

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**TEACHERS' RESPONSIVENESS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL
INCLUSION PRINCIPLES OF THE COMMON CORE CURRICULUM IN
AGONA WEST MUNICIPALITY**

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UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Evans Oduro 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 original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature.....

Date.....

Supervisors' Declaration

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

Professor Richardson Addai-Mununkum, PhD (**Principal Supervisor**)

Signature.....

Date.....

Mr. Stephen Apau (**Co-Supervisor**)

Signature.....

Date.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dear wife, Miss Rebeca Otu, and my adorable children, Konrad Nana-Yaw Oduro and Audrey Efia Essilfua Oduro. Their love, care, and support made my study journey smooth and this dream a reality.

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GLOSSARY

C.R.C	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CCC	Common Core Curriculum
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
D.F.A	Dakar Framework for Action
E.F.A	Education For All
G.E.E	Gender Equality for Education
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
M.D.Gs	Millennium Development Goals
NaCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
S.D.Gs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations
UNGEI	United Nations Girls Education Initiative

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored teachers' responsiveness to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles within Ghana's Common Core Curriculum (CCC) in Junior High Schools. Employing an interpretivist paradigm and phenomenological design, the research was conducted in the Agona Swedru Municipality, involving 30 participants (teachers and students) selected through purposive sampling (Criterion). Data were collected via focus group discussions, interviews, and observations and analysed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that teachers' religious beliefs and personal values significantly influenced their engagement with GESI principles, leading to varied classroom practices. While some teachers promoted inclusivity through gender-neutral language and mixed-gender activities, others unintentionally perpetuated biases, such as favouring boys in mathematics class or marginalizing students with disabilities. The study also identified discriminatory practices, including body shaming and insensitive language, which contradicted GESI principles. The research highlights the need for professional development programmes to address unconscious biases and equip teachers with inclusive strategies. Recommendations include involving religious leaders in GESI policy development to ensure cultural sensitivity and collaboration with educational institutions to foster inclusive environments. The findings contribute to understanding the challenges and opportunities in implementing GESI principles within Ghana's CCC, highlighting the importance of teacher attitudes and systemic support in achieving equitable education.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

One of the major global goals and a prerequisite for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5 is promoting gender equality and social inclusion, (GESI). This principle advocates for giving equal opportunities and treatment to all, including the disabled and the marginalised, to ensure equitable, inclusive, and quality education for all. Many people have been marginalized due to discrimination, biases, inequalities, and have been trapped in an intergenerational cycle of poverty because of their gender, disability, age, ethnicity, or just where they live (Hamidaturrohmah & Ailulia, 2023a; Agyare-Kwabi, n.d.).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, particularly SDG 5, strongly emphasize gender equality. The objective is to eradicate violence, discrimination, and harmful practices that impede gender equality and women and girls' empowerment (Nwokeocha, 2021). In addition to being a basic human right, gender equality is also a precondition for a prosperous, peaceful, and sustainable world.

As stated in SDG 4, education is essential to achieving gender equality because it gives both girls and boys the chance to get a high-quality education, which enables them to fully engage in decision-making and contribute to the advancement of society (Nwokeocha, 2021). SDG 4 aims to guarantee that all girls and boys have access to free primary and secondary education of high quality. It highlights the significance of inclusive and equitable quality education for everyone (Nwokeocha, 2021). Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) calls for the promotion of inclusive and

equitable education to establish a setting in which all people, regardless of gender, have the chance to realize their full potential (Nwokeocha, 2021).

Education plays a key role in improving gender equality and social inclusion by removing barriers such as poverty, cultural norms, early marriage, and lack of resources that keep both boys and girls from pursuing education (UNESCO, 2017). Through education, people gain the confidence to question societal expectations surrounding gender roles, fostering an atmosphere in which both boys and girls can flourish and make positive contributions to the social and economic advancement of their communities (UNESCO, 2017). Individuals who receive education are also more equipped to confront discriminatory practices and promote gender equality in their communities (UNESCO, 2017).

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) refers to the conscious and systematic efforts aimed at ensuring that all individuals regardless of gender, ability, disability, ethnicity or socio-economic background have equal access to opportunities, resources, treatment and meaningful participation in social and educational processes (Agyare-Kwabi, 2013). In the educational context, GESI emphasises removing structural, cultural, and classroom barriers that hinder learners' participation and achievement (Hamidaturrohmah & Ailulia, 2023b). It promotes the adoption of inclusive pedagogies, gender sensitive classroom interactions and equitable learning environments that recognise learners' diverse needs and support their full development. It also functions as a guiding principle that requires teachers to be conscious of biases, discriminatory norms, and exclusionary practices (Agyare-Kwabi, 2013). The principles further demands that teachers ensure a classroom environment

that are safe, participatory, and fair for every learner, including those from marginalised or vulnerable group (Agyare-Kwabi, 2013).

A just and equitable society is based on the fundamental ideas of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) (Mosito et al., 2020). Growing awareness of how crucial it is to promote these values in educational settings, especially schools, has emerged in recent years. Schools are essential to mould young minds and get them ready for the challenges of the future. Schools can establish an atmosphere that supports diversity, cultivates empathy, and equips learners to become engaged and accountable citizens by endorsing gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). This approach also establishes the groundwork for a society that is more equitable and inclusive (Hamidaturrohmah & Ailulia, 2023a).

Like many other nations, gender differences and discrimination in schooling remain in Ghana (Alhassan & Odame, 2015). Girls frequently encounter obstacles that prevent them from completing their education, including early marriage, cultural expectations, lack of money, and discriminatory behaviours (Johnson & Kposowa, 2018). Children from marginalized communities, such as those from low-income families or those with disabilities, may also be excluded from mainstream education for a variety of reasons, including societal prejudices, a lack of infrastructure, inadequate teacher preparation, and teachers' and teaching materials' conscious or unconscious support of gender inequality in the classroom (Hirpa, 2021).

Given these, the Ministry of Education in Ghana incorporated gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) as a cross-cutting concern and tenet of the Common Core Curriculum in 2021. The introduction of the Common Core Curriculum aimed to improve the quality of education provided in Ghana and help achieve SDGs 4 and 5

while also bringing the country's educational system into line with international best practices (Mochiah & Adibi, 2023).

The Common Core Curriculum also seeks to offer a comprehensive and standardized education system that encourages gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) by introducing the values of inclusivity, equity, and non-discrimination into the curriculum (Mochiah & Adibi, 2023). In addition, the curriculum is made to meet the different learning needs of every learner, irrespective of their gender, socioeconomic status, or any other element that would cause them to be marginalized (Mahama, 2022). That is why the Common Core Curriculum is designed to overcome gender biases and stereotypes by making sure that the learning resources and content are inclusive and reflect a range of perspectives (Agyepong, 2023).

According to Agyepong (2023), the Common Core Curriculum emphasizes inclusive teaching techniques that address learners' various learning needs. To guarantee that every learner has equitable access to high-quality education, teachers are urged to implement learner-centred approaches, differentiated instruction, and inclusive assessment techniques and that is why the curriculum encourages equitable learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or ability, by implementing inclusive pedagogy (Mochiah & Adibi, 2023).

The curriculum again incorporates strategies to encourage both boys' and girls' enrolment and retention in schools, including mentorship programmes and targeted interventions to address specific challenges (Ghanabulletin, 2020). Incorporating these strategies within the Common Core Curriculum reflects a commitment to promoting gender equity in education and ensuring that girls and boys have equal opportunities to thrive academically. The interventions focus on addressing issues

such as gender-based discrimination, cultural barriers, or societal expectations that could hinder girls' and boys' academic success. Identifying and addressing these challenges through tailored programmes and support services, the Common Core Curriculum aims to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all. The implementation of gender equality and social inclusion principles in education has significant implications for individual development, societal progress, and economic growth (Agyepong, 2023), and research has consistently shown that when girls and boys receive equal educational opportunities, societies experience lower rates of poverty, improved health outcomes, reduced gender-based violence, and increased political participation (Juvonen et al., 2019). Similarly, promoting social inclusion ensures that marginalized groups have access to education and are empowered to contribute meaningfully to society (Gatta, 2006).

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping educational experiences and creating a positive learning environment for learners. They significantly influence students' experiences, attitudes, outcomes, and stereotypes and also promote more inclusive teaching practices (Arvelo-Rosales, 2022). Their understanding and awareness of gender equality and social inclusion principles directly impact how they interact with the learners, design lesson plans, create an inclusive classroom environment, and address individuals (Glass et al., 2008). However, without a clear understanding of gender equality and social inclusion principles, teachers may unknowingly perpetuate inequalities and biases within the classroom. This limited understanding can manifest in various ways, such as favouring male students over female students, perpetuating traditional gender roles, and failing to address diverse learning needs effectively.

Several factors can influence teachers' responsiveness to gender equality and social inclusion principles, including their attitudes and beliefs, training and professional development opportunities, as well as the contextual factors of the educational system (Agyare-Kwabi, n.d.). Therefore, understanding the current state of teachers' responsiveness to gender equality and social inclusion principles in the Common Core Curriculum in Ghana is vital for improving educational outcomes, promoting social justice, and ensuring that the Curriculum achieves its intended goals.

It is for this reason that this research study aims to explore the extent to which teachers in Ghana are putting into practice gender equality and social inclusion principles within the Common Core Curriculum. Examining teachers' perspectives, practices, challenges, and opportunities related to promoting gender equality and social inclusion, this study seeks to provide insights into the current state of affairs and identify potential areas for improvement. The findings of this research contribute to the existing body of knowledge on inclusive education in Ghana, inform policy, and provide recommendations for enhancing gender equality and social inclusion within the Common Core Curriculum.

1.2 Problem Statement

Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) have become central to global educational systems, with many researchers examining aspects such as gender stereotypes, bias, and gender-responsive pedagogy (Coron, 2020).

In Ghana, the Ministry of Education has integrated GESI as a key tenet of the Common Core Curriculum for Junior high schools in 2021, reflecting a commitment to creating an equitable, inclusive, and empowering educational system (Takyi et al., 2021). Teachers' adherence to GESI principles is not only a professional obligation

but also a national policy aimed at fostering inclusive classrooms that promote better academic and social outcomes for all students, thereby contributing to a more just and equitable society (Agyare-Kwabi, n.d.).

Despite the national emphasis on integrating GESI within the CCC, there is a significant lack of empirical evidence on how teachers interpret and apply GESI principles in their classroom practices, particularly in the Agona West Municipality, because anecdotes from teachers from the mass media suggests that teachers are not ensuring these principles in their classroom practices. While scholars have explored various aspects of GESI in the Ghanaian education context, a critical gap persists. For instance, Agbevanu et al. (2021) examined gender disparities in STEM participation, finding that socio-cultural norms and teacher biases discourage girls from pursuing science-related fields. Ayentimi et al. (2020) investigated teacher training programmes and noted a lack of adequate preparation in gender-responsive pedagogy, leading to inconsistent GESI implementation. Also, Juvonen et al. (2019) focused on inclusive education for students with disabilities, revealing systemic barriers such as inadequate resources and teacher attitudes. Lastly, Seshie (2019) explored classroom interactions, documenting how gendered language and role assignments reinforce inequality.

These studies, however, looks at GESI in their specifics such as Gender disparity in education, inclusive education and others. Also, they collectively highlight persistent challenges in translating GESI principles into practice. However, none specifically address teachers' responsiveness to GESI within the Common Core Curriculum, particularly in Agona West. This gap has practical implications for achieving Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality). Without a clear understanding of how teachers interpret and apply GESI principles,

there is a risk of perpetuating inequalities and biases in the classroom, which may undermine the CCC's objectives and hinder its progress toward inclusive education. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring teachers' responsiveness to GESI principles in their practices within the Agona Swedru Municipality. Employing qualitative methodology, the study aims to provide insight into current practices, challenges, and opportunities for promoting GESI in the CCC.

1.3 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' responsiveness to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles within the Common Core Curriculum (CCC) in the Agona West Municipality. Specifically, the study examined teachers' values, classroom practices, challenges and the influence of learner characteristics on their responsiveness to GESI.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research has the following objectives;

1. To explore how teachers' values influence their appreciation of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles of the Common Core Curriculum (CCC).
2. To identify how teachers' classroom practices promote Gender Equality and Social Inclusion principles of the Common Core Curriculum (CCC).
3. To identify teachers' classroom practices that contradict the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles of the Common Core Curriculum (CCC).
4. To explore how students' backgrounds influence teachers' adoption of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)-responsive teaching.

1.5 Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do teachers' values influence their appreciation of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion principles of the Common Core Curriculum?
2. How do teachers' classroom practices promote the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion principles of the Common Core Curriculum?
3. How do teachers' classroom practices contradict the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion principles of the Common Core Curriculum?
4. How do students' backgrounds influence teachers' adoption of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion-responsive teaching?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for multiple stakeholders, including teachers, headteachers, educational institutions, and policymakers, as it addresses the critical issue of promoting gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) within Ghana's Common Core Curriculum (CCC). By exploring teachers' responsiveness to GESI principles, the study has the potential to inform policy by providing evidence-based recommendations for improving GESI implementation in the CCC. These recommendations can guide the development of targeted interventions, training programs, and resource allocation to support teachers in creating more inclusive and equitable classrooms.

For teachers, this study sheds light on their pivotal role in fostering an inclusive learning environment. By identifying gaps and challenges in teachers' responsiveness to GESI principles, the study equips teachers with strategies to overcome barriers and enhance their pedagogical approaches. It also highlights effective teaching practices

that promote gender equality and social inclusion, enabling teachers to better address the diverse needs of their students.

For headteachers and educational institutions, the study offers a deeper understanding of the challenges teachers face in implementing GESI principles. This knowledge can inform decisions aimed at supporting teachers, such as providing professional development opportunities, resources and organising Peer Learning Community Programmes. By addressing these challenges, educational institutions can create a more supportive environment for teachers to implement GESI-responsive practices, ultimately benefiting students.

For students, the study contributes to the creation of a safe, respectful, and inclusive educational environment. Research consistently shows that students who feel valued and included are more likely to thrive academically and socially (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). By examining how teachers respond to GESI principles, the study identifies strategies and interventions that foster a positive learning experience for all students, regardless of their gender or social background.

For society as a whole, the study plays a crucial role in shaping societal norms and values. Education is a powerful tool for challenging gender stereotypes, discrimination, and exclusion. By promoting gender equality and social inclusion within the education system, this study contributes to breaking down barriers that perpetuate inequality, paving the way for a more equitable and just society.

1.8 Study Area

Agona West Municipality was a suitable place to conduct this research study because of its diverse socio-cultural educational landscape where hierarchical social structures

actively shape classroom interactions and teacher decision making. Also, its population's diversity, which includes both urban and rural communities, offers a broad sociocultural framework that a provide good ground to examine how teachers, understand, interpret and operationalise the GESI principles in their classroom practice.

Additionally, the various types of schools, both public and private of Agona Swedru's educational landscape which reflect a typical Ghanaian classroom also made this area a suitable place for the study. These schools offered important insights into how various school environments affect teachers' practices concerning the GESI principles by comparing the methods used by teachers in various educational environments to address issues concerning GESI, where it offered insightful information about how teachers' behaviours and attitudes towards GESI were influenced by the school environments.

Finally, hierarchical social structures like traditional gender roles which are deeply ingrained in Agona West Municipality society, where males are typically perceived as the breadwinners and women as carers who are responsible for supporting their families financially (Ampofo, 2017). Teachers may hold these traditional ideas about gender roles, and this may have an impact on how they feel about gender equality and social inclusion in the classroom (Frimpong-Adamtey, 2019). Teachers' reactions to promoting GESI may be influenced by these cultural viewpoints on gender equality and social inclusion, which may have an additional impact on the study.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

Geographically, the study was delimited to public and private Junior High Schools in Agona West Municipality, Central Region, Ghana. This focus allowed for an in-depth

examination of contextual factors such as personal values and resource disparities influencing GESI implementation. While findings may not be generalizable nationally, the municipality's socio-cultural diversity offered a microcosm of challenges and opportunities relevant to similar settings in Ghana.

The study further delimited its focus to teachers' responsiveness to GESI principles within the CCC, excluding other curriculum components. This specificity ensured a targeted analysis of how teachers interpret and operationalise inclusivity and equity mandates in their pedagogy, classroom management, and student interactions.

These delimitations were necessary to maintain methodological rigor and depth. Bounding the study geographically and topically helps the research generate complex insights into teachers' practices while acknowledging contextual constraints.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

Gender Equality: This is a state where males and females have equal rights, life prospects, and opportunities to shape their own lives and contribute to society.

Social Inclusion: This is the process of improving the terms of participation for disadvantaged people, through enhancing opportunities and access to resources.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI): This refers to a concept that addresses unequal relations experienced by people on the grounds of gender, ability, ethnicity, location, language, disability, or a combination of these dimensions.

Common Core Curriculum: They are a set of learning standards that outline the knowledge, skills, and competencies that students should acquire at each stage of their education. It is designed to provide a consistent and coherent framework for teaching across all schools in Ghana.

1.11 Organization of the Study

This thesis is structured into five chapters, each addressing a distinct aspect of the research:

1.12 Summary

Chapter One introduces the study by highlighting the importance of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in education, particularly within the Common Core Curriculum (CCC). It identifies the research gap regarding teachers' responsiveness to GESI principles and emphasizes the need for empirical evidence to address this gap. The chapter outlines the study's purpose, objectives, and research questions, focusing on exploring teachers' values, practices, and challenges in implementing GESI principles. It also discusses the significance of the study for teachers, students, educational institutions, and policymakers, as well as its potential to inform policy and contribute to theoretical understanding. Finally, the chapter defines key terms and provides an overview of the thesis structure. The next chapter analyses what literature has said about the phenomenon under study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is the literature review segment of the study, which provides an in-depth examination of the existing research and studies on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in the Common Core Curriculum. The review is organized under five key headings, including Gender Equality in Education, Social Inclusion in Education, Common Core Curriculum, Teachers' responsiveness to Gender Equality principles, and Teachers' responsiveness to Social Inclusion principles. It also includes the theoretical framework by Rogers (1995). Synthesizing the existing knowledge on these topics would enable this literature review to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues surrounding Teachers Responsiveness to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Principles of the Common Core Curriculum.

2.1 The Global Agenda for Gender Equality in Education

Many international agreements and organisations have been established to promote gender equality and the right to education. These include the 1999 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)(Gallego & María, 2023), the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (Lominashvili,2019)The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Vereinte Nationen,2003), the 2000 Dakar Declaration* on Education for All(Macura et al., 2023), the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration, and the 2015 UN Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development(Weiland et al., 2021). These instruments have created a robust international normative framework concerning achieving universal access to education free from all forms of exclusion or discrimination.

2.1.1 Agenda before 2015

The Dakar Declaration on Education for All and the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration challenged the international community and national governments to achieve gender equality in education, given the lack of emphasis on girls' education in state policies (Akmatalieva, 2022; Manion, 2012). Subsequently, governments and international organisations, such as the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), have endeavoured to advance gender equality throughout society and at educational levels. The international community initiated three initiatives aimed at achieving this goal: the UNGEI, the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration, and the 2000 Dakar Declaration on Education For All (EFA)(Peter et al., n.d.). The two frameworks that came out of the first two global agreements are the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All (DFA: EFA onwards) and the Indicators for Monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs Framework onwards). The states publicly committed to attaining gender parity in elementary and secondary education by 2005, and in Gender Equality in Education (GEE) by 2015, when they adopted it in 2000.

The UNGEI, the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration, and the 2000 Dakar Declaration on EFA were the three steps that the world community took to achieve this goal (Halisçelik & Soytaş, 2019). Two frameworks were created as a result of the first two international agreements: the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All (DFA: EFA onwards) and the Indicators for Monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs Framework onwards). The states made a public commitment to achieving gender parity in GEE by 2015 and in elementary and secondary education by 2005 when they approved them in 2000. Three global community-initiated initiatives were the UNGEI, the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration, and the 2000 Dakar Declaration on EFA(Suseelan et al., 2022).

2.1.3 The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs Framework)

Furthermore, the UN Millennium Declaration was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000 (UN Development Group 2003). At least 23 international organisations and 192 UN member states committed to achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015, drawing inspiration from the universal principles of equity, equality, and human dignity. The MDGs 2 and 3, which were derived from the EFA goals 2 and 5, are specifically focused on attaining gender equality, women's empowerment, and universal primary education (Kushnir & Nunes, 2022). In order to monitor progress towards the eight MDGs decided upon in the UN Millennium Declaration, the UN Office of the Secretary-General established 48 quantitative indicators that were compiled at the 2003 MDGs Framework (Zajda et al., 2006).

2.1.4 The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) of 2000

In an effort to assist nations in transitioning to GEE, the UN Secretary-General established the 'United Nations Girls' Education Initiative' in 2000 (Manion, 2012). In order to empower women and girls through transformative education, UNGEI is committed to increasing girls' access to education, improving its quality, and forming multi-stakeholder partnerships in this area (Saini et al., 2023). The EFA goals and the MDGs 2 and 3 are expanded upon by UNGEI. Its objective is to assist nations in moving towards gender equality and girls' education by including these issues within the post-2015 international education agenda of the SDGs (UNESCO, 2017).

2.1.5 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) Framework, Transforming Our World (2015)

The post-2015 agenda was contained in a resolution named ‘2015 Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs Framework onwards)’ that was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. According to (Browne (2017), 69 countries have committed to achieving the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 in order to build a future that is wealthier, more sustainable, and free from discrimination (Browne, 2017). These SDGs are building upon the lessons learned and the areas that the MDGs did not address (Kushnir & Nunes, 2022). The importance of education is highlighted by SDGs 4 and 5, which seek to achieve gender equality, women’s empowerment, and universal access to high-quality education. Moreover, it is believed that the other SDGs cannot be achieved without universal education (Halişçelik & Soytaş, 2019).

2.1.6 The framework for action on education 2030

The Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 was developed in 2015 during the World Education Forum (Mundial et al., 2016). With over 1,600 members from 160 countries, it symbolizes the education community’s commitment to a new educational vision over the next fifteen years. It departs from the lessons learned and progress made toward the MDGs and EFA goals since 2000 and instead draws on the issues still facing the 2030 agenda for education while reiterating the DFA: EFA and the new SDGs, committing to SDG4. In addition, the Education 2030 Framework for Action (Education 2030 Framework onwards) was adopted by 184 UNESCO Member States in Paris in 2015 to review and recommend indicators to track global progress toward the achievement of SDG4 and provide strategic guidelines to implement the post-2015 education agenda (Flores-Vivar & García-Peñalvo, 2023).

2.1.7 Gender equality in education

The social, economic, and political advancement of people as well as the growth of communities all depend on education, which is a fundamental human right. However, gender disparity in education is still a major problem that affects people on a personal, societal, and international level. A key aspect of human growth is gender equality in education, which allows people to realize their full potential and make positive contributions to their communities and societies. According to research, Education can lessen gender-based discrimination, increase economic possibilities, and improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities, making it a potent instrument for advancing gender equality (Akmatalieva, 2022).

Encouraging sustainable development and attaining social justice require gender equality in education. It covers fair learning opportunities, equal access to education, and the elimination of discrimination against women in educational institutions (Alon et al., 2020).

Gender parity and equity are seen as necessary but insufficient elements in the field of education to achieve gender equality (Hamidaturrohmah & Ailulia, 2023a; Coron, 2020; Alon et al., 2020). Many scholars contend that establishing gender equality in education, also known as substantive equality, begins with gender parity, or informal equality (Tsuruda, 2023; Yin et al., 2023; Alon et al., 2020).

Gender equality in education is an objective measure used to evaluate how girls and boys within a given school age range access and participate in educational activities (UNESCO, 2018; Yin et al., 2023). Its main goal is to count the proportion of people of both sexes who have equal access to education.

The idea of Gender Equality in Education (GEE) is used to measure gender equality in education. Its purpose is to evaluate the degree of gender equality in the educational system and its effect on the chances of boys and girls outside of school in the long run (V. Johnson et al., 2016). Prioritizing gender parity in enrolment numbers was the main emphasis of prior efforts, but more recently, attention has shifted to the quality of education and its wider societal ramifications (Unterhalter, 2010).

The GEE framework acknowledges that equitable access to education for boys and girls is not the only aspect of gender equality in education. It includes a thorough assessment of how well the educational system can promote gender equality within its structures and address discriminatory behaviours (Unterhalter, 2010). Doing this would help to foster an atmosphere that empowers women and girls both inside and outside of the classroom, throughout their educational journey (Lominashvili, 2019).

Traditionally, the main goal of initiatives to attain gender equality in education has been to guarantee that both genders have equal access to education. But this limited perspective ignores the calibre of education delivered and how that affects society as a whole. The notion that gender equality in education must take into account the educational experience and results for women and girls as well as enrolment statistics has gained traction in recent years (V. Johnson et al., 2016).

Achieving social justice and advancing equitable opportunities for all people, regardless of gender, depend heavily on gender equality in education. But the proportion of boys and girls enrolled in schools does not fairly represent the enduring social discriminatory mechanisms that sustain gender inequality within and outside of learning environments (Wilson, 2003). Therefore, it is crucial to concentrate on expanding educational opportunities while also enhancing its quality and

comprehending how they affect women's and girls' day-to-day lives (Sultana, 2008; ChildHope et al., n.d.).

Gender stereotypes and discriminatory behaviours must be eliminated from curricula, learning content, techniques and materials, school environment, and educational system governance in order to guarantee gender equality in education (Moisuc & Brauer, 2019; Eagly et al., 2020; Kotek et al., 2023). According to Aikman and Unterhalter, (2010), granting boys and girls the freedom to attend, learn from, and engage in a safe and inclusive environment is essential to attaining gender equality in education. In addition, it entails providing access to a variety of political, cultural, and economic opportunities as well as encouraging the growth of gender-sensitive and democratic principles (Unterhalter, 2010).

Gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices must be eliminated in order to provide gender-sensitive, high-quality education (V. Johnson et al., 2016). These practices can be found in areas like curricula, learning content, methods and materials, school environment, and educational system governance (Unterhalter, 2010).

According to (Unterhalter, 2010), attaining gender equality in education entails more than just having access to education. It includes establishing an inclusive atmosphere free from discrimination so that boys and girls can participate, learn, and attend school without hindrance. Additionally, it entails encouraging students to acquire democratic and gender-sensitive attitudes. People can take advantage of several political, cultural, and economic opportunities by doing this (Sultana, 2008).

Achieving gender equality in education (GEE) is defined by UNESCO as giving boys and girls the same opportunities to attend school, making sure that curricula and teaching methods are free of stereotypes, providing counselling services free from

discrimination based on gender, promoting equality in academic qualifications and learning outcomes, and giving both genders equal opportunities for employment based on experience and qualifications (Akmatalieva, 2022).

Eliminating biases or inequities between boys and girls in the educational system is the aim of GEE. This entails making sure that all genders have equal access to education and establishing a welcoming, gender-neutral learning environment. Gender discrimination should not be a factor in the provision of counselling services.

GEE further highlights how critical it is to attain parity in academic credentials and learning outcomes. This implies that boys and girls ought to have equal access to educational opportunities and acknowledgment for their accomplishments. Furthermore, GEE seeks to offer equitable employment chances to people of all genders who possess comparable training and experience (Bhatta, 2016).

The subject of gender equality in education is one that is frequently discussed, and many scholars have offered their opinions on it. The concept of gender equality in education has been aided by (Unterhalter, 2010; Bhatta, 2016; Agbevanu et al., 2021).

The notion that every person, regardless of gender, should have equal chances and outcomes in the educational system and beyond is included in the concept of gender equality in education (Akmatalieva, 2022). In 2008, USAID put up a comprehensive plan for achieving gender equality in education that includes four key components: equal access, equal learning opportunities, equal educational outcomes, and equal external outcomes (Stromquist et al., 2019). USAID has identified two factors: equality of access and equality in the learning process (Stromquist et al., 2019). The aforementioned elements centre on guaranteeing that every person has an equal chance to obtain an education and be in an equitable learning environment (Stromquist et al., 2019).

2.1.8 The importance of gender equality in education

Achieving social justice and advancing sustainable development critically depends on gender equality in education. Because it affects people individually, in groups, and throughout society, gender equality in education is extremely important. When people have equal access to opportunities, information, and skills in education, gender equality empowers people. According to Yin et al. (2023), gender-based barriers to girls' and boys' educational opportunities prevent them from reaching their full potential. Achieving social justice and advancing sustainable development critically depends on gender equality in education. Because it affects people individually, in groups, and throughout society, gender equality in education is extremely important.

When people have equal access to opportunities, information, and skills in education, gender equality empowers people. According to Yin et al. (2023), gender-based barriers to girls' and boys' educational opportunities prevent them from reaching their full potential. This gives people the freedom to follow their dreams without being constrained by expectations or social standards. People who have had an education are better able to think critically, solve problems, and acquire the knowledge needed for success and personal development. Additionally, it helps people make wise choices regarding their relationships, jobs, and lives (Pullu & Gömleksiz, 2021). This gives individuals the resources they need to overcome obstacles in both their personal and professional lives. Giving both boys and girls the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to realize their full potential would require gender equality in education to empower these individuals (Akmatalieva, 2022). When everyone has equitable access to education, they develop the critical thinking skills necessary to properly assess information (Kovpik, 2023).

Economic development and gender equality in education are closely related. Several studies have demonstrated the substantial benefits of investing in girls' education for both economic growth and the eradication of poverty (Angoro, 2018). Girls are more likely to join the workforce, make more money, and boost economic productivity when they receive high-quality education (Mazhar, 2022). Additionally, educated women are more likely to devote a bigger percentage of their income to providing for their families' needs, such as their children's education and healthcare (Bertrand, 2013). Higher living standards and general economic growth are the results of this investment cycle.

International institutions like the World Bank and UNESCO have acknowledged investing in girls' education as a major factor in economic success (Fiske, 2012; Solesin, 2018). According to Fiske (2012), educating girls has a good effect on society overall in addition to helping individuals. Also, according to Archer (2006), reducing the gender gap in education is predicted to raise per capita income over the following ten years by 9% in middle-income countries and 14% in low-income countries.

The greater engagement of women in the workforce is one of the primary reasons that investing in girls' education bolsters economic development. Girls can obtain better work possibilities and higher-paying positions by obtaining an education, which gives them the skills and knowledge they need (Azamatova, 2021). According to Spratt and Charles'Will' Lewis, (2020), women with greater education have a higher employment rate and make more money than women with little or no education. A higher level of economic production and output results from women's increasing labour force participation.

Social justice, a basic idea intended to guarantee equity and fairness in society, is also ensured by gender equality. The goal of achieving gender equality in education is essential to the advancement of social justice. Education provides a means of promoting equity and inclusivity for people, irrespective of their gender identity or presentation (Zajda et al., 2006). Societies can endeavour to eliminate systemic bias and establish a fairer and more equal society by tackling and eradicating gender gaps in education. In order to create a more welcoming and inclusive society, gender equality in education works to combat damaging gender conventions and stereotypes (Akmatalieva, 2022).

2.1.9 Gender disparities in access to education

Gender inequality in education is the word used to describe the differences between boys and girls with regard to educational opportunities, achievements, and experiences (Hossain & Tisdell, 2005). This subject has generated a great deal of research and discussion because of its importance for social equality, economic advancement, and personal well-being. Inequality in education can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including disparities in career opportunities, academic performance, participation in specific programs of study, and educational accessibility (Gaye et al., 2010).

The effects of gender differences in education are extensive, affecting individuals, groups, and entire nations. Denying girls the opportunity to go to school limits their opportunities for personal development, social and economic success (Borgonovi & Han, 2021). Refusing girls' education contributes to gender inequality since it is a basic human right that gives people power (Alhassan & Odame, 2015). Moreover, while gender inequalities in education restrict women's ability to contribute to the

labour and society, they hinder economic growth and sustainable development. Understanding what causes gender inequalities in education is essential to finding a solution to this problem and advancing gender equality in educational settings(Hossain & Tisdell, 2005).

One of the main causes of the gender gap in education is cultural and social norms that place a greater importance on a man's education than on a woman. Girls' enrolment and retention in school are hampered by these standards, which can give rise to discriminatory attitudes, gender-based stereotypes, and limited access to educational resources(Hossain & Tisdell, 2005). For instance, in many developing nations, girls are expected to put more importance on taking care of the family or getting married young than going to school(Alhassan & Odame, 2015). As a result, girls have lower literacy rates than boys.

The gender gap in education can be attributed in large part to access to education. Girls have historically encountered barriers in their pursuit of an education because of discriminatory regulations, financial constraints, and cultural standards. Many civilizations place a larger value on domestic responsibilities than education for girls, which has led to lower enrolment and higher dropout rates among them than among boys (Alhassan & Odame, 2015).

Financial challenges are other variables contributing to the gender gap in education. Poverty remains a significant obstacle to obtaining a quality education, particularly for girls. Due to financial constraints, some families choose to send their boys to school while keeping their females at home to help out around the house or make additional money (Morrison et al., 2007). Unfunded liabilities also lead to inadequate

infrastructure, such as gender-specific restrooms, which discourage female attendance (Komabu-Pomeyie, 2023).

Furthermore, institutional variables in educational institutions have the potential to sustain gender inequities. Inequitable treatment of different genders can be strengthened by biased policies and behaviours. For instance, regulations in some nations might limit females' access to particular subjects or their educational options because of their cultural or religious convictions (Suseelan et al., 2022). Furthermore, biased classroom practices that favour males over girls can arise from inadequate training for teachers in gender-responsive pedagogy (Klees et al., 2012).

Furthermore, variations in gender can also be observed in academic performance. Research has shown that disparities in learning styles or a student's aptitude for a given subject can account for differences in academic achievement between males and girls (Alcalde-Rubio et al., 2020). These differences have been attributed to a variety of variables, including socialization processes, teacher biases, and institutional practices. According to Borgonovi and Han, (2021), gender-based prejudices and preconceptions can also influence how teachers evaluate and hold students accountable, which may have an effect on their academic achievement.

In addition to variations in access and academic achievement, gender gaps can also be observed in the study fields and career paths selected. Girls have historically been underrepresented in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) sectors, which have historically been dominated by men (Aziabah, 2018). This underrepresentation could be attributed to a variety of things, including unconscious biases in educational institutions, a lack of role models, and cultural expectations (Borgonovi & Han, 2021).

2.1.10 Ghana's gender gap in education

Discrimination against women has long been the main cause of the gender gap in educational attainment, particularly in countries like Ghana. According to Alhassan and Odame, (2015), a significant portion of the country's youth do not attend primary school, and boys are typically given preference over girls. The Ghanaian society, where women have traditionally been responsible for taking care of the home, is the source of this gender bias (Alhassan, 2013).

In many Ghanaian communities, women are typically seen as secondary members of society (Dei, 1994). Women and girls currently have fewer access to opportunities, including education, as a result of their marginalization. Cultural traditions that support men's education contribute to the gender gap in educational attainment because men are typically expected to be the family's major breadwinners (Amu, 2005).

The ramifications of this gender bias are extensive and long-lasting. Girls who are not allowed to attend school are more likely to be poor, have bad health, and have limited options in life. However, women who have received more education are more likely to be in favour of regional and national economic development (Dei, 1994).

For a number of social, cultural, religious, and financial reasons, the girl child was left behind when Western education was founded in Ghana (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Although women have the right to an education and it is a fundamental human right, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this is not always the case in Ghana (Amabo, 2017).

The statement reads: ‘The education of a girl child is contingent upon her political and economic freedom’ Dovari, (2023) draws attention to the crucial connection between girls’ education and women’s empowerment. This illustrates the link between gender equality and females’ access to education. For a number of social, cultural, religious, and financial reasons, the girl child was left behind when Western education was founded in Ghana (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Although women have the right to an education and it is a fundamental human right, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this is not always the case in Ghana (Amabo, 2017). The quote: ‘The education of a girl child is contingent upon her political and economic freedom’ Dovari, (2023) highlights the critical relationship that exists between women’s empowerment and girls’ education (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). This demonstrates the connection between women’s access to education and gender equality.

2.1.11 Historical background of gender disparity in education in Ghana

Understanding the gender gap in girls’ education is necessary to comprehend the notable gender imbalance in Ghana’s educational system. A history of formal education in the country states that the colonial administration had a major influence on the gender gap in schooling. Girls’ social and economic disadvantages stemmed from their marginalization (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008).

The gender gap in educational achievement during the colonial era was especially evident in Ghana. The nation’s efforts to increase female education have been impeded, in part, by the establishment of schools. In the colonial era, schools were only constructed for boys, and enrolment in primary schools was based on social position, thus not all girls had the opportunity to attend (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008).

Formal education was introduced by Christian missionaries, but parents disapproved of it and saw it as a danger to their culture, religion, and beliefs about girls' education. Ghana's gender gap in female education was made worse by this resistance (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008).

The colonial authorities in Ghana were largely responsible for the gender gap in females' education. The male-dominated British colonial administration reinforced Ghana's patriarchal society. As a result, girls experienced marginalization in the educational system and were less fortunate in the social and economic domains (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Moreover, colonial rulers usually favoured the education of boys over girls because they believed that boys would rule the country in the future. The gender gap in education grew even worse as a result.

In Ghana, women's education has not kept up with men's, partly because of the colonial foundation of institutions. The dearth of inclusive educational programs and female-only schools prevented many girls from receiving a formal education. In addition, resistance to formal education from cultural and religious groups significantly limited the opportunities available to girls. Moreover, colonial rulers usually favoured the education of boys over girls because they believed that boys would rule the country in the future. The gender gap in education grew even worse as a result (Alhassan, 2013).

Particularly in traditional communities, parents often worry about the potential effects of Western education on their daughters. Their concern that sending their daughters to school will corrupt them and make the family unstable is what gave rise to this belief. According to many parents, education contradicts their values and way of life (Alhassan, 2013).

In these traditional cultures, women's roles are primarily focused on taking care of the family and the home. Therefore, the idea of sending daughters to school could be seen as a challenge to gender norms and the stability of the community as a whole. Parents could worry that their daughters would be exposed to ideas and values that differ from their own, potentially leading to the breakdown of the family (Alhassan, 2013).

Christian missions, including the Wesley Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Anglican missions, played a significant role in the establishment of Ghana's educational system (Berman, 1974). While their main objective was to uphold church doctrine rather than adjust to the socio-cultural realities of the area, these missions were crucial in bringing Western education to the nation. Throughout the 1800s, the British government attempted to establish formal education in Ghana, but many parents opposed it, believing that Western education would undermine their traditional ways of life. As a result, some parents were reluctant to enrol their children in primary school, choosing to stick to their customs (Berman, 1974).

Parents who saw the benefits of a Western education enrolled their children, especially the males, in schools, despite the fact that girls' educational options were limited because parents were not under any pressure from colonial missionaries to enrol their daughters in school. Colonial laws and practices frequently served to legitimize preexisting biases and gender norms, further marginalizing women and girls in a range of contexts (Berman, 1974).

2.1.14 Gender stereotypes and biases in the classroom

Gender stereotypes and biases have long been a cause for concern in educational settings. These deeply rooted biases in cultural norms can have a significant impact on students' learning experiences and academic advancement (Kotek et al., 2023).

Stereotypes and biases are preconceived notions and expectations about a person's traits, behaviour, and interests based on their gender. Such stereotypes can have a detrimental effect on students' career aspirations, self-worth, and academic success(Kotek et al., 2023).

One significant area where gender stereotypes and biases are evident in the classroom is in the beliefs and attitudes of the teachers themselves(Eagly et al., 2020). Teachers who adhere to traditional gender stereotypes may unknowingly give preference to boys over girls or assume that girls will perform lower than boys in a given subject (Carlana, 2019). Teachers may, for example, call on boys more frequently than girls during class discussions or provide boys with more feedback than girls(Heilman et al., 2024). These subtle differences could play a role in the unequal learning opportunities that are specific to a gender.

Another significant area where stereotypes and biases are evident is in the expectations teachers have of their students. Research suggests that teachers might hold different expectations for students who identify as male or female(Carlana, 2019). It is often expected that girls will perform better in the humanities and languages, while boys will perform better in subjects like science and math(Kotek et al., 2023). Due to these discriminatory assumptions, there may be differences in the chances for engagement, feedback, and encouragement between teachers and students depending on the gender of the student body. It might also have an impact on how students feel about their talents and self. For example, stereotype threats might impact females' performance in arithmetic-related activities if they adopt the assumption that women are not as proficient in math as boys(Kotek et al., 2023). Nevertheless, guys who feel they have to live up to this stereotype may feel pressure to fit in, even if they

have no interest in or skill for athletics. It might also have an impact on how students feel about their talents and self. For example, stereotype threats might impact females' performance in arithmetic-related activities if they adopt the assumption that women are not as proficient in math as boys (Carlana, 2019). Nevertheless, guys who feel they have to live up to this stereotype may feel pressure to fit in, even if they have no interest in or skill for athletics.

Islam and Asadullah, (2018) identified peer pressure as an additional manifestation of gender bias and stereotypes. Due to societal norms that value masculinity over femininity, boys might be more likely to engage in competitive activities or to dissuade women from engaging in specific activities. Boys who absorb stereotypically masculine ideas may have negative effects such as increased aggression or limited emotional expressiveness (Pattnaik, 1997). Girls may feel underappreciated or unwelcome in fields where males predominate, such as science, ICT, and mathematics, as a result of these peer relationships (Kotek et al., 2023). Peer relationships in the classroom may also be impacted. According to research, students may be more inclined to seek out friends or colleagues of the same gender, which could reinforce gender stereotypes in the classroom (Cuddy et al., 2007). Restricting possibilities for cross-gender socialization and collaboration, gender-based isolation might uphold traditional gender roles and norms. Girls who encounter these prejudices may become less confident in themselves or stop attending school entirely (Kerkhoven et al., 2016). Furthermore, according to Carlana, (2019), these biases can prevent girls from pursuing STEM-related education, which maintains gender gaps in a variety of industries.

Addressing gender biases and preconceptions in educational environments is the primary way to improve gender equality in education. Research has demonstrated that gender disparities often result from cultural norms and beliefs influencing how men and women view education (Arvelo-Rosales, 2022). By means of targeted endeavours such as curriculum modifications and teacher training courses, educational institutions can confront biases and stereotypes and cultivate a welcoming atmosphere where every pupil experiences encouragement and gratitude (Kerkhoven et al., 2016).

Another strategy is to make sure that all genders have equal access to educational opportunities and resources. In order to eliminate obstacles that keep girls from attending school, like a lack of transportation or worries about their safety, it is imperative that they have equal access to educational resources, tools, and extracurricular activities as boys. Proper financing can lead to the improvements in infrastructure and female scholarships, policymakers can contribute to the reduction of the gender gap in education (Klees et al., 2012). Unterhalter & Aikman (2007) claim that raising the enrolment rates of women and enhancing their academic performance requires policies and initiatives aimed at removing these obstacles. Another strategy is to guarantee equal access to resources and educational opportunities for all genders. Giving girls access to the same educational resources, tools, and extracurricular activities as boys is necessary to remove barriers that prevent them from attending school, such as a lack of transportation or concerns about their safety. Policymakers can help close the gender gap in education by providing financing for infrastructure improvements and scholarships for females (Fiske, 2012). Unterhalter & Aikman, (2007) assert that policies and programs designed to eliminate these barriers are essential for increasing females' enrolment rates and improving their academic outcomes. Ensuring that all genders have equal access to resources and

educational opportunities is another tactic. Eliminating obstacles that keep girls from attending school, like a lack of transportation or worries about their safety, requires giving them access to the same educational resources, tools, and extracurricular activities as boys. By funding infrastructure upgrades and female scholarships, policymakers can contribute to the reduction of the gender gap in education (Fiske, 2012). According to Unterhalter and Aikman (2007), boosting the enrolment rates of girls and enhancing their academic performance depend on policies and initiatives aimed at removing these obstacles.

Gender-sensitive teaching strategies can also be used in the classroom to advance gender equality in education. This means using inclusive language, diverse examples, and cooperative learning activities to meet the needs of all students, regardless of gender identification. Integrating gender perspectives into teaching resources and pedagogical strategies can lead teachers to encourage students to challenge preconceptions and promote gender equality both within and outside of the classroom. This promotes critical thinking abilities and diversity in the classroom while also helping to establish a supportive learning environment (Zaman, 2008).

2.2 Social Inclusion in Education

The goal of social inclusion in education is to guarantee that everyone, regardless of background, ability, or socioeconomic level, has equal chances and access to education. According to Koutsouris et al.(2020), inclusive education is the process of recognizing and meeting the various needs of all students by fostering more engagement in communities, cultures, and learning while lowering exclusion from and within the educational system. With a unified vision that encompasses all children of the proper age range and a conviction that it is the state's duty to educate all

children, it entails changes and revisions in content, approaches, structure, and techniques (Juvonen et al., 2019). It is a calculated strategy meant to help every youngster succeed in their educational endeavours. The idea of inclusion is based on the conviction that all students have the right to recognition, belonging, and visibility in their community. Put another way, kids 'don't have to 'earn' their way' into society or education; instead, they can engage as full members right away (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018). Furthermore, for societies to be inclusive, they must adapt, especially in terms of how they view their obligations to all children. These adjustments call for altering the perceptions of children with and without disabilities, removing obstacles that children with disabilities encounter, and increasing the opportunities that are open to them. According to Juvonen et al., (2019), the inclusion movement aims to build inclusive societies that value, respect, and embrace diversity in addition to altering educational practices and increasing access (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018).

According to the inclusionary worldview, education is both essential and a human right. The body of research typically concludes that the cornerstones of inclusion are social justice, human rights, and equal opportunities (Arvelo-Rosales, 2022; Juvonen et al., 2019; Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018).

Due to the plethora of definitions put out by academics, there are several meanings of inclusive education (Juvonen et al., 2019). There is no one dimension of inclusiveness, not even among nations or educational institutions (Bhatta, 2016). Despite the international need for inclusion, Assefa et al., (2021) reminds us that there is no coherent inclusive definition. Once more, according to Qvortrup and Qvortrup, (2018), there is no concrete, widely accepted concept of inclusion. Because of this

phenomenon's complexity, there is a risk that its manifestations will vary (Juvonen et al., 2019).

Arvelo-Rosales (2022) defines inclusive education as a strategy for achieving maximum educational equity for individuals with exceptionalities in terms of instruction, assistance, and access within a mainstream educational setting. This definition emphasizes embracing all students and reforming the educational system. Conversely, inclusion is defined by Demircuc-Kunt et al. (2018) as a militant assessment and pedagogical and curriculum reform inside the educational system. Mittler goes on to say that the concept of inclusion should emphasize adapting the educational system to the unique requirements of students with disabilities rather than merely placing them in regular classrooms.

There has been a shift in inclusive education practices recently. Contributing to the intricate world of inclusion, Jury et al. (2023) described inclusive education as acknowledging each child's uniqueness and providing education within their community regardless of that difference (cultural, religious, societal, etc.). Furthermore, according to Allen et al. (2018), inclusive education occurs when peers without disabilities and those with disabilities have their needs met on a platform of acceptance and belonging. This changes the conversation from one about the institutions and structures of society to one about change for the benefit of everybody. As a result, this aims to boost general education's social contract chances (Allen et al., 2018).

Chapman et al. (2011) propose a framework for characterizing inclusion regarding disability and 'special educational needs.' According to this paradigm, teaching students with impairments is the main goal of inclusive education. Due to its capacity

to accommodate the challenges associated with educating children with disabilities, it is the most widely accepted definition of inclusion in the majority of nations (Kelles-Viitanen & Shrestha, 2011). This typology's opponents question the approach's value, claiming that by emphasizing the unique needs of children with disabilities, the needs of their counterparts without disabilities are being overlooked. hapman et al. (2011) advocate for a change in emphasis from 'special educational needs' to 'participation and support system.' Even while those who oppose this strategy raise legitimate

Annan (2016) further emphasized that inclusion concerned all populations at risk of exclusion. According to Cid-Samamed et al.(2022), inclusion is seen as a way to end vulnerable groups' marginalization and bias. When it comes to education, inclusion encompasses populations such as kids with disabilities, kids with behavioural issues, and kids from underprivileged neighbourhoods whose access to education is at risk.

Also, inclusion was defined by Annan (2016) as the advancement of an inclusive school. According to this typology, inclusion involves creating a common school for all students, irrespective of their differences, to guarantee quality instruction and learning.

Furthermore, education for all was characterized as inclusion by Annan (2016). This pattern results from the international community's inability to meet the goals established at the Dakar summit. There have been complaints over the Education for All declaration's failure to provide priority to people with disabilities (Mundial et al., 2016). Accordingly, emphasis was placed on the need for an inclusive educational system that serves all students, particularly those with impairments.

Once again, inclusive education is described in the Education for All Declaration as ensuring that everyone has access to education while fostering equity (Mundial et al., 2016). In the end, this calls for a procedure that attends to kids' various requirements by increasing their involvement and decreasing their exclusion from the educational system.

Some conditions have to be met for a school to be deemed inclusive. Despite their differences, inclusive schools, according to Mosito et al. (2020), share certain characteristics. According to Shutaleva et al. (2023), inclusive education aims to help students with a disability or those that feel like they are excluded. But when all students, despite their differences, feel accepted, this sense of belongingness can be attained (Annan, 2016). This implies that instead of being kept apart from their classmates without disabilities, children with disabilities should attend normal schools.

Individual results are the main focus of inclusive education. According to (Shutaleva et al., 2023), the services offered by inclusive education ought to be cantered on the needs of each individual rather than their label. Because of this feature, learning objectives must be customized to each person's unique learning requirements. Annan (2016) assert that inclusive education is diverse. This feature of inclusive education guaranteed that all students, disabled or not, received an education in groups that included all students in proportionately natural ways. Therefore, inclusive education recognizes that different learning objectives apply to heterogeneous groups. A caring community that is considerate of everyone's needs must be established by inclusive education (Kelles-Viitanen & Shrestha, 2011).

2.2.1 Significance of social inclusion in education

Ensuring equal access to high-quality education for all people, irrespective of their ability or background, requires social participation in the educational process (Levasseur et al., 2022). To do this, an atmosphere that values, respects, and encourages each student on their learning path must be established (Q. Li et al., 2023). Creating an inclusive culture that acknowledges and treats each student's individual needs and experiences is the focus of this concept, which goes beyond just integrating excluded groups into mainstream classrooms (Levasseur et al., 2022). Studies have indicated that encouraging social inclusion in education helps to create a more cohesive and inclusive society in addition to providing benefits to individual pupils (Ozili, 2023).

Promoting diversity and multiculturalism in educational settings is essential to social inclusion. Valuing diversity and providing opportunities for children from different cultural backgrounds to learn alongside one another can make schools to help students develop understanding, empathy, and respect (Kymlicka, 2021). Schools can help students deal with issues of discrimination, stereotypes, prejudices, and exclusion based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, or gender identity by creating an inclusive learning environment. Studies have indicated that when students experience a sense of belonging and acceptance for their unique identity, they are more likely to participate actively in educational activities, form wholesome relationships with their teachers and peers, and perform better academically (Tang et al., 2023). As per Jury et al. (2023), inclusive education involves appreciating diversity and encouraging every student to fully engage in the educational process. The development of critical abilities like empathy, communication, and teamwork is intimately related to social inclusion in education. Teachers may assist students in

becoming successful in a world that is becoming more varied and linked by establishing an inclusive school culture that emphasizes cooperation and respect for one another. As stated by (Lidia et al., 2024), inclusive education fosters students' social and emotional growth in addition to their academic success.

Creating inclusive learning environments that meet the different needs of students is one way that social inclusion in education helps to address issues of discrimination and inequality (Li & Singh, 2022). When it comes to characteristics like colour, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or handicap, schools can assist lessen the gaps in educational attainment (Li & Singh, 2022). According to Polat, (2011), advancing social justice and guaranteeing equal opportunities for all students depends on inclusive education.

Additionally, the beneficial effects of inclusive education include improved self-esteem, academic success, and student wellbeing(Collins, 2003). Studies have indicated that students are more likely to participate actively in their studies and do better academically when they feel included and supported in their learning environment(Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Schools may support students in thriving academically and realizing their full potential by fostering a friendly and inclusive environment. Furthermore, it has been discovered that inclusive schools encourage good social relationships between students and raise their levels of wellbeing and satisfaction(Shutaleva et al., 2023). Beyond the classroom, inclusive education has several advantages. Schools that are inclusive work to lessen stigma and bias against students who have disabilities or other distinctions (Annan, 2016). More acceptance and comprehension within the larger community may result from this. Furthermore, inclusive education supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN,

particularly SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities and SDG 4: Quality Education (Browne, 2017). Students are more inclined to join in class discussions, work with peers on group projects, and ask teachers for help when they need it when they feel socially included in the classroom. Students from a variety of backgrounds graduate at faster rates and with greater academic accomplishment when they feel like they belong and are connected (Galton & Simon, 2023).

2.2.2 Barriers to social inclusion in the classroom

Education that aims to provide equal opportunities for all students and foster an environment where each student is valued, respected, and supported regardless of their identities, backgrounds, or skills must include social inclusion in the classroom (Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2018). Teachers play a critical role in furthering social inclusion by fostering an inclusive learning environment that celebrates variety and promotes equality (Romanova, 2020). However, several barriers could prevent social inclusion in the classroom from happening, especially regarding gender equality.

Teachers' gender stereotypes and biases are a major barrier to social inclusion in the classroom, limiting students' educational prospects and impeding their overall development. Allen et al. (2018) state that gender biases in the classroom can take many different forms, such as assigning assignments or participating in activities based on the gender of the students. For example, guys may be assigned physical strength or competition duties, whereas girls are more likely to be given domestic tasks or nurturing-related activities. Due to the perpetuation of established gender norms, these practices may restrict students' prospects for learning and growth.

Moreover, biases held by teachers may influence the gender-based expectations that they have for their students. According to research, teachers frequently have lower

expectations for girls' academic performance than they do for boys, which can harm girls' academic achievement (Jury et al., 2023). On the other hand, boys who defy conventional notions of masculinity could encounter unfavourable treatment from their classmates and teachers (Eagly et al., 2020). It is critical to acknowledge that these biases are frequently unintended and unconscious. Teachers may be unaware of how their actions affect students or how their own views affect the dynamics in the classroom.

Also, inclusive education places a strong emphasis on diversity and fairness in the classroom, working to guarantee that all students have equal access to chances for growth and learning (Shutaleva et al., 2023). Nonetheless, attempts to promote social inclusion may be hampered if instructional materials and resources do not fairly reflect the diversity of pupils in the classroom. Studies have indicated that when students from underrepresented groups see themselves represented in the curriculum, it affirms their experiences and gives them a sense of kinship with the material being taught (Arvelo-Rosales, 2022).

Additionally, a lack of diversity in instructional materials can reinforce preexisting power relations in the classroom by fostering stereotypes and biases. The persistent underrepresentation or misrepresentation of particular groups in educational materials may convey the idea that these groups' viewpoints are less significant or worthwhile. According to Jones, (2019), this may negatively affect students' feelings of self-worth and community inside the institution.

Again, attempts to create an inclusive classroom atmosphere can be seriously hampered by inadequate teacher training on issues of gender equality and social inclusion. It may be difficult for teachers to adequately help every student in their

learning process if they lack the knowledge and abilities to address diversity and equality issues (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2023). Negative effects on student learning results may result from teachers who are not trained in gender equality and social inclusion. According to research, students from underrepresented groups may do worse academically, become less engaged, and feel excluded when teachers are ill-prepared to handle diversity-related concerns (Kessels & Van Houtte, 2022). Thus, funding teacher preparation initiatives that emphasize fostering diversity can result in better learning results for every student.

2.2.4 Promoting a positive classroom climate for all students

According to Khalfaoui et al.(2020), the classroom climate is an important component of the educational experience since it reflects the opinions of the students about their learning environment. Students' perceptions of the level of difficulty of the course, their interactions with peers and the teachers, and their participation in class activities are all included (Khalfaoui et al., 2020a). A supportive and inclusive learning environment can significantly impact students' academic performance, motivation, and general well-being. To achieve this, a healthy classroom atmosphere is necessary (Li & Singh, 2022).

A positive classroom atmosphere includes a mutual respect system, a feeling of community, and open communication between teachers and students (Ying et al., 2023). It is characterized by fruitful interactions, such as those between students and teachers (Ying et al., 2023). These exchanges are essential to helping the students develop a sense of engagement and community. Research shows that a classroom with a supportive learning atmosphere can help students become more motivated, perform better academically, and grow as social workers (Hung, 2017; Faroji et al., 2024). One

of a teacher's most important responsibilities is to create and maintain a positive classroom environment. They may establish a friendly and inclusive atmosphere by promoting positive relationships, demanding active participation, and allowing students to take ownership of their education (Faroji et al., 2024; Li & Singh, 2022). Teachers can also be positive role models for their students by acting with empathy, understanding, and respect. As a result, the classroom atmosphere will be encouraging and supportive (Hasnah, 2017).

Creating a positive and healthy learning environment in the classroom requires work and intentionality. It is imperative that teachers recognize the importance of classroom climate and take proactive measures to create a friendly, inclusive, and conducive learning environment. This can entail setting clear expectations and goals for student behaviour and academic achievement, providing them with direction and a feeling of purpose. Teachers can give their students opportunities for involvement and engagement through activities like group projects and class debates, which foster confidence and active learning (Li & Singh, 2022). Additionally, by assessing each student's individual strengths and limitations and providing direction and encouragement when needed, they can offer students emotional support and feedback. Finally, by fostering positive relationships between students and their teachers as well as among themselves, they may foster a sense of community and establish an inclusive and collaborative learning environment in the classroom (Sakarneh, n.d.).

A positive learning environment in the classroom is mostly dependent on the relationships between students as well as the interactions between teachers and students. According to Hendrickson (2018) students are more likely to be motivated and active in class if they feel that their peers are supportive of them and provide a

sense of friendship. In addition to facilitating group work opportunities and fostering collaboration among students, teachers can foster a sense of community in the classroom (Hendrickson, 2018).

2.3 Overview of the Common Core Curriculum in Ghana

The common core curriculum for junior high schools in Ghana represents a significant shift in educational policy aimed at enhancing the quality of education and aligning it with contemporary societal needs. The foundation of this reform is an extensive structure that prioritises critical thinking, learner-centred pedagogies, and the incorporation of technology into the teaching and learning process. Some curriculum tenets, such as gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), social and emotional learning, and 21st-century skills, are also required of teachers in their work to enhance quality education for all (*NaCCA*, n.d.). Developing a generation of creative and adaptive learners is the main objective of this curriculum, which aims to provide students with the abilities and knowledge needed to prosper in a world that is changing quickly (Ghanabulletin, 2020).

The Common Core Curriculum's emphasis on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion reflects a commitment to creating an educational system that is fair, inclusive, and empowering for all students (Ghanabulletin, 2020). Teachers are central to this vision, as their roles and responsibilities directly impact the success of the Common Core Curriculum. Teachers adapting their teaching methods, fostering inclusive classroom cultures, and advocating for marginalized groups, can ensure that the principles of GESI are upheld (Kanluoru, 2023). Their compliance is not only a professional obligation but also a national policy for them to comply in order to ensure Inclusive and equitable classrooms that lead to better academic and social outcomes for all

students, as it paves the way for a more just and equitable society (Ghanabulletin, 2020). Through their dedication and efforts, teachers can help to realize the transformative potential of the Common Core Curriculum, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed and thrive (Ghanabulletin, 2020).

The common core curriculum in Ghana aims to promote a more unified and uniform national education strategy that emphasises the development of digital literacy, personal development, leadership abilities, creativity and innovation, communication and teamwork skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, cultural identity and global citizenship, and creativity and innovation that help the student to succeed and fit in where ever she or he finds herself or himself (Ghanabulletin, 2020).

Additionally, the common core curriculum promotes a more student-centred method of instruction in which learners are motivated to participate actively in their education and cultivate a sense of agency and independence (Ghanabulletin, 2020). Research indicates that student-centred learning can result in greater academic performance, higher motivation, and better career preparation, all of which are benefits of this method (Al-Ansi, 2022).

Another important component of the Curriculum is the incorporation of technology into the teaching and learning process. This aligns with the Curriculum's focus on utilising technology to improve instruction and student learning (ghanabulletin, 2020). Studies have indicated that technology can be an effective instrument for raising student achievement, especially in science and maths (Kardanova et al., 2018).

2.3.1 Goals and objectives of the common core curriculum

The recently implemented Common Core curriculum in Ghana was created with a number of major goals in mind, intending to completely transform the nation's educational system. The primary goal of this curriculum is to encourage equality and inclusivity in education. This is crucial in a multicultural country like Ghana, where disparities in educational opportunities and standards persist across numerous racial and ethnic groupings. The curriculum seeks to address these gaps by ensuring that every student, regardless of background, has access to a high-quality education that meets their individual needs. This is consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable high-quality education for all. (Ntumi et al., 2023).

The common core curriculum places a strong emphasis on comprehensive education in addition to promoting inclusivity. This approach recognizes that academic achievement should not take precedence over children's social, emotional, and physical development in the classroom. The inclusion of courses like creative arts and physical education in the curriculum demonstrates this all-encompassing approach (Agyepong, 2023). The curriculum aims to teach competent people while also fostering responsible citizenship and valuable contributions to society through the promotion of a comprehensive education.

Another significant aspect of the new curriculum is its emphasis on practical skills and competencies. This aims to provide students with useful skills that they may use in their everyday lives and careers. It is essential that topics like entrepreneurship be covered in the social studies curriculum in order to educate students about the workforce and encourage self-employment (Gyamfuah et al., 2022). The curriculum

bridges the gap between education and work with the goal of making graduates more employable and contributing to the economic progress of the country.

Techniques for assessment have also changed as a result of the curriculum. The focus these days is on formative assessment, which provides feedback to enhance learning outcomes while monitoring students' progress. The shift from traditional summative tests to more dynamic, ongoing evaluation methods is intended to provide students with a more stimulating and supportive learning environment (Apau, 2021). Teachers are receiving training through professional development programs so they can use these new evaluation techniques appropriately. This will make it possible for them to accurately gauge the understanding of the students and adjust their instruction accordingly (Apau, 2021).

The new curriculum also incorporates technology as a necessary component of teaching and learning. Because it recognizes the increasing significance of technology in education, the curriculum encourages the use of digital tools and resources in the classroom. In the process, education is enhanced, and students are more prepared for a technologically advanced society (Asante et al., 2024). Professional development programs are being implemented to ensure that teachers possess the necessary abilities to effectively incorporate technology into their lesson plans.

Moreover, the curriculum strives to develop students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are crucial for navigating the complexity of the twenty-first century. The curriculum fosters creative thinking and the development of novel solutions to real-world problems by integrating project-based learning and inquiry-based techniques. This method not only helps students do better academically but it also gets them ready for the demands of the modern workforce (ghanabulletin, 2020).

2.3.2 Challenges and opportunities in implementing the common core curriculum

There are opportunities and problems associated with implementing the Common Core curriculum in Ghana for educational reform. Even though the new curriculum has promising goals, problems including poor teacher preparation, scarce resources, and teacher opposition to change are making it difficult to implement it effectively (Apau, 2021; Ntumi et al., 2023).

One of the many challenges faced by teachers is the disparity in their program knowledge and self-efficacy. Research indicates that many instructors are only moderately confident in their ability to administer the standards-based curriculum in an efficient manner, which can have a negative influence on both their performance and the program's overall implementation (Agormedah et al., 2022). A lack of knowledge about the process of developing curricula and fundamental concepts that are necessary for their effective implementation contributes to this lack of trust (Agormedah et al., 2022). If teachers are not well-versed in the theoretical foundations of the new curriculum, they may find it challenging to engage completely in its development and implementation. This could lead to inconsistent application in the educational setting.

Moreover, the new curriculum's focus on 21st-century skills creates additional challenges. Developing students critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy skills is expected of teachers. Nevertheless, many teachers claim they have no skills to impart these abilities effectively, sometimes due to a lack of resources and training (Agormedah et al., 2022) This lack of preparation may result in diverging

curriculum goals and teaching strategies in the classroom, which will ultimately affect students' performance.

The way the new curriculum is implemented is also influenced by Ghana's existing educational infrastructure. It can be more difficult to implement the curriculum effectively when there is inadequate infrastructure, technology, or textbook availability (Apau, 2021). In addition, a high teacher-to-student ratio in many schools makes it challenging for teachers to provide each student with the individualized attention and assistance they require (Ntumi et al., 2023).

Despite these challenges, implementing the common core curriculum presents significant opportunities for educational reform in Ghana. Greater flexibility in teaching techniques is made possible by the move towards a more learner-centred and integrated approach, which also pushes teachers to use innovative pedagogical techniques (Addai-Mununkum & Setordzi, 2023). For instance, integrating technology into the classroom can improve student engagement and provide a more dynamic learning environment (Mahama, 2022). However, in order for technology integration to be successful, teachers must be given the assistance and training they need, since many of them do not yet possess the skills needed to use these resources efficiently (Mahama, 2022).

2.3.3 Teacher roles and responsibilities in curriculum implementation

Teachers carry out a range of roles while putting curricula into practice, which require a combination of skills, knowledge, collaboration, and introspection (Atteh et al., 2023). Their ability to adapt the curriculum to meet each student's needs has a significant effect on both the overall academic success of the class and the educational outcomes.

Teachers are also responsible for fostering a friendly and cooperative learning environment in the classroom that encourages student participation. This means that teachers must adapt their teaching methods to align with the curriculum and actively include students in the learning process. Research has shown that when teachers provide a supportive learning environment, students are more inclined to take chances and give it their all in the classroom, which increases academic success (Atteh et al., 2023). Because of this, teachers must place a high value on establishing a classroom climate that values student participation and promotes active learning.

In addition to merely imparting curricular knowledge, teachers are also vital in assessing student learning and providing feedback. The common core curriculum, according to Al-Ansi, (2022), put a lot of stress on the need for formative assessment approaches, which require teachers to routinely evaluate students' progress and adjust their lesson plans as needed. The curriculum must be modified to meet the needs of each student, and this ongoing assessment process is crucial for identifying any areas in which pupils may be struggling.

Despite these challenges, the new curriculum offers opportunities for teachers to work together and grow professionally. Participating in professional learning communities can help teachers to discuss challenges, share best practices, and collaborate on curriculum implementation strategies (Harris & Jones, 2010). These cooperative activities not only enhance teachers' skills but also help them develop a sense of community and support, both of which are essential for overcoming the obstacles posed by curricular change (Harris & Jones, 2010).

Similarly, strong leadership and support from the education authority are necessary for the Common Core Curriculum to be executed successfully. (Ntumi et al. (2023)

highlight the significance of the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service (GES), and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) in offering teachers resources, support, and instruction. These organisations can facilitate a smoother transition to the new curriculum by prioritising teacher development and ensuring that teachers have access to the necessary tools and support (Ntumi et al., 2023).

Teachers need to take on the role of curriculum developers as well, adapting the curriculum to meet the unique needs of their students and institutions. To achieve this, an analysis of the curriculum standards and benchmarks, identification of the areas in which students may require more support, and development of specialized teaching strategies to address these requirements are required (Ntumi et al., 2023). Teachers' active contribution to the preparation of the new curriculum may ensure that it is implemented in a way that is considerate of the needs of their students.

Developing their professional knowledge and skills should also be a top concern for teachers, particularly in areas like data-driven instruction and technology integration. The new curriculum places a strong emphasis on the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning, and teachers must possess the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully integrate technology into their lesson plans (Mahama, 2022). Similarly, in order to inform their decisions about how best to teach and assess their students' development, teachers must be able to collect and analyse data on student learning (Mahama, 2022).

consequently, teachers must be prepared to address any challenges that may arise throughout the implementation of the new curriculum in a proactive and collaborative manner. This can mean asking for help from outside organizations and resources as

well as recognizing and resolving such barriers in coordination with colleagues and school authorities (Agormedah et al., 2022). Teachers being proactive and collaborative in their approach to curriculum implementation may help to ensure a smooth transition to the Common Core Curriculum and improve student outcomes.

2.4. Teachers' Implementation of Gender Equality Principles

The use of gender equality principles in educational settings has gained attention in the contemporary conversation around education reform. The significance of this is reinforced by the realization that educational settings serve as both critical socialization venues where students establish their understanding of gender roles and norms and as locations for academic learning. Since they are the ones who establish the classroom culture, teachers have a significant influence on how gender norms are perceived and implemented in this setting (Subrahmanian, 2005; Aragonés-González et al., 2020).

A careful analysis of the literature reveals that teachers' opinions and actions regarding gender equality are often greatly influenced by a range of factors, including their cultural backgrounds, personal experiences, and the institutional contexts in which they work (Acar-Erdol et al., 2022; Gråstén et al., 2022). Teachers who grew up in traditional settings may inadvertently include biases in their lessons. These biases can manifest in a variety of ways, such as treating students differently according to their gender or fostering stereotypes through interactions between students and the curriculum.

Moreover, despite their stated commitment to promoting gender equity, there is compelling evidence that many teachers unintentionally perpetuate gender stereotypes. This effect is particularly evident in fields such as STEM education,

which has historically been dominated by one gender (Gråstén et al., 2022). Subconscious biases and preconceived notions about students' abilities based on gender may contribute to the under-representation of female students in these fields. These relationships affect students' self-perceptions as well as their goals and interest in courses that are crucial for their future employment prospects (Gråstén et al., 2022).

The consequences of these findings highlight the critical need for targeted professional development initiatives that help teachers become more conscious of their own biases and equip them with the resources they need to establish inclusive learning environments. Providing teachers with the tools they need to critically analyse their own actions and forcefully challenge established biases should be the primary objective of professional development programs (Gråstén et al., 2022). Teachers who take these actions can make a substantial difference in removing barriers that prevent gender equality in the classroom.

The integration of gender-responsive pedagogy into teacher preparation programs represents a significant advancement in equitable and inclusive educational practices. Gender-responsive pedagogy emphasizes the significance of recognizing and attending to each student's unique needs, regardless of their gender. This approach increases teacher effectiveness and contributes to the creation of a more equal learning environment for male and female students (Ananga, 2021). Gender-based ideas can be included in teacher training programs to help create an inclusive learning environment and give educators the tools they need to successfully engage all students.

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Gender-responsive pedagogy emphasizes the significance of recognizing and attending to each student's unique needs, regardless of their gender. This approach increases teacher effectiveness and contributes to the creation of a more equal learning environment for male and female students (Dorji, 2020; Ananga, 2021; Khalil et al., 2023). Gender-based ideas can be included in teacher training programs to help create an inclusive learning environment and give educators the tools they need to successfully engage all students (Ananga, 2021).

Studies indicate that teachers trained in gender-responsive pedagogy are better able to apply strategies that assist all students and are more aware of their own biases (Dorji, 2020; Ananga, 2021). This understanding leads to improved classroom dynamics, giving boys and girls the confidence to participate actively in their education and to feel valued. Teachers' capacity to teach is positively impacted by the diversified instructional approaches they adopt to suit different learning styles. This, in turn, improves student engagement and achievement (Khalil et al., 2023).

However, studies reveal a number of challenges in effectively implementing gender-responsive teaching despite all of these favourable results (Dorji, 2020; Khalil et al., 2023; Thabiti et al., 2023). One of the biggest problems is that there isn't enough infrastructure to support these teaching methods. Many educational institutions lack the resources, such as appropriate materials or places, required to establish cooperative learning environments that support the principles of gender equity (Khalil et al., 2023). Furthermore, the successful implementation of these pedagogical strategies depends on institutional support; efforts to include gender-responsive practices may not be successful in the absence of support from school administrations or educational officials (Ananga, 2021).

There is an additional level of complication arising from the qualities of teachers. The way in which teachers use the concepts of gender equality in the classroom is greatly impacted by things like emotional and previous teaching experience (Pena et al., 2012). Emotional intelligence is the intelligence capacity to recognize, understand, and regulate one's own feelings while also being aware of those of others (Devis-Rozental, 2018). Studies reveal that teachers who possess higher levels of emotional intelligence employ more effective teaching strategies, particularly in establishing secure and supportive learning environments that facilitate the success of every student (Devis-Rozental, 2018; Pena et al., 2012; Zeidner et al., 2012). Teachers with high emotional intelligence are better able to satisfy the needs of their students and navigate the complexities of the classroom (Zeidner et al., 2012).

However, another study indicates that demographic factors such as age and gender could not have a significant impact on teachers' use of gender equality in the classroom (Diseko et al., 2022). Although emotional intelligence and other human qualities are necessary for effective teaching strategies, this research suggests that other characteristics might not be as significant as previously believed. Determining how gender-responsive pedagogy should be implemented in educational settings is challenging due to the complex environment that arises from the interaction of these several elements (Diseko et al., 2022).

Research pertaining to the application of gender equality principles in educational settings highlights the significance of teachers' actions being influenced by social views and community outreach programmes. This connection is particularly significant in diverse cultural contexts where traditional norms and values may have an impact on perceptions regarding gender roles (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008).

Community outreach programs serve as a bridge between educational institutions and the larger community, promoting communication and understanding amongst a variety of stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community leaders. These programs can help align societal beliefs with equality principles, fostering an environment that is conducive to the progress of gender parity. For instance, King et al. (2010) emphasizes how crucial these outreach initiatives are to dispel myths about gender roles in communities affected by certain cultural or religious beliefs. Engaging in the community can help teachers better understand local perspectives on gender issues and collaborate to debunk stereotypes and encourage inclusive practices.

Apart from being responsible for instructing the curriculum, they also act as facilitators for change and hold the authority to influence students' perspectives on gender parity. Teachers can promote an equitable learning environment by equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to confront gender biases effectively. This is especially important when these beliefs could conflict with social standards (Robo, 2014).

The interaction between community outreach programs and teacher practices highlights the necessity of professional development opportunities that give teachers the tools they need to manage these challenges. Equitable gender opportunities and active community engagement should be the primary objectives of training programs for teachers. Furthermore, collaborations between educational institutions and community organizations can improve the effectiveness of these initiatives by providing instructors and students with access to resources and support (E. King et al., 2010).

2.4.1 Teacher attitudes and beliefs towards gender equality

In reality, teachers' support of gender equality in the classroom is an essential aspect of teaching that requires careful thought. More than just dispensing knowledge, teachers have a substantial impact on the social dynamics in their classrooms. Teachers' attitudes, ideas, and behaviours have a significant impact on students' perceptions of gender roles and equality.

Understanding teacher views toward gender equality starts with acknowledging how their educational backgrounds and personal beliefs influence their opinions. Gremmen et al. (2016) emphasize that teacher characteristics and beliefs play a critical role in shaping classroom management strategies that either reinforce or contradict gender equality. According to their findings, teachers' self-efficacy and student-centred beliefs have a big impact on how they handle classroom dynamics, like seating arrangements that could confirm or refute gender stereotypes (Gremmen et al., 2016). This is in line with the findings of Gajda et al. (2022), who found that teachers are often aware of gender stereotypes even if they may not have had the appropriate training to confront them in the classroom. This highlights a severe flaw in teacher preparation programs, which usually leave teachers unprepared to deal with gender biases.

Cultural and socioeconomic factors further strengthen the relationship between teacher views and gender equality. Aturupane and Wikramanayake (2011) For instance, examining the intersections of gender equality and citizenship in post-conflict settings reveals that cultural influences significantly impact teachers' conceptions of gender roles. The relationship that was found in Sri Lanka between teachers' attitudes about gender equality and their perspectives on citizenship and

social cohesiveness indicates that larger societal narratives can shape individual beliefs and behaviours in the classroom (Aturupane & Wikramanayake, 2011). This is supported by Olawale and Hendricks, (2024) study, which found no appreciable influence of gender on math teachers' self-efficacy perceptions about classroom management (Olawale & Hendricks, 2024). This research suggests that cultural norms, rather than the teachers' own experiences or education, may have a greater influence on their ideas about gender roles. Cultural norms and personal convictions are also very important in determining how teachers feel about gender equality. Social conventions and individual experiences often shaped teacher candidates' opinions on gender equality, according to (Acar-Erdol et al., 2022) research' The findings of (Akmatalieva, 2022) support this conclusion, contending that in order to conceptualize gender equality in education, one must have a thorough understanding of the broader socioeconomic forces that maintain inequality. In addition to having a solid grasp of gender issues, their findings suggest that teachers must be ready to challenge and change these social norms in the classroom.

Furthermore, language has a crucial role in promoting gender equality, which cannot be underestimated. Teachers' opinions about gender-inclusive language might encourage a more equitable learning environment (Vizcarra-Garcia, 2021). The research indicates that teachers who employ language that is inclusive of all genders not only foster empathy in their students but also enhance their participation and engagement in the classroom. Given the results of Li & Yang (2022), which emphasize the need to create a gender-equal environment in early education settings, this is particularly important. They found that preschool teachers' opinions on gender equality significantly impact how young children define their gender roles, underscoring the need for early intervention in shaping gender attitudes.

Also, language has a crucial role in promoting gender equality, which cannot be underestimated. According to Vizcarra-Garcia (2021), teachers' opinions about gender-inclusive language might encourage a more equitable learning environment. The research indicates that teachers who employ language that is inclusive of all genders not only foster empathy in their students but also enhance their participation and engagement in the classroom. Given the results of (Bennet & Moriarty, 2015), which emphasize the need to create a gender-equal environment in early education settings. They found that preschool teachers' opinions on gender equality significantly impact how young children define their gender roles, underscoring the need for early intervention in shaping gender attitudes.

The available research also highlights the significance of teacher preparation in shaping students' perspectives on gender equality. Many teachers expressed frustration with the lack of gender equality in instructional materials, according to a study conducted by Raftery et al. (2007) on the gendered content of test questions. This discontent is frequently brought on by a lack of awareness and training about how to handle gender inequalities in educational materials. Similarly, Miralles-Cardona et al. (2022) discovered that the self-efficacy attitudes of aspiring teachers toward gender equality practices and their confidence in addressing gender issues were significantly influenced by their training and educational background. This suggests that extending teacher education programs to include a thorough covering of gender issues could lead to more equitable classroom practices.

Understanding the long-term effects of teachers' views on gender equality is crucial because teachers have a significant impact on their students' opportunities and aspirations. In their discussion of the connections between gender equality and

educational opportunities, Kumar and Pandey (2021) note that girls with higher levels of education are better able to challenge established social structures. Additionally, education about gender equality has an impact on students' future possibilities and social roles outside of the classroom.

2.4.2 Classroom practices that promote gender equality

Gender inequality persists in classrooms, where teachers often unwittingly perpetuate gender stereotypes (Stoll, 2013). Research indicates that promoting gender equality and addressing problems like bullying, discrimination, and a lack of gender awareness in schools is crucial (Upadhyay et al., 2023). Teachers can make a significant contribution to the advancement of gender equality by using inclusive teaching methods and reflecting on their own biases (Alnahdi et al., 2022). To create a gender-friendly environment, teachers should examine classroom procedures carefully, use innovative approaches, and encourage a shift in perspective.

According to research, in order to promote gender equality in the classroom, gender-neutral language and materials are required (Agyepong, 2023). Teachers should use gender-neutral language and avoid teaching materials that perpetuate gender stereotypes in order to promote healthy sex-based competition (Agyepong, 2023). Additionally, teachers ought to encourage mixed-sex seating and provide equal opportunities for boys and girls to participate in school-related activities (Agyepong, 2023). Removing traditional gender norms and biases can help create a more fair and inclusive learning environment.

Research indicates that teachers have a critical role in promoting gender equality in the classroom (Hamidaturrohmah & Ailulia, 2023a). According to Hamidaturrohmah and Ailulia (2023), teachers' attitudes and behaviours might perpetuate unfair

assumptions and discriminatory classroom practices. Teachers may unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes when they praise boys for their size, strength, athletic prowess, and academic accomplishments while complimenting girls on their attractiveness, hairstyle, neatness, and helpfulness (Kotek et al., 2023).

Establishing a gender-sensitive learning environment is also crucial to promoting gender equality. Allowing students of different genders to collaborate, especially in a range of educational environments that encourage cooperation and communication, can help achieve this. These kinds of partnerships promote respect and understanding between children by dispelling gender stereotypes that frequently dictate how boys and girls should act or interact with one another. Teachers should be aware of their own biases and strive to create a gender-sensitive classroom where every student is treated with respect.

Establishing a gender-sensitive learning environment is also crucial to promoting gender equality. Allowing students of different genders to collaborate, especially in a range of educational environments that encourage cooperation and communication, can help achieve gender equality in class (Acar-Erdol et al., 2022). These kinds of partnerships promote respect and understanding between children by dispelling gender stereotypes that frequently dictate how boys and girls should act or interact with one another. Teachers should be aware of their own biases and strive to create a gender-sensitive classroom where every student is treated with respect (Acar-Erdol et al., 2022). Teachers must be aware of gender stereotypes in the classroom and take proactive measures to challenge them. In addition to eliminating biased language, this entails discussing how stereotypes impact people's identities and societal expectations (Eagly et al., 2020). Teachers can facilitate discussions on gender norms and

encourage critical examination of media representations of gender. A safe school environment is crucial to promoting gender equality. Teachers should establish clear rules against bullying and harassment while promoting respect among students (Kotek et al., 2023). A friendly atmosphere where all students are treated with respect can be created by encouraging open discussions on gender-related feelings and experiences.

Furthermore, studies show that an inclusive curriculum includes a variety of perspectives, including those of different genders (Acar-Erdol et al., 2022). Teachers should include materials that highlight the accomplishments of women and men in fields like science, literature, and history (Acar-Erdol et al., 2022). Teaching students to value the contributions that all individuals make to society, the approach will challenge conventional gender stereotypes. Teachers should actively encourage participation from all of their students, regardless of gender. Approaches like assigning students to different responsibilities in group projects or choosing questions at random can be used to achieve this (Eagly et al., 2020). Teachers can help remove barriers to participation by ensuring that boys and girls have equal opportunities to participate.

2.5.1 Teacher attitudes towards social inclusion

Teachers must have a positive attitude toward social inclusion in order to create an inclusive learning environment in the classroom. Research has shown that teachers' attitudes can significantly impact how well students with disabilities integrate into society (Gyimah et al., 2009). According to a study by (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013) social inclusion is greatly aided by teachers' diverse attitudes toward inclusive education, which include their behaviours, feelings, and beliefs. The study found that teachers who see inclusive education favourably are more likely to create an inclusive

classroom, which can help students with disabilities by enhancing their social inclusion results.

Gunnþórsdóttir (2014) discovered in another study that attitudes of normal primary school teachers towards teaching and learning influence their attitudes toward inclusive education. Teachers who support and have good attitudes about inclusive education are more likely to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms.

Additionally, studies show that a variety of factors influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, including their educational background, perspectives on education, and experiences working with students with special needs (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). Positive attitudes are essential for establishing an inclusive learning environment in the classroom because they encourage teachers to use practices that support the academic and social integration of students with disabilities (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). However, negative perceptions may impede effective inclusion, perhaps leading to the exclusion of students with special needs (Arvelo-Rosales, 2022). According to MacFarlane & Woolfson (2013), research indicates that teachers who are not trained in inclusive practices have a lower likelihood of implementing successful interventions for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This underscores the significance of professional development in shaping the attitudes and competencies of teachers.

Furthermore, the way that teachers use inclusive language, incorporate multiple viewpoints and encourage cultural sensitivity can all be influenced by their attitudes toward social inclusion (Gay, 2002). A friendly and inclusive classroom environment can result in better academic results, higher student involvement, and a decrease in

bullying and harassment. Teachers who have positive attitudes about social inclusion are more likely to foster this environment (Arvelo-Rosales, 2022).

Also, studies have demonstrated how teachers' attitudes about social inclusion are influenced by how they see their own skills. If teachers believe they can positively impact children with disabilities, they are more likely to embrace effective inclusive practices and have favourable attitudes toward inclusion (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Norwich, 2002). Conversely, teachers who are confident in their ability to support students with disabilities may hold unfavourable opinions about inclusion, which may lower their motivation and the amount of effort they put into putting inclusive strategies into practice (Khalil et al., 2023).

2.5.2 Strategies for creating an inclusive classroom environment

Creating an inclusive classroom environment is essential to fostering a sense of belonging and ensuring that all students have equal access to education. Teachers that use inclusive classroom practices embrace diversity by addressing the many needs, backgrounds, and ability levels of their students (Moten, 2020).

Research indicates that teachers need to have the skills and knowledge necessary to foster social interactions among children with and without disabilities (Polat, 2011). Two powerful strategies for enhancing social inclusion and encouraging the growth of strong bonds between students are peer tutoring and collaborative learning (Kefallinou et al., 2020). However, the successful implementation of these strategies typically requires teachers to be prepared to embrace inclusive practices and to understand social inclusion concepts (Kefallinou et al., 2020).

Moreover, students' perspectives particularly those with disabilities are often overlooked in discussions about inclusion (Moten, 2020). In order to better meet the diverse needs of every student, teachers can adapt their approaches and get valuable insights into inclusive practices by talking with students about their preferences and experiences (Alnahdi et al., 2022). In addition to empowering students, this participatory method fosters an inclusive school environment where all students are valued and encouraged.

Another study highlights the need of creating a welcoming and positive school environment that promotes social inclusion (Khalifaoui et al., 2020b). Teachers can achieve this by encouraging students to communicate freely, presenting a range of data and materials, and employing inclusive language (Khalil et al., 2023). Additionally, by implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, teachers can design lessons that are both interesting and accessible to all students, regardless of ability (Kennette & Wilson, 2019). Provision of wide a range of platforms for representation, expression, and engagement can lead teachers to accommodate the diverse learning requirements of their students while also promoting a feeling of inclusion and belonging (Kennette & Wilson, 2019).

In addition, promoting social inclusion in the classroom is greatly aided by the use of technology. In particular, assistive technology can help students with disabilities engage with their peers and participate more in class (Ahmed, 2018). Additionally, digital technologies and online learning platforms can provide opportunities for communication and cooperation regardless of a student's location or degree of expertise (Ahmed, 2018).

Lastly, teachers need to realize how important it is to address the social and emotional needs of all students, including those with impairments (Haynes, 2002). By incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) into their lesson plans, teachers may help students acquire critical skills like empathy, self-awareness, and self-regulation, all essential for creating positive connections and promoting social inclusion (Devis-Rozental, 2018).

2.6 Theoretical Framework: Diffusion of Innovation by Rogers

This section offers insights into the elements influencing teachers' acceptance of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles in their teaching methods by drawing on the theoretical framework put forward by Everett M. Rogers. The concept of diffusion of innovation dates back to the early 1800s, when French sociologist Gabriel Tarde proposed that changes in human behaviour could be explained fundamentally by the transmission of new ideas. However, empirical research on diffusion did not start to appear until the middle of the 20th century, thanks to the groundbreaking work of Bryce Ryan and Neal Gross on Iowa farmers' adoption of hybrid maize. As a result of this study's emphasis on the role that communication plays in the diffusion process, diffusion research has spread to a number of academic disciplines, including geography, anthropology, public health, education, and rural sociology.

Since its inception in 1960, Rogers' theory has experienced substantial growth as a result of his career-long analysis and improvement of the diffusion process. Diffusion is 'the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels among the members of a social system over time,' according to Rogers (1995). Diffusion, as it relates to the GESI principles, is the process through which teachers

accept and incorporate these ideas into their instructional strategies. Many factors, such as individual traits, social systems, and communication channels impact this process. Diffusion is a unique kind of communication that deals with the dissemination of messages (Rogers, 1995). Four main elements make up the spread of the innovation process. These four main elements are discussed below.

2.6.1 Four main elements of diffusion

Four main elements in the diffusion of new ideas include innovation, communication channels, time, and a social system.

2.6.1.1 Innovation

As stated by Rogers (p. 11), an innovation is ‘an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption.’ The decision to adopt, persuasion, and knowledge, are factors that can have an impact on this subjective sense of novelty (Rogers, p. 15). Adopters may become hesitant when a new concept is introduced because they want proof that the innovation is better than the status quo (Rogers, p. 9). Moreover, a given invention might be accepted by one person in a given circumstance but rejected by another in a different one (Rogers, p. 11). The following discussion delves into five essential features of innovations that help to explain the rate of adoption among individuals.

Five Characteristics of Innovation

1. Relative advantage describes how much a new idea is superior to an existing one in terms of quality, effectiveness, or advantage. Adoption will happen more quickly if users believe an innovation offers a relative advantage. The degree of relative advantage can be quantified in terms of money, social

standing, ease of use in achieving objectives, contentment, and the calibre of work products.

2. **Compatibility:** Consistency with the needs, prior experiences, and current values of possible adopters is a necessary component of compatibility. Individual, group, and organizational objectives, requirements, culture, and structure are all aspects of compatibility. It is focused on whether the group's customary work patterns and the work patterns needed by the innovation agree or diverge. Innovations that are incompatible with the standards and values of a certain social structure will not be embraced as quickly as those that are.
3. **Complexity:** The degree of an innovation's difficulty for an adopter to comprehend and apply is known as its complexity. Innovations that are viewed as easier to use and comprehend will be accepted more quickly than those that call for additional knowledge and abilities. On the other hand, a procedure or product won't be adopted if people think it's hard to use, comprehend, or learn.
4. **Trialability** is the extent to which an invention can be tested on a small scale. Adoption of new concepts will happen faster if they can be tested out than if they are not divisible (Rogers, 1995). If innovation is trailable, adopters who are thinking about adopting it will be less uncertain. Trialability encompasses the amount of work and risk required to watch and take part in small-scale system demos, as well as the expenses associated with going back and changing one's mind about using the system (Rogers, 1995).
5. The term 'observability' describes how easily others can see the outcomes of the innovation. Observability also encompasses a demonstrable outcome, such as the simplicity of communicating to others the impact or outcomes of

implementing an invention. People are more likely to embrace innovation if they can more quickly see its benefits.

A new idea's conversation among peers is sparked by visibility. A somewhat less noticeable innovation will spread more gradually.

The rate of adoption depends on the five factors given above. People will embrace new practices, ideas, or products more quickly if they show an advantage over the ones that came before them, if they fit with adopters' needs, experiences, and values, if they are simple to comprehend and use if they can be tested out beforehand, and if the outcomes are evident.

2.6.1.2 Communication Channels

Rogers (1995) described communication as the process by which people generate and exchange information in order to come to an understanding with one another (p. 40). People can lessen ambiguity and make it easier for message content to be sent by gathering information. Four essential components make up the communication process: an invention, a person who has knowledge or experience with the innovation, a person who does not have expertise with the innovation and a communication channel that connects the two.

According to Rogers (1995), a communication channel is a channel through which communications are sent from one person to another (p. 23). He divides routes of communication into two categories: interpersonal and mass media. Radio, television, and newspapers are examples of mass media platforms that target vast populations and are frequently the fastest and most efficient ways to notify audiences about developments. On the other hand, interpersonal routes, which entail in-person conversations between two or more people, are more successful in getting people to

accept novel concepts. Notably, Rogers notes that people frequently depend less on scientific studies and more on the subjective assessments of others who have embraced innovations when making decisions about them (Rogers, 1995).

2.6.1.3 Time

Time is the third component in the diffusion process. The diffusion process involves the time dimension in

1. the innovation-decision process, which entails an individual's progression from first awareness of an invention to attitude formation, decision-making regarding adoption or rejection, application and use of the new idea, and confirmation of this decision.
2. The relative timing that is, how soon or how late a person adopts an innovation in relation to other system members.
3. The rate of adoption of an invention inside a system, typically expressed as the number of system members who embrace the innovation within a specified time frame.

2.6.1.4 Social System

According to Rogers (1995, p. 32), 'a social system is a web of connected units that allows an innovation to spread'. These units are defined by a regular pattern of arrangements and might consist of individuals, unofficial groups, and organizations (Rogers, 1995). An innovation's dispersion is greatly influenced by the social structure, and many circumstances might lead to an innovation's acceptance or rejection. Among these are norms, which are defined as established behavioural patterns (Rogers, 1995); opinion leadership, which is the process by which an individual influences the attitudes or behaviours of others (Rogers, 1995); change

agents, who actively encourage the adoption of an innovation (Rogers, 1995); aides, who are less skilled change agents (Rogers, 1995); and consequences, which are the results that follow from the acceptance or rejection of an innovation (Rogers, 1995).

Additionally, adopter categories which categorize people in a social system according to how innovative they are or how much they embrace new ideas in comparison to other people in the system are identified by Rogers (1995). These classifications offer a framework for comprehending the differences in people's openness to innovation inside a social system.

Five adopter categories can be distinguished from the innovativeness continuum: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards.

Five major groups of people, each with distinctive traits that impact their decision-making process, have an impact on the adoption of innovations (Rogers, 1995). Venturesome and receptive to new concepts, innovators are essential gatekeepers when it comes to bringing innovations into a system (Rogers, 1995). They need to be skilled in navigating situations with a lot of uncertainty and have the technical know-how to comprehend and use complicated information (Rogers, 1995).

Respected by their peers, early adopters act as role models and give prospective adopters advice and information (Rogers, 1995). They acquire ideas slowly and thoughtfully, taking their time to fully grasp novel concepts (Rogers, 1995). Conversely, the early majority exhibits a more measured approach, embracing innovations only after giving them some thought and succumbing to peer pressure (Rogers, 1995).

According to Rogers (1995), the late majority is apprehensive and reluctant to embrace new ideas; they only accept them once the ambiguity around them has been resolved. Peer pressure frequently drives their decisions, and they need assurances that the invention won't fail before embracing it (Rogers, 1995). Lastly, laggards are conventional and reluctant to embrace novel concepts, frequently as a result of valid worries about their possible failure (Rogers, 1995).

Rogers (1995) highlights the significance of understanding the distinct attributes and incentives of every group by highlighting the intricate interplay of elements that impact an individual's decision to accept an invention through these five categories.

The theory influenced this study by providing a framework for understanding the factors that influence the adoption and acceptance of GESI by teachers, focusing on four out of the five characteristics of innovation that affect the rate of adoption as well as the decision to accept innovation. Applying this theory helped the research to examine how teachers' perceptions and interpretation of GESI impacted their willingness to adopt these principles.

2.7 Summary of Reviewed Literature

This chapter reviews literature that presents insights into Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) within the context of education and the Common Core Curriculum. It examines existing research on gender equality in education, social inclusion in education, and the Common Core Curriculum. Rogers' (1995) Diffusion of Innovation theory was used as the theoretical framework was used to explain teachers' responsiveness to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion. The next chapter will deal with the paradigm and how data was collected and analysed.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter offers an in-depth explanation of the research paradigm, approach, and design that underpinned the study. It includes the researcher's role, the study area, and the participant selection procedure. The chapter also goes into detail on the techniques, methods, and sampling strategies that were used to obtain the data, including focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observations.

The ethical issues that were taken into account to guarantee the preservation of participants' rights, dignity, and privacy are also covered in this chapter. It also discusses the data's trustworthiness and the methods used to demonstrate its dependability, confirmability, credibility, and transferability. The study's limitations are also addressed.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The paradigm of interpretivism was employed for this study, which is concerned with understanding how individuals attach meanings to their experiences and social contexts (Potrac et al., 2014). This paradigm was appropriate because the study sought to explore teachers' subjective meanings, beliefs, and interpretations of the GESI principles in their classroom practices (Creswell & Poth, 2023). This approach is particularly suited for exploring complex and context-dependent issues like GESI as it has it that realities are socially constructed, and shaped by the individuals' interpretations and experience (Creswell, 2014). This paradigm's flexibility in prioritizing subjective and contextual factors allowed for an in-depth examination of how teachers interpret and implement GESI principles in their practices, which

captures the complexities of their lived experiences by revealing deeper into inner perspectives, values and feelings of their essence to the GESI principles (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Also, through the use of data collection instruments such as interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations, the paradigm allowed the study to uncover the meanings teachers attach to GESI principles and how these meanings shape their pedagogical decisions and interactions with learners (Potrac et al., 2014). This approach therefore moved beyond generalisation, offering rich, in-depth and holistic appreciation of teachers responsiveness to the GESI principles and revealing the barriers and opportunities for effective implementation within the CCC (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Research Approach

For this study on teachers' responses to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion principles of the Common Core Curriculum, a qualitative research approach was the best because it respects the subjectivities of the participants, allows for a variety of points of view, and avoids generalisations (Creswell & Poth, 2023). This approach is especially well-suited to explore the complex and subtle ways in which teachers respond to gender equality and social inclusion principles in their practice because it permits a thorough analysis of the social and cultural environments in which they function (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Additionally, by examining how social and cultural environments influence teachers' receptiveness to the GESI principles in the Common Core Curriculum, qualitative approach aids in gaining an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours regarding gender equality and social inclusion (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Also, the use of this approach results in comprehensive explanations of the social phenomena under study, which is crucial when examining complex and multidimensional topics like social inclusion and gender equality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research approach enables a thorough knowledge of the richness and complexity of social interactions and human behaviour, in contrast to quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2022, p.20).

Finally, a qualitative research approach is the most appropriate approach to help examine how teachers respond to gender equality and social inclusion of the Common Core Curriculum because the curriculum is a novel initiative, and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is one of its main tenets which require an approach which will respect participants opinions (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

It is also essential to recognise the limitations of qualitative research. Qualitative research outcomes may be less generalisable due to its in-depth analysis and small sample numbers (Silverman & Patterson, 2021). Consequently, I do not aim for the findings of this work to be generalised to the entire teacher population in Ghana. Rather, I aim for its transferability. The findings of this work may be transferrable to teachers with similar characteristics and/or working in context with similar features.

3.3 Research Design

Phenomenology was the study's design approach, and understanding people's lived experiences and the meanings they assign to them is the aim of phenomenological research design (Creswell et al., 2007a). In order to determine the essence of a phenomenon, it looks at the subjective opinions of those who have really lived it

(Leavy, 2017). Phenomenology offered insightful information about how teachers incorporate GESI principles into their daily work.

This design's ability to offer an in-depth understanding of teachers' lived experiences and viewpoints on this matter makes it significant to assess teachers' responsiveness to gender equality and social inclusion in the Common Core Curriculum by helping me to explore more deeper into teachers inner perspectives, values and feelings, revealing the deeper essence to their responsiveness to these principles (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This design was also employed to explore the complexities and subtleties of teachers' experiences, gaining insights into their thoughts, beliefs, and behaviours regarding Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Principles (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). A more thorough understanding of the phenomenon under study was made possible by this research design's flexible and iterative data-collecting and analysis process (Leavy, 2017). Since teachers' personal opinions and biases affect their practices when teaching complicated and sensitive issues like Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, this design is especially important (Leavy, 2017). Employing a phenomenological design helps reveal the fundamental structures of consciousness that shape teachers' experiences and understandings of GESI in their classroom practices (Leavy, 2017). Focusing on the participants' subjective experiences, the design allowed me to uncover the essence of the participants' interactions with the GESI principles, highlighting the difficulties and challenges they face in promoting inclusivity and equality in education (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.4 Researcher's Role

In the field of qualitative research, the researcher plays a crucial role as the principal tool for gathering and interpreting data. As such, the trustworthiness of qualitative

methods greatly depends on the skills, proficiency, and careful consideration of the researcher when performing fieldwork (Creswell, 2014). It was important to recognise that the researcher's personal beliefs and preconceived notions about gender equality and social inclusion within the Common Core Curriculum may unintentionally influence the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes when I begin the in-depth investigation of teachers' responses to this topic.

The researcher employed the reflexive practice of bracketing, which assisted me in identifying and putting aside my own opinions and presumptions to help lessen the possibility of bias in order to help minimise any potential biases (Chan et al., 2013). Also, as someone who believes in gender equality, the researcher consciously suspended my personal opinions in order to prevent any unconscious biases from influencing the data collection and analysis processes. Also, the researcher approached the study with a more objective mindset and ensured that the study's conclusions were founded on empirical data rather than my personal ideas by purposely bracketing myself. Reducing the impact of my own beliefs on the procedures of data collection and analysis was my aim to ensure this study was credible and trustworthy.

3.5 Participant Selection

The sample consisted of basic junior high school teachers from both public and private schools in the Agona West Municipality. The study consists of junior high school teachers who teach Basic 7–9 and participated in the training for the Common Core Curriculum in the 2021 implementation process. The study also included Basic Nine Junior High School students because they have had experience with both the curriculum and teachers for quite some time. They are relevant to the study because

they are in a position to provide the information needed on how well teachers respond to the GESI principles in the context of the Common Core curriculum. In particular, a homogeneous sample of participants was chosen based on their familiarity with the Common Core Curriculum. The Municipal Education Directorate and Headteachers helped me by granting me permission to visit schools and select a sample based on the study's predetermined standards. This sample was limited to those who indicated interest in participating in the study and also met the criteria set for participant selection. After obtaining the consent from those who granted it, the researcher contacted the teachers by phone and emailed them the informed consent form which was necessary for everyone to complete before they could participate. Also, the researcher contacted the students through their teachers, explained the study's purpose to them, and gave them the informed consent form to fill out. For this study, the researcher had planned on having between 20 to 25 participants as suggested by Creswell (2013) for phenomenology, however, the researcher realised after 25, data had not saturated so the researcher extended until it reached saturation at 30.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

The quality of a piece of research stands or falls not only on the appropriateness of the methodology and instrumentation but also on the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted (Dhivyadeepa, 2015). The study employed Purposive sampling technique (criterion Sampling).

3.7 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling, particularly criterion sampling technique was used in this study to choose participants who fit the necessary requirements, targeting teachers with specific experience in terms of the number of years served, which is five years and

above, are willing to participate in the study and are teaching in Agona West Municipality, and have been exposed to the Common Core Curriculum and were part of the training before its implementation. Teachers who were not part of the training and have taught not less than five years were excluded. Also, teachers outside Agona West Municipality were excluded from the study. The participants also included J.H.S. three students who have been with the participating teachers for a considerable amount of time. They were included because they have experience both the teachers and the curriculum for quite some time and can express themselves and can provide relevant and in-depth information about teachers practices in class. J.H.S students who were outside Agona West Municipality and schools in Agona West who are not using the C.C.C were not part of the study. These study's participants provided insightful information about their viewpoints, difficulties, and accomplishments. Processes involved in this sample procedure include the following,

Firstly, the researcher began by determining the exact criteria or traits I wanted to research. In this instance, J.H.S. three students who have been with the teachers for a considerable amount of time, and teachers who were involved in the training before the implementation of the Common Core Curriculum and have taught for at least five years assisted in gathering detailed information about the phenomenon under study.

Secondly, the researcher looked for possible participants who fit these requirements by requesting permission from headteachers and the Municipal Directorate to conduct a study in the schools where these participants were found.

Once the potential participants were identified, the researcher assessed their eligibility based on the predetermined criteria. This was done by conducting interviews to gather information about their qualifications and experiences.

Finally, the researcher selected a sample of participants who best represented the desired qualities and extended an invitation to join the study. The following are the reasons why the researcher decided to employ purposeful sampling for this study.

In order to fully understand the issue under study, this method first enabled the researcher to concentrate on particular groups or individuals with unique knowledge or experiences that are crucial to understanding the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

According to Creswell and Poth, (2023), the second advantage of this approach was its efficiency in helping me to gather data, as it focused on participants who were most likely to offer rich and in-depth information.

Lastly, this approach enabled the researcher to have an in-depth examination of the research questions by choosing participants who could offer a variety of viewpoints and ideas (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

3.8 Data Collection Instrument

The study used the following data collection instrument to gather data.

3.8.1 Focus Group Discussion

Focus group was used to gather data from the students to explore how learner experiences, backgrounds and interactions with teachers influence the interpretation and their applications of the GESI principles. Students were selected purposively guided by specific criteria designed to ensure that they possess relevant and diverse information that aligns with the study's objectives (Creswell et al., 2007b). The focus group took place in a serene environment that allowed them to feel comfortable and free from teacher influence. Prior to the discussions, the purpose of the study was

explained to them and I assured them of confidentiality and anonymity. The discussion involved eight participants which allowed for effective interactions while giving each participants enough opportunity express themselves (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher had two sessions with students and each session lasted for 45 minutes and was recorded with the students assent. Also, notes were taken simultaneously to capture non-verbal cues, patterns of agreement or disagreement and significant group dynamics.

This technique helped to encourage participants to contribute their ideas, opinions, and experiences about the phenomenon being studied, the researcher facilitated the talks in this approach by posing open-ended questions (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). The researcher selected this method because it ensures dynamic and interactive dialogue among participants, allowing the participants to build on each other's ideas and produce new insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Additionally, it provided valuable insights into teachers' behaviours, and attitudes toward students in class regarding the topic under discussion.

Also, it gave me a chance to watch nonverbal indicators like facial expressions and body language, which helped to provide more context to participants' answers (Creswell, 2014).

3.8.2 Interview

A semi-structured interview was used to gather data from teachers to explore their lived experiences and professional responses to the GESI principles within the Common Core Curriculum. Semi-structured interview was particularly appropriate for this study because it provided a flexible yet systematic framework that allowed participants to freely express their perspectives while ensuring alignment with the

research questions (Creswell, 2014). The interview began by first getting permission from the Municipal Education directorate and head teachers. Selected teachers were contacted on phone, after the initial contact to schedule interview sessions with them. The interviews were held in a serene environment to ensure comfort and privacy. At the start of each session, the purpose of the interview was re-explained and the researcher kept assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity. Also, the researcher sought for the consent of the participants to audio record them to enable me ensure accuracy in my analysis (N. King & Hugh-Jones, 2018). Also, field notes were taken during and immediately after each interview to capture non-verbal cues, contextual impression and emerging analytical reflections. Some interviews were done in Fante depending on the participant's linguistic comfort. These were later transcribed and translated into English. Translations were verified through member checking to ensure that the original meaning were retained.

The interview provided a comprehensive information about teachers' practices, perceptions, attitudes, and personal beliefs regarding GESI, which was helpful in the context of this study. It also gave me more insight into the participants' understanding of the GESI principles, their role in implementing these principles in their work, and any barriers they experienced in the way (King & Hugh-Jones, 2018, p. 201).

Also, it gave the researcher the freedom to use a variety of questioning strategies, which enabled me to delve more into particular topics of interest or get clarity on certain answers (King & Hugh-Jones, 2018). As a result, participants were able to share their ideas and experiences in their own words, which resulted in rich and insightful data (King & Hugh-Jones, 2018). Each interview lasted for 45 minutes for

every participant as promised and each session concluded with an opportunity for participants to add clarifications or additional thought.

3.8.3 Observation

The study also employed classroom Observations as a complementary data collection method capture happenings, interactions, and behaviours in a natural environment that are related to the GESI principles (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Observation was adopted because it enabled me to document naturally occurring classroom behaviours, routines and interactions which provided evidence beyond self-reported data obtained from interview and focus group discussions. Prior to each observation, permission was sought from headteachers and participating teachers where the purpose of the observation was clearly explained and participants were assured that the exercise was not to evaluate but for purely research purpose. A non-participant observation was adopted with the researcher remaining unobstructive and not interfering with the classroom activities (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). An observation guide was used to focus attention on key GESI related indicators which include:

Teacher to student interactions, Gender participation in classroom discussions, Inclusion of learners with diverse abilities, grouping strategies and allocation of tasks and Use of language and instructional materials that promote or undermine inclusion.

Field notes were taken throughout the observation to document verbal exchanges. Classroom dynamics and non-verbal cues (Aagaard & Matthiesen, 2016). Particular attention was paid to instances that reflected alignment with or contradictions of GESI principles. After each session, reflective notes were written to capture emerging impressions and contextual factors. The anonymity of teachers, students and schools I visited were maintained and data was handled confidentially in accordance with

ethical research standards (Aagaard & Matthiesen, 2016). Each observation lasted an hour corresponding to the standard lesson period, allowing me to observe lesson introduction, delivery, learner engagement and closure.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in any research study, especially when it involves human subjects (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018). In the context of this work, several ethical considerations were taken into account. These considerations ensured that the research was conducted in a manner that respects the rights and well-being of the participants involved through the following.

- 1. Informed Consent:** Obtaining informed consent from all participants is essential. The researcher clearly explained the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study to the teachers and students who participated. The researcher also emphasized that participation is voluntary and that participants have the right to withdraw at any time without facing any negative consequences (Xu et al., 2020).
- 2. Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of participants is crucial to protect their privacy. The researcher assured them that any personal information collected during the study would be kept confidential and would only be used for research purposes. The researcher also assured them that he would not use their real names but pseudonyms for discussions and reporting findings to maintain anonymity (Gibson et al., 2013).
- 3. Minimization of Harm:** The researcher took measures to minimize any potential harm or discomfort that participants may experience during the study. This includes avoiding sensitive or intrusive questions and ensuring that

participants are not exposed to any form of discrimination or stigmatization as a result of their involvement in the research (Gençten, n.d.).

4. **Equity and Fairness:** It is important to ensure equity and fairness in participant selection and recruitment processes. The researcher was fair by including a diverse range of participants from different genders, and educational settings to ensure that multiple perspectives were represented in the study (Grieshaber, 2020).
5. **Collaboration and Respect:** The researcher approached the study with a collaborative mindset, valuing the knowledge and expertise of the participants involved. I also established a respectful and trusting relationship with participants, fostering open communication and mutual understanding (O'Grady, 2016).

Considering these ethics, the researcher conducted the study on teachers' responsiveness to gender equality and social inclusion principles in the Common Core Curriculum in a manner that respects the rights and well-being of the participants involved.

3.10 Data Collection Procedure

Through the Agona Swedru Municipal Education Directorate and Headteachers, the participants received an introductory letter from the Head of the Department of Foundations of Education, introducing the researcher as a student conducting a study on Teachers' Responsiveness to the GESI principles in the Common Core Curriculum. Teachers were contacted through WhatsApp, where everything were explained in detailed to them about the study, and interested replied to give show their interest and later, the researcher also gave those teachers a call to schedule an interview, and the researcher went into the interview with a plan based on the research

questions, but that didn't stop me from asking follow-up questions as the researcher went along. Also, flexibility as a strength of the interview method was explored while keeping in mind that my objective is to assist respondents in expressing their opinions about the phenomenon in a way that suits them. The researcher got the respondents' permission in advance to record the interviews. In part, the audio recording made it easier for me to review and also analyse the study data.

3.11 Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis is a crucial step in the research process, and it is the systematic examination of data to describe, discuss, interpret, evaluate, and explain in relation to research questions (Flick, 2013). In preparation for this analytical process, the researcher started the transcriptions, which involved transcribing audio-recorded interviews and focus group discussions. This step was essential in preparing the data for the coding and thematic analysis, which are critical components of the data analysis process (Flick, 2013).

Thematic analysis, according to Alhojailan (2012), is the process of working with raw data to identify and interpret the key ideas. This approach helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the words and experiences of the participants, providing a rich description of the phenomenon being studied. The primary objective of thematic analysis is not to generalize findings but rather to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

The data analysis process consisted of three phases. The first phase involved familiarizing myself with the data, which included immersing myself in the transcriptions, field notes, and audio recordings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. This phase was crucial in identifying initial patterns and

themes, as well as similarities and contradictions between patterns in the data. Through this process, I was able to develop a deeper understanding of the data, which laid the foundation for the subsequent phases of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

The second phase involved creating initial codes for the data, which is a critical step in qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2023). This phase involved manually analysing the data, applying codes to meaningful segments, and organizing the information into themes. The researcher printed out the interview transcriptions and written field notes, read and re-read them carefully, and applied named coding for each group. This process allowed me to deeply think about the data, view it from different perspectives, and make connections between the various themes.

The third and final phase involved categorizing the initial codes into themes and constructing narratives in a way, where the participants' responses and my observations became interwoven (Braun & Clarke, 2023). The researcher then related the narratives to the literature and reported them in the findings and discussion chapter. This phase was critical in providing a comprehensive understanding of the research findings and their implications.

3.12 Ensuring Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is a crucial factor that researchers must consider to effectively communicate the importance and value of their study to their audience (Gunawan, 2015). According to Adler (2022), a study's trustworthiness serves as a means of reassuring readers that it merits their time and consideration. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), trustworthiness also refers to a researcher's ability to persuade an audience that an investigation's findings merit their careful

consideration and attention. Therefore, the used the following techniques to ensure and guarantee the trustworthy nature of this research.

First and foremost, the understood the importance of developing connections with the participants, so the researcher spent time getting to know them and earning their confidence before beginning the data collection process. This allowed me to better understand their viewpoints and experiences with the topic under study. By doing this, the researcher was able to build a foundation of trust with the participants, which let them feel at ease enough to open up to me about their ideas and experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Secondly, as mentioned by Adler (2022), the researcher used a range of research methods to increase the credibility of the results. The researcher was able to compile extensive data by using research methods like focus groups, interviews, and observations. The researcher was able to triangulate my findings and examine them from several angles, thanks to these research methodologies (Adler, 2022). Triangulation allowed me to investigate the fundamental causes of the teachers' practices and provided a deeper insight into their experiences.

Thirdly, the researcher had regular conversations with colleagues and supervisors about my research throughout the work, including my methodological choices and how the researcher interpreted the findings. These discussions provided a range of viewpoints that allowed me to assess my own thoughts and interpretations critically, which eventually assisted me in recognising my own biases. These conversations were essential to the entire study process, and my understanding of the phenomenon widened through discussions as others brought to bear their experiences and perceptions.

Finally, as suggested by Guba and Lincoln, (1994) the researcher verified that the participants' intended meanings were maintained by sharing my field notes and interview transcripts with them in order to ensure the accuracy of the data gathered. Furthermore, because some interviews were done in Fantse, the researcher translated these conversations into English. The researcher then gave the translated texts back to the participants for confirmation to make sure the translations faithfully captured their original words and that no significant word was lost in the process.

3.13 Limitations

The researcher was somewhat aback by some participants' fear of being recorded during the data collection process even after the researcher had informed them earlier. Every time the participants spotted me using the audio recorder app and taking notes, there was a brief pause. Some of the participants expressed fear of concern that the data would end up in the hands of their superiors and they could become victims, even in the face of all the ethical procedures, which included informed permission and guarantees of secrecy. This may have been brought about by Ghana's introduction of a new curriculum that has drawn subtly political shading. The matter is particularly delicate because criticisms and affirmations of the curriculum are occasionally interpreted as supporting or opposing the governing party, respectively. I'm concerned that participants may not have been able to freely express their opinions due to this sensitivity, which may have caused them to give answers that were more socially desirable. The researcher overcame this by providing constant assurances of privacy and anonymity.

Additionally, some participants found it uncomfortable for me to be present in their class since it disturbed their flow. They advised that I monitor the instruction by

sitting far from the class as a result, the researcher had to beg them to let me get a little closer so I could observe the participants teaching in class and this was also a concern to me.

3.14 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter outlines the research methodology and the specific methods employed in this study. It also articulates my positionality within the context of this research. Following this, detailed descriptions of the procedures undertaken before and during data collection are provided, along with a discussion of ethical considerations. The measures implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of the research are explained, and an overview of the data analysis process is presented. The subsequent chapter will delve into the findings and discussions derived from the data collection.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the data collected. The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' responsiveness to GESI principles in the Common Core Curriculum in Agona West Municipality. The Common Core Curriculum's emphasis on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion reflects a commitment to creating an educational system that is fair, inclusive, and empowering for all students. Teachers' compliance with these principles is not only a professional obligation but also a national policy for them to comply in order to ensure Inclusive and equitable classrooms that lead to better academic and social outcomes for all students, as it paves the way for a more just and equitable society.

In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative design using a phenomenology approach, hence, using one-on-one in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observation to gather data. Data was collected through the guidance of the interpretivist paradigm, where the researcher aimed to view the participants' responses against the context in which it was set and the subjective viewpoints of the participants. The responses were transcribed manually for the generation of codes and formulation of themes the findings were later discussed using Rogers' (1995) diffusion of innovation theory. The results and analysis were presented generally under the biodata of respondents and the research questions that guided the study. However, themes were developed under each research question to help bring out the emerging issues.

4.1 Bio Data of Respondents

The respondents for the study were grouped into two main categories; teachers, and students. The first category comprised of thirteen teachers from different schools,

including both public and private schools, of which four were females and the remaining nine were males, with 7 – 30 years of experience. The researcher believes that the respondents, having taught for this number of years, would have accumulated enough experience and knowledge on how they respond to GESI principles in the CCC. The table below is the description of teachers who took part in the study.

Table 1: Description of Teachers

Pseudonym	Gender	Length of Service in Years	Professional Qualification
Peter	Male	7	First Degree
Eva	Female	8	First Degree
Abdul	Male	25	First Degree
Sophia	Female	30	First Degree
John	Male	10	First Degree
Emilda	Female	8	First Degree
Kojo	Male	15	First Degree
Kwame	Male	10	First Degree
Kofi	Male	7	First Degree
Seth	Male	13	First Degree
Charles	Male	17	First Degree
Lamptey	Male	10	First Degree
Audrey	Female	13	First Degree

The second category of respondents was made up of Seventeen students from different schools including both public and private of which nine were females and eight were males. These students were selected purposively for a focus group interview.

Table 2: Description of Junior High School Students

Pseudonym	Gender	Class
Sandra	Female	J.H.S. 3
Rebecca	Female	J.H.S. 3
Paul	Male	J.H.S. 3
Percy	Male	J.H.S. 3
Efua	Female	J.H.S. 3
Abena	Female	J.H.S. 3
Yaw	Male	J.H.S. 3
James	Male	J.H.S. 3
Esi	Female	J.H.S. 3
Vera	Female	J.H.S. 3
Sarah	Female	J.H.S. 3
Kwesi	Male	J.H.S. 3
Stephen	Male	J.H.S. 3
Aziz	Male	J.H.S. 3
Akos	Female	J.H.S. 3
Abba	Female	J.H.S. 3
George	Male	J.H.S. 3

For purposes of anonymity and confidentiality, the identities of respondents (Teachers and Students) are undisclosed. Instead, information attributed to them was identified with pseudonyms derived from the respondents during the interview.

4.2 Research Question 1: How Do Teachers' Values Influence their Appreciation of the GESI Principles of the Common Core Curriculum?

The first research question sought to explore how teachers' values influence their appreciation of the GESI principles of the Common Core Curriculum. This is because teachers' values play a substantial role in shaping their instructional decisions, their interaction with learners, and their ability to ensure equality in class (Cohen et al.,

2018). Also, understanding how teachers' values influence their appreciation of GESI principles can provide valuable insights into the factors that facilitate or hinder the effective integration of these principles into their teaching practices. The respondents in the study expressed a strong belief that values significantly influence their understanding and appreciation of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles. This perspective is rooted in the diverse socio-cultural and religious background from which teachers come. To fully grasp this assertion, it is essential to explore how values shape perceptions and attitudes toward GESI principles, as well as the implications of these influences on teachers' practices. Three themes were emerged from the views of the respondents as to how their values influence their appreciation of GESI principles in their practice. These are teachers' religious values, teachers' personal values, and motivation for adopting GESI.

Theme One: Teachers' Religious Beliefs

The first theme that was generated under research question one was that teachers' religious beliefs play a significant role in shaping their appreciation of the GESI principles of the Common Core Curriculum.

Religious beliefs exert a significant influence on teachers' understanding and appreciation of GESI principles (Tamang, 2022). Teachers' religious beliefs can shape their attitudes toward gender roles, social norms, and cultural practices, and this can, in turn, influence their interpretation and implementation of the GESI principles, which are designed to promote inclusivity, diversity, and equity in the educational setting (Huberman, 2023). These religious beliefs may lead teachers to hold traditional views on gender roles, which could affect their ability to effectively

integrate GESI principles into their teaching practices, potentially perpetuating gender stereotypes and limiting opportunities for students.

Also, Alesina and Giuliano (2015) postulate that religious beliefs can shape teachers' perceptions of social norms and cultural practices, which can in turn, affect their understanding of the GESI principles. Respondents expressed their views in many ways, and some were captured and presented.

For instance, Abdul, a teacher, said:

'...As a Muslim, I believe that men and women have different roles in society, so I implement GESI in a way that respects our cultural and religious values where men are seen as superior over women'.

In my observation at Abdul's school, I noticed students were in mixed-gender seating arrangements, but he used the lecture method in his delivery and he allowed less time for questions and answers. Students only listened to his lectures, and though they did not ask questions for further clarification, I could see from their faces that they did not fully understand the concepts well because it was drawn on their faces.

Also, Peter, a teacher, added that,

'...I come from a traditional background where women are expected to take care of the home. I struggle to ensure equality sometimes in my teaching because they go against the cultural values of the Ghanaian society'.

In my observation at Peter's school, I noticed the seating arrangements of the students were not in mixed-gender form, and he used the lecture method for his lesson delivery.

Eva, a teacher also emphasized how her religious beliefs influence her thinking about gender roles. However, she held completely opposite positions to those of Abdul and Peter. She said:

‘...As a Christian, I believe in giving both sexes, equal opportunity to all and creating no limitations for a particular gender or sex due to their biological disposition’.

The data suggest that teachers’ religious beliefs can significantly influence their understanding and implementation of GESI principles. Abdul’s statement, ‘As a Muslim, I believe that men and women have different roles in society, so I implement GESI in a way that respects our cultural and religious values where men are seen as superior over women,’ indicates that religious beliefs lead to a patriarchal interpretation of gender roles. These beliefs of Abdul may be reinforced by *Surah An-Nisa (4:34)*, which states that men are ‘protectors of women due to their physical strength and financial responsibilities’. Most Islamic scholars interpret this verse to mean, ‘Men hold a position of authority over women’. Abdul’s statement reflects his belief in the superiority of men over women, which is rooted in his interpretation of Islamic teachings and this may have led to him believing that men are superior to women. This perspective is consistent with research that suggests that religious beliefs can shape individuals’ attitudes toward gender equality and social inclusion (Schnabel, 2016; Seguino, 2011). This perspective is reflected in his teaching practice, as observed during the study, where students were seated in mixed-gender arrangements, but the lecture method was predominantly used, allowing limited time for questions and answers. The students’ facial expressions suggested that they did not fully comprehend the concepts, indicating a potential limitation of this approach.

Peter's account, 'I come from a traditional background where women are expected to take care of the home, so I struggle to ensure equality sometimes in my teaching because they go against the cultural value of the Ghanaian patriarchal society', highlighting the tension between religious beliefs and the principles of GESI. These beliefs may be fuelled by Akan proverbs, saying, *'When a woman buys a gun, she places it in a man's house'* and *'A woman sells garden eggs but not gunpowder'*. These indicate that women are often associated with nurturing roles and domestic responsibilities but not power. This is in line with literature that says that the struggle to reconcile traditional beliefs with the need to promote gender equality and social inclusion is a common challenge teachers face in patriarchal societies (Durrani & Halai, 2018; Makama, 2013). This struggle was evident in his teaching practice, where students were not seated in mixed-gender arrangements, and the lecture method was used for lesson delivery.

Eva's statement, 'As a Christian, I believe in giving both sexes an equal opportunity to all and creating no limitations for a particular gender or sex due to their biological disposition'. Presents a contrasting view, where religious beliefs promote gender equality and social inclusion. Eva's belief may be strengthened by a Bible quote from *Galatians 3:28* that states, *'There is neither Jew nor Gentile neither slave nor free people nor is there male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'*. This verse has been foundational for many Christian movements promoting gender equality. This perspective is consistent with research that suggests that religious beliefs can also promote egalitarian attitudes toward gender roles (Alesina & Giuliano, 2015b; Cruşmac, 2019; Mullally, 2006).

These findings suggest that teachers' religious beliefs can influence their implementation of GESI principles in various ways. Some teachers may use their religious beliefs to justify patriarchal attitudes toward gender roles, while others may use their beliefs to promote gender equality and social inclusion.

Additionally, the findings suggest that teachers' religious beliefs can influence their relationships with students and their ability to create an inclusive learning environment. Teachers who hold patriarchal beliefs may create a learning environment that perpetuates gender stereotypes and inequality, while teachers who promote gender equality and social inclusion may create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Theme Two: Teachers' Personal Values

Teachers' personal values shaped by their upbringing, experiences, and cultural background influence their teaching practices, interactions with students, and, ultimately, their appreciation of GESI principles. Teachers who hold personal values that prioritize fairness, equality, and inclusivity are more likely to appreciate and actively promote Gender Equality and Social Inclusion principles within the Common Core Curriculum. These teachers may incorporate diverse perspectives into their teaching practices, create inclusive classroom environments, and advocate for policies that support the needs of all students regardless of their background or identity.

For instance, Sophia, a teacher, stated:

'...I believe that boys and girls should be treated equally in the classroom. I make sure to provide equal opportunities for all students to participate in my class.'

Sandra, Sophia's student, supported this by saying:

'Our teachers provide equal treatment to both boys and girls in class because they always say we are all human beings and we all deserve the same respect and treatment'.

In my observation at Sophia's school, I noticed she was free to the students, and the students approached her with ease. In her class, students were in their mixed-gender sitting positions, and she took time to discuss the topic she was teaching to the students, and she wrote notes on the board for students to copy after discussions. I asked why, and she said not all the students could afford the textbooks so she wrote on the board for them to copy into their notebook for revision and reference. She encouraged equal participation in class by making sure both boys and girls asked questions. I asked why, and she said it helps her to know if everyone understands what she is teaching.

John, a teacher, also said:

'As a result of my strong belief in GESI, my relationship with the opposite sex is full of mutual respect, and I have always given equal opportunities to individuals I meet without being biased as a result of their biological or physical makeup'.

John's student, Rebecca, added that:

'Our teachers show equal treatment to boys and girls by focusing on all students in the class, which makes us feel equal, included, and valued.'

In observation at John's school, I was informed that he was the netball coach. He trains girls from primary to junior high school in his school for netball, and they perform well in all competitions. I was told his welcoming style of training the girls have made them like him so much. In my observation in one of his trainings, I

realized he was not using a cane nor insulting when one makes a mistake. Though netball is a game for girls, he mixed both girls and boys and when I asked why, he said they had introduced handball in their inter-school sports competition so he wanted the boys to learn how to hold and throw a ball and it was all fun for the students. In his classroom practices, I observed he takes his time to explain concepts to students and he invites questions from the students regardless of gender.

The findings suggest that teachers' personal values substantially shape their appreciation of the GESI principles. For instance, Sophia stated that she believes in treating boys and girls equally in the classroom, providing equal opportunities for all students to participate. This value was reflected in her teaching practices, as observed in her classroom, where students were seated in mixed-gender groups, and she encouraged equal participation by making sure both boys and girls asked questions. Sophia's student, Sandra, confirmed this, stating that their teachers treat boys and girls equally, as they believe all students deserve the same respect and treatment.

Similarly, John also shared his belief in GESI, saying that he gives everyone equal opportunities without bias and that his relationship with the other sex is based on mutual respect. Rebecca, one of his students, attested to this, saying that both boys and girls receive equal attention from teachers, which makes them feel valued, included, and equal. As a netball coach who instructs girls from primary school through junior high school in a kind and inclusive manner, John's dedication to GESI values is also evident.

These findings are consistent with research that suggests that teachers' personal values and beliefs play a significant role in shaping their teaching practices and interactions with students (Day et al., 2006; Hargreaves, 2001). The data also highlights the

importance of teacher-student relationships in creating an inclusive learning environment, as teachers who value equality are more likely to foster positive relationships with their students (Akmatalieva, 2022; Camp, 2011).

Furthermore, the findings suggest that teachers' values influence their pedagogical practices, such as encouraging equal participation, using inclusive language, and providing opportunities for students to engage with each other (Addai-Mununkum & Setordzi, 2023; Gyimah et al., 2009). The observation of Sophia and John's teaching practices, for example, demonstrates how their values are translated into action, creating a learning environment that is inclusive and respectful of all students.

Theme Three: Motivations for Adopting GEESI

The third theme under research question one delves into the motivations that drive teachers to adopt Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles in their educational practice. GESI principles aim to promote equality, inclusivity, and diversity within educational settings by addressing gender disparities, promoting social inclusion, and embracing diversity among students. Understanding teachers' motivations for incorporating these principles into their teaching practices is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Teachers may be motivated to adopt GESI principles in their practice for various reasons.

For instance, Eva, a teacher, stated that:

'...I am motivated by the fact that GESI helps students feel included and also makes it easy for learners to respect the opposite sex'.

Kojo, a teacher, also said:

‘...My motivation stems from the fact that every student deserves to have equal opportunities for academic success regardless of their background or identity.’

The findings of this theme reveal that teachers’ motivations for adopting GESI principles are rooted in their desire to create a sense of belonging and respect among students, regardless of their background or identity.

For instance, Eva expressed her motivation as stemming from the fact that GESI helps students to feel included and makes it easy for learners to respect the opposite sex. ‘Kojo another teacher, echoed this sentiment, who stated that he is motivated by the belief that every student deserves equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background or identity’. These statements highlight the importance of teachers’ values and beliefs in shaping their practice as noted by (Day et al., 2006; Hargreaves, 2001).

The motivations expressed by these teachers align with the principles of GESI, which emphasize the need to address the diverse needs of all learners, particularly those from marginalized groups (Wagner et al., 2022). By adopting GESI principles, teachers create a learning environment that is inclusive, respectful, and supportive of all students, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic background (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Furthermore, the findings suggest that teachers’ motivations for adopting GESI principles are also driven by a sense of social justice and a commitment to promoting equality and fairness in education. This is consistent with the literature on teacher motivation, which highlights the importance of teachers’ values and beliefs in shaping their practice (Day et al., 2006). As noted by Fullan(2006), teachers who are

motivated by a sense of social justice are more likely to engage in practices that promote equity and inclusion.

4.3 Research Question 2: How do teachers' practices promote the GESI principles of the Common Core Curriculum?

It is essential to examine how teachers' practice aligns with Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles that seek to ensure inclusivity, equity, and equality in class because studies have shown that teachers play a significant role in shaping students' learning experiences and outcomes (Hasnah, 2017).

In answering Research Question Two, which aims to investigate how teachers' practices promote Gender Equality and Social Inclusion principles of the Common Core Curriculum, three prominent themes emerged from the participants' responses. These themes shed light on the strategies employed by teachers to uphold GESI principles in their practices. The themes include GESI responsive language, Participation of both males and females, and Positive role modelling.

Theme 1: GESI responsive language

The first theme that surfaced from the participants' responses highlighted the significance of GESI-responsive language in creating an inclusive learning environment. Teachers and students alike emphasized the need for language that is sensitive to the diverse needs of all learners, regardless of their gender, social background, or other characteristics. This involves using language that is free from bias, stereotypes, and discriminatory terminologies and instead promotes equity, inclusivity, and social justice.

The importance of GESI-responsive language was underscored by teachers, who recognized its potential to shape the learning experiences of students.

For instance, Emilda, a teacher, said:

'...I make sure to use gender-neutral language in my teaching to avoid stereotyping and biases, which promote inclusivity in my class, and it helps my students to participate in my lesson.'

Paul, Emilda's student, added that:

'...My teachers make sure that we respect each other's opinions in class, especially when someone stands to speak or answers a question and makes a mistake, they do not allow us to laugh at him/her and that's very important for our learning.'

Abena, another student, added that,

'...Our teachers always advise us to respect and treat everyone equally, no matter their circumstances.'

In my observation of Emilda's classroom practices, I noticed she avoided using specific pronouns like he/she but used gender-neutral pronouns such as they, student, and everyone more frequently. I asked why, and she said she did not want to create discrimination among the students. She added that she wants to instil in everyone that any person can be a nurse, firefighter, or police officer, regardless of their gender, so she tries to avoid names like policeman, fireman, and the rest.

Kojo, a teacher, also added:

'...I use GESI-responsive communication through gender-neutral language together with unbiased practices that value diversity as well as equality to ensure my teaching remains accessible to all students with different backgrounds or abilities and this provides students with a feeling of being valued and respected and being empowered to participate and learn.'

Percy, Kojo's student, also supported this by saying:

'...Our teachers use inclusive teaching methods with GESI-sensitive language to cater to the individual learning needs of all students in the classroom. This makes us feel valued and seen as important because of the various materials they use with teaching approaches that honour all our needs and abilities.'

In my observation at Kojo's school, I noticed he went to class with cardboard, and students were grouped into mixed-gender groupings. He hangs the cardboard one by one, asks students to discuss what they see, and presents them group by group. I asked why that strategy and he said, he does that to promote teamwork, and respect and also ensure everyone participates in the lesson. I also noticed that he encouraged everyone to participate in the presentation where every member says something for marks. Though he frequently used he or she in his delivery the students didn't feel excluded because the class was fun and everybody participated.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of using gender-neutral language and inclusive teaching practices in promoting a safe and inclusive learning environment. The participants, including teachers and students, emphasized the need to avoid stereotyping and biases in language use to promote equality and respect among students.

The use of gender-neutral language was found to be a deliberate strategy employed by teachers to create an inclusive learning environment. For instance, Emilda reported using gender-neutral pronouns such as 'they,' 'student,' and 'everyone' to avoid creating discrimination among students. This finding is consistent with previous

research that suggests that language use can have a significant impact on students' perceptions of inclusivity and respect in the classroom (Mohammadi et al., 2017).

The study also found that teachers' use of inclusive language and teaching strategies promotes teamwork, respect, and participation among students. Kojo reported using GESI-responsive language and inclusive teaching strategies to cater to the diverse needs of all students in the class. This finding is supported by previous research that suggests that inclusive teaching practices can lead to improved academic outcomes and increased student engagement (Gay, 2002).

Furthermore, the study found that students value and appreciate the use of inclusive language and teaching strategies by their teachers. For instance, Paul, a student, reported that his teachers' emphasis on respecting each other's opinions in class helped to create a safe and inclusive learning environment. Similarly, Abena, a student, reported that her teachers' advice to respect and treat everyone equally regardless of their circumstances helped to promote a sense of inclusivity and respect in the classroom.

However, the study also found that even when teachers use non-inclusive language, the impact can be mitigated by the use of inclusive teaching strategies. For instance, observation in Kojo's class revealed that he frequently used non-inclusive language in his delivery, but the students did not feel excluded because the class was fun and everybody participated. This finding is in line with literature that states that the impact of language use on students' perceptions of inclusivity and respect is complex and influenced by many factors (Vizcarra-Garcia, 2021).

Theme Two: Participation of both males and females

The second theme under research question two explores the factors that influence the participation of both males and females in the classroom. Achieving a balanced and inclusive learning environment requires understanding the dynamics that promote equal engagement and involvement of students from diverse backgrounds. This theme explores how teachers ensure varying levels of participation among male and female students in the classroom.

For instance, Seth, a teacher, stated that:

'...I put students into mixed-gender groupings that create an inclusive environment where both males and females feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions. I also encourage active listening and respect for each other's perspectives, regardless of gender, and this leads to a rich exchange of ideas and a deeper understanding of the topic at hand.'

In my observation in Seth's school, I observed that he puts students in mixed-gender groupings to discuss the topic, and he acts as a facilitator to guide the students in the discussion process. Afterward, students were made to do a presentation group by group.

Charles, a teacher, also said:

'...I promote collaborative learning by implementing mixed gender seating arrangements for projects and presentations because it allows both male and female students to work as equals.'

Akos, Charle's student, said,

'...Our seating arrangement in the school has always been male and female on a desk but sometimes some teachers also

put us in mixed-gender groupings for discussions and presentations.'

In my observation at Charles's school, I noticed that a sweeping duty roster in all the J.H.S blocks only had the names of girls. Also, the inner walls of the Form Three class have only pictures of past presidents and other male personalities who have held key positions in the country I didn't see any pictures of females who have held key positions like chief justice, speaker of parliament, and the Electoral Commission. In Charles's class, I noticed the seating arrangements were male and female on a desk. He used only the lecture method throughout the teaching and learning process, where students became passive listeners rather than allowing them to explore the topic through discussions.

The findings of this theme highlight the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment that promotes equal participation and teamwork among both male and female students. According to Seth mixed-gender groupings can facilitate an inclusive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions, leading to a rich exchange of ideas and a deeper understanding of the topic. This approach is supported by research that suggests that mixed-gender groupings can promote social interactions, collaboration, and mutual respect among students (Karmina et al., 2023).

Observations in Seth's school confirmed that he implemented this approach by putting students in mixed-gender groupings to discuss topics, acting as a facilitator to guide the discussion process. This approach allowed students to engage actively with the learning material and with each other, promoting a deeper understanding of the topic.

The use of group presentations also provided an opportunity for students to develop their communication and teamwork skills.

Similarly, Charles reported that he encouraged collaborative learning by arranging mixed seating in the classroom, promoting equal participation and teamwork among both males and females. However, observations in Charles's school revealed a contradictory picture. Despite the mixed seating arrangement, the classroom sweeping duty roster in all the Junior High School blocks had only the names of girls, suggesting that traditional gender roles were still being reinforced.

Furthermore, the inner walls of the Form Three class displayed only pictures of past presidents and other male personalities who had held key positions in the country, with no representation of females who had held similar positions. This lack of representation can perpetuate gender stereotypes and reinforce the notion that leadership roles are reserved for males (Connell & Pearse, 2014).

Moreover, Kojo's teaching approach was observed to be primarily lecture-based, with students playing a passive role rather than being encouraged to explore the topic through discussions. This approach can limit students' opportunities for engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration (Freire, 2015). In contrast, Akos, one of Charles's students, reported that some teachers, including Charles, sometimes used mixed-gender groupings for discussions and presentations. The observations in those teachers' schools suggest that while teachers may consciously adopt inclusive practices like mixed-gender groupings, they may unconsciously perpetuate traditional gender roles due to deeply ingrained societal norms or institutional practices, such as assigning domestic tasks to girls or displaying male-centric leadership imagery. These contradictions undermine the effectiveness of GESI implementation by sending mixed

messages to students, reinforcing stereotypes, and limiting opportunities for meaningful gender equality in the classroom.

Theme Three: Positive Role Modelling

The last theme explores teachers' practices that exemplify their attitudes and behaviours that align with the GESI principles of the Common Core Curriculum. It delves into how teachers' practices can create a learning environment that is inclusive, respectful, and supportive of all students, regardless of their background, including challenging gender stereotypes and promoting equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their gender or disability.

For instance, Kwame, a teacher, said:

'...I work towards promoting gender equality and social inclusion by providing neutral chances for students to study and participate in classroom activities in order to reduce discrimination while diversity strengthens, and students develop a feeling of group unity.'

Kwame's student, Efua, added that:

'...Some of my teachers, especially teacher Kwame, are fair to us in class and when they come to class and ask questions, and you answer them wrongly, they don't consider your background to help and because of that, I like them so much.'

During the interview, I observed that Efua was very passionate about teacher Kwame's attitude towards students in class because she kept praising him anytime, I mentioned his name.

Also, in my observation at Kwame's school, I noticed most students, including both boys and girls, approach him with ease, especially during break time. He was their sports teacher who was in charge of all ball games, and students were calling him by

his nickname, and he was okay with it. In my class observation, I realized his students were seated in a mixed-gender form and were happy to see him in class. He creates competition for both boys and girls in terms of answering questions in class.

Also, Kofi, a teacher, said:

‘...I use mixed-gender and ability groups for discussions and presentations as well as peer reviews to ensure inclusivity and equal participation’.

His student, Abba, added that:

‘...Sir Kofi is one teacher who is always fair to us in class, he is always caring’.

Abba said this with a smile on her face, and it explains how she likes teacher Kofi so much because of his fairness.

In my observation at teacher Kofi’s school, I noticed that he was a disciplinarian and he ensured students dressed well. In class, I noticed his students were in mixed-gender groupings while they listened to an audio from an MP3. He guided them to discuss the audio and he made each group do a presentation. He gave an assignment and explained how he was expecting them to answer and he left. I noticed the students liked his style of teaching and were happy around him.

The data collected from teachers and student interviews, as well as classroom observations, demonstrate how teachers’ practices can foster a sense of belonging, reduce discrimination, and promote diversity among students.

According to Bandura (1977), people learn new behaviours and attitudes by observing and imitating others. In this context, teachers play a crucial role in modelling positive behaviours and attitudes that promote GESSI principles. Teacher Kwame’s approach

to ensuring equal opportunities for all students to learn and participate in class activities is a prime example of positive role modelling. By creating a fair and inclusive learning environment, Kwame reduces discrimination and promotes diversity among his students.

The impact of Kwame's approach is evident in how his student, Efua, perceive him. Efua's praise for Kwame's attitude towards students in class suggests that she feels valued and respected by her teacher. This is consistent with research that highlights the importance of teacher-student relationships in promoting student engagement and motivation (Camp, 2011). The observation that most students, including boys and girls, approach Kwame easily during break time further supports the notion that he has created a positive and inclusive learning environment around him.

Similarly, Kofi's use of mixed-gender and ability groups for discussions and presentations promotes social inclusion and reduces discrimination. This approach is supported by research that suggests that cooperative learning strategies can encourage social skills, empathy, and understanding among students (Slavin, 2012). Abba's comment that Kofi is always fair and caring further highlights the positive impact of Kofi's approach on his students.

The classroom observations of both Kwame and Kofi's classes provide further evidence of their positive role modelling. The use of mixed-gender groupings and the creation of competition for both boys and girls in answering questions promote social inclusion and reduce discrimination. The fact that students in both classes appear happy and engaged suggests that they feel valued and respected by their teachers.

Finally, the findings from this study highlight the importance of positive role modelling in promoting GESI principles in the classroom. Teachers Kwame and Kofi's approaches to creating inclusive learning environments, promoting social inclusion, and reducing discrimination provide valuable insights into the ways in which teachers can promote positive attitudes and behaviours among their students. As Bandura (1977) notes, 'behaviours, knowledge, and attitudes acquired through observation and imitation can have a profound impact on an individual's development'. The findings from this study suggest that teachers have a critical role to play in promoting positive attitudes and behaviours among their students and that positive role modelling is a key strategy in achieving this goal.

4.4 Research Question 3: How do Teachers' Practices Contradict the GESI

Principles of the Common Core Curriculum?

Research question three sought to explore how teachers' practices contradict the GESI principles of the Common Core Curriculum. This research question is worth being examined because it will help to identify gaps where educational equity is compromised. This knowledge is vital for addressing disparities that affect marginalized groups and students from diverse backgrounds. This is because research has shown that teachers' biases and stereotype can influence their expectations and interactions with students, leading to unequal opportunities for learning (McKown et al., 2010). Four key themes emerged from the feedback provided by participants. These themes revealed teachers' practices that counter GESI principles in their teaching practices. The identified themes include unfair treatment based on gender, lack of support for students with disabilities, insensitive use of language, and Body-shaming.

Theme 1: Unfair Treatment Based on Gender

This theme delves into the exploration of teaching practices employed by teachers that inadvertently or intentionally perpetuate discriminatory treatment to students based on their gender or socio-economic background. Such practices are in direct conflict with the fundamental principles of gender equality and social inclusion principles (GESI), which emphasize the importance of fostering an environment of fairness, respect, and inclusivity among students.

Also, this theme seeks to identify how teachers' practices may contribute to the marginalization or exclusion of certain student groups, thereby undermining the GESI principles.

For instance, Vera, a student said,

'...Some of our teachers give more attention to boys than girls in class, especially during mathematics class, because most of us are weak and it's not fair. It makes us feel excluded and inferior.'

In support of this response, I noticed in my observations that most teachers in some schools I visited were seeking answers to questions without actively ensuring gender equality. They were not consciously promoting gender inclusivity when asking students for answers. The responses were mostly coming from the boys and the teachers were okay, and not encouraging the girls to also try.

Sarah, a student also added that,

'...Some teachers exclude boys from certain activities like scrubbing and sweeping in class and that's not fair. They always say these activities are for the girls and if we fail to scrub the toilet, they cane all the girls leaving the boys.'

In support of this response, I also noticed in my observations that some of the classes had a sweeping duty roster pasting in their class and the names on the rosters were girls, I asked why and the response I had was that it was normal there.

Research has shown that teacher-student interactions play a significant role in shaping students' learning experiences and outcomes (Camp, 2011). Unfortunately, the data collected in this study suggests that teachers often unintentionally perpetuate gender-based discrimination in the classroom. Vera, a student, noted that teachers give more attention to boys than girls, particularly in mathematics classes, making the girls feel 'excluded and inferior'. This observation is supported by research, which has consistently shown that teachers tend to interact more with boys than girls in the classroom, often unintentionally reinforcing gender stereotypes (Kollmayer et al., 2018).

Furthermore, observations revealed that teachers were not actively promoting gender inclusivity when asking students for answers, with responses mostly coming from boys. This lack of encouragement for girls to participate can have long-term consequences, as research has shown that girls who are not encouraged to participate in math and science classes are less likely to pursue careers in these fields (Wang & Degol, 2017). By not actively promoting gender inclusivity, teachers are unintentionally perpetuating the existing gender gap in education.

In addition to the unequal attention given to boys and girls, the data also revealed that teachers often assign tasks based on traditional gender roles. Sarah, a student, noted that teachers excluded boys from certain activities like scrubbing and sweeping, assigning these tasks to girls only. This practice reinforces the notion that domestic work is the responsibility of girls and women, perpetuating gender stereotypes and

limiting the potential of both boys and girls (Connell & Pearse, 2014). The observation of sweeping duty rosters with girls' names further supports this finding, highlighting the need for teachers to challenge and change these discriminatory practices.

The GESI principles of the CCC aim to promote a learning environment that is free from discrimination and bias. However, the findings of this study suggest that teachers' practices often contradict these principles, perpetuating unfair treatment based on gender.

Theme 2: Lack of Support for Students with Disabilities

This theme delves into the teaching practices that lack support for students with disabilities in the classroom, highlighting the ways in which teachers may create obstacles that hinder students' full participation and engagement in classroom activities. More specifically, this theme brings to the forefront how teachers, either knowingly or unknowingly, may implement instructional methods, assessments, or classroom environments that exclude or marginalize students with disabilities, ultimately limiting their opportunities for learning and socialization.

For instance, Kwesi, a student said:

'...Some of our teachers' writings on the board are too small that it becomes difficult to see and write and when you complain too, they either disgrace you or make fun of you which is not fair'.

Stephen, a student also added that,

'...Sometimes some of our teachers teach for a few who understand them and leave those of us who do not understand what they are teaching and that's very bad, making some of us feel inferior and excluded'.

In my observations, I also noticed that the majority of teachers were teaching without taking into account the unique differences among students in the class, as they solely relied on the lecture method for instruction. This lack of consideration for individual learning styles became apparent through the expressions of confusion and lack of understanding on some students' faces. All the schools I visited including both private and public also lacked public address (P.A.) systems and projectors to aid in the classroom activities of teachers, which is a disadvantage to those with hearing and vision problems.

The Gender Equality Social Inclusive (GESI) principles emphasize the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of all students, including those with disabilities. However, the findings from this study reveal that teachers' practices in the observed schools contradict this principle, particularly about supporting students with disabilities.

One of the significant concerns raised by the students was the lack of consideration for their visual and auditory needs. Kwesi, a student, lamented that some teachers' writings on the board were too small, making it difficult for him to see and write. This complaint highlights the neglect of teachers to accommodate students with visual impairments, which is a clear contradiction to the GESI principle of providing equal access to education for all students. Furthermore, the lack of P.A. systems and projectors in the schools exacerbates this issue, putting students with hearing and vision problems at a significant disadvantage.

Moreover, the teaching methods employed by the majority of teachers observed in this study were not inclusive, as they relied solely on the lecture method, neglecting the diverse learning styles of students. This approach can lead to feelings of exclusion

and inferiority among students who do not understand the materials, as expressed by Stephen, a student. This finding is consistent with research that suggests that traditional teaching methods can marginalize students with disabilities, leading to poor academic outcomes and low self-esteem (Scherr & Mayer, 2019).

The GESI principle emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that values diversity and promotes equity. However, the findings from this study suggest that teachers' practices in the observed schools contradict this principle, particularly in supporting students with disabilities. The lack of consideration for individual styles, the neglect of visual and auditory needs, and the absence of assistive technology all contribute to an exclusionary learning environment that undermines the principles of inclusive education (Scherr & Mayer, 2019).

Theme 3: Insensitive Use of Language

This theme highlights teachers' practices involving insensitive use of language, which contradicts the GESI principle, which seeks to promote respect for diversity.

When teachers use language that is insensitive or discriminatory, it creates a hostile learning environment for students from diverse backgrounds. This not only goes against the principles of inclusivity and respect but also hinders the overall educational experience for all students.

For instance, Vera, a student, said:

'...Some teachers jokingly use offensive language on us, especially if we don't understand what they are teaching, I remember a teacher told me I was mad because I answered a question wrong, and that made me feel bad and less human that day'.

When I asked Vera to give me more of the offensive language, she has heard teachers use on them, she said, a teacher once told her colleague that his head is like a goat. Another also said she was mad and her head was not working normally because she did not understand something and she asked a question. I observed Vera was pained and she expressed this on her face.

Aziz, a student also said:

'...During a mathematics class, I did not understand what the teacher was teaching and I raised my hand to tell him. When I told him I was not getting what he was teaching, he told me that I would not understand till I die, and up till now it hurts me and it has made me hate the teacher and the subject'.

I saw drops of tears coming while Aziz was telling me this and it shows how much these incentive words from the teacher in question pained him. It was evident those words were still haunting him.

The experiences of students like Vera and Aziz highlight a disturbing trend in teacher practices that contradict the principles of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in the classroom. Specifically, the insensitive use of language by teachers has a profound impact on students' emotional well-being and learning outcomes.

Research has consistently shown that teacher-student interactions play a significant role in shaping students' academic experiences and self-concept (Camp, 2011). However, when teachers use derogatory language, it can lead to feelings of shame, low self-esteem, and decreased motivation among students (Walker et al., 2020). Vera's account of her experience where a teacher told her she was 'mad' for answering a question incorrectly, making her feel 'bad and less human'. This incident highlights

the potential for teacher language to dehumanize students and undermine their confidence (Kotek et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Vera reported that teachers often use disparaging remarks, such as comparing a colleague's head to a goat or telling a student that their head is not working normally. These comments not only create a toxic learning environment but also perpetuate a culture of disrespect and ridicule.

Moreover, the use of offensive language by teachers can be particularly hurtful when it is directed at students who are already struggling academically. Aziz's experience of being told that 'he would not understand till he dies' is a heartbreaking example of how teachers' words can have a lasting impact on students' emotional well-being. This kind of language can lead to feelings of despair, which can have long-term consequences for students' mental health and academic achievement (Walker et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the fact that these incidents have stayed with Vera and Aziz long after they occurred suggests that the impact of teachers' language can be cumulative and enduring. Research has shown that student who experiences negative interactions with teachers are more likely to develop negative attitudes toward learning and toward themselves (Martin & Dowson, 2009). In this case, Aziz's hatred towards the teacher and the subject of mathematics is a direct result of the teacher's insensitive language.

Theme 4: Body-shaming

Body-shaming by teachers, characterized by derogatory comments, ridicule, and humiliation, can create a learning environment that is antithetical to the principles of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). This theme delves into the ways in

which body-shaming perpetuates inequality and undermines inclusive educational practices, thereby contradicting the fundamental tenets of GESI.

Body-shaming by teachers comes in the form of verbal or non-verbal behaviour that targets a student's physical appearance, weight, or body shape, resulting in feelings of shame, self-doubt, and low self-esteem. The following are some of the comments by the participants concerning the theme.

For instance, James, a student, said,

'...My teacher cited me as an example of an effeminate in class because, according to him, I behave and walk like a girl. I cried the whole day. I wanted to stop school because the entire class laughed at me, and up until now, some of my colleagues call me by that name'.

Yaw, a student, also said,

'My teacher disgraced me once by telling me that sports are not for people like me, whose bodies are like bread soaked in water and I felt bad because I was laughed at'.

The findings of this theme highlight the profound impact of teacher bullying on students' emotional well-being and academic experiences. Specifically, the data reveal that teachers' derogatory comments and behaviours can lead to feelings of shame, embarrassment, and low self-esteem among students.

One of the most striking findings to emerge from the data was the way in which teachers used gendered language to belittle and humiliate students. For instance, James recounted an incident in which his teacher publicly referred to him as 'effeminate' due to his perceived feminine mannerisms, stating, 'My teacher cited me as an example of an effeminate in class because according to him, I behave and walk

like a girl'. This experience had a profound impact on James, who reported crying for the entire day and feeling a strong desire to drop out of school due to the ridicule he faced from his classmates.

Similarly, Yaw shared an experience where his teacher disparaged his physical appearance, telling him that sports were not suitable for someone with a body 'like bread soaked in water'. This comment not only made Yaw feel 'bad' but also subjected him to ridicule from his peers, further reinforcing the negative impact of teacher-perpetrated harassment on students' emotional well-being

These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the negative impact of teacher bullying on students' emotional well-being and academic outcomes (Jones, 2023; Upadhyay et al., 2023). They also underscore the importance of creating a safe and inclusive learning environment where students feel valued and respected regardless of their gender expression or physical appearance.

Furthermore, these findings suggest that teachers' behaviours and comments can impact students' self-esteem and confidence. As noted by James, even after the initial incident had passed, some of his classmates continued to refer to him by the derogatory name used by his teacher, perpetuating a cycle of bullying and harassment.

4.5 Research Question 4: How do Students' Backgrounds Influence Teachers'

Adoption of GESI Responsive Teaching?

The fourth research question aims to explore how students' backgrounds influence teachers' adoption of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) responsive teaching practices. This inquiry is crucial in understanding the complex dynamics at

play in the educational setting, where teachers' instructional approaches are influenced by various factors, including the backgrounds of their students (Liu, 2023).

Three themes were highlighted to help answer this question, and they include students' background influencing teachers' adoption of GESI-responsive teaching, teachers' sensitivity to students' needs, and teachers' ability to adapt their teaching practices.

Theme 1: Students' Backgrounds Influencing Teachers' Adoption of GESI-responsive Teaching

The significance of teachers' awareness of students' backgrounds in shaping their adoption of GESI-responsive teaching practices cannot be underrated. Research has consistently demonstrated that teachers who deeply understand their students' backgrounds are more likely to adapt their teaching methods to cater to their diverse needs (Khalil et al., 2023; Thabiti et al., 2023). This awareness enables teachers to create an inclusive learning environment that acknowledges and values their students' unique experiences, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds. Studies have also shown that teachers who are knowledgeable about their students' backgrounds are better equipped to identify and address the individual needs of their students, leading to more effective teaching practices (Nicholson-Eaton, 2020).

Eva, a teacher, for instance, said,

'...Some less confident and shy students in my class influenced my decision to adopt GESI-responsive teaching strategies by tailoring my teaching methods to cater to their learning needs. I do that by celebrating small victories and acknowledging their efforts and progress. Also, I establish a positive and respectful classroom culture where all students feel valued and encouraged'.

In my observation at Eva's school, I was told she has a girls' club in the school where she meets them once a week to discuss issues about girls' health and gender issues. So, I asked her intention for the club, and she said her motive behind forming the club is to motivate the young girls to see their potential and who they can become in future if they work harder. In her classroom practices, I noticed she had put her students in mixed-gender groups and she guided them to do discussions. I also noticed she was very welcoming when students raised their hands to ask questions. She has a classroom environment where students do not tease or laugh at fellow students who speak bad English or answer questions wrongly. She rewarded students who asked questions and did presentations with toffees. She told me the rewards were to motivate students to participate fully.

Seth, a teacher also said:

'...I am careful when dealing with students concerning their religion. My school has both Christian and Muslim students so I am careful in citing examples using students' religion negatively, knowing well it may hurt them'.

The influence of students' backgrounds on teachers' adoption of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) responsive teaching is a critical aspect of creating an inclusive learning environment. Research has shown that their understanding of their students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and needs shapes teachers' pedagogical choices (Thabiti et al., 2023).

According to Eva, her students' backgrounds particularly those less confident and shy students, influenced her decision to adopt GESI-responsive teaching strategies. She tailored her teaching methods to cater to their learning needs by celebrating small victories and acknowledging their efforts and progress. This approach is consistent

with research that suggests that teachers' pedagogical choices should be informed by their students' diverse backgrounds and experiences (Ananga, 2021). Establishing a positive and respectful classroom culture enabled Eva to create an inclusive learning environment where all students felt valued and encouraged.

Eva's approach is also reflective of her commitment to promoting gender equality and social inclusion. Her establishment of a girls' club in the school, where she meets with them once a week to discuss issues related to girls' health and gender, demonstrates her dedication to empowering young girls and promoting their potential. This initiative is consistent with research that suggests that teachers can play a critical role in promoting gender equality and social inclusion in the classroom (Kumar & Pandey, 2021).

In addition, Eva's classroom practices, such as putting students in mixed-gender groups and guiding them to engage in discussions, demonstrate her commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment. Her welcoming approach to students who raise their hands to ask questions and her rewards for students who participate fully in class activities, such as presenting and asking questions also reflect her dedication to promoting student participation and engagement.

Seth's narrative also highlights the importance of considering students' backgrounds in teaching practices. He reported being careful when dealing with students concerning their religion, citing examples that might not hurt or offend them. This approach is consistent with research that suggests that teachers should be sensitive to their students' diverse backgrounds and experiences, including their religious beliefs (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008).

Theme 2: Teachers' Sensitivity to Students' Needs

Teachers' sensitivity to students' needs is a crucial aspect of effective teaching, as it enables teachers to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of their students. Research has consistently shown that teachers who are sensitive to their students' needs are more likely to promote better academic achievement, social-emotional growth, and overall well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

For instance, Sophia, a teacher, said:

'...Students from low-income backgrounds sometimes face the challenge of accessing resources to ensure effective learning, so I adapt my teaching methods to address these specific barriers and provide additional support to help these students to feel included by always writing notes on the board for my students'.

In my observation in Sophia's class, I observed students were seated in mixed-gender groupings and she led a discussion. Students were allowed to ask questions but the boys asked more questions than the girls. She wrote notes on the board and students copied. I asked a few students if they like copying notes this way and the responses were yes because their parents could not afford to buy them the textbooks.

Also, Charles, a teacher, said:

'...There are times when some girls will say because of their religion, they cannot wear shorts to participate in sporting activities because their religion does not allow them to show some part of their bodies and I have to respect that and allow them to put on those that make them feel comfortable to participate'.

Also, Esi, a student stated that:

‘...My father is mentally derailed and my teachers know that and because of that they always choose their words carefully not to make me feel bad especially when we are treating topics concerning mental illness’.

The influence of students’ backgrounds on teachers’ adoption of GESI-responsive teaching is a critical aspect of creating an inclusive learning environment. Research has shown that teachers’ sensitivity to students’ needs plays a significant role in promoting academic achievement and social inclusion (Runesson et al., 2011).

The findings from this study reveal that teachers who are sensitive to the needs of their students from diverse backgrounds are more likely to adopt GESI-responsive teaching practices. For instance, Sophia, a teacher, adapts her teaching methods to address the specific barriers faced by students from low-income backgrounds, such as limited access to resources. Writing notes on the board enabled Sophia to provide additional support to help these students feel included, which is a key principle of GESI-responsive teaching (Tamang, 2022). This approach not only promotes academic inclusion but also acknowledges the socio-economic challenges faced by these students.

Moreover, the observation of Sophia’s class reveals that students from low-income backgrounds appreciate the effort made by the teacher to provide them with notes, as their parents cannot afford to buy them textbooks. This finding is consistent with research that highlights the importance of teachers’ understanding of students’ socio-economic backgrounds in promoting academic achievement (Okioga, 2013). By taking into account the financial constraints faced by these students, Sophia

demonstrates her commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment by being sensitive to her students' needs.

Also, Charles shows sensitivity to the religious needs of his students, particularly girls who may not be allowed to wear shorts for sporting activities due to their religious beliefs. Respecting their wishes and allowing them to wear alternative attire, Charles promoted social inclusion and acknowledged the diversity of his students' backgrounds. This approach is consistent with the principles of GESI-responsive teaching, which emphasizes the importance of respecting students' cultural and religious diversity (Abrha et al., 2023).

Additionally, Esi, a student, highlights the importance of teachers' sensitivity to students' personal circumstances, particularly those related to her father's mental health by choosing their words carefully when discussing topics related to mental health. Esi's teachers demonstrate their understanding of her situation and promote a safe inclusive learning environment. This finding is consistent with research that emphasizes the importance of teachers' empathy and understanding in promoting students' well-being and academic achievement (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015).

Theme 3: Teachers' Ability to Adapt Teaching Practices

This theme sheds light on how teachers adapt their teaching practices based on students' backgrounds and learning abilities.

Teachers are increasingly recognizing the need to tailor their instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students, which can vary significantly based on factors such as socio-economic status, learning abilities, and personal circumstances (Basit & Tomlinson, 2012). This adaptability is essential for fostering an inclusive learning

environment that promotes equity and enhances student engagement and achievement (Li & Singh, 2022).

For instance, Lamptey, a teacher, said,

'...A physically challenged girl (deaf and dumb) who is in my class. I met her mother about her daughter's situation and I advised her to take her to a special school but she declined the idea, she said we should allow her to be in the school because her pastor had prophesied that the girl would hear and speak if she allowed her in our school. I teach and sometimes give her special attention. It is difficult, though but I manage'.

In my observation at John's school, I noticed the girl in question is at a disadvantage because she cannot speak nor hear so John after dealing with the entire class, he went to her and made some signs to explain the concept to her. I asked John if he is a trained special education teacher, and he said no, and they do not even have one in the school. I continued to enquire to know if she understood the signs he made and he replied that to some extent, she understood him but it was difficult since he is not a special education teacher. John gave exercise and to my surprise, she had two out of five questions correct. Also, she had bad handwriting but it was readable.

Audrey, a teacher also said:

'...I make sure I choose a teaching method that suits the level of my learners. For instance, I mostly use the activity method to include all learners in the teaching and learning process and also encourage them to participate in the lesson'.

George, Audrey's student said:

'Some of my teachers adapt their teaching to meet our needs in class by ensuring that we all understand whatever they teach and that helps us learn effectively'.

In my observation at Audrey's school, I noticed that Audrey came to class with a cardboard with pictures with no names and she grouped students into mixed-gender groups and asked them to look at the pictures and tell the topic they going to study group by group. After discussions, students did a presentation group by group and the class was fun because groups were challenging each other with strong evidence to claim that theirs is the correct answer. I asked Eva why that method and she said it helps get the students involved in the learning process and it suits all learning styles. The influence of students' backgrounds on teachers' adoption of GESI-responsive teaching practices is a complex and multifaceted issue.

According to Lamptey, the teacher who has a physically challenged student in his class, adapting his teaching practices to meet the needs of this student is a challenging task. Despite not being a trained special education teacher, John makes an effort to give the student special attention, using signs to explain concepts to her. This approach is supported by research, which suggests that teachers' ability to adapt their teaching practices to meet the needs of students with disabilities is critical in promoting inclusive education (Chapman et al., 2011). However, Lamptey's experience also highlights the challenge that teachers face in adapting their teaching practice to meet the needs of students with disabilities, particularly in the absence of specialized training and resources.

In contrast, Audrey's approach to teaching is more proactive and inclusive. She uses a variety of teaching methods, including the activity method, to engage all learners in the teaching and learning process. This approach is supported by research, which suggests that teachers' use of inclusive teaching practices can have a positive impact on student learning outcomes (Moten, 2020). Audrey's student, George, also confirms

that Audrey's teaching approach helps him learn effectively, suggesting that Audrey's ability to adapt her teaching practices to meet the needs of her students is having a positive impact on student learning outcomes.

Observation of Audrey's teaching practice also reveals that she uses a variety of strategies to engage all learners, including the use of visual aids and group work. This approach is supported by research, which suggests that teachers' use of visual aids and group work can help to promote inclusive education (Forgrave, 2002). Audrey's approach also highlights the importance of teacher flexibility and creativity in adapting teaching practices to meet the needs of diverse learners.

4.6 Discussions of the Findings

This section discusses the major findings from the analysis based on Rogers (1995) diffusion of innovation theory, focusing on four out of the five characteristics of innovation to explain teachers' responsiveness to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion principles, as well as the decision to accept innovation. These characteristics are relative advantages, compatibility, complexity, and observability, which are presented in that order.

Relative Advantage

The concept of relative advantage is one of the key factors that influence the adoption of an innovation, as it refers to the benefits a member of a social system considers when deciding if the innovation is a better alternative than the existing idea or practice (Rogers, 1995). The greater the degree to which a member of a social system perceives the innovation's relative advantage, the more rapid its rate of adoption in a social system will be. In the context of this study, the relative advantage of the GESI

principles can be seen as the benefits teachers perceive in promoting these principles in their teaching practices.

The findings suggest that teachers who value equality, respect, and inclusion are more likely to create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all students. This is evident in Sophia's statement, where she believes in treating boys and girls equally in the classroom and providing equal opportunities for all students to participate. In this instance, Sophia sees GESI as a way to foster a positive classroom climate where all students feel valued and respected. Sophia's student, Sandra, corroborates this, stating that their teachers treat boys and girls equally, as they believe all students deserve the same respect and treatment. This is a testament to how Sophia perceives the relative advantage of GESI as having the ability to reduce discrimination and promote teamwork among students.

Similarly, John's commitment to GESI principles was reflected in his role as a netball coach, where he trains girls from primary to Junior High School using a welcoming and inclusive approach. This indicates that John sees GESI as a means to empower girls and challenge traditional gender roles which he believes contributes to a more just and equitable society. He perceives the relative advantage of GESI in terms of its ability to break down gender stereotypes and promote equal opportunities for all students.

According to Rogers (1995), 'The relative advantage of an innovation is the degree to which it is perceived as being better than the existing practice.' In this case, Sophia and John see GESI as a better alternative because it aligns with their values of fairness, inclusion and social justice and also addresses the needs of their students.

Also, the findings suggest that teachers' understanding of students' diverse backgrounds plays a significant role in shaping their pedagogical choices. For instance, both Eva and Lamptey, adapted their teaching practices to meet the needs of their students which reflects their perception of the relative advantage of GESI promoting inclusive education. Eva's decision to adopt GESI-responsive teaching strategies was influenced by her students' backgrounds, particularly those of less confident and shy students. She celebrates small victories and acknowledges their efforts, creating a positive and respectful classroom culture. This reveals how Eva sees the relative advantage of GESI in its ability to empower marginalised students and create a sense of belonging in the classroom. Also, she perceives GESI as a way to address the unique challenges faced by students from diverse backgrounds.

Similarly, Lamptey made an effort to give special attention to his physically challenged student, using signs to explain concepts and adapting his teaching methods to meet her needs. He sees the relative advantage of GESI in its ability to promote inclusive education and ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, have access to quality education.

This approach is consistent with Rogers (1995) notion that the relative advantage of an innovation is influenced by the degree to which it meets the needs of the adopter. In both cases, the teachers adopted GESI principles because it helped them to address the diverse needs of their students, making their teaching practices more effective and inclusive.

On the other hand, some teachers did not perceive the relative advantage of adopting GESI principles, particularly those who hold patriarchal attitudes toward gender roles. For instance, Abdul's statement suggests that he believes men are superior to women,

which may lead him to resist adopting GESI principles that promote gender equality. He views GESI as a threat to the traditional gender roles that he values, which undermines his willingness to adopt these principles, making him see the relative advantage of GESI principles as conflicting with his religious beliefs and cultural norms. Also, Peter's statement highlights the challenge of understanding and implementing GESI principles. He notes, 'I come from a traditional background where women are expected to take care of the home. I struggle to ensure equality sometimes in my teaching because they go against the cultural values of the Ghanaian patriarchal society.' His statement portrays his lack of understanding of the GESI principles and his patriarchal attitude toward gender roles which may prevent him from seeing the relative advantage of adopting the GESI principles in his practice. These two teachers do not see any advantage in adopting these principles in their practice since it conflicts with their religious values.

Similarly, the study also found that some teachers perpetuate gender-based discrimination in the classroom, such as favouring boys in math classes or assigning gender-specific roles. These teachers do not perceive the relative advantage of GESI because they are either unaware of its benefits or hold unconscious biases that prevent them from adopting inclusive practices. These teachers may view GESI as unnecessary or irrelevant, particularly if they believe that traditional gender roles are natural or beneficial. Their lack of understanding of GESI principles and their unconscious biases hinder their ability to recognize the benefits of promoting gender equality and social inclusion.

Compatibility

The concept of compatibility is also a crucial aspect of the diffusion of innovations theory, as it refers to the degree to which an innovation is consistent with the values, beliefs, and practices of the adopter (Rogers, 1995). In the context of this study, the compatibility of GESI principles refers to the extent to which teachers perceive these principles as consistent with their own values, beliefs, and practices.

The findings of this study suggest that the compatibility of GESI principles was a significant factor in their adoption by teachers in the sense that, teachers who perceived GESI principles as compatible with their own values, beliefs, and practices were more likely to adopt them. For instance, Eva's statement, 'I believe that all students should be treated equally and with respect, regardless of their gender or background. This statement reflects her personal belief in equality, which aligns with the GESI principles. Her religious values, rooted in Christian teachings that emphasize equality (e.g., Galatians 3:28), make her more receptive to GESI principles. This compatibility between her personal values and GESI principles motivates her to create an inclusive classroom environment where all students feel valued and respected. According to Rogers (1995), the compatibility of an innovation with the adopter's existing values and beliefs is a key factor in its adoption. For Eva, GESI is seen as compatible because it aligns with her personal and religious values, making it easier for her to integrate these principles into her teaching practices.

On the other hand, teachers who perceived GESI principles as incompatible with their own values, beliefs, and practices were less likely to adopt them. For instance, Abdul and Peter's statements, suggest that they perceived GESI principles as incompatible with their own values and beliefs. This incompatibility discouraged them from

adopting GESI principles, as they did not see them as aligning with their own values and practices. For Abdul and Peter, GESI is perceived as incompatible with their religious and cultural values, which hinders their adoption of these principles.

Also, some teachers' practices contradicted the principles of GESI, such as perpetuating unfair treatment based on gender, the lack of consideration for individual learning styles, body-shaming, neglect of visual and auditory needs, and absence of assistive technology all contribute to an exclusionary learning environment that undermines the principles of inclusive education. Rogers (1995) emphasizes that the adoption of an innovation depends on its compatibility with the adopter's existing values and practices.

The compatibility of GESI principles is also influenced by the broader cultural and social context in which teachers operate. In the Agona West Municipality, traditional gender roles and religious beliefs are deeply ingrained in society, which can create barriers to the adoption of the GESI principles. This is consistent with Rogers (1995) assertions that the compatibility of an innovation can be influenced by both the cultural and social context in which it is introduced. This may have led Peter to have challenges in implementing GESI in his practice.

Complexity

The concept of complexity is another crucial aspect of the diffusion of innovations theory, as it refers to the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand or use (Rogers, 1995). According to Rogers (1995), 'the complexity of an innovation is a key factor in its adoption' (p. 214). In the context of this study, the complexity of the GESI principles is the extent to which teachers perceive these principles as difficult to understand or implement in their teaching practices. The

adoption of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles in educational settings is a crucial step towards creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. However, implementing these principles can be complex and challenging for teachers.

The complexity of adopting the GESI principles lies in the perceived difficulty in understanding and implementing them. This perceived difficulty is a significant barrier to the adoption of the GESI principles, as many teachers may struggle to comprehend the nuances of the GESI principles, leading to confusion and uncertainty about how to integrate them into their teaching practices. For instance, teachers like Abdul and Peter perceive GESI as complex because they struggle to reconcile these principles with their cultural norms and religious beliefs. Their difficulty in understanding and implementing GESI stems from the perceived conflict between these principles and their deeply held values.

Abdul's statement illustrates the challenge of understanding GESI principles. He states, 'As a Muslim, I believe that men and women have different roles in society, so I implement GESI in a way that respects our cultural and religious values where men are seen as superior to women.' This statement suggests that Abdul's understanding of GESI principles is influenced by his religious background, particularly, his interpretation of Islamic teachings like Surah An-Nisa (4:34), which emphasizes men's authority over women, creates a conflict with the principles of GESI, which makes him perceive the GESI as complex because it challenges his religious beliefs and traditional gender roles, making it difficult for him to fully understand and implement these principles.

Similarly, Peter's statement also highlights the challenge of understanding and implementing GESI principles. He notes, 'I come from a traditional background where women are expected to take care of the home. I struggle to ensure equality sometimes in my teaching because they go against the cultural values of the Ghanaian patriarchal society.' This statement suggests that Peter's cultural background and values create a perceived difficulty in implementing GESI principles, particularly in ensuring equality in his teaching practices which makes him perceive GESI as complex because it requires him to challenge deeply ingrained cultural norms, which he finds difficult to reconcile with his teaching practices. According to Rogers (1995), the complexity of an innovation is a key factor in its adoption. Innovations that are perceived as difficult to understand or use are less likely to be adopted so, for Abdul and Peter, GESI is perceived as complex because it conflicts with their religious and cultural beliefs, making it challenging for them to integrate these principles into their teaching.

Furthermore, Vera's statement highlights the lack of understanding of GESI principles among some teachers. She notes, 'Teachers give more attention to boys than girls, particularly in mathematics classes, making girls feel 'excluded and inferior'.' This statement implies that some teachers may not fully grasp the principles of GESI, which can lead to a perceived difficulty in implementing these principles. These teachers' lack of understanding of GESI principles leads to gender bias in the classroom, as they fail to recognize the importance of promoting gender equality, which makes them see GESI as complex because they do not fully understand these principles or how to implement them effectively. As Rogers (1995) notes, 'the perceived difficulty of an innovation can affect its adoption'.

Observability

The findings of this study relate to the Rogers (1995) concept of Observability in several ways. Observability refers to the degree to which an innovation is visible and observable to others, making it easier for them to understand and adopt (Rogers, 1995). In the context of this study, the findings suggest that the implementation of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles was observable to students, teachers, and the school community and that it helped to improve teaching and learning, inclusivity, and students' academic outcomes.

The study's findings show that when teachers implemented GESI principles in their teaching practices, it was observable to students, who reported feeling more included, respected, and valued. For instance, Sophia's teaching practices, where she encouraged equal participation and used inclusive language, were observable to her students, who reported feeling more confident and motivated to learn. Similarly, John's commitment to GESI principles was evident in his role as a netball coach, where he trained girls from primary to Junior High School using a welcoming and inclusive approach, making his practices observable to his students and colleagues.

The study also highlights the importance of teachers' use of inclusive language and teaching strategies, which were observable to students and helped to promote teamwork, respect, and participation among them. For instance, Kojo's use of GESI-responsive language and inclusive teaching strategies and Paul's report that his teachers' emphasis on respecting each other's opinions in class helped to create a safe and inclusive learning environment demonstrate how teachers' observable practices can shape students' experiences and perceptions.

Furthermore, the study's findings suggest that the observability of GESI principles helped to improve students' academic outcomes. For example, Eva's establishment of a girls' club in the school, where she met with them once a week to discuss issues related to girls' health and gender issues, was observable to students, who reported feeling more confident and motivated to learn. Similarly, Kwame's approach to ensuring equal opportunities for all students to learn and participate in class activities was also observable to students, who reported feeling more included and valued. The implementation of mixed-gender groupings and discussions were observable to students, who reported feeling more comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions, leading to a rich exchange of ideas and a deeper understanding of the topic.

4.7 Summary

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of the study, which were analysed through the lenses of Rogers' (1995) diffusion of innovation theory. According to this theory, the adoption of an innovation is influenced by five key characteristics: relative advantages, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. The study applied this framework to explain teachers' responsiveness to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles of the Common Core Curriculum. The findings suggest that teachers' personal values, religious beliefs, and motivations are critical factors shaping their understanding and implementation of GESI principles, highlighting the complex interplay between individual teacher characteristics and the adoption of inclusive education practices. The next chapter deals with the conclusion, recommendations, and areas suggested for further studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study explored teachers' responsiveness to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principle of the Common Core Curriculum in the Agona West Municipal. Specifically, it sought to explore how teachers interpret, adopt, and implement GESI in their practices. The study employed a phenomenological design, recruiting a purposive sample of 30 participants, comprising of 13 teachers and 17 students. Data collection involved in-depth interviews and non-participant observations with teachers, as well as focus group discussions with students.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data, allowing for the identification of patterns, themes, and meanings that emerged from the participants' narratives.

5.2 Summary of Findings

1. The study's findings reveal a profound connection between teachers' values and their appreciation of the GESI principles of the CCC. Specifically, the data highlights the significant influence of teachers' religious beliefs and personal values on their understanding and implementation of GESI principles.
2. The study found that teachers play a crucial role in promoting GESI principles in the classroom through their inclusive practices, motivations driven by social justice, equality, and positive role modelling. Ultimately creating an inclusive learning environment that fosters a sense of belonging and respect among students, regardless of their gender or background.

3. The study found that some teachers' practices in the classroom were characterised by a set of discriminatory behaviours, including the unintentional perpetuation of gender-based discrimination, neglect of students with disabilities, use of insensitive language, and body-shaming, which undesirably affected students personally and their learning experiences. Some students are being discriminated against, marginalized, and excluded from participation, especially girls and students with disabilities, based on their gender, abilities, and socio-cultural background.
4. The findings revealed that teachers who adopted GESI responsive teaching practices were sensitive to the diverse needs of their students, adaptable, and flexible in their teaching approaches. Most of the teachers employed inclusive teaching methods, such as celebrating small victories, acknowledging students' effort and progress, and using visual aids and group work, in order to cater to the uniqueness of their students. Being committed to creating an inclusive learning environment and demonstrating empathy and understanding towards students' backgrounds and experiences acts positively and influences student learning outcomes.

5.3 Conclusions

This study explored teachers' responsiveness to the GESI principles within the CCC in the Agona West Municipality. Drawing on teachers and students lived experiences and analysed through the lens of Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory, the study concludes that teachers' engagement with GESI is complex, uneven and strongly shaped by religious and contextual factors.

The findings demonstrate that while some teachers actively embraced GESI principles by adopting inclusive language, equitable participation strategies, and learner centered practices, others exhibited classroom behaviours that unintentionally contradicted the GESI principles. Teachers' personal values, religious beliefs and socio-cultural orientations emerged as significant influences on how teachers understood, interpreted and applied GESI in their classroom practices. Where teachers perceived GESI as compatible with their beliefs and professional identity, they were more likely to integrate the GESI principles meaningfully into their practice. Conversely, perception of incompatibility or complexity often resulted in partial adoption or resistance.

The study further concludes that the GESI principles are observable in practice when consciously implemented as reflected in students reported experience of inclusion, participation, and improved confidence, however, gaps between policy intentions and classroom realities persist, particularly in relation to gender participation, attention to learners with disabilities and certain discriminatory practices such as body-shaming, and biased teacher-students' interactions. These gaps point to limitations in teachers practical understanding of the GESI principles rather than outright rejection of it goals.

5.4 Implications of the Study

The study highlights the need for the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service to invite religious leaders to play an active role in the development of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) policies that address the complex interplay between teachers' religious beliefs, personal values, and their implementation of GESI principles. This will help bridge the gap between teachers' religious beliefs and their adoption of the GESI principles.

The study underscores the importance of promoting critical reflection and self-awareness among teachers, enabling them to recognize and challenge their own biases and assumptions about gender roles and social inclusion. This can be achieved through ongoing professional development and coaching, which can help teachers develop a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which their religious beliefs and personal values shape their teaching practices and interactions with students.

This study emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive school culture that values diversity, promotes social inclusion, and addresses the diverse needs of all learners. This can be achieved through the development of inclusive policies and procedures, provision of support for students with disabilities, and fostering a culture of respect, empathy, and understanding.

The study highlights the importance of teachers adapting their teaching practices to meet the diverse needs of their students, including those from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, and students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. This can be achieved through teacher flexibility and creativity in adapting teaching practices as well as the provision of necessary support and resources by schools and educational institutions.

The study calls for a paradigm shift in teacher-student interactions, one that prioritizes empathy, inclusivity, and social justice. This can be achieved through a fundamental transformation of the way teachers interact with students, including the use of inclusive language, avoidance of body-shaming, and the creation of a learning environment that values diversity, promotes equity, and supports the well-being of all students.

5.5 Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Given the profound influence of religious values on teachers' practices, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should engage religious leaders in discussions surrounding GESI. Their involvement will help foster a deeper understanding of how religious values align with and support GESI principles while also identifying practical strategies to address potential conflicts that may arise from religious beliefs and GESI principles. This collaborative approach would ensure that the GESI policies are religiously and culturally sensitive, inclusive, and effectively implemented.
2. Headteachers should acknowledge and recognize teachers who consistently integrate Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles into their practice, as it will serve as a motivation for them to continue their good works and also inspire others to follow their example. These exemplary teachers should be encouraged to lead Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), where they can share their innovative ideas, strategies, and best practices with their colleagues. Providing a platform for these teachers to showcase their successes and also guide others as it will help schools to develop a culture that fosters collaboration and continuous improvement, ensuring that GESI principles are widely understood, adopted, and integrated into everyday teaching practice.
3. The district education directorate should make it a priority to provide comprehensive training for teachers to recognize and address unconscious biases and stereotypes that negatively impact students' learning engagement and personal self. This training should focus on practical strategies to ensure

equal attention and participation for all students, such as fostering inclusive discussions, implementing equitable participation techniques, and challenging gender or cultural stereotypes.

4. The Ghana Education Service should prioritize providing teachers with the necessary resources and support to create inclusive lesson plans. This may include access to assistive technologies, such as P.A. systems and projectors, to accommodate students with visual or auditory impairments, as well as funding for professional development programmes and educational materials that reflect diverse backgrounds and experiences.

5.6 Suggestion for Further Studies

The outcome of this study has raised further issues that may be explored by future researchers:

1. I encourage scholars to examine the profound impact of teachers' behaviours and comments on students' emotional wellbeing and learning outcomes.
2. I also urge researchers to explore the influence of teachers' religious beliefs on their understanding and implementation of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles.
3. Furthermore, I call for an investigation into the importance of teachers' use of inclusive language and teaching strategies in promoting a safe and inclusive learning environment.
4. Lastly, I encourage scholars to delve into the relationship between teachers' values and their ability to create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

INFORMED CONSENT

Research Topic: TEACHERS' RESPONSIVENESS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION PRINCIPLES IN THE COMMON CORE CURRICULUM IN AGONA WEST MUNICIPALITY

I have been informed about the purpose and scope of this research study, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any doubts. I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

I....., hereby consent to participate in this research study. I understand that the study aims to explore teachers' responsiveness to gender equality and social inclusion principles in the Common Core Curriculum in Agona West Municipality.

My participation in this study will involve a 30-minute interview. I will be asked to share my thoughts and experiences related to the research topic. I understand that all information collected during this study will be kept confidential. My identity will not be disclosed, and my responses will be anonymized.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, and I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequence.

I consent to participate in this research study, and I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may withdraw from the study at any time without providing reasons.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

CONFIRMATION AGREEMENT

I,....., hereby confirm that I have thoroughly read and understood the transcript and interpretation of the interview I participated in, which was conducted as part of the research study on ‘Teachers’ Responsiveness to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Principles in the Common Core Curriculum in Agona West Municipality.’

I acknowledge that the transcript accurately represents my experiences, perspectives, and opinions, and I confirm that I am the owner of the narrative shared during the interview. I hereby grant my full and informed consent for the researcher to use my story, as transcribed and interpreted, for the purposes of this research project.

I have reviewed the transcript and interpretation, and I am satisfied that they accurately reflect my intended meaning. I do not have any reservations or concerns regarding the credibility or accuracy of the transcript and interpretation.

By signing below, I confirm my agreement to the use of my interview data for this research project, and I acknowledge that I have been fully informed about the purpose, risks, and benefits of the research.

Participant’s Details:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

Background information

Male/Female

Academic qualification

Working experience

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

How Teachers' Values Influence Their Appreciation of GESI Principles in the CCC:

1. Can you describe your understanding of GESI in the context of education?
2. . How do you perceive the importance of integrating GESI principles into the classroom?
3. How do your religious and cultural values make it easy or difficult to incorporate GESI principles?
4. How do you think your personal values influence your appreciation or approaches to incorporating GESI principles into your practice within the CCC framework?
5. Have there been any instances where your values conflicted with promoting gender equality and social inclusion in education? If so, how did you navigate these conflicts?

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

How Teachers' Practices Promote the GESI Principles of the CCC:

1. What motivates you to adopt gender GESI in your classroom activities?
2. How do you perceive the impact of promoting gender equality and social inclusion on students' learning outcomes?
3. Tell me about specific activities or initiatives you have implemented to ensure GESI in your practice.
4. Can you share any challenges you have faced in implementing gender equality and social inclusion in your teaching practices?
5. What recommendations would you give to other teachers looking to improve their implementation of GESI principles in their classrooms?

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How Teachers' Practices Contradict GESI Principles of CCC:

This will be answered based on observations from teachers' practice and data from the students.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

How Students' Backgrounds Influence Teachers' Adoption of GESI-Responsive Teaching:

1. How does your class demographics influence your adoption of GESI-responsive teaching practices? If there were more females than males (and vice versa) in your class, what would change?
2. What challenges do you face in implementing GESI-responsive teaching strategies in your classroom?
3. How do your students respond to your implementation of GESI principles? Would it change if the demographics were different?
4. Tell me about how specific student backgrounds have influenced your decision-making in adopting GESI-responsive teaching methods.

5. In what ways do you adapt your teaching methods to ensure inclusivity for all students, regardless of gender or background?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENT (FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS)

Background information

Male/Female

School/ Class

Research question one:

How do teachers' values influence their appreciation of the GESI principles of the CCC?

1. Do you think teachers treat boys and girls equally in your school?
2. Tell me an instance where your teacher promoted fairness among boys and girls.
3. Tell me about a time when your teacher made you feel included or excluded in class.
4. Based on your experiences, do you think all teachers are equally willing to adopt GESI principles in their teaching practices? Why or why not?

Research question two:

How do teachers' practices promote the GESI principles of the CCC?

1. Have you observed teachers who are particularly promoting gender equality and social inclusion in school? What makes them stand out?
2. Tell me how teachers encourage respect and understanding among students from diverse backgrounds.
3. Tell me a specific positive experience you've had in school where you felt included and respected by your teacher.
4. Tell me some of the ways your teachers have been using to support both boys and girls equally in their learning.

Research question three:

How do teachers' practices contradict the GESI principles of CCC?

1. How do you perceive your teachers' attitudes toward gender equality in the classroom?
2. Can you share specific instances where you felt excluded or treated unfairly based on your gender or social background?
3. Do you think your teachers are aware of GESI principles? Why or why not?
4. Based on your experiences with your teachers, do you think all teachers are equally willing to adopt GESI principles in their teaching?

Research question four:

How do students' backgrounds influence teachers' adoption of GESI-responsive teaching?

1. Have you ever experienced a lesson or activity that made you feel excluded because of your background? If so, can you describe what happened and how it made you feel?
2. Have you encountered any teacher who is being particularly responsive to different student backgrounds?
3. Tell me an instance where a teacher's approach changed based on student backgrounds.
4. Have you ever felt that your background influenced how a teacher interacted with you in the classroom?

APPENDIX E

CODE NAME, DESCRIPTION, AND EXAMPLE FROM INTERVIEW DATA

Research Question 1: How Do Teachers' Values Influence Their Appreciation of the GESI Principles of the CCC?

Code Name	Description	Example from Interview Data
Religious values facilitating GESI adoption	Teachers' religious beliefs align with GESI principles, promoting equality and inclusion.	'As a Christian, I believe in giving both sexes equal opportunity to all and creating no limitations for a particular gender or sex due to their biological disposition'. (Peter)
Religious values conflicting with GESI principles	Teachers' religious beliefs hinder the adoption of GESI principles.	'As a Muslim, I believe that men and women have different roles in society so I implement GESI in a way that respects our cultural and religious values where men are seen as superior over women'. (Abdul)
Personal values aligning with GESI principles	Teachers' personal values, such as fairness and empathy, support GESI adoption.	'I believe that boys and girls should be treated equally in the classroom. I make sure to provide equal opportunities for all students to participate in my class'. (Sophia)
Desire for students to succeed	Teachers are motivated to adopt GESI principles to help students succeed.	'My motivation stems from the fact that every student deserves to have equal opportunities for academic success regardless of their background or identity.' (Kojo)

Research Question 2: How Do Teachers' Practices Promote the GESI Principles of the CCC?

Code Name	Description	Example from Interview Data
Use of gender-neutral language	Teachers avoid gendered terms to promote inclusivity.	'I make sure to use gender-neutral language in my teaching to avoid stereotyping and biases, which promote inclusivity in my class, and it helps my students to participate in my lesson'.(Emilda)
Displaying diverse materials	Teachers use materials that reflect diverse cultures, genders, and backgrounds.	'Our teacher uses inclusive teaching methods with GESI-sensitive language to cater to the individual learning needs of all students in the classroom. This makes us feel valued and seen as important because of the varied materials he uses with teaching approaches that honour all students' needs and abilities.' (Percy a student)
Encouraging participation from all students	Teachers ensure all students have opportunities to contribute.	'I put students into mixed-gender groupings that create an inclusive environment where both males and females feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions. I encourage active listening and respect for each other's perspectives, regardless of gender, and this leads to a rich exchange of ideas and a deeper understanding of the topic at hand.'
Promoting equal	Teachers provide additional support to ensure	'I promote collaborative learning by implementing mixed gender seating

opportunities	equal opportunities for all.	arrangements for projects and presentations because it allows both male and female students to participate and work as equals.’ (Kojo)
Demonstrating fairness and respect	Teachers model fairness and respect in their interactions with students.	‘Sir Kofi is one teacher who is always fair to us in class, he is always caring’. (Abba)
Inclusive grouping strategies	Teachers use group work to ensure students from diverse backgrounds collaborate.	‘I use mixed-gender and ability groups for discussions and presentations as well as peer reviews to ensure inclusivity and equal participation’. (Kofi)

Research Question 3: How Do Teachers' Practices Contradict the GESI Principles of the CCC?

Code Name	Description	Example from Interview Data
Unfair treatment to students	Teachers' unfair treatment to students.	'Some teachers exclude boys from certain activities like scrubbing, and <i>'Some of our</i> Teachers give more attention to boys than girls in class, especially during mathematics class, because most of us are weak and it's not fair. It makes us feel excluded and inferior.' (Vera)
Exclusion based on gender	Teachers exclude students from activities based on gender.	'Some teachers exclude boys from certain activities like scrubbing and sweeping in class and that's not fair. They always say these activities are for the girls and if we fail to scrub the toilet, they cane all the girls leaving the boys.' (Sarah, a student)
Ignoring students with disabilities	Teachers fail to provide support for students with disabilities.	'Some of our teachers' writings on the board are too small that it becomes difficult to see and write and when you complain too, they either disgrace you or make fun of you which is not fair'. (Kwesi)
Offensive language	Teachers use language that is insensitive or offensive to certain groups.	'During a mathematics class, I did not understand what the teacher was teaching and I raised my hand to tell him. When I told him I was not getting what he was teaching, he told me that I would not understand till I die, and up till now it hurts me and it has made me hate the teacher and the subject. (Aziz, a student)

Body shaming	Teachers disrespecting students based on their body	‘My teacher disgraced me once by telling me that sports are not for people like me, whose bodies are like bread soaked in water and I felt bad because I was laughed at’.(Yaw)
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Research Question 4: How Do Students' Backgrounds Influence Teachers' Adoption of GESI-Responsive Teaching?

Code Name	Description	Example from Interview Data
Awareness of students' backgrounds	Teachers adapt their teaching based on knowledge of students' backgrounds.	'I am careful when dealing with students concerning their religion. My school has both Christian and Muslim students so I am careful in citing examples using students' religion negatively, knowing well it may hurt them'. (Seth)
Adapt teaching methods	Teachers adjust their lessons for students with diverse needs.	'There are times when some girls will say because of their religion, they cannot wear shorts to participate in sporting activities because their religion does not allow them to show some part of their bodies and I have to respect that and allow them to put on those that make them feel comfortable to participate'. (Charles)
Providing support for students with disabilities	Teachers ensure students with disabilities have necessary resources.	'Students from low-income backgrounds sometimes face the challenge of accessing resources to ensure effective learning so, I adapt my teaching methods to address these specific barriers and provide additional support to help these students to feel included by always writing notes on the board for my students'.(Sophia)
Addressing low self-esteem	Teachers work to build confidence in students who struggle with	'Some less confident and shy students in my class influenced my decision to adopt GESI-responsive

	self-esteem.	teaching strategies by tailoring my teaching methods to cater to their learning needs. I do that by celebrating small victories and acknowledging their efforts and progress. Also, I establish a positive and respectful classroom culture where all students feel valued and encouraged'.(Eva)
Differentiated instruction	Teachers use varied methods to meet the needs of all students.	'I make sure I choose a teaching method that suits the level of my learners. For instance, I mostly use the activity method to include all learners in the teaching and learning process and also encourage them to participate in the lesson.'(Audrey)

APPENDIX F

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Study Title: Teachers' Responsiveness to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
(GESI) Principles in the Common Core Curriculum

Purpose: This checklist documents are observable teacher behaviours related to gender equality, and social inclusion principles of the Common Core Curriculum.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are teachers' values and appreciation of GESI principles in the Common Core Curriculum?

RQ2: What classroom practices promote GESI principles?

RQ3: What classroom practices contradict GESI principles?

RQ4: How do students' backgrounds influence teachers' responsiveness to GESI?

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

School: _____

Class/Form: _____

Subject: _____

Date of Observation: _____

Teacher Code: _____

Observer: _____

SECTION B: TEACHER LANGUAGE AND INTERACTION

Item	Indicator	Research Question	Yes	No	Sometimes	Comments
1	Uses gender-neutral language (e.g., 'learners', 'students')	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Avoids gender-stereotyped expressions or examples	RQ3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3	Shows equal respect to all learners	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4	Encourages both boys and girls to participate	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5	Addresses discriminatory or biased remarks	RQ3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

SECTION C: PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Item	Indicator	Research Question	Yes	No	Sometimes	Comment
6	Calls on both boys and girls equally	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7	Encourages shy or less confident learners to participate	RQ4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8	Gives equal opportunity for answering questions	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9	Allows learners from different backgrounds to contribute	RQ4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10	Responds positively and respectfully to learners' contributions	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

SECTION D: INCLUSION OF DIVERSE LEARNERS

Item	Indicator	Research Question	Yes	No	Sometimes	Comments
11	Supports learners with learning difficulties or special needs	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12	Adjusts instruction to accommodate different learning abilities	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13	Provides additional explanations or assistance when needed	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14	Does not ignore, isolate, or marginalize any learner	RQ3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15	Encourages peer support and cooperation among learners	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

SECTION E: CLASSROOM ROLES AND LEADERSHIP

Item	Indicator	Research Question	Yes	No	Sometimes	Comments
16	Assigns leadership roles to both boys and girls	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17	Does not assign tasks based on gender stereotypes	RQ3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18	Encourages mixed-gender group work	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19	Allows all learners to take responsibility roles	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20	Values contributions from all group members equally	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

SECTION F: CLASSROOM CLIMATE AND EQUITY

Item	Indicator	Research Question	Yes	No	Sometimes	Comments
21	Classroom atmosphere is respectful and inclusive	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	Discourages bullying, teasing, or exclusion	RQ3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	Applies discipline fairly to all learners	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	Avoids embarrassing or humiliating learners	RQ3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	Demonstrates patience, fairness, and consistency	RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION G: GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Examples of inclusive practices observed:

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Examples of non-inclusive or biased practices observed:

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Additional comments:

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