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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to assess the success of inclusive education for children with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream education. The study was guided by the following three objectives firstly, identify the attitude of stakeholders towards the inclusion of children with hearing difficulties. The second objective was to investigate the resource adequacy of educational institutions in terms of the inclusion of children with hearing difficulties. Lastly, to determine the appropriateness of the curricula in Ghanaian mainstream educational institutions for the needs of hearing-impaired children in inclusive education. Qualitative research was used on the study sample of 16 participants (8 teachers and 8 parents). Convenience sampling technique was used. Semi structured interviews and secondary sources of data were adopted as data collection techniques. The findings of the study indicate that public and private school teachers as well as parents recognize the importance of inclusive education, aligning with the global consensus on the benefits of inclusion. All the respondents raised concerns about its practicality or collective impact. In addition, the study found out that parents and teachers had negative responses to the resource adequacy of mainstream schools in Ghana. Lastly, all teachers felt that the stipulated curriculum for the Ghana Education Service had to be improved to ensure the successful inclusion of students with hearing difficulties. On the other hand, parents were unsure about the nature of the school's curriculum. Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends improvements of resources (hard and soft resources), support of special needs schools, a flexible education curriculum, improved supervision.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The researcher provides background information on inclusive education from a generic context of the world, Africa, and regions within the African continent to the more specific context of Ghana. The thesis statement, purpose and objectives adopted for the study are also outlined in this chapter. The researcher presents limitations, a justification for the study and delineates the scope of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

Over 430 million people in the global world are estimated to be living with hearing difficulties; that which constitutes not less than 5% of the global population (WHO, 2021). Close to all members of this group often require rehabilitation to effectively address their hearing needs; to mitigate or check the negative impacts of an unaddressed condition on cognition, communication, education, and employment (Jiang et al., 2020). Hearing impairments is noted to be more prevalent in low- and middle-income countries, with over 80% of the global population emerging from these areas, when compared to countries with more advanced economies (Stevens et al, 2013; Tingang et al., 2020).

Inclusive education is simply perceived in many countries across the globe as a means of ensuring disabled children are not exempted from general education settings (Ydo, 2020). This general

perception is one of the motivating factors for UN-organized World Forum on Education in May 2015; that which came up with a publication on the Education 2030 Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015). The framework argues inclusivity and equity are necessary pillars for ensuring quality education. The publication also stresses the need to address all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation, and learning processes and outcomes. Thereby broadening the scope of inclusive education beyond the general perceptions often adopted by countries across the globe.

Inclusive education is necessary for students if they are to be well-integrated into society after school. This importance has been reaffirmed by the 4th United Nations Sustainable Development Goal which is to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning (UN, 2017). The fourth sustainable development goal is primarily focused on achieving the following by the year 2030; universal primary and secondary education, early childhood development and universal pre-primary education, equal access to technical/vocational and higher education, gender equality and inclusion, universal youth literacy, relevant skills for decent work and an education for sustainable development and global citizens. The aforementioned ten targets ascribed to SDG 4 are to be achieved by three means of implementation; effective learning environments, scholarships and teachers and educators (UNESCO, 2021). The importance of quality education as a motivation for SDG 4 is in its ability to allow people to break from the cycle of poverty as a result of accessing it (UN, 2018).

In 2020, UNESCO published The Global Education Monitoring Report outlining some challenges towards achieving Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2020); that which aimed at ensuring the practice of inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all across the globe by the year 2030 (Boeren, 2019). The

challenges outlined includes the following; differing understandings of the word inclusion, lack of teacher support, absence of data on those excluded from education, inappropriate infrastructure, persistence of parallel systems and special schools, untargeted finance, lack of political will and community support, uncoordinated governance, multiple but inconsistent laws and policies that are not being followed through (UNESCO, 2020).

The pursuit and practice of inclusive education in Africa is described by De Souza (2021) as a back-and-forth endeavor beginning from the early 1990s and expressed in various forms of parleys and activism towards the inclusion of disabled persons in societies at large and schools in particular. Activism was particularly needed in Africa for inclusivity to be possible due to some cultural and religious beliefs held by some societies with regards to persons living with disabilities. In Africa, persons with disabilities often lived outdoors or in the forests due to an unacceptance from their families and societies at large. Nonetheless, inclusive education is a top priority for many governments in the world and Africa (Magumise & Sefotho, 2020).

However, the African challenge towards the effective implementation of national policies for inclusive education relates to the formulation of policies and strategies that are unique to the specific needs of specific countries given the socio-cultural differences expressed across countries (UN-DESA, 2019). Chimwaza (2015) indicates most of the polices on inclusive education adopted by African countries lack a context compatibility and relevance, that which for Youdell (2011) has the potential to foster exclusive education. Most countries in Africa for instance have the prevalent challenge of assuming expert knowledge in special education is required in mainstream schools in order for inclusive education to work, or that inclusive education and special education are one and the same thing (Pather & Slee, 2018). Assumptions of that kind often pose negative implications on the practice of inclusive education on the African continent.

The practice of inclusive education in East and West Africa has been looked at through the gender lens by Hui et al. (2018) in a qualitative interpretive secondary analysis. Although boys and girls with disabilities in Togo, Zambia, Niger, Malawi, and Sierra Leone were likely to face similar cases of social exclusion in schools, girls with disabilities were argued by the scholars to suffer societal biases and hindrances in relation to their educational potential. Girls were more likely to be victims of sexual abuse given the potential weaknesses caused by their disability. The state of inclusive education in West Africa is poor as many developing countries in the region are lagging behind in implementing inclusive education practices (Unachukwu & Nwosu, 2020). The lagging picture of inclusive educational practices in West Africa have been related to issues concerning policies on inclusive education, the role of teachers in ensuring the implementation of inclusivity in the classroom, and an appropriate pedagogical, psychological, and learning environment.

The government of Ghana has taken a keen interest in inclusion, and with the collaboration of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has made some progress in the area of drafting an inclusive education policy to provide fundamental guidelines for inclusion in Ghana's education system (GOG, 2015). The goal of inclusion in Ghana targets both public and private institutions, with regulations that permit and encourage inclusion in Ghanaian mainstream schools. Despite these initiatives and efforts, inclusion remains unpopular in Ghanaian mainstream education. Ametepe & Anastasiou (2015) highlights the lack of resources, appropriate curricula, and the attitudes of stakeholders as key challenges faced by Ghana's goal towards inclusive education. In Ghana, Gomda et al (2022) found the presence of infrastructural, socio-cultural, and institutional barriers responsible for the challenge of implementing the inclusive education policy in the country.

Persons with hearing difficulties constitute a minority group in Ghana easily susceptible to being ignored for the rate of insignificance demonstrated by the demographic group's representation in the general population. In 2010, Ghana's Statistical Service estimated about 0.4% of Ghana's population were persons with hearing difficulties after its population and housing census (GSS, 2014). As of 2022, the Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD) has mobilized about 11,000 persons living with hearing difficulties in the country from a total estimated figure at 110,625 (GNAD, 2022). Students with hearing difficulties are by extension underrepresented in mainstream education as opposed to special needs schools specifically dedicated to educating persons with hearing impairments.

Although the policy for Inclusive Education prescribes various means by which persons with disabilities may be included in the education system, there are some often overlooked challenges regarding access, participation, and recognition. The plethora of policies meant to address the education of persons living with disabilities are not reflective of the situation in schools and institutions as indicated by Awini et al (2022).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It is estimated that by 2050 over 900 million people will be living with a hearing disability (WHO, 2016). This leaves low- and middle-income countries, of which Ghana is a part, with the need to adopt measures to contain persons with hearing difficulties in society, and by extension adopt and implement sustainable policies to progressively ensure that institutions of education are well resourced and equipped to include them. However, Ghana's readiness for this task may be questioned by some scholars as persons living with disabilities are often marginalized in the sphere

of education despite the commonality of persons living with disabilities within the Ghanaian context (Awini et al., 2022). While special schools may have the requisite learning resources for persons with disabilities, Ghana's Presbyterian College of Education at Akropong as an example (Mensah et al., 2022), there may be challenges faced in mainstream schools non-specialized in the education of minorities such as persons living with physical disabilities in the country.

For instance, students with hearing impairments may not be able to access information in literature books selected by policy makers as mandated readings for all students at a particular level of education, due to the absence of alternative formats designed to meet the special needs of students with hearing difficulties. Although all public education institutions are to be inclusive by default due to the documented policy on inclusive education produced by the Government of Ghana through its education ministry and UNICEF, inclusive education in practice may be a farce (Awini et al, 2022). For that reason, this study intends to assess how dedicated some select educational institutions are to inclusive education, not only in theory but in practice.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The purpose of the study is to assess the success of inclusive education for children with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream education.

1.4 Research Objectives

Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

i.   Identify the attitude of stakeholders towards the inclusion of children with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream educational institutions.

ii.   Investigate the resource adequacy of Ghanaian mainstream educational institutions in terms of the inclusion of children with hearing difficulties.

iii.   Determine the appropriateness of the curricula in Ghanaian mainstream educational institutions for the needs of hearing-impaired children in inclusive education.

1.5 Research Questions

The following are the research questions adopted by the study:

i.   What are the attitudes of relevant stakeholders concerning the inclusion of students with hearing difficulties in mainstream education institutions?

ii.   How resourced are Ghanaian mainstream education institutions in terms of providing inclusive education for students with hearing difficulties?

iii.   Are the curricula of mainstream educational institutions well designed to meet the needs of hearing-impaired children in Ghana?

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study is focused on investigating the implementation of inclusive education for children with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream educational institutions. Two sample groups consisting of 4 teachers and 4 parents from 2 basic schools (1 private and 1 public) located in the Ga West Municipal is adopted by the researcher for the purposes of satisfying the objectives of the study. While there are various special schools for persons living with disabilities in Ghana, the

study focuses on obtaining qualitative data from public mainstream primary and junior high schools in the region.

1.7 Limitation of the study

A key limitation of this study is the adoption of 16 interviewees as required by the qualitative approach and design of research, instead of a quantitative approach which allows data collection for a higher number of respondents. However, the qualitative design of research, that which comparatively and usually permits a lesser number of subjects, may be acceptable given how insignificant the number of students living with hearing difficulties are in commensuration with the total population of Ghanaians.

The qualitative design is particularly adopted by the study as the issue of disability happens to be a very sensitive topic; that which requires more detailed responses than a survey questionnaire permits. known difficulties encountered with the selection of larger samples. The study, by effect, did not obtain any quantitative data; apart from data researched during the literature review process. The study particularly focuses on teachers and parents of children in mainstream Ghanaian educational institutions, rather than obtaining data from other stakeholders of inclusive education. This style of respondent selection is adopted as parents and teachers are usually the agents of socialization for which basic school students obtain the various forms of societal education.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This research is relevant in several ways. Findings from the study is relevant to policy makers in education; particularly the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service. The study has the potential of providing content that creates the space for policymakers to have a detailed understanding of the state and challenges of implementing inclusive education in Ghana. This contribution to the research on students with hearing difficulties is more likely to create the space for well-informed decisions at the policy formulation stage. It allows policymakers in education to evaluate data obtained from stakeholders strongly connected with children living with hearing difficulties, and where necessary modify the style by which mainstream educational institutions function in ways to improve the state of inclusive education in Ghana.

Teachers and parents of students with hearing difficulties may also find information obtained from the study as a basis for advocating for better attitudes, the requisite resources and curricular to enhance inclusive education within their respective domains. Information also obtained from the study may be relevant to researchers interested in conducting meta-studies and reviews on the practice of inclusive education within Ghanaian mainstream educational institutions. The study is useful for aspiring teachers; where it provides information on parents and teachers' perceptions on the required resources to ensure that a classroom is conducive towards inclusive education; that which may assist them in building the needed skills and ensuring their classrooms are conducive enough to accommodate the requirements of the policy of inclusive education in Ghana. Other stakeholders who will benefit from the body of knowledge deduced from the study includes the National Commission for Civic Education and activists interested in promoting the practice of inclusivity across the various social institutions in Ghana.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

The key assumption held by the study is that the attitudes of parents and teachers, coupled with the nature of school curricula and the available requisite resources cumulatively has an effect on the successful implementation of inclusive education in the classroom. The study assumes that education policy does not change during the course of the research as well as the school curricula.

1.10 Organization of the Study

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to the study on inclusive education in Ghana, focusing on the inclusion of students with hearing difficulties. It offers an overview of the inclusive education landscape in Ghana, highlighting the historical context and emphasizing the challenge at hand. The chapter introduces the problem statement, research objectives, and research questions. It underscores the significance of the study in addressing this challenge and presents an outline of the thesis structure.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, we delve into a comprehensive review of relevant literature. The review is organized thematically according to the study objectives, which include examining the attitudes of various stakeholders towards inclusive education, assessing the resource adequacy in mainstream educational institutions, and evaluating the appropriateness of curricula for students with hearing difficulties. The chapter concludes by synthesizing key findings from the literature.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 3 details the research methodology adopted for the study. We explain the research design, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures. Ethical considerations within the research process are discussed, along with any associated limitations.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Results

This chapter is dedicated to presenting the research findings. Data is organized thematically based on the research questions and illustrated using tables, graphs, and narratives. Detailed descriptions of the results pertaining to the attitudes of stakeholders, resource adequacy, and curriculum appropriateness are provided.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Results

Chapter 5 offers an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the research findings. We compare these findings with the relevant literature reviewed in Chapter 2, examining their implications for inclusive education in Ghana. The chapter identifies key trends, similarities, differences, and draws conclusions from both primary and secondary data.

Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusions

The final chapter summarizes the main findings and insights from the previous chapters. It provides conclusive remarks based on the research objectives and presents recommendations for enhancing inclusive education for students with hearing difficulties in Ghana. Additionally, suggestions for future research directions and areas of policy and practice are outlined.

1.11 Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter presented a background to the study by explaining the state of inclusive education using a funnel technique from the global state of affairs in relation to the problem to the localized setting of Ghana. The purpose identified by the study is to investigate the success of Inclusive education for children with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream education. That which is achievable by specifically assessing the attitudes of parents and teachers, and the state of resources and curricula in mainstream schools. The next chapter presents a review of relevant literature on the theory and practice of inclusive education in Europe and Africa.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This section presents a review of the relevant literature on the topic. The researcher peers in on what academia has achieved in relation to the topic of the study at this point. The theory and practice of inclusivity and its various related indicators are explored in the chapter by first detailing what inclusivity means; that which is followed by a subsequent review of literature on the attitudes of teachers and parents towards the implementation and practice of inclusive education, as well as the role of the requisite resources and curricula in achieving inclusive education.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the three main problems of inclusion theory. The theory was first formulated by Bricker in 1995. Primarily, it focuses on the role of attitudes, resources and curricula in the implementation of pedagogical strategies within the context of the classroom. The inclusion theory is predicated on the assumption that all students in spite of their exemplified diversities are entitled to an effective learning experience; that which is well facilitated by ensuring that the challenges emanating from the problems of attitudes, resources and curricula are addressed. Bricker (1995) argues that the main goal of educational systems is to be a repository for the transfer of knowledge, albeit in a manner that is integral to the diverse reality of society. A notable critique on the theory of inclusion comes from Slee (2003) who argues that the concept of inclusive education despite the original motivations for developing it has transmogrified to be a buzz-word or a meaningless

cliché in education generalized and diffused up to the point of having various meanings for differing constituencies in the world (Dunne, 2009).

However, the theory of inclusion is appropriate for this study as it allows the researcher to link the suggested theoretical assumption on the practice of inclusivity to the practicalities on the ground. Thus, at the very point of practice as expressed in the attitudes of key stakeholders such as teachers and parents and the available resources and curricula for the purposes of implementing inclusivity. By relating to the problem to the main actors involved in the primary socialization of basic school-going children, the theory of inclusion allows policy makers and researchers to analyze and understand the issue of inclusion at the level of implementation as opposed to the limitations of arm-chair assumptions that may not necessarily translate into working policies when enforced at the basic school level. Moreover, adopting the inclusion theory developed by Bricker (1995) simplifies a theory that is rather complex for the purposes of satisfying the objectives of the study given the limited scope of the study.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework
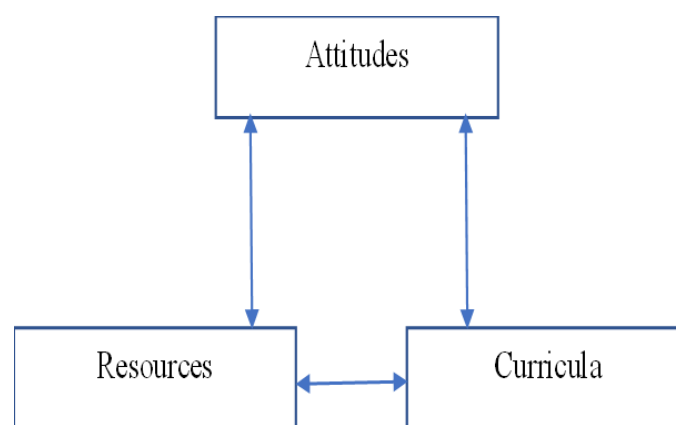
Source: Bricker (1995)

2.2 Inclusive Education Defined

While there are various definitions for what inclusion means (Slee, 2018), inclusive education is primarily focused on mainstreaming persons with disabilities (UNESCO, 1994), improving curricula to that effect, and the provision of inclusive school development for all students, including students without disabilities (Pather & Slee, 2018). Ydo (2020) concluded that inclusive education was generally perceived in many countries as a means of ensuring disabled children are not exempted from general education settings. Obi (2008) describes inclusive education as the expansion of educational opportunities for all children especially the disabled, vulnerable, and disadvantaged (Obi & Ashi, 2016). The importance of inclusive education for students with hearing difficulties as recommended by Afoh (2022) is found in the need for effective functioning and social participation; that which may not only provide positive academic outcomes for the student, but also creates the space for personal development in language, spelling, writing and communication. For this study, I define inclusive education as the implementation of learning environment at the home or school with the goal of promoting a unification of differences albeit in a manner that does not prevent the inculcation of the knowledge, training and guidance required for ensuring children develop into responsible adults for the betterment of their respective societies.

Unianu (2012) observed that knowledge on the basic concept of inclusion or integration was very weak among 112 teachers sampled in her quantitative study. The scholar suggested that, perhaps, the weak understanding of the concept of inclusion could be due to the complexity of the concept; that which represents a very large domain which cannot be taught in one semester of a bachelor's degree programme. The scholar therefore made some recommendations to policy makers in

education, urging them to rethink and reform the bachelor's degree curricula to ensure a better understanding and a better training of teachers for inclusive education.

2.3 Attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities

This section reviews relevant literature on the attitudes of teachers and parents towards the practice of inclusive education in the classroom. Attitudes as defined by Vargas-Sanchez, Plaza-Mejia & Porras-Bueno (2016) are the ways in which a person views and evaluates something or someone. It is usually a predisposition or the tendency to positively or negatively respond to a certain idea, object, person or situation. A study on attitudes is practically and theoretically relevant because attitudes have a predictive effect on human behavior (Eaton & Visser, 2008). It allows the researcher to appropriately evaluate the reasons behind a positive or negative disposition towards something or someone, and by that effect creates the space for obtaining empirical data. This section of the literature review is primarily focused on the attitudes of parents and teachers concerning the practice of inclusivity in mainstream educational institutions.

2.3.1 Teacher Attitudes

Students with hearing difficulties have an average academic performance below that of hearing students; that which Agyire-Tettey, Cobbina & Hamenoo (2017) reports is tied to challenges emanating from different systems and actors including students with hearing difficulties, parents, and other institutional barriers in deaf education. Other barriers identified by Agyire-Tettey & et al. (2017) were in relation to curricular and institutional barriers such as the effective instructional procedures adopted by teachers. One of the identified barriers to the implementation of inclusive education in schools is tied to the teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education (Ewing, Monsen & Kielblock, 2018). Teachers take a center stage in the classroom; that which is the stage for which

implementation of educational policies are usually exercised. For instance, teachers with a positive attitude towards inclusion are more likely to have controlled learning environments than teachers with negative attitudes towards inclusion (Monsen & Frederickson, 2004; Boyle, Anderson & Allen, 2020).

This indicates the high level of significance of the role of the teacher in the implementation of strategies adopted to ensure inclusive education is practiced in mainstream schools.   An understanding of the attitudes of teachers, according to Ewing et al. (2018) is highly significant in enabling educational psychologists to ensure teachers are given the need support in implementing classrooms that are conducive to inclusive education. The attitudes of teachers on inclusive education are influenced by the following several factors: the nature of the student's disability, the degree of the student's difficulties, the experiences of the teacher in relation to children with special educational needs and the teachers' own trust in their ability to implement inclusive activities (Unianu, 2012).

Attitudes towards inclusive education have a significant effect on the implementation of inclusive educational practices (Creswell, 2012). Boyle, Anderson & Allen (2020) confirm this point as indicated in Figure 1 below where negative attitudes by teachers have the proclivity to create a damaging cyclical effect on the practice of inclusion in the classroom. Thus, a negative attitude to inclusion by a teacher may prevent the teacher from providing the appropriate support a child with special needs requires; that which may lead to educational difficulties faced by students as a result of the experiences in the classroom. Educational difficulties easily lead to a failure in placing a special needs child within the context of a mainstream or regular schooling system; thereby leading to the false conclusion that inclusion does not work. The cycle then repeats itself. Figure 1 below demonstrates the cycle on how negative attitudes affects inclusion.

Figure 2: The Damaging Cyclical Effect of Negative Attitudes to Inclusion
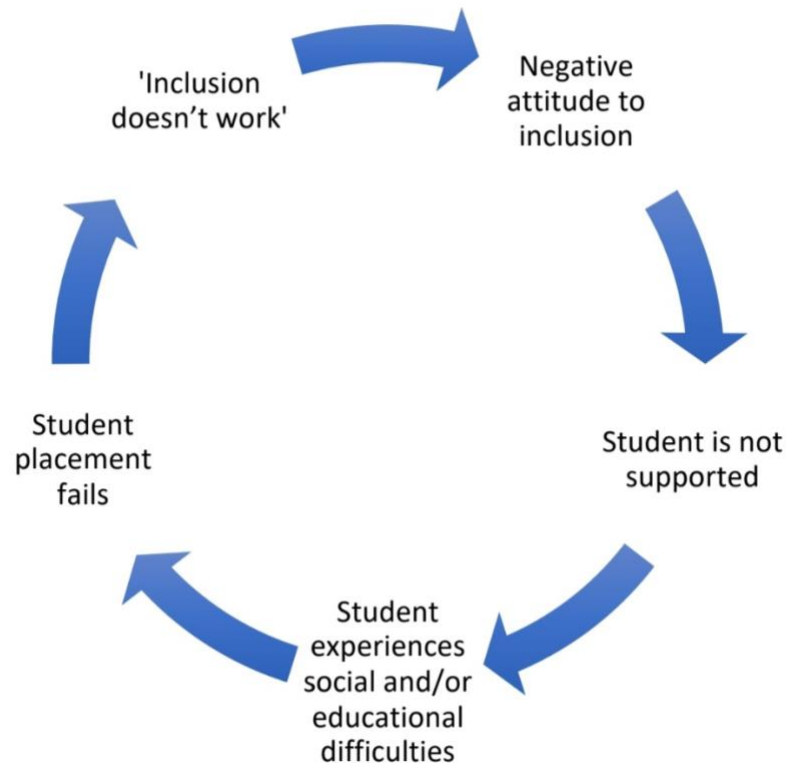
Source: Boyle, Anderson & Allen (2020)

In a comparative study on the attitudes of teachers from Finland and Japan towards inclusive education, Moberg et al. (2020) found that the attitudes of teachers varied and were critical. Whereas the Finnish teachers worried more about the efficacy of the teacher when implementing inclusive education in the classroom, especially when teaching students with intellectual disabilities, the Japanese teachers focused on the benefits of inclusion for both disabled and non-disabled students. The researchers came to the conclusion that the Finnish teachers were more critical than their Japanese counterparts as they emphasized the effectiveness of special education rather than merely perceiving it as an ideal to be achieved without considering the means of

achieving the ideal of inclusive education. The study adopted a sample of 362 Finnish and 1518 Japanese for the study and found that the findings supported the idea that more research is required to adequately analyze how inclusive educational developments are realized in different cultural and historical contexts; that which is crucial in improving the universal understandings of inclusive education. A significant finding by Woodcock & Woolfson (2019)'s study, that which explored teachers' views on the systemic support for inclusion and barriers to ensuring classrooms were conducive to inclusion was the fact that the responsibility for inclusion was not uniformly shared by all teachers even in schools that prided themselves on their inclusive practices.

A recent meta-analysis by Yada et al. (2022) examining the relationship between teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy in inclusion found a positive correlation between teachers' efficacy and attitudes'. The researchers concluded that the findings suggest that the positive correlational relationship between the attitudes adopted by teachers on inclusive education and the self-efficacy of the teachers in implementing inclusive education might be somewhat universal regardless of time, culture, or gender. Whereas various scholars (Alvarez, 2015; Boyle, Anderson & Allen, 2020) have emphasized the importance of positive teacher attitudes in achieving inclusive education, the need of identifying the variables needed to promote positive attitudes led Navarro-Mateu et al. (2019) to analyze the predictive power of sociodemographic variables, empathy and social dominance orientation on the attitudes and sentiments of 268 teachers of different educational levels sampled for the study. Empathy as used in the study comprised of cognitive empathy; that which was the ability of putting one's self in the place of another and emotional empathy; that which was exercised by the teacher's ability to share the emotions of another (Batchelder, Brosnan & Ashwin, 2017).

Empathy was necessary its potential of increasing one's understanding and knowledge about the circumstances of disabled people; that which in turn can affect one's attitude towards disabled people and ultimately influence attitudes towards inclusive education (Gonzalez, Riggle & Rostosky, 2015; Makoelle, 2019; Crispel & Kasperski, 2021). Findings from the study, according to the regression models adopted by Navarro-Mateu et al. (2019), suggested that social dominance was the main predictor of teachers' attitudes, sentiments, and concerns about inclusive education. Social dominance was positively related to the sentiments and concerns of teachers regarding inclusive education and negatively related to the attitudes of teachers. The researchers recommended that intervention programmes should be developed to train teachers on the implications of empathy and social dominance on the successful implementation of inclusive education. This indicates the need for teachers to be aware of how their empathy and social dominance orientations could improve or serve as barriers to a classroom conducive to inclusive education.

Teachers and their attitudes to inclusive education may be analyzed according to the teachers' level of experience; that which can be based on identifying whether a teacher is a pre-service teacher or an in-service teacher. This distinction is necessary in a review of literature on the attitudes of teacher given the differing results obtained by various studies with a focus on both demographic groups. Goddard & Evans (2018) in a survey investigating the extent to which pre-service training affects pre-service primary teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education found that primary pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusion were generally positive and got better across the years where final year students had significantly more positive attitudes than their first year counterparts. However, the results varied according to the demographic characteristics, constructs, and areas of

inclusion. This survey was based on a sample of 56 pre-service teachers drawn from three metropolitan universities in Australia.

Although the findings by Goddard & Evans (2018) mirrors that of Kraska & Boyle (2014), it differs from findings in studies conducted by Costello & Boyle (2013) and Saloviita (2015); both of which reported that students in their first years of study held more positive attitudes towards inclusion than in their later years. However, Saloviita (2015) argues that the differences in the results of pre-school teachers' attitudes is as a result of the use of different survey tools.

The Cabinet of Ghana approved the Policy for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Reform in 2018; that which brought about a New Bachelor of Education Curriculum that outlined inclusive education as one of its fundamental pillars. The reform by extension made it mandatory for all Colleges of Education to ensure that the curriculum, by which pre-service teachers in Ghana were trained, provided a means for training on inclusive education. The motive behind this initiative was to ensure that teachers at the end of training were well equipped to handle diversity in the classroom setting (MoE, 2018). Ghana's teacher education philosophy, according to the Ministry of Education, was aimed at producing teachers imbued with professional skills, values and attitudes and the use of inclusive strategies to engage in lifelong learning among others (MoE, 2017). Previously, the only formalized educational system accommodating students with special needs education were the special needs schools. This reform changed the educational policy by creating the space for special needs children to be accommodated in regular or mainstream educational settings. The inclusion of special needs children was allowed provided the Ministries responsible for Education, Health and Social Welfare had assessed the child and concluded that the regular school may be detrimental to the child's education (MoE, 2018).

Years after the reform, Nyaaba, Aboyinga & Akanzire (2021) conducted a convergent mixed method study to identify the attitudes of pre-service parent teachers regarding inclusive education. The scholars found that pre-service parent teachers had positive attitudes towards inclusive education. The parent teachers sampled for the study believed in their ability to note the strengths of their children and where necessary support them with the appropriate contents required in a classroom conducive to inclusive education. Perhaps the difference in the outcomes from Nyaaba, Aboyinga & Akanzire (2021) given they are parents, lies in the knowledge they obtained during their pre-service training. The 112 parent teachers sampled by Nyaaba et al. (2021) in the convergent mixed method study, however, noted some barriers to the successful implementation of inclusive education in classrooms. The noted challenges include the inadequacy of resources and the absence of peaceful cooperation among learners in inclusive environments. For instance, stigmatization had the proclivity of making learning environments less conducive for inclusivity. The parent teachers made some recommendations to the government of Ghana and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the noted challenges are resolved to make the implementation of inclusive education in classrooms a success.

Vanderpuye (2013), in a previous attempt to investigate parents' perceptions, expectations and involvement in inclusive education, reported that the majority of parents were satisfied with the inclusive education as practiced in the schools of their wards. However, 53.8% of parents felt children with special needs in education should not be accommodated in inclusive schools. The study found a relationship between parents' current involvement, the level of knowledge in inclusive education and the perceived benefits of inclusive education among parents sampled for the study.

The literature on the attitudes of in-service teachers towards inclusive education varies by scholar. Butakor et al. (2020) in an analysis of the attitude of Ghanaian teachers revealed male teachers were more likely to exhibit negative beliefs towards inclusivity than female teachers. The study also found that more experienced teachers exhibited low behavioral attitudes when compared to their colleagues with less teaching experiences. This finding is consistent with Sarfo (2011)'s findings from a study examining the attitudes of 400 mainstream teachers where teacher variables such as gender, location of school, level of school, age, teaching experience and qualification had an influence on their attitudes towards inclusive education. Kuyini, Desai & Sharma (2020) found that Ghanaian teachers generally had less positive attitudes and moderate levels of their self-efficacy regarding the implementation of inclusive education in their classrooms. However, Deku & Ackhah (2012) found no significant influence of teacher characteristics such as gender and years of experience on the attitudes and knowledge of teachers regarding inclusive education.

2.3.2 Parent Attitudes

Ghana's Inclusive Education Policy document emphasizes the need for multiple stakeholders including parents to be involved in the implementation of inclusive education (Amponteng et al., 2019). Parents are one of such stakeholders given one of the identified influences on the academic performance of students with hearing difficulties is tied to parental support according to a study by Agyire-Tettey, Cobbina & Hamenoo (2017). Moreover, effective parenting is more likely to promote the physical, emotional, mental and social-wellbeing of children according to a paper presented by Opoku, Nketsia & Benefo et al. (2022) to the Journal of Family Studies. In the qualitative study, Opoku, Nketsia & Benefo et al. (2022) found that parents had a challenge with communicating with their deaf children as a result of the lack of proficiency in sign language. A challenge which usually had adverse impacts on their ability to provide the basic skills in training

to determine and satisfy the needs of children with hearing difficulties. The scholars recommended the need for the development of comprehensive support programmes to equip parents with basic skills to raise children with hearing difficulties.

Paseka & Schwab (2020) in a qualitative examination of parental attitudes according to the attitudes towards inclusive education, the parental perception of teaching practices and resources, all of which are important factors for the successful implementation of inclusive education, found that the attitude of parents towards the inclusion of children with physical or learning disabilities were generally positive. However, the attitudes of these same parents towards children with behavioral and mental disorders were rather neutral. Moreover, parents with children who attended inclusive classes with at least one student with special education needs understood and perceived more inclusive practices than parents whose children attended regular classes, thus classes without even a single student with special education needs. In conclusion, the scholars indicated that the predictor of a parent's attitude towards inclusive education depended on the specific type of disability.

Stevens & Wurf (2020) in a mixed methods study sampling 44 parents across three Australian primary schools found that parents of children with disabilities were significantly more likely to agree children had the right to inclusive education. This finding is consistent with a comparative examination of parental attitudes towards inclusion among parents with children with ASD, parents of typically developing children and classroom teachers in China; where parents with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) held the most positive attitudes towards the inclusion of children with ASD (Su, Guo & Wang, 2020). Atuahene et al. (2019) in an assessment of public and private schools within the Berekum municipality in Ghana found disparities in the academic performance of students in public and private basic schools. This finding may have

implications on the performance of a disabled children based on the type of school attended by the child.

Another significant finding from Stevens & Wurf (2020) pertained to the perception of parents concerning the efficacy of teachers in ensuring classrooms are conducive to inclusive education. However, it is necessary to note that parents' satisfaction with inclusion was more varied where a significantly large group of parents were 'undecided' about the progress of their children in inclusive classes. The majority of parents sampled for the study felt that teachers were not adequately prepared to support the diverse range of students with disabilities permitted by an inclusive classroom. Parents either expressed negative or undecided perceptions on the teachers' ability and knowledge in delivering an individualized instruction within the context of the classroom. More parents while admitting to having heard of the word "inclusion" also admitted to a limited knowledge on how inclusion was implemented in the classroom. For most of the parents sampled for the study, a supportive staff, peer relationships and the appropriate resources were essential for the implementation of inclusive education. Perhaps, the findings indicate the need for the development of individualized educational programmes to ensure the efficacy of pre-service and in-service teachers in creating a conducive environment for inclusivity.

The Ghanaian case of parental attitudes towards inclusive education was examined by Amponteng et al. (2019) using Ajzen (1991; 2020)'s theory of planned behavior (TPB) as a framework to assess the perceptions of 411 parents in Ghana. Findings from the study indicated that there was no significant difference in the attitudes between parents of children with disabilities and those with non-disabled children. However, the parents sampled in Ghana by Amponteng et al. (2019) like those sampled by Stevens & Wurf (2020) in Australia admitted to having a limited knowledge on inclusive practices. Perhaps, the neutrality evinced in the Ghana's sample among attitudes

between parents of disabled children and parents of typical developing children is due to the limited knowledge parents have on inclusive practices. Opoku et al. (2022) similarly adopted Ajzen (1991)'s theory of planned behavior to examine parents' attitudes regarding inclusive education for a sample of 1075 parents from Ghana (n=411) and Nigeria (n=664) and found that while parents had positive attitudes to inclusive education, they reported a lack of knowledge about inclusive education. These and many other findings have in effect led Opoku et al. (2022) to recommend the need for policymakers to prioritize public education.

While children with special needs are permitted to attend regular schools, Klemm (2015) finds that parents are usually faced with the task of having to choose from only two options; special schools or regular schools. The regular schools, despite being open to students with special needs, have only few students with such needs. The options for which parents can select from are also limiting as the rights of parents to choose is limited by the number of places schools have available for students with special needs.

2.4 Resources for Inclusive Education

The availability of resources is an influencing factor for the implementation of inclusive education as schools can easily reject students with special needs with the justification of the absence of the resources required to appropriately accommodate to ensure students with special needs (Klemm, 2015). The perception of available resources has been linked to the attitudes of teachers regarding inclusive education (Goldan & Schwab, 2020). For instance, barriers in relation to the availability of teaching facilities and reading or learning materials for students with hearing difficulties was identified by Agyire-Tettey, Cobbina & Hamenoo (2017) as an academic challenge in a qualitative

research that sought to elucidate the challenges preventing students with hearing difficulties from high academic challenges.

Obi & Ashi (2016) indicates that the practice of inclusive education involved bringing together persons with disabilities and the non-disabled to study in the same classroom with adaptable facilities and equipment. The scholars added this arrangement made assistive technology an unconditional requirement for children with special needs. In addition, inclusive education according to them, involved public and private programmes and laws and a number of other things including people who work in the "helping" professions.

Schneider et al. (2018) divides resources for inclusive education into the following: personnel resources, that which consists of teaching and non-teaching staff; teaching and learning materials; and special resources. Chitiyo & et al. (2019) describes the resources for inclusive education as that which consists of infrastructure, classroom learning materials and personnel as detailed in Figure 2.4 below.

Figure 3: Resources or Materials for Inclusive Education
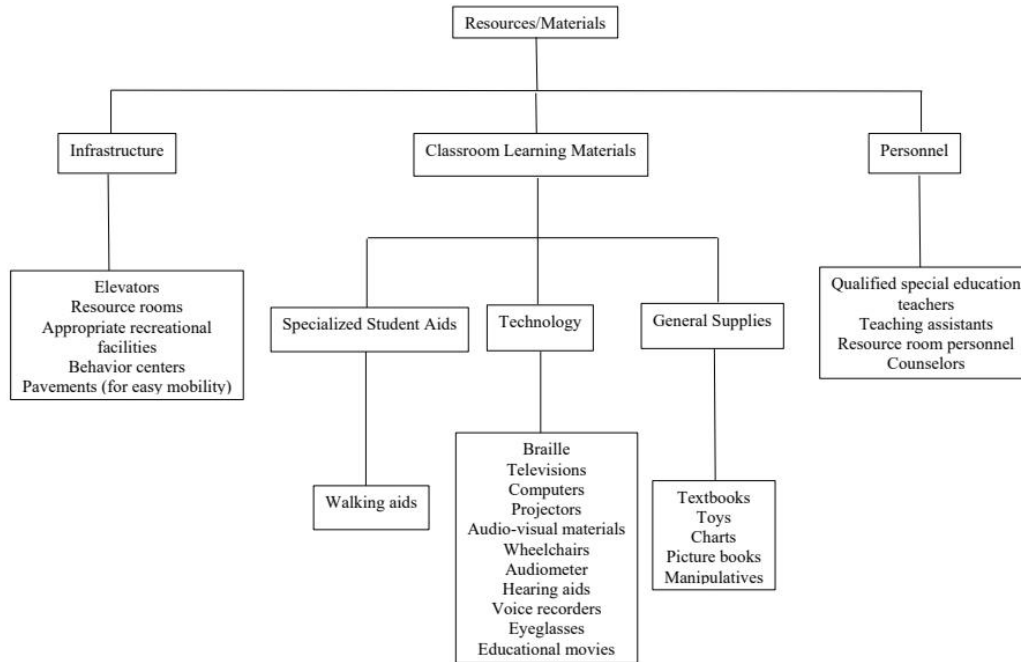
Source: Chitiyo et al. (2019)

Infrastructure conducive for inclusive education consists of resource rooms and the appropriate recreational facilities and behavior centers. Classroom learning materials entails specialized student aids, assistive technologies (ATs) and general supplies, whereas personnel resources entails qualified special education teachers, counselors, resource room personnel and teaching assistants. Infrastructural resources such as classrooms may help reduce the negative attitudes of teachers considering the findings made by Alhassan (2014). In a mixed study examining the attitudes of teachers in implementing inclusive education, the researcher found negative attitudes towards inclusive education among teachers functioning in large class-sizes. The methodology adopted by Alhassan (2014) consisted of the following; quantitative data from 108 teachers and qualitative data from 20 students and 10 students.

According to Gitschthaler et al. (2021), the factors that influence teachers' subjective perception of resources includes their years of experience and the number of students in an inclusive classroom. When the perception of teachers regarding the availability of inclusive education resources was measured in Austria, that which was based on a revised version of the Perception of Resources Questionnaire (RQ) developed by Goldan & Schwab (2018), revealed teachers felt ambivalent or had a somewhat positive perception on the availability of resources for inclusive education.

Opoku et al. (2015) measured the feasibility of the implementation of inclusive education piloted for 10 years across some selected districts in Ghana. Findings indicated that the pilot programme did not meet the expectations due to the following challenges; lack of resources and funds, lack of qualified teachers, inaccessible environments, poor teaching methods and negative attitudes of teachers towards students with disabilities. The scholars therefore recommended the need for the Government of Ghana to provide sufficient resources to enhance the efficacy of schools practicing inclusive education. In addition, there was the need for an extensive modification of school infrastructure to be conducive for students with special needs as most inclusive schools were not originally built with children with disabilities in mind.

Ackah-Jnr (2018) with a focus on the need for inclusive education in the early childhood setting suggests that the early childhood setting requires a multifaceted and integrated resource architecture to ensure a successful implementation of inclusive education in the setting. However, there is the need to reconceptualize resources due to the changing definitions of inclusive education. Ackah & Fluckiger (2018) in effect defined resources as "the cosmopolitan of available help, necessary things, ongoing and desired assistance, and input, enabling teachers and schools to implement inclusive education. This includes professional support, motivational support, human

support and funds or material. Professional support within the context of education occurs in the form of in-service and pre-service training and other teaching education programmes; that which should be geared towards education and training to ensure teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and capacity to successfully implement inclusive education in the classroom.

In an effort to provide a service-delivery model for speech-language pathologists working in low- and middle-income countries like Ghana, Baigorri, Crowley & Bukari (2019) suggested that alternative and augmentative communications should be introduced into the classroom and creating activities to enhance the literary skills of all children including those with hearing difficulties within an inclusive classroom. Alternative means of communication is particularly important for hearing impaired students due to their peculiar problem of not being able to perceive sounds and voiced language through their auditory mechanisms (Fobi & Oppong, 2018).

An alternative means of communication commonly adopted to help communicate with persons living with hearing difficulties is the sign or manual communication; an approach which uses visual-spatial modalities including movements, hand gestures, arms or body, facial expressions, and orientations of the hands to convey the ideas of the speaker. Ghana has adopted this alternative form of communication through the Ghanaian Sign Language (GhSL), the Adamorobe Sign language and the Nanabin Sign language. Sign language in Ghana begins by sign communication as expressed with the hands, body, and facial expression, and either diverts to the unique styles of the Ghanaian Sign Language, the Adamorobe Sign Language, or the Nanabin Sign Language, and is finally received and monitored through vision as indicated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 4: Structure of Sign Language
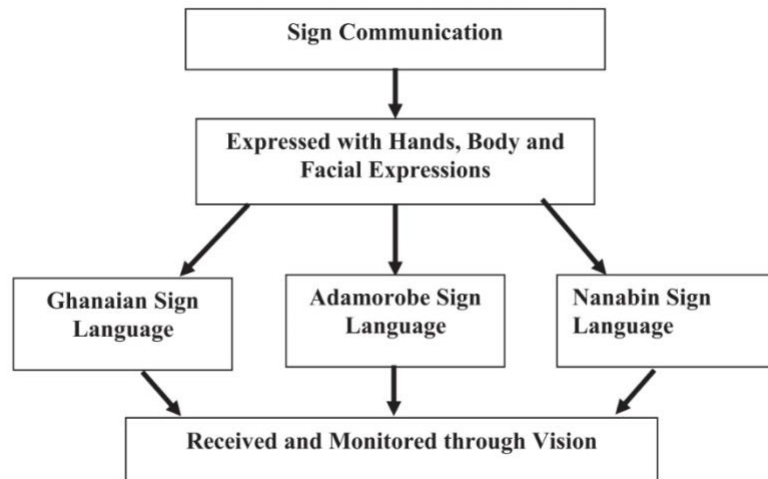
Source: Fobi & Oppong (2018)

One of the fundamental resources for the successful implementation of inclusive education is the use of assistive technologies (ATs); that which has been found to increase the levels of independent living among children with disabilities (Osam et al., 2021). ATs is an umbrella term for any piece of equipment, software program or system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified or customized, that provides practical solutions to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of persons living with disabilities (WHO, 2011; ATiA, 2023). For children or students with hearing difficulties, ATs refer to any device that aids such persons to hear and understand what is being said clearer or to easily express their thoughts. Hearing assistance can be accessed by the use of digital and wireless technologies to assist persons with hearing, voice, speech and language disorders to communicate more meaningfully and fully participate in their daily lives independently (NIH, 2019).

However, the knowledge of assistive technologies is limiting in Ghana. Osam et al. (2021) in a quantitative study adopted to explore the experiences of parents with disabled children concerning

the use of ATs found that while parents admitted to the benefits of ATs for the development of their children in societies, there existed barriers to the successful use of ATs. This includes the high cost of assistive technologies; thereby making it difficult for parents without the needed funds to purchase for the benefit of their disabled children. Other barriers identified were inadequate health facilities to assist disabled, stigmatization and an unfriendly environment. Osam et al. (2021) noted that ATs may encourage the participation and acceptance of children with disabilities in environments with negative attitudes towards children with disabilities. In effect, recommendations are made by the scholars for government to expand the health and rehabilitation facilities to ensure access and participation, and by extension an inclusive environment for persons living with disabilities.

2.5 Curricula for Inclusive Education

Mulenga (2018) in a comprehensive review on the definition of Curriculum concluded by defining Curriculum as "*all the selected, organized, integrative, innovative and evaluative educational experiences provided to learners consciously or unconsciously under the school authority in order to achieve the designated learning outcomes which are achieved as a result of growth, maturation and learning meant to be best utilized for life in a changing society.*" (Mulenga, 2018, p. 20)

A curriculum is important as it provides instructors in education with a steady, organized path in the task of achieving a specific set of goals for the purpose of elevating the student to the next level (Williams, 2019). Curricular contents have been identified as one of the barriers to the academic performance of students with hearing difficulties; that which is a factor from an interplay of different systems of the environment of students with hearing difficulties (Agyire-Tettey, Cobbina & Hamenoo, 2017). According to Atuahene et al. (2020), public and private basic school use the

same Ghana Education Service (GES) stipulated curriculum in their schools. This curriculum is centralized, and not designed for diversity and reinforces the dominance of teacher-centered teaching approaches in the classroom (Price, 2015). Moreover, the examination-oriented system in Ghana is a challenge as it defeats the purpose and principle of inclusion among students given its emphasis on marks and grades (Forlin, 2010). This further has implications on the quality of education accessed by students with special needs where teachers have the proclivity to adopt authoritarian styles of leadership within the classroom setting by means of awarding marks (Tafa, 2004) rather than focusing on the individual growth and needs of students by interactive pedagogy (Edwards & Protheroe, 2003). For this reason, Nketsia (2018) recommends a curriculum based on a social model perspective on disability; that which will ensure the successful removal of barriers within local schools.

Al-Shammari, Faulkner & Forlin (2019), however, suggests that inclusive educational practices can be derived from adopting an eclectic approach based on the theories of cognitivism, behaviorism, and constructivism. The learning theories are relevant as they provide curriculum designers with the instructional strategies and techniques for facilitating learning in classrooms, that which includes the need to implement inclusive education practices for students with disabilities in mainstream schools (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

The instructional strategies adopted from the theories of cognitivism, behaviorism and constructivism allows for the modification of school curricula and instructional design, as well as the use of evidence-based practices. The theory of behaviorism, for instance, includes the application of behaviorism in inclusive education settings; which is primarily functional within the context of harnessing student behavior to manipulate stimulus materials for the purpose of enhancing the learning experience in the classroom. The core principles of behaviorism in response

to education are based on the following assumptions; that behavior is learned rather than genetically obtained, behavior is governed by the context and setting it occurs, there is no teaching without learning, learning equates and leads to behavioral change, behavior is governed by what follows actions, and the need for a focus on the observable (Harold & Corcoran, 2013).

The cognitive theory for inclusive education is based on a focus on one's personal thinking, motivation, memory, reflections towards learning. In this regard, cognitive theorists usually place an emphasis on ensuring knowledge is meaningful to the student in ways that motivates them to be interested in effectively understand what is being taught by the instructor (Petersen, 2014). Constructivism, on the contrary, always intends to contextualize the outcomes of education to reflect the culture within which education functions. Thus, constructivists attempt to be conscious of the environment and the social dimensions and implications of the learning process. Teachers are usually perceived to be facilitators and organizers of the classroom settings in ways that permit and allow the students to discover their own realities and outcomes (Liu & Ju, 2010).

Chitiyo & et al. (2019) in an explorative study on the professional development needs for both special education teachers and teachers functioning in mainstream schools with inclusive classes discovered teachers sampled for the study felt inadequately prepared to teach special and inclusive classrooms. This is similar to findings from Deku & Vanderpuye (2017) who linked the inadequacy of teachers to the inappropriateness of the curriculum. In that regard, this study intends to examine the perception of teachers with regards to the efficacy of the curriculum to inclusive education.

2.6 Empirical Evidence on the Practice of Inclusion

The European Agency took data from its member countries concerning the practice of inclusive education for the purposes of running a comparative analysis of the data obtained. The data spanned over 20 years and was based on two main criteria; access to mainstream education and access to inclusive education (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020). A distinction between these criteria is necessary according to the Agency as an enrollment in mainstream education does not necessarily provide the needed details on the quality of the education or the education experienced by the individual student in context of the education institution. For the criterion on access to mainstream education, the European Agency found a substantial variation between countries in relation to their enrollment rate in mainstream education with a range of the proportion of learners between 92% to 99%.

The second criterion was measured using an 80%-time placement benchmark in mainstream classrooms; that which goes a step ahead of guaranteeing inclusive education after being enrolled in a mainstream classroom. Specifically, the second criterion is focused on the proportion of learners within a country who were not attending separate classes in mainstream schools, fully separate special schools, were out of school or in any kind of non-formal education. Findings from the second criterion indicates that no European country has 100% enrolment in inclusive settings.

Thereby indicating the various countries involved used some form of fully separate specialist provision (separate schools and/or units), as well as separate classes in mainstream schools. Although, the data shows no country is absolutely inclusive, there is a clear indication of how close European countries are to ensuring absolute inclusion within their educational institutions. This leads Ramberg & Watkins (2020) to conclude European countries face certain challenges to ensure their institutions are well developed to meet the demands of the policy of inclusive education.

While the literature on the European practice of inclusive education has been highlighted for the purposes of elucidating a model for practice that may be adopted in African countries, there is the need to extensively review literature on the practice of inclusive education in Africa.

2.6.1 Africa

Sub-Saharan countries have been chosen for this review on the empirical literature on the practice of inclusive education due to the impact of persistent poverty on traditionally marginalized populations as adopted by Drame & Kamphoff (2014) in their study. Marginalized populations as used in this context pertains to persons in society such as children living with disabilities in Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Cameroon, Zambia, and Sierra Leone. As indicated earlier in the background to the study, the practice of inclusive education in East and West Africa has been looked at through the gender lens by Hui et al. (2018) in a qualitative interpretive secondary analysis. Although boys and girls with disabilities in Togo, Zambia, Niger, Malawi, and Sierra Leone were likely to face similar cases of social exclusion in schools, girls with disabilities were argued by the scholars to suffer societal biases and hindrances in relation to their educational potential. Girls were more likely to be victims of sexual abuse given the potential weaknesses caused by their disability. The state of inclusive education in West Africa is poor as many developing countries in the region are lagging behind in implementing inclusive education practices (Unachukwu & Nwosu, 2020). The lagging picture of inclusive educational practices in West Africa have been related to issues concerning policies on inclusive education, the role of teachers in ensuring the implementation of inclusivity in the classroom, and an appropriate pedagogical, psychological, and learning environment.

Opoku et al. (2022) examined the attitudes, knowledge, and perceived social norms regarding inclusive education in West Africa by comparing findings obtained from a sample of 411 parents

in Ghana and a sample of 664 parents in Nigeria. They found that parents sampled for the study were positive on attitudes and perceived norms in spite of reporting a lack of knowledge about inclusive education. The parents acknowledged the efforts of implementers in the practice of inclusive education.

Cockburn et al. (2017) examined published research on the practice and implementation of inclusive education in Cameroon and found that there is an emerging attention to inclusive education for children with disabilities in Cameroon. However, many children are still not able to realize their rights to inclusion given legislations and policies made by the Cameroonian government, be it within the schooling system or society on a broader scale. Cockburn et al. (2017) indicate that most children with disabilities in Cameroon are not included in mainstream educational schools. They point to the need for education policy makers to address teacher attitudes and pedagogy. Srivastava, De Boer & Pijil (2015) in a presentation of an overview of literature for the purposes of establishing which projects have been undertaken and support the inclusion of students with disabilities in developing countries found that implemented projects were mainly focused on school and teacher factors when compared to legislation/policy and school factors. However, only two studies according to the review reported on their effects.

Adeniyi et al. (2021) in an attempt to identify education as a crucial contributory factor to growth inclusiveness in West Africa found that the empirical results revealed a positive impact on school enrollment measures in most countries in the short and long-run. The researchers recommended countries in the region to give an adequate attention to quality during the process of planning and design of educational policy to foster inclusive growth. Chuma Umeh (2018) conducted a case study using Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Ghana with the purpose of evaluating the extent to which domestic legislation and policy framework in the three West African countries complied with the

normative standards stipulated in article 24 of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The researcher found that none of the legislative and policy frameworks in the aforementioned countries comprehensively lived up to the expectations arising from articles 24(2)(a) and (c) of CRPD. The articles enjoined state parties to ensure inclusive education for persons with disabilities at all levels without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity. Chuma Umeh (2018) stated further that the challenges in these three West African countries ranged from the omission of disability as a listed ground in the general prohibition of discrimination to the framing of the right to education as a non-justiciable directive of state policy particularly in Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Adijun (2021) examined the knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of inclusive education of pre-service teachers in Nigeria (n=217) and South Africa (n= 266) in a cross-sectional survey. The study found a significant interaction between one's country and gender. Thereby indicating one's perceptions, knowledge and attitude towards inclusive education was affected by one's gender and country. Female pre-service teachers in Nigeria had a slightly better knowledge of inclusive education. However, pre-service teachers in South Africa were generally more knowledgeable about inclusive education than pre-service teachers in South Africa. The researcher in effect recommends various African universities to intensify their efforts to scale up the content of their curricula in order to furnish trainee teachers with the requisite knowledge on the intricacies of inclusive education and what is attainable in real classroom scenarios.

2. 7 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed relevant literature on the implementation and practice of inclusive education with a focus on a theoretical framework based on the work of Bricker (1995). Key notes obtained

from the review indicate that while attitudes towards inclusive education are generally positive from the perspective of parents and teachers, the requisite resources, and curricula for ensuring its implementation are not readily available in many mainstream educational institutions, especially in Africa. The next chapter presents the methods adopted by the researcher for the study. It presents detailed information on the strategies adopted to ensure that the data obtained from the qualitative research is reliable and valid.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology adopted for the research. It entails detailed information on the research approach, techniques and procedures, sampling strategies, the nature of the sources for data, and the ethical considerations adopted for the purposes of satisfying the objectives of the study.

3.2 Research Approach

A research approach was adopted during the process of planning as a means of assisting the researcher in identifying the focus, methods, and goals of the research. The approach provided the researcher with information on the broad assumptions to the detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Information provided in the review of literature led the researcher to adopt a qualitative approach to investigate the problem of inclusivity manifested within the context of the classroom. The researcher chose the approach as a means of obtaining rich and detailed data; that which a quantitative approach is less likely to capture in spite of the potential of obtaining data that is statistically significant. In addition, the qualitative design allowed the researcher to delve into meaning and interpretive modes of thinking concerned with the social construction of reality; that which is applicable to the study of the attitudes of teachers and parents sampled for the study. The qualitative research assisted the researcher in collecting and analyzing information and delivering conclusions that resolve challenges through the methodical application of the predetermined set of techniques.

3.3 Study Area

The main study area for the research is the Ga West Municipal District from which two schools (1 public and 1 private) are selected to satisfy the objectives of this study. The Ga West Municipality lies within latitude 50 degrees 48' North and longitudes 0 degrees 12 west and 0 degrees 22 West. It is one of twenty-nine districts found in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana with a population of about 314,299 people. The land area it covers is approximately 305.4sq km. Ga West is bordered by the Ga Central, Ga East and the Ga South districts. The district has numerous public and private schools dispersed across the various communities within its jurisdiction. Some notable communities are Amasaman which happens to be the district capital, Nsakina, Dedeiman and Pokuase. Schools to be selected for the comparative analysis of the study are located in Pokuase and Amasaman both of which are urban districts. The public school adopted for this study is the St. Sylvanus R/C Basic School located in Amasaman while the private school adopted for the purposes of answering the objectives of this study is the Glorious Child International School Complex located in Pokuase. Both schools were selected given their urban location; that which increases the propensity for obtaining information from a more diverse population. Urban schools given the diversity of students and teachers may be useful to the researcher in obtaining data for inferential purposes.

Figure 5: Map of the Ga West and Ga South Municipal Districts

Source: *Ackumey et al. (2012)*

3.4 Population

The target population for this study comprises teachers and parents of students in mainstream educational institutions operating within the framework of inclusive education. The choice of parents and teachers as the primary groups of interest is informed by their significant roles as key

stakeholders in the primary socialization of children and students. Their influence extends to the promotion and effective practice of inclusive education within mainstream educational settings.

It's important to note that the decision to focus on parents and teachers is in alignment with Ghana's Inclusive Education Policy document, which underscores the importance of multiple stakeholders' involvement in the successful implementation of inclusive education. This policy emphasizes the active roles that parents and teachers play in supporting the inclusion of students with diverse needs (Amponteng et al., 2019).

In the research methodology, it should be highlighted that children were not interviewed due to ethical considerations, especially concerning the issue of informed consent. Working with minors, it is crucial to uphold ethical standards and ensure that research procedures are sensitive to the rights and well-being of the children involved. Therefore, this study avoids direct interviews with children to protect their rights and privacy while focusing on the insights and perspectives of parents and teachers who are closely associated with the inclusive education process.

3.4.1 Eligibility Criteria for Teachers

Teachers eligible for the study should have at least 5 years of basic school teaching experience.

3.4.2 Eligibility Criteria for Parents

Parents eligible for the study should be active participants of PTA (Parent and Teacher Association) meetings.

3.5 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique adopted by the researcher is the convenience sampling technique; that which is generally classified under the non-probability sampling techniques as it does not provide for each member of a target population to participate in a study (Stratton, 2021). Danso & Gadugah (2022), for instance estimates about 239,180 basic school teachers in Ghana.

The convenience sampling technique was used because it is the easiest way of obtaining a sample for a study. In addition, the sampling technique is relatively faster than the other forms of non-probability sampling techniques available. The researcher in the process of implementing the convenience sampling technique simply announced the study, after which interested participants self-selected themselves to participate in the study provided they met the eligibility criteria prescribed for the study. Thus, the selection of participants was primarily based on the availability and eligibility of participants.

The researcher, in effect, recruited the first 8 teachers and 8 parents who availed themselves to participate in the study after a Parent and Teacher Association (PTA) meeting organized by the 2 basic schools (1 public and 1 private) sampled using the clustered sampling technique. The clustered sampling technique was chosen as it allowed the researcher to consume less time and cost. The technique guaranteed a convenient access to the relevant respondents, while ensuring an ease of implementation and data accuracy. For the purposes of the study, schools within the Ga West Municipal were therefore grouped into two clusters of basic private schools and basic public schools, after which a school was randomly selected from each cluster.

3.6 Sample Size

A sample size of 16 participants comprising of 8 teachers and 8 parents of students in mainstream basic schools in the Ga West Municipal was adopted for the study. The adopted sample size is small when compared to that which is commonly accommodated by quantitative studies. However, the small size is adopted to support the depth of information required by qualitative studies. Moreover, the study is value-driven as expressed in the objective of determining the attitudes of teachers and parents regarding the practice of inclusive education. It is therefore not necessarily interested in obtaining an objective finding that lacks neutrality. Adopting the small sample size creates the space for the researcher to adequately situate findings of the study within a more specific social and cultural context as opposed to the generalized approach usually adopted by quantitative studies. A smaller sample size allowed the researcher to foster and build a relationship with the participants; that which was likely to be impossible with a larger sample. Parents and teachers of students attending basic schools in the Ga West Municipal are the primary groups from which participants for the study are chosen as they are primarily engaged with students through the process of socialization. Parents and teachers are more likely to observe the implementation of the policy of inclusive education given their direct contact with schools. Teachers are also crucial as they are primary agents for the implementation of pedagogical methods and curricula in the context of classrooms.

3.7 Data Collection Method and Instrument

This section presents on the sources of data and the data collection instrument adopted by the researcher for the study.

3.7.1 Sources of Data

The study is primarily based on data obtained from participants during the interview. However, secondary data is obtained from journals, articles, books, newsletters, annual reports, and articles as a means of executing a comparative analysis in the light of previous studies held on inclusive education in Ghana.

3.7.2 Data Collection Technique

The primary method of data collection adopted by the study is a semi-structured interview. This method allowed the researcher to simultaneously incorporate planned and tightly defined questions with more free flowing ones. The semi-structured interview was helpful to the researcher as it permitted a greater degree of spontaneity and flexibility for interviewees to include issues that might have not been thought of by the researcher during the process of designing the data collection instrument.

The researcher adopts the semi-structured interview to ensure that the responses obtained from participants are more open-ended and broader in scope; that which is more likely to guarantee data that is rich and detailed. The researcher using this technique encouraged more promptings, follow-ups, and a return to previously discussed subjects to clarify and enhance an understanding of the issues discussed. Interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone prior to a well-informed consent. The interviews were conducted in quiet rooms to prevent disturbances and interruptions. However, participants were always allowed to select a venue of their choice for the purposes of ensuring their comfort, and as well participate in the interview with no intimidation. A sheet was prepared in addition to the interview guide to check out relevant demographic characteristics ascribed to participants. The interview guide was used to ensure the research objectives are covered in the interview.

This was a serious consideration given the free flowing nature of the interview had the proclivity of causing both the interviewer and interviewee to veer off the main objectives guiding the study. The researcher, during the process of the interview, asked questions in a balanced, unthreatening and non-judgmental way. Active listening was also adopted during the data collection process where the researcher observes the participant to obtain non-verbal cues; that which is likely to contextualize the verbal responses given by participants.

3.8 Data Analysis

The thematic method of qualitative data analysis was adopted by the researcher to interpret the data obtained from participants of the interview. The audio format of interviews obtained from an audio recorder were transcribed, coded, analyzed, interpreted where necessary and verified to ensure an effective analysis of the data. The codes applied by the researcher were organized thematically into keywords for discussions on information provided by participants at this stage of the research process. Non-numeric data collected from the interviews were analyzed based on the inferences made by the researcher with guidance from the literature review. The inferences made involved an extraction of meaning and implications of responses provided by participants to specific questions addressed to them through verbal communication during the data collection procedure. These specific questions were based on the objectives of the study for the purposes of investigating the attitude of stakeholders towards the inclusion of students with hearing difficulties, the resource adequacy of schools in terms of the inclusion of these students into the education framework, and the appropriateness of the curricula in such schools for the needs of students with hearing difficulties. The data collected, thus, constitutes the key findings of the research. Direct

quotations from participants are employed by the researcher in reference to findings made by other researchers during presentation of the data.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher produced a research work that met all the necessary ethical considerations as suggested by Ystanes and Laterza (2022) in the *Master's Thesis Seminar Study Guide 2022 (ME-526-1)*. Ethical issues within areas in the Research, Society and Ethics, and Respect for Individuals sections as found in the NESH (2016) were usually needed for all researchers in spite of the research topic and methodology adopted by the researcher. However, that may not be the case for the other sections found in the same suggested document. While the researcher subscribes to a meritocratic view of society as influenced by the concept of equity, the researcher upholds the integrity of the documentation at all steps of the research process.

During the data collection process, there was no attempt to persuade participants to subscribe to any worldview, no matter how valuable it was to the researcher. Rather the researcher simply provided the necessary questions as adapted from the objectives of the study to respondents. Participants were expected to answer questions according to their own perceptions and values without intimidation from the researcher. Thus, the researcher made sure there was no attempt to convince participants to consider another view concerning the issue on discussion. The researcher worked in consistency with the argumentation provided all through the research process. This explains why the objectives of the study were based on the research problem and questions identified, right on to the point of influencing the literature review and questions contained in the data collection instrument.

Furthermore, the researcher ran an impartial assessment of the data obtained, and an openness regarding uncertainty in cases where findings necessitated such positions. The researcher in consideration of the duty and openness and publication, that which stems from the responsibility for researchers and their institutions to preserve the freedom and independence of research, did not withhold or selectively report results and conclusions of the study as mandated by the NESH (2016). The researcher complied by the ethical obligation of protecting the personal integrity, respecting the privacy, and preserving the individual freedom of humans encountered for the purposes of the research.

Participants were provided with all relevant information required to ensure a well-informed consent. The following information are provided to participants to satisfy this ethical objective: information about the field of research, the purpose of research, funding for the research where applicable, information on who will receive access to the needed information, the intended use of the findings obtained from the research, and the consequences of participating in the research. All information for this ethical purpose are also provided in a neutral manner to prevent decisions made as a result of undue pressure. The information is communicated in a manner understandable to the participant. For instance, the communication is channeled through the medium of a local language where necessary to enhance the intelligibility of participants regarding issues discussed.

Participants of the research were assured confidentiality; that which is evinced by the researcher's dedication to process data acquired on personal matters confidentially. Information obtained from participants was not passed on in ways that could identify the participants. The researcher took responsibility for ensuring participants were not exposed to serious physical harm or other severe or unreasonable strain as a result of the research. In effect, the researcher was dedicated to selecting safe spaces for the data collection process.

The researcher followed a good citation practice for the purposes of making critical examination on the part of the researcher's supervisory body easier and effective. This ethical consideration is likely to be helpful for other researchers who intend to pick up findings from the researcher's study as a foundation for further research. All sources of information for which the research is guided were appropriately cited in the working document to satisfy this ethical standard. The researcher ensured that the work of others was not plagiarized as that constitutes a serious breach in the norms of research ethics.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The chapter analyses empirical data gathered from the interviewees. It presents the researcher's observations of the study and compares the findings to relevant studies adopted by the researcher for the literature review section. Thus, the main purpose of this chapter is to systematically present findings of the study with discussions guided by the researcher's interpretation of the qualitative data. This study sought to gather data to assess the success of inclusive education for children with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream education from the perspective of teachers and parents sampled for an interview. Details such as the background of participants, how the data analysis was executed, and the findings obtained according to the adopted themes for analyzing the data are also included in subsequent sections of this chapter. The researcher also includes a brief discussion of the findings in the light of the literature reviewed in the study.

The following are the research questions adopted by the study:

iv. What are the attitudes of relevant stakeholders concerning the inclusion of students with hearing difficulties in mainstream education institutions?

v. How resourced are Ghanaian mainstream education institutions in terms of providing inclusive education for students with hearing difficulties?

vi. Are the curricula of mainstream educational institutions well designed to meet the needs of hearing-impaired children in Ghana?

4.1 Background of Respondents

Participants sampled for the study were obtained from a heterogenous group of teachers and parents approached during a PTA meeting organized in the two selected basic schools. The age range of teachers sampled for the study was between 23 to 57 years; that which is in line with the eligibility criteria of 18 to 60 years adopted for the study. There were more female teachers and parents in both schools as indicated by Table 4.1 below. The gender distribution of teachers from the public school was unequal as the ratio of male teachers to female teachers was 1:3. However, the gender distribution of teachers sampled from the private school was equal with a ratio of 2:2 as indicated in Table 4.1 below.

The years of teaching experience of teachers sampled for the study ranged from 5 to 24 years. The teacher with the highest level of experience was a male teacher from the private school. A common trend noticed from the demographic data obtained was that the age of teachers was more likely to directly affect their years of teaching experience. Thus, the higher the teacher's age, the higher the teacher's number for the years of teaching experience. This general representation of data was only untrue for a participant from the private school (T6) who was aged 31 years and still had only 5 years of experience; that which was the baseline criterion for eligibility adopted for the study.

Teachers sampled for the study were generally adults who fell within the age range of 23 to 57. All teachers sampled for the study had at least completed senior high school. However, more teachers from the public school had attained only a diploma as indicated in Table 4.1 below. The educational distribution of teachers from the private school was equal given two teachers had

completed a bachelor's degree and the two others with a senior high school level certificate. This equal representation may be explained by the entry requirements adopted by private schools.

Whereas private schools may be more liberal in their selection of teachers for their schools albeit with a critical look at what prospective teachers applying for employment in their school can offer, public schools are stricter and only adopt teachers with an educational level lower than a diploma through the teaching practice as mandated in the curricula of pre-service teacher training schools. The distinction of teachers from public and private schools is necessary for elucidatory purposes as Atuahene et al. (2019)'s study found disparities in the academic performance of students in public and private basic schools in the Berekum Municipality of Ghana.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Teachers

	Teacher							
	Public School				**Private School**			
	T1	**T2**	**T3**	**T4**	**T5**	**T6**	**T7**	**T8**
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female
Age	23	27	40	33	57	31	34	36
Years of Teaching Experience	5	6	14	9	24	5	12	15
Level of Education	Diploma	Diploma	Degree	Diploma	Degree	Degree	Senior High Level	Senior High Level

Source: Field Data (2023)

There were more female parents than males in both basic schools according to Table 4.2 below, that which indicates an unequal gender distribution where a male parent was to three female

parents for both schools. The age range of parents was 20 to 41 for the public basic school and 28 to 48 for the private basic school. Be that as it may, there was an unequal professional distribution of parents sampled for the study where a formal profession was to three non-formal professions for public schools and a non-formal profession was to three formal professions for private schools.

One's profession was more likely to determine one's education level according to Table 4.2; that which indicates that parents with formal professions were more likely to have degrees than parents with non-formal professions. This finding is expressed clearly in the professional distribution of parents from the public school where the only parent with a formal profession (P3) had not only obtained a degree but had moved on to complete a master's degree. The professional distribution of parents sampled from the private school also proves this, but in a different manner given all three parents with a formal profession had at least completed a degree. However, the only parent with a non-formal profession had only completed senior high school as shown in Table 4.2.

The education level of parents deduced from the distribution of parents implies that the average participant sampled for the study is educationally fit to provide data for the study as all participants had at least completed a basic school. This indicates the sampled participants have acquired some formal education to understand and respond to the questions asked during the interview stage. Ghergut (2010) pointed out that one's level of education was an important factor in determining and developing attitudes towards inclusive education where a higher level of education such as a degree was more likely to have disciplines based on an educational plan that incorporated knowledge on special education, children with special educational needs, learning difficulties and inclusion. A high school curriculum, according to Ghergut (2010), was not adequately developed to instill students with information on inclusion to form proper attitudes towards inclusion.

Table 2: Demographic Information of Parents

	Parent							
	Public School				**Private School**			
	P1	**P2**	**P3**	**P4**	**P5**	**P6**	**P7**	**P8**
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female
Age	20	25	32	41	28	34	48	29
Profession	Informal	Informal	Formal	Informal	Formal	Formal	Formal	Informal
Level of Education	Junior High Level	Senior High Level	Master's Degree	Senior High Level	Degree	Degree	Master's Degree	Senior High Level

Source: Field Data (2023)

4.2 Data Analysis

The data collected in this study was analyzed using the thematic analysis procedure. This examination was conducted by identifying the relevant themes to address the research questions and objectives of the study. The researcher engaged in the practice of reading and rereading the data collected from interviewees and establishing codes and categories as a means of obtaining relevant themes. The researcher then examined the pattern of codes, categories, and themes in a comparative manner to identify the commonalities, differences, and connections of the data obtained from participants of the study. The real names of interviewees were not stated, on the contrary, the researcher adopted descriptors as a means of ensuring that the ethical considerations of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality were maintained.

Interviews were transcribed for easy reading and coding. The coding process broke down the interviews into different parts to acquire a comprehensive view of the data. Interviews were conducted in accordance with the location of the participant's choice. After the process of transcription, the researcher imported the transcripts into NVivo (version 10); a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. The NVivo software was adopted for the coding procedure by using the interview transcripts to take notes on the various codes stored under the 'memos' section of the software. Transcripts were coded according to the themes identified from the questions asked during the interviews.

Although the interviews were subsequently transcribed, the researcher took brief notes after each interview to ensure that the immediate impressions obtained from the interview, as motivated by the gestures and mannerisms of participants, were not lost due to time changes. These brief notes captured the main topics discussed in interviews as well as the researcher's field experiences. The field notes helped me to nudge my memory during the transcription stage and in effect, ensured that my analysis of the interviews conducted was more of an ongoing process than a one-stop procedure at the end of writing this analysis chapter. After coding along these broad themes in NVivo, it was then more natural to write up the three data chapters structured around the objectives of the study.

4.3 Themes for Analysis

Responses obtained from the interview were captured according to the following themes and will be discussed in the subsequent sections of the chapter:

- Attitudes

- Resource

- Curricula

4.3.1 Attitudes

This section presents the findings on the attitudes of teachers and parents as obtained from the qualitative data collection procedure and discusses how these findings relate to literature reviewed in the study. It is sub-divided into teacher attitudes and parental attitudes for the specification and analytical purposes.

4.3.1.1 Teacher Attitudes

Questions were included in the interview guide as a means of satisfying the first objective of the study; that which attempts to understand the attitudes of teachers and parents towards the practice of inclusive education in Ghanaian mainstream schools. Prior to satisfying this objective, the researcher found it necessary to test the understanding of teachers sampled on the concept of inclusive education. This was particularly necessary as one's understanding, knowledge and perceptions of a phenomenon was more likely to affect their attitudes on that given phenomenon as indicated by Lawal et al. (2022) in their recent study where the researchers measured the knowledge, attitude, perception, and practices of northern Nigerian toward the COVID-19 pandemic. In effect, participants were asked to describe inclusive education as a means of determining the role played by their knowledge and understanding of the concept of inclusive education.

According to the qualitative data gathered, all participants had an idea of inclusive education. Teaching participants sampled for the study differed in their descriptions of inclusive education as they did not necessarily provide a textbook definition of the concept. However, they all indicated that the practice of inclusive education dealt with ensuring that all persons had access to education

despite their creed, age, gender, social standing, or condition. A teacher with 24 years of teaching experience described inclusive education as "a model of education that attempts to ensure all members of society in spite of their demographic differences, disabilities and social standings are given access to quality education during the primary years of their lives." When asked to explain what he meant by "primary years" to prevent a misunderstanding on the part of the researcher, the teacher answered, "the years as a child, those formative years of the child's primary socialization, where the child is imbued with the dos and don'ts of society, is what I mean. I think the basic education years of any individual best defines the individual's primary years. That is the point where the necessary foundation for further studies is laid."

A female teacher sampled from the public basic school with 9 years teaching experience simply stated when asked to define inclusive education, "For me, inclusive education is quality education for all including children with disabilities." Another from the same school described the practice of inclusive education as "the provision of quality education without discrimination." A private school teacher towed the same line when asked. She answered "Inclusive education attempts to see to it that no child is left out during the process of education. It entails including children from all walks of life in our schools."

These definitions are compatible with Obi (2008)'s definition for inclusive education; that which describes it as the expansion of educational opportunities for all children especially the disabled, vulnerable, and disadvantaged (Obi & Ashi, 2016). Although some teachers sampled for the study were not too specific as to the primary focus of including persons with disabilities, it is still fair to suggest that their various definitions for inclusive education made room for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. This points out to a point of definitional divergence from the literature as teachers were more likely to perceive inclusivity from a generic perspective rather than from a

specific focus on persons living with disabilities. This point of definitional difference was identified by comparing the general descriptions provided by participants to the conclusions made by Ydo (2020) and the more specific definition provided by UNESCO (1994). Ydo (2020) concluded that inclusive education was generally perceived in many countries as a means of ensuring disabled children are not exempted from general education settings while UNESCO described inclusive education to be primarily focused on mainstreaming persons with disabilities. Notwithstanding, all teachers from both schools had at least heard of inclusive education and had a fair understanding of the concept as all participants made room for the inclusion of persons with disabilities by adopting a more general description against discrimination.

Unianu (2012) observed that knowledge on the basic concept of inclusion or integration was very weak among 112 teachers sampled for her quantitative study. If we are to go by a textbook definition that is generally specific in the inclusion of persons with disabilities rather than general in terms of the inclusion of all vulnerable groups, then it may also be fair to argue that most teachers sampled for the study had a weak knowledge on the concept of inclusive education by defining it as a policy that involved the inclusion of "children from all walks of life in our schools." A weak understanding of the concept of inclusion for Unianu (2012) may result from the complexity of the concept; that which represents a very large domain which cannot be taught in one semester of a bachelor's degree programme. The scholar therefore made some recommendations to policy makers in education, urging them to rethink and reform the bachelor's degree curricula to ensure a better understanding and a better training of teachers for inclusive education.

Most teachers got information on the concept of inclusive education during their pre-service training. For instance, a male teacher sampled from the private school is quoted, "every teacher who has attended the teacher training college should have an idea of what inclusive education is,

as it is part of the syllabus." Another female teacher from the public school with a diploma agreed to this when she indicated she first heard of inclusive education during her pre-service teaching years. "Inclusive education is a mandatory course in teacher training colleges" a male teacher with 6 years teaching experience stated, "I think all GES-led teacher training schools have it in their curriculum." The implication of this in light of the generic rather than the specific definition of inclusive education is that teachers did not study the concept in a detailed manner, or in the manner prescribed by Unianu (2012). According to Atuahene et al. (2020), public and private basic school use the same Ghana Education Service (GES) stipulated curriculum in their schools. Therefore, it allows private school teachers who had not yet obtained a teacher training college diploma to still encounter the concept of inclusive education because of the GES stipulated curriculum used in their schools.

The teachers sampled all agreed to the importance of the concept of inclusive education. The reasons provided to justify the claimed importance of inclusivity varied in some instances but was generally outlined as the following: inclusive education was a means of providing quality education to all children, it was right because it was fair and democratic as it allowed all the same opportunities despite their background. Other reasons provided during the interview process was that inclusive education allowed students to develop their sense of self-confidence in spite of their disabilities and that it allowed both disabled and non-disabled students to form meaningful and productive relationships that may be useful in the long-term. A private school teacher, however, cited some famous persons noted to be disabled and yet highly successful. She then argued that providing quality education to every child meant that the country widened its potential net for success in the future as all were involved in the training and education towards the betterment of society in the future. The private school teacher said,

"Inclusive education is very important because it includes everyone in the education process. This means that we have a larger population working on the problems of the state now and in the future. It also means that Ghana will benefit from the worth of everybody and will not be limited due to manageable disabilities. If you look out there, Helen Keller, Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles, John Nash and even Stephen Hawking have made significant contributions in their various domains. Imagine if these people were not allowed to work due to their conditions. That will mean losing out on what they have to offer. Inclusive education is even the democratic thing to do, and we live in a democracy. It is important in principle."

All participating teachers of the study agreed that the practice of inclusive education was important in the context of the classroom. A public-school teacher with 14 years of teaching experience for instance stated, "There is no point where the viability of inclusive education can be tested outside the context of the classroom. After all, the classroom is where the pedagogies, curricula and policies made for education are implemented." A participant from the private school made a similar statement, "parents and teachers are the primary educators of the child, and they relatively spend more time with the child. The parent works from home and the teacher from the classroom. However, the child is more likely to experience diversity in the classroom than at home. This makes the practice of inclusion in our classrooms very important as it ensures that the child is safe in a diversified environment."

The next question asked by the researcher was intended to determine the perception of teachers concerning the subject matter in a narrower sense; that which pertained to their attitudes towards the inclusion of children with hearing difficulties to be specific. The researcher asked participants the question below: Is it appropriate to include students with hearing difficulties and special needs into mainstream schools? Why? Although all teachers sampled for the study agreed to the

importance of inclusive education, there were some points of divergence on the manner in which the inclusion of students with hearing disabilities had to be practiced. Teachers from public schools pointed out to the fact that their already over-crowded classrooms posed challenges for them; that which was likely to make it difficult to accord special needs children with the necessary attention required to ensure that they were not left behind during the teaching process. Teachers in public schools reported a teacher to student ratio between 1:65 and 1:80, while those from private schools reported a ratio between 1:20 and 1:35.

An experienced public-school teacher holding a bachelor's degree in education emphasized her challenges encountered in the classroom.

> I have 67 students in my class, most of whom genuinely need some special attention. That is a challenge of being a teacher of a large and diverse class. The upper primary and junior high students find themselves reaching the early stages of puberty. The early stages of puberty results in many changes that some do control while others do not understand the changes in hormones causing some to be a bit stubborn. This already makes it very difficult to handle them. Let alone handling students with hearing difficulties. If you ask me, handling students with disabilities is an extra task even if you wanted to give your best.

Another public-school teacher pointed out, "including students with hearing difficulties is acceptable. However, the large numbers of our classes will make it almost impossible to provide such children with the needed attention."

Some teachers had reservations on whether the implementation of inclusive education could collectively produce positive outcomes as the inclusion of students with special needs has the possibility of dragging the class behind. A private school teacher said,

"We are always charged to leave no child behind. However, focusing on one child more than the rest also has the tendency to be unfair to the rest especially if the need of that child requires more time than a lesson will permit. The normal way is to give your all to carry as many students along as possible and hope for positive outcomes." Thus, this teacher preferred to adopt a quasi-utilitarian approach in her classroom given the perceived challenge of not being able to adequately provide the actual attention required by children with special needs. The philosophy of utilitarianism is a theory based on the assumption that action should be directed towards the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people (West & Duignan, 2023). Thus, utilitarianism is more likely to adopt approaches that produce positive outcomes from a collective rather than an individual based perspective. A public basic schoolteacher made a similar remark, "Children with special needs almost all the time require you to go an extra mile. This is not necessarily a problem till you consider the fact that the school system is designed to produce results within a given time frame. You risk preventing the entire class from meeting the objectives of the term if you have to accord each and every child the same attention."

Some teachers thought inclusivity, although important, does not have to be based on all forms of disabilities. For instance, a participant from the Private School indicated that teachers were more likely to manage children with hearing impairments that are not too serious than children who were entirely deaf and dumb. She said, "We must admit that there are levels to every problem. A student who is completely deaf and dumb is best assisted by experts with several years of training in special needs. Not me. Who only has some basic training on inclusivity. The willingness to do something does not guarantee that I will be competent enough to be able to do it."

Some teachers argued that the benefits of inclusion varied for disabled and non-disabled students, that which policymakers must take note of as the practice of inclusion is equally likely to create

disparities for non-disabled students in the classroom where too much attention is placed on disabled children. A private basic schoolteacher argued, "Sometimes trying to prevent disparities may cause you to be unfair to some other students. I think assimilating children with hearing difficulties in general classrooms helps these children in the long run psychologically if you may. They will feel normal and have some sense of belonging. However, we need to consider that focusing too much attention on one or two children with hearing disabilities will mean stealing some time away from the other students. The other students, who may not be deaf, may still have some academic challenges. So, policy makers need to consider this." These comments, for instance, is compatible with Unianu (2012)'s study; that which found that some teachers did not feel that they were prepared or competent to teach both regular learners and students with special educational needs. The main reason being that they did not think they had sufficient training to deal with the appropriate inclusive educational activities.

A public basic schoolteacher claimed one or two disabled persons per class was enough for the practice of inclusivity in the classroom, and that anything more will affect the collective advancement of the class. He said, "For me, the numbers matter. Results are affected by the numbers. It is no wonder students from private schools are more likely to perform better than those from public ones. It is simply because the overcrowded challenge faced by public schools is usually not present in private schools. Private school teachers have few students to dedicate their strengths to. It's in that same way, that I think a child or two with hearing difficulties should be enough for a class due to the attention required to properly ensure those children are carried along."

The researcher asked participants to describe the state of inclusive education in Ghana as a means of identifying their perception on Ghana's dedication towards ensuring the practice of inclusivity in mainstream schools of the country. According to all participants sampled for the study, schools

in Ghana generally had more room for improvement with regards to the inclusion of children with disabilities in general and hearing impairments to be specific. A private school teacher recounted her brief experience in the United Kingdom during her comparative exposition,

> Ghana is trying. But I must admit, we have a long way to go when it comes to the practice of inclusive education. Our schools do not have departments dedicated to special needs children. I once visited my cousin in the UK and was stunned at the efforts made to carry all the children along. We were watching the news when my niece began making some hand gestures. Puzzled, I asked my cousin to explain what was going on. Her mother told me she was practicing sign language. That was part of their school's curriculum. My niece was not deaf. This experience is rare to find in Ghana. I doubt our schools in Ghana teach the sign language.

A public basic schoolteacher stated that inclusive education was yet to be well practiced. She said, "inclusive education like many other things is only on paper. I don't think the average school takes it too seriously. I am suspecting a parent will be directed to a special needs school if they took their child with hearing difficulties to a mainstream school for training." "The state of inclusive education in Ghana needs to be improved" another private school teacher said, "I don't think we have put too much work into that" she added.

The researcher specifically asked participants to indicate whether they thought the state of inclusive education in Ghana needed to be improved. All teachers sampled for the study thought the state of inclusive education had to be improved usually citing the absence of proper training for teachers and the requisite resources to ensure that vulnerable children were appropriately included into mainstream schools. A public basic schoolteacher is noted,

Drafting a policy is different from ensuring its successful implementation. You can tell teachers to include and engage all types of children. However, that does not necessarily guarantee teachers will be able to successfully include students with special needs in practice. Teachers may be willing to help and still not be competent enough to help. A lot of training must go into ensuring that teachers are well equipped with the requisite skills needed to ensure good practice of inclusion in their classrooms. The necessary resources must be provided as well. And this includes ensuring that our classrooms are not overcrowded.

Another teacher indicated that "Ghana has to improve its training on inclusivity as well as ensure that the learning materials for practicing inclusive education are at par with the requirements of proper inclusion."

When teachers were asked if their respective schools admitted students with hearing difficulties, they agreed but made some comments indicating that the level of hearing difficulty was more likely to determine whether a student was admitted. A public basic schoolteacher for instance named a student with hearing difficulty in their school while commenting. However, the name of the student has been changed for ethical reasons. She answered, "Yes. We admit students with hearing difficulties. But the hearing difficulty has to be manageable. For instance, Ama cannot hear properly from the left ear. Teachers and students in this school do not find it difficult communicating with her provided they speak loud enough. Another thing Ama does is that she looks at the lips of whoever she is communicating with. This makes it easier for her. Ama is the only case of a child with hearing difficulty being admitted to this school I know of. And I have been in this school for 9 years."

Three other teachers from the public-school mentioned Ama's case. One for instance said, "There is a girl in class who struggles to hear. But her writing and reading is very good. I am suspecting that is what has made schooling for her easier." Another teacher added, "Ama struggles a lot to hear when she is spoken to. She will not hear you if you call her from behind without shouting. So, her case is evidence that this school admits children with hearing difficulties." These findings confirm Unianu (2012) who pointed out that attitudes of teachers towards inclusion and its principles was a major barrier. The scholar added that the attitude of teachers towards inclusion and its principles were influenced by various factors such as "the degree of children' difficulties, the nature of children' disabilities, the teachers' experience with children with special educational needs, the trust in their own capabilities to implement inclusive activities (the teachers' preparedness for integrated classrooms) or the expectations towards the children no matter what are the differences between them, the curricula and so on."

No teacher from the private school was able to cite a student with hearing difficulties. However, they all indicated that their school was willing to admit students with hearing difficulties. A private school teacher, for instance, stated, "I don't think we have a student with hearing difficulties as at now. But I am sure this school is willing to accommodate a child with hearing difficulties provided the situation is manageable."

The next question asked by the researcher was aimed at identifying the state of inclusive education in the respective mainstream schools of participants: Do you think this school is committed to the policy of inclusive education? How and why? Teachers from both schools indicated that their schools were committed to the policy of inclusivity. However, their reasons for stating this varied. A public basic schoolteacher for instance, stated that their school was committed to the practice of inclusive education by default as they used the Ghana Education Service (GES) stipulated

curriculum. She stated, "All public schools in Ghana are committed to the practice of inclusive education by default as they are run by policies formulated by the Ghana Education Service; that which requires schools within its jurisdiction to practice inclusivity." Other teachers cited the heterogeneous nature of their students as evidence for a commitment to the practice of inclusivity. A private school teacher stated, "We do not discriminate against children on any basis. Go into every class and you'll find students from different religions, tribes, and backgrounds. At this school, everyone is welcome." Another private school teacher is quoted, "We are committed to equality. All students admitted to this school are treated equally. They are all given the same amount of attention without bias."

Teachers were asked to rate the performance of their respective schools in the promotion of inclusive education on a scale between 1 to 10. The researcher found that private school teachers were more likely to rate their schools higher than teachers from public schools. However, teachers from both schools rated their schools above average as indicated in Table 4.4 below.

Table 3: Teacher Inclusive Education Rating

	Teacher							
	Public School				Private School			
	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8
Rating	6	8	7	5	7	9	8	9

Source: Field Data (2023)

Teachers in both schools were asked to describe how they will handle students with special needs in the context of the classroom. Most participants sampled for the study indicated that they would adopt an individual-based approach when dealing with students with special needs. Private and public basic schoolteachers, however, indicated that an individually based approach towards

inclusion only worked where the ratio between a teacher and his or her student was very low. A teacher from the public school explained his method this way, "I will go at the pace of the child with special needs. When teaching I will use graphical learning materials especially for children with hearing difficulties. Instead of focusing on sounds, I will teach by employing symbols and pictures as a means of communication. I will then select those cues the child in question is more likely to gravitate towards. This will be my style of teaching as it keeps the student engaged despite their physical challenges. However, this is literally impossible if I have over 60 students in my class as I do now."

A teacher from the private school also seemed to go by a similar approach. She explained, "When faced with the task of handling a child with hearing difficulties, I will adopt various methods of communication and stick to the one that the given child responds best to." Another teacher from the same school admitted to the challenge when she answered, "I am yet to face a situation of that kind. However, when faced with that I'll research the necessary tools and methods required for educating a child with hearing difficulties. I will use as many strategies as possible and go with the ones the student prefers."

"I will collaborate with the child's parents to understand the child better. Every child is unique, and parents are more likely to understand their wards. So, my teaching will be a collaborative process. For instance, I will have to ensure that the parent or guardian of the child continues with school work from home as a student with special needs requires more effort, time, and attention" another private school teacher said in response to her preferred approach of teaching students with hearing difficulties".

A teacher with a bachelor's degree from the public school indicated that he will "teach the class generally, albeit observe the deaf child keenly to assess their strengths and weaknesses. The

assessment will then determine the method I will use in teaching the student. Ama is a classic example. It took me some time to know she had the habit of reading the lips of people she was in communication with. So, I usually get a bit closer to her than I will and then speak the words slowly but loud enough for her to understand. This approach means more time and effort. While this method works for Ama, it is not guaranteed to work for all persons with hearing challenges."

4.3.1.2 Parental Attitudes

Parents sampled for the study generally asserted inclusive education was very necessary and important. A private basic school parent for instance is quoted, "Inclusive education is highly important as diversity is a natural rather than an artificial phenomenon." However, parents when compared to teachers were generally not aware of the concept of inclusive education but immediately got the point when the researcher explained the concept using Ydo (2022)'s definition of the concept; that which simply defined inclusive education as a means of ensuring disabled children are not exempted from general education settings. A public basic school parent for instance said once the researcher had defined inclusive education, "I have an idea on that. However, I did not know that was the technical term used for that situation" The same parent when asked if it was appropriate to include students with hearing difficulties and other special needs in general schools answered, "Yes, I believe all children including children with disabilities deserve to be educated in general schools. It is no fault of theirs to be born that way. And separating them from the rest might make them feel inferior." Another public basic school parent who could not explain the concept of inclusive education earlier indicated immediately upon the researcher's intervention, "I did not know that was what you were talking about. Ensuring that all children are included in the mainstream education process can't be bad" she said. This points to the fact parents

were not ignorant of inclusive education but were rather ignorant of the technical articulations in English ascribed to the concept.

Parents from both schools sampled for the study generally believed that children with disabilities required special care to function properly in society. A parent from the private school admitted to the importance of inclusive education but was in a hurry to point out that "children with all forms of disabilities usually require more special attention than the average child" and that "while it was appropriate to include them into mainstream schools, a lot has to go into ensuring general schools are accommodating enough to safeguard their academic and social development." The common justification given by parents for including students with hearing difficulties in general schools was that students with hearing difficulties were likely to feel ostracized if separated from the rest. A parent aged 48 from the private school explained,

"These children come from families who are likely to engage them with love and care. Segregating them from the rest can have mental health implications, especially when the separation from their year mates becomes too obvious." Another public basic school parent said, "*It is only appropriate to include them in all social activities at the very beginning if disabled children are going to be living in society as adults. Inclusion at a later stage will more likely be a recipe for disaster as the child or adult would not have prepared enough to be social."*

However, some parents indicated that including children with special needs will affect them negatively as most mainstream schools were not designed to incorporate them. When parents were asked if they thought the sampled schools were committed to ensuring that the environment was conducive for students with physical challenges, they generally answered in the negative. A public basic schoolteacher for instance said, *"No, I don't think general schools are usually built with*

special needs children in mind. They are built for the average child. You'll find that most public schools despite operating by the policy of inclusive education primarily focus on the collective performance of students, most of whom are non-disabled. Anything else means going the extra mile." Another parent was not sure about the commitment stating that, "*I am not aware of the school's policy. The teaching staff are the best qualified people to respond to that question.*"

The negative responses given by parents concerning the sampled school's commitment towards ensuring the practice of inclusive education was further evidenced by their responses to another question; that which required the sampled parents to indicate whether they will recommend the sampled schools to someone with a disability. The parents generally answered "*no*" rather than recommending special schools. A parent from the private school is quoted, *"You will be doing your disabled child a great disservice enrolling them in a general school like this. They will feel bad. It's always better to take them to a place where they feel belonged."* The teacher's colleague from the same private school also stated that *"teaching students with special needs requires a lot of training and effort. It's an activity that needs the intervention of teachers purposefully trained to handle children with special needs. I do not think this school has any teacher of that kind. I will rather recommend one of the schools for the deaf in the country."* Another public basic school parent said, *"these schools do not have the needed training and resources to ensure children with special needs are safe. Special needs schools, on the contrary, are designed to ensure disabled children navigate through their system without feeling like a burden to the entire establishment. In a disabled school, there is a little sense of self-pity as everyone else is just like the disabled child."*

For most of the parents, teachers from the sampled general schools did not have the necessary training to effectively handle and teach students with hearing difficulties. A parent from the private

school is quoted, *"general schoolteachers are not specially trained to teach students with hearing difficulties. The qualified ones are the teachers from schools like the Sekondi School for the Deaf or Adjei-Kojo."* A parent from the same school also said, *"These teachers, no matter how they try, will still not do a good job in handling students with special needs. And this is not only the case because they are not trained to do so, but even if they are well trained, they will have to make the tough decision of alternating teaching methods in the classroom. This will be too much work for them. If asked to recommend a school for children with hearing difficulties, I'll mention the one at Koforidua or Adjei-Kojo. There are some others across the country. Take for instance the Savelugu School for the Deaf and the Mampong School for the Deaf. The teachers there are well-trained to help children like that. Some of the who are also deaf."* All parents had positive attitudes towards children with disabilities in both genders. That which confirms findings made by Paseka & Schwab (2020)'s. The scholars found no gender effect on parent's attitudes towards the inclusion of students with physical disabilities when compared to their attitudes towards the inclusion of students with learning and mental disabilities. According to the scholars, mothers had more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of students with learning and mental disabilities than fathers.

The answers provided by parents from both schools varied when parents were asked to explain how they will handle a child with special needs. Some preferred to resort to religion and spirituality like a parent from the public basic school who indicated "*There is no problem God cannot fix. If I have a sick child, I'll take him to church."* Another parent from the public school also spoke of "the power of prayer in healing the sick." She added "nothing solves any problem I have ever faced than prayer. I will pray and wait on the Lord if I have a disabled child." A private school parent

indicated that they will "pray and yet take the child to the hospital and a special school." When asked why she stated, "I'll rather use all the options available and hope for a miracle."

Other parents preferred to home school their children at the early stages for different reasons. A parent indicated that she was motivated by a fear that schools in Ghana may not be able to provide a child with hearing difficulties with the necessary training. She said "I don't think most schools are Ghana are well-resourced to help disabled children. I will take care of the child on my own than to risk the child's welfare it with a mainstream school." Another parent who also considered home-schooling a hearing-impaired child indicated that she is more likely to make that choice to maintain a good relationship with her child. She said, "God forbid me having a deaf child. But if I find myself in a situation like that, I will have no choice than to train the child at home. Taking the child off to a boarding school for the deaf might affect my relationship with the child. In our area at Nungua for instance, there was a girl who lived and played with us. She was deaf. I never saw them taking her to any school."

However, some parents from both public and private basic schools preferred to leave disabled children with the relevant authorities trained to handle them. A parent said, "I don't think I'll have such a child. But for the purpose of answering this question, I think I'll take the child to a special needs school. I say so because specialized schools for the deaf are more likely to help the child than I will. I have no training, let alone the resources to help a child like that." Another private basic school parent indicated, "There is a school for the deaf called the New Horizon Special School. That is where I will send a child with hearing difficulties. They are very good."

All parents sampled for the study felt the state of inclusive education in Ghana should be improved. They all said "yes" when asked "do you think the state of inclusive education in Ghana should be improved? Why?" and cited the absence of adequate teaching resources, infrastructure, and

specialized mainstream teachers to ensure a good inclusive education practice and limited human resources. No parent indicated the poor state of the curriculum nor attitudes as a reason. When parents were asked to provide recommendations to the Government and other relevant authorities concerning the practice of inclusive education in Ghana, they all indicated that the government needs to provide the needed resources, train teachers properly and educating the public as measures to be taken to ensure the practice of inclusive education.

4.3.2 Resources

The practice of inclusive education is more challenging without the requisite resources to ensure its efficacy. It is for this reason that the researcher included questions directed at determining the perception of participants on how resourced Ghanaian mainstream education institutions were in terms of providing inclusive education for students with hearing difficulties. Participants were asked; Are there any special provisions made for students with disabilities in general, and hearing-impaired students to be specific?

The general answer to the question above was negative. Most teachers indicated that there were no learning materials and provisions made for students living with disabilities in general, and hearing-impaired students to be specific. However, for some teachers this was not a problem as there were literally no disabled students enrolled in the schools to begin with. A teacher from the private basic school argued, "I don't think we have the needed resources for ensuring the practice of inclusive education in our school, nonetheless that is not a problem because we do not have students with disabilities. I am sure the school will make the necessary provisions in case we find ourselves in that kind of situation." Another public-school teacher is quoted as saying "I doubt there are resources for handling students with hearing difficulties. You'll have to confer from the headteacher on that one. However, I doubt." I then specifically asked the teachers if they had ever

taught in any school that provided or had assistive devices in stock for students with hearing difficulties. This question was asked in reference to Obi & Ashi (2016) who pointed out the fact that the practice of inclusive education involved bringing together persons with disabilities and the non-disabled to study in the same classroom with adaptable facilities and equipment. The scholars added "With this arrangement in place the assistive technology becomes an unconditional requirement for children with special needs. It involves public and private programmes and laws. And it involves a number of other things including people who work in the "helping" professions." No teacher had taught in a school that provided assistive devices for students with hearing difficulties. For a senior teacher in a private basic school, "assistive devices are too expensive for the school to procure by default. We work on a needs-basis. So, I'm suspecting we'll have that when the need arises." This finding is proof that the lack of resources was a main challenge faced by schools in the practice of inclusive education. Nyaaba et al. (2021) for instance, pointed out to this fact; "Generally, a major barrier to successful inclusion seems to be the lack of resources or that resources are not addressing students' concrete needs."

The researcher for emphasis asked if there were any special resources for teaching students with physical challenges and to name them if applicable. Participating teachers from both schools indicated that there were no special resources for teaching students with physical challenges when asked. "No, there is none" a public-school teacher answered. She however managed to name some special resources required for teaching students with special needs, she answered, "I'm aware of the braille for the blind and FM systems for students with hearing difficulties. When I was in junior high school, we had a classmate who used to wear an earphone-like device that was intended to help her hearing. However, it's been a long time since I saw that type of device. Maybe it's no longer in use."

Nyaaba et al. (2021) suggested resources may be divided into personnel resources (teaching and non-teaching staff), teaching, and learning materials and special resources. For this reason, the researcher followed up with the question as a means of tackling the personnel resources aspect of the delineated categories. The researcher asked participants; Are training courses on inclusive education and dealing with students with special needs held in this school for the teaching staff? If yes, how often is such training organized? Teachers in the public schools agreed that there were workshops organized for them periodically on key issues related to the teaching practice, one of which was on the practice of inclusive education. When asked how often the workshops were organized, the teachers generally selected a year or two as the span of time. A teacher stated, "They train us sometimes on the practice of inclusion. It is not too often but its better than nothing." Another public-school teacher indicated, "I went on an inclusive education workshop some few years ago. Hopefully, the authorities in charge will organize another soon."

Teachers with the private basic school, however, indicated there were no workshops organized for them on teaching topics related to the practice of inclusive education. On the contrary, they indicated that they often discussed such issues at their monthly-based staff meeting. The teachers, however, did not find the discussion to be intense. As one private school teacher recalls, "the discussion we had on the practice of inclusive education was not detailed. It was just raised in passing by the headmaster during one of our general staff meetings."

Another private school teacher indicated that Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) visited them occasionally, which could be an avenue for knowledge on the practice of inclusion for some of her colleagues; *"If I'm not wrong,"* she stated, *"we only discussed the issue of inclusivity once as a teaching body. And I have been in this school for the past 4 years. However, we have been*

receiving pamphlets and magazines from NGOs on the topic. So, I am suspecting some other colleagues would have acquainted themselves to the issue on their own."

Teachers were asked to indicate if they thought the government of Ghana had provided the needed resources and learning materials for students with special needs. The motivation for asking this question was for the researcher to know if the policy makers had provided teachers with what was required for them to ensure that their classrooms were inclusive in nature. Teachers from both schools answered in the negative when asked if they thought the government had provided the needed resources and learning materials for students with special needs in mainstream schools. A private teacher answered, "The government does not provide mainstream schools with learning materials and resources for the inclusion of students with special needs. And this goes as far as the senior high schools. However, I was told some tertiary institutions in the country like the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology are well-resourced to handle disabled students. At KNUST, there is even a disability course."

The researcher asked parents three questions to identify their perception on the resource adequacy of basic schools in Ghana towards the practice of inclusive education. The following questions were asked in no order; (a) Do you think this school is adequately resourced to include students with hearing difficulties? (b) Are discussions on inclusive education and ways of handling physically challenged students held during PTA meetings? (c) Do you think the teachers in this school can handle students with hearing difficulties?

All parents sampled for the study felt that basic schools were generally not adequately resourced to include students with hearing difficulties. Below are some responses provided by 2 public school parents and 2 private school parents.

"No. I don't think schools in Ghana are well-resourced for accommodating disabled children. Not once have I seen or heard something confirming this." - Public School Parent 1

"Schools in Ghana are not well-resourced to practice inclusive education. At times, public schools even struggle to provide the basic resources required for most students who are not even disabled. The schools with the needed resources are special schools established purposefully for accommodating students with special needs. Even with that, those schools sometimes complain of not having the adequate number of resources to help these children." - Public School Parent 2

"I don't think general schools in Ghana have the needed resources to cater for students with disabilities. And I am suspecting that is the case because disabled students are in a minority. We need to consider them as they are also equally Ghanaians." - Private School Parent 1

"No. I don't think I am in the best position to answer this as I am not a teacher. But I think it is highly unlikely that schools can meet the necessary demand for inclusive education in terms of the resources." - Private School Parent 2

4.3.3 Curricula

Williams (2019) indicated that the importance of a curriculum was found in its provision of a steady, organized path in the task of achieving a specific set of goals in the classroom. The curriculum used by teachers in the classroom therefore plays a role in how the classroom will be organized to ensure the practice of inclusion. The researcher, given this reason required teachers to indicate if they thought the GES curriculum by which their school operates was well-designed to meet the needs of hearing-impaired students. All teachers from both schools felt the stipulated curriculum for the GES had to be improved. Some teachers, for instance, spoke about how the

curriculum sets general objectives with the class in mind. A public-school teacher for instance said, "the curriculum needs some more work if we are to take inclusion seriously. We have a complex but clear curriculum. However, meeting the objectives in a large class is very difficult because of the uniqueness of each student. I do not see anything in the curriculum that focuses on disabled children."

Another public-school teacher indicated that curriculum "needs to be improved to ensure teachers in mainstream schools are well-resourced to handle students with disabilities." "The centralized nature of the curriculum does not help local schools to adopt unique methods to ensure that children with hearing challenges are included" a private school teacher stated. These findings confirm Agyire-Tettey et al. (2017) who indicated that curricular contents were identified as one of the barriers to the academic performance of students with hearing difficulties. The statement by the private basic schoolteacher necessitates the recommendation made by Nketsia (2018). The scholar has recommended a curriculum based on a social model perspective on disability; that which is likely to ensure the successful removal of barriers in local schools.

Parents sampled for the study were usually unsure about the school curriculum's nature to respond. A public-school parent answered when asked about the adequacy of the school's curriculum in ensuring the successful implementation of inclusive education; "I do not know much about this school's curriculum. I am genuinely unaware. That is question meant for the teacher." Another private school teacher answered, "I honestly have no idea of the nature of the curriculum to comment on this question." However, the few parents who made comments were not confident on the adequacy of Ghana's curriculum on ensuring the practice of inclusive education in mainstream schools in Ghana. A public-school parent said, "I am not aware, but I doubt general schools operate by a curriculum that accommodates disabled children. If that was the case, we will see a lot of

disabled children trooping into our schools." A public-school parent also stated, "Nothing shows the curriculum in general schools are fit for children with disabilities. Special schools are schools with a curriculum designed for special children. And not the other way round."

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter analyzed the qualitative data obtained from interviews conducted by the researcher to satisfy the study's objectives. The findings were presented in comparison to findings made by other studies reviewed in the second chapter. The researcher asked specific questions curated in an interview guide to satisfy the specific objectives in this section. Participants were quoted in the chapter to indicate how their views were consistent with the literature reviewed in the second chapter of this study. The next chapter presents a summary of the findings extracted from this chapter and the conclusions made by the researcher. It adds recommendations guided by findings from the research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter ends the study by summarizing the research findings. The summary is based on the various themes outlined in the fourth chapter. Additionally, the researcher makes some recommendations and suggests areas researchers can adopt for further studies.

5.1 Summary of findings

The aim of the study was to assess the success of inclusive education for children with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream schools. The researcher in effect adopted the following specific objectives of the study; (a) Identify the attitude of teachers and parents towards the inclusion of children with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream schools, (b) Investigate the resource adequacy of Ghanaian mainstream schools with regards to the inclusion of children with hearing difficulties, and (c) Determine the appropriateness of the curricula in Ghanaian mainstream schools for the needs of hearing-impaired children in inclusive education. The findings of the study are briefly stated in the sections below.

5.1.1 Attitudes of Teacher and Parents towards the inclusion of children with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream schools

In this study, the attitudes of both teachers and parents were examined, revealing a spectrum of perspectives regarding the feasibility and desirability of inclusive education.

Public School Teachers

The findings indicate that public school teachers recognize the importance of inclusive education as a concept, aligning with the global consensus on the benefits of inclusion. However, practical challenges emerged, particularly the overwhelmingly high teacher-to-student ratios, with some teachers responsible for as many as 80 students. Their concerns revolved around overcrowding in classrooms, which hindered their ability to provide the necessary attention and support for students with hearing difficulties. This emphasizes the challenge posed by the lack of resources and capacity in public schools, as noted in the literature.

Private School Teachers

Private school teachers, although also acknowledging the significance of inclusive education, expressed reservations about its collective impact on the entire class. They were concerned that the inclusion of students with hearing difficulties might slow down the class's progress. These concerns reflect a perception of potential academic challenges associated with inclusive education, mirroring some of the common misconceptions about inclusion found in the literature

Parents

Parents recognized the importance of inclusive education but raised concerns about its practicality in mainstream schools. They pointed out that most mainstream schools in Ghana were not originally designed to accommodate children with hearing difficulties. This underlines the need for infrastructural improvements to facilitate the inclusion of students with hearing difficulties. The parents' concerns resonate with the literature highlighting the need for accessible and accommodating physical infrastructure in mainstream schools

The study's findings indicate that while stakeholders generally recognize the significance of inclusive education, the practical challenges and concerns surrounding its implementation vary. Public school teachers grapple with overcrowded classrooms, private school teachers express concerns about collective outcomes, and parents stress the need for infrastructural improvements. These findings underscore the multi-faceted nature of inclusive education, reflecting the complexity of integrating students with hearing difficulties into mainstream schools. Addressing these concerns and challenges is pivotal in ensuring the successful implementation of inclusive education in Ghanaian mainstream schools.

5.1.2 Resource Adequacy of Mainstream Schools in Ghana

Parents and teachers sampled for the study generally had negative responses to the resource adequacy of mainstream schools in Ghana in relation to the inclusion of children with hearing difficulties. Some teachers argued that this challenge was not necessarily a problem as there were literally no students with hearing difficulties in their schools. However, the researcher assumes given the responses provided by participants of the study that the common incidence of inadequate resources to support the inclusion of hearing-impaired students in mainstream schools in Ghana is the exact same reason for their absence in mainstream schools.

5.1.3 The Appropriateness of the Curricula of Mainstream Schools in Ghana for the needs of hearing-impaired children in inclusive education

All teachers sampled for the study felt that the stipulated curriculum for the Ghana Education Service had to be improved to ensure the successful inclusion of students with hearing difficulties. Most parents sampled for the study were unsure about the nature of the school's curriculum to provide a response on this objective.

5.2 Conclusion

The responses gathered by the researcher from teachers and parents of public and private schools in Ghana concerning the inclusion of students with hearing difficulties indicates that more work needs to be done in terms of the adequacy of resources and curricula to meet the demands of inclusive education. The findings of this study shed light on several critical aspects of inclusive education for children with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream schools. They indicate a complex interplay of attitudes, resource challenges, and curriculum appropriateness. Importantly, the results have notable connections to the existing literature reviewed at the outset of the study.

The attitudes of teachers and parents, as highlighted in the findings, align with the earlier literature, which underscored the importance of attitudinal shifts and the need for teachers and stakeholders to recognize the rights and potential of students with hearing difficulties in the context of inclusive education. The reluctance and concerns expressed by teachers and parents reflect the challenges associated with the practical implementation of inclusive education in crowded classrooms.

Additionally, the absence of students with hearing difficulties in some mainstream schools, as reported by teachers, underscores the potential repercussions of limited resources, as students with special needs may not even have the opportunity to attend these schools. The teachers' unanimous call for curriculum improvements to cater to the unique needs of students with hearing difficulties highlights the practical challenges faced in implementing an inclusive curriculum.

This study's findings resonate with the broader literature on inclusive education. They underline the complex challenges and critical areas of concern in ensuring the success of inclusive education

for students with hearing difficulties in Ghana. To enhance the prospects of inclusive education, it is imperative for stakeholders to address attitudinal barriers, resource limitations, and curriculum appropriateness, as highlighted in the literature review and confirmed by this study. This research serves as a stepping stone for further investigation and action, aiming to bridge the gap between the inclusive education philosophy and its effective implementation, not only in Ghana but also in other similar contexts.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several key recommendations are made to the Government of Ghana, managers of private schools, and other relevant stakeholders. These recommendations are essential for advancing the success of inclusive education for children with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream schools.

Improvement of Resources

Resources in terms of adequate infrastructure and teaching personnel in both public and private schools should be significantly improved. This enhancement is crucial to ensure the successful inclusion of students with hearing difficulties. Adequate resources encompass not only specialized facilities but also smaller teacher-student ratios, which can facilitate individualized attention and support for these students. Public schools, in particular, must address overcrowding and overburdened teachers to enable the effective implementation of inclusive education.

Support for Special Needs Schools

Special needs schools should receive substantial resources to ensure their efficacy in handling children with severe and complex diagnoses that cannot be effectively managed by mainstream schools. These specialized institutions play a critical role in catering to the unique needs of students with profound hearing difficulties. Well-resourced special needs schools are essential to provide these children with the specialized support and environment they require.

Enhanced Teacher Training

Teacher training on inclusive practices should be significantly enhanced by the Ghana Education Service. This training is vital to equip educators with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to effectively include students with hearing difficulties in the Ghanaian educational system. Teacher training programs should focus on not only the theoretical aspects but also the practical strategies for creating inclusive classrooms and adapting teaching methods.

Curriculum Design and Individualized Approach

The curriculum of schools in Ghana should be revaluated and designed in a way that accommodates the unique needs of students with hearing difficulties. An individual student-based approach, where the curriculum is tailored to the specific needs of each child, is more likely to produce positive outcomes in the practice of inclusive education. Flexibility in curriculum design is essential to ensure that all students, including those with hearing difficulties, can access and benefit from the education provided.

Maximized Supervision

Supervision of schools concerning the effective practice of inclusive education should be maximized by the Ghana Education Service. This increased oversight is critical to raise awareness among primary implementers of inclusivity in Ghanaian classrooms. Regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms can help identify challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Improved Civic Education

The National Commission for Civic Education should improve its efforts to educate the public and stakeholders on the practice and efficacy of inclusive education in Ghana. Raising awareness about the importance of inclusive education and dispelling common misconceptions is essential for fostering a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

These recommendations are essential steps to address the challenges and concerns raised by the stakeholders in the study and to enhance the successful practice of inclusive education for students with hearing difficulties in Ghanaian mainstream schools. The collaboration of government, private school managers, and relevant stakeholders is crucial to create an inclusive and equitable educational system that benefits all children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

5.4 Areas for further studies

This study has shed light on several critical dimensions of inclusive education for children with hearing difficulties in Ghana. However, there remain several areas where further research can deepen our understanding and guide future initiatives.

Curriculum and Resource Improvement

Researchers interested in this field may consider conducting meta-studies with a specific focus on ways to enhance the curriculum and resources of mainstream schools in Ghana. These studies can explore strategies for curriculum adaptation to better meet the needs of students with hearing difficulties. Additionally, they can delve into resource allocation and infrastructure improvement to facilitate the effective practice of inclusive education. By conducting comprehensive research in these areas, we can gain insights into the most effective approaches and practices for creating truly inclusive classrooms in Ghana.

Attitudinal Shift

Further studies may also explore the dynamics of attitudinal shifts among teachers, parents, and students in the context of inclusive education. Investigating the factors that influence attitudinal changes, as well as the impact of awareness campaigns and training programs, can provide valuable insights into the process of fostering a more inclusive educational environment in Ghana.

Student Outcomes

Research that examines the academic and social outcomes of students with hearing difficulties in inclusive settings can contribute to our understanding of the effectiveness of inclusive education in Ghana. These studies can assess the impact of inclusive practices on academic achievement, social integration, and overall well-being.

Policy Evaluation

An examination of the existing policies and regulations related to inclusive education in Ghana and their practical implementation is another avenue for further research. Evaluating the alignment

of policies with the realities of inclusive education in classrooms can highlight areas where policy adjustments or enhancements are needed.

Comparative Studies

Comparative studies that analyze the experiences of students with hearing difficulties in mainstream schools in Ghana in comparison to other countries can provide a broader perspective on the challenges and opportunities specific to Ghana. These studies can help identify international best practices and lessons that can be applied to the Ghanaian context.

There are several promising areas for further studies in the field of inclusive education for students with hearing difficulties in Ghana. These studies can contribute to the ongoing improvement of inclusive practices, resource allocation, and curriculum adaptation in Ghanaian mainstream schools. The collective efforts of researchers, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders are vital in advancing the inclusivity and equity of education for all children in Ghana.

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APPENDICES

Interview Guide

Teacher

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How will you describe inclusive education?
3. Is it appropriate to include students with hearing difficulties and special needs into mainstream schools? Why?
4. How will you describe the state of inclusive education in Ghana?
5. Does this school admit students with hearing difficulties?
6. Do you think this school is committed to the policy of inclusive education? How and why?
7. In general, how will you rate the performance of this school in promoting inclusive education? (scale 1-10).
8. Will you say that the curriculum by which this school operates is well-designed to meet the needs of hearing-impaired students?
9. Are there any special provisions made for students with disabilities in general, and hearing-impaired students to be specific?
10. Are training courses on inclusive education and dealing with students with special needs held in this school for the teaching staff? If yes, how often is such training organized?
11. Do you think the state of inclusive education in Ghana should be improved? Why?
12. Are there special resources for teaching students with physical challenges? Name them if applicable.
13. Will you recommend this school for a child with hearing difficulties? Why?
14. Do you think the government has provided the needed resources and learning materials for students with special needs?
15. How do you handle students with special needs in the context of the classroom?
16. Do you have any recommendations to Government and authorities concerning the theory and practice of inclusive education in Ghana?

Parent

1. Is it appropriate to include students with hearing difficulties and special needs into mainstream schools? Why?

2. Do you think this school is committed to ensuring that its environment is conducive for students with physical challenges?

3. Do you think this school is adequately resourced to include students with hearing difficulties?

4. Will you say that the curriculum of this school is designed to include the needs of students with hearing difficulties?

5. Will you recommend this school to someone with a physical challenge? Why?

6. Are discussions on inclusive education and ways of handling physically-challenged students held during PTA meetings?

7. Do you think the teachers in this school have the ability to handle students with hearing difficulties?

8. How will you handle a child with special needs in the context of the home?

9. Do you think the state of inclusive education in Ghana should be improved? Why?

10. Do you have any recommendations to Government and authorities concerning the theory and practice of inclusive education in Ghana?