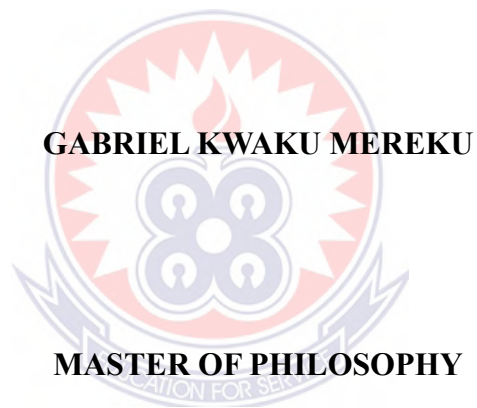


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**HEADTEACHERS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION POLICY IN FIVE BASIC SCHOOLS IN NKWANTA NORTH
DISTRICT**



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DISTRICT**



**A thesis in the Department of Educational Administration and Management,
School of Education and Life-Long Learning, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Educational Administration and Management)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

APRIL, 2025

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

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

Signature:

Date:



Supervisor's Declaration

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

Prof. Kwame Odei-Tettey (Supervisor)

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my beloved parents and siblings for their love and support.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

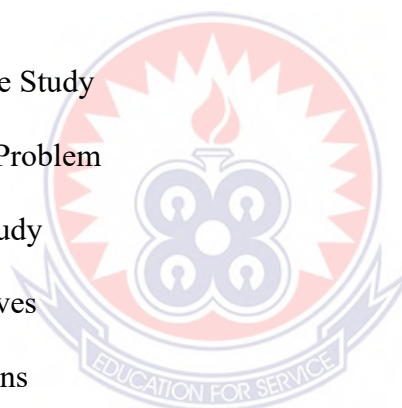
My deepest appreciation goes to my supervisor, Prof. Kwame Odei-Tettey for his valuable guidance, encouragement, support, expert direction, love and constructive feedback that shaped this study. I am sincerely grateful. I also acknowledge the support of the faculty and staff of the Department of Educational Administration and Management.

Additionally, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to my parents, siblings and friends for their unwavering encouragement and unflinching support.

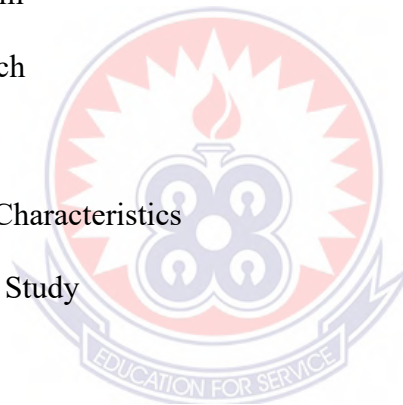
Again, I express my immense thanks to Mr. Wisdom Xlornyeku, Miss Belinda Borni, Mr. Emmanuel Akrono and Miss Eva Djikunu for their selfless support and for consistently dedicating their time from their busy schedules for regular check-ins on the progress of my research work. To my MPhil course mates, my deepest love for you all, I highly appreciate your contributions throughout this remarkable academic journey. Finally, to all my interviewees who participated in this study, I sincerely express my immense appreciations to you all.

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GLOSSARY

CRPD	Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities
GES	Ghana Education Service
ICT	Information Communications Technology
LI	Legislative Instrument
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGOs	Non- Governmental Organizations
PBIS	Positive Behavioural Interventions and Support
PLCs	Professional Learning Communities
PLP	Personalized Learning Plans
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SEN	Special Education Needs
SJLT	Social Justice Leadership Theory
SMC	School Management Committee
TLT	Transformational Leadership Theory
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN	United States of America
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is a global educational practice that seeks to provide equitable learning opportunities for all learners, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or learning needs. In Ghana, efforts to implement inclusive education policies have gained momentum, yet the translation of these policies into effective school-level practices remains a challenge. This study investigated the experiences of basic school headteachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education policy within the Nkwanta North District of the Oti Region. The study adopted the interpretivist research philosophy, and a qualitative research approach and a case study design. The study purposively selected 15 participants comprising 5 headteachers, 5 teachers and 5 students from five selected basic schools in Nkwanta North District and used in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to collect data. The data collected was analysed with the thematic analysis method. The study found out that headteachers have limited understanding of inclusive education policy, resource constraints and poor infrastructure hinder implementation of inclusive education policy, inadequate training and support limit the ability to effectively implement the policy, lack of leadership and institutional support in policy implementation hampered the execution of inclusive practices, weak collaboration from stakeholders, and inadequate government budget for inclusive education also impeded the policy implementation. The study concluded that effective implementation of inclusive education policy requires effective leadership, institutional support and resources. Key recommendations included, enhancement of leadership capacity through targeted training and professional development, improvement in institutional support and monitoring systems, provision of adequate teaching and learning resources for inclusive education, fostering of community sensitization and stakeholder engagement, recruitment and deployment of specialized personnel in schools to support inclusion and increment in government budget allocation for inclusive education.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the thesis statement, the purpose of the study, the focal theory, the research objectives, the research questions. It further discussed the significance of the study, delimitations, organization of the study and the operational definition of terms.

1.1 Background to the Study

Inclusive education has become a significant global objective in the 21st century, aimed at ensuring equal educational opportunities for all learners, irrespective of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions (UNESCO, 2020). The concept is rooted in the belief that all learners, including those with special educational needs (SEN), have the right to be educated within mainstream schools, with appropriate support systems to facilitate their learning. The 1994 Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education strongly advocated for inclusive education as a guiding principle in educational systems worldwide, urging nations to reform their school systems to accommodate all learners (UNESCO, 1994). International frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) underscore the global commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education. Ghana, as a signatory to these conventions, has translated these international commitments into national policies, notably the Inclusive Education Policy launched in 2015 (Ministry of Education, 2015).

The implementation of inclusive education policies, however, varies significantly across countries and regions. In developed nations such as Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, inclusive education has been supported through systemic reforms, including the revision of curricula, enhancement of teacher training, infrastructural modifications, and the deployment of special education services (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2011). Yet, despite these efforts, challenges remain, such as resistance from educators, insufficient training, and lack of resources (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). In sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in Ghana, inclusive education has gained increasing attention in recent decades. Ghana ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2012 and launched its Inclusive Education Policy in 2015 (Ministry of Education, 2015). The policy seeks to promote a unified education system that accommodates all learners by ensuring curriculum flexibility, teacher capacity building, and the provision of teaching and learning materials. This policy is guided by principles of participation, access, equity, and quality. It calls for systemic changes in educational practices, curriculum adaptation, teacher training, school infrastructure, and community involvement to support diverse learners (Ministry of Education, 2015). It further emphasizes stakeholder collaboration and community involvement as vital to the success of inclusive practices.

Despite this progressive policy framework, implementation of the study across Ghana has been inconsistent, with several studies highlighting challenges such as inadequate teacher preparation, lack of infrastructure, negative societal attitudes, and poor policy monitoring (Agbenyega, 2007; Opoku, Dzahene-Quarshie & Agyei-Okyere, 2019). Teachers and school leaders often lack the necessary training and support to translate inclusive policy directives into effective classroom practices. Furthermore, cultural

beliefs about disability and exclusion continue to hinder the full participation of learners with SEN in many communities (Avoke, 2002).

Headteachers, as instructional leaders, play a central role in shaping the school environment, managing human and material resources, and facilitating the implementation of educational policies (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Their leadership, vision, and attitude toward inclusive education significantly influence the extent to which inclusive practices are successfully enacted at the school level. In Ghana, however, many headteachers operate in contexts characterized by limited professional autonomy, scarce resources, and minimal support from the Ghana Education Service (Kuyini & Desai, 2007). Again, many headteachers have not received formal training in inclusive education, leaving them ill-equipped to handle the complexities involved in supporting students with special needs (Opoku, Dzahene-Quarshie, & Agyei-Okyere, 2019). These conditions often restrict their ability to provide effective leadership for inclusive education.

In Nkwanta North District of the Oti Region, the challenges facing headteachers in implementing inclusive education are particularly acute. The district is predominantly rural, with low socio-economic indicators, poor educational infrastructure, and limited access to specialized support services. Most schools are overcrowded, lack trained personnel for inclusive education, and operate with inadequate teaching and learning resources. Additionally, deeply rooted cultural misconceptions about disability often lead to the stigmatization of children with SEN, discouraging their enrollment and participation in school activities. These factors create a complex environment for implementing inclusive education. (Avoke, 2002).

Preliminary insights from Nkwanta North District suggest that while headteachers are aware of the inclusive education policy, they struggle to effectively implement it due to

a lack of institutional support and resources. Some headteachers expressed concerns about their limited understanding of inclusive pedagogy, their inability to train teachers under their supervision adequately, and the community's resistance to the enrollment of children with disabilities. These factors contribute to the marginalization of learners with special needs and undermine the goals of the national policy.

Despite the critical role of headteachers in policy implementation, there is a scarcity of empirical studies that focus specifically on their experiences within rural contexts like Nkwanta North. Existing research in Ghana has largely centered on teacher attitudes or general policy evaluation, with little attention given to school-level leadership and its influence on inclusive education outcomes (Opoku et al., 2019). This gap in the literature makes it difficult to develop targeted interventions that support headteachers in rural areas to effectively implement inclusive education policies.

Given these realities, this study sought to explore the experiences of headteachers in five basic schools in Nkwanta North District regarding the implementation of inclusive education. It sought to explore their perceptions of the policy, the challenges they face in implementing the policy, the approaches they employ to foster inclusion and their training needs to improve inclusive education. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, educational administrators, and teacher training institutions on how to better support headteachers in rural areas. It also contributes to the broader discourse on inclusive education in Ghana by highlighting the context-specific challenges and possibilities that shape school-level implementation.

While inclusive education holds promise for transforming educational outcomes for all learners, its success hinges on the ability of school leaders, especially headteachers, to operationalize policy mandates in diverse and often challenging environments. By

investigating the experiences of headteachers in Nkwanta North District, this study offered recommendations for strengthening inclusive education implementation at the rural and underserved communities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Inclusive education has emerged as a fundamental principle in global educational reforms, aimed at ensuring that every learner regardless of ability, background, or circumstance has equitable access to quality education (UNESCO, 2020). The Salamanca Statement of 1994 set the global tone by asserting the right of every child to education in an inclusive environment. Since then, countries worldwide have adopted inclusive education policies, integrating students with special educational needs (SEN) into mainstream classrooms. In line with this global trend, Ghana introduced its Inclusive Education Policy in 2015 to ensure that learners with special educational needs (SEN) are provided with equitable access to quality education within mainstream schools (Ministry of Education, 2015). However, the translation of these policies into practice has been fraught with systemic, infrastructural, cultural, and pedagogical challenges (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

In developed countries such as Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, inclusive education is supported by legal mandates, specialized teacher training, infrastructure modifications, and inclusive curricula (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2011). These nations have made strides toward achieving inclusive environments where learners with disabilities and other marginalized groups receive appropriate support. Research shows that even in these contexts, where inclusive education policies exist, translating them into classroom practices remains problematic due to insufficient support systems, negative societal attitudes toward disabilities, and lack of teacher preparation (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2017). Developing countries face even greater barriers, with limited

financial resources, inadequate training for educators, and sociocultural attitudes that perpetuate exclusion (Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2008). These challenges necessitate strong leadership and administrative support at the school level, particularly from headteachers, who serve as the bridge between policy directives and classroom implementation (Ainscow & Miles, 2008).

In the Ghanaian context, inclusive education is recognized as a vital tool for addressing disparities in educational access and outcomes. The Ghana Inclusive Education Policy, launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Education, aims to foster an inclusive, child-friendly educational system that accommodates all learners, including those with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2015). However, implementation remains inconsistent across regions, especially in rural areas where the capacity to support inclusive practices is limited (Opoku, Dzahene-Quarshie & Agyei-Okyere, 2019).

Research has identified several barriers to effective implementation of inclusive education in Ghana. These include a lack of adequately trained teachers, inadequate teaching and learning materials, poor infrastructure, and persistent stigmatization of children with disabilities (Agbenyega, 2007; Avoke, 2002).

Effective implementation of inclusive education depends largely on headteachers' leadership, commitment, and ability to translate policy into practice (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). In Ghana, many headteachers have not received formal training in inclusive education and are not adequately supported by the Ghana Education Service (GES) to implement inclusive practices (Kuyini & Desai, 2007).

In Nkwanta North District, preliminary observations suggest that the situation differs not from the aforementioned argument. While headteachers are aware of inclusive education policy they struggle to effectively implement it due to lack of institutional support and resources (Opoku et al., 2019).

The problem of the study in Nkwanta North District is that, headteachers who are policy implementers and are expected to bridge the gap between policy and practice, lack institutional support, resources and adequate training to effectively implement inclusive education policy initiatives leading to implementation challenges of the policy in schools. As a result, the implementation of inclusive education policy remains a challenge, leading to academic setbacks, social exclusion, low self-esteem, limits future economic opportunities for vulnerable learners and an overall diminished learning experience for students with special needs. In view of the above problem the thesis of the study is stated that: “Successful implementation of inclusive educational policy in Nkwanta North District requires effective leadership, institutional support and resources.”

The study is motivated by the need to address persistent gaps in headteachers’ leadership capacity, limited institutional and resource support and contextual constraints in rural districts, and to generate empirical evidence that can inform targeted leadership development and effective implementation of inclusive education policy (Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015; UNESCO, 2017; Alhassan, 2025).

Although some studies have explored inclusive education policy in Ghana, there is a scarcity of empirical studies that focus specifically on the experiences of headteachers within the rural context like Nkwanta North. Existing literature in Ghana has centered on teacher attitude or general policy evaluation (Opoku et al, 2019). This literature gap underscored the need for an in-depth exploration into the experiences of headteachers in the policy implementation.

While national-level studies provide insights into inclusive education policies (Ministry of Education, 2015), there is limited research on the specific strategies, challenges, and leadership approaches of headteachers in resource-constrained environments like

Nkwanta North District. Existing studies on inclusive education in Ghana (Forster, 2020) have primarily focused on urban settings where schools generally have better infrastructure and trained personnel. This geographical gap is crucial, as education dynamics and challenges vary significantly across regions (Akyeampong, 2013).

Additionally, most research on inclusive education in Ghana has relied on quantitative approaches (Anamuah-Mensah, 2019), which, while useful, may not provide a holistic understanding of the complexities headteachers face in fostering inclusivity. A qualitative investigation is necessary to explore their leadership experiences, strategies, and challenges in greater depth.

Given these literature, methodological, and geographical gaps, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive study that examines the perceptions, challenges, approaches adopted and the training needs of headteachers in implementing inclusive education in Nkwanta North District.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study sought to explore the experiences of headteachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education policy in five basic schools in Nkwanta North District.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To explore the perception of basic school headteachers on inclusive education in Nkwanta North District.
2. To investigate approaches adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity in basic schools in Nkwanta North District.
3. To find out challenges faced by basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District.

4. To explore the training needs of basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District.

1.5 Research Questions

The main question to this study is that, successful implementation of inclusive education policy requires effective leadership, institutional support and resources therefore, what are the experiences of basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive education policy to achieve its effectiveness? However, the under listed elements of the research question has been crafted to guide the study.

1. What are the perceptions of basic school headteachers on inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District?
2. What approaches have been adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity in Nkwanta North District?
3. What are the challenges faced by basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District?
4. What are the training needs of basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education in Nkwanta North District?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant implications for policy, theory, and professional practice in addressing critical gaps in the implementation of inclusive education in the Nkwanta North District.

a. Significance to Policy

The findings of this study provide evidence-based insights into the challenges and leadership strategies of basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive education policies. This informs policymakers, including the Ghana Education Service (GES) and

the Ministry of Education, in designing targeted interventions that strengthen headteachers' capacity to foster inclusivity in basic schools. Additionally, the study highlights the need for more comprehensive training programmes, adequate resource allocation, and stronger policy support mechanisms to enhance inclusive education in rural districts.

b. Significance to Theory

The study also contributes to the theoretical discourse on inclusive education and educational leadership by providing empirical data from a rural Ghanaian context. It extends existing frameworks on inclusive leadership by examining how headteachers navigate resource constraints and institutional challenges to promote inclusive education with the insights of the transformational instructional leadership theory.

c. Significance to Professional Practice

For headteachers and other educational practitioners, this study offers practical guidance on effective leadership strategies for fostering inclusivity in basic schools. By identifying best practices and common challenges, the study serves as a reference point for headteachers, teachers, and district education officers in enhancing inclusive education implementation. Additionally, the findings inform professional development programmes, equipping headteachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to lead inclusive schools effectively.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

This study specifically focused on the experiences of basic school headteachers in the implementation of inclusive educational policies in Nkwanta North District. It did not extend its scope to other districts in the Oti region. The study primarily targeted basic school headteachers, teachers and students within the Nkwanta North District in Ghana. It excluded other key stakeholders such as assistant headteachers, parents or community

members. Also, the study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore the experiences of basic school headteachers in the implementation of inclusive educational policy within the context of Nkwanta North District.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study was presented in five chapters. Chapter One includes Introduction, Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem, Thesis statement, Purpose of the Study, Focal Theory, Research Objectives, Research Questions, Significance of the Study, Delimitations, Operational Definitions of Terms, and the Organization of the Study. Chapter Two comprises a review of relevant theories underpinning the study, a conceptual framework for the study, a review of related literature on teacher participation in curriculum development, a review of literature on the factors influencing teacher selection and involvement in curriculum development, and a review of the strategies to augment teacher participation in curriculum development. Chapter Three highlights the methodological stance adopted for the study. It includes the various methods employed in conducting the research, the specific tools and procedures used in collecting and analysing data, the trustworthiness of the study and the ethical considerations that guided the study. Chapter Four presents an analysis and interpretation of results obtained from the field. It also includes the comparison of the findings to relevant literature and similar findings from other studies. Chapter Five provides a summary of the findings, draws conclusions, highlights the study limitations, offers recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

1. Inclusive Education: The practice of ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, backgrounds, or learning needs, have equal access to quality

education within mainstream schools. In this study, it refers to the implementation of Ghana's Inclusive Education Policy in basic schools in the Nkwanta North District.

2. **Headteachers:** School administrators responsible for overseeing the management, leadership, and implementation of educational policies at the basic school level. In this study, headteachers refer to those leading public basic schools in the Nkwanta North District.

3. **Implementation:** The process by which headteachers and teachers put inclusive education policies into practice, including the provision of appropriate teaching strategies, learning materials, and support for students with diverse needs.

4. **Leadership Strategies:** The methods, approaches, and actions adopted by headteachers to create and sustain inclusive school environments. In this study, leadership strategies refer to how headteachers foster inclusivity in their schools through decision-making, teacher support, and policy enforcement.

5. **Challenges:** The obstacles or difficulties that hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education policies. These may include inadequate teacher training, lack of resources, poor infrastructure, and limited support from education authorities.

6. **Training Needs:** The specific skills, knowledge, and professional development requirements necessary for headteachers to effectively implement inclusive education. In this study, it refers to the capacity-building needs of headteachers in the Nkwanta North District to enhance inclusive education.

7. **Special Educational Needs:** Learning difficulties or disabilities that require additional support and accommodations to ensure effective learning. In this study, SEN refers to students in the Nkwanta North District who need specialized instructional strategies and resources to participate in mainstream education.

8. **Resource Constraints:** Limitations in funding, infrastructure, learning materials, and trained personnel that affect the implementation of inclusive education. In this study, it refers to the lack of essential resources that headteachers face in promoting inclusivity in their schools.

9. **Experiences:** The knowledge, skills, perceptions, interactions, challenges, practical involvement, and insights that headteachers encounter as they implement inclusive education policy in their respective basic schools. This includes their day-to-day activities, decisions, and reflections related to promoting inclusive practices for learners with diverse needs.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a literature review of related studies on inclusive education in basic schools. The literature discusses global levels of inclusive education in the US, China, New Zealand, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia to name a few. It also discusses the deplorable state in which inclusive education in Ghanaian basic schools find themselves in and the difficulty involved in implementing the policy in these schools. The review begins with a conceptual framework linking the various themes generated from the research questions together, a theoretical framework which is consisted with the theoretical basis, concepts and ideas of the study, an empirical review of literature related to each concept and summary of the literature review.

This literature review is based on the thesis statement “Successful implementation of inclusive educational policy in Nkwanta North District requires effective leadership, institutional support and resources.” This translates into the focal theory that “Successful implementation of inclusive education policy requires effective leadership, institutional support and resources therefore, what are the experiences of basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive education policy to achieve its effectiveness?”

The conceptual framework discussed below covers the underlisted concepts that are derived from the research questions:

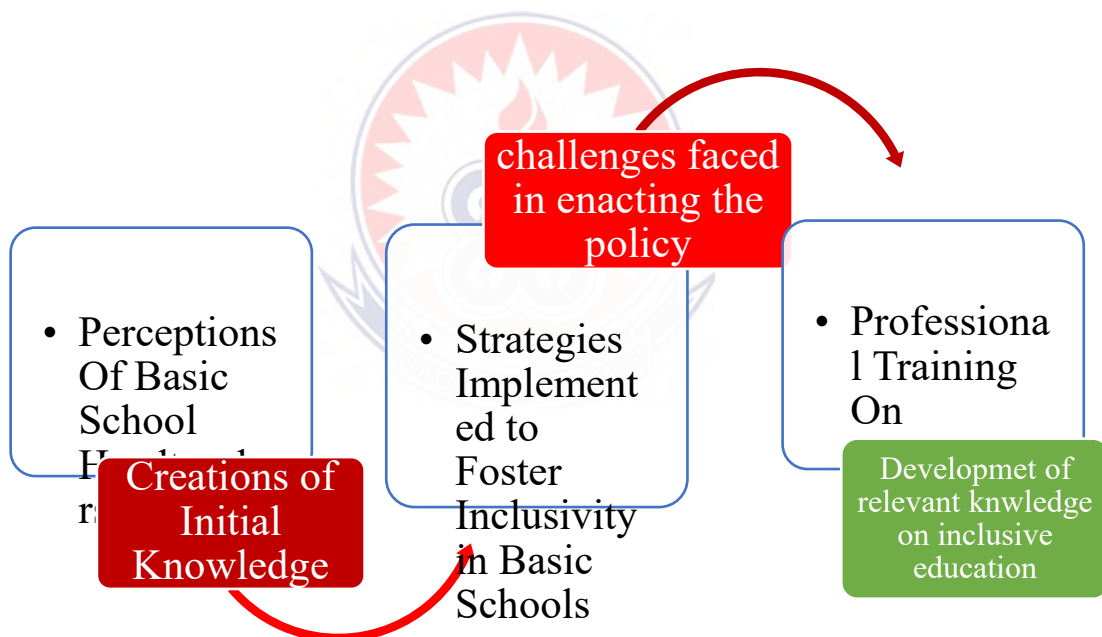
- i. Perceptions of basic school headteachers on inclusive education policy.
- ii. Approaches adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity in basic schools.
- iii. Challenges faced by basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive education policy.
- iv. Training needs of basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education policy.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The concepts that underpin this study in reviewing relevant literature are interconnected at various levels. This is because the perceptions an individual has over phenomena dictate how the phenomena is approached. Thus, perceptions are important for generating initial knowledge of a concept. The way basic school headteachers perceive the inclusive education policy determines how they each approach its implementation. With limited training on the policy headteachers of basic schools are assumed to have limited perceptions and views of what the policy is all about, this leads to the creation of the initial knowledge or improvised activities thought of as ways of implementing the policy. With the limitation in scope and knowledge of the policy it is assumed that the approaches employed will be full of shortcomings. Headteachers may have varied perceptions of the policy. Some may view it as a positive step towards equality and equity in education, while others may feel unprepared or uncertain about how to implement it effectively. Research suggests that some teachers resist inclusive practices, and some headteachers may even deny admission to learners with special educational needs due to a lack of preparedness or understanding of their responsibilities under the policy (Opoku- Nkoom & Ackah- jnr, 2023). These shortfalls create challenges for basic school headteachers in implementing the policy since the rudiments of the policy itself is distorted in their views of the policy itself. These challenges faced by headteachers in implementing the policy has placed the entire policy in reaction mode calling for more substantive and content specific training on the policy to help school heads unlearn the initial views of the policy and relearn the fundamentals of the policy as well as ways of improving the policy in their schools. It's important to provide headteachers with adequate training and resources to ensure they understand the benefits of inclusive education and how to implement it successfully.

This could lead to more positive perceptions and a stronger commitment to fostering an inclusive environment in their schools (Naami and Touh mort, 2023). This can aid headteachers gain deep understanding of what inclusive education entails, its importance, and the legal and ethical obligations to provide it. It will also boost their leadership and management skills.

Training in leadership and management is essential for headteachers to effectively lead their schools towards inclusivity. When this is done, a new approach is created based on a complete understanding of the concept which will in turn lead to the adoption of better strategies of implementing the policy and also create a much-sophisticated perception in the minds of basic school headteachers about inclusive education.



2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is supported by the transformational leadership theory and the social justice leadership theory with the former aiding to critically understand the perceptions and approaches adopted to foster inclusivity and the latter helping to digest the challenges faced and the training needs of headteachers on inclusive education. The ideas of

transformational leadership theory and social justice theory are closely linked with the thesis statement of the research, which states that, “Successful implementation of inclusive educational policy in Nkwanta North District requires effective leadership, institutional support and resources”

Transformational leadership theory emphasizes that leaders must go beyond simply managing change and instead work to transform the underlying assumptions, beliefs, and values that shape educational institutions. Transformative leaders are focused on creating more inclusive, equitable, and social just schools. This aligns with the need for headteachers in Nkwanta North District to provide strong leadership to effectively implement inclusive education policies.

The social justice leadership theory posits that effective school leaders must make issues of race, class, gender, disability and other forms of marginalization central to their advocacy, practice, and vision. Social justice leaders work to eliminate marginalization and ensure all students, regardless of background, feel affirmed, respected, and academically challenged. This directly relates to the requirement for headteachers to provide the necessary leadership to create truly inclusive schools in Nkwanta North District. By combining the inspirational and empowering aspect of transformational leadership with the social justice orientation of the social justice leadership theory, basic school headteachers in Nkwanta North District can provide the strong leadership needed to successfully implement inclusive educational policies.

Transformational leadership theory emphasizes the importance of leaders articulating a compelling vision and inspiring others to work towards it. Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) can be traced back to the work of James MacGregor Burns in his book "Leadership" published in 1978 (Bass, 1985). Burns introduced the concept of transformational leadership as a contrast to transactional leadership, emphasizing the

importance of leaders who inspire and motivate followers to achieve higher levels of performance beyond their self-interests. Bernard M. Bass further developed and popularized the concept in his book "Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations" published in 1985 (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transformational Leadership Theory is applicable across various domains, including business, education, politics, and healthcare. In educational settings, transformational leadership has been found to positively influence teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). Additionally, transformational leadership has been associated with higher levels of organizational innovation, effectiveness, and adaptability (Avolio & Bass, 2013).

The applicability of transformational leadership lies in its emphasis on visionary leadership, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation (Bass, 1985). By providing a compelling vision for the future, fostering creativity and innovation, showing genuine concern for individual needs, and inspiring followers to achieve beyond their self-interests, transformational leaders can effectively motivate and empower their followers to achieve organizational goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

In this study, headteachers' perceptions of inclusive education policy may be influenced by their alignment with the overarching vision set forth in those policy document. According to Avolio and Yammarino (2013), transformational leaders inspire followers through their vision, charisma, and ability to communicate effectively. Therefore, headteachers who exhibit transformational leadership qualities are likely to perceive inclusive education policies as aligned with their own vision for creating a supportive

and equitable learning environment for all students irrespective of their abilities or disabilities.

Additionally, transformational leaders encourage critical thinking and engage in open dialogue with their followers (Northouse, 2018). This approach may lead headteachers to critically evaluate the inclusive education policy, considering its potential impact on their school community and the extent to which it addresses the needs of diverse learners. By examining headteachers' perceptions through the lens of transformational leadership theory, this study gains insights into how leaders interpret and respond to inclusive education policies based on their vision, values, and commitment to promoting positive change.

On the approaches adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity, Transformational leadership theory suggests that leaders inspire and motivate others to achieve higher levels of performance and personal growth. Bass (1985) argues that transformational leaders stimulate followers' intellectual curiosity and encourage them to think creatively. In the context of fostering inclusivity, headteachers who exhibit transformational leadership qualities are likely to adopt innovative approaches that promote collaboration, equity, and respect for diversity within their schools.

For example, transformational leaders often prioritize individualized consideration, demonstrating genuine concern for the needs and development of each individual follower (Bass & Riggio, 2006) which in this case would refer to the disabled students. Headteachers who embrace this aspect of transformational leadership may implement personalized support systems for students with diverse learning needs, ensuring that each student receives the necessary accommodations and resources to succeed.

Moreover, transformational leaders inspire a shared vision and empower others to contribute to its realization (Northouse, 2018). In the context of inclusivity,

headteachers may engage teachers and stakeholders in collaborative decision-making processes, encouraging teachers, students, parents, and community members to work together to create a more inclusive school culture.

The Social justice leadership theory also provides a valuable framework for understanding and addressing the challenges faced by basic school headteachers in enacting inclusive educational policies, as well as identifying their training needs to improve inclusive education practices.

The Social Justice Leadership Theory (SJLT) has its roots in the broader field of educational leadership theory, which focuses on understanding and promoting effective leadership practices in educational settings. SJLT specifically emerged from the need to address issues of equity, diversity, and social justice within educational institutions.

Its origin can be traced back to the civil rights movements of the mid-20th century in the United States. These movements highlighted systemic inequalities and injustices within society, including disparities in education based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and other factors. As educators and scholars began to examine these issues more closely, they recognized the crucial role that educational leaders play in promoting social justice and equity within schools. It is applicable in various educational contexts, including K-12 schools, colleges, universities, and other learning environments. It emphasizes the importance of educational leaders in addressing systemic inequalities and creating inclusive and equitable learning environments where all students have access to high-quality education and opportunities for success (Bogotch et al., 2006). The key principles of this theory include:

- a. **Equity and Inclusion:** SJLT emphasizes the promotion of equity and inclusion within educational institutions by identifying and dismantling systemic barriers that hinder

access and opportunities for marginalized and underserved students (Marshall & Oliva, 2015). In the context of the Social Justice Leadership Theory (SJLT), the emphasis on equity and inclusion underscores the imperative to address systemic disparities that exist within educational institutions. This involves not only recognizing the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and support systems but also actively working to dismantle the underlying barriers that hinder access and success for marginalized and underserved students. By prioritizing equity and inclusion, educational leaders can create a more equitable and just educational system where every student has the opportunity to thrive. This aligns with the broader goals of social justice, which seek to address systemic inequalities and promote fairness, justice, and empowerment for all members of society.

To further elucidate, SJLT calls for educational leaders to engage in a process of identifying and addressing systemic barriers within their institutions. These barriers may manifest in various forms, including disparities in funding, curriculum, access to advanced coursework, disciplinary practices, and opportunities for student voice and representation. By critically examining these systemic inequities, educational leaders can gain insight into the root causes of disparities and develop strategies to mitigate them.

- b. Advocacy and Activism:** Educational leaders are urged to serve as advocates for social justice and equity, challenging discriminatory policies and practices and advocating for policy changes to foster educational equity (Theoharis & Scanlon, 2017). Educational leaders are encouraged to engage in advocacy efforts both within and beyond their institutions. This may include advocating for changes to institutional policies and practices that perpetuate inequities, such as biased disciplinary practices, inequitable resource allocation, or limited access to advanced coursework for marginalized

students. By advocating for policy changes at the institutional level, educational leaders can work towards creating a more equitable learning environment that supports the success of all students. Furthermore, SJLT calls for educational leaders to engage in broader advocacy and activism efforts aimed at addressing systemic injustices within the education system and society at large. This may involve collaborating with community organizations, policymakers, and advocacy groups to advocate for legislative changes, funding initiatives, and policy reforms that advance social justice and equity in education. By leveraging their position and influence, educational leaders can amplify the voices of marginalized communities and advocate for policies that address the root causes of inequities. Additionally, advocacy and activism within SJLT extend beyond policy advocacy to encompass broader efforts to raise awareness, educate stakeholders, and mobilize support for social justice and equity initiatives. This may include organizing community forums, facilitating workshops on diversity and inclusion, and engaging in dialogue with stakeholders to promote understanding and action around issues of social justice and equity.

- c. Culturally Responsive Leadership:** SJLT underscores the importance of culturally responsive leadership practices that acknowledge and appreciate the diversity of students' backgrounds, experiences, and identities, incorporating culturally relevant curriculum, pedagogy, and practices (Gay, 2018). Educational leaders must recognize and acknowledge the diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and identities present within their school communities. This involves understanding the various cultural assets and strengths that students bring to the learning environment and valuing the richness of cultural diversity. Culturally responsive leaders work to create inclusive and welcoming learning environments where all students feel safe, respected, and valued. This involves fostering a climate of trust, empathy, and mutual respect among students

and teachers, as well as promoting positive intercultural interactions and dialogue. They also actively seek to incorporate curriculum materials, resources, and instructional practices that reflect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of their students. This may involve selecting texts, materials, and resources that feature diverse perspectives and cultural contributions, thereby making the curriculum more relevant and meaningful to students from different cultural backgrounds.

- d. Collaborative and Participatory Leadership:** The theory promotes collaborative and participatory leadership approaches involving stakeholders in decision-making processes, fostering shared ownership and commitment to advancing social justice and equity goals (Bogotch & Shields, 2006). Educational leaders actively involve stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members, in decision-making processes related to school policies, programmes, and practices. This inclusive approach ensures that diverse perspectives and voices are considered in shaping decisions that impact the school community. Collaborative leadership fosters the development of a shared vision and goals for advancing social justice and equity within the school community. By collaboratively identifying priorities and objectives, stakeholders develop a sense of ownership and commitment towards working together to achieve common goals. Collaborative leadership empowers stakeholders by providing opportunities for skill development, leadership training, and meaningful participation in decision-making processes. By building the capacity of stakeholders to actively contribute to social justice initiatives, educational leaders cultivate a sense of agency and empowerment among members of the school community.
- e. Continuous Learning and Reflection:** SJLT encourages educational leaders to engage in continuous learning and critical reflection on issues of social justice and equity,

advocating for ongoing professional development and dialogue to deepen understanding and drive meaningful change (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

According to this theory, leaders should advocate for the rights and needs of marginalized individuals and communities. In the implementation of inclusive education policies, headteachers may encounter various challenges, such as inadequate training for implementers, limited perceptions on the policy, resistance from staff, lack of resources, and systemic inequities within the education system (Pinar, 2012). These challenges can hinder their ability to effectively implement inclusive policies and practices. By applying social justice leadership theory, this study can explore these challenges through a lens of equity and fairness, identifying systemic barriers and advocating for policy changes to address them.

With regards to the training Needs of Basic School Headteachers to Improve Inclusive Education, the social justice leadership theory emphasizes continuous learning and growth (Klingner et al., 2005). According to this theory, leaders should prioritize professional development opportunities that enhance their ability to create inclusive and equitable learning environments. In the context of inclusive education, headteachers may require training on a variety of topics, such as cultural competence, anti-bias education, and trauma-informed practices (Klingner et al., 2005). By applying social justice leadership theory, researchers can identify the training needs of headteachers from a perspective of promoting equity and inclusion. They can then advocate for the development and implementation of professional development programmes that address these needs and support headteachers in enacting inclusive educational policies effectively.

In conclusion, the adoption of both the Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) and the Social Justice Leadership Theory (SJLT) offers significant value and relevance to

the study at hand. By integrating principles from these two leadership theories, educational leaders can cultivate an environment that not only inspires positive change and innovation but also fosters social justice and equity within educational settings.

The Transformational Leadership Theory gives clarity on visionary leadership, empowerment, and motivation, which are essential for driving organizational change and improvement. Through transformational leadership practices, educational leaders can inspire and empower teachers to excel beyond their self-interests, ultimately leading to improved teacher job performance and enhanced student outcomes.

Similarly, important to this study, the Social Justice Leadership Theory underscores the importance of addressing systemic inequalities and promoting equity within educational institutions. By adopting culturally responsive leadership practices, fostering collaboration and participatory decision-making, and advocating for social justice, educational leaders can create an inclusive and empowering school environment where all students have the opportunity to thrive.

The integration of both transformational and social justice leadership approaches is crucial for promoting holistic school improvement and addressing the diverse needs of students and educators. By embracing transformational leadership practices, educational leaders can inspire positive change and innovation, while incorporating social justice leadership principles ensures that this change is equitable, inclusive, and sustainable.

Furthermore, the importance of adopting both theories in this study lies in their complementary nature. Transformational leadership provides the vision and inspiration for change, while social justice leadership ensures that this change is equitable and inclusive, addressing systemic inequalities and promoting fairness and justice for all members of the school community.

The adoption of both the Transformational Leadership Theory and the Social Justice Leadership Theory is paramount for promoting positive change and fostering social justice and equity within educational settings. By embracing these leadership approaches, educational leaders can create a supportive and empowering school environment that enhances teacher job performance and promotes the success of all students.

2.3.0 Empirical Review

Empirical studies on inclusive education policy in Ghana show that while the policy framework exist to promote equitable access for all learners, implementation remains uneven and constrained by contextual challenges, particularly at the school level. Research indicates that headteachers play a pivotal role in translating policy into practice, yet their capacity to do so effectively varies widely due to systemic and school-based limitations.

A study by Hayford and Asare (2025) highlights that headteachers are central to the implementation of the 2015 inclusive education policy, as they are responsible for setting a vision for inclusive practices, mobilizing resources, fostering inclusive school culture, and engaging community stakeholders. However, headteachers often confront inadequate resourcing, limited teacher preparation, insufficient infrastructure, and weak stakeholder collaboration, which significantly hinder their implementation efforts in Ghanaian basic schools.

Similarly, global and Ghana-specific reviews suggest that inclusive education policy in Ghana is often aspirational, as assuming that school system has the capacity to implement inclusive practices that they do not yet possess. For instance, reports from the UNESCO indicate that inclusive education in Ghana requires stronger systemic

support including data systems, financing, and professional development to ensure successful implementation (UNESCO, 2018).

Empirical evidence also identifies teacher preparedness and attitudes as critical factors that intersect with leadership effectiveness. Studies point out that general education teachers, who are key actors in inclusive classrooms, often report moderate competence and confidence in inclusive practices but also identifies gaps in training and support, which may limit successful execution of inclusive strategies at school level (Kuyini et al., 2009; Mprah et al., 2023). These findings suggest that headteachers not only require leadership skills but also the capacity to build teacher confidence and competence in inclusive pedagogies.

Further research in Ghana has highlighted practical barriers that affect inclusive education practice overall, such as shortages of specialized staff, inadequate materials, and infrastructural constraints. For instance, some studies reveal that even where headteachers seek to support inclusive practice, the absence of special education resource teachers and assistive classroom materials restricts effective inclusion of learners with disabilities (International Journal of Innovation and Research in Educational Sciences, 2019).

Other empirical work has connected school leadership behaviour and inclusive culture directly, noting that successful inclusive environments require leaders to work collaboratively with teachers, families, and communities to value diversity and adopt flexible instructional strategies. In comparative contexts, research shows that inclusive school leaders cultivate environments where all learners feel welcome and respected, suggesting that leadership behaviour is integral to shaping school culture (Headteachers and Inclusion: Setting the Tone for an Inclusive School).

Empirical evidence supports the relevance of Transformational Leadership Theory in inclusive education contexts. Transformational leadership theory emphasises vision building, motivation, individualised support and capacity development elements that align strongly with inclusive education goals. Studies indicate that headteachers who demonstrate transformational leadership behaviours are more likely to inspire teachers to embrace inclusive practices, adapt instruction, and collaborate to support learners with special needs (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

In the Ghanaian context, Hayford and Asare (2025) reported that headteachers who motivated teachers, encouraged professional learning, and modeled inclusive values were more successful in implementing inclusive education policies, even in resource-constrained environments. This suggest that transformational leadership can mitigate some contextual challenges by fostering teacher commitment and shared responsibility for inclusion.

Beyond instructional leadership, empirical literature highlights the importance of Social Justice Leadership Theory in promoting inclusive education. Social justice leadership theory focuses on equity, fairness, and the dismantling of systemic barriers that marginalize vulnerable learners. Research shows that headteachers who adopt social justice leadership actively challenge discriminatory practices, advocate for learners with disabilities, and prioritize equitable access to learning resources (Theoharis, 2007).

UNESCO (2017) emphasizes that inclusive education requires leaders who are willing to confront structural inequalities and ensure that marginalized learners are not excluded from meaningful participation. Empirical studies in sub-Saharan Africa indicate that when school leaders consciously prioritize equity and inclusion, schools are more likely to implement learner-centered practices and create supportive environments for all students (UNESCO, 2018).

Despite the increasing body of research on inclusive education policy in Ghana, there is a scarcity of empirical studies that focus specifically on the experiences of headteachers within the rural context like Nkwanta North. Existing literature in Ghana has centered on teacher attitude or general policy evaluation (Opoku et al, 2019). This literature gap underscored the need for an in-depth exploration into the experiences of headteachers in the policy implementation.

While national-level studies provide insights into inclusive education policies (Ministry of Education, 2015), there is limited research on the specific strategies, challenges, and leadership approaches of headteachers in resource-constrained environments like Nkwanta North District. Existing studies on inclusive education in Ghana (Forster, 2020) have primarily focused on urban settings where schools generally have better infrastructure and trained personnel. This geographical gap is crucial, as education dynamics and challenges vary significantly across regions (Akyeampong, 2013).

Additionally, most research on inclusive education in Ghana has relied on quantitative approaches (Anamuah-Mensah, 2019), which, while useful, may not provide a holistic understanding of the complexities headteachers face in fostering inclusivity. A qualitative investigation is necessary to explore their leadership experiences, strategies, and challenges in greater depth.

In summary, empirical research consistently points to the central role of headteachers in inclusive education implementation, while also revealing persistent constraints such as limited resources, inadequate training, infrastructural gaps, and variable teacher readiness that impede policy success. However, there remains a need for contextualized studies that focus on how these dynamics play out in rural districts like Nkwanta North to provide actionable insights for policy and practice.

2.3.1 Perceptions of Basic School Headteachers on Inclusive Education

The discussions pertaining to this section inquires to the research question one which states that, ‘what are the perceptions of basic school headteachers on inclusive education policy?’

Headteachers’ personal beliefs and values regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion significantly influence their perceptions of inclusive education (Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009). Individuals who strongly adhere to principles of social justice and equal opportunities for all students tend to view inclusive education positively (Slee, 2011). They prioritize providing equal opportunities for students regardless of background, abilities, or disabilities, advocating for policies and practices that foster diversity, inclusion, and social cohesion within schools (Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009).

According to current research by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), headteachers who prioritize equity and inclusion are more likely to adopt student-centered approaches to inclusive education. They implement differentiated instruction, flexible grouping strategies, and personalized support systems to accommodate diverse learners within their schools. However, headteachers with more traditional or exclusive perspectives may harbour reservations about inclusive education. They may prioritize academic achievement over inclusion, view students with disabilities as a burden on resources, or perceive inclusive practices as compromising academic standards (Farrell & Ainscow, 2002). These traditional perspectives can pose challenges for headteachers in embracing inclusive education, including concerns about maintaining discipline, managing classroom dynamics, and meeting the needs of diverse learners (Farrell & Ainscow, 2002). Additionally, headteachers’ beliefs and values regarding inclusive education can significantly impact school culture. Those who champion inclusive

practices create a culture of acceptance, respect, and collaboration within their schools (Avramidis et al., 2000). Conversely, headteachers who hold reservations about inclusive education may inadvertently contribute to a culture of exclusion, where certain groups of students are marginalized or stigmatized.

Headteachers' personal beliefs and values are important in shaping their perceptions of inclusive education. Understanding these beliefs and values is essential for promoting positive attitudes toward inclusive education and fostering inclusive school environments. These perceptions can be influenced by the following:

2.3.1.1 Professional Background and Training

Headteachers' professional background and training can impact their perceptions of inclusive education. Those with training in special education, diversity, or inclusive pedagogy may have a more nuanced understanding of the principles and practices of inclusive education, while others may rely on their past experiences and professional development opportunities (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997). Headteachers' professional background and training significantly influence their perceptions of inclusive education (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997). Current research supports the idea that headteachers with training in special education, diversity, or inclusive pedagogy tend to have a more nuanced understanding of inclusive education principles and practices (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

According to Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), headteachers who have received specialized training in areas related to inclusive education are better equipped to implement inclusive practices effectively. They demonstrate a deeper understanding of diverse learning needs and are more adept at developing inclusive strategies to support all students. Additionally, headteachers with training in special education may have a

greater appreciation for the benefits of inclusive education in promoting positive outcomes for students with disabilities (Avramidis et al., 2000).

Conversely, headteachers who lack specialized training in inclusive education may rely more on their past experiences and professional development opportunities to inform their perceptions. These headteachers may exhibit varying levels of confidence and competence in implementing inclusive practices, depending on the extent of their exposure to inclusive education principles (Forlin et al., 2010).

Forlin et al. (2010) highlight the importance of ongoing professional development for headteachers as a crucial factor in enhancing their understanding and implementation of inclusive education. Given the dynamic nature of educational policies and the increasing diversity in classrooms, headteachers must continuously update their knowledge and skills to effectively lead inclusive schools. Professional development opportunities, such as workshops, in-service training, mentorship programs, and collaborative learning networks, provide headteachers with the necessary competencies to navigate the complexities of inclusive education.

Headteachers who engage in continuous learning and professional growth opportunities are better equipped to address the diverse academic, social, and emotional needs of their students. They develop a deeper understanding of inclusive pedagogical approaches, differentiated instruction, and adaptive assessment strategies, enabling them to support teachers in implementing inclusive practices effectively. Additionally, professional development enhances their capacity to advocate for the necessary resources, build partnerships with stakeholders, and foster a school culture that embraces diversity and inclusivity.

Furthermore, ongoing training helps headteachers to stay informed about emerging trends, best practices, and policy changes related to inclusive education. It also provides

them with leadership strategies to manage challenges such as resistance from teachers, limited resources, and the need for community engagement. Without adequate professional development, headteachers may struggle to implement inclusive education policies effectively, leading to inconsistencies in practice and barriers to educational access for students with diverse learning needs.

Therefore, investing in continuous professional development for headteachers is essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education. Strengthening their leadership capacity through targeted training initiatives ensures that schools become more inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all learners.

2.3.1.2 School Context and Culture

The context and culture of the school environment play a crucial role in shaping headteachers' perceptions of inclusive education. A school's commitment to inclusion, the attitudes of staff, the availability of resources, community involvement, and the institution's prior experiences with inclusion initiatives all contribute to how headteachers view and implement inclusive practices (Avramidis et al., 2000). When a school fosters an inclusive culture that values diversity and equity, headteachers are more likely to embrace inclusive education as a necessary and achievable goal. Conversely, in environments where inclusive practices are not well-established or where skepticism exists among staff, headteachers may encounter resistance, making it challenging to implement inclusive policies effectively.

Research by Loreman and Deppeler (2016) underscores the importance of a supportive school culture in fostering inclusive education. When teachers, support staff, and administrators collectively demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusivity, headteachers are more likely to perceive inclusive education positively and actively work towards its implementation. Supportive colleagues, including teaching assistants,

special education coordinators, and school counselors, play a vital role in assisting headteachers in designing and implementing strategies that cater to diverse learning needs. This collaborative approach helps reduce the burden on headteachers and ensures that inclusive practices are embedded throughout the school system.

The availability of resources, both human and material, significantly influences headteachers' perceptions and attitudes toward inclusive education. Schools with sufficient funding, well-trained personnel, and access to specialized instructional materials are better positioned to provide inclusive education and accommodate students with diverse learning needs (Sharma et al., 2016). Headteachers in well-resourced schools may feel more confident in implementing inclusive policies because they have the necessary tools and personnel to support students with disabilities or additional learning needs.

In contrast, headteachers in under-resourced schools often face significant challenges in implementing inclusive education. A lack of trained special education teachers, limited assistive technology, inadequate classroom accommodations, and insufficient funding can create barriers to effective inclusion. In such contexts, headteachers may struggle to provide the necessary support for students with disabilities, leading to frustration and skepticism about the feasibility of inclusive education. Additionally, inadequate professional development opportunities can further hinder headteachers' ability to build a strong foundation for inclusive practices within their schools.

Community involvement also plays a vital role in shaping headteachers' perceptions of inclusive education. Schools that have strong partnerships with parents, local organizations, and government agencies often benefit from additional support in implementing inclusive policies. Engaged communities can provide advocacy, resources, and alternative learning opportunities that reinforce inclusive practices.

Conversely, a lack of community support may leave headteachers feeling isolated in their efforts to promote inclusivity, making implementation more challenging.

Ultimately, the school environment's culture, resources, and level of collaboration shape headteachers' views on inclusive education and influence their ability to translate policy into practice. To strengthen inclusive education, it is essential to foster a school climate that prioritizes inclusivity, provides adequate resources, and encourages collective responsibility among all stakeholders.

2.3.1.3 Perceived Benefits and Challenges

Headteachers' perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with inclusive education can impact their overall stance on the approach. Positive experiences with inclusive practices, such as improved student outcomes, enhanced social cohesion, and greater community engagement, may foster more favourable perceptions, while concerns about increased workload, behaviour management issues, and lack of support may lead to more cautious attitudes (Forlin et al., 2010).

Headteachers' perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with inclusive education significantly influence their overall stance on the approach (Forlin et al., 2010). Current literature supports this assertion, highlighting various factors that shape headteachers' attitudes and beliefs toward inclusive practices.

Research by Loreman and Deppeler (2016) suggests that headteachers who have positive experiences with inclusive practices are more likely to hold favourable perceptions of inclusive education. Improved student outcomes, such as academic achievement and social development, are commonly cited benefits of inclusive education (Avramidis et al., 2000). Additionally, headteachers may perceive inclusive practices as promoting social cohesion and fostering greater community engagement within the school environment (Hornby et al., 2020).

Conversely, headteachers' concerns about the challenges associated with inclusive education can lead to more cautious attitudes. Research by Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin (2016) indicate that increased workload, behaviour management issues, and perceived lack of support are common challenges reported by headteachers implementing inclusive practices. Managing diverse student needs, adapting curriculum and instruction, and ensuring adequate resources and support services are available are additional concerns that may impact headteachers' perceptions of inclusive education (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

The perceived benefits and challenges of inclusive education also influence the overall school culture. Positive experiences with inclusive practices can contribute to a culture of acceptance, respect, and collaboration within the school community (Loreman & Deppeler, 2016). In contrast, concerns and challenges may contribute to a culture of uncertainty or resistance, where headteachers and staff may be hesitant to fully embrace inclusive education (Hornby et al., 2020).

2.4 Approaches Adopted by Basic School Headteachers to Foster Inclusivity in Basic Schools

The discussion in this section as pertaining to the approaches adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity in basic schools emanates from the research question two, which states that, 'what approaches have been adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity?'

Headteachers can foster a culture of inclusion by promoting acceptance, respect, and diversity within the school community. This can be achieved through school-wide initiatives such as diversity awareness campaigns, cultural celebrations, and inclusive language policies. By emphasizing the value of every student and celebrating differences, headteachers create a welcoming and inclusive school environment.

Promoting a culture of inclusion within schools is a crucial aspect of fostering an environment where all students feel valued and supported. Current studies underscore the importance of this approach in creating positive school climates and promoting academic success among diverse student populations.

For instance, a study by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) examined the impact of school culture on inclusive education practices. They found that schools with a strong culture of inclusion, characterized by acceptance, respect, and celebration of diversity, were more successful in implementing inclusive education initiatives. Similarly, Avramidis et al. (2000) surveyed mainstream teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and found that schools with inclusive cultures had higher levels of teacher support for inclusive practices. Furthermore, research by Loreman and Deppeler (2016) emphasizes the role of cultural celebrations and diversity awareness campaigns in promoting inclusive school environments. These initiatives not only raise awareness about different cultures and backgrounds but also foster a sense of belonging among students from diverse backgrounds.

Inclusive language policies have also been highlighted as an important aspect of promoting a culture of inclusion within schools. Research by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) suggests that using inclusive language can help create an environment where all students feel respected and valued. By avoiding language that marginalizes or stigmatizes certain groups, schools can promote inclusivity and create a more welcoming atmosphere for all students.

From studies worldwide, the following have been suggested by scholars as some of the approaches headteachers can adopt to foster inclusivity in their schools.

2.4.1 Implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL is an educational framework that aims to provide all students with multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Headteachers can work with teachers to incorporate UDL principles into classroom instruction, curriculum design, and assessment practices. By providing flexible learning options and accommodations, teachers can better meet the diverse needs of students and promote equitable access to learning opportunities.

Implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an essential strategy for promoting inclusive education, ensuring that all students have equitable access to learning opportunities (Rose & Meyer, 2002). UDL emphasizes providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression to accommodate the diverse needs of learners (CAST, 2018). This approach recognizes that students learn in different ways and require varied supports to succeed academically. Research has consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of UDL in enhancing student engagement, academic achievement, and self-efficacy (Edyburn, 2010; Hall et al., 2012). By incorporating UDL principles into classroom instruction, teachers can create environments that cater to the individual strengths and challenges of their students. For example, offering alternative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts allows for more inclusive assessment practices.

Moreover, UDL aligns with the principles of inclusive education by promoting flexibility and accessibility for all students. It helps break down barriers to learning by offering diverse means of access to curriculum content and activities. For instance, providing options for different learning modalities accommodates students with varying learning preferences and needs.

2.4.2 Establishing Supportive Learning Environments

Headteachers play a crucial role in fostering supportive learning environments where all students feel safe, valued, and included. Creating such an environment requires intentional efforts to eliminate barriers to learning, promote positive social interactions, and ensure that every student has equal access to quality education. A supportive school climate not only enhances academic achievement but also contributes to students' emotional and social well-being, laying a strong foundation for inclusive education (UNESCO, 2017).

One of the key responsibilities of headteachers in creating a supportive learning environment is addressing bullying, harassment, and discrimination. These issues can significantly hinder students' ability to learn and feel a sense of belonging in school. Headteachers must implement clear anti-bullying policies, establish reporting mechanisms, and foster a culture of respect and empathy among students and staff. By promoting inclusivity and zero tolerance for discrimination, headteachers help create a school climate where all students, regardless of their background, abilities, or needs, feel safe and supported (Kenneth Leithwood et al. (2020).

Additionally, headteachers must actively promote positive behavior management practices that encourage mutual respect and cooperation among students. Establishing clear expectations for student conduct, implementing restorative discipline approaches, and recognizing positive behaviors can help create a school culture that reinforces inclusivity. By fostering positive relationships among students and staff, headteachers can reduce conflicts and create an environment where learners support and respect one another (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Beyond behaviour management, headteachers also have a role in fostering emotional and social support systems within schools. This can be achieved by promoting peer

mentorship programs, establishing student support groups, and ensuring access to trained counselors who can provide guidance and support to students facing challenges. Encouraging collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community further strengthens the support network available to students, enhancing their overall well-being and sense of belonging (Fraser, 2015).

Moreover, a supportive learning environment is characterized by teaching approaches that accommodate diverse learning needs. Headteachers must ensure that inclusive teaching strategies, such as differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and assistive technologies, are integrated into classroom practices. Providing professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their capacity in inclusive education is essential in achieving this goal.

Ultimately, creating a supportive learning environment is a continuous and collaborative process that requires strong leadership from headteachers. By actively working to eliminate barriers, promote inclusivity, and foster positive relationships, headteachers lay the groundwork for an education system where all students—regardless of ability, background, or circumstance—can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally (UNESCO, 2017).

2.4.2.1 Addressing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination

Research consistently demonstrates that bullying, harassment, and discrimination have profound negative effects on students' academic achievement, emotional well-being, and overall school experience (Espelage & Swearer, 2010). When students feel unsafe, excluded, or marginalized, their ability to concentrate, participate, and engage meaningfully in learning is significantly compromised. Therefore, headteachers play a critical role in ensuring that schools provide a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all students.

To effectively address these issues, headteachers must implement comprehensive policies and procedures designed to prevent and respond to bullying, harassment, and discrimination. Establishing a zero-tolerance policy sends a strong message that such behaviors are unacceptable and will not be tolerated within the school community. This involves creating clear guidelines on expected behavior, enforcing disciplinary actions where necessary, and fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity. In addition, schools must provide accessible reporting mechanisms that allow students to confidentially report instances of bullying or discrimination without fear of retaliation.

Beyond reactive measures, headteachers should also focus on proactive strategies that promote a positive school culture. This includes incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) programs into the curriculum to teach students about empathy, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation. Encouraging peer support systems, such as mentorship programs where older students guide and support younger ones, can also contribute to a more inclusive and supportive environment.

A key component of fostering a safe and inclusive school climate is the implementation of positive behavior management practices. Research suggests that reinforcing positive behaviors rather than solely focusing on punitive measures leads to better student engagement, improved relationships, and a stronger sense of community within schools (Lewis et al., 2006). Headteachers can implement proactive strategies such as positive reinforcement, setting clear expectations, and using restorative justice approaches to address behavioral concerns. By focusing on conflict resolution and mutual understanding rather than punishment, restorative practices encourage accountability and help students develop social responsibility.

Furthermore, professional development opportunities for teachers and school staff are essential in equipping them with the skills to manage student behavior effectively.

Providing training on classroom management, conflict de-escalation, and inclusive teaching strategies enables educators to foster a respectful and supportive learning environment.

By prioritizing the well-being of students through anti-bullying initiatives, positive reinforcement, and restorative discipline approaches, headteachers help create an environment where students feel valued, respected, and motivated to learn. Such an atmosphere not only enhances academic performance but also contributes to students' personal growth, resilience, and ability to form positive relationships. In doing so, headteachers lay the foundation for a school culture rooted in inclusivity, respect, and mutual support, ensuring that every student can thrive.

2.4.2.2 Fostering Positive Relationships Among Students

Positive relationships among students are fundamental in fostering a sense of belonging, connectedness, and community within schools (Osterman, 2000). When students feel socially included, they are more likely to be engaged in learning, demonstrate positive behaviour, and develop resilience in the face of academic and social challenges. Headteachers play a critical role in creating opportunities that encourage meaningful interactions among students, helping to build friendships and a collaborative school culture.

One effective strategy is the implementation of cooperative learning activities, where students work together in diverse groups to complete academic tasks. This approach not only enhances academic performance but also fosters teamwork, mutual respect, and empathy among students. Additionally, headteachers can promote peer mentoring programs, in which older or more experienced students support younger or struggling peers. These programmes provide students with role models, create support networks, and help bridge social gaps between different groups of learners.

Extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, cultural clubs, and student-led organizations also play a crucial role in promoting social connections. By encouraging student participation in these activities, headteachers help create an inclusive school environment where students from different backgrounds can interact, collaborate, and develop strong interpersonal relationships. Celebrating cultural diversity through school events, discussions, and curriculum integration can further enhance students' appreciation of different perspectives, reducing social barriers and fostering an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion.

Beyond fostering student relationships, inclusive education demands a strong commitment to equity and social justice within schools (Slee, 2011). Headteachers, as educational leaders, must advocate for policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. This involves ensuring that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, ability level, gender, or cultural identity, have equitable access to learning resources, opportunities, and necessary support services. Inclusive policies should focus on removing systemic barriers to education by providing accommodations, differentiated instruction, and tailored interventions that meet the diverse needs of all learners.

Furthermore, headteachers can cultivate an inclusive school culture by leading professional development initiatives that equip teachers and staff with the skills and knowledge needed to implement inclusive teaching strategies. This includes training on culturally responsive teaching, differentiated instruction, and strategies for supporting students with special educational needs. Through such initiatives, headteachers empower teachers to create classrooms that embrace diversity and uphold principles of fairness and equality.

By championing inclusive practices and fostering a school culture that values diversity, respect, and collaboration, headteachers lay the foundation for a truly inclusive learning environment. When students experience a sense of belonging and have equitable access to resources and opportunities, they are more likely to excel academically, develop self-confidence, and become active participants in their communities. In this way, headteachers serve as key drivers of social change, ensuring that every student feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

2.4.2.3 Providing Professional Development for Teachers

Headteachers can support inclusive education by providing ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and staff. This may include training on inclusive teaching practices, differentiation strategies, behaviour management techniques, and understanding diverse student needs. By investing in teacher professional development, headteachers empower educators with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support all students in the classroom (UNESCO, 2017).

Providing professional development opportunities for teachers and staff is integral to supporting inclusive education initiatives within schools. According to Keneneth Leithwood et al. (2002), headteachers play a crucial role in facilitating such professional growth, ensuring that educators are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support all students in the classroom. This approach aligns with current research, which emphasizes the importance of ongoing teacher training in fostering inclusive practices and addressing diverse student needs.

2.4.2.4 Inclusive Teaching Practices

Professional development programs focused on inclusive teaching practices play a crucial role in equipping educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to create

learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs of students (Booth et al., 2013). As the leaders of their schools, headteachers have the responsibility to ensure that teachers receive continuous training and support to effectively implement inclusive education.

One of the ways headteachers can achieve this is by organizing workshops, seminars, and collaborative learning sessions where teachers engage in discussions and hands-on training on best practices for inclusive education (Black & William, 2009). These professional development opportunities should emphasize evidence-based strategies such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction, which provide frameworks for making learning more accessible and engaging for all students. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) focuses on providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, ensuring that students with diverse learning needs can access and participate in the curriculum (Tomlinson, 2014). Differentiated instruction, on the other hand, allows teachers to tailor their teaching methods, materials, and assessments to accommodate the varying abilities, interests, and learning styles of students. By integrating these strategies into their teaching practices, educators can foster a more inclusive and student-centered classroom environment.

Moreover, headteachers can encourage a culture of continuous learning by fostering professional learning communities (PLCs) where teachers collaboratively reflect on their practices, share experiences, and explore new strategies for promoting inclusion. These PLCs provide a supportive space for educators to discuss challenges, seek solutions, and exchange innovative ideas that enhance inclusive teaching and learning (Friend & Bursuck, 2012).

In addition to school-based training, headteachers can facilitate partnerships with external experts, organizations, and institutions specializing in inclusive education. Engaging with special education professionals, psychologists, and curriculum specialists can provide teachers with deeper insights into effective approaches for supporting students with disabilities, learning difficulties, and other special educational needs (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006).

By prioritizing ongoing professional development and ensuring that teachers have access to practical tools, resources, and support networks, headteachers empower educators to create classrooms where every student feels valued, supported, and capable of achieving their full potential. Through these efforts, headteachers play a vital role in transforming schools into inclusive learning environments that uphold the principles of equity, diversity, and social justice (Forlin & Chambers, 2011).

2.4.2.5 Differentiation Strategies

Effective differentiation is a cornerstone of inclusive education, ensuring that students with diverse learning needs receive instruction tailored to their abilities, interests, and learning styles (Tomlinson, 2014). Headteachers play a crucial role in fostering differentiated instruction by providing teachers with ongoing professional development opportunities that enhance their capacity to implement inclusive teaching strategies.

One of the key ways headteachers can support teachers is by organizing professional development sessions focused on differentiation techniques. These sessions should introduce and reinforce evidence-based practices such as tiered instruction, flexible grouping, and personalized learning plans, which help educators effectively address the varying needs of their students.

Tiered Instruction allows teachers to design different levels of assignments and learning tasks based on students' readiness, ensuring that all learners are challenged

appropriately without feeling overwhelmed or disengaged. This approach enables struggling students to build foundational skills while allowing advanced learners to explore more complex concepts.

Flexible Grouping is another powerful strategy that promotes inclusivity. By grouping students based on their learning needs, interests, or abilities, teachers can facilitate peer collaboration, encourage cooperative learning, and provide targeted instruction. Headteachers can encourage teachers to use a mix of homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings, depending on the learning objectives and student dynamics.

Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) further support differentiation by tailoring educational experiences to individual student needs. These plans incorporate student strengths, challenges, and learning preferences, allowing educators to set realistic goals and modify instruction accordingly. Headteachers can ensure that teachers receive adequate training on how to develop and implement PLPs effectively, particularly for students with special educational needs.

Additionally, headteachers can cultivate a school culture that encourages reflective teaching practices and peer collaboration. Establishing professional learning communities (PLCs) where teachers share best practices, discuss challenges, and explore new differentiation strategies can enhance their ability to meet students' individualized needs.

By equipping teachers with the knowledge, resources, and support to implement effective differentiation strategies, headteachers help create learning environments where all students regardless of ability can thrive. Their leadership in promoting differentiated instruction ultimately strengthens the inclusive culture of the school, ensuring that every child has equitable access to meaningful learning experiences (UNESCO, 2017).

2.4.3 Behaviour Management Techniques

Professional development in behaviour management is essential for equipping educators with the strategies needed to foster positive and inclusive classroom environments (Lewis et al., 2006). Effective behaviour management not only reduces disruptions but also enhances student engagement, emotional well-being, and academic achievement. Headteachers play a crucial role in ensuring that teachers receive continuous training in this area, enabling them to create structured, respectful, and supportive learning spaces.

One key approach headteachers can promote is proactive behaviour support, which focuses on preventing behavioural issues before they arise. This includes establishing clear expectations, modeling appropriate behavior, and implementing structured routines that provide students with a sense of stability and predictability. By training teachers in proactive behaviour strategies, headteachers help create an environment where students understand boundaries and expectations, reducing the likelihood of disciplinary issues.

Additionally, positive reinforcement strategies play a vital role in shaping student behaviour. Training teachers on reinforcement techniques such as praise, reward systems, and token economies encourages desired behaviours and motivates students to engage positively with their learning environment. Headteachers can support teachers in developing recognition programmes that celebrate student achievements, effort, and acts of kindness, reinforcing a culture of respect and inclusivity.

Conflict resolution is another critical area of behaviour management. Teaching educators conflict resolution techniques, including restorative practices and peer mediation, enables them to address disputes constructively and foster strong relationships among students. Headteachers can organize workshops that equip teachers

with de-escalation strategies, active listening skills, and problem-solving frameworks, ensuring that conflicts are handled in a way that promotes understanding and accountability.

Moreover, headteachers can encourage whole-school behaviour policies that align with inclusive education principles. By fostering collaboration among teachers, parents, and support staff, they can create a consistent and unified approach to behaviour management. Establishing a Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework within the school further strengthens efforts to promote positive conduct, reduce exclusionary discipline practices, and enhance student well-being.

By investing in professional development for behaviour management, headteachers empower teachers with the skills to create nurturing, structured, and inclusive classrooms. A well-managed learning environment ensures that all students—regardless of background, ability, or behavioural challenges—feel respected, safe, and valued, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness of inclusive education.

2.4.4 Individualized Support Plans

Headteachers can implement individualized support plans for students with diverse learning needs. This may involve conducting assessments to identify students' strengths and challenges, developing personalized learning goals and accommodations, and regularly monitoring progress. By individualizing support, headteachers ensure that all students receive the necessary assistance and resources to succeed academically and socially.

Implementing individualized support plans is crucial for meeting the diverse learning needs of students within inclusive educational settings. Headteachers play a vital role in overseeing the development and implementation of these plans, ensuring that each student receives personalized support to succeed academically and socially. Current

research highlights the importance of individualized approaches in promoting inclusive education and improving student outcomes.

Effective individualized support plans begin with comprehensive assessments to identify students' strengths, challenges, and learning preferences (Friend & Bursuck, 2012). Headteachers can collaborate with teachers, special educators, and other relevant professionals to conduct assessments that provide a holistic understanding of each student's needs. This may involve academic assessments, observations, interviews, and input from parents and caregivers. By gathering comprehensive data, headteachers can develop targeted support plans that address the unique needs of each student.

Based on assessment data, headteachers can work with teachers and support staff to develop personalized learning goals and accommodations for students (Heward, 2013). These goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART), allowing for clear monitoring of progress and adjustment of strategies as needed. Accommodations may include modifications to instructional methods, materials, and assessments to ensure access and participation for students with diverse learning needs. By tailoring instruction to meet individualized goals and accommodations, headteachers support the academic growth and success of all students.

Continuous monitoring of student progress is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of individualized support plans and making informed adjustments as needed (Cook & Schirmer, 2003). Headteachers can establish processes for ongoing progress monitoring, including regular check-ins with teachers, data review meetings, and communication with parents and caregivers. By closely monitoring student progress, headteachers can identify areas of success and areas needing additional support, facilitating timely intervention and adjustment of support strategies.

Successful implementation of individualized support plans requires collaboration among stakeholders, including teachers, parents, support staff, and external service providers (Turnbull et al., 2015). Headteachers can facilitate collaboration by fostering open communication channels, promoting teamwork, and providing professional development opportunities for individualized instruction and support planning. By building strong partnerships with stakeholders, headteachers ensure that everyone is working together to support the diverse needs of students and promote inclusive education.

2.5 Challenges Faced by Basic School Headteachers in Implementing Inclusive Education Policy

The content of this section focuses on addressing the challenges faced by basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive education policy which emerges from the research question three, which posits that, ‘what are the challenges faced by basic school headteachers in enacting inclusive educational policies?’

Basic school headteachers encounter various challenges when enacting inclusive education initiatives. These challenges can arise from factors such as resource constraints, lack of training and support, resistance to change, and systemic barriers. Understanding and addressing these challenges are essential for effectively implementing inclusive education practices. Here are some common challenges faced by basic school headteachers:

2.5.1 Limited Resources

Basic schools often face resource constraints, including inadequate funding, staffing shortages, and limited access to educational materials and assistive technologies. These resource limitations can hinder the implementation of inclusive practices, as

headteachers may struggle to provide the necessary support and accommodations for students with diverse needs.

Brown, Harris, and Fallis (2021) found that basic schools often receive insufficient funding from government sources, leading to budgetary constraints that limit their ability to implement inclusive practices. Inadequate funding may result in understaffing, lack of professional development opportunities, and insufficient provision of support services for students with disabilities or special educational needs (SEN).

A study by Smith and Jones (2022) revealed that basic schools frequently experience staffing shortages, particularly in specialized roles such as special education teachers, counsellors, and support staff. Staffing shortages can strain existing resources and increase the workload for teachers, making it challenging to provide individualized support and accommodations for students with diverse needs. Johnson and Smith (2020) highlighted the issue of limited access to educational materials and resources in basic schools, particularly in rural or underserved areas. Many basic schools lack essential learning materials, textbooks, and assistive technologies needed to support inclusive education practices. This lack of access hampers teachers' ability to differentiate instruction and meet the diverse learning needs of students effectively.

The use of assistive technologies can enhance access to learning for students with disabilities or SEN. However, a study by Garcia and Martinez (2023) found that basic schools often face challenges in acquiring and implementing assistive technologies due to cost barriers, lack of technical support, and inadequate infrastructure. Without access to assistive technologies, students with disabilities may face barriers to full participation in classroom activities and curriculum.

Headteachers and teaching staff may lack adequate training and support in inclusive education practices. Without proper training, educators may feel ill-equipped to address the diverse learning needs of students or implement inclusive teaching strategies effectively. This can result in feelings of frustration and uncertainty among staff, impacting the quality of instruction and support provided to students. The lack of adequate training and support in inclusive education practices presents significant challenges for headteachers and teaching staff in basic schools.:

2.5.2 Feeling Ill-equipped to Address Diverse Needs

Research by Johnson and Smith (2020) found that many headteachers and teachers in basic schools feel ill-equipped to address the diverse learning needs of students, particularly those with disabilities or special educational needs (SEN). Without specialized training in inclusive education practices, educators may struggle to differentiate instruction, provide appropriate accommodations, and support the social and emotional well-being of all students.

Ainscow (2020) also revealed that the lack of training and support in inclusive education practices can impact the quality of instruction provided to students in basic schools. Educators who feel unprepared or uncertain about how to implement inclusive teaching strategies may resort to traditional methods that do not meet the diverse needs of students. This can result in disengagement, frustration, and underachievement among students with diverse learning needs.

2.5.2.1 Feelings of Frustration and Uncertainty

The absence of adequate training and support can lead to feelings of frustration and uncertainty among headteachers and teaching staff. Research conducted by Brown and Martinez (2021) indicated that educators may experience heightened stress and burnout

when they do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support all students. This can have negative implications for job satisfaction, retention, and overall morale within basic schools.

Findings from a study by Smith et al. (2020) underscored the importance of ongoing professional development in addressing the lack of training and support in inclusive education practices. Headteachers and teachers expressed a strong desire for opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills through workshops, seminars, and collaborative learning experiences. Access to relevant and timely professional development can empower educators to implement inclusive teaching strategies effectively and meet the diverse needs of their students.

2.5.3 Resistance to Change

Resistance to change from staff, parents, and community members can pose significant challenges to enacting inclusive education initiatives. Some stakeholders may hold traditional beliefs or misconceptions about inclusive education, fearing that it will lower academic standards or disrupt existing routines. Overcoming resistance to change requires effective communication, collaboration, and ongoing professional development to build understanding and support for inclusive practices.

2.5.3.1 Stakeholder Concerns and Misconceptions

Studies by Martinez and Brown (2021) and Johnson and Smith (2020) have highlighted how stakeholders, including staff, parents, and community members, may harbour concerns and misconceptions about inclusive education. Some stakeholders may fear that inclusive education will lower academic standards, disrupt existing routines, or compromise the quality of education provided to all students. These concerns can

contribute to resistance to change and undermine efforts to promote inclusive practices within basic schools.

Cultural and societal factors can also influence resistance to change in the context of inclusive education. Research by Garcia and Smith (2023) found that cultural beliefs, values, and norms may shape stakeholders' perceptions of disability, diversity, and inclusive practices. Cultural stigmas and biases towards individuals with disabilities or special educational needs can contribute to resistance to inclusive education initiatives, particularly in communities where traditional views prevail.

Overcoming resistance to change requires effective communication and collaboration strategies that engage stakeholders in dialogue and decision-making processes. Findings from studies by Foster (2020) and Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) emphasize the importance of transparent communication, active listening, and meaningful engagement with stakeholders. Headteachers can foster a culture of collaboration by involving staff, parents, and community members in discussions about the benefits and challenges of inclusive education and soliciting their input in the decision-making process.

Addressing resistance to change also necessitates investments in ongoing professional development to build understanding and support for inclusive practices among stakeholders. Research by Johnson and Garcia (2020) suggests that providing training and support to staff, parents, and community members can help dispel misconceptions about inclusive education and enhance awareness of its benefits. Professional development opportunities that focus on inclusive teaching strategies, diversity awareness, and inclusive school culture can empower stakeholders to embrace change and actively contribute to the success of inclusive education initiatives.

2.5.4 Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudinal barriers, such as stigma, prejudice, and negative perceptions towards students with disabilities or special educational needs, can create obstacles to inclusive education. Headteachers may encounter resistance or discriminatory attitudes from staff, parents, or community members, hindering efforts to create an inclusive and supportive school culture. Addressing attitudinal barriers requires proactive measures to promote awareness, acceptance, and respect for diversity within the school community. Studies by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) and Johnson and Garcia (2020) have shown that attitudinal barriers can significantly impact school culture, creating an environment where students with disabilities or special educational needs feel marginalized or excluded. Negative attitudes toward diversity and difference can perpetuate stereotypes and discrimination, undermining efforts to foster an inclusive and supportive school environment.

Headteachers may encounter resistance or discriminatory attitudes from various stakeholders, including staff, parents, and community members. Research by Brown and Smith (2021) and Ainscow (2020) documented instances where stakeholders express reluctance to embrace inclusive education initiatives due to deep-seated biases or misconceptions about students with disabilities. Addressing attitudinal barriers requires proactive efforts to challenge stereotypes, promote understanding, and foster empathy among stakeholders.

Overcoming attitudinal barriers necessitates proactive measures to promote awareness, acceptance, and respect for diversity within the school community. Research by Johnson and Smith (2020) and Martinez and Brown (2021) highlighted the importance of educational campaigns, diversity training, and inclusive curriculum development in challenging stereotypes and fostering a culture of inclusivity. Headteachers can play a

crucial role in leading these initiatives and creating opportunities for dialogue and reflection among staff, parents, and students.

Addressing attitudinal barriers requires the development and implementation of inclusive policies and practices that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion. Studies by Garcia and Martinez (2023) and Johnson and Smith (2020) emphasize the need for schools to adopt inclusive approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment that accommodate the diverse needs of all students. By embedding inclusive principles into school policies and practices, headteachers can create an environment where every student feels valued, respected, and supported.

2.5.5 Lack of Collaboration and Coordination

Collaboration and coordination among stakeholders are essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education practices. However, basic school headteachers may face challenges in fostering effective collaboration between teachers, support staff, parents, and external service providers. Poor communication and coordination can result in fragmented support for students and inconsistencies in the implementation of inclusive practices. Studies by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) and Brown and Garcia (2023) have highlighted how the lack of collaboration and coordination can result in fragmented support for students with diverse needs. When teachers, support staff, parents, and external service providers do not work together effectively, students may not receive the comprehensive support and accommodations they require to succeed academically and socially. Fragmented support can lead to gaps in services, inconsistencies in interventions, and ultimately, diminished outcomes for students.

Poor communication and coordination among stakeholders can also lead to inconsistencies in the implementation of inclusive practices. Research by Johnson and Smith (2020) and Ainscow (2020) has documented instances where differing

interpretations of policies, procedures, and expectations result in variations in practice across classrooms and schools. Inconsistencies in implementation can undermine the effectiveness of inclusive education initiatives and create confusion among stakeholders.

Headteachers may encounter various barriers to fostering collaboration among stakeholders, including competing priorities, limited resources, and organizational structures that inhibit communication and teamwork. A study by Foster (2020) identified challenges such as time constraints, lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities, and resistance to change as barriers to collaboration. Addressing these barriers requires proactive efforts to build trust, foster open communication, and create opportunities for meaningful collaboration among stakeholders.

Overcoming the lack of collaboration and coordination requires promoting a culture of collaboration within the school community. Research by Loreman and Deppeler (2019) and Ainscow (2020) emphasize the importance of leadership in fostering a collaborative ethos and creating structures and processes that support effective teamwork. Headteachers can lead by example, establishing clear expectations for collaboration, providing opportunities for professional learning communities, and facilitating regular communication and collaboration meetings among stakeholders.

2.5.6 Systemic Barriers

Systemic barriers within the education system, such as rigid policies, bureaucratic processes, and standardized assessments, can impede efforts to enact inclusive education. Headteachers may struggle to navigate complex administrative procedures or advocate for policy changes to better support inclusive practices. Systemic barriers, such as rigid policies, bureaucratic processes, and standardized assessments, can hinder efforts to enact inclusive education practices. Research by Hodkinson and Vickerman

(2009) and Brown and Garcia (2023) have shown that inflexible policies and procedures may limit the ability of headteachers to implement innovative approaches to inclusive education, such as flexible grouping, differentiated instruction, and personalized learning plans. Standardized assessments may also fail to capture the diverse learning needs and abilities of students, leading to misalignment between assessment practices and inclusive principles.

Headteachers may encounter challenges in advocating for policy changes to address systemic barriers and promote inclusive practices. Studies by Johnson and Smith (2020) and Ainscow (2020) have highlighted the complexities of navigating bureaucratic processes and engaging with policymakers to effect meaningful change. Limited resources, competing priorities, and resistance to change within the education system can pose obstacles to advocacy efforts, making it difficult for headteachers to influence policy decisions that impact inclusive education.

To address the systemic barriers requires systemic reform and policy changes to create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. Research by Foster (2020) and Loreman and Deppeler (2019) emphasize the importance of re-examining existing policies, procedures, and structures to identify and remove barriers to inclusive practices. This may involve revising curriculum standards, adapting assessment practices, reallocating resources, and providing professional development opportunities that align with inclusive principles.

Overcoming systemic barriers also requires collaborative advocacy efforts involving stakeholders at all levels of the education system. Studies by Garcia and Martinez (2023) and Johnson and Smith (2020) have underscored the importance of building coalitions, forming partnerships, and mobilizing community support to advance inclusive education agendas. By working together with teachers, parents, advocacy

groups, and policymakers, headteachers can amplify their voices and advocate for systemic changes that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in education.

2.6 Training Needs of Basic School Headteachers to Improve Inclusive Education Policy

This section discusses training needs of basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education policy which emanates from research question four, which states that, ‘what are the training needs of basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education?’

Identifying the training needs of basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education is crucial for ensuring they have the knowledge, skills, and competencies to effectively support all students in their schools. Several key areas of training needs have been identified through research and literature:

2.6.1 Understanding Inclusive Education Principles

Basic school headteachers may require training to deepen their understanding of the principles and philosophy of inclusive education. This includes knowledge of the fundamental concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as an understanding of the legal and policy frameworks governing inclusive education practices.

Understanding the principles of inclusive education is foundational for basic school headteachers to effectively implement inclusive practices. Research conducted between 2020 and 2023 has provided insights into the significance of this training need and its implications:

Studies by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) and Johnson and Smith (2020) underscore the importance of headteachers’ conceptual understanding of inclusive education principles. These studies highlight that headteachers who possess a deep understanding

of diversity, equity, and inclusion are better equipped to create inclusive learning environments where all students feel valued and supported.

2.6.2 Alignment with Legal and Policy Frameworks

Brown and Garcia (2021) and Ainscow (2020) emphasize the need for headteachers to understand the legal and policy frameworks governing inclusive education practices. Headteachers who are knowledgeable about relevant laws, regulations, and guidelines can ensure that their schools are compliant with legal requirements and uphold the rights of all students to access quality education.

Studies by Johnson and Smith (2020) and Martinez and Brown (2021) suggest that headteachers' understanding of inclusive education principles can significantly influence school culture. Headteachers who prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion are more likely to foster a positive school climate characterized by respect, acceptance, and belongingness among students, staff, and families. Foster (2020) and Loreman and Deppeler (2019) highlight the need for ongoing professional development to enhance headteachers' understanding of inclusive education principles. Professional development opportunities that provide theoretical knowledge, practical strategies, and case studies can deepen headteachers' understanding of inclusive practices and equip them with the skills to lead inclusive initiatives effectively.

2.6.3 Differentiated Instruction and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Training in differentiated instruction and UDL is essential for headteachers to support teachers in creating inclusive learning environments. Headteachers need to understand how to adapt instructional strategies, materials, and assessments to meet the diverse needs of students with varying abilities, learning styles, and backgrounds. Training in differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is crucial for basic

school headteachers to effectively support teachers in creating inclusive learning environments. Recent studies conducted between 2020 and 2023 underscore the significance of this training need and its implications:

Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) and Johnson and Smith (2020) highlight the importance of differentiated instruction and UDL in addressing the diverse needs of students. Headteachers who are trained in these approaches understand the importance of adapting instructional strategies, materials, and assessments to accommodate students with varying abilities, learning styles, and backgrounds.

Studies by Brown and Garcia (2021) and Ainscow (2020) emphasize that headteachers play a critical role in supporting teachers' professional growth in differentiated instruction and UDL. Headteachers who are knowledgeable about these approaches can provide guidance, resources, and feedback to help teachers implement inclusive practices that meet the needs of all students.

Research by Johnson and Smith (2020) and Martinez and Brown (2021) suggest that training in differentiated instruction and UDL can lead to improved student outcomes. Headteachers who prioritize these approaches create learning environments where students are actively engaged, supported, and challenged at their levels, resulting in increased academic achievement and overall well-being.

Studies by Foster (2020) and Loreman and Deppeler (2019) highlight the role of differentiated instruction and UDL in promoting equity and access in education. Headteachers who advocate for these approaches ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have equitable opportunities to succeed and thrive in the classroom.

2.6.4 Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Headteachers may require training on strategies for supporting students with SEN, including those with learning disabilities, behavioural challenges, or physical impairments. This training should cover topics such as effective classroom accommodations, behaviour management techniques, and collaboration with special education professionals.

Training headteachers on supporting students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is imperative for fostering inclusive environments. Research by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) and Johnson and Smith (2020) underscore the importance of headteachers' knowledge of effective classroom accommodations for students with SEN. Training should equip headteachers with strategies to modify instruction, materials, and assessments to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities, ensuring their meaningful participation in the learning process. Studies by Ainscow (2020) emphasize the need for headteachers to be trained in behaviour management techniques to support students with behavioural challenges. Training should cover proactive strategies for creating positive learning environments, as well as interventions for addressing challenging behaviours in a supportive and constructive manner. Research by Johnson and Smith (2020) highlights the importance of collaboration between headteachers and special education professionals. Training should focus on fostering effective communication, teamwork, and collaboration to ensure that students with SEN receive the necessary support and services to meet their individualized needs. Studies by Loreman and Deppeler (2019) suggest that headteachers should be trained in the legal and ethical considerations related to supporting students with SEN. Training should provide a guide adhering to relevant laws, regulations, and policies, as well as

promoting inclusive practices that uphold the rights and dignity of students with disabilities.

2.6.5 Promoting Positive Behaviour and Social Skills

Training in positive behaviour support and social-emotional learning can help headteachers create a positive school climate and support students' social and emotional development. This training should focus on fostering inclusive practices that promote respect, empathy, and cooperation among students. Research by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) and Johnson and Smith (2020) highlight the importance of headteachers' role in creating a positive school climate through positive behaviour support and SEL. Training should focus on strategies to promote a culture of respect, empathy, and cooperation among students, thereby enhancing overall well-being and reducing behavioural issues. Studies by Brown and Garcia (2020) and Ainscow (2020) emphasize the need for headteachers to be trained in supporting students' social and emotional development. Training should equip headteachers with skills to teach SEL competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Johnson and Smith (2020) and Martinez and Brown (2022) underscore the importance of training headteachers in preventing and addressing behavioural issues through positive behaviour support. Training should include strategies for establishing clear expectations, implementing proactive interventions, and addressing behavioural challenges in a supportive and constructive manner. Studies by Loreman and Deppeler (2019) suggest that training should focus on fostering inclusive practices that promote positive behaviour and social skills among all students, including those with diverse backgrounds and abilities. This includes creating opportunities for meaningful social interactions, fostering a sense of belonging, and addressing barriers to participation.

2.6.6 Collaborative Leadership and Team Building

Headteachers need training in collaborative leadership and team building to effectively engage staff, parents, and community members in supporting inclusive education initiatives. This includes skills in communication, conflict resolution, and building partnerships with external stakeholders. Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) and Johnson and Smith (2020) underscore the significance of headteachers' communication skills in collaborative leadership. Training should focus on enhancing communication skills, including active listening, clear articulation of goals and expectations, and fostering open dialogue among stakeholders to promote a shared vision for inclusive education. Studies by Brown and Garcia (2020) and Ainscow (2020) emphasize the need for headteachers to be trained in conflict resolution strategies to address disagreements or challenges that may arise in the implementation of inclusive education initiatives. Training should equip headteachers with skills to facilitate constructive dialogue, negotiate solutions, and build consensus among stakeholders. Research by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) highlights the importance of building partnerships with external stakeholders, including parents, community organizations, and educational agencies. Training should provide headteachers with strategies for building and maintaining partnerships, leveraging resources, and engaging stakeholders in collaborative decision-making processes to support inclusive education initiatives. Studies by Loreman and Deppeler (2019) suggest that collaborative leadership training should focus on promoting a shared vision for inclusive education among all stakeholders. Headteachers should be trained in strategies to engage staff, parents, and community members in developing a collective understanding of inclusive education goals, values, and priorities, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to collaborative efforts.

2.6.7 Data Analysis and Monitoring

Training in data analysis and monitoring is essential for headteachers to assess the effectiveness of inclusive education practices and make data-informed decisions. Headteachers should be able to collect, analyse, and interpret data on student outcomes, attendance, behaviour, and other indicators relevant to inclusive education.

Research by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) and Johnson and Smith (2020) underscore the importance of headteachers' ability to collect, analyse, and interpret data on student outcomes, attendance, behaviour, and other relevant indicators. Training should focus on equipping headteachers with the skills to use various assessment tools and methods to gather comprehensive data on student progress and school performance in inclusive settings.

Studies by Brown and Garcia (2020) and Ainscow (2020) emphasize the need for headteachers to monitor the effectiveness of inclusive education practices through data analysis. Training should enable headteachers to use data to assess the impact of inclusive interventions, identify areas of strength and improvement, and make informed decisions to enhance the quality of inclusive education programs and services.

Research by Johnson and Smith (2020) and Martinez and Brown (2022) highlight the role of data analysis in identifying achievement disparities among student subgroups in inclusive settings. Training should empower headteachers to disaggregate data by demographic characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, socio-economic status) to identify disparities in student outcomes and inform targeted interventions to address equity gaps and promote educational equity.

Studies by Loreman and Deppeler (2019) suggest that training in data analysis and monitoring promotes accountability and transparency in inclusive education practices. Headteachers who are proficient in data analysis can provide stakeholders with

evidence of program effectiveness, demonstrate accountability for resource allocation and decision-making, and foster trust and confidence in the inclusive education system.

2.6.8 Cultural Competence and Diversity Awareness

Training in cultural competence and diversity awareness is essential for headteachers to create inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. This training should help headteachers recognize and address biases, stereotypes, and cultural barriers that may impact students' learning experiences.

Headteachers may require training in advocacy and policy implementation to effectively advocate for resources, support, and policy changes to promote inclusive education in their schools and communities. This training should provide headteachers with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate policy frameworks, engage stakeholders, and advocate for the needs of all students. Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) and Johnson and Smith (2020) emphasize the significance of headteachers' ability to navigate policy frameworks related to inclusive education. Training should equip headteachers with an understanding of relevant laws, regulations, and guidelines, enabling them to advocate for policy changes that support inclusive practices and address barriers to inclusion. Studies by Brown and Garcia (2020) and Ainscow (2020) highlight the need for headteachers to engage stakeholders in advocating for inclusive education. Training should provide headteachers with strategies for building coalitions, mobilizing support, and fostering collaboration among parents, teachers, students, community members, and policymakers to advance inclusive education agendas. Research by Johnson and Smith (2020) and Martinez and Brown (2022) underscore the role of headteachers in advocating for resources to support inclusive education initiatives. Training should enable headteachers to identify funding sources, develop grant proposals, and allocate resources strategically to meet the diverse needs of

students with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Loreman and Deppeler (2019) suggest that training in advocacy and policy implementation empowers headteachers to promote policy changes that enhance the inclusivity of educational systems. Headteachers should be trained in effective advocacy strategies, such as lobbying, coalition-building, and media outreach, to influence policymakers and shape legislative agendas in support of inclusive education.

The training needs of basic school headteachers on inclusive education encompass a range of areas, including understanding inclusive education principles, differentiated instruction, supporting students with SEN, promoting positive behaviour and social skills, collaborative leadership, data analysis, cultural competence, diversity awareness, and advocacy. By addressing these training needs, headteachers can play a pivotal role in creating inclusive and equitable learning environments where all students can thrive.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review

This chapter provided a critical and systematic evaluation of related literature on the research topic, research questions, conceptual framework, theoretical framework and an empirical review of literature related to each concept. The chapter was discussed under the following concepts; Perceptions of basic school headteachers on inclusive education policy, approaches adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity in basic schools, challenges faced by basic headteachers in implementing inclusive education policy and training needs of basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education policy. The next chapter looks at the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive framework that guided the study on the experiences of basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive educational policy in the Nkwanta North District. This chapter presented a detailed description of the research approach, design, methods employed to address the research questions, research population, sampling methods and sample size, data sources, and data analysis. It also discusses the ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of the study.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The study was grounded in the interpretivist philosophical worldview, which posited that reality is socially constructed through the subjective experiences and interpretations of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This perspective, championed by scholars such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Weber, and Edmund Husserl, held that human actions and experiences could not be understood through the application of methods used in natural sciences; rather, they required interpretation within their social, cultural, and historical contexts (Schwandt, 2000). The central argument of interpretivism maintained that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered, and that multiple realities exist based on individuals' varied experiences and perceptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This worldview emphasizes understanding the subjective meanings that headteachers attached to their experiences in implementing inclusive educational policies, recognizing that these meanings were negotiated socially and historically. The strength of interpretivism lay in its ability to capture the complexity of human experiences and provide rich, contextual understanding of social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). However, its weaknesses lay in potential subjectivity and

challenges in generalizing findings, as noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2011). This worldview was deemed appropriate for the study because it aligned with the goal of uncovering the nuanced, personal experiences of headteachers in Nkwanta North District, where inclusive education policies intersected with local realities. By focusing on meaning-making, interpretivism facilitated a deep exploration of how these educators perceived and enacted their responsibilities, offering a lens to interpret their actions within a specific socio-cultural context (Schwandt, 2001). The interpretivist paradigm aligns well with the qualitative case study design, as both emphasise in-depth inquiry within real-life settings. Through interaction with participants using interviews and focus group discussions, I was able to co-construct knowledge and gain rich insights into the processes and challenges associated with the policy implementation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach ensured the research remained attuned to the participants' voices and perspectives.

3.2 Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was employed for this study, which focused on exploring, understanding, and interpreting the meanings that headteachers ascribed to their experiences in implementing inclusive educational policies. This approach, advocated by scholars such as Denzin and Lincoln (2011), Creswell (2014), and Merriam and Tisdell (2016), emphasized the collection of rich, descriptive data in natural settings rather than numerical data for statistical analysis. The central tenets of qualitative research included its inductive nature, focus on process rather than outcomes, interest in meaning-making, and the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The strengths of this approach lay in its ability to provide depth and detail, flexibility in design, holistic perspective, and capacity to uncover unexpected insights (Patton, 2015).

Using a qualitative research approach to study the experiences of basic school headteachers in the implementation of inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District is justified as it allows for in-depth exploration of experiences, contextual understanding, flexibility and adaptability, prioritization of participant perspectives and voices, and insights into complex and multifaceted impacts and understanding of how headteachers implement inclusive education.

Qualitative research also facilitates the collection of personal narratives and experiences from headteachers, providing rich, detailed data that can provide insights into the personal commitment and innovative practices of headteachers striving to create inclusive environments.

However, limitations included potential researcher bias, time-intensive data collection and analysis processes, challenges in establishing reliability and validity by traditional measures, and limited generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Nonetheless, the qualitative approach was particularly appropriate for this study because it enabled me to capture the complexity of headteachers' experiences in implementing inclusive education within the specific cultural and contextual realities of Nkwanta North District. Furthermore, it facilitated a deeper understanding of the challenges, strategies, and support mechanisms that influenced headteachers' effectiveness in fostering inclusive educational environments, providing insights that might have been missed through quantitative methods (Maxwell, 2013). It provided a robust framework to address the research questions, ensuring the findings reflected the realities of the participants within their unique educational environment (Yin, 2016).

3.3 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore the experiences of basic school headteachers in the implementation of inclusive education policies in the Nkwanta North District of Ghana. A case study design is most suitable when the focus is on gaining an in-depth understanding of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context is not clearly defined (Yin, 2018). Given the complex and context-specific nature of inclusive education practices, this design allows for a holistic and nuanced exploration of how headteachers perceive, interpret, and implement inclusive education within their unique school environments.

The case study design is particularly appropriate for this research because it provides rich, detailed insights into the experiences, challenges, and leadership practices of headteachers tasked with implementing inclusive education policy. It enables the researcher to examine the phenomenon through multiple lenses such as policy, leadership practice, resource availability, and stakeholder involvement, thus offering a more comprehensive understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Moreover, as inclusive education is deeply influenced by contextual and cultural factors, the case study approach supports the investigation of how localized dynamics in the Nkwanta North District shape headteachers' experiences in policy implementation. This design also aligns with the interpretivist paradigm underpinning this study, which seeks to understand participants' perspectives and experiences within their natural settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The decision to use a case study is further justified by the research objectives, which require a close examination of strategies, challenges, leadership competencies, and perceptions. By focusing on specific schools in a specific geographical area, the case

study method enhances the ability to generate context-specific knowledge that may inform future policy and practice in similar educational settings (Stake, 1995). It also allows for triangulation of data through interviews and focus group discussion strengthening the validity and trustworthiness of the findings (Yin, 2018).

In sum, the case study design offers the flexibility and depth necessary to uncover the intricacies of headteachers' experiences in implementing inclusive education and is well-suited to answering the research questions of this study.

3.4 Site and Sample Characteristics

The study was conducted in the Nkwanta North District, one of the nine districts in the Oti Region of Ghana. This district emerged as a separate administrative entity on February 29, 2008, through Legislative Instrument (L.I.) 1846, having been carved out from the original Nkwanta District that was established on March 10, 1989 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The remaining portion was subsequently designated as Nkwanta South District, which later attained municipal status on November 14, 2017, with implementation commencing on March 15, 2018, under Legislative Instrument (L.I.) 2283. Kpassa served as the principal town and administrative centre of Nkwanta North District, which was situated in the northern section of the Oti Region (Nkwanta North District Assembly, 2020).

The district was predominantly rural with agriculture being the main economic activity, characterized by diverse ethnic groups including Konkomba, Adele, Ntrubu, and Challa, with corresponding linguistic diversity (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The educational landscape of the district consisted of both public and private basic schools, with varying levels of infrastructure, resources, and teacher qualifications. At the time of the study, the district had 24 basic schools, including 45 primary schools, 11 junior high schools, 65 kindergartens and 80 headteachers (Ghana Education Service,

Nkwanta North District, 2023. The five basic schools that were purposefully selected for this study were Kpassa D/A Basic School B3, Kabonwuli D/A Basic School, Kpassa D/A Basic School A1, Bisignamdo D/A Basic School and Kpassa D/A Basic School B4. The five selected schools are public schools. Kpassa D/A Basic School B3 is a public school located in western part of Kpassa. The school provides kindergarten, primary and junior high school education to learners from diverse backgrounds. The school has permanent classroom buildings with concrete walls and zinc roofing. The school has access to electricity but no ICT facilities, no library, no functional water supply source, and no disability-friendly infrastructure for learners with special needs. The headteacher has over 6 years of experience in school administration. The school has 14 teachers with a mix of trained professionals and National Service Personnel. Few teachers have basic training in inclusive education but specialized knowledge is limited. The student population was approximately 620 learners with some students with special learning needs but limited formal support services. The school is mixed with learners aged between 6 and 18 years from different socio-economic backgrounds. Kabonwuli D/A Basic School is a public school located in north-western part of Kpassa. The school provides kindergarten, primary and junior high school education to learners from diverse backgrounds within Kabonwuli township and nearby villages. The school has permanent classroom buildings with concrete walls and zinc roofing but some structures need renovation. The school has access to electricity but no ICT facilities, no library, no functional water supply source, no friendly playground for physical activities and no disability-friendly infrastructure for learners with special needs. The headteacher has over 8 years of experience in school administration. The school has eleven teachers with a mix of trained professionals, National Service Personnel and volunteer teachers. Few teachers have basic training in inclusive education but

specialized knowledge is limited. The student population was approximately 200 learners with some students with special learning needs but limited formal support services. The learners aged between 6 and 18 years from different socio-economic backgrounds. The school is mixed with learners aged between 6 and 18 years from different socio-economic backgrounds. Kpassa D/A Basic School A1 is a public school located in central part of Kpassa. The school provides kindergarten, primary and junior high school education to learners from diverse backgrounds. The school has permanent classroom buildings with concrete walls and zinc roofing. The school has access to electricity and ICT facilities, no library, no functional water supply source, and no disability-friendly infrastructure for learners with special needs. The headteacher has over 12 years of experience in school administration. The school has 18 teachers with a mix of trained professionals and National Service Personnel. Few teachers have basic training in inclusive education but specialized knowledge is limited. The student population was approximately 850 learners with some students with special learning needs but limited formal support services. The school is mixed with learners aged between 6 and 18 years from different socio-economic backgrounds. Bisignando D/A Basic School is a public school located in eastern part of Kpassa. The school provides kindergarten, primary and junior high school education to learners from diverse backgrounds. The school has permanent classroom buildings with concrete walls and zinc roofing. The school has access to electricity with functional water supply source, no ICT facilities, no library, and no disability-friendly infrastructure for learners with special needs. The headteacher has over 10 years of experience in school administration. The school has 16 teachers with a mix of trained professionals and National Service Personnel. Few teachers have basic training in inclusive education but specialized knowledge is limited. The student population was approximately 550

learners with some students with special learning needs but limited formal support services. The school is mixed with learners aged between 6 and 18 years from different socio-economic backgrounds. Kpassa D/A Basic School B4 is a public school located in western part of Kpassa. The school provides kindergarten, primary and junior high school education to learners from diverse backgrounds. The school has permanent classroom buildings with concrete walls and zinc roofing. The school has access to electricity but no ICT facilities, no library, no functional water supply source, and no disability-friendly infrastructure for learners with special needs. The headteacher has over 7 years of experience in school administration. The school has 17 teachers with a mix of trained professionals and National Service Personnel. Few teachers have basic training in inclusive education but specialized knowledge is limited. The student population was approximately 730 learners with some students with special learning needs but limited formal support services. The school is a mixed with learners aged between 6 and 18 years from different socio-economic backgrounds. Many schools faced challenges including inadequate facilities, high pupil-teacher ratios, and limited specialized resources for inclusive education (Ministry of Education, Ghana, 2018). This setting was particularly relevant for the study because it represented typical conditions in rural Ghanaian districts where the implementation of inclusive education policies often faced significant contextual challenges, including resource constraints, cultural attitudes toward disability, and limited specialized support services (Opoku et al., 2021). These characteristics made the district an appropriate context for examining how headteachers navigated their roles in implementing inclusive education amidst local realities and constraints.

3.5. Population of the Study

The study population comprised all basic school headteachers, teachers and students in Nkwanta North District of Ghana's Oti Region. At the time of the study, the district had 80 headteachers, 953 teachers and 22,752 learners. The population was relevant to the research as headteachers were directly responsible for translating national inclusive education policies into practice within their school contexts, making decisions about resource allocation, teacher professional development, curriculum adaptation, and community engagement to support inclusive education (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Their experiences, challenges, and strategies provided valuable insights into the practical realities of implementing inclusive education policies in a rural Ghanaian district characterized by resource constraints and diverse cultural attitudes toward disability and education (Opoku et al., 2021). Teachers are directly responsible for the classroom-level implementation practices and their attitudes, knowledge, and instructional strategies significantly influence the success of inclusion (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Students, on the other hand are the primary beneficiaries of inclusive education policies and provide insight into how such policies affect peer interactions, participation and learning outcomes (Slee, 2011). Involving all three groups ensures a holistic understanding of the policy's impact and challenges (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006).

3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study had a sample size of 15 participants, 5 basic school headteachers, 5 teachers and 5 students from the Nkwanta North District. The 5 basic school headteachers were selected purposefully from five different schools to enable the researcher capture diverse leadership practices and contextual realities across schools within the same district while maintaining a manageable and analytically rigorous sample (Patton,

2015). The 5 teachers were selected purposefully from five different basic schools for the focus group discussions and this was considered methodologically appropriate for this qualitative study. Qualitative research scholars recommend small focus groups to encourage meaningful interaction, allow participants to contribute equally, and facilitate in-depth exploration of shared experiences (Krueger & Casey, 2015). A group discussions size of five participants is particularly suitable when the study seeks detailed professional perspectives, as it minimizes domination by few individuals and promote balanced discussion (Morgan, 2019). From the practical standpoint, selecting five teachers ensured manageable group dynamics and allowed sufficient time for each participant to share experiences related to headteachers' leadership and inclusive education practices. This group size also supported ethical considerations by creating a comfortable and non-threatening environment that encouraged openness and professional trust among participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The five students were also deliberately selected from different schools for the focus group discussions. A group of five is considered optimal for studies involving young participants, as it creates a comfortable and manageable environment that support open interaction and rich data generation (Morgan, 2019). Additionally, focus group discussions with fewer participants are particularly appropriate when working with students, as smaller groups reduce anxiety, enhance concentration, and allow the moderator to provide adequate attention and guidance to each participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is especially important in inclusive education research, where learners may have diverse abilities, communication styles, or confidence levels. This sample size was informed by the concept of data saturation as described by Guest et al. (2006). The determination of this sample size also aligned with Creswell and Poth's (2018) recommendation of 5-25 participants for case studies, depending on the scope and nature of the research. While

larger samples might have provided additional perspectives, the selected sample size struck an appropriate balance between breadth and depth, enabling the collection of rich and detailed data from each participant while capturing sufficient diversity of experiences to address the research questions comprehensively (Robinson, 2014). During data collection, I monitored for saturation, and after the recurring themes became evident with minimal new insights emerging, confirmed the adequacy of the sample size (Saunders et al., 2018).

The study employed purposive sampling as the primary technique for selecting participants, supplemented by maximum variation sampling to ensure diversity of perspectives. Purposive sampling, advocated by scholars such as Patton (2015) and Creswell and Poth (2018), involved deliberately selecting information-rich cases that could provide in-depth understanding of the experiences of headteachers in implementing inclusive education policies. This technique was particularly appropriate for the case study approach as it allowed for the selection of participants who had direct experience with the phenomenon being studied (van Manen, 2016).

Within the purposive framework, maximum variation sampling was applied to ensure heterogeneity in terms of school characteristics (urban/rural location, size, resources), headteacher, teacher and student demographics (gender, years of experience, educational qualifications), and experience with inclusive education implementation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This approach enhanced the transferability of findings by capturing both common patterns and unique perspectives across diverse contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This sampling technique ensured that the selected participants could provide rich, varied perspectives on the research topic while maintaining the focus on those with

direct experience in implementing inclusive education policies in Nkwanta North District.

3.7. Data Sources

The study utilized primary data sources to comprehensively address the research questions. Primary data was obtained directly from basic school headteachers, teachers and students through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions conducted at their respective schools (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These interviews and focus group discussions elicited firsthand accounts of participants experiences, challenges, and strategies in implementing inclusive education policies. Additionally, direct observation of school environments was conducted to assess physical accessibility features, classroom arrangements, and available resources for inclusive education, providing contextual understanding of headteachers' narratives (Patton, 2015).

3.8 Methods for Data Collection

Data collection was carried out through interviews and focus group discussions. The goal was to gain useful insight through appropriate information. The interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in a manner that ensured participants felt comfortable and relaxed, increasing the likelihood of honest and open responses (Ribbins, 2007). Before the data was collected, participants were provided with a copy of the interview guide, allowing them to prepare their thoughts and feelings on the topic. Additionally, the interviews and focus group discussions were conducted at a time and place convenient for the participants, and the researcher spent time getting to know the participants before the interview began (Hinds, 2000). These procedures aimed to create

an environment that encouraged participants to feel more at ease and open, ultimately resulting in more insightful and detailed responses.

3.9 Instrumentation

The primary data gathering instruments employed in this study were semi-structured interview guide for the interviews and interview schedule for the focus group discussions which were carefully designed to elicit rich, detailed responses from headteachers regarding their experiences in implementing inclusive education policies. The instruments were developed based on the research questions and conceptual framework, drawing from relevant literature on inclusive education leadership in basic schools (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The instruments contained open-ended questions organized into thematic sections addressing headteachers' understanding of inclusive education, their specific roles and responsibilities, challenges encountered, strategies employed, support mechanisms utilized, and perceived impact of their leadership on inclusive practices (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

These questions were formulated to encourage detailed narratives rather than brief responses, allowing participants to share their experiences in depth. Before field application, the instruments underwent expert review by two specialists in inclusive education and one methodologist to ensure content validity, relevance, and clarity (Maxwell, 2013). The experts assessed the relevance, clarity and adequacy of items in addressing the research objectives. Their feedback led to the refinement of question wording, elimination of ambiguities, and alignment of items with the study focus, thereby enhancing the instruments' validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.10 Pilot testing

Pilot testing refers to "A preliminary administering of instruments carried out before the full research to test out data collection instruments and other procedures" (Gerrish & Lacey, 2006, p. 538).

The instruments were pilot tested with two headteachers, three teachers and three students from Nkwanta South, a neighbouring district with similar characteristics to Nkwanta North, leading to refinements in question phrasing, sequencing, and the addition of relevant probes (Patton, 2015). The participants were interviewed to determine the flaws with the semi-structured interview guide and interview schedule and to make the necessary corrections if any. Also, my supervisor looked through and made necessary revisions and corrections to ensure the validity of the instruments.

The pilot test gave a fore knowledge of the duration of interviews with key informants as well as other participants. Some of the questions were rearranged and this ensured logical arrangement of questions and deletion of repeated ones. Additionally, the pilot study aided the planning for the field work and made it less stressful and difficult.

3.11 Data Collection Procedures

The data gathering procedures followed a systematic and ethical approach to collect rich, comprehensive information from the participants. Initial contact was established with the Nkwanta North District Education Directorate, where I obtained formal permission to conduct the research with headteachers under their jurisdiction (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Following this institutional approval, I personally visited each selected school to meet potential participants, explain the research purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations, and formally invite them to participate in the study (Maxwell, 2013). I scheduled interview appointments at times and locations convenient to them,

typically in their offices after-school hours to minimize disruption to their administrative duties (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Prior to each interview, I reviewed the informed consent form with participants, emphasizing their rights to confidentiality, anonymity, and withdrawal from the study without consequences, and obtained their signed consent (Patton, 2015). The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, and were audio-recorded with participants' permission using two digital recording devices to prevent data loss due to technical failures (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During the interviews, I maintained field notes to capture non-verbal cues, environmental contexts, and immediate reflections that might aid in data interpretation (Miles et al., 2014). This comprehensive data gathering approach ensured the collection of rich, contextual information necessary for addressing the research questions.

3.12 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The study employed specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that participants possessed relevant experience and knowledge regarding the implementation of inclusive education policies. Inclusion criteria specified that participants must have been serving as headteachers in public basic schools within the administrative boundaries of Nkwanta North District at the time of data collection (Patton, 2015). Additionally, participants were required to have a minimum of two years of experience as headteachers to ensure they had sufficient exposure to and involvement with inclusive education policy implementation in their schools (Maxwell, 2013). The study also required participants to have at least one student with identified special educational needs enrolled in their school, as this ensured that headteachers had practical experience in addressing inclusive education challenges (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Teachers selected had to be teaching in public basic schools within the administrative boundaries

of Nkwanta North District at the time of data collection and have some exposure or experience with inclusive education practice or learners with special needs, which is important for gathering informed perspectives (Forlin, 2010). Teachers selected were required to have a minimum of two years teaching experience in their respective schools. This ensured that participants had adequate exposure to school leadership practices, policy directives, and inclusive teaching strategies over time, enabling them to provide reflective and informed perspectives (Michael Patton, 2015). Students included were required to be currently enrolled in the selected schools. This criterion ensured that participants had direct and recent experiences of the school environment and could meaningfully reflect on teaching practices, learning conditions, and inclusion-related experiences within their schools. Including participants who were embedded in the research context enhances the authenticity and credibility of qualitative data (Yvonna Lincoln & Egon Guba, 1985). Students were included if they were in upper primary or junior high levels, as learners in these levels are more cognitively matured and are better capable of articulating their educational experiences, opinions and social interactions within inclusive settings during group discussions (Mitchell, 2014). Students included were required to demonstrate willingness to participate and provide assent, with parental or guardian consent obtained prior to participation. This criterion ensured adherence to ethical standards, particularly when conducting research involving minors (Alan Bryman, 2016).

In contrast, exclusion criteria eliminated assistant headteachers and acting headteachers who had served in that capacity for less than six months, as they might have had limited experience with policy implementation responsibilities (Miles et al., 2014). Headteachers who were on extended leave, including study leave, maternity/paternity leave, or sick leave at the time of data collection were also excluded, as their recent

absence might have affected their awareness of current inclusive education practices in their schools (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Teachers who were newly posted to the selected schools for less than two years of teaching experience in the school were excluded. Such teachers may not have had sufficient exposure to school's leadership practices, inclusive education strategies and policy implementation processes to provide informed and reflective contributions. Excluding participants with limited contextual experience enhances the dependability and depth of qualitative data (Michael Patton, 2015). Teachers who were unavailable during the scheduled focus group discussions due to workload, leave or any other professional commitments were excluded as they may lack sufficient engagement with inclusive practices and inconsistent attendance could compromise data quality (Richard Krueger & Casey, 2012). Teachers who were unwilling to participate voluntarily or unable to provide informed consent were excluded. Ethical research practice requires voluntary and excluding unwilling participants prevent coerced responses and enhances openness and authenticity during discussions (Alan Bryman, 2016). Likewise, students below primary four were excluded, as their cognitive and communicative abilities may not support meaningful participation in the study (Punch, 2002). Learners who were unable to obtain parental or guardian consent or provide personal assent were excluded. Ethical research practice requires the protection of minors through informed consent procedures and excluding learners without proper consent ensured compliance with ethical standards and safeguarded participant's rights (Alan Bryman, 2016). These carefully defined criteria ensured that the study gathered data from participants who could provide rich, relevant insights into the research questions, enhancing the quality and credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

3.13 Reflexivity

Throughout the research process, I engaged in continuous reflexive practice to acknowledge and address how my positionality, background, and preconceptions influenced the study design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. As a headteacher with experience in inclusive education settings, I recognized that my professional background shaped my interest in this topic and potentially influenced my interpretation of headteachers' experiences (Finlay, 2002). To manage this influence, I maintained a reflexive journal where I documented my personal reactions, assumptions, and potential biases before, during, and after each interview and throughout the analysis process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This journal served as both a self-awareness tool and an audit trail, enhancing the transparency and trustworthiness of the research (Ortlipp, 2008).

I also engaged in bracketing, a phenomenological technique described by Moustakas (1994), where I consciously set aside my preconceptions about headteachers' roles in inclusive education to approach each interview with openness to the participant's unique perspective. Additionally, I employed peer debriefing sessions with colleagues who had expertise in qualitative research but were not directly involved in the study, which helped me identify instances where my interpretations might have been unduly influenced by my personal perspectives (Creswell & Miller, 2000). During interviews, I practiced active listening and used member checks, restating and summarizing participants' responses to ensure I accurately captured their intended meanings rather than imposing my interpretation (Maxwell, 2013). I also acknowledged my status as both an insider (as an educator familiar with the Ghanaian educational system and a headteacher in Nkwanta North District) and an outsider (as a researcher), recognizing how this dual positionality affected my rapport with participants and access to

information (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). This continuous reflexive practice enhanced the authenticity of the research by making explicit how my subjectivity shaped the research process while implementing strategies to minimize inappropriate interference of personal biases.

3.14 Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis of data followed the six-phase thematic analysis approach espoused by Braun and Clarke (2006), which provided a systematic yet flexible framework for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within the qualitative data. It was appropriate for this study because it enabled an in-depth understanding of headteachers' experiences regarding the implementation of the inclusive education policy within their real-life school context. In the first phase, I familiarized myself with the data by personally transcribing all audio recordings verbatim, which took approximately four weeks to complete (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I repeatedly read the transcripts while listening to the original recordings to ensure accuracy and to immerse myself in the participants' narratives, noting initial impressions, recurring ideas, potential codes in the margins and significant statements related to leadership practices and inclusive education implementation (Nowell et al., 2017). During the second phase, I generated initial codes by systematically working through the entire dataset, identifying meaningful segments of text, such as words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs assigned descriptive labels relevant to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Examples of initial codes included, limited training on inclusive education, lack of teaching and learning materials, headteachers support for teachers, collaboration with parents and negative teacher attitudes.

I used both inductive coding, deriving codes directly from participants' language, and deductive coding, applying concepts from the literature on inclusive education

leadership (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In the third phase, I searched for potential themes by collating similar codes into broader patterns of meaning, creating visual mind maps to explore relationships between codes and emerging themes. These groupings formed sub-themes that captured broader patterns across participants' accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Codes such as no workshops, inadequate skills, and lack of specialised training were grouped under the sub-theme limited professional preparation. Codes like lack of ramps, overcrowded classrooms, and absence of teaching aids formed the sub-theme inadequate school resources. The fourth phase involved reviewing the themes, where I refined, split, combined, and discarded initial themes to ensure internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity, checking them against the coded extracts and the entire dataset (Nowell et al., 2017). In phase five, I defined and named the themes, identifying the essence of each theme and determining how it contributed to understanding headteachers' roles in implementing inclusive education (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I created a detailed analysis of each theme, considering its relation to the research questions and the overall narrative emerging from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The following themes emerged from the dataset, mixed perceptions toward inclusion, inadequate teacher preparation, resource constraints in inclusion, student-centred outcomes, collaborative teaching practices for inclusivity, identification and grouping of students with special needs, physical learning environment adaptations, instructional differentiation practice, and administrative support mechanisms, cultural misconceptions, infrastructure and resource constraints, professional development gaps, social integration challenges, stakeholder engagement barriers, understanding inclusive education policies and legal frameworks, pedagogical approaches and differentiated instruction, monitoring and evaluation, and inclusive assessment. The final phase involved producing the report, where I selected compelling

extract examples, related the analysis back to the research questions and literature, and crafted a coherent narrative and supported with verbatim quotations from participants that captured the complexity of headteachers' experiences illustrating key findings and enhanced credibility (Nowell et al., 2017). Throughout this process, I utilized NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis software to organize codes, themes, and supporting excerpts, enhancing the systematic nature of the analysis while maintaining close connection to the original data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

3.15 Trustworthiness Criteria

The study established rigour and trustworthiness following Guba and Lincoln's (1985) four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility, analogous to internal validity, was ensured through prolonged engagement with participants, which involved spending sufficient time in the field to build rapport and gain an in-depth understanding of headteachers' experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Persistent observation allowed for identification of salient issues related to inclusive education implementation, distinguishing between typical and atypical practices (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Triangulation of data sources, methods, and theories further enhanced credibility by providing corroborating evidence from different perspectives (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Transferability, parallel to external validity, was addressed through thick, rich description of the research context, participant characteristics, and findings, enabling readers to evaluate the applicability of the results to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The maximum variation sampling strategy further supported transferability by capturing diverse perspectives across different school contexts within the district (Patton, 2015).

Dependability, corresponding to reliability, was established through a detailed audit trail documenting the research process, including field notes, methodological decisions, data analysis procedures, and reflexive comments (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). This documentation allowed for external review of the research process to confirm its logical, traceable, and clearly documented nature (Schwandt, 2001).

Confirmability, similar to objectivity, was addressed through reflexivity, where the researcher acknowledged personal biases and assumptions that might influence the study and implemented strategies to minimize their impact (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, the researcher sought negative cases that contradicted emerging patterns, incorporating these into the analysis to present a comprehensive account of headteachers' experiences (Patton, 2015). The triangulation of data sources also contributed to confirmability by reducing the effect of investigator bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Together, these strategies ensured that the findings were grounded in participants' experiences rather than researcher predispositions, enhancing the overall trustworthiness and scientific quality of the study.

3.16 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to stringent ethical principles throughout its planning and execution to protect participants' rights, dignity, and well-being. Prior to data collection, introductory letter was obtained from the department. Permission was also secured from the Nkwanta North District Education Directorate to conduct research within their jurisdiction (Maxwell, 2013). Informed consent was obtained from all participants after providing them with comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, data management procedures, and their rights as research participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Ethical considerations were strictly observed involving students in the study. Informed consent was obtained from school authorities and parents or guardians, while assent was obtained from the students themselves (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The voluntary nature of participation was emphasized, with participants assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences (Patton, 2015). Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms for both participants and their schools in all research documents and publications, with identifying information removed or altered in reported findings (Miles et al., 2014). Data security measures included storing digital recordings and transcripts on password-protected devices and keeping physical documents in locked cabinets accessible only to the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The researcher was particularly attentive to power dynamics during interviews, creating a non-judgmental atmosphere where participants felt comfortable sharing challenges and shortcomings in implementing inclusive education without fear of evaluation or repercussion (Cohen et al., 2018). These comprehensive ethical considerations ensured that the research was conducted with respect for participants' dignity, privacy, and autonomy.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings from the research conducted on headteachers and the implementation of inclusive education policy in five basic schools within the Nkwanta North District. The study sought to explore the experiences of headteachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education policy in five basic schools in Nkwanta North District with emphasis on the thesis statement that: “Successful implementation of inclusive educational policy in Nkwanta North District requires effective leadership, institutional support and resources”. Data was collected to approve or disprove the above thesis statement for the study. The data was collected through interviews with headteachers from the selected schools and focus group discussions with teachers and students from the selected schools. The focus group discussion one was for the selected teachers while focus discussion two was for the students. The findings are organised according to the four main research objectives that guided this study:

1. To explore the perception of basic school headteachers on inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District.
2. To investigate approaches adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity in basic schools in Nkwanta North District.
3. To find out the challenges faced by basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District.
4. To explore the training needs of basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District.

Through systematic analysis of the collected data, this chapter aims to provide comprehensive insights into how headteachers navigate their roles in creating inclusive learning environments within their schools.

The data was analysed under thematic headings in line with the thematic analysis procedure adopted under the research methodology. In most cases, direct quotations have been provided to put much emphasis where applicable.

4.1 Headteachers' Perceptions about Inclusive Education Policy

The data presented under this objective sought to explore the perception of basic school headteachers on inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District. This sought to provide answers to the research question “What are the perceptions of basic school headteachers on inclusive education policy? To answer this research question, the data collected during the interview was used. Insight gleaned from the dataset revealed that inclusive education is a critical component of Ghana’s educational framework, aimed at ensuring that all children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, have access to quality education in a supportive and accommodating environment. The implementation of inclusive education policies in Ghana reflects a commitment to global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). However, the study revealed that the success of these policies largely depends on the perceptions and leadership of headteachers, who play a pivotal role in fostering inclusive school cultures, implementing policies, and addressing challenges. According to this study, headteachers views not only influence the acceptance and integration of students with disabilities but also determine the extent to which inclusive practices are effectively implemented in schools. Understanding these perceptions provide valuable insights into

the successes and barriers of inclusive education in Ghana and highlights areas for improvement to achieve equitable and inclusive learning for all. Under this broader objective, the following themes were generated from the dataset, mixed attitudes toward inclusion, inadequate teacher preparation, resource constraints in inclusion, student-centred outcomes, and need for collaborative support.

4.1.1 Mixed Perceptions Toward Inclusion

The interview data revealed that headteachers in Ghana often hold diverse views about inclusive education, reflecting both positive recognition of its benefits and concerns about its practical challenges. While many headteachers acknowledged the potential of inclusive education to promote equity, reduce stigmatisation, and enhance social cohesion, others expressed reservations about its implementation due to perceived disruptions to learning. These mixed perceptions according to the study were influenced by cultural beliefs, societal norms, and the readiness of schools to accommodate students with disabilities. The perspectives on inclusiveness in schools highlighted the duality of its impact, with some participants emphasising its role in reducing stigma and fostering social integration among students. As interview participant one (PH1) noted: “Inclusiveness in schools, I think, is a good thing. And you know, when students who are having disability are separated like that... They stigmatize against them” (Interview data, PH1).

Building on this viewpoint, another participant underscored the broader societal benefits of inclusion, while also acknowledging concerns from teachers and parents who perceive it as potentially detrimental to the academic progress of the entire class. This tension between idealism and practicality reflects the complex dynamics surrounding inclusive education. Interview Participant (PH2) added: “Inclusion is a

good idea because it helped all children learn to work together, but honestly, some teachers and parents think it's unfair to put children with special needs in the same class as others. They believed it slows down the progress of the entire class" (Interview data, PH2).

Expanding on these concerns, participant four (PH4) emphasised the importance of creating an inclusive environment that fosters belonging for all students. However, he also expressed apprehension about the additional attention required by students with disabilities, which could inadvertently affect the learning experience of others in the classroom:

...and I support the idea of giving every child a chance to learn together, regardless of their abilities. It helped break down barriers and fosters a sense of belonging among students. However, I worry about the impact on academic performance, especially when some children with disabilities require more attention, which can take time away from the rest of the class (Interview data, PH4).

The qualitative data analysis of the data highlights the mixed perceptions of headteachers in Ghana toward inclusive education, reflecting both optimism about its societal benefits and concerns regarding its practical challenges. This duality reflects broader tensions in education systems worldwide, where the ideal of inclusivity often confronts practical barriers such as resource limitations and entrenched cultural norms. The study indicates that while headteachers recognise inclusive education as a tool to reduce stigmatisation and promote equity, they also express apprehension about its potential to disrupt classroom learning. The positive recognition of inclusive education as a tool for promoting equity, reducing stigmatisation, and fostering social cohesion aligns with global educational goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Headteachers' acknowledgment of these benefits highlights a progressive shift in perceptions toward equity in education. However, the concerns about potential disruptions to learning, particularly for students without disabilities, underscore practical challenges that are also reflected in other studies. These findings resonate with Kuyini et al. (2018), which revealed that Ghanaian teachers often hold moderate levels of self-efficacy and less positive perceptions toward inclusive education, citing concerns about implementation challenges. Concerns about the impact of inclusion on classroom dynamics and academic progress, as expressed by some headteachers, are consistent with findings by Butakor et al. (2018), who observed that experienced teachers often exhibit fewer positive perceptions toward inclusion, potentially due to their familiarity with the demands of diverse classrooms. These apprehensions highlight the need for targeted professional development programmes that equip teachers with strategies to manage inclusive classrooms effectively.

Interestingly, the data also reveals a broader societal benefit of inclusion, as noted by one participant, who emphasised its role in breaking down barriers and fostering belonging. This aligns with findings by Asamoah et al. (2018), who reported that teachers and visually impaired students in Ghana viewed inclusion as a pathway to equal opportunities, despite logistical and resource-related challenges.

4.1.2 Student-Centered Outcomes

The interview data revealed that Student-centered outcomes are a critical focus of inclusive education policies, reflecting headteachers' perceptions of the ultimate goal of such initiatives. Inclusive education emphasises the holistic development of all learners, particularly those with disabilities, by fostering academic achievement, social integration, and emotional well-being. Headteachers in this study view these outcomes

as benchmarks for the success of inclusive policies, highlighting the need for tailored teaching strategies, supportive environments, and collaborative approaches that address individual student needs. The study uncovered that these outcomes not only measure the effectiveness of inclusive practices but also underscore the broader societal benefits of empowering all students to reach their potential. By prioritising student-centred outcomes, headteachers align their efforts with the core principles of equity and inclusion, ensuring that education systems cater for the diverse needs of every learner. Highlighting the shift toward inclusive access, Participant three (PH3) noted:

Education is now free and open to all manner of children, and we have various calibre of children... we have to open the chance, or give them the opportunity also to have their fair share in education, irrespective of their physical or mental challenges. We embrace them, infuse them into the normal terms, so that we give them a helping hand (Interview data, PH3).

Pointing to the social dynamics of integration, participant four (PH4) observed: “When students who are having disability are separated... Most of the students who are okay and don’t have any disability, stigmatize against them... but they don’t when actually, they are part of them. They are like colleagues, that stigma reduces” (Interview data, PH4).

Demonstrating practical implementation, participant two (PH2) also shared:

I have one child who is disabled. He is in the wheelchair, so I make sure whenever he’s coming to school, the friends will go and help him to come to the classroom... At times I moved around the classes... I have to bring him to the front so that he can see clearly from where he sits. (Interview data, PH2).

The findings underscore a transformative emphasis on multidimensional development within inclusive education, as perceived by school leaders. Central to their approach is the recognition that academic progress, interpersonal acceptance, and psychological resilience collectively define educational success for students with disabilities. The

study revealed that headteachers associate effective inclusion with adaptive pedagogical methods, intentionally designed learning spaces, and communal responsibility, which collectively dismantle barriers to participation. The testimonies reveal a deliberate shift from segregation to belonging, where structural accessibility such as peer-assisted mobility support and curricular visibility, like preferential seating, exemplify operational commitments to equity.

These insights align with research advocating for systemic inclusion models that prioritise both academic and psychosocial outcomes. Ainscow (2020) emphasise that inclusive practices thrive in environments where collaboration among stakeholders and differentiated instruction coexist, mirroring the headteachers' emphasis on tailored strategies and community engagement. Nilholm (2021) corroborates the societal benefits of inclusion, noting that early exposure to diversity in schools cultivates long-term attitudinal shifts against stigmatisation, as reflected in participants' observations on reduced prejudice. However, contrasts emerge with critiques highlighting implementation gaps. For instance, while the headteachers' proactive measures such as peer support networks address resource constraints, scholars like Slee (2018) caution that systemic underfunding and inadequate teacher training often undermine inclusion efforts, suggesting disparities between policy ideals and on-ground realities.

4.1.3 Inadequate Teacher Preparation

Throughout the interviews, headteachers consistently highlighted the challenges they face due to teachers' limited preparedness to handle diverse learning needs in inclusive classrooms. The interview data revealed that while headteachers support the inclusive education policy in principle, they recognise that many teachers lack the necessary skills, training, and confidence to effectively teach students with various disabilities.

This perception according to the study, stems from their observations of teachers struggling to adapt teaching methods, modify curricula, and manage inclusive classrooms effectively. The headteachers' perception underscores a critical gap between policy aspirations and practical implementation, where insufficient teacher preparation emerges as a significant barrier to achieving meaningful inclusive education.

In an interview participant five (PH5) lamented:

“We were not trained to handle children with disabilities. Sometimes, I feel helpless because I don't know the right teaching strategies for them, and it affects their learning” (Interview data, PH5).

Interview participant two (PH2) added:

“There's a girl now that almost all the teachers are complaining of because she's a special child, she is in class one... looking at her nature, teachers are not comfortable with her” (Interview data, PH2).

Affirming the view of participant two (PH2) on the challenges headteachers faced due to teachers limited preparedness to handle learners with diverse needs, interview participant four (PH4) intimated: “...we are using our own method and then the strategies to handle it” (Interview data, PH4).

The data highlights a significant disconnect between the theoretical framework of inclusive education and its practical application, particularly in the area of teacher preparedness. The study underscores a pervasive inadequacy in equipping educators with the competencies required to address the diverse needs of students in inclusive classrooms. This lack of preparation manifests in teachers' inability to adapt instructional strategies, tailor curriculum content, and manage the complexities of heterogeneous learning environments. Such deficiencies not only impede the effective delivery of education but also contribute to a sense of professional inadequacy among teachers, as they struggle to meet the demands of inclusive practices. Relatedly, the discomfort and reluctance expressed by educators when working with students who

require specialised attention reveal underlying systemic issues, such as insufficient professional development opportunities and a lack of institutional support.

The findings of this study on inadequate teacher preparation for inclusive education are strongly supported by existing research. Studies show that teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive classrooms is significantly influenced by their experience, training, and understanding of policies (Chao et al., 2016). Consistence with this, Sharma et al. (2015) found that pre-service teachers in the Solomon Islands lacked the necessary skills to implement inclusive education effectively, emphasizing the need for curriculum revisions to better equip educators. While experience alone does not necessarily improve teacher self-efficacy, research from Korea suggests that targeted training and positive beliefs about inclusive education can enhance teachers' confidence and effectiveness (You et al., 2019). The research indicates that the gap between inclusive education policy and classroom reality stems from insufficient teacher preparation, but well-structured training and continuous professional development can help bridge this divide.

4.1.4 Resource Constraints in Inclusion

The interview data established that resource constraints significantly influence headteachers' perceptions of inclusive education policies, often shaping their ability to implement these initiatives effectively. Inclusive education aims to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities (UNESCO, 2020). However, inadequate funding, insufficient teaching aids, lack of specialised training for educators, and poorly adapted physical infrastructure often hinder the realisation of these goals. These constraints challenge schools in accommodating diverse learners, particularly those with disabilities, and create

disparities in access to quality education. Headteachers, as key implementers of inclusive policies, frequently grapple with balancing these limitations while striving to foster an inclusive school culture. Interview participant one (PH1) disclosed: “Physical environment, I will say my physical environment is not conducive for pupils, because there are no ramps. They are all steps, even the first block... Even there is a gutter, you know, so it’s not conducive” (Interview data, PH1).

Participant three (PH3) also opined:

“We have, especially the boy who is using a wheelchair. We have where there are pebbles, that place they help him out. But when he is entering the campus... the campus is full of pebbles, so he has to pass through pebbles before entering the campus” (Interview data, PH3).

The data highlights significant systemic challenges in creating inclusive educational environments, primarily stemming from structural and logistical inadequacies. The study revealed that headteachers frequently encounter obstacles related to financial limitations and insufficient institutional support, which impede their capacity to accommodate diverse learners effectively. Physical accessibility emerged as a critical issue, with school infrastructure such as stepped entrances, uneven pathways, and absent ramps directly obstructing the mobility and participation of students with physical disabilities. These environmental barriers not only compromise safety but also reinforce inequities, as learners requiring assistive devices face daily navigational hardships. Headteachers’ experiences underscore the tension between aspirational inclusive mandates and the reality of under-resourced settings, emphasising the need for targeted interventions to address these foundational gaps.

Existing research corroborates these findings, particularly in contexts with limited institutional investment. UNESCO (2020) notes that inadequate funding and infrastructural neglect in low- and middle-income countries persistently undermine

inclusive education, aligning with the described challenges uncovered in this study. Mpuang et al. (2015) in South African schools similarly identified inaccessible campuses as a major barrier, mirroring the struggles of students navigating pebbled pathways or staircases. Conversely, studies from well-resourced systems, such as Finland's inclusive model, demonstrate how consistent funding, teacher training, and accessible design can enhance equity (Björnsdóttir et al., 2017), contrasting sharply with the depicted scenarios. However, some scholars argue that resource availability alone does not guarantee inclusion; cultural attitudes and pedagogical flexibility remain pivotal (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). This contrasts with the data, which focuses predominantly on material deficits rather than sociocultural factors.

4.1.5 Need for collaborative support

The data gathered from the interview expressed that, the need for collaborative support is a central theme in headteachers' perceptions of inclusive education policies, highlighting the importance of shared responsibility among stakeholders to achieve equitable educational outcomes. This interview data established that inclusive education requires the combined efforts of teachers, parents, students, and the broader community to create an environment that supports diverse learners, particularly those with disabilities. Headteachers often emphasise the role of collaboration in addressing challenges such as stigma, resource limitations, and teacher preparedness. This collaborative approach not only enhances the implementation of inclusive education policies but also strengthens the culture of acceptance and support within educational institutions, ensuring that all students are empowered to succeed. In line with this, interview participant two (PH2) added:

We have various calibre of children, those that are somehow sick or defected, either, maybe hard of hearing, partially blind, partially deaf. Those who are mildly formed or somehow deformed, we have to open the chance,

or give them the opportunity to also have their fair share in education, irrespective of their physical or mental challenges. It's a matter of understanding them, making their challenges known to the teachers, and providing the little help we can give them so that they also compete with their friends (Interview data, PH2).

This is echoed by interview participant five (PH5), who stated: "Inclusiveness in schools is a good thing. When students with disabilities are integrated, the stigma reduces. They are treated as colleagues, and this fosters acceptance and reduces discrimination" (Interview data, PH5).

The emphasis on collaborative support is further reinforced by interview participant three (PH3) who recounted: "I have one child who is disabled. His friends help him come to the classroom, and I ensure he is seated in a way that accommodates his needs. This teamwork among teachers, peers, and myself ensures he feels included and supported" (Interview data, PH3).

The findings emphasise the significance of collective effort in fostering an inclusive learning environment, underscoring the necessity of shared responsibility among educators, families, and the community. The study revealed that effective implementation of inclusive education policies relies on coordinated support systems that address the unique challenges faced by students with disabilities, including social stigma, accessibility barriers, and the need for specialized resources. The data highlights that fostering strong partnerships among stakeholders not only enhances academic participation but also nurtures a culture of empathy and acceptance. By encouraging teamwork and mutual understanding, schools can create spaces where every student, regardless of their physical or cognitive differences, is empowered to thrive. The reflections from participants illustrate that collaboration helps bridge gaps

in educational access, ensuring that learners with diverse needs receive equitable opportunities to succeed.

Existing literature supports the notion that collaboration is integral to effective inclusive education. Forlin and Chambers (2011) indicate that when teachers, parents, and support staff work together, students with disabilities experience improved learning outcomes and social integration. Saloviita (2020) highlights that peer support and teacher cooperation reduce exclusion and foster a sense of belonging among students with disabilities. However, contrasting perspectives suggest that inadequate training and limited resources can hinder collaborative efforts. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) argue that without sufficient professional development, educators may struggle to effectively implement inclusive practices, leading to unintended marginalization. These findings suggest that while teamwork is essential, continuous investment in training and resources is necessary to fully realize the benefits of inclusive education.

4.2 Approaches Adopted by Basic School Headteachers to Foster Inclusivity in Basic Schools

The data presented under this objective seeks to investigate approaches adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity in basic schools in Nkwanta North District. This sought to provide answers to the research question “What approaches have been adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity?” To answer this research question, the data collected during the interviews and focus group discussions were used. By adopting these approaches, headteachers aim to create a school environment where every child feels valued, respected, and empowered to succeed. The insight gleaned from the dataset revealed that basic school headteachers employ various approaches to foster inclusivity within their educational institutions, recognizing the

critical importance of creating learning environments that accommodate all students regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or needs. These leaders typically implement comprehensive policies that encompass professional development for teachers, modification of physical infrastructure, and adaptation of teaching methodologies to support diverse learning styles. According to this study, their approaches often involve establishing collaborative partnerships with special education professionals, implementing differentiated instruction strategies, and creating support systems that facilitate the integration of students with varying needs into mainstream classrooms. Headteachers also focus on cultivating a school culture that celebrates diversity through awareness programmes, inclusive curriculum design, and regular engagement with parents and community stakeholders to ensure sustained support for inclusive practices. The following themes emerged from the dataset— collaborative teaching practices for inclusivity, identification and grouping of students with special needs, physical learning environment adaptations, instructional differentiation practice, and administrative support mechanisms.

4.2.1 Collaborative Teaching Practices for Inclusivity

Analysis of the interviews and focus group discussions revealed collaborative teaching practices as a foundational strategy employed by headteachers to foster inclusivity, efforts to pool teacher expertise and address diverse learner needs collectively. Within resource-constrained environments, headteachers encourage teamwork through structures like Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), where teachers collaboratively research, share strategies, and solve problems for inclusive pedagogy. In this study, teachers described collaborating to "treat special needs students in a special way" through shared lesson delivery, though they acknowledged limitations due to gaps in specialized training. This approach aligns with the broader objective of

inclusivity by leveraging peer support to adapt teaching methods, manage behavioural challenges, and ensure all students are "carried along" in classroom activities. However, the reliance on internal collaboration while fostering solidarity also highlights systemic gaps, as teachers expressed a need for external expertise to strengthen their collective capacity. In the focus group discussions, participant two (PT2) intimated: "We collaborate for the students, but in the course of delivery, out of the collaboration, we treat them [special needs students] in a special way" (Focus group discussion data, PT2).

Interview participant four (PH4) added:

"It's true that we try our best, but we don't have all the expertise needed to fully support every special need student. That's why at PLC meetings, we engage in research and discussions to find the best ways to improve our approaches" (Interview data, PH4).

These perspectives from headteachers and teachers highlight the collaborative efforts in supporting students with special needs while acknowledging existing limitations. Teachers further reinforce this viewpoint, emphasizing their commitment to individualized support within the broader learning environment and the role of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in enhancing their capacity to address these challenges effectively. The above point was corroborated by participant one (PT1) during the focus group discussions: "Yes, we collaborate for the benefit of the students, and while working together, we make sure to give special attention to those with special needs. It's about ensuring they receive the right support within the general learning environment". (Focus group discussion data, PT1).

The qualitative data analysis highlights the pivotal role of collaborative teaching practices in advancing inclusivity, particularly within resource-limited educational

contexts. Headteachers prioritize collective teacher engagement through structured forums such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), enabling educators to share pedagogical strategies, co-design lessons, and address classroom challenges tied to diverse learner needs. This team-based approach fosters adaptability, allowing teachers to tailor instruction for students requiring specialized support, such as modifying lesson delivery or behavioural management techniques. Indeed, while these internal collaborations cultivate peer-driven problem-solving and a shared commitment to equity, they also reveal critical systemic shortcomings. Educators openly acknowledge gaps in their capacity to fully address complex needs, underscoring a reliance on self-directed research within PLCs rather than formal training. This duality positions collaboration as both a practical adaptation to resource constraints and an implicit critique of institutional inadequacies, emphasizing the necessity for external expertise to complement grassroots efforts. The emphasis on collective action reflects a resilience-driven response to inclusivity barriers but simultaneously signals the urgency of systemic investment in teacher development and specialized support structures.

Several studies resonate with these findings. Vangrieken et al. (2017) underscores the efficacy of teacher collaboration in fostering inclusive environments, particularly when educators collectively reflect on practice and share responsibility for student outcomes. Friend et al. (2010) emphasizes co-teaching models as tools for addressing diverse needs, aligning with the described PLC-driven strategies. However, contrasting perspectives emerge from studies such as Florian (2014), which argue that inclusive education demands more than peer collaboration it requires targeted professional development in specialized pedagogical approaches, a gap explicitly noted by participants. Furthermore, UNESCO (2020) reports highlight how under-resourced

systems often rely on internal teacher networks as a stopgap measure, perpetuating inequities when external support is absent. These parallels reinforce the study's implications while collaboration is a vital adaptive mechanism, sustainable inclusivity hinges on systemic reforms that bridge grassroots initiatives with institutionalized training and resource allocation.

4.2.2 Identification and Grouping of Students with Special Needs

The focus group discussions and interview data uncovered that effective identification and grouping of students with special needs are critical to fostering inclusive and equitable educational environments. Schools employ varied strategies to recognize and support these students, often shaped by available resources and institutional priorities. A common starting point is teacher observation, which serves as a foundational method across contexts. Educators monitor academic performance, behavioural patterns, and social interactions to flag potential challenges. In this study settings, systematic screenings and periodic assessments complement these observations, enabling early detection of learning difficulties. However, access to professional evaluations, such as those by educational psychologists or speech therapists, varies. While some schools integrate specialists into their processes, others particularly in resource-constrained environments rely on community health workers or peer-support systems to bridge gaps. Interview participant four (PH4) disclosed:

In our school, we identify students with special needs through both teacher observations and periodic assessments. When a child shows signs of difficulty in learning, behaviour or social interaction, we engage parents and, if necessary, refer them to specialists for further evaluation. Once identified, we group them according to their specific needs...children with mild learning difficulties receive additional support within the mainstream classroom, while those with more severe challenges are assigned to resource teachers for targeted interventions (Interview data, PH4).

Participant five (PH5) added:

Our teachers are trained to conduct initial screenings, and we also engage specialists such as educational psychologists and speech therapists to conduct thorough assessments. Once identified, students are placed in learning support groups based on their specific needs. We practice flexible grouping, where students with similar learning challenges receive targeted instruction but still participate in the general classroom setting. This helps them feel included while receiving the necessary support (Interview data, PH5).

Relatedly, participant three (PT3) affirmed what the headmasters intimated during the focus group discussions:

Identifying students with special needs in our school is mainly done through classroom observation and teacher reports. We do not always have access to professional assessments, so we rely on teachers' experiences to notice students struggling with learning or social interaction. Once we identify such students, we create peer support groups where classmates assist them in their learning process. Additionally, we provide differentiated instruction to cater to their abilities. We also collaborate with community health workers to assess students who might need professional intervention (Focus group discussion data, PT3).

This alignment between headteachers' strategic approaches and teachers' firsthand experiences underscores the critical role of classroom-based identification and intervention in supporting students with special needs. While headteachers emphasize the institutional frameworks and resource allocation for these students, teachers provide practical insights into the day-to-day implementation of these strategies, highlighting both the strengths and challenges of existing support mechanisms. The study findings underscore the centrality of adaptive frameworks in identifying and supporting students with special needs, with approaches shaped by institutional capacity and resource accessibility. In this study, teacher observation emerges as a universal initial step, leveraging educators' proximity to detect academic, behavioural, or social challenges.

While some institutions enhance this through structured screenings or specialist evaluations ensuring precision in diagnosis others, particularly in resource-limited

contexts, depend on community networks or peer-led systems to compensate for gaps in professional access. Flexible grouping models, which balance individualized instruction with inclusive participation, reflect an emphasis on minimizing segregation while addressing diverse learning profiles.

Existing research aligns with these findings, emphasizing the role of teacher agency in early identification. Tomlinson (2014) highlight differentiated instruction as pivotal for inclusivity, resonating with the in-class support described. Conversely, critics like Florian (2014) caution against over-reliance on teacher judgment without standardized assessments, a challenge evident in settings lacking specialist input. The integration of community health workers mirrors global initiatives in low-resource regions, validating such adaptations, while literature on co-teaching (Friend & Cook, 2013) supports flexible grouping's efficacy.

4.2.3 Physical Learning Environment Adaptations

The data from the interview and focus group discussions established that creating an inclusive learning environment requires headteachers to implement physical adaptations that accommodate the diverse needs of learners. The study findings revealed that these adaptations often involve modifications to school infrastructure, such as ramps for students with mobility impairments, accessible toilets, and well-lit classrooms to support students with visual impairments. Relatedly, schools may introduce flexible seating arrangements, designated quiet spaces for learners with sensory sensitivities, and visual aids to enhance comprehension for students with learning disabilities. Ensuring that classrooms are spacious and free from physical barriers fosters better movement and interaction among students, promoting an inclusive atmosphere. The study also uncovered how headteachers also play a crucial

role in securing funding and resources to improve school facilities and collaborating with stakeholders, including government agencies and non-governmental organisations, to enhance accessibility. These adaptations not only create a conducive learning environment for all students but also reinforce the commitment to inclusive education at the basic school level. Interview participant two (PH2) opined:

One of the strategies we have implemented to support inclusivity in our school is by making physical adaptations to the learning environment. We have made several physical adaptations in the learning environment to support students with disabilities. We've rearranged the seating in the front row so that students with visual impairments can easily see the board and participate in lessons. This has significantly helped those with hearing or visual impairments (Interview data, PH2).

These ideas are confirmed by participant four (PS4) during the focus group discussion for students:

Our headteacher undertakes hazard removal initiatives, such as ensuring clear pathways and removing any obstacles that could hinder students with physical disabilities from moving around freely. He also ensures that all furniture is adjustable and can accommodate students who use wheelchairs, ensuring a comfortable and inclusive learning space (Focus group discussions data, PS4).

This commitment to inclusive education, as demonstrated by headteachers through physical adaptations and resource mobilization, is further reinforced by teachers who implement these strategies in their daily classroom practices. While headteachers focus on enhancing school infrastructure and securing support from external stakeholders, teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that these adaptations effectively meet students' needs. Their hands-on involvement bridges the gap between policy implementation and the experiences of students, ensuring that inclusive education is not just an institutional goal but a classroom reality. This is what participant five (PT5) said during the focus group discussions:

I have noticed how our school has made changes to ensure that everyone can learn comfortably, no matter their abilities. We have ramps that make it easier for students with mobility challenges to move around, and the classrooms are arranged in a way that allows us all to interact without obstacles (Focus group discussions data, PT5).

The findings emphasize the significance of modifying school infrastructure to support students with varying needs. By incorporating ramps, accessible restrooms, adjustable seating, and well-lit classrooms, institutions ensure that learning spaces cater to all individuals. Indeed, proactive role of headteachers in securing resources and collaborating with stakeholders highlights the systemic effort required to implement inclusivity. The practical initiatives shared by school leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to fostering an accommodating environment, addressing both mobility and sensory challenges. Removing obstacles and promoting ease of movement contribute to creating a space where learners can engage effectively, reinforcing the principle that physical accessibility is a cornerstone of inclusive education.

Empirical research aligns with these observations. Molbaek (2017) highlights the importance of inclusive teaching strategies that address both physical and pedagogical adaptations to improve student engagement. Relatedly, Lopatina et al. (2023) found that while faculty members in higher education support inclusion, gaps in their knowledge about accessibility hinder effective implementation. However, contrasting perspectives exist, such as research by Miesera et al. (2018), which suggests that teacher attitudes and self-efficacy significantly influence the success of inclusive initiatives, indicating that structural adaptations alone may not be sufficient. These studies collectively reinforce the necessity of both physical modifications and well-informed educators to achieve meaningful inclusivity.

4.2.4 Instructional Differentiation Practices

Instructional differentiation is a teaching approach that involves modifying content, process, and assessment methods to cater to the diverse learning needs of students (Strogilos et al., 2017). It is based on the premise that students have different learning styles, abilities, and interests, requiring teachers to employ varied instructional strategies to ensure effective learning for all. According to this study, differentiated instruction may include adapting lesson materials, using flexible grouping, incorporating technology, and providing individualized support. Research suggests that when teachers implement differentiation effectively, it enhances student engagement, motivation, and academic performance, particularly in diverse classrooms. However, successful implementation requires adequate teacher training, access to resources, and continuous assessment to address students' evolving needs. Basic school headteachers play a critical role in promoting inclusivity by implementing policies and strategies that ensure equitable access to quality education for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. The interview and focus group discussions data revealed that headteachers implement policies that prevent discrimination, create inclusive curricula, and adopt flexible teaching strategies to accommodate different learning abilities.

Interview participant one (PH1) revealed:

As a headteacher, I strongly believe in differentiated learning to ensure every child's needs are met. In my school, we implement various teaching strategies to cater to the diverse learning styles. Some students benefit more from visual aids, while others grasp concepts better through hands-on activities. I make it a point to offer individual attention to students who may be struggling, providing them with tailored support. This personalized approach has helped us improve student engagement and learning outcomes (Interview data, PH1).

Participant three (PH3) disclosed:

We focus a lot on remedial teaching to support students who need additional help. Our teachers are trained to identify learners who are falling behind and

then provide targeted interventions. We have after-school programs where struggling students receive one-on-one support, which helps bridge the gaps in their learning. This has been a key strategy for fostering inclusivity as it ensures no child is left behind, regardless of their initial skill level (Interview data, PH3).

Students' experiences further validate these institutional approaches, demonstrating the impact of differentiated instruction in the classroom. As one student explains, the use of multiple teaching strategies enables learners to grasp concepts in ways that suit their individual learning styles. Peer support, remedial sessions, and personalized attention from teachers contribute to a more inclusive learning experience, ensuring that no student is left behind. During the focus group discussion, participant two (PS2) clarified saying:

I have seen how teachers use different teaching methods to help us understand lessons better. Some of my classmates learn better with pictures and videos, while others need practical activities to grasp concepts. Our teachers make sure that we all get the support we need. For example, when I struggled with math, I received extra help during remedial sessions after school, which made a big difference in my learning (Focus group discussions data, PS2).

The study revealed that differentiated instruction plays a crucial role in fostering inclusive education by accommodating diverse student needs through varied teaching methods. The headteachers' insights emphasize the importance of adapting instructional strategies to match different learning styles, ensuring all students receive equitable opportunities. It follows then that personalized learning approaches, including visual aids, hands-on activities, and remedial support, have contributed to increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes. The emphasis on individualized attention and targeted interventions aligns with best practices in inclusive education, ensuring that students with varying abilities can thrive academically and socially.

Moreover, fostering an interactive and collaborative classroom environment enhances motivation and peer learning, further strengthening inclusivity.

Research supports these observations, emphasizing that differentiated instruction enhances student engagement and academic performance. Lindner and Schwab (2020) highlight the necessity of moving away from a "one-size-fits-all" approach toward personalized learning that includes co-teaching, flexible grouping, and modified assessments. Similarly, Strogilos et al. (2017) found that co-teachers often perceive differentiation as a remedial approach for students with disabilities rather than an inclusive strategy for all learners, limiting its effectiveness. Contrastingly, Donath et al. (2023) suggest that professional development programs significantly enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in implementing inclusive strategies. These findings indicate that while differentiated instruction is a valuable tool for inclusivity, its success largely depends on proper teacher training and institutional support.

4.2.5 Administrative Support Mechanisms

The administrative support mechanisms revealed under this sub-theme demonstrate how headteachers implement structural and procedural measures to promote inclusive education within basic schools. Insight gleaned from the dataset revealed three key administrative support mechanisms: parent-teacher engagement through regular meetings, School Management Committee coordination, and financial inclusion through fee exemption policies. These mechanisms work together to create a comprehensive support system that addresses both social and economic barriers to inclusive education. The headteachers' approach emphasizes open communication channels between all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and community members, while also implementing practical solutions like fee exemptions to ensure

education remains accessible to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Participant one (PH1) added:

As a headteacher, I believe in the importance of regular parent-teacher meetings to ensure inclusivity. These meetings provided a platform for us to discuss students' progress, especially those with special needs. We encouraged parents to actively participate in school activities, share their concerns, and learn more about our inclusive education strategies. This open communication built a strong partnership between the school and parents, which is essential for fostering inclusivity in the classroom (Interview data, PH1).

Participant three (PH3) said this:

We make sure to coordinate School Management Committee (SMC) meetings where we discussed issues related to inclusive education. During these meetings, we talked about how we can better support students with diverse needs and how the community can get involved. The collaboration between teachers, parents, and the committee ensures that our inclusive practices are well-supported and that we are collectively accountable for each student's well-being and academic success (Interview data, PH3).

The perspectives of teachers complement those of the headteachers, as they work closely with students, parents, and school committees to implement inclusive strategies. Their experiences offer a practical view of how these administrative support mechanisms shape classroom interactions and student success. Participant four (PT4) during the focus group discussions corroborated:

...the School Management Committee (SMC) meetings play a crucial role in sustaining inclusive education efforts. As teachers, we actively participate in these meetings to provide insights into students' needs, share our experiences, and propose interventions that enhance inclusivity (Focus group discussions data, PT4).

The study revealed administrative structures play a crucial role in facilitating inclusive education by creating a supportive environment that addresses both academic and socio-economic challenges. The measures implemented by headteachers, including consistent engagement with parents, coordination with school management

committees, and financial assistance for underprivileged students, ensure that no learner is excluded due to systemic barriers. Strengthening collaboration among stakeholders fosters accountability and responsiveness to students' needs, enabling timely interventions. By establishing structured administrative mechanisms, schools not only uphold educational equity but also create sustainable frameworks for ongoing support and improvement.

Several studies align with these findings, emphasizing the importance of administrative involvement in inclusive education. An empirical study conducted in Greece highlights that while inclusive policies exist, their effectiveness largely depends on financial investment and educator training (Pappas et al., 2018). Similarly, Zagona et al. (2017) found that teacher preparedness significantly improves when administrators facilitate professional development and provide structural support. Conversely, Morningstar et al. (2015) suggest that while policies promote inclusive education, their success depends on tangible classroom-level interventions like peer-supported learning and differentiated instruction. These perspectives reinforce the argument that while administrative policies are essential, their impact is maximized when coupled with teacher training and classroom-level initiatives.

4.3 Challenges Faced by Basic School Headteachers in Implementing Inclusive Education Policy

The data presented under this objective seeks to find out the challenges faced by basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District. This sought to provide answers to the research question, "What are the challenges faced by basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive educational policies? To answer this question, the data collected during the interview and focus

group discussions were used. The study revealed that basic school headteachers face numerous interconnected challenges when implementing inclusive education policies, which aim to provide quality education for all students regardless of their abilities or disabilities. These headteachers must navigate complex resource constraints, including limited funding for necessary infrastructure modifications like ramps, accessible washrooms, and specialized learning materials that accommodate diverse learning needs. The shortage of trained special education teachers and support staff further compounds the difficulty, as regular teachers often lack the expertise to effectively differentiate instruction and provide appropriate support for students with various disabilities. The administrative burden of implementing inclusive practices while maintaining academic standards presents another significant hurdle, as headteachers struggle to balance individualized learning approaches with standardized curriculum requirements and assessment methods. The following themes emerged from the dataset: cultural misconceptions, infrastructure and resource constraints, professional development gaps, social integration challenges, and stakeholder engagement barriers.

4.3.1 Cultural Misconceptions

The focus group discussions and interview data revealed that cultural misconceptions present a critical barrier to the implementation of inclusive education policies in basic schools. In this study settings, deeply ingrained beliefs and stereotypes about disability, learning differences, and social norms shape attitudes toward inclusion. Some parents, teachers, and community members perceive disabilities as a form of divine punishment, a curse, or a mark of inferiority, leading to stigmatization and exclusion of students with special needs. Others view inclusive education as a distraction that compromises academic rigor for non-disabled students, fearing that accommodating diverse learners will lower educational standards. Traditional educational paradigms that prioritize

uniformity over individualized learning further reinforce resistance to inclusive practices. These cultural misconceptions manifest as reluctance to enroll children with disabilities, resistance to classroom adaptations, and even hostility toward advocacy efforts by school leaders. Indeed, addressing these biases requires headteachers to confront long-standing social norms while advocating for attitudinal shifts that recognize the value of diversity and equity in education. This is what interview participant two (PH2) said:

In our community, many parents believe that learners with disabilities are ‘better off’ learning separately or staying at home. I have had parents openly question why we ‘waste resources’ on ramps or sign language interpreters when their own children lack textbooks. Changing mindsets is exhausting—some teachers still think inclusion means ‘lowering standards.’ We organize community dialogues with disability advocates, but progress is slow. It’s like dismantling a wall brick by brick (Interview data, PH2).

Participant four (PH4) added:

Here, disability is often seen as a taboo. Families hide children with physical or intellectual differences because they fear ridicule. One parent told me, ‘If my child sits with others, people will think our family is cursed.’ Even teachers struggle some assume these children can’t learn and focus only on ‘easier’ students (Interview data, PH2).

While headteachers work tirelessly to challenge cultural misconceptions and advocate for inclusive education, students also witness and experience these challenges firsthand. Their perspectives provide valuable insight into how these misconceptions impact their peers, learning environments, and social interactions. Participant four (PS4) in the focus group discussions disclosed:

We experience firsthand how cultural misconceptions affect our peers with disabilities and learning differences. While our headteachers and teachers work hard to create an inclusive environment, we often see the challenges they face in changing deeply rooted beliefs in our communities (Focus group discussions data, PS4).

The data underscores how deep-rooted cultural beliefs significantly hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education policies. Widespread misconceptions about disabilities being linked to divine punishment or family disgrace fuel stigma and exclusion. Such biases are not only held by community members but also by educators, some of whom believe that integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms diminishes academic standards. The resistance to adapting teaching methods and providing necessary accommodations stems from a rigid adherence to traditional educational paradigms that prioritize uniformity over personalized learning. This reluctance manifests in parents discouraging inclusive education, teachers focusing on students perceived as "easier" to teach, and limited support for initiatives promoting equity. School leaders attempting to challenge these entrenched attitudes face slow progress, highlighting the necessity of sustained advocacy, community engagement, and strategic interventions to shift mindsets.

Several studies confirm the findings of this study. Engelbrecht et al. (2015) in South Africa similarly highlights how teacher training influences attitudes towards inclusive education. Many educators were trained under a deficit model that views disabilities as limitations rather than diversity in learning needs. This aligns with the observation that teachers struggle with shifting away from exclusionary practices. Dawson (2023) expands on this perspective, arguing that neurodiversity should be seen as an integral part of human diversity, necessitating systemic changes in pedagogy. Unlike the misconceptions identified in the study, Dawson advocates for an inclusive framework that benefits all students rather than being perceived as a "burden" on mainstream education. Eden et al. (2024) emphasizes cultural competence as a crucial factor in fostering inclusivity. They propose professional development programs to address biases among educators and promote responsive teaching methods. This supports the

need for structured interventions similar to the community dialogues mentioned in the data.

4.3.2 Infrastructure and Resource Constraints

The focus group discussions and interview data established that inclusive education policies strive to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, receive a quality education in environments that honour their diverse needs. However, a significant barrier to achieving these goals is the challenge posed by infrastructure and resource constraints. Many schools especially those in resource-limited settings were not originally designed with accessibility in mind. As a result, essential modifications (such as installing ramps, accessible washrooms, and adapted classrooms) require substantial financial investments, specialized planning, and technical expertise. Chronic underfunding further limits the ability of schools to acquire necessary adaptive learning materials and assistive technologies. This misalignment between high-level inclusive education policies and on-the-ground realities emphasizes that effective resource allocation is critical for the successful implementation of inclusive practices.

This is what participant three (PH3) has to say:

...the lack of proper infrastructure is a daily challenge. Our school's buildings were constructed decades ago with no provision for accessibility. We face significant hurdles in terms of modifying our facilities such as installing ramps or ensuring that washrooms and classrooms are accessible to students with mobility challenges. The funding we receive is not only limited but also earmarked for more immediate academic needs, which leaves little room for these necessary (Interview data, PH3).

Participant one (PH1) intimated:

...from my perspective, the infrastructural constraints we face are a clear indication of broader systemic neglect when it comes to inclusive education. In our school, we have struggled to acquire even the most basic adaptive learning materials, and our classrooms lack the necessary design modifications to facilitate the movement and participation of all students.

This is not just an issue of funding although that is a major part of the problem but also one of prioritization and planning. While national policies emphasize inclusivity, local implementation often falls short because of inadequate support and bureaucratic delays. Our efforts to secure additional resources have been hampered by complex administrative processes and a lack of technical guidance on how best to adapt existing spaces to meet the needs of every learner (Interview data, PH1).

Participant five (PH5) also corroborated:

As someone who has been at the helm of school administration for over a decade, I have witnessed firsthand how infrastructural deficits can undermine the goals of inclusive education. Our school is a classic example of an institution where outdated physical facilities directly conflict with modern educational imperatives. The lack of accessible features such as ramps, or specially designed learning environments creates a barrier to participation for students with disabilities, ultimately affecting their academic and social development (Interview data, PH5).

While headteachers highlight the systemic challenges posed by infrastructure and resource constraints, students also experience the direct impact of these limitations in their daily school lives. Their perspectives offer valuable insight into how inadequate facilities and insufficient learning materials affect their academic performance and overall school experience. During the focus group discussions, participant two (PS2) affirmed the assertion by interview participant five (PH5) and avers that:

...the physical design of our schools is not inclusive. Most of our classrooms, washrooms, and playgrounds were not built to accommodate students with mobility challenges. We see daily how students with disabilities struggle to navigate the school environment, limiting their participation in both academic and extracurricular activities (Focus group discussions data, PS2).

The findings highlight significant barriers to inclusive education due to infrastructure and resource limitations. Schools, particularly in resource-constrained environments, lack the necessary physical modifications, such as ramps, accessible washrooms, and adapted classrooms, making it difficult for students with disabilities to participate fully. According to this study, financial constraints exacerbate these issues, as funding is often

allocated to immediate academic priorities rather than long-term infrastructural improvements. Relatedly, systemic challenges, such as bureaucratic inefficiencies and misaligned policy frameworks, hinder the timely implementation of necessary changes. School administrators face the dual challenge of ensuring compliance with inclusive education policies while managing existing academic demands, further complicating efforts to create an accessible learning environment. The testimonies from school leaders reinforce the reality that, despite the push for inclusive policies at a national level, the lack of localized support and technical expertise limits practical implementation.

Several studies align with these findings, confirming that infrastructure and resource constraints are major impediments to inclusive education. A study on South African schools identified overcrowding, insufficient teacher training, and a lack of adaptive learning materials as key challenges in implementing inclusive education (Mpu & Adu, 2021). Similarly, research on the broader South African context found that although educators support inclusion in principle, the lack of adequate resources both human and material leads to skepticism about its feasibility (Engelbrecht, 2020). Beyond Africa, studies in Eastern Europe have also documented systemic and structural barriers that hinder the progress of inclusive education. A literature review on Eastern European countries emphasized that historical and societal factors contribute to slow adoption rates, with many schools lacking both the infrastructure and teacher training required for inclusivity (Stepaniuk, 2018). Likewise, in Pacific nations, researchers identified inadequate teacher preparation and limited stakeholder engagement as significant obstacles (Sharma et al., 2018). While these studies reinforce the primary challenges presented in the initial data, they also highlight variations based on regional contexts. For example, whereas financial constraints dominate the discussion in resource-limited

settings, in some regions, negative societal attitudes and inadequate teacher training emerge as equally critical issues.

4.3.3 Professional Development Gaps

The focus group discussions and interview data revealed that professional development gaps represent a critical barrier to effective implementation of inclusive education policies in basic schools. Many teachers and school leaders lack specialized training in inclusive pedagogies, disability-specific strategies, and differentiated instruction, leaving them unprepared to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Existing professional development programs are often sporadic, generic, or theoretical, failing to equip educators with practical skills for classroom adaptation, behaviour management, or collaborative teaching. Headteachers face challenges in accessing funding and expert facilitators to deliver ongoing, context-specific training. These gaps perpetuate reliance on outdated teaching methods, hindering the creation of accessible, equitable learning environments. Participant five (PH5) said:

We have attended workshops on inclusion, but they are too broad. Teachers return asking, ‘How do I adapt a math lesson for a child with dyslexia?’ and I do not have answers. The district occasionally sends ‘experts,’ but they focus on policy, not classroom strategies. Without sustained mentoring or peer-learning platforms, even motivated teachers feel stuck. We need hands-on training tailored to our students’ specific needs—not one-size-fits-all seminars (Interview data, PH5).

During the focus group discussions, participant two (PT2) added:

I have been teaching for 12 years, but nothing prepared me for inclusive classrooms. Last term, I had a student with autism who needed sensory breaks, but I did not know how to balance that with lesson pacing. Short online courses are available, but they are optional and unpaid. Many colleagues avoid inclusion training altogether because it is seen as ‘extra work’ without recognition. If the government partnered with special educators to co-train us, we would feel more confident (Focus group discussions data, PT2).

Beyond the administrative challenges discussed by headteachers, students themselves feel the direct impact of teachers' limited training in inclusive education. Their experiences shed light on the difficulties they face when their learning needs are not fully understood or supported. The above point was further corroborated by participant one (PS1) during the focus group discussions for students:

...we can see that our teachers try their best to help everyone, but sometimes they do not know exactly how to support some of our classmates who learn differently. In our class, we have friends who struggle with reading, writing, or paying attention, and sometimes the teacher seems unsure of what to do to help them. See, I have a friend who finds it hard to read because of dyslexia. Sometimes, when we are given reading assignments, the teacher moves too fast, and my friend gets left behind. I know the teacher wants to help, but maybe they don't have the right training to teach students like my friend in a way that makes learning easier (Focus group discussions data, PS1).

Professional development deficits hinder the successful integration of inclusive education in primary schools. Inadequate training leaves educators ill-equipped to manage diverse classroom needs, particularly in adapting lessons and supporting students with disabilities. Existing workshops and training programs lack specificity, often focusing on theoretical frameworks rather than practical implementation. Limited financial resources and bureaucratic inefficiencies further exacerbate the situation, restricting access to specialized instruction and expert mentorship. The absence of inclusion-focused content in pre-service teacher training means new educators enter the workforce without the necessary competencies. As a result, outdated teaching approaches persist, reinforcing barriers to meaningful participation for all learners. Headteachers express frustration over the lack of hands-on guidance, mentoring, and structured peer-learning opportunities. Without systemic reforms to embed inclusive education into professional development frameworks, these gaps will continue to undermine the effectiveness of inclusive policies.

The findings from this study align with broader research highlighting the crucial role of professional training in fostering inclusive education. A meta-analysis examining professional development effectiveness found that while training significantly improves teachers' knowledge, its impact on classroom skills and student behaviour remains moderate (Donath et al., 2023). This suggests that one-time workshops or theoretical sessions are insufficient; continuous, practical training is necessary to translate knowledge into actionable strategies. Studies also emphasize the benefits of co-teaching models and embedded professional development. Empirical findings on collaborative teaching approaches found that pairing general and special educators enhances their competencies, allowing for real-time learning and adaptation (Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). This contrasts with the frustration expressed in the data regarding isolated, policy-driven training that lacks practical classroom applications. Similarly, a review on inclusive classroom climate development emphasized that effective teacher training should focus on fostering inclusive pedagogical approaches within everyday instruction (Margas, 2023).

4.3.4 Social Integration Challenges

The focus group discussions and interview data established that social integration challenges within inclusive education arise from persistent societal norms and misconceptions surrounding disability. Despite policy mandates, students with disabilities often encounter stigmatization, peer discrimination, and barriers to social acceptance, which undermine their sense of belonging and participation in school life. These issues stem from cultural beliefs that marginalize differences, leading to exclusionary behaviours such as bullying, social isolation, or reluctance among peers to collaborate. Schools frequently lack structured programmes to foster empathy and inclusivity, leaving headteachers to combat deeply ingrained attitudes while striving to

create environments where diversity is celebrated. This is what study participant five (PT5) said:

One of our biggest hurdles is shifting mindsets. Even when we modify infrastructure, some parents and students still view children with disabilities as ‘outsiders.’ For instance, during group activities, peers often exclude classmates with speech impairments, assuming they can’t contribute. We have initiated peer mentorship programmes to encourage interaction, but resistance persists. Teachers need more training to model inclusive behaviour and address microaggressions in real-time (Focus group discussions data, PT5).

Participant one (PT1) intimated:

Student with autism was repeatedly called names by others, which went unchallenged until I intervened. Many kids mimic stereotypes they hear at home, like believing disabilities are ‘contagious.’ While we’ve incorporated inclusive storytelling sessions to normalize diversity, changing these attitudes is slow. Without systemic support like counselling services or awareness campaigns the burden falls on teachers to mediate these conflicts daily (Focus group discussions data, PT1).

The headteachers’ concerns about persistent stigmatization and exclusion are reflected in students’ own observations. Many students recognize the barriers their peers with disabilities face and emphasize the need for more awareness, structured inclusion programs, and positive peer interactions. This is what participant three (PS3) said during the focus group discussions: “Sometimes, when we do group work, some classmates do not want to pair up with them because they think it will slow them down. I do not think this is fair because everyone should get a chance to participate” (Focus group discussions data, PH3).

Barriers to meaningful social integration in inclusive education stem from deep-rooted societal beliefs and biases against disabilities. Despite policy frameworks advocating for equal participation, students with disabilities continue to experience exclusion, ranging from peer rejection to systemic neglect. The study revealed that misinformation

and ingrained stereotypes contribute to discrimination, leading to social isolation and limited interaction with peers. Schools often lack structured interventions to address these biases, leaving educators to navigate these challenges with minimal guidance. The study further revealed that without proactive measures such as awareness campaigns, peer mentorship programs, and comprehensive teacher training on inclusive social practices, the efforts to foster integration risk being superficial rather than transformative. A holistic approach that includes consistent parental engagement, school-wide sensitization initiatives, and embedded inclusive practices in daily learning environments is necessary to challenge and change these exclusionary attitudes.

The finding of this study aligns with existing research, which underscores the role of cultural perceptions and school environments in shaping social inclusion. A study on inclusive education in South Africa identified stigma and negative attitudes as major obstacles to the full participation of students with disabilities, reinforcing that physical inclusion alone does not guarantee social integration (Mpu & Adu, 2021). Similarly, an analysis of higher education inclusion in Australia found that despite policy improvements, students with disabilities still faced social exclusion due to staff biases and the perception that too many accommodations create dependencies (Collins et al., 2018). In contrast, a study on sustainable intercultural and inclusive education in Greece highlighted positive outcomes when inclusive and intercultural education were integrated, emphasizing that fostering understanding across diverse student groups can significantly improve acceptance (Sorkos & Hajisoteriou, 2020).

4.3.5 Stakeholder Engagement Barriers

The interview and focus group discussion data show that effective stakeholder engagement is critical to implementing inclusive education, as it requires collaboration

among parents, communities, institutions, and policymakers. However, school headteachers often encounter systemic barriers that undermine these partnerships. Limited parental involvement stems from cultural misconceptions about disability, socioeconomic constraints, or lack of awareness about inclusive practices, leaving families disconnected from decision-making processes. Poor community support reflects entrenched stigmas or resource competition, where local leaders prioritize other developmental needs over inclusion. Weak institutional collaboration arises from fragmented coordination between schools, government agencies, NGOs, and healthcare providers, leading to duplicated efforts or gaps in service delivery. This study concluded that these barriers collectively weaken the ecosystem required to sustain inclusive education, perpetuating inequities for vulnerable learners. Interview participant five (PH5) added:

Parental involvement is our biggest hurdle. Many parents of children with disabilities feel ashamed or fear their child will be stigmatized, so they avoid school meetings. Even when we organize workshops on inclusion, turnout is low. We have tried sending messages and using community liaisons, but some families lack phones or distrust the system. Without parental buy-in, it is hard to align home and school support for these learners (Interview data, PH5).

Interview participant two (PH2) intimated:

The community saw inclusive education as a ‘waste’ of resources. Local leaders argued that children with severe disabilities should be at home, not ‘distracting’ others. We have faced resistance when requesting resources to build ramps or accessible toilets they ask, ‘Why invest in a few children?’ It’s disheartening. We need sensitization campaigns, but without funding or partnerships with NGOs, our hands are tied (Interview data, PH2).

Building on the concerns raised by headteachers, teachers provide a closer look at the everyday struggles of implementing inclusive education without strong stakeholder support. Their experiences reveal how limited parental involvement, community

resistance, and weak institutional coordination affect both teaching and learning.

During the focus group discussions, participant four (PT4) intimated:

One of the biggest issues we encounter is low parental involvement. Some parents of children with disabilities rarely attend meetings or school events. When we try to reach out to them, some express shame or fear that their child will be treated differently, while others simply do not see the value of inclusive education (Focus group discussions data, PT4).

Stakeholder engagement is crucial in implementing inclusive education, yet various barriers hinder effective collaboration. The study uncovered that lack of parental involvement, influenced by cultural stigma, financial struggles, and misinformation, isolates families from decision-making. Communities often deprioritize inclusive education, perceiving it as an inefficient allocation of resources, which leads to resistance in infrastructural improvements. Institutional fragmentation further exacerbates challenges, as weak coordination among schools, government agencies, and NGOs creates service gaps. Communication barriers, such as language differences and inadequate dialogue platforms, restrict meaningful participation. These systemic obstacles weaken the foundation needed to sustain inclusive education, leaving vulnerable students unsupported.

The findings align with existing research on stakeholder engagement barriers in inclusive education. A study in the Pacific identified stigma, poor teacher preparation, and weak stakeholder collaboration as significant challenges to inclusive education (Sharma et al., 2018). Similarly, a study in Spain highlighted institutional and attitudinal barriers, including inadequate teacher training and resistance to inclusive policies. These findings reinforce the argument that deeply ingrained societal attitudes and structural inefficiencies hinder meaningful stakeholder engagement.

4.4 Training Needs of Basic School Headteachers to Improve Inclusive Education Policy

The data presented under this objective seeks to explore the training needs of basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District. This sought to provide answers to the research question, “What are the training needs of basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education.” To answer this research question, the data collected during the interview and focus group discussions were used. Insight gleaned from the dataset revealed that unarguably, headteachers play a pivotal role in implementing inclusive education policies as they are responsible for creating an inclusive school culture, managing resources, supporting teachers, and engaging with various stakeholders. However, many headteachers lack the specific knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to effectively lead inclusive education initiatives in their schools. This gap highlights the importance of identifying and addressing their training needs to ensure they can successfully implement inclusive education policies, support diverse learners, and create inclusive learning environments that benefit all students. Under this objective, the following themes emerged from the dataset understanding inclusive education policies and legal frameworks, pedagogical approaches and differentiated instruction, and monitoring, evaluation, and inclusive assessment.

4.4.1 Understanding Inclusive Education Policies and Legal Frameworks

The focus group discussions and interview data uncovered that inclusive education policies and legal frameworks are foundational to creating equitable learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs of all students, including those with disabilities, cultural or linguistic minorities, and other marginalized groups. Globally, frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities (UNCRPD) and national legislation, like Ghana's Persons with Disability Act mandate schools to eliminate barriers to education and ensure equal access. However, headteachers often lack comprehensive awareness of these policies or struggle to interpret and operationalize them within their school contexts. Without a clear grasp of legal obligations and policy goals, headteachers may inadvertently perpetuate exclusionary practices, fail to allocate resources effectively, or miss opportunities to advocate for systemic changes. Training in this area is critical to equip headteachers with the knowledge to align school policies with legal standards, advocate for marginalized learners, and foster collaboration with stakeholders, teachers, parents, local authorities to translate policy into practice. Strengthening this understanding ensures that inclusive education is not merely a bureaucratic requirement but a shared ethical commitment embedded in the school's vision and operations. This is what interview participant two (PH2) intimated:

While I am aware of Ghana's Persons with Disability Act, I often struggle with translating these policies into practical actions in my school. We need comprehensive training on both international frameworks like the UNCRPD and our national policies. Recently, I faced a situation where a student with hearing impairment joined our school, and I was not fully confident about their legal rights or our school's obligations. This made me realize how crucial it is for headteachers to receive detailed training on policy interpretation and implementation (Interview data, PH2).

These challenges articulated by headteachers resonate deeply with teachers, a study participant three (PT3) during the focus group discussions added:

...I attended a brief workshop on inclusive education, but it barely scratched the surface of what we need to know. We require in-depth training on how to align our school policies with both national and international standards. I'm currently working to update our school's admission policies, but I'm uncertain whether they fully comply with inclusive education requirements (Interview data, PT3).

The findings highlight that while inclusive education frameworks are critical components for equitable learning environments, their implementation is hindered by systemic barriers in policy comprehension and application. School leaders recognize the transformative potential of international conventions and national legislation but face challenges operationalizing these mandates due to insufficient familiarity with their nuances. This gap between policy intent and practice risks reinforcing inequities, as leaders may overlook marginalized learners' rights or misallocate support mechanisms. The demand for targeted training underscores the need to bridge theoretical knowledge with contextualized strategies, enabling leaders to navigate legal complexities, foster stakeholder collaboration, and prioritize inclusivity as an ethical imperative rather than a procedural formality.

These findings align with Ainscow and Miles (2008), who stress that school leadership training is pivotal for translating inclusive policies into actionable practices, particularly in low-resource settings. In similar vein, Agbenyega's (2007) echoes the disconnect between policy awareness and implementation, emphasizing cultural and systemic resistance. Conversely, the study contrasts with approaches in high-income contexts, such as Norway's centralized support systems (Haug, 2017), where policy enactment is bolstered by robust institutional guidance, reducing reliance on individual leaders' interpretative capacity. This divergence underscores the urgency of contextualized training in resource-constrained environments to mitigate disparities in policy execution.

4.4.2 Leadership and Management for Inclusive Schools

The interview and focus group discussions data established that leadership and management play a critical role in shaping the training needs of basic school

headteachers, especially in efforts to effectively implement inclusive education policies and ensuring that schools provide inclusive education for all learners, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or needs. When headteachers understand the core principles through effective leadership, it highlights their training needs such as policy interpretation, strategic planning, inclusive school development, disability awareness and inclusive classroom management. Through leadership, headteachers are engaged in capacity-building initiatives and are supported in accessing relevant training opportunities. Inclusive schools promote equity by embracing diversity, implementing supportive policies, and fostering a culture of belonging. The study uncovered that effective leadership in inclusive schools requires vision, collaboration, and adaptability. School leaders and administrators must advocate for accessible learning environments, implement inclusive teaching strategies, and support teachers in meeting diverse student needs. They must also engage with communities, ensure fair resource allocation, and uphold policies that prevent discrimination. By focusing on leadership and management for inclusive schools, this theme highlights best practices, challenges, and solutions to create education systems where every learner can thrive. In an interview participant five (PH5) intimated:

One of our most successful initiatives was establishing a peer mentoring programme where students support each other across different ability levels and backgrounds. For resource allocation, we implemented a flexible budgeting system that prioritizes adaptive equipment and teaching materials. We've developed a structure that includes regular meetings between special education teachers, mainstream teachers, school counsellors, and external specialists (Interview data, PH5).

Interview participant three (PH3) articulates that:

Leading an inclusive school has completely transformed my understanding of education management. When I started five years ago, I realized that creating an inclusive culture isn't just about physical accessibility - it's about changing mindsets. We focused heavily on professional development,

providing monthly training sessions for all staff on inclusive practices. For resource management, we've taken an innovative approach by partnering with local businesses and NGOs to supplement our budget for inclusive education initiative (Interview data, PH3).

Interview with teachers during the focus group discussions corroborated the perspectives shared by the headteachers as participant five (PT5) intimated:

I have seen how strong leadership plays a vital role in making our school more inclusive. The peer mentoring program has been particularly effective, as students learn to support one another, fostering a more collaborative learning environment. I have also benefited from the regular training sessions on inclusive teaching strategies, which have helped me adapt my lessons to meet the needs of all students (Focus group discussions data, PT5).

Insight gleaned from the dataset revealed that effective leadership is crucial in fostering inclusive education, as demonstrated by the initiatives described by school leaders. The establishment of peer mentoring programs enhances student collaboration across diverse backgrounds and abilities. Strategic financial planning, such as allocating a portion of the budget to inclusive resources, ensures equitable access to learning tools. Partnerships with external organizations contribute to financial sustainability, allowing schools to extend their inclusive initiatives. The emphasis on continuous professional development signifies a shift towards adaptive leadership, ensuring that educators are equipped with the necessary skills to accommodate all learners. These management strategies highlight a proactive approach to overcoming barriers to inclusion by combining financial planning, staff training, and community involvement.

Several studies align with or contrast the findings on leadership and management for inclusive schools. The importance of leadership in fostering inclusivity is reinforced by Abdallah et al. (2023), who highlight that principals in inclusive schools must actively build a culture of equality by implementing school reforms, supporting teacher

collaboration, and modifying instructional strategies. Similarly, Lambrecht et al. (2020) found that transformational and instructional leadership practices significantly impact inclusive education by enhancing cooperation between special and general education teachers, aligning with the study's emphasis on structured leadership approaches.

4.4.3 Pedagogical Approaches and Differentiated Instruction

The focus group discussions and interview data revealed that pedagogical approaches and differentiated instruction play a pivotal role in shaping the training needs of basic school headteachers to effectively implement inclusive education policy. Inclusive education demands that teaching practices be adapted to cater for the diverse abilities, backgrounds and learning styles of all learners including those with special educational needs. Differentiated instruction focuses on tailoring teaching methods to meet the diverse learning needs of students. Pedagogical approaches encompass various instructional strategies, including constructivism, direct instruction, inquiry-based learning, and cooperative learning, each designed to enhance student engagement and comprehension. Differentiated instruction ensures that lessons are adapted based on students' abilities, interests, and learning styles, using varied content, processes, and assessments. For headteachers to lead and support such practices, they must themselves be well-versed in inclusive pedagogies and understand how to create enabling teaching and learning environments. This necessitates targeted training that equips headteachers with the skills to observe, guide and evaluate differentiated instructional practices. Without adequate training in these areas headteachers may lack the instructional leadership capacity to drive inclusive education practices in their schools. This approach fosters inclusivity, maximizes individual potential, and supports diverse learners in achieving academic success. In line with this, participant one (PT1) echoed: "In my experience, using a mix of pedagogical approaches has helped engage students

with different learning needs. Differentiated instruction allows me to modify lessons so that all students, regardless of ability, can actively participate and succeed” (Focus group discussions data, PT1).

Interview participant two (PH2) opined: “I have seen that when instruction is tailored to individual learning styles, students become more motivated and confident. Differentiated instruction helps bridge learning gaps by offering multiple ways to access and demonstrate understanding of content” (Interview data, PH2)

Interview participant one (PH1) corroborated:

Implementing inquiry-based learning alongside differentiated strategies has significantly improved my students’ critical thinking skills. By adjusting tasks and materials to their unique strengths, I create a more inclusive and effective learning environment (Interview data, PH1).

The practical application of these pedagogical approaches is further affirmed by teachers, who experience firsthand the impact of differentiated instruction in their classrooms. Their accounts demonstrate how adapting instructional strategies to students’ unique strengths leads to improved engagement, deeper understanding, and enhanced critical thinking skills. Teachers corroborate that implementing multiple instructional methods creates an inclusive and student-centered learning environment, ensuring equitable access to education for all learners. This is what participant two (PT2) said during the focus group discussions:

I experienced how differentiated instruction transforms the classroom experience. Using a variety of teaching methods, such as inquiry-based learning and cooperative learning, I ensure that students with different learning needs can fully engage with the content. For example, some students benefit from hands-on activities, while others grasp concepts more effectively through structured discussions or visual aids. By modifying tasks and assessments based on students’ abilities, I create an environment where every learner feels supported and capable of succeeding. These

approaches not only improve student motivation and confidence but also strengthen their critical thinking skills (Focus group discussions data, PT4).

The findings highlight educators' emphasis on adaptable teaching strategies that cater to diverse learner profiles, prioritizing engagement and equity. Participants underscored the efficacy of combining varied instructional methods such as student-centered exploration, structured guidance, and collaborative tasks to foster participation and reduce barriers for learners with differing abilities. By customizing content delivery, task complexity, and assessment formats, educators reported heightened student motivation, self-assurance, and critical reasoning, particularly when aligning tasks with learners' strengths. These outcomes suggest that responsive teaching practices not only nurture academic growth but also cultivate inclusive environments where students feel empowered to engage with material meaningfully.

This study aligns with Tomlinson's (2001) framework on differentiated instruction, which advocates modifying content, process, and product to meet individual needs, as well as Vygotsky's social constructivism, emphasizing collaborative learning and scaffolding. Subban (2006) supports the link between tailored instruction and improved student self-efficacy.' However, the findings contrast with critiques by Brighton et al. (2005), who argue that excessive differentiation may strain teacher resources in heterogeneous classrooms. While this study highlights inquiry-based learning as pivotal for critical thinking, some traditional models prioritize direct instruction for standardized outcomes (Hattie, 2009), illustrating a tension between adaptability and curricular rigidity. These juxtapositions underscore the complexity of balancing individualized approaches with systemic educational demands.

4.4.4 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Inclusive Assessment

The focus group discussion and interview established that monitoring, evaluation, and inclusive assessment play a crucial role in ensuring the effective implementation of education policies, particularly in fostering inclusive education. In the context of basic schools, headteachers serve as key facilitators in creating inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse student needs. However, their ability to implement inclusive education policies depends significantly on their knowledge, skills, and competencies. Assessing the training needs of basic school headteachers is essential to identify gaps in their understanding of inclusive education principles, strategies for supporting students with diverse learning needs, and methods for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of inclusion policies. Strengthening their capacity through targeted professional development programmes can enhance policy implementation and promote equitable education for all learners. Interview participant four (PH4) highlighted the need for additional training, stating:

As a headteacher, I recognize the importance of inclusive education, but I often struggle with implementing policies effectively. More training on strategies for supporting diverse learners would help me create a more inclusive school environment in the school. (Interview data, PH4).

Similarly, participant one (PH1) emphasized the challenges associated with monitoring and evaluating inclusive education initiatives, noting the need for practical training:

Monitoring and evaluation are crucial for inclusive education, but without proper training, it's difficult to assess whether we are meeting the needs of all students. I believe headteachers need workshops on policy implementation and assessment techniques. I feel that while inclusive education is emphasized in policies, there is little guidance on how to execute it in real classroom settings. Training programmes tailored to real-life challenges would greatly improve how we support students with different learning needs. (Interview data, PH1).

The perspectives of headteachers underscore the necessity of professional development in fostering inclusive education. However, these challenges are not unique to school leaders alone. Teachers, who are directly responsible for implementing inclusive teaching strategies in the classroom, also face similar difficulties. Their perspectives further reinforce the need for comprehensive training programs that bridge the gap between policy and classroom practice.

Participant four (PT4) in the focus group discussions affirmed the concerns raised by headteachers, emphasizing the need for teacher-specific training as well:

As a teacher, I completely agree with what the headteachers have shared. Inclusive education is essential, but without proper training, it becomes difficult to implement effectively in the classroom. While we do our best to support students with diverse learning needs, we often lack clear guidelines and strategies. If headteachers struggle with policy implementation, then as teachers, we also face similar challenges in adapting our teaching methods to accommodate all learners (Focus group discussions data, PT4).

By highlighting both headteachers' and teachers' perspectives, it becomes evident that a holistic approach to training is essential. Equipping school leaders with the necessary skills to support inclusive education will, in turn, empower teachers to implement effective strategies within their classrooms. Therefore, professional development initiatives should be designed to cater to both groups, ensuring a collaborative and well-informed approach to inclusive education. Unarguably, effective oversight mechanisms play a fundamental role in ensuring the successful execution of education policies, particularly in fostering inclusivity in learning environments. School leaders, acting as key implementers, require specialized expertise to support diverse learners effectively. The ability of these leaders to track progress and assess the effectiveness of inclusive education is often hindered by gaps in professional training. As expressed by participants, structured training programs would enable them to develop strategies for

supporting all students, ensuring that inclusivity is not just a policy but a practical reality. Strengthening their competencies through targeted development initiatives would equip them with the tools necessary for assessing policy implementation and making informed adjustments, ultimately fostering equitable learning experiences.

The findings confirm with research that highlights the necessity of professional development for school administrators in inclusive education. Bai and Martin (2015) found that school leaders require structured training to enhance their knowledge and ability to serve students with disabilities effectively. Empirical evidence from UAE underscored the importance of school principals' awareness in fostering inclusive schools and recommended targeted professional development programs (Khaleel et al., 2021). This notwithstanding, studies suggest that merely providing training is insufficient unless it is coupled with systemic support and changes in school culture. Research conducted in Canada found that while pre-service teachers receive basic training in inclusive practices, they often require further hands-on experience and ongoing mentorship to implement strategies effectively (D'Intino & Wang, 2021).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This chapter contains a summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future study. The primary focus of the study was to explore the experiences of basic school headteachers in the implementation of inclusive education policy in five basic schools within Nkwanta North District. The study was guided by the thesis statement that: “Successful implementation of inclusive educational policy in Nkwanta North District requires effective leadership, institutional support and resources.” To achieve this, the study was guided by four (4) key research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of basic school headteachers on inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District?
2. What approaches have been adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity in Nkwanta North District?
3. What are the challenges faced by basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District?
4. What are the training needs of basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education in Nkwanta North District?

By addressing these questions, the research offers insights into the perception of basic school headteachers on inclusive education policy, highlighting on how basic school headteachers’ training and roles affects inclusive education implementation, proposing approaches to strengthen the capacity of basic school headteachers and measures to remedy the implementation challenges faced by basic school headteachers to improve inclusive education in the district. The data was collected through interviews with headteachers from the selected schools and focus group discussions with teachers and

students from the selected schools. This chapter serves as a culmination of this research study, presenting a comprehensive summary of the findings, drawing meaningful conclusions, and offering actionable recommendations based on the analysis. This chapter addresses the limitations of the current study and suggests potential avenues for future research, thereby contributing to the ongoing dialogue in the field and paving the way for further scholarly inquiry.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This section presents a summary of key findings from the study.

5.1.1 Perceptions of Basic School Headteachers on Inclusive Education in Nkwanta North District

The study explores headteachers' perceptions of inclusive education policy in Ghana, revealing both its transformative potential and systemic challenges. While inclusive education is recognized as a cornerstone of Ghana's commitment to global equity frameworks like the SDGs and UNCRPD, its success hinges on school leaders' attitudes and resource realities. Headteachers expressed mixed views: many acknowledged inclusion's role in reducing stigma and fostering social cohesion, yet others raised concerns about disruptions to academic progress, particularly when students with disabilities require specialized attention. These tensions reflect cultural norms, infrastructural limitations, and gaps in teacher preparedness. A critical barrier identified was inadequate teacher training, with educators often lacking skills to adapt curricula or manage diverse classrooms, leading to professional frustration and inconsistent implementation of inclusive practices. Resource constraints such as inaccessible campuses, insufficient funding, and a lack of teaching aids further hindered efforts, disproportionately affecting students with physical disabilities. Despite these

challenges, headteachers emphasized student-centered outcomes, prioritizing holistic development through peer support, adaptive teaching, and inclusive environments that promote academic and social integration. Collaboration emerged as vital, with stakeholders, teachers, parents, peers, and communities needing to share responsibility in addressing stigma and resource gaps. The findings align with global research highlighting the interplay between policy aspirations and on-ground realities, underscoring the need for targeted teacher training, infrastructure investment, and sustained community engagement to translate inclusive ideals into equitable educational experiences for all students in Ghana.

5.1.2 Approaches Adopted by Basic School Headteachers to Foster Inclusivity in Nkwanta North District

The study highlights five key approaches adopted by basic school headteachers to foster inclusivity, emphasizing both strategies and systemic challenges. First, collaborative teaching practices, such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), enable teachers to share strategies and adapt pedagogy collectively. While this fosters peer-driven problem-solving, educators acknowledge gaps in specialized training, underscoring the need for external expertise to complement grassroots efforts. Second, identification and grouping of students with special needs rely heavily on teacher observations and periodic assessments, with flexible grouping models balancing individualized support and mainstream integration. However, resource constraints limit access to professional evaluations, prompting reliance on community networks in under-resourced settings. Third, physical adaptations ramps, accessible facilities, and sensory-friendly classrooms are prioritized, though their implementation often depends on headteachers' ability to secure funding and stakeholder collaboration. Fourth, instructional differentiation tailored content and methods to diverse learning styles, using visual aids,

remedial programmes, and peer collaboration. While effective in boosting engagement, its success hinges on teacher training, which remains inconsistent. Finally, administrative support mechanisms, such as parent-teacher engagement, School Management Committees, and fee exemptions, address socio-economic barriers but require sustained institutional commitment. Research underscores the value of these strategies while critiquing systemic shortcomings: collaboration and differentiation are lauded but limited without targeted training; physical and administrative measures are vital yet insufficient without broader resource allocation. The findings collectively advocate for a dual approach leveraging local adaptability while addressing structural gaps through policy reforms, funding, and professional development to achieve equitable, inclusive education.

5.1.3 Challenges Faced by Basic School Headteachers in Implementing Inclusive Education Policy in Nkwanta North District

The study identifies five interconnected challenges faced by basic school headteachers in implementing inclusive education policies. Cultural misconceptions rooted in beliefs that disabilities signify divine punishment or inferiority fuel stigma, resistance to classroom adaptations, and parental reluctance to enroll children with disabilities, as highlighted by interviewees who describe community resistance and slow attitudinal shifts. Infrastructure and resource constraints, including inadequate funding for ramps, accessible facilities, and specialized materials, are exacerbated by bureaucratic inefficiencies and systemic neglect, with participants emphasizing outdated buildings and misaligned policy priorities, corroborated by studies from South Africa and Eastern Europe. Professional development gaps leave teachers unprepared to address diverse needs, as sporadic, theoretical training fails to provide practical strategies, a concern echoed by educators requesting hands-on mentoring and context-specific guidance,

supported by research stressing the need for continuous, collaborative training models. Social integration challenges persist due to bullying, exclusion, and ingrained stereotypes, with participants noting efforts like peer mentorship and inclusion days that face resistance, aligning with studies underscoring the limitations of physical inclusion without cultural change. Finally, stakeholder engagement barriers arise from low parental involvement, community resource competition, and institutional fragmentation, as interviewees cite parental shame and community skepticism, paralleling findings from the Pacific and Spain that advocate for cross-sector collaboration and policy reforms. Collectively, these challenges highlight the necessity for sustained advocacy, systemic funding, targeted training, and holistic community engagement to advance inclusive education.

5.1.4 Training Needs of Basic School Headteachers to Improve Inclusive Education in Nkwanta North District

The study highlights the critical need for targeted training for headteachers to effectively implement inclusive education policies, as many lack the necessary knowledge and skills to create inclusive school environments. Key training areas identified include understanding inclusive education policies and legal frameworks, leadership and management, pedagogical approaches, and monitoring and evaluation. Headteachers struggle to interpret policies, align school practices with legal standards, and advocate for marginalized learners, emphasizing the need for comprehensive training to bridge policy intent and practice. Effective leadership, including strategic budgeting, peer mentoring, and stakeholder collaboration, is essential for fostering inclusivity, aligning with research on distributed leadership and professional development. Additionally, pedagogical approaches such as differentiated instruction and inquiry-based learning are crucial for engaging diverse learners, though resource

constraints pose challenges. Finally, monitoring and evaluation gaps hinder the assessment of inclusive education effectiveness, reinforcing the need for structured professional development. Overall, the study underscores the urgency of equipping headteachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to transform inclusive education policies into practical, equitable learning experiences for all students.

The findings of this study are strongly informed by transformational leadership theory and social justice leadership theory, as both frameworks provide a lens for understanding how teachers influence the implementation of the inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District.

The findings revealed that headteachers who articulated a clear vision for inclusion, motivated teachers, and provided support and supervision were more successful in promoting inclusive practices. These actions reflect key components of transformational leadership, idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Where headteachers encouraged collaboration, modelled inclusive values, and supported teachers' professional growth, teachers demonstrated greater commitment to inclusive education. Conversely, limited training and weak leadership capacity constrained headteachers' ability to fully transform school practices, reinforcing the theory's emphasis on leadership competence as a driver of organisational change.

The findings also showed inclusive education implementation was challenged by inadequate resources, inaccessible infrastructure and persistent stigma towards learners with special educational needs. These findings align with the social justice leadership, which emphasises leaders' responsibility to challenge exclusionary practices, address systemic inequalities and advocate for marginalised learners. Headteachers who

demonstrated sensitivity to learners' diverse needs and promoted inclusive school cultures were acting as social justice leaders, even within constrained contexts.

Together, the two theories explained both agency and limitations observed in the findings. Transformational leadership accounts for how headteachers inspire and mobilise teachers toward inclusive practices while social justice leadership explains the moral and ethical commitment required to address inequalities and promote inclusion. The findings therefore suggest that effective implementation of inclusive education requires headteachers to function simultaneously as transformational leaders to drive change and social justice leaders who advocate for equity and inclusion within the education system.

5.2 Conclusion

The study explored the experiences of headteachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education policy in five basic schools in Nkwanta North District. That was to explore their perceptions of the policy, the challenges they face in implementing the policy, the approaches they employ to foster inclusion and their training needs to improve the policy, with specific attention to how their leadership practices, institutional support systems, and availability of resources influence the success or failure of the policy at the basic school level. The findings from this research provide a comprehensive understanding of the realities on the ground, especially concerning how school leadership influences the success or failure of inclusive education, particularly within resource-constrained rural district contexts. The research was grounded in the premise that successful implementation of inclusive education depends not merely on policy presence but on practical actions guided by effective school leadership, adequate support structures, and the necessary educational resources. The findings of this study

strongly support the thesis that effective leadership, institutional support, and resources are indispensable for the successful implementation of inclusive education in the Nkwanta North District.

The study results clearly found that headteachers are central figures in the implementation of inclusive education. Their role as school leaders places them in a unique position to influence school culture, guide teachers, manage resources, and engage stakeholders in creating inclusive learning environments. Headteachers in Nkwanta North District generally exhibited positive perception toward inclusive education and acknowledged its importance in promoting equity and access for all learners. However, their efforts were often limited by inadequate leadership training specifically tailored to inclusive practices. Without the requisite knowledge and leadership capacity, many headteachers struggled to develop clear implementation strategies, support their teachers adequately, or make informed decisions regarding inclusion.

The study further revealed that successful inclusive education requires more than good intentions from school leaders; it demands effective and transformational leadership. The lack of leadership training in inclusive education represents a major gap that must be addressed to make inclusive education a lived reality in the district.

Equally critical is the role of institutional support. The Ghana Education Service (GES), District Education Offices, and other educational bodies are expected to provide the structural and administrative backing necessary for schools to function effectively. This lack of institutional commitment undermines the headteachers' efforts and weakens the foundation of inclusive education across the district.

Moreover, the study uncovered serious resource constraints that significantly impede the implementation of inclusive education. Many schools lacked basic teaching and learning materials, not to mention specialized aids for learners with disabilities. Infrastructural challenges such as inaccessible buildings, lack of disability-friendly toilets, and overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for headteachers to accommodate the diverse needs of learners. These resource deficiencies directly impact the quality of inclusive education and reinforce the need for targeted investment in school infrastructure and logistics.

The findings of this study validate the thesis that successful implementation of inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District requires effective leadership, institutional support, and resources. Overall, the study concludes that effective implementation of inclusive education in Nkwanta North District depends not only on headteachers' leadership commitment but also on sustained capacity building, adequate resourcing and strong support systems. Without addressing these three critical components, inclusive education will remain more of an aspiration than a reality at the school level.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The study on headteachers and the implementation of inclusive education policy in Nkwanta North District, while insightful, presented some limitation. Firstly, reliance on self-reported data from headteachers through interviews and teachers and students through focus group discussions risks response bias, as participants might have emphasized successes or downplayed challenges to align with perceived expectations. I mitigated this by triangulating data across multiple schools and cross-referencing responses to identify consistent themes, thereby enhancing credibility.

Secondly, unwillingness of one potential participant to share data also posed a challenge, as concerns about confidentiality or criticism of institutional practices may have led to withheld information. I addressed this by ensuring anonymity, fostering trust through transparent communication, and emphasizing the study's non-judgmental purpose. Despite these efforts, the potential for non-response bias was acknowledged, and future studies were advised to employ participatory engagement strategies or incentives to improve participation rates.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive study of inclusive education policy implementation in Nkwanta North District, the research has revealed that while headteachers in the Nkwanta North District are generally aware of the inclusive education policy and exhibit positive perceptions toward its goals, the actual implementation of the policy is fraught with systemic challenges. These include inadequate training, lack of institutional support, poor infrastructure, limited teaching and learning resources, cultural misconceptions and persistent community stigma around disability. These challenges significantly impact the effective implementation of inclusive education policies across basic schools. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed to guide policy, practice, and future interventions to enhance the successful implementation of inclusive education in the district:

1. The Ghana Education Service (GES) and other educational stakeholders should design and implement regular, context-specific professional development programmes for headteachers. These programmes should focus on inclusive school leadership, adaptive pedagogy, instructional supervision for diverse learners, change management, and stakeholder engagement. Training should not be a one-off event but should form part of a structured continuous professional

development framework. In addition, mentorship and peer learning networks should be established among headteachers to promote shared learning and innovation in inclusive education leadership.

2. Ghana Education Service and Nkwanta North District Education Directorate must strengthen their institutional support for inclusive education by establishing dedicated teams or units at the district level to oversee inclusive practices. These teams should provide regular on-site visits, technical guidance, feedback, and follow-up support to headteachers and schools. Policies and action plans for inclusive education should be clearly communicated, and accountability systems should be put in place to monitor progress and ensure compliance. The establishment of inclusive education coordinators at the district level can also bridge the gap between policy and practice.
3. The Ministry of Education and donor agencies must prioritize the provision of inclusive education materials and infrastructure. This includes learning aids for learners with visual, hearing, and physical impairments; textbooks in accessible formats; ramps; inclusive classroom furniture; and communication devices. Special education professionals should also be deployed to support schools and offer expertise. The procurement and distribution of these resources must be need-based, with schools in the most underserved communities prioritized.
4. Community engagement and public education campaigns should be intensified to combat stigma and promote inclusive values. Headteachers, with support from district authorities, should collaborate with traditional leaders, religious groups, and civil society organizations to sensitize communities on the importance of inclusive education. Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) should also be mobilized to play a more active role in supporting inclusion and

advocating for the rights of all learners. When communities are well-informed and involved, they become allies in the implementation process.

5. The Ghana Education Service should recruit and assign trained special educators, school psychologists, speech therapists, and guidance and counselling personnel to basic schools in the district. These specialists can work collaboratively with headteachers and classroom teachers to assess learners' needs, provide individualized support, and build the capacity of teaching staff. A strategic deployment plan should ensure that each school cluster or circuit has access to at least one special needs educator.
6. All schools should be required to develop their own inclusive education action plans aligned with national policy. These school-level plans should be developed collaboratively with teachers, parents, and students and should outline specific goals, activities, timelines, and responsibilities for inclusion. Headteachers should be trained in school improvement planning with a focus on inclusion. District education offices should review and monitor the implementation of these school-based policies to ensure coherence and progress.
7. The Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, should increase funding for inclusive education and ensure equitable distribution of resources across districts. Funding should be earmarked for inclusive infrastructure, resource centers, teaching aids, capacity building, and monitoring activities. Donor support and public-private partnerships can be leveraged to supplement government funding.

The findings of this study affirmed that the successful implementation of inclusive education in Nkwanta North District is dependent on three interrelated pillars: effective

headteacher leadership, robust institutional support, and adequate resourcing. These recommendations offer a roadmap for addressing existing gaps and fostering an inclusive, equitable, and empowering educational environment for all learners. By adopting a multi-stakeholder, well-resourced, and context-sensitive approach, inclusive education can be transformed from policy to practice, ensuring that no learner is left behind. These recommendations, if effectively implemented, will not only support headteachers but also bring Ghana closer to achieving the vision of inclusive and quality education for all learners as enshrined in national and international education goals.

5.5 Implications of the Study Findings

The findings of this study have important implications for the discipline of educational leadership and inclusive education policy implementation.

First, the central role of headteachers in shaping inclusive school practices underscores the need to strengthen instructional and transformational leadership within basic schools. This highlights the importance of leadership preparation and continuous professional development in educational leadership programmes.

Second, the identified gaps in teachers' preparedness and resource availability imply that inclusive education cannot be achieved through policy directives alone. For the discipline of education, this reinforces the view that policy implementation is a context-driven process that requires alignment between leadership, teacher capacity and institutional support.

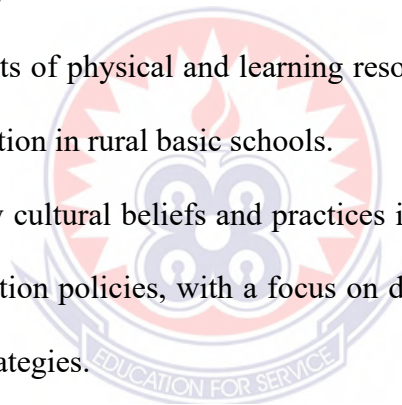
Finally, the findings contribute to inclusive education scholarship by providing context-specific evidence from the rural district like Nkwanta North, enriching the body of knowledge on how leadership and systemic constraints influence inclusive practices in

developing-country setting. These insights are relevant to educators, policymakers, and researchers within the field, as they inform leadership training, policy refinement, and future research in inclusive and equitable education.

5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings from this study on inclusive education policy implementation in Ghana's basic schools, several important areas warrant further investigation. The following directions for future research would contribute significantly to our understanding and improvement of inclusive education practices.

1. Roles of parents and community stakeholders in supporting inclusive education in basic schools
2. Exploring effects of physical and learning resources on the implementation of inclusive education in rural basic schools.
3. Investigate how cultural beliefs and practices influence the implementation of inclusive education policies, with a focus on developing culturally responsive intervention strategies.



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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING (SCCELL)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEADTEACHERS

TOPIC: HEADTEACHERS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY IN FIVE BASIC SCHOOLS IN NKWANTA NORTH DISTRICT.

I am currently pursuing an MPhil in Educational Administration and Management at the University of Education, Winneba. The purpose of the study seeks to examine the roles of headteachers in the implementation of inclusive educational policy in five basic schools in Nkwanta North District. This interview focuses on basic school headteachers perceptions about inclusive education policy, approaches adopted to foster inclusivity, challenges faced in implementing inclusive educational policies and training needs to improve inclusive education in Nkwanta North District.

As a researcher, I would assure you that this study places a strong emphasis on research ethics which is the value governing research. Rest assured, any information you provide will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality, and your identities will remain anonymous. Your honest contributions are crucial for enhancing knowledge and informing practice. Therefore, your active and thoughtful engagement in this study is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your valuable participation.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographic Information

Tick [] appropriately by choosing the demographic factors related to you.

Gender: 1. Male [] 2. Female []

Name of Institution / office:

Designation / Position:

Region:

Town:

District:

Years of experience in service at the institution:

CONCEPT ONE: PERCEPTIONS OF BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

WHAT ARE THE PERCEPTIONS OF BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY?

1. How do you perceive the inclusion of students with special needs in your school?
2. What are your core values and beliefs that inform your decision-making as a headteacher of an inclusive school?
3. How do you think your personal values influence your approach to inclusive education?
4. How would you describe the culture of inclusion in your school?
5. How does the school's culture influence your perceptions of inclusive education?
6. What steps have you taken to foster an inclusive school culture that values diversity and supports all learners?
7. How accessible is your school's physical environment for students with disabilities?

8. What role does the school's environment play in shaping your perceptions of inclusive education?

CONCEPT TWO: APPROACHES ADOPTED BY BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS TO FOSTER INCLUSIVITY IN BASIC SCHOOLS

WHAT APPROACHES HAVE BEEN ADOPTED BY BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS TO FOSTER INCLUSIVITY?

1. What approaches do you employ to promote awareness and equity in your school?
2. What strategies do you employ to promote inclusive practices in teaching and learning?
3. What strategies do you employ to address bullying and discrimination of special needs learners in your school?
4. What strategies do you employ to create accessible and supportive learning environment to foster inclusivity in your school?
5. What strategies do you adopt to address diverse learning needs of learners through differentiated instruction?
6. What principles underpin your use of collaborative approach to teaching and learning?
7. What collaborative approaches do you employ to foster individualized support?

CONCEPT THREE: CHALLENGES FACED BY BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FACED BY BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL POLICIES?

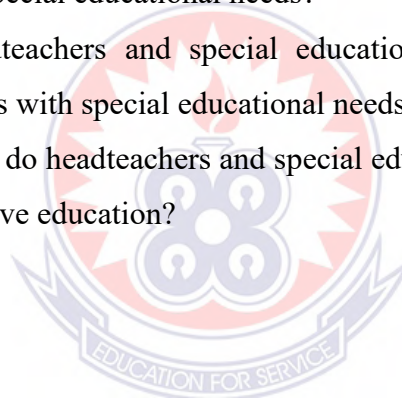
1. What challenges do you face in implementing inclusive education in your school?
2. How do these challenges affect your attitudes and beliefs about inclusive education practices?
3. What measures do you employ to mitigate the challenges in your school?

4. What is the state of funding in implementing inclusive education in your school?
5. What are the effects of inadequate funding in implementing inclusive education?
6. What is the state of staffing in your school?
7. How do staffing shortages affect the implementation of inclusive education in your school?
8. What are the strategies to mitigate staffing shortages?
9. What is the state of educational materials and assistive devices in your school?
10. What are the potential consequences of no access to educational materials and assistive technologies?
11. What are potential strategies to improve access to educational materials and assistive technologies?
12. What is the state of training and support for inclusive education in your school?
13. What are the gaps in training and support for inclusive education in your school?
14. What are the potential strategies to employ to improve the training and support gaps?
15. What are the misconceptions and concerns about inclusive education in your school?
16. What strategies can be employed to address the misconceptions and concerns about inclusive education?
17. What is the state of collaboration and coordination among stakeholders about inclusive education in your school?
18. What strategies can be employed to address the barriers of headteachers fostering collaboration and coordination among stakeholders?

**CONCEPT FOUR: TRAINING NEEDS OF BASIC SCHOOL
HEADTEACHERS TO IMPROVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY.**

***WHAT ARE THE TRAINING NEEDS OF BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS
TO IMPROVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION***

1. What kind of training have you received regarding inclusive education delivery?
2. What specific training programmes do you need to equip basic school teachers with the skills to support diverse learners in inclusive classroom?
3. What competences should be developed in pre-service and in-service training to improve inclusive education?
4. What strategies can be employed to train headteachers to support students with special educational needs?
5. What are the benefits of training headteachers on strategies for supporting students with special educational needs?
6. How can headteachers and special education professionals collaborate to support students with special educational needs [SEN]?
9. What strategies do headteachers and special education professionals employ to improve inclusive education?



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

CONCEPT ONE: PERCEPTIONS OF BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION.

1. How would you describe your headteacher's attitude towards students with diverse needs in your school?
2. In your opinion, how does your headteacher perceive inclusive education in your school?
3. How does your headteacher promote inclusive practices in your school?
4. How supportive is your headteacher toward implementing inclusive education in your school?
5. In your opinion, do you think your headteacher has adequate knowledge in inclusive. Please explain?

CONCEPT TWO: APPROACHES ADOPTED BY BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS TO FOSTER INCLUSIVITY IN BASIC SCHOOLS

1. What ways does your headteacher encourage collaboration among teachers to foster inclusive environment?
2. What approaches should your headteacher adopt to foster inclusivity in your school?
3. What specific actions has your headteacher taken to identify and support learners with special needs?
4. How often does your headteacher organize meetings or workshops to discuss inclusive education issues?
5. How does you headteacher encourage peer learning or mentoring related to inclusive education?
6. How does your headteacher engage parents or guardians of learners with special education needs?

CONCEPT THREE: CHALLENGES FACED BY BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY.

1. What challenges does your headteachers face in implementing inclusive education in your school?
2. What challenges does your headteachers face in involving parents and the community in inclusive education efforts?
3. What support systems are available to assist your headteachers, and are they sufficient?
4. How does these challenges face by your headteachers affects teaching and learning in your school?
5. Are there any cultural or societal beliefs within the community that make the headteacher's work difficult in implementing inclusive education?
6. What measures would you suggest to mitigate the challenges in your school?

CONCEPT FOUR: TRAINING NEEDS OF BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS TO IMPROVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY

1. Do you think your headteacher has the necessary leadership skills to implement inclusive education policy effectively?
2. What kind of training does your headteacher need to improve inclusivity?
3. In what areas do you think your headteachers need more training to effectively improve inclusive education?
4. How should your headteacher support you to improve inclusivity?
5. What type of professional development opportunities do you think should be made available to your headteachers?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDENTS.

CONCEPT ONE: PERCEPTIONS OF BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1. In your opinion, how does your headteacher perceive inclusive education in your school?
2. How does your headteacher treat your classmates with special needs?
3. How will you describe your headteachers attitude towards learners with disabilities?
4. How does your headteacher encourage learners to help and support one another?

CONCEPT TWO: APPROACHES ADOPTED BY BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS TO FOSTER INCLUSIVITY IN BASIC SCHOOLS

1. What things does your headteacher do to make sure every student is included in school activities?
2. How does your headteacher treat learners with disabilities?
3. Has your headteacher made any changes in the school to help learners with disabilities? What changes?
4. In your opinion, what more do you think your headteacher can do to help make the school better for learners with disabilities?

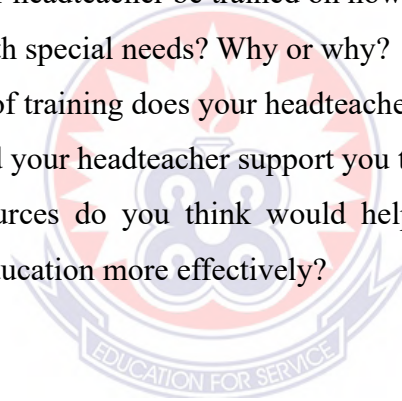
CONCEPT THREE: CHALLENGES FACED BY BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY.

1. What challenges does your headteacher face in implementing inclusive education in your school?
2. Are there enough teachers or helpers to give special attention to learners with disabilities?
3. Do you think your headteacher is able to support learners with special needs effectively?
4. Are there enough resources like books, chairs and other learning materials for learners with special needs?

5. How do these challenges affect students with diverse needs?
6. What measures would you suggest to your headteacher to mitigate the challenges in your school?

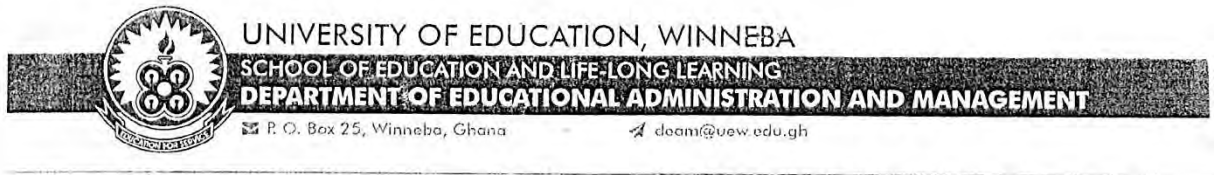
CONCEPT FOUR: TRAINING NEEDS OF BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS TO IMPROVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY

1. Do you think your headteacher knows enough about how to support all learners including those with special needs? Why or why not?
2. What do you think your headteacher should learn more to make the school more inclusive?
3. Do you think your headteacher needs more skills in leading teachers to support learners with special needs?
4. Should your headteacher be trained on how to work with parents to support students with special needs? Why or why?
5. What kind of training does your headteacher need to improve inclusivity?
6. How should your headteacher support you to improve inclusivity?
7. What resources do you think would help your headteacher implement inclusive education more effectively?



APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



DEAM/MPHIL/INTRO/VOL.1/82

Date: 31st July, 2024.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

We write to introduce **Mereku Gabriel Kwaku** a student pursuing a Master of Philosophy (Educational Administration and Management) Programme at the Department of Educational Administration and Management, University of Education, Winneba.

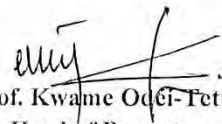
Mereku Gabriel Kwaku is currently working on a research project titled:

“ROLES OF HEADTEACHERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN FIVE BASIC SCHOOLS IN NKWANTA NORTH DISTRICT”.

We should be grateful if you could accord him the needed assistance to aid the completion of his research.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,


Prof. Kwame Odei-Fetey
Ag. Head of Department

cc: Graduate School