agreed that resources are inadequate for the practice of inclusive education whiles majority of them also indicated that, the inclusion of students with special needs will pose extra work to the general education teachers.

5.4 Research Question 3

The third research question focused on the necessary preparations that are made by teachers towards the practice of inclusive education in the selected basic schools in the Bekwai Municipality. The collected data proved that, majority of the general education teachers disagreed to the statement that general education teachers have been given the needed training for the practice of inclusive education while most of them also agreed that professional development activities can prepare regular classroom teachers in teaching inclusive children. However, a greater number of the selected basic school teachers disagreed that pre-service teachers have the needed exposure towards the practice of inclusive education. From the data collected, it has also been revealed that, majority of the regular education teachers confirmed that regular classroom teachers require adequate preparations in how to teach children with special needs. Finally, most of the general education teachers agreed that the initial teacher courses attended have fully prepared them for the practice of inclusive education meanwhile majority of them suggests that the general education teachers do

not have sufficient training to teach students with special needs in inclusive classroom.

5.6 Research Question 4

The last research question emphasized on the support services that teachers need for the practice of inclusive education in the selected basic schools of the Bekwai Municipality. From the data collected, analyzed and discussed, it was revealed that, majority of the general education teachers confirmed that the general classroom teachers did not have the needed support services for the practice of inclusive education while most of them also agreed that administrative support is very important for inclusive practice. Moreover a greater number of the regular education teachers also proposed that the availability of material resources is necessary for the practice of inclusive education meanwhile majority of them suggested that the regular classroom teachers needed the support of special teachers for the success of inclusive practice. Furthermore, it is noted in the collected data that, many of the selected basic school teachers in the Bekwai municipality agreed that adequate teacher motivation is very crucial for the practice of inclusive education. Finally, from the data collected, majority of the regular education teachers suggested that teachers needed support from parents for the practice of inclusive education whereas most of them agreed that the reduction in large class sizes can support teachers in inclusive practice.

5.7 Conclusions

The study concluded that

a. General education teachers held positive attitudes towards the practice of inclusive education in order to allow both the special needs children and the regular children learn together effectively. The findings also revealed that,

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inclusive education improves the learning needs of regular children and also demonstrate a significant progress in their learning with special needs children. Meanwhile, the findings proved that the practice of inclusive education promotes social development among students with and without special needs.

b.   The findings also confirmed that inclusion of students with special needs can benefit both students with and without disability in the regular classroom. From the findings it was also noted that, the practice of inclusive education promotes self-esteem among students with special needs.

c.   The state of overcrowded classrooms was one of the contributory factors influencing the perceptions of teachers towards the practice of inclusive education. The findings also revealed that inadequate resources as well as the untrained nature of some regular education teachers were determining factors hindering the successful practice of inclusive education.

d.   From the findings, it was concluded that, the inclusion of students with special needs pose extra amount of work to general education teachers which could also be a determinant that contributed to the poor practice of inclusive education in those selected basic schools in the Bekwai Municipality.

e.   It was revealed from the findings that, general education teachers should be given the sufficient training to enable them teach students with special needs in the inclusive classroom.

f.   Regular education teachers should be given adequate preparations by providing them with variety of professional development activities in order to fully prepare them for inclusive teaching.

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g. It was also notified that general classroom teachers should be given the needed support services such as administrative support to ensure effective practice of inclusive education.

h. The findings disclosed that, adequate motivation should be given to the regular education teachers as well as material resources in order to facilitate the practice of inclusive education in the basic schools within the Bekwai Municipality of the Ashanti Region.

5.8 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- There will be the need for general education teachers to develop good positive attitudes towards the practice of inclusive education in order to meet the needs of both the regular and special needs children.

- Teachers in the regular classroom should be given support in the form of adequate resources such as facilities and special education teachers to support the learning needs of all children.

- The vast majority of the teachers felt they should be exposed to all the necessary courses of special education to prepare them for the teaching profession. Teachers' preparedness therefore should based on the national policy of inclusive education as a right.

- The Government as well as the heads of schools should also shoulder the responsibility of providing the basic schools with adequate resources to enhance the practice of inclusive education especially in the Bekwai Municipality within the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

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- The Ghana Education Service (GES) in collaboration with school heads should organize an in-service training seminars for the regular education teachers on the ever importance of inclusive education.

5.9 Areas for Further Studies

Since this study only focused on the perceptions of teachers towards the practice of inclusive education in some selected basic schools, it is however proposed that subsequent studies be conducted into the perceptions of students towards inclusive education. The position of students in the inclusive classroom as well as its impact on their academic performance needs to be explored. Further research is also required into the possible challenges that are hampering the successful practice of inclusive education in the Ghanaian basic schools.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

QUESTIONNER FOR TEACHERS

Dear respondent!

This questionnaire is purely for academic purposes. Therefore, I would be very grateful if you could feel free and answer these questions by ticking the appropriate responses as they appeal to you according to the research questions and the respective statements. Please you are assured of the necessary confidentiality. Thanks

Section A: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Please respond to the items below and tick ( ) where applicable in the space provided.

1. **Gender/Sex**

   A. **Male**   (   )

   B. **Female** (   )

2. **Age**

   A. **20-30 yrs** (   )

   B. **31-40yrs** (   )

   C. **41-60 yrs** (   )

3. **Teaching Experience**

   A. **1-5 yrs**   (   )

   B. **6-10 yrs**   (   )

   C. **10-beyond** (   )

4. **Class Taught**

   A. **Prim 1-6**   (   )

   B. **JHS 1-3**   (   )

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Key:

SA: Strongly agree =5; **A:** Agree 4; **N**: Neutral 3; **D:** Disagree = 2, S**D**: Strongly disagree =1

Section B: What perceptions do regular teachers have about the practice of inclusive education?

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Inclusive education cannot affect the learning of regular children.					
2	Inclusive education will enable both "normal'' children and inclusive children learn together.					
3	The practice of inclusive education cannot enable those with special needs to progress in learning.					
4	Inclusion promotes social independence among students with special needs and those without special needs.					
5	The practice of inclusive education will allow all categories to share experiences.					
6	Inclusion of students with special needs can benefit both students with and without disability in the regular classroom.					
7	Inclusion promotes self- esteem among students with special needs.					
8	All general education teachers do understand the meaning and have knowledge about inclusion education.					

Section C: What are the underlying factors that Influence Teachers' Perceptions about the Practice of Inclusive Education.

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
9	Overcrowded classrooms cannot support inclusive practice.					
10	The needs for special needs children cannot be met by regular classroom teachers in inclusive classroom.					
11	Children with special needs have their special schools to attend.					
12	Regular education teachers are not trained to teach children with special needs.					
13	Teachers in regular classroom cannot adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of special needs children.					
14	Teachers need adequate exposure in order to					

		SA	A	N	D	SD
	accommodate special needs children in inclusive classroom.					
15	Resources are inadequate to allow for the practice of inclusive education.					
16	Inclusion of students with special needs pose extra amount of work for general education teachers.					

Section D: What preparations are made generally for Teachers' towards the Practice of Inclusive Education

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
17	General education teachers have been given the needed training for the practice of education.					
18	Pre-service teachers have the needed exposure towards the practice of inclusive education.					
19	Professional development activities can prepare regular classroom teachers in teaching inclusive children.					
20	Regular classroom teachers require adequate preparations in how to teach children with special needs.					
21	The initial teacher courses attended have fully prepared me for the practice of inclusive education.					
22	General education teachers do not have sufficient training to teach students with special needs in inclusive classroom.					

Section E: What support services do teachers need towards the practice of inclusive education

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
23	General classroom teachers have the needed support services towards the practice of inclusive education.					
24	Administrative support is very important for inclusive practice.					
25	Availability of material resources is necessary for inclusive practice.					
26	Regular classroom teachers need support from special teachers for the success of inclusive practice.					
27	Adequate teacher motivation is crucial for inclusive education.					

28	Teachers need support from parents for the practice of inclusive education.					
29	Reduction in large class sizes can support teachers in inclusive practice.					