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PERCEPTIONS OF PRIVATE SCHOOL TEACHERS ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN BOLGATANGA EAST DISTRICT OF THE UPPER EAST REGION

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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, **Regina Abena Onuaye** hereby 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 has not been submitted, either imparts or in whole for another degree elsewhere.

Signature: ……

Date: …….

Supervisor's Declaration

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

Name of Supervisor:

Signature: ……...

Date: ……...

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my lovely mother, madam Dora Somanhime Sampana

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of private school teachers towards inclusive education in the Bolgatanga East District. Twenty (20) teachers, comprising 10 males and females formed the sample size of the study. In-depth interviews that were semi-structured were used to gather the data. The study used a mixed methodology based on pragmatism philosophy and reported findings based on participant interviews. The results of the study showed that while many teachers were aware of what constitute inclusion education, most of the teachers were unable to implement it due to numerous challenges. These challenges include exclusion by government in the provision of materials and infrastructure needed for effective implementation. According to some educators, inclusive education is an effective strategy for guaranteeing equal access to educational opportunities. According to the study's findings, teachers working in inclusive schools need to receive training on how to work with pupils who have disabilities.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

The inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream education has been a major cause of concern for many governments around the world. It is a national and international development that is supported in national legislation and in statements and reports that have been issued by international bodies such as the United Nations and Council of Europe. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) advocated that children with special educational needs (SEN) should have access to mainstream education so as to provide a basis to combat discriminating attitudes. The statement

is therefore conceived as forming the basis for inclusion and a shift from segregation by creating a welcoming community, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.

Inclusive education means" full inclusion of children with diverse abilities in all aspects of schooling that others are able to access and enjoy" (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2005, p.2). The government of Ghana has since attained independence from the British in 1957, has regarded education as a fundamental human right for its citizens, and it has enshrined this right in the legal framework of education. The 1961 Act is the principal legislation concerning the right to education for all children in Ghana which states that:

Every child who has attained the school going age as determined by the minister shall attend a course of instruction as laid down by the minister in a school recognized for the purpose by the minister. (Ghana Education Service GES, 2004, p.2) This statement gives a legislative backing for every child to be in school. The concept of inclusive education is aligned with the 10-year Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme in 1996, which is a policy framework that increases access, retention and participation of all students of school going age in education.

Inclusion is a widely accepted programme, according to United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005). Gadagbui (2008) opined that inclusive education ensures the participation of all students in school and involves restructuring the culture, policies and practices in schools so that they can respond to the diverse needs of students in their localities. The goal of inclusive education is to break down barriers that separate general and special education and make the included students feel liked, and become members of the general education classroom. This inclusive system provides individual students with disabilities opportunities and

confidence in learning independently concepts, skills and strategies that their counterparts without disabilities are exposed to. The fundamental principle of inclusive education is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of difficulties or differences they may have. As such, inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different learning needs, pace and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnership with their communities.

The Act 715 of the Republic of Ghana, entitled Disability Act, 2006, emphasizes inclusive education for children with disabilities. Section 20 of the Act states that; A person responsible for admission into a school or other institution of learning shall no refuse to give admission to a person with disability on account of the disability unless the person has been assessed by the Ministry responsible for education in collaboration with the Ministries responsible for health and social welfare to be in a special school for children or persons with disability (Disability Act, 2006, p. 2). Children with disabilities deserve proper education; and they have a right to it, so those who are able to work in the normal classroom environment should be included. As teachers who are willing to teach these children would face many challenges and issues, they may need specialised training, and develop personal attributes such as patience to deal with these children. To achieve this, teachers need to work with children disabilities and develop awareness of inherent challenges and changes it could lead to (Coles, 2009).

Many researchers emphasize teachers‟ attitudes as a decisive component in ensuring the successful inclusion of students with special education needs (De Boer et al., 2011; Dulčić & Bakota, 2008). Simply put, attitudes of teachers can enhance or impede the implementation of inclusion. Teachers

who personally support inclusive practice and accept the concept of inclusion can more readily adapt the learning environment to the diverse needs of students and use a variety of approaches and teaching strategies (Ryan, 2009). In addition to general attitudes towards inclusion, researchers most frequently study factors that have an impact on teacher attitudes, such as their gender, age, experience, professional training and education, as well as the types and level of impairments that children have (Forlin, 2005; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2006). Other factors that influence teachers‟ attitudes towards inclusion have also been studied, such as the implementation of inclusion at school, sources of support and the distribution of resources, support from the school administration and colleagues, organization framework (Jerlinder, Danermark, & Gill, 2010; Morley, Bailey, & Tan, 2005). The statement means that persons with disabilities have the right to be in regular schools and no head of the learning institution should deny them admission. It also means that, the implementation of inclusive education is now mandatory and, therefore, teachers, parents, and all stakeholders should unite to make it a reality. Beliefs about disability, ethnicity and teachers‟ attitudes can influence the practice of inclusive education, the quality of educational materials and instruction students receive (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Sharma & Desai, 2002). Many regular education teachers who feel unprepared and fearful to work with learners with disabilities in regular classes display frustration, anger and negative attitudes. Additionally, access to resources and specialist support affects teachers‟ confidence and attitudes towards inclusive education (Wolery, Anthony, Snyder, Werts, & Katzenmeyer, 1999).

Avramidis, Buylis, and Burden (2000) argued that when teachers gain extensive professional knowledge needed to implement inclusive education, they may succumb to it. Similarly, Cook, Tankersely, Cook, and Landrum (200) reported that as teachers have experience with students, specifically those with disabilities, their confidence to each of them is likely to grow, which could

alter their negative attitudes. General classroom teachers need to be willing and able to teach children with disabilities in their classrooms. If these teachers are unwilling to teach children with disabilities or have unrealistically low expectations of themselves when considering teaching children with disabilities, mainstreaming will not be successful. Therefore, the researcher wanted to investigate the perceptions of private school teachers towards inclusive education in the Bolgatanga East District.

Teachers' attitudes are influenced by the nature and severity of the disabling condition presented to them (child-related variables) and less by teacher-related variables (Avoke, 2008). Furthermore, educational environment-related variables, such as the availability of physical and human support are associated with attitudes to inclusion. Therefore, there is the assumption that the successful implementation of any inclusive policy is largely dependent on educators being positive about it.

In the Bolgatanga District, for instance, there are few special education resource teachers attached to selected regular schools that work hand in hand with general education teachers and are responsible for teaching and meeting the learning needs of children with disabilities in classrooms. Special education resource teachers are trained to operate in inclusive schools, where they serve children with their specific categories of disabilities whilst regular classroom teachers are trained to operate in regular education classrooms. Gadagbui (2008) was of the view that, "…unless all teachers are fully prepared, inclusive education will not be realized" (p. 2). This suggests that teachers‟ 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.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although teachers in the general education classrooms have positive attitudes towards including students with disabilities in the regular school classrooms, they have limited knowledge of inclusive practices (Hayford, 2007). Most teachers do not provide the individual support to students with disabilities to offer assistance to enable them to overcome their problems and participate in learning successfully (Hayford, 2007). Most general education classroom teachers in Ghana have limited knowledge in identifying special need children. Regular classroom teachers usually express concerns about inclusive education (Hayford, 2007). One of the concerns is that they lack the specialized training required to teach academic, social or adaptive behaviours to students with disabilities (Hayford, 2007). Information gathered from resource teachers revealed that teachers in the general classroom have difficulties in adapting the general curriculum to suite the learning needs of special need children. Regular class teachers turn to see assessment practices that alienate special need children. As a result of these practices in the general education, some of the special need children feel uncomfortable and thus, turn to be truant and finally, drop out of school. It is against this and other background that it is necessary to explore the views of teachers of selected basic schools on inclusive education in the Bolgatanga East district. The researcher upon a follow up on the denial of admission of a disable student by a private school in Bolgatanga East District realized that there is the need to research into the perceptions of private school teachers towards inclusive education because of the admission denial else the consequences may lead to the defeat of the purpose of inclusive education.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of private school teachers towards inclusive education in the Bolgatanga East District.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to explore:

1. To find out the perceptions of private school teachers on the practice of inclusive education in Bolga East District.
2. To evaluate the factors that influence the perceptions of private school teachers on the practice of inclusive education in the Bolga East in the Upper East Region of Ghana.
3. To analyze the inherent challenges private school teacher face in implementing inclusive education

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What perceptions do private school teachers have about the practice of inclusive education in the Bolga?

2. What factors influence private school teachers' perceptions about the practice of inclusive education in the district?

3. What inherent challenges do private school teachers face in implementing inclusive education in the Bolga East District?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Results of the study would help in revealing the perceptions private school teachers' hold about the practice of inclusive education in regular classrooms in the Bolga East District in the Upper East Region of Ghana. Also, the findings will enable the Ghana Education Service (GES) to find means of factoring private school 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 private school 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 inclusive education.

1.7 Delimitation of the study

This study was restricted only to private school teachers in schools in the Bolgatanga East District of the Upper East Region of Ghana. The study was also delimited to only seven (7) selected private schools in the Bolgatanga East District of the Upper East Region in Ghana.

1.8 Limitation of the study

One major problem faced initially was the difficulty in having access to the class teachers in responding to the instrument since they were busy always with their pupils. The distance between the schools was far, so a lot of travelling was done in collecting data, so the instrument was not responded to at the same time. At times the intended teachers who were to respond to the instrument do not come to school and they have to be chased severally. This had extended the time projected for the completion of the study.

Access to information from some respondents was difficult; interviews were scheduled and were cancelled by some respondents a couple of time, the researcher had to follow up several times to get the respondents to grant interview

Also, some respondents failed to respond to their questionnaires and return same to the researcher, the researcher had to look for respondent's within the same population to administer the questionnaire. Some respondents at a time opted out of the study, the researcher had to convince

them on the importance of the study to enable them respond.

The final challenge was the availability of time on my part to go to several schools, perhaps three times, before administering the instrument since no teacher was willing to receive on behalf of their colleagues. The challenges outlined above unduly delayed the completion of the study. Nevertheless, it could not have any significant effect on the data collected for the study.

1.9 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.

SEN: Special Educational Need

TLMS: Teaching and Learning Materials

S/N: Serial number

Perception: a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem

Private schools: a school supported by private organization or private entity rather than the state

1.10 Organization of the study

The study was arranged in five (5) chapters. Chapter one was 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, limitation of the study and operational definition of terms are all part of chapter one. Chapter Two covered the review of literature, which mostly dealt with the writing of scholarly works in earlier studies conducted on the topic. Chapter Three discussed the methodology and dealt with issues such as the philosophy, research design,

population, sample and sampling techniques, instruments for data collection, data collection procedure and data analysis. The results and discussion were focused on the Chapter Four. Chapter five summarized the findings, drew conclusion, gave recommendations and provided Suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature reviewed for the study. The areas covered include:

- Theoretical framework
- The Concept of Inclusive Education
- Perceptions Teachers hold about the Practice of Inclusive Education
- Inherent Underlying Factors Influencing Teachers Perceptions about the Practice of Inclusive Education
- Preparations made for Teachers toward the Practice of Inclusive Education
- Challenges teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education
- Summary of Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical framework

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.

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.

2.3 The Concept of Inclusive Education

Globally, there has been a decisive move towards inclusive practice in education and any acceptable agreement on the key principles which was encompassed in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). Since 1994, the principles agreed on in Salamanca have been reinforced by many conventions. The declarations and recommendations in Europe which covers United Nation‟s Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) had made it an explicit reference to the importance of ensuring inclusive systems of education. It was obvious that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has gone beyond the narrow idea of inclusion as a means of understanding and overcoming a deficit in understanding the issue on inclusive education. It is now widely accepted that concerns on the issues of gender, ethnicity, class, social conditions, health and human rights encompassed universal involvement, access, participation and achievement (Ouane, 2008). The UNESCO International Conference in Geneva in 2008 raised the importance of inclusive education as a means of addressing increasing inequality, spatial segmentation and cultural fragmentation. Garcia-Huidobro (2005) has also pointed out that equity must be at the centre of general policy decisions and not limited to peripheral policies oriented to correct the effects of general policies that are not in tune with logic of justice or prevention. Education for all and remove barriers to participation and learning are essential links which made the reform of education system and other policies such as poverty alleviation, improved maternal and child health, promote gender equality and ensure environmental sustainability and global partnership. A declaration following the ninth meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for all (EFA) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in February 2010, confirmed the key role played by education in building equitable and peaceful societies and in sustainable social and economic development (United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2010). The

recommendations from the meeting were evidence-based, inclusive education policies are indispensable for reaching the marginalized and meeting the educational needs of all children, youth and adults, regardless of age, nationality, race, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, low social status and other markers of disadvantage. The recommendations from the meeting also highlighted the importance of documenting and disseminating best practices in addressing key elements of quality education. For instance, adequately-qualified teachers, appropriate pedagogy, relevant curricula and materials, language of instruction, promotion of tolerance and peace, appropriate use of technologies and open education resources were proposed. Rouse (2010) has indicated the fact that problems with quality and availability of educational opportunities are not confined to the developing world. Traces of such issues are also evident in the developed nations. According to Rouse (2010), „well-schooled" countries where compulsory education has a long history, such concerns may seem irrelevant, however, not all children have positive experiences of education, nor do many have much to show for their time in school when they leave. Inclusive education can, therefore, be understood as the presence (access to education and school attendance), participation (quality of the learning experience from the students" perspective) and achievement (learning processes and outcomes across the curriculum) of all learners. UNESCO (2008) definition of inclusive education states that „an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination"(p. 3). Opertti Brady and Duncombe (2009) discussed some of the challenges associated with the broad definition of inclusive education by UNESCO (2008) as: a. achieving a balance between universal and targeted social policies. b. positively discriminate towards certain social groups; such targeted policies may be seen as „second class" or may increase fragmentation and segregation; c.

supporting childhood care and education as the foundation for positive outcomes; d. the expansion of basic education to a minimum of nine or ten years, with a smooth transition between primary and lower secondary education; promoting a comprehensive and integrated life-long education system (instead of a vertical and static divided system of formal, non-formal and informal education); f. ensuring relevant curricular frameworks and learning tools to meet learners‟ diverse needs and achieve learning outcomes. The ideology of inclusive education, as outlined above, is implemented in different ways across different contexts and varies with national policies and priorities which are in turn influenced by a whole range of social, cultural, historical and political issues. Definitions and understandings of what is meant by inclusion and inclusive education vary greatly within countries (D‟Alessio, 2007) and there is no agreed interpretation of terms such as handicap, special need or disability. Such differences are linked to administrative, financial and procedural regulations rather than reflecting variations in the incidence and the types of special educational needs in countries (Meijer, 2003).

When considering policy and practice for inclusive education across countries, therefore, it is important to keep in mind that policy makers and practitioners are not always talking about the same thing (Watkins & D‟Alessio, 2009). There appears to be a number of reasons for this: firstly, the education systems (policies and practice) in countries have evolved over time, within very specific contexts and are, therefore, highly individual (Meijer, 1999, 2003). Despite this, there are similarities in approaches and aims for inclusive education within all countries, as well as between countries (Ainscow & Booth, 1998).

Secondly, systems for inclusive education are embedded in both the general and special education frameworks of provision that exist in individual countries (Watkins, 2007). There is a need to examine issues impacting upon inclusive education within both general and special education

legislation and policy to fully understand teaching and learning in inclusive settings. Finally, inclusive education in all countries is not a static phenomenon – it has been developing in different ways and continues to develop (Barton & Armstrong, 2007). Conceptions of policies for and practice in inclusive education are constantly undergoing changes and any examination of inclusive education and „current" practice in any country needs to be considered within the context of wider educational reforms occurring in that country. UNESCO (2005) monitoring report on quality in education highlighted the need to respect „indigenous" views of quality. Mitchell (2005) states: Since there is no one model of inclusive education that suites every country"s circumstances, caution must be exercised in exporting and importing a particular model. While countries can learn from others" experiences, it is important that they give due consideration to their own social economicpolitical-cultural-historical singularities" (p. 19).

Despite these varying contexts, fundamental principles can be agreed to overcome barriers which may arise from „entrenched professional attitudes, class, sexist or racial prejudice, or from cultural misunderstandings" (Rambla, Ferrer, Tarabini & Verger 2008). Opertti et al. (2009) have suggested that Skidmore"s (2004) examples of discourses around deviance as compared to inclusive education can be helpful in identifying and overcoming barriers to learning. According to Schumm and Vaughn (1995), the most effective teaching strategies used in preparing teachers towards inclusive education is embedded in inclusive teacher preparation model. To them this preparation model is in two major dimensions. One deals with the outcomes of the model and the other focuses on the specific programme components (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). The most prevalent education conceptualisations are those that define inclusion based on certain key features and characteristics such as age-appropriate placement and students being able to attend their local school. Berlach and Chambers (2011) provided a philosophical framework for inclusive education

along with school-based and classroom-based examples. Their philosophical underpinnings included: availability of opportunity; acceptance of disability and / or disadvantage; superior ability and diversity; and an absence of bias, prejudice, and inequality. Hall (1996), cited in Florian (2005) noted that inclusion means "Full membership of an age-appropriate class in your local school doing the same lessons as other pupils and it mattering if you are not there. Plus you have friends who spend time with you outside of school" (p. 31). Other definitions refer to the presence of community (Forest & Pearpoint, 1992), „ordinary" schools expanding what they do (Clark et al., 1995), problem solving (Rouse & Florian, 1996), and responsiveness to student needs via curriculum organisation and provision (Ballard, 1995). Loreman (2002) provided a synthesis of the features of inclusive education evident in a variety of sources situated firmly in this key features category. These features include: 1. All children attend their neighbourhood school. 2. Schools and districts have a „zero-rejection" policy when it comes to registering and teaching children in their region. All children are welcomed and valued. 3. All children learn in regular, heterogeneous classrooms with same-age peers. 4. All children follow substantively similar programmes of study, with curriculum that can be adapted and modified if needed. Modes of instruction are varied and responsive to the needs of all. 5. All children contribute to regular school and classroom learning activities and events. 6. All children are supported to make friends and to be socially successful with their peers. 7. Adequate resources and staff training are provided within the school and district to support inclusion (Loreman, 2002, p. 43). Attempts to define inclusive education by what it is, however, are problematic because such definitions can be impacted by shifts in educational practice, context, culture, and circumstance that can quickly render these features

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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 is a body of literature on teachers‟ attitudes on inclusive education. Chambers and Forlin (2010) defined attitudes as a "learned, evaluative response about an objector an issue and a cumulative result of personal beliefs." (p. 74). Forlin adds that beliefs influenced teacher attitudes to inclusive education that in turn, influence their intentions and behaviors. Attitudes are formed by experience as well as by implicit learning and may reflect an individual's personality (Zimbardo & Lieppe, 1991). Johnson and Howell (2009) contend that attitudes may be seen to have three related components: cognitive (the idea or assumptions upon which the attitude is based), affective (feelings about the issue), and behavioral (a predisposition toward an action that corresponds with the assumption or belief). As a result, the formation and modification of teacher attitudes are important areas of education research (Weisman & Garza, 2002). Cook (2002) noted the need for positive teacher attitudes and for teachers to create a sense of belonging to support effective inclusive practice. In relation to the assertion, Cook and Silverman (2007) pointed out that

teachers' attitudes directly affect their behavior with students, and so have a great influence on classroom climate and student outcomes. Several studies show that teachers' understanding and perception contribute to success of inclusion and that positive perceptions and understanding are linked to a range of factors, including training in special or inclusive education, experience in working with students with disabilities, and close contact with students with disabilities. Also, beliefs disability, ethnicity, attitudes, and concerns of teachers can influence the practice of inclusive education, the quality of educational materials and instruction students receive (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Nieto, 1997; Sharma & Desai, 2002).

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 inclusion of students with more severe disabilities and students with behavior disabilities (Scruggs &Mastropieri, 1996; Avramidis& Norwich, 2002}.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(1996) noted that the highest-level 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 appeared to be related to the belief that including students with disabilities would have a negative effect on general education classroom. Students with mild disabilities (e.g. students with learning disabilities) have been portrayed as not being significantly different from students without distinguished disabilities (Wang, Reynolds & Walberg, 1998) and therefore were more likely to be welcomed in the inclusive classrooms. Conversely, children with emotional and behavioral problems have typically been rated less

positively in relation to perception and understanding about inclusion (Soodak, Podell, & Lehman 1998, Stoiber, Gettinger, & Goetz, 1998). In general, teachers believe that students with the most challenging behavior require additional teacher responsibility and that they are difficult to support. Other studies revealed that inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom brings about larger classes which increase the teachers‟ work-load; large classes may be viewed as an obstacle to the successful implementation of inclusive education (Agran, Alper, & Wehmeyer, 2002). Larger classes place additional demands on the regular educator, while reinforcing concern that all students may not receive proper time or attention (Stoler, 1992). Cornoldi, Terreni, Scruggs and Mastropieri(1996) noted that, classes cannot exceed 20 if there is one student with a disability in an inclusive classroom. Some teachers are also with the view that the classroom time will be insufficient when students with disabilities are included in the general classroom. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) indicated that teachers believed that the classroom time is insufficient for inclusion efforts. Similarly, Downing, Eichinger and Williams (199) found positive perspectives toward inclusion as teachers were more concerned about the classroom time required to support students with disabilities that might limit their ability to provide an appropriate education for general education students in the inclusive classroom. Insufficient classroom time available for teachers in inclusive classroom was therefore a major concern to teachers. Positive attitudes and beliefs combine to play a major part in support diversity in inclusive education (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Silva & Morgado, 2004). According to Cook (2002), training in special and inclusive education has consistently been found out to have influence educators attitudes either in a single course or through a content-infused approach. Also, Lancaster and Bain (2007) agreed that in general, there is a positive change in attitudes after undertaking an inclusive and special education unit of study across a number of contexts and countries. The authors suggested that some

type of formalized input is sufficient to increase the awareness of general education pre-service teachers. However, Molina (2006) finds out some research evidence to demonstrate that theoretical classes and reading are not sufficient to modify teachers and students negative attitudes towards students with special educational needs. Mahat (2008) noted that in order to find out the attitudes of teachers towards students with disabilities, In his view, Mahat suggested that attitudes of mainstream teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities were influenced by past experiences (previous experience with teaching students with disabilities), previous knowledge (training in the field of inclusive education) and newly-acquired knowledge (professional development or training modules). Avramidis and Norwich (2002) note the importance of positive attitudes of beginning teachers in inclusive settings has been well documented. However, both pre-service and in-service courses that address the skills and the attitudes of teachers towards students with disabilities are frequently deemed insufficient by teachers (Westwood & Graham, 2003).

Finally, inclusive education can be achieved depending on teachers' positive attitudes towards teaching disabled children without exhibiting certain stereotypical patterns in students' academic behavior" (Jordan et al. 2001). In other words, teachers stereotypical and self-imposed perceptions of considering their pupils as one good or bad from the others closes their own motivation to be adaptable to each of their pupils needs (Prater, 2010).

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.

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 pre-service 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 favorable 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 taught when 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.

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 programs. 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 programs 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 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 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.

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. Avramidis and Norwich conducted a study on educators' attitudes towards inclusive education in which the main focus was to find out whether gender had any effect on the choice. The findings revealed that female teachers had a greater tolerance level for integration and for special needs persons than did male teachers. Harvey (1985), as cited by Avramidis and Norwich), asserted that there is a marginal tendency for female teachers to express more positive attitudes towards the idea of integrating children with behaviour problems than male teachers.

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 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.

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

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them meet the challenges of inclusion when they begin teaching in regular classrooms (Smith et al., 2005).

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 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 behavior 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 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 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 cooperative 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 Scalew 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 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.

2.4.1 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-al). 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 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 Philosophical foundation of the study, research design, study area, population, sample size, sampling technique, instrumentation, procedure for data collection, validity and reliability, pre-testing, data analysis, ethical consideration, and summary.

3.1 Philosophical Underpinning

Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) stated that all researches need a foundation, and that this foundation, whether explicit or implicit, is found in the 'worldview' or philosophical framework chosen by the researcher. In this study therefore, the philosophical framework adopted by the researcher to underpin the study was pragmatism (pragmatist philosophy/paradigm). The pragmatic paradigm in its simplest terms implies that, the overall approach to research is that of mixing data collection procedures and analysis within the research process (Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2007). Pragmatism is seen as "debunking concepts such as 'truth' and 'reality' and focuses instead on 'what works' as the truth regarding the research questions under investigation" (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p. 713). the philosophical theory of pragmatism is likewise seen as a means of bridging the gap between the empirical singular scientific approach to research and the newer "freewheeling" inquiry of qualitative research theories (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p. 52). It draws on many ideas including using "what works," diverse approaches, and valuing both objective and subjective knowledge (Cherryholmes, as cited in Creswell, 2008). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that mixed methods research uses a method and philosophy that attempt to fit together the insights provided by qualitative and quantitative research into a workable

solution. According to Tashakkori, and Teddlie (2003) taking a pragmatic and balanced or pluralist position will help improve communication among researchers from different paradigms as they attempt to advance knowledge. Pragmatism also helps to shed light on how the research approaches can be mixed fruitfully (Creswell, 2008). Thus, for the mixed methods researcher, pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as to different forms of data collection and analysis in the mixed methods study.

The study was conducted in kindergarten classroom settings where preschoolers (learners) and teachers interacted freely and in a structured manner. In the classroom environment, teachers and preschoolers (learners) are familiar with each other and classroom interactions are seen as natural. In order to describe whatever was on going therefore, it was imperative to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. This philosophical approach therefore enabled the researcher to develop thorough understanding of teacher perception towards inclusive assessment practices in early childhood centres, which will enable them achieve the GNKGC goals.

3.2 Research Approach

In order to explain the research problem into detail and based on the philosophical approach, the study adopted the mixed methods approach. According to Creswell (2002), mixed method in research is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. To him, the core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone. Corroborating this view, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) postulate that mixed method research can be viewed as an approach which draws upon the strengths and perspectives of each method, recognizing the existence and importance of the physical, natural world as well as the importance of reality and influence of

human experience. Mixed methods research therefore, is all about adopting a research strategy which employs more than one type of research method for in-depth explanation.

The advantage of the mixed method approach is that both approaches (quantitative and qualitative) have strengths and weaknesses, and that the weakness of one can be remedied or compensated for by the strengths of the other (Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2007). Another advantage is that the mixed-methods approach can answer a broader and more complete range of research questions (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Furthermore, applying the mixed method approach can improve insights into and understanding of the data, which might be missed when using a single approach. Mixed methods can be applied to increase the generalizability of the results of a study (Johnson and Christensen, 2012). It requires that the researcher is familiar with the collection and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2007).

Mixed method approach for conducting research involves collecting, analyzing and integrating quantitative and qualitative research. This approach in research is used when the integration provides a better understanding of the research problem than either quantitative or qualitative alone (Creswell, 2008).

Quantitative data includes close-ended information such as that found to measure teachers' attitude for quantitative behaviours using questionnaires and performance instruments such as Likert's rating scales. The analysis of this type of data consists of statistically analysing scores collected on instruments (e.g., questionnaires) or checklists to answer research questions or to test hypotheses (Creswell, 2002). According to Gay and Airasian (2000, p. 5,11) quantitative research is "based on the collection and analysis of numerical data" and is used to "describe current conditions, investigate relationships, and study cause-effect phenomena". McMillan and

Schumacher (2006, p. 117) described essential elements of sound quantitative design as including subject selection, identification of data collection techniques, articulation of data gathering procedures, and procedures for treatment implementation and noted the importance of the researcher addressing "principles in each component that enhance the quality of the research".

Qualitative data on the other hand**,** consists of open-ended information that the researcher usually gathers through interviews, focus groups and observations. The analysis of the qualitative data typically follows the path of aggregating it into categories of information and presenting the diversity of ideas gathered during data collection (Creswell, 2002).

3.3 Research Design

In relation to the objectives of this study, the researcher selected a concurrent mixed method research design (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). A concurrent mixed method design was employed for this study. This approach requires the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, and analyze them at the same time (Creswell, 2014). This design helps to explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behavior by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

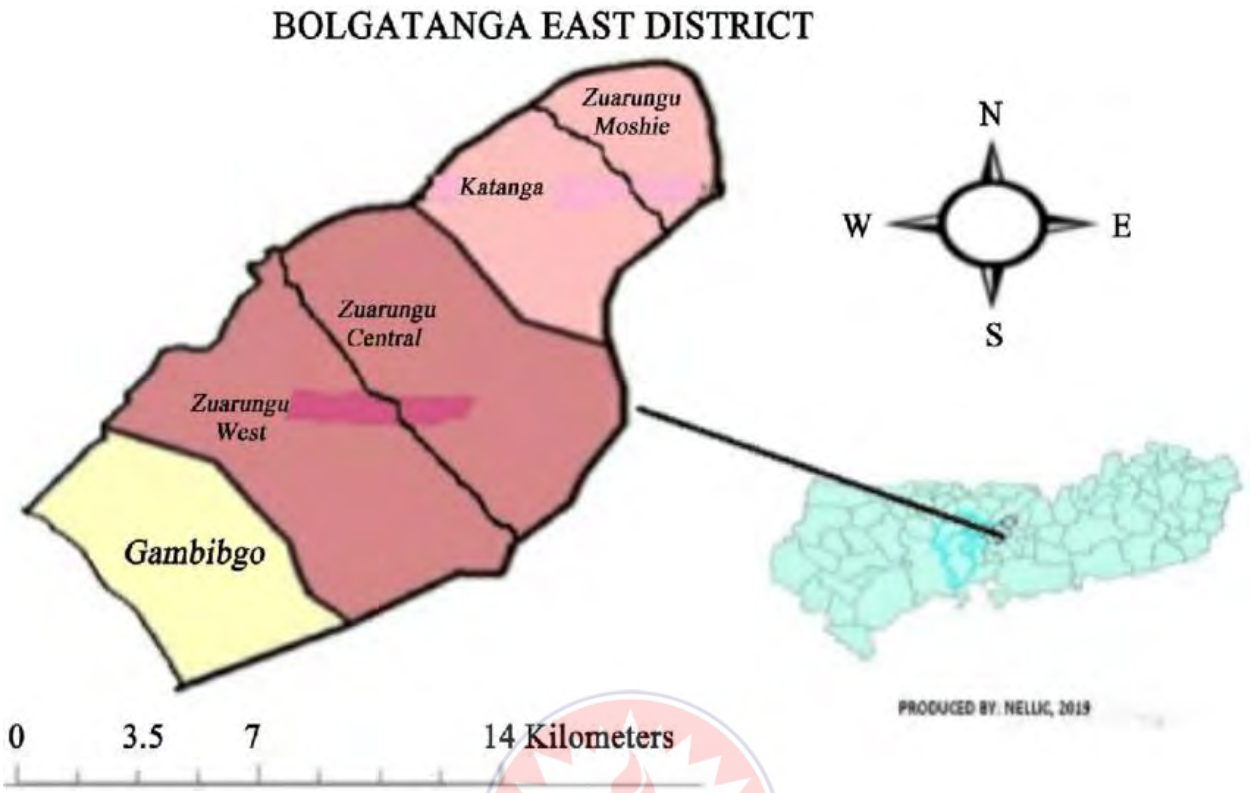
Also, the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone (Creswell, 2014). Thus, in this approach, one set of data compliments the other, helping to overcome any weakness associated with each other (Creswell, 2014).

3.4 Study Area

Bolgatanga East District is one of the fifteen districts in the Upper East Region of Ghana. Originally it was formerly part of the then larger Bolgatanga District in 1988; until part of the district was later split off to create Bolgatanga East District on 15 March 2018. The district is

located in the central part of Upper East Region and has Zuarungu as its capital town. Below is the population and map of Bolgatanga East District. The population development of Bolgatanga East as well as related information and services (Wikipedia, Google, and image)

MAP OF BOLGATANGA EAST



GSS, 2020

Population refers to the aggregate or totality of objects or individuals regarding which inferences are to be made (Cohen & Manion, 1994, cited by Asiedu, 2015). A population can be defined as a group of individuals or people with the same characteristics and in whom the researcher is interested (Kusi, 2012). According to Maduekwe (2011), population is the larger group to which a researcher wishes to generalize the study.

The target population for the study comprised all the Fourty (40) private Kindergarten teachers in ten (10) schools in the Bolgatanga East District of the Upper East Region of Ghana, but the accessible population was twenty (20) Kindergarten private school teachers which comprised of

ten (10) males and ten (10) female teachers with an average age of below forty (40) years teaching at the kindergarten level. This can be seen in the table below.

Table 1 below present the population of the study

SN	NAME OF SCHOOL	NUMBEROF TEACHERS
1.	ST. John international catholic school	4
2.	Ideal citizens academy	4
3.	Eureca academy	4
4.	Life care academy	4
5.	Kings international	4
6.	Benim preparatory academy	4
6	Quality brain academy	4
8.	Christ frontier mission	4
9.	Divine power Christian academy	4
10.	Pealsung academy	4
Total		**40**

3.5 Sample Size

A sample could also be defined as a subset or collections of some units of the universe or population (Asamoah-Gyimah & Duodu, 2006). Avoke (2005) defines sample as the subset of the entire population of interest to the researcher. When dealing with people, it can be defined as a set of respondents (people) selected from a larger population for the purpose of a survey. In sampling, the researcher endeavors to collect information from a smaller group or subset of a population in such a way that, the knowledge gained is representative of the total population under study (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

Sampling involves taking a portion of a population, observing the portion and the generalizing the findings to the large population. However, to study a whole population to arrive at a generalization was not practicable (Dampso & Danso, 2012). Sampling is the procedure a researcher uses to select people, places, or things to study (Flick, 2014). The quality of a sample determines the quality of the research findings in a large measure. Sampling and selection of a

site is to a large extent influenced by the strategy of enquiry used by the researcher (Creswell, 2009). Sampling is a procedure whereby elements or people are chosen from a population to represent the characteristics of the population.

The sample size was twenty (20) kindergarten schoolteachers which comprised of ten (10) males and ten (10) female teachers out of the forty permanent teachers in the kindergarten with an average age of below forty (40) years. Sommer (2003) also stated that in order to have appropriate sampling, at least 10% of the target population should be considered.

Table 2 below presents the sample size selected for the study.

S/N	Names of School	Number of Teachers
1.	Pealsng academy	4
2.	Word international	4
3.	Benin preparatory academy	4
4.	Eureca academy	4
5.	Kings international	4
	Total	**20**

3.6 Sampling Technique

In this study, simple random sampling which is a probability sampling was used for the quantitative data. A simple random sample is a subset of statistical population in which each member of the subset has an equal opportunity of being chosen. It is meant to be an unbiased representation of a group. The researcher folded 40 pieces of papers in a transparent container which contained 20 'YES' and 20 'NO' which was sent to their various schools to pick from.

Any member of the population who picked yes became part of the sample and anybody who picked no was excluded as a participant in the study. Simple random sampling was used because it is less complicated as compared to other methods Such as the stratified sampling and it lacks bias because individual chosen are chosen at random and each individual in the population has the same probability of being chosen (Thomson 2012).

At the qualitative phase, the researcher adopted convenience sampling technique which is a non-probability sampling. Convenience sampling sometimes called accidental or opportunity sampling involves choosing the nearest individual to serve as respondents and continue that process until the required sample size have been obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible at that time (Subbey, 2019). In convenience sampling people are sampled because they are convenient source of data for researchers.

3.7 Instrument for data collection

In a mixed method, it is necessary to indicate the type of instruments that was used for collecting data in a quantitative and qualitative phase. After carefully examining the research questions, the type of information the researcher wants to obtain and the purpose of the study it was appropriate to use a questionnaire for the quantitative phase, semi-structured interview guide and observational guide for the qualitative phase.

3.7.1 Questionnaire

A self-constructed questionnaire was used in the study. The respondents who answered the questionnaire were Kindergarten private school teachers. A questionnaire is a research tool through which respondents are asked to respond to similar questions in a predetermined order (Gray, 2004). The questionnaire was used because it reduces bias that might result from the personal characteristics of the interviewer. Questionnaire offers the chance for privacy since the respondents could complete them at their own convenience.

In spite of the strengths, the use of questionnaires in studies has its own limitations. The majority of people who receive questionnaires do not return them (Denscombe, 2003; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). With respect to low response rate, the researcher curtailed it by appealing to the participants' goodwill, explaining the rationale of the study to them and assuring them that their responses will be in private and confidential. In order to ensure that respondents answer the questionnaire, the researcher kept the self-constructed questionnaires short, using simple and clear language, keep the respondents' task simple, provided clear instructions. At the quantitative phase, a three-point Likert-type scale and closed-ended questions were used to sample respondents' view for the study.

In Section A, closed-ended items were used to sample respondents' knowledge about their background information. With closed-ended questions, respondents are given a set of pre-designed replies such as "agree" or "disagree" or are given the opportunity to choose from a set of numbers representing strengths of feeling or attitude (Gray, 2004).

Closed-ended question items have a number of advantages. For example, data analysis from closed-ended questions is relatively simpler and questions can be coded quickly. Closed-ended questions require no extended writing thereby saving the respondent's time. The remaining sections on the questionnaire were Likert scale. The research questions in the study call for the use of a Likert scale. Likert-type scales are used to register the extent of agreement or disagreement with a particular statement of attitude, beliefs or judgment (Tuckman, 1994).

The three Likert-type scale was scored as: "Agree" =1, "Disagree" =2, "undecided" =3. The questionnaire contains thirteen (13) items. Section A (questions 1-6) elicits background information on, Gender, Age, Marital status, Educational Qualification, Teaching Experience and Class taught. Section B (7-13) solicits information on the attitudes of private school teachers towards early grade learners with disabilities in Bolgatanga East Districts.

3.7.2 Semi-Structured Interview guide

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect the qualitative data. In semi structured interviews, researchers must develop, adapt and generate questions and follow-up probes appropriate to the central purpose of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). O'Leary (2005, p. 164) argued that: "Semi-structured interviews are neither fully fixed nor fully free and are perhaps best seen as flexible. Interviews generally start with some defined questioning plan but pursue a more conversational style of interview that may see questions answered in an order natural to the flow

of the conversation. They may also start with a few defined questions but be ready to pursue any interesting tangents that may develop".

The semi-structured interview schedule was useful for gathering information from teachers to help understand the quantitative data. The interview guide was in four Sections, Section A dealt with the background information of the respondents, Section B dealt with the attitudes of private school teachers towards early grade learners with disabilities, Section C dealt with the factors that influenced private school teachers' attitudes towards learners with disabilities and Section D dealt with inherent challenges private school teachers faced towards teaching early grade learners with disabilities.

3.7.3 Observational Schedule

Observation was used to look out for the attitudes of private school teachers towards early grade learners with disabilities. Section A dealt with the demographic information of the respondents' whiles Section B was the observation on the attitudes of the respondents towards early grade learners with disabilities. Marshall and Rossman (1995, p.79) defined observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study". Fieldwork involves "actively looking, improving memory, informal interviewing, writing detailed field notes, and perhaps most importantly, patience"(Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002, p.7). Non-participant observation was used to enable the researcher to observe the displayed attitudes of the sampled.

The observation was done once a week for three periods, each period lasted for thirty (30) minutes duration of 30 minutes. The researcher used observation as methods to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is, as objective and accurate as possible given

the limitations of the method (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). They suggested that observation is used as a way to increase the validity of the study, as observations may help the researcher to have a better understanding of the context and phenomenon under study. The researcher selected 6 basic schoolteachers from 10 schools to observe how they display their attitudes towards learners with disabilities in their classroom and 20 teachers to be interviewed.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The data for the research was collected using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The questionnaires were given to the respondents to respond to them at their convenient time within a week. The researcher called a day before a week to remind them that he will be collecting the questionnaires tomorrow. The interviews were done face to face which lasted between thirty (30) minutes and an hour. The observations were done in the classrooms of the respondents once a week for three periods, each period lasted for thirty (30) minutes.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

Validity is the indicator for how successfully the research captures the information it's meant to capture. It is defined by Orodho (2003) as the correctness and significance of inferences drawn from research. Non-statistical techniques such as peer and/or expert review, as well as pilot testing, are used to assess content and construct validity (Klassen, 2008).

In four kindergarten centres, a pilot research was conducted. It aided in the attainment of validity since it resulted in the correction and adjustment of areas of weakness in connection to the issue under study. The pilot study's findings were not included in the final research conclusions. The researcher used two distinct data collecting methods to verify the validity and trustworthiness:

interviews and questionnaire. Before being utilized in the study, the questionnaires were piloted with a small sample to guarantee dependability.

The Guba criteria for validity of qualitative research were used to guarantee the research's validity. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability, according to Guba, are four criteria that assure a study's validity. The first criterion of validity which is credibility is ensured by the data acquired through questionnaires and interview. The researcher included details in the research regarding the participants and the setting of the investigation to ensure transferability. As a result, teachers, policy makers and other readers may apply the findings to their own circumstances (Mills, 2014). In addition, I followed Wolcott's guidelines for guaranteeing qualitative research's validity. I was patient while interviewing teachers and allowed them time to reply to the questions without interrupting or guiding their responses, as per the first approach of "Talk a little; Listen a lot."

The research reliability is defined as a measure of how consistent the results are (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). It's a metric for how well a research instrument produces consistent outcomes or data after several trials (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). When used several times in the data collecting process, a dependable instrument delivers consistent findings.

3.10 Qualitative Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed using content analysis. Analyzing qualitative data is not always smooth sailing and can bring some frustration and difficulties. Patton (2002) states that “analysis brings moments of terror that there is nothing there and there are times of exhilaration from the clarity of discovering ultimate truth. In between are long periods of hard work, deep thinking, and weight lifting volumes of material.” (2002, p. 371). The thematic content analysis is, perhaps, the

most common method of data analysis used in qualitative work. This method arose out of the approach known as grounded theory (Stewart et al., 2008). The method can be used in a range of other types of qualitative work, including ethnography and phenomenology. Indeed, Stewart et al, explained the process of thematic content analysis is often very similar in all types of qualitative research, in that the process involves analyzing transcripts, identifying themes within those data and gathering together examples of those themes from the text.

This analysis involved discovering themes in the interview transcripts and attempting to verify, confirm and qualify them by searching through the data and repeating the process to identify further themes and categories. In order to do this, once the interviews have been transcribed verbatim, I read each transcript and made notes in the margins of words, theories or short phrases that sum up what is being said in the text. This is usually known as open coding. The aim, however, was to offer a summary statement or word for each element that is discussed in the transcript. The initial coding framework used in the data generated from an actual interview with the three teachers in a qualitative assessment study, exploring their views on the mode of assessment used, the reasons for using them and the impact of performance assessment on the teacher's professional development. In the second stage, I collected together all of the words and phrases from all of the interview transcripts onto a clean set of pages. These were worked through and all duplications crossed out. This was to reduce the effect of the numbers of 'categories' quite considerably.

3.11 Pre- Testing

The test-retest approach was used to determine reliability. This allowed the researcher to check the questionnaire's consistency. The questionnaires were given to respondents to respond; same questioners were given to them a week later to identify if their responses will be the same.

Table 3 shows a summary of scale of pilot test results from the instrument. Comparing the results computed for alpha 1 and alpha 2 showed consistency of teachers' response to the issues in the instrument. For instance, Section B recorded alpha level of 0.74 for test one and 0.76 for test two, which has an average of 0.75. For Section C Alpha 1 recorded 0.86 and Alpha 2 recorded 0.89 which has an average of 0.82. The internal consistency was computed by finding the average of the two tests which was 0.75 and 0.88 = 0.82.

To establish the internal consistency of the instruments it was pre-tested among (4) purposively selected private kindergarten school teachers in Bolgatanga East District. Analysis of the pre-test data established a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82. George and Mallery (2003) would interpret this to mean that the internal consistency of the items in the scale was good, and Gliem and Gliem (2003) would describe it as high. Therefore, the research instrument was acceptable.

This shows the instrument was reliable. The pre-test instrument serves as the preliminary testing of the research questions to provide insights into ideas not yet considered and problems unanticipated, with data collection and data analysis in the main work.

Table 3. Summary of pilot test results

Scale	Number of items	Alpha 1.	Alpha 2.
Section B	7	0.74	0.76
Section C	10	0.86	0.89

3.11 Data Analysis

In concurrent mixed method research design approach, the researcher requires knowledge and strategies used in analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. This may involve the interpretation

and functions that may be assigned to the data. The background information from the questionnaire was primarily analyzed using descriptive statistics.

The data was organized into frequency counts and converted into percentages. The results were presented in tables, bar and pie charts. Looking at the nature of research questions 1, 2, and 3, descriptive statistics were employed, where the researcher used frequency and simple percentages to make the interpretation of the results more meaningful, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made from the data. The observation data was also presented in frequency and percentages whiles data on the interview were analyzed thematically.

3.12 Ethical Consideration

Creswell (2008) said that it is unethical to enter into an organization or social groups to collect data without permission from the 'gate-keepers' of the organization. An introductory letter was collected from the Department of Early Childhood Education to grant the researcher access to the study. The researcher sought permission from the District Education Directorate of the Bolgatanga East District.

The researcher discussed when and how data would be collected from the schools. When access was granted, the researcher then discussed other ethical issues with the participants of the study. It was important to gain the informed consent of the target participant of the study. Informed consent is an ethical requirement which demands that respondents be allowed to choose to participate or not to participate in the research after receiving full information about the possible risks or benefits of participating (Makore-Rukuni, 2001). The participant is free to decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time (Tuckman, 1994).

In this study, the researcher informed selected participants about the purpose of the study. The participants were given the freedom to choose to participate or not in the study. The next ethical issue discussed was confidentiality. Confidentiality indicates the researcher's ethical obligation to keep the respondent's identity and responses private (Babbie, 2001). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007, p. 65) concluded that confidentiality: Means that although researchers know who has provided the information or are able to identify participants from the information given, they will in no way make the connection known publicly, the boundaries surrounding the shared secret will be protected. In this study, the researcher ensured that the information provided is not shared with any other user. The information was used for the purpose of the research. The next ethical issue that was discussed is anonymity. Anonymity was used to protect respondents' 'right of privacy'. A respondent was therefore considered anonymous when the researcher or another person cannot identify the respondents from the information provided (Cohen et al., 2007).

In this study, anonymity was achieved by not asking participants to write their names on the questionnaires or mention their school during the observation session. Anonymity was guaranteed through grouping data rather than presenting individual responses. Furthermore, all the materials used and cited for this research have been duly acknowledged.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Overview

Chapter four of the study provided the results of the data collection from the study in Bolga East on the role of private school teachers in inclusive education.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

In an attempt to understand teachers' perceptions towards inclusion, the researcher examined the existence of statistically significant relationships between teachers' demographic variables and survey subscales including cultural perceptions of children with disabilities, training and development, classroom behavior, parental involvement, and government support. The researcher focused on answering key question: What are the differences in perceptions and attitudes of teachers in Bolga East towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Table 1 provides descriptive data about the gender of the participants. It shows that out of the 20 teachers who participated in the survey, 15 (75%) of them are females, while 5 (25%) were males. There were slightly more of females than male participants in the study.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of Teachers in Bolga East District

Demographic parameter	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	5	25
	Female	15	75
Qualification of Respondents	4-year Certificate A	0	0
	3-year Post-Secondary Certificate	0	0
	Diploma	10	50
	B.E.D	10	50
	No qualification	0	0
Years of Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	2	10
	5-10 years	2	10
	11-15 years	8	40
	16-20 years	2	10
	21-25 years	5	25
	26-30 years	1	5
	31 and above	0	0
Rank of Respondent in Ghana Education Service	Teacher Certificate A	0	0
	Superintendent II	2	10
	Superintendent I	2	10
	Senior Superintendent II	11	55
	Senior Superintendent I	3	15
	Principal Superintendent	2	10
	Assistant Director	0	0

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 1 shows the educational background of the teachers. The findings indicate that there were 10 teachers (50%) who held the Diploma, 0 teachers (0%) who held higher teachers certificate and 10 teachers (50%) who held bachelor's degree.

Table 1 shows the years of teaching experience. The findings indicate that there were 8 teachers (40%) who held 11-15 years of teaching experience, 5 teachers (25%) who held 21-25 years of teaching experience, and 2 teachers each (10% each) who held less than 5 years and 5-10 years of teaching experience respectively. On the matter of the rank of teaching respondents, 2 are at Superintendent II representing (10%) while 11 (55%) at a Senior Superintendent II and 3 (15%)

are at Senior Superintendent I.

The responses to the question of whether respondents had ever heard of the idea of inclusive education are displayed in Table 2. Twenty (20) respondents in total (100%) answered "Yes" to the query. The results in Table 2 also came from a follow-up question on those who responded "Yes" when asked if they understood how the idea of inclusive education worked. Apparently, the responses in Table 2, suggest respondents have heard of the concept of inclusive education but have no fore knowledge on how the concept works. About 75% admit to knowing how the concept works.

Table 2 Extent of awareness of Respondents on the Concept of Inclusive Education

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Have you heard of the concept of inclusive	Yes	20	100
education?	No	0	0.0
Total		**20**	**100.0**
Do you understand how the concept of	Yes	15	75
inclusive education works?	No	5	25
Total	**Total**	**20**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 3 is the response of the perception of inclusive education. Bipolar scaling methods of Likert scale of either agree or disagree with frequencies and their corresponding percentages of the positive statements. Respondents disagreed, 10(50%) special needs of children in regular classroom increase the child's circle of friends, similarly, 5(25%) disagreed special needs of children in regular classroom limit the child's level of academic performance. From Table 3, only in two constructs out of ten constructs that respondents agreed to. That is; respondents agreed, 16(80%) that special needs of children in regular classroom worsen the child's learning problem and 10 (50%) agreed that special needs of children in regular classroom increase the amount of social rejection by the child's peers. On regular teachers the responses can also be seen in the Table 3. Respondents agreed, 10 (50%) regular teachers do not understand problems associated with disabilities. Similarly, 8 (40%) agreed that regular teachers do not make appropriate educational provisions for children with disabilities. However, 6 (30%) agreed regular teachers are well-prepared to teach children with disabilities in regular class. Finally, 5 (25%) agreed regular teachers are happy to have children with disabilities in their classes.

Table 3 Perception of Respondents on Inclusive Education

	Variable	**Agree**		**Disagree**	
S/N	**On Special needs of children in regular classroom**	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
	Increase the child's circle of friends	10	50	10	50
	Limit the child's level of academic performance	15	75	5	25
	Make the child's well-adjusted socially	4	20	16	80
	Ensure that non special needs children will be happy to play with special needs children	7	35	13	65
	Worsen the child's learning problem	16	80	4	20

Have a negative effect on the social development of other children	5	25	15	75
Provide more opportunities for the other children to benefit from the specialized instruction of the children	5	25	15	75
Develop a stronger feeling in the child of confidence in his/her academic ability	7	35	13	65
Increase the amount of social rejection by the child's Peers	10	50	10	50
Ensure that non-special needs will be more appreciative of children with disability	6	30	14	70
On the Regular Teachers				
Do not understand problems associated with Disabilities	10	50	10	50
Do not make appropriate educational provisions for children with disabilities	8	40	12	60
Are well-prepared to teach children with disabilities in regular class	6	30	14	70
Are happy to have children with disabilities in their Classes	5	25	15	75

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Qualitative Analysis

Findings in the qualitative study were guided by questions and four follow up questions, which may contribute to understanding the perceptions of teachers in regards to inclusive education: Responses to the interview questions were coded into three themes. These themes were similar to subscales in the quantitative survey. Despite their similarities, findings differed a bit since individual perspective on a particular theme was different.

Theme 1: Awareness of Inclusive Education

Question 1 was intended to explore the awareness of teachers on inclusive education in the Bolga East district. Many of the respondents seem to be aware of inclusive education as well as the learning disabilities of children in Bolga East district.

All the respondents seem to be aware of inclusive education in the district. However, the concept of inclusive education and its implementation were lost on the respondents. A respondent stated that;

"Yes, I am aware of the existence of inclusive education but I have always encountered challenges on how best it's supposed to be implemented".

Theme 2: Perceptions of Teacher on Inclusive Education

Teachers' perceptions of communities in Bolga East district regarding children with disabilities revealed that the country's traditional belief is at variance with the underlying medical conditions of children with disabilities. According to one of the respondents,

"Bolga East is lagging behind in the way we think concerning special needs children. We believe that somehow, parents of children with disabilities might have committed sin against God and consequently God is punishing them now through disabilities."

One of the respondents claimed that many people still see children with disabilities as burdens and are therefore often disinclined to put up with their disabilities. Other participants held the notion that in certain rural communities around the country, inhabitants attribute children with disabilities as a curse from God. One of the participants said:

"Well, it depends on where the children find themselves. At some villages and towns, the society labels you as a curse or in other places, a witch. They see you as someone God has punished. Even in bigger cities, the feelings and perceptions are not often different. Men and women in these societies try to pretend and hide their feelings, but they see these children as a burden."

Theme 3: Challenges in the Implementation of Inclusive Education

This theme relates to the obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of inclusive education in the Bolga East district of the Upper East Region. One of the participants claimed that the absence of government support hinder the smooth implementation of inclusion. As far as the question regarding challenges of inclusive education in Bolga East district, majority of the respondents believed that each of the barriers is unique to students based on their circumstances. But overall, they pointed to insufficiency of materials, lack of conducive atmosphere and learning resources as major barriers of inclusive education. Besides the lack of material support, another teacher stated that it is difficult to implement inclusion in their classrooms due to the absence of teachers training opportunities. Another participant commented that government should be sincere in its effort to

implement polices especially if they intend for them to be effective. Many of the respondents blame for the failure of inclusion in Bolga East district on the doorstep of the government. A respondent retorted;

"Little is done by government in these areas in the provision of logistics that can aid the effective implementation of inclusive education"

Almost all of the ten participants believed that training of teachers to work in an inclusive environment was crucial to minimise the challenges encountered in the implementation of inclusive education. All ten participants indicated that professional development workshops and seminars were needed for inclusion to succeed. One participant had this to say:

"Based on my present level of education, I am not prepared to handle these children at all. I was trained to work with other children and not special needs children. So I do not believe that I have sufficient training."

Another participant disclosed that professional training for teachers is not a frequent academic exercise in Bolga East district, especially for teachers who will be working with children with disabilities. The respondent went on to assert that:

"I do not think that training teachers in special needs is something that is common here. Teachers receive little training on inclusion subjects".

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the summary of the findings of the study. The conclusion of the findings and the recommendation for future research were also discussed.

5.1 Summary

The summary addressed the three objectives outlined in the study.

The first objective was on perceptions of private school teachers on the practice of inclusive education. The findings from the study demonstrated that respondents have a good knowledge of inclusive education in the Bolga East district of Ghana's Upper East region, notwithstanding the some lack of a strong significant understanding of the concept of inclusive education.

The second objective was to evaluate the factors that influence the perceptions of private school teachers on the practice of inclusive education. The survey on this objective revealed that the overwhelming hostility toward inclusion among instructors is a result of a variety of interconnected variables.

The third objectives was centred on the challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education in the Bolga East district of the Upper East region of Ghana. The findings revealed that the implementation of inclusion is hampered by the lack of any significant professional development programmes for teachers in the district on inclusive education for kids with disabilities. It is possible that study participants underwent brief, ineffective training sessions. The majority of teachers have stated that special education training should be adequate to meet the expressed needs of educating students with disabilities. Teachers receiving excellent training

experience significant increases in student achievement as evidence in favour of a strict professional development for teachers, maintaining that the absence of teachers' training has served as a significant barrier to inclusion.

5.2 Conclusion

The study's findings are as follows: although normal instructors in Ghana's Bolga East District of the Upper East Region are aware of inclusive education, they have little understanding of how the concept functions. Regular teachers are unable to provide the necessary educational accommodations for district's children with disabilities because they are unaware of the issues related to disability. Regular teachers, however, welcome the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classes. Children with special needs in a typical school do not narrow the child's circle of friends or affect how well the child performs academically. Children are socially well-adjusted the more the benefits of accommodating their unique needs in a regular classroom were assessed to be. The observed effects, however, are that children with special needs enrolled in a typical school suffer the deterioration of other children's social skills and a rise in the level of social rejection by the child's classmates.

5.3 Recommendation

My proposals for future studies are explained in the following recommendations:

Sensitisation of teachers on inclusive education. This will equip them to give students with disabilities the best of care and education.

Since this research has demonstrated the importance of teachers in the smooth implementation of inclusion, maybe a more comprehensive approach will be helpful to explore other key factors that might influence the encouragement of positive attitudes toward inclusive education. There is a

serious need for a better understanding of what affects attitude and how these factors relate to one and other. Future research needs to focus on other possible subscales including, legal policy, school climate, and self- awareness.

Further studies could examine the perception of and attitude of principals and school administrators toward inclusion. Further research in the areas of the identification of variables that poses challenges and threats to the implementation of inclusive education in Ghana.

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APPENDIXES

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Questionnaire on the Perceptions of Private School Teachers about Inclusive Education in Bolgatanga East District of the Upper East Region

Introduction

Dear Participants, I am very grateful to you for your acceptance to participate in this study. The study is to investigate Private School Teachers about Inclusive Education in Bolgatanga East District of the Upper East Region. It is expected that the results of this study will be beneficial to you and all KG teachers. This will help you to reflect on your instructional practices. Also, to find out whether such practices will help achieve the set goals and objectives of the national KG curriculum.

Your contributions and responses will be treated very strictly and confidential. For that matter, no name is requested during this exercise.

Thank you so much.

Instruction

kindly provide responses for these questions as sincere as you can for the purpose of this study.

Section A

Personal Information: Demographics

Please, supply the responses as demand by the question.

1. School ID: _____

2. Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]

3. Class taught: KG 1 [ ] KG 2 [ ]

4. Age range of teacher: 16-20 [ ] 21-25 [ ] 26-29 [ ]

30-35 [ ] 36 and above [ ]

5. What is your highest academic qualification?

MPhil [ ] M. Ed [ ] Dip. Ed [ ]

B. Ed [ ] Cert.[ ] Any other please specify_____

6. Specialized Area:

Early Childhood Education [ ] Basic Education [ ]

Any other, please specify_____

7. Teaching experience: 2-5 [ ] 6-10 [ ] 11-15 [ ]

16-20 [ ] 21 and above [ ] below two [ ]

8. Indicate your position in your school

Head teacher [ ] Early childhood coordinator [ ]

Class teacher [ ] Any other, please specify_____

Section B

Kindly tick (√) the option to the statement based on Inclusive Education in Bolgatanga East District of the Upper East Region

Key: A - Agree (1), DA- Disgree (2)

1. Perception of Respondents on Inclusive Education

SN	Statement	YES	YES
1	Have you heard of the concept of inclusive education?		
2	Do you understand how the concept of inclusive education works?		

2. Extent of awareness of Respondents on the Concept of Inclusive Education

SN		A	D
3	Increase the child's circle of friends		
4	Limit the child's level of academic performance		
5	Make the child's well-adjusted socially		
6	Ensure that non special needs children will be happy to play with special needs children		
7	Worsen the child's learning problem		
8	Have a negative effect on the social development of other children		
9	Provide more opportunities for the other children to benefit from the specialized instruction of the children		
10	Develop a stronger feeling in the child of confidence in his/her academic ability		
11	Increase the amount of social rejection by the child's Peers		

12	Ensure that non-special needs will be more appreciative of children with disability		

APPENDIX II:

INTERVIEW GUIDE

I am conducting a study to investigate teachers attitude towards Inclusive Education in Bolgatanga East District of the Upper East Region. This research is carried out for an award of MPhil degree in Education in the University of Education, winneba

My objects of investigation are kindergarten teachers in inclusive schools and there is at least one student with special educational needs learning in your regular class. The information you provide will be helpful for me to understand kindergarten teacher's attitudes toward inclusive assessment and practical difficulties implementing inclusive education in practice, and beneficial for providing more effective support system of inclusive education for all learners in future. Information and responses will be strictly confidential and anonymous for academic purposes only. Thank you for your cooperation!

Part 1: Background

1. Age
2. Gender
3. What is your Rank or Position?
4. What is your educational level or Qualification?
5. How long have you work as a professional teacher?
6. Have you taught learners with disabilities in regular class?

Part 3: The Challenges Teachers Face in the Administering Inclusive Assessment

7. What are the challenges teachers faces in the administering inclusive education?
8. How difficult is the administration of inclusive education?
9. What are the setbacks you encounter when assessing learners inclusively?

10. What prevent you from adopting inclusive education?