Teachers' Experiences with Inclusive Education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Disability Studies

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Winnipeg

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ABSTRACT

Background:

The literature on inclusive education shows that teachers greatly influence experiences education outcomes of people with disabilities and that support is needed from the government in order for them to be better able to do this.

Purpose: This thesis seeks to investigate how the experiences of teachers and the culture of the Ghanaian society enhance disabling conditions regarding the education of citizens with disabilities.

Method: This study utilized a qualitative approach and a review of existing literature on the history and culture of Ghana and the Ashanti Region. Six participants were employed in both private and government educational institutions in this study. Data analysis was performed manually by the researcher regarding influences on the parameters of education for people with disabilities and this group experience disablement in schools. Education was found to be a protective factor of persons with disabilities.

Findings: The results of this study show that cultures of Ghana, attitudes and experiences of teachers have major influences on the parameters of education for people with disabilities.

Conclusion: By fighting disabling cultural beliefs, discrimination and lack of accessibility within the society, individuals with disabilities may have the advantage to contribute significantly to society through their education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Diane Driedger. It has been an honour working under your guidance. You encouraged me and believed in my ideas, and you patiently guided me into giving them shape and meaning. Thank you for supporting me as I could not have done this without you. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Nancy Hansen and Dr. Kerstin Roger, for your insight, time and commitment to this project.

I deeply appreciate the participants of this study, who generously shared their experiences with me; I thank you for your trust in me and your commitment to making the process of data collection a great pleasure.

Finally, I would like to thank my spouse, Patrick Oppong-Boateng, for his encouragement.

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CHAPTER ONE

Education has become an integral part of every child's life. According to the World Bank (2016), schools in Africa like the Togo education and institutional strengthening projects recently are paying attention to the various needs of children with disabilities. This had been done by making their classrooms accessible to all school-going age children whether disabled or not and has served about 42,000 students and pupils (World Bank, 2016).

Inclusive education is a way in which various needs of individuals are met whether with disabilities or without disabilities and ensure full participation in learning, cultures, and community while minimizing exclusion within an educational setting (UNESCO, 1994). UNESCO further stated, inclusive education is a practice based on the philosophical belief that every learner, (disabled or non-disabled) should be put together in a learning environment. It is the official policy for combining disabled children with non-disabled children in mainstream education (United Nations Education, 1995). According to the government of Ghana's education strategic plan 2003-2015, inclusive education should be effective from September 2015 (Ghana Education Service, 2006).

Inclusive education has numerous benefits for both children with and without disabilities (UNESCO, 2014). To children with disabilities, it enhances friendship with non-disabled children so that they would not feel excluded in the society, which would, in turn, enhance greater interaction between persons with disabilities and their peers without disabilities. Also, inclusion in a mainstream educational setting would allow children with disabilities to have some of their peers as role-models, whom they would look up to, as well as for encouragement or for inspiring children with disabilities to attain higher education (UNESCO, 2014). If these opportunities are

created for children with disabilities, it would increase inclusion in the future. To children without disabilities, inclusive education would help them to understand and respect diversity. Since they would live with children with all forms of impairments, it would increase their appreciation and acceptance of differences. Again, inclusive education would prepare children without disabilities for adulthood in an inclusive environment. With all these benefits for both children with and without disabilities, it is necessary for inclusive education to take place in both private and public basic schools (UNESCO, 2014).

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Ashanti tribe of the Akan ethnic group is the largest in Ghana and one of few societies where lineage is traced through the mother and maternal ancestors. The Ashanti Region can be found in the southern part of Ghana. I chose the Ashanti Region for this study because I am from the Ashanti ethnic group. I was born, schooled and worked in the region and so I am most familiar with its culture and norm.

As a former teacher from Ghana and someone who will be returning to Ghana to take back my teaching position, I became interested in this research when I learnt about Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's (2011) theory of "misfits" and realized how unknowingly I have created misfits in the classroom. And how some teachers could do same without knowing I have been in situations in the classroom where I unknowingly created "misfits" by calling both students with disabilities and students without disabilities names (labelling), especially students who were unable to answer my questions asked in the classroom which created low self-esteem and isolation for them. Also, my experience with people with disabilities is that not all students with disabilities have the same needs and so not one particular teaching methodology fits all students.

In order to further examine and understand how teachers' experiences can impact the educational experiences of people with disabilities in Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti Region, the key theoretical approach that was utilized is "misfits." According to Garland-Thomson (2011), the concept of misfit is not about the disabled body but in the fullness of varying lived embodiments, and the experiences of disability are found in time and place. She argues that the notion of a misfit is materialistic; that is, how bodies interact with the physical world, in other words, the environment relating to space and limited by time. This means to state that misfit is situated spatially and in time, and not in the individual themselves. Hence, misfits can be created not because of the disabled body in the classroom but due to the interaction between resources and materials which an individual is unable to use and at a particular time or space. Since inclusive education is about meeting the needs of all individuals, both nondisabled and disabled, it is necessary to consider teachers' needs, learners' needs, time, teaching materials and the classroom environment as a whole for an effective learning and teaching process.

This implies that the experiences of teachers can either create misfits or make individuals fit in the classroom. If teachers are able to provide all the necessary teaching materials or right tools, adopt good teaching strategies, give enough time to students and also show positive attitudes towards students, students will fit in the classroom. For example, if the visually impaired student is provided with a Braille machine or frame and Braille sheets, embossed reading materials, good lighting, a good temperature in the classroom, a tactile map in a social studies class, and ample time to work, that a student will be able to study and produce, and that a student will be classified as fitting. And so, the student will not be seen as disabled. Also, if systemic barriers, negative attitudes and physical barriers are removed, and government educational policies are strictly implemented, the concept of who is a misfit will not be seen because every student will have the

right tools, atmosphere and time to study and produce. Nevertheless, perception of society on individuals with disabilities can be a barrier which makes this theory not applicable regardless of the all the resources or materials available.

Furthermore, accessibility is another topic of concern in terms of misfits and fits. How are accessible schools contributing to a person being a misfit or fit? If wheelchairs are provided to students with mobility impairment and the schools, as well as classrooms, are accessible, these students will be able to have access to education by going to school and being able to move in the classroom regardless of their disability, and they will not be misfits in the society.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aims of the study are:

- Find out how inclusive education is understood by teachers in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.
- Elicit how experiences, practices and attitudes of teachers create educational challenges for people with disabilities in the Region.
- Identify specific challenges that teachers experience concerning inclusive education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I discuss briefly an overview of disability, inclusive education and the barriers of education for disabled children globally, especially in North America, Europe and Ghana. In this chapter, I then go on to discuss the attitudes of teachers and students towards inclusive education. Also, I provide a brief summary of Ghanaian history and culture to provide a background on what affects the education of people with disabilities. I finish this review by systematically seeking the challenges in adopting inclusive education.

According to Benshoff, Barrera, and Heyman (2014), all around the world people with disabilities face significant barriers when it comes to participation in education or employment, and they experience consistently lower educational rates than individuals without disabilities. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006), people with disabilities include individuals who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments. About 15% of the world's population lives with some form of disability; this global estimate for disability is on the rise due to population ageing and the rapid spread of chronic diseases, as well as advancement in the procedures used to measure disability (WHO & World Bank, 2011).

According to the social model, disability is a social construction; hence changes are required to redefine who is disabled and who is not. Michael Oliver, one of the social model advocates, argued, “disablement has nothing to do with the body,” and “impairment is, in fact, nothing less than a description of the physical body” (Hughes & Paterson, 1997). This explains that disability is not found in the physical body, but it is found in the environment. It is the

environment that disables an individual. Therefore, if the physical environment is accessible to all individuals, disabled and non- disabled can easily move around without difficulties, and no one will be seen as disabled. One of the motivations of social reconstructing is to challenge the medical view that presents disabled people as "other". Nevertheless, the social model does not rule out impairments solely except that its advocates insist that disability is contingent on social conditions (Thomas, 2004; Reindal, 2009). For instance, Allotey et al. (2003) found that people who are paralyzed lower part of their body in Cameroon and Australia reported different disabling experiences largely due to the social context – the latter country being much supportive of persons with disabilities. Disability multiplies the vulnerability of individuals in various ways. Therefore, it is necessary to deliver appropriate interventions for people with disabilities.

Acton (1983) argues that disability and poverty together are scary and either one can cause the other; their existence in combination has a great ability to destroy the lives of individuals with a disability and also requires the support of their families. When a person with a disability is denied access to education in whatever forms, the individual will not be employed, and unemployment leads to poverty. Poverty makes it impossible to access health and other services. Most people with disabilities are hawking and begging in the streets in Ghana, especially in big cities like Kumasi.

The social model of disability came into view from the intellectual and political arguments of the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in the United Kingdom with the aim of substituting segregated facilities, and with the advantage for people with impairments to participate fully in society, to live independently and to have full control over their own lives (Shakespeare, 2013). With the social model, activists made it clear that contrary to the medical model, disability is not found within the body, but rather it exists as a construct within the society, in the lack of wheelchair accessibility of schools or lack of accessible reading materials, poor

access to education, lack of employment, inappropriate remuneration for disabled people, social stigma and discrimination of people with disabilities. The strict laws to combat inequalities by international institutions seem to be efficient in developed countries but are not so in developing countries like Ghana (Adekile, 2014). Most developed countries, for example, Canada, there are programs in place to provide financial supports to individuals who are unable to work and they are taken care of financially (Thorntons, 2005). In addition to the challenges faced by people with disabilities worldwide, those in developed countries face their own challenges that are unique to their countries, like poverty, the politicization of disability rights groups, conflicts due to the absence of the government in fully satisfying demands for more comprehensive services, as well as limited knowledge of other forms and models of disability (Grischow, 2015). For example, in Palestine, community-based rehabilitation programs focus on the conflict-related and physical forms of disability as opposed to non-conflict related forms of disability, and those with mental disabilities are completely sidelined (Burton et al., 2013). In addition, in Ghana, the legal empowerment is not sufficient in itself to guarantee disability rights (Grischow, 2015).

There have been various definitions and explanations of disability, and there is no universally accepted definition. Hence, disability is a more or less inevitable human condition, and at any point, almost every person is exposed to, and may experience, impermanent or permanent disability (WHO & World Bank, 2011). Disability manifests in different social constructions depending on the setting in which the concept is used. It is neither a social nor biological construct; instead, it is often hinged on the interactions among health, environmental and personal factors (WHO & World Bank, 2011). Disability can be seen in three levels: impairment in body function or structure; limitation inactivity, such as the inability to read or move around; and a restriction in participation, such as exclusion from school or work. Individuals with these conditions are

normally said to be disabled, for example, wheelchair users, people who are blind or deaf, or people with intellectual impairments and people who experience difficulties in functioning due to a wide range of health conditions such as chronic diseases, severe mental disorders, multiple sclerosis and old age (WHO, 2013)

According to the Ghana Statistical Service Population and Housing Census (2010), the Akan ethnic group accounted for 46.5% of all disabilities, followed by the Ewes (16.7%). Mande and all other ethnic groups constituted 1% and 1.1% of people with disabilities (PWDs) respectively. The majority (53.3%) of PWDs in the urban centres were Akans. Among PWDs in the rural areas however, the Akans were 40.8%, followed by the Mole-Dagbani ethnic group. The distribution of PWD by sex in the urban and rural areas shows similar patterns. Unfortunately, most people with disabilities have the worst results in education, health, economic and work participation, as well as a higher rate of poverty and vulnerability (WHO & World Bank 2011). Hence, the education of people with disabilities is equally paramount to the education of people without disabilities. The education of people with or without disabilities in the same environment must be practised worldwide.

Inclusive education today has already been practised in Canada for more than two decades, and this has impacted nations of the North. The focus of this inclusive vision is to create confidence in children and their capabilities. This belief is shown in numerous broadly accepted best practices that started in Ontario schools: Person Centred Planning, Making Action Plans (MAPS), Circles of Friends, and PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrow's with Hope) (Stainback & Stainback, 1996). Educational programmes are potential tools for establishing networks among schools, parents and communities, and for resolving difficult individual, family, and systems concerns that may act as obstacles to inclusive education. The Centre for Integrated Education and Community

in Toronto, Canada initiates and supports activities to advance inclusion in education and communities (Stainback & Stainback, 1996).As revealed by Stainback and Stainback (1996) in their work, the Centre for Integrated Education and Community in Toronto, Canada has been renamed as the Marsha Forest Centre, and currently focuses on developing future leadership for inclusion through the creation of focused programs, materials and research, and it initiates and supports events to improve inclusion in education and communities in Ontario.

Additionally, Ontario has a remarkable system-wide method for Individual Education (IE). This is also practised in the province of New Brunswick, Canada. Individual Education turned out to be an authorized policy in New Brunswick as early as 1968 and was reinforced in 1985 by the Act to Amend the Schools Act. Known as Bill 85, every school in the region is obliged to offer IE. Italy is the only other OECD member that equals this standard of official Inclusive Education law/policy. In New Brunswick, as in Italy, nearly all students are educated in mainstream classrooms, with specialized assistance as required, based on a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Likewise in Manitoba, according to the Student-Specific Planning, IE programmes are defined in The Public Schools Act and in the Education Administration Act where The Core Team (student, student parent(s) and classroom teacher), the In-School Team (principal, school counsellor, resource teacher and Inclusive Education teacher), and the School Support Team (therapists, support services personnel, consultants, community resource personnel, and health professionals) all work together with curriculum for student-specific outcomes in regular classrooms. Also, additional resources, such as computers with accessibility Windows 10, which come with a wide range of accessibility features, such as narrator, word prediction, eye control, descriptions of pictures etc., are provided to empower diverse classrooms and to address the unique learning needs of students.

Inclusive Education programmes in the United States have developed exponentially since the passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1975, which guaranteed free public education to every child with a disability. The number of school districts reporting Inclusive Educational programmes in the US tripled according to Lipsky and Gartner (1997) between 1994-1995. A 1994 account of the National Centre on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI) documented inclusion programs in each state and at all grade levels, involving students across the whole array of disabilities. Furthermore, in 1994, best practice characteristics for Inclusive Education were ascertained by a Working Forum on Inclusive Schools (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). Some of the best practices in the US were paying attention to inadequacies in the educational practices, prejudices ~~and~~ discrimination, conceptual limitations, and discussions on educational improvement and concerns for the limited outcomes for students.

2.1 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN EUROPE AND OTHER ORGANIZATION OF ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD) COUNTRIES

In order to get many disabled children into school, there is a need to call for the integration of children with disabilities into mainstream education. Twenty-three (23) member states were to find common areas of realization and difficulty experienced in integrating disabled learners into normal schools through a study carried out in Paris in 1999. Results of the survey concentrated on (1) decision on placement, (2) issues about parental choice, (3) fairness in access and integration, (4) forms and models of integration, and (5) teacher training and staff support. Teachers' impact cannot be overlooked in all aspects of inclusive education.

Developing an inclusive education system is not just a right. Access to education provides a vital means to persons with disabilities at the same level of equality with non-disabled persons.

It also pushes diversity within schools and builds social connections between persons with and without disabilities. It is also a means of promoting education systems with the emphasis of achieving a common learning environment guaranteeing the full participation, presence and achievement of equal results for all learners, including those with disabilities (Quinn & Ebersold, 2008).

2.2 THE STATE OF EDUCATION FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Disabled persons worldwide encounter a multitude of barriers when they want to participate in society, especially in their right to education (The United Nations 2011). This results in their inability to realize their potential and in the long-run militates against their participation in community activities. According to the World Health Organization and the World Bank (2011),the number of children with either mild or moderate disabilities in developing countries, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, is astronomical compared to rich countries. Children with disabilities are one of the marginalized groups with respect to education (World Health Organization & UNICEF, 2008). The United Nations (2010) disclosed that there is very little information about the degree to which children with disabilities are excluded from education. However, the little data that is available strongly and undeniably shows that children with disability world-wide receive poorer educational opportunities compared to their non-disabled counterparts. For instance, the World Health Survey (2004) showed that participants with disabilities had a notably lower rate of primary school completion and fewer years of education compared to their non-disabled counterparts. Similarly, in Burkina Faso, there is an increased risk of becoming a school dropout as a result of disability (Loeb, Arne,& Eide, 2004).

Furthermore, the World Bank (2008) reported that "the [schooling] deficit associated with a disability is clearly large compared with other sources of inequality." This indicates that, exclusion in terms of education is the highest among other forms of exclusion that disabled children face. Individuals with disabilities are educationally excluded in various ways; for example, physical inaccessibility to educational institutions like the building of ramps instead of stairs, inaccessible reading materials like Braille books, inadequately trained teachers, and technological devices such as talking computers and other acoustic materials etc.

2.3 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Over the years, education for children with disabilities, in general, has taken an inclusive education perspective. This is a result of the fact that society thinks school-age children with disabilities need special attention and logistics to be able to learn effectively. Inclusive education refers to the special teaching a child with a disability receives (Evers, 2014). It refers to a wide range of assistance, placements and programs designed for children or pupils who need special logistics and teaching methods in order to perform well in school. This means that in an inclusive education setting, all the requisite learning needs of a pupil are met to enhance teaching and learning. Inclusive education as a concept was pioneered in the 19th century by inclusive education experts to help make provision for children with disabilities of school-going age who encountered difficulties in accessing mainstream schools (Reynolds & Ainscow, 1994).

However, researchers have identified that children with disabilities were selected disproportionately from tribal and racial minorities and disadvantaged groups in the United States and United Kingdom (Dunn, 1968; Mercer, 1970; Tomlinson, 1981). As time went on, various governments worldwide saw it as a responsibility and added the concept to their policies (National

Council for Special Education [NCSE], 2010). Later, special schools were seen as the norm for all children with disabilities. Therefore, pupils with disabilities were segregated according to their impairment types (e.g. school for the deaf, school for the intellectually impaired, school for the visually impaired, etc.). Thomas, Walker, and Webb (2006) added that the segregation of children or pupils with disabilities according to their disabilities was deemed as beneficial because these pupils could not effectively participate in mainstream classrooms. This implies that efforts were made by stakeholders (parents, school officials, educators, etc.) to make sure that school environments were accommodating to pupils with disabilities. However, the segregation of the pupils was in line with the medical model of disability, which views the barriers to learning as residing in the pupil (NCSE, 2010). The Council further argued that the implementation of inclusive education as a solution to learning barriers for disabled children has remained unchallenged for a long period of time. According to Inge et al.(1994), the concept remained unquestioned because it was regarded as the best way of meeting the needs of a minority of children and at the same time safeguarding the needs of the majority of children who are not disabled.

The increased civil rights movements in the 1960s in Europe instigated the questioning of inclusive education (NCSE, 2010). NCSE explained further that persons with disabilities, political pressures, parental advocacy groups and other movements lamented their dissatisfaction with inclusive education. That is, the concept was viewed as a form of stigmatization, inequality to educational access and very insulting (NCSE, 2010).

2.3.1 Special Education in Ghana

Special Education started in Ghana in the year 1957, when the government of Ghana fully assumed the role of ensuring that persons with disabilities gained access to education (UNESCO, 1988). This effort was in response to the fact that disabled persons lacked access to education; and they were given training in indigenous livelihood activities such as fishing, farming, etc. by their relatives. UNESCO (1988) added that persons with disabilities who were trained in that era received training in weaving and basketry only. The Education Act of 1961 was the first act that unified special education into the general education system, and this required collaborative effort from the Ministry of Education and the then Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (UNESCO, 1988). In modern Ghana, inclusive education through the Ministry of Education outlines the various people who need special education. These individuals or children who require special attention to learn effectively include gifted and talented persons; persons with disabilities; persons with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; children displaced by natural catastrophes and social conflicts; nomadic children (shepherd boys, fisher-folks' children and domestic child workers); children living in extreme social and economic deprivation; children exploited for a financial purpose; orphans and children who are not living with their biological parents; and children living with HIV/AIDS (Ministry of Education, 2013). This implies that the government of Ghana should adopt a means of meeting the needs of all the groups of individuals specified above. However, the actual inclusive education practised in Ghana is mainly special education for persons with a hearing disability, visual disability or intellectual disability (GES, 2004). A gifted and talented person attends mostly regular schools. Due to stigma, other children living with HIV/AIDS and children with other forms of disability are normally not seen in the special education schools. There are schools like Akropong School for The Blind in Akuapim, Garden City School for the children

with intellectual disabilities in Kumasi and New Horizon Special School in Accra, but no schools, for example, for children who are gifted and talented, children with HIV/AIDS, or children with other forms of disability.

2.3.2 Inclusive Education in Ghana

Inclusive education has become a global issue (Abbring et al., 1994). According to Loreman (2005), inclusive education in the field of education means the "full inclusion of children with diverse abilities in all aspects of schooling that other children are able to access and enjoy." When the teaching process is effective and the needs of the pupils are met, then all would be able to participate in the teaching and learning process (Ainscow, 2002; Corbett, 2001; Lindsay, 2003).

However, Ghana's inclusive education is encapsulated in the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education policy to increase access, retention and participation for all children of school-going age in Ghana, which includes children with disabilities (GES, 2004). Also, the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana further provides that the Ghana government within two years of parliament first-ever meeting will draw up a program for implementation within the next ten years for the provision of a free, compulsory, universal basic education (F cube) (Government of Ghana, 1992)

Inclusive education involves adopting a positive school culture and organizational set-up, and helping both special and regular schools to build capacity in providing opportunities for all school-going age children in Ghana, whether they have learning difficulties or disabilities (GES, 2004; Ocloo et al., 2008).

After independence, the Government of Ghana made basic education a fundamental human right for the citizenry, and this is enshrined in the Legal Framework of Education in Ghana (Ghana

Education Service, 2004). The Education Act passed in the year 1961 is currently the principal legislation which protects the educational right of every child in Ghana, and it stated that: "Every child who has attained the school-going age as determined by the Minister shall attend a course of instruction as laid down by the Minister in a school recognized for the purpose by the Minister" (GES, 2004).

Although the aforementioned documents and ~~other~~ international documents support the enactment of inclusive education, little attention has been given to education for disabled children in Ghana (Ocloo & Subbey, 2008).

2.3.3 Teachers and Inclusive Education

In Ghana basic schools refer to the elementary schools from nursery to junior high (ninth grade) for children from ages five to fourteen. Schools are owned by either the government (public schools) or by individuals or organizations (private schools).

The Ghana Disability Law emphasizes that all public basic schools should adopt inclusive education 2016 (Ghana Disability Law, 2006). However, the Government of Ghana focused on only public schools in Ghana. The feasibility of this policy remains unknown since there are many challenges attached to inclusive education. Numerous researchers have proven that most principals, school proprietors and teachers, having foreseen the challenges that inclusive education can pose on them, fail to adopt it (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000). Several factors influence school authorities, and especially teachers, in adopting inclusive education. Aside from the tension and difficulty teachers face in teaching disabled children (Whiting & Young, 1995), the following affect the adoption of inclusive education: teachers' gender, (Avramidis et al., 2000; Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2001), age (Cornoldi, Terreni, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 1998), level of

qualification in inclusive education (Clayton, 1996), and the severity of the child's disability (Agran, Alper, & Wehmeyer, 2002). Research has proven that teachers who are advanced in age concur and are willing to teach children with disabilities (Agran et al., 2002).It is believed that teachers who have a long period of life experience and have had the opportunity to meet different people across ages and disabilities are able to mingle and are more willing to teach people with disabilities compared to younger teachers. It is apparent that the number of young teachers in Ghana outnumbers the number of older teachers and this means that the likelihood of inclusive education being effective in Ghana is minimal. Furthermore, if training and education in disability and disability-related issues are inadequate, the chances of the teachers not preferring to teach children with disabilities become bigger (Briggs, Johnson, Shepherd, & Sedbrook, 2002).

Another influential factor is the perceived confidence of mainstream teachers. Some teachers have eagerness to teach with disabilities together with children without disabilities, and by so doing, they end up acquiring positive perceptions about children with disabilities (Avramidis et al., 2000). Moreover, research has shown that teachers who have past experience in working with persons with disabilities appear to see the concept of inclusive education as feasible (Avramidis et al., 2000). But the question is how many school teachers in Ghana have experience with disability and its associated issues? Agran et al. (2002) and Kuester (2000) added that the severity of a child's disability influences their inclusion in mainstream educational settings. They further posited that students with severe disabilities are usually aggressive.

2.3.4 Students and Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education in Ghana

Numerous research studies found that the attitudes of teachers add to the implementation of inclusion and that positive attitudes are connected to an array of reasons comprising of training

in inclusive education and experiences working with students with disabilities. Issues such as close connection with a person with a disability, experience in teaching, awareness of policy and law, and confidence levels had a substantial influence on teachers' attitudes, as was ascertained by international research in four nations, Hong Kong, Canada, India and the United States (Loreman, 2007). The attitude of society also continues to produce major obstacles to inclusion (Forlin, 2001; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008).

A European study by Lambe and Bones (2007) has shown that training in inclusive education and teaching or relating to students with disabilities has a positive effect on attitudes. Moreover, such positive attitudes support the possibility of other fruitful inclusive programmes or experiences for pupils (Kuyini & Desai, 2008).With respect to the above, inclusive education training initiatives in Ghana and Botswana were vital, assuming that apart from indigenous contextual issues, both student teachers and regular classroom tutors largely negative attitudes towards inclusive education (Kuyini, 2004), and they also have serious concerns about inclusive education (Alexander, 2001). Such limited positive attitudes and strong concerns can affect the quality of teacher-student relations and instructional requirements for students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Avramidis et al., 2000).

The work of Peltier (1997)from America revealed that numerous mainstream teachers who were not ready and are afraid to include students with disabilities in their classes, displayed anger, frustration and bad attitudes toward inclusive education. In the last decade, studies indicated that several school teachers have inadequate expertise to teach in inclusive classrooms and this, together with the absence of resources like assistive devices (small teaching aids, computers and software(Alexander, 2001; Avramidis et al., 2000), normally transform into severe concerns on the part of teachers to be involved in inclusive educational settings.

For instance, Kuyini and Desai (2008) discovered in Ghana that teachers' inadequate knowledge and low positive attitudes were the cause for inadequate use of effective instructional practices. David (2007) similarly revealed in a study of Tamil schools in Nadu, India that attitudes resulted in the low social inclusion of students. Additionally, Chhabra, Strivasta, and Strivasta (2010) established that teacher attitudes and concern such as limited training and inadequate resources in inclusive education are obstacles to effective inclusive education in Botswana.

Arrah and Swain (2014) carried out research on teachers' views of students with disabilities in Cameroon secondary schools. From the research, it was revealed that teachers' views of students with disabilities were positive. But, particular aspects of interest were note especially inadequate resources in the area of inclusive education, there lack of training for teachers to work with students with disabilities, as well as additional stress and anxiety when teaching students with disabilities and preventing the learning of other students. The difficulty in ~~not~~ using some of the necessary tools may limit teachers in performing their best to resolve the difficulties that affect students and could bring their confidence down with time??

Most studies to investigate teachers' fears and attitudes toward inclusive education have concentrated on educators in the field (Agbenyega, 2006) instead of focusing on student teachers. Few studies have taken place regarding student teacher attitudes, and concerns have been carried out principally across Africa, predominantly Ghana and Botswana. Assuming negative teacher attitudes and significant fears regarding inclusive education affect instructional quality, gaining an understanding of teachers' attitudes and worries about inclusive education is vital if the implementation is to be fruitful in these states. Moreover, where the attrition of teachers is very high in Ghana (Cobbold, 2006) This is result of: poor conditions of service low income high cost of living, no benefits, The limited energy to initiate inclusive education may yet be another

important cause. Student teachers may be ill at ease with lack of training in inclusive education. Assessing student teachers' fears and attitudes concerning inclusive education in Botswana and Ghana is vital in order to safeguard that most training programmes that are being initiated in both nations by donor countries and NGOs tackle some of these issues at both the training and policy levels.

2.3.5 Challenges in Adopting Inclusive Education around the world

Although the concept and practice of inclusive education have been adopted by most countries worldwide (Maher, 2009), it is not translated in the main classroom setting. Attitudes of teachers play an important role in the process of making inclusive education effective (Zollers, Ramanathan, & Yu, 1999). That is, if the attitudes of school teachers are positive, then pupils with disabilities can participate in school activities and vice versa. According to Ainscow (2002), principals and teachers from mainstream UK schools should invest in making their schools and classrooms accommodating for all individuals. This is really challenging because in some schools a majority teachers believe that the needs of children with disabilities are best met when they are allowed to study in separate classrooms (Campbell, Gilmore, & Cuskelly, 2003).

According to Bornman and Rose(2017), "[a] general lack of support and resources, as well as the prevailing negative attitudes toward disability, all contribute to the general bewilderment in South African schools towards inclusion." Restructuring the school environment and training teachers involve additional costs which school authorities are not ready to bear. For example, ramps and elevators in schools is more expensive than building stairs, and the use of assistive devices in classrooms and Braille machines and readers are all additional costs. These logistics are requisites in realizing an inclusive education classroom in South Africa (Lomofsky & Lazarus,

2001). Underscoring, the principals of basic schools in Africa, especially Gauteng (the most resource rich province in South Africa), are unwilling to provide support for ~~their~~ disabled pupils in school (Nel, Müller, & Rheeders, 2011).

Although environmental barriers are major contributors to social inclusion, cultural level barriers should also be considered (Polat, 2011). Polat posited further that "changing attitudinal barriers among school professionals and in the wider community … is one of the essential aspects of making inclusive education happen in low-income countries" (Polat, 2011). Children's participation and inclusion in education are strongly determined by the perception that members of the community have about disabilities. That is, if a community expresses prejudice toward children with disabilities, their (children with disabilities') participation and inclusion in education will below. Groce (2004) concurred that most children with disabilities in less developed or developing countries do not attend school because community members believe that they cannot learn or they will disrupt other children in the class.

The above studies outline main reasons why disabled children are not integrated into mainstream education are negative attitudes of community members and school officials toward people with disabilities. Also, school authorities, especially teachers, are not willing and ready to bear the cost of restructuring the classroom environment to suit the needs of disabled pupils in the United States (Zollers et al., 1999). Teachers' beliefs and their attitudes about disability can greatly affect the implementation of inclusive education (Sharma & Desai, 2002). Most basic school teachers feel unprepared and frightened and find it overwhelming to teach pupils with disabilities. Therefore, they are opposed to the idea of inclusive education (Peltier, 1997; Tiegerman-Farber, 1998). These teachers feel that many difficulties would ensue both in the teaching and learning

processes if pupils with various forms of disability are made to be in the same class with their ~~fellow~~ non-disabled counterparts.

Moreover, Bennett, DeLuca, and Bruns (1997) argue~~d~~ that access to disability-related specialist support services for teachers (e.g. sign language experts, disability experts, training in disability issues, etc.) are in limited. This creates a challenge for teachers to accept the idea of inclusive education. However, if teachers are given the necessary skills and training to cope with disabled pupils, then they will succumb to the concept of inclusive education (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001) in Illinois (US). A study conducted by LeyRoy and Simpson (1996 cited in Agbenyega, 2007), reported that, if mainstream teachers in Michigan (US) are made to start teaching pupils with disabilities, their confidence level in teaching the pupils with disabilities will increase over time. This will alter the negative perceptions they have about pupils with disabilities.

2.4 BARRIERS

Individuals with disabilities face several challenges. Physical or social environments can be a barrier to people with disabilities. The physical environment is important. Buildings, educational institutions or schools with accessible washrooms, classrooms and ramps, cultural beliefs, customs, negative attitudes, misconceptions, neglect due to societal “norms” also can create barriers in addition to what people with disabilities already experience. This unpleasant environment leads to low self-esteem of people with disabilities and prevents disabled people from being free and confident to access education as their human rights. Society plays a huge role in the disabling of people with disabilities.

2.5 EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN GHANA

Disabled people are one of the largest minority groups in Ghana, making up an estimated 3% of Ghana's population of 25 million (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012), although Ghana has various legal and constitutional provisions that are meant to protect people with disabilities. Ghana signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007, and made it official in 2012, to become the 119th country in the world to do so and the 32nd in Africa. This was a sign of the country's commitment to defending the rights of disabled people and empowering them for full social participation. In 2006, the Persons with Disability Act 2006 (Act 715) was passed by Parliament to usher disability rights in Ghana into a new dawn. Among other things, the Act provides for rights such as unrestricted access to public places and buildings, free health care, employment, education and transportation. The law allowed for a 10-year moratorium, within which all public buildings including schools were supposed to be made accessible to disabled people, but people with disabilities face several challenges like social stigma, social exclusion and various forms of discrimination in accessing education or employment. Since Ghana's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012, evidence shows that when barriers to people with disabilities are removed and persons with disabilities are empowered to participate fully in the society, their entire community benefits. Barriers faced by persons with disabilities are therefore a detriment to society as a whole, and accessibility is necessary to achieve progress and development for all.

Also, most of these social and educational issues are a result of traditional and religious beliefs and hurtful stereotypes which often characterize interpretations of disability and lead to the creation of oppressive conceptualizations of disability (Kassah, 2008). This makes it difficult if not impossible, for people, disabled and non-disabled, to acquire knowledge and be open-minded

in the understanding of disabilities. Disabled people, therefore, continue to experience social stigma, social exclusion and discrimination. Furthermore, this makes it more difficult to implement legal rights due to the diehard belief systems in the country, which influence attitudes, actions or inactions. These legal provisions sometimes cause the Disability Act to be enforced in a weak manner against strong social currents in traditional beliefs, discrimination, social exclusion and stigma. With this, the educational opportunities that are supposed to be provided by the state under the law are almost non-existent (Sackey 2015). In addition to these challenges, most people with disability have not come to the realization of the full inclusion laws or do not find the current pro-inclusion efforts to be accurate and beneficial enough because sometimes some disabled people perceive themselves to be not worthy of respect and social recognition (Picton, 2011). They may internalize the oppression they experience. There appears to be no sustained and concerted effort on the part of the state aimed at empowering disabled people for educating non-disabled people about individuals with a disability or people who discriminate against disabled people.

2.6 THE HISTORY OF GHANA

Modern-day Ghana was formerly called the Gold Coast by the Europeans due to its wealth and the abundance of gold found in the country. Several small kingdoms such as Bonoman and the Asante Kingdom are currently known as the Brong Ahafo and Ashanti regions. The Portuguese and Dutch settled on the Gold Coast and monopolized trade for a century, preventing the English and French efforts to trade. The Dutch built forts and captured Elimina castle from the Portuguese, and the Gold Coast were attacked by its neighbours who had been colonized by the British in the 17thcentury. Several conflicts developed between the kings of the various Akan States and the British governors leading to the capturing of the Ashanti king Osei Tutu. Led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the Gold Coast gained independence from the British in 1957, becoming a member of

the Commonwealth nations and joining the United Nations. Ghana became the new name. Ghana was divided into 10 regions and recently added 6 more regions, namely, Ashanti Region (which is the cultural heartbeat of Ghana), Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Western, Volta and the recently added 6 more regions, which are Savannah, North East, Bono East, Oti, Western North, Ahafo and Bono.

2.7 GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

There are a few gaps in the existing literature with respect to cultural and other social and discriminatory practices on the areas of education for students with disabilities. These practices create some challenges for students with disabilities. The literature talks about how students with disabilities are being marginalized and are denied access to education which is their human right but mostly fails to talk about the influence and culture of Ghana and especially the experiences of teachers in the Ashanti Region in creating disabling conditions. Also, the lack of data on people with disabilities in Ghana and their place in history and culture has not been discussed. Moreover, I found that most studies discussed governmental policies and enrolment, which is undeniably true, but to effect change it is time to consider the experiences of teachers and the influences on people with disabilities and education. The government's role is to ensure those teachers' attitudes and experiences do affect inclusive education positively. This study sought to bridge the gaps in the literature by utilizing the theory of misfit. It is utilized to examine the influences of teachers' experiences and discriminatory practices in Ghana on the education situation of people with disabilities. This study also attempts to contribute to putting an end to the silence on the experiences of teachers on inclusive education and to give voice to their challenges, success and vision. Lastly, the study aims to provide an approach to putting an end to the injustices experienced by disabled citizens of the country, Ghana.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 METHODOLOGY

This study undertook a qualitative approach to purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. A qualitative method was used for this study. A qualitative study has many advantages as it helps to give a precise description of a remarkable situation (Sandelowski, 2000). Qualitative methods research helped to make use of open-ended questions which provided the participants with the mandate to express their responses in their own words and in a way they felt comfortable, instead of choosing from fixed answers (Stuckey, 2013). With the purpose of evaluating human experiences and behaviours, qualitative research methods can be put into practical use to help policymakers to plan and implement the correct and implement suitable measures to address public concerns (Shrivastava, Shrivastava, & Ramasamy, 2014).

The purpose of this study is to discover how culture shapes teachers' attitudes and practice as well as the barriers that face them in education for Ghanaian citizens with disabilities. The theoretical question pointed to by Garland-Thomson's (2011) "misfits" was utilized as a guide. This project focuses on teachers of inclusive education, and examined some of their experiences as well as the challenges experienced by individuals with disabilities in educational settings. This study sought the opinions of teachers i.e. professional teachers and inclusive education teachers, via in-depth semi-structured interviews, to determine where there is an agreement with current literature and to contribute to the knowledge on the subject. The aim of an extensive interview is to obtain the perspective, attitudes and perceptions from the participants who are professionals and are knowledgeable on the subject inquiry (Shrivastava et al., 2014). Since qualitative research employs mostly the interview method or the semi-structured interview, the researcher gave an

outline for the topics or questions to be asked but the direction of the interview was determined by the participant's responses (Stuckey, 2013). This made it very helpful providing consensus on a fundamental reality regarding the subject of inquiry, especially in bringing out the facts that are not captured in the literature and to clarify the existing literature.

Also, qualitative methodology permits the researcher the flexibility to probe the initial participant's response by asking why or how (Stuckey, 2013). The findings and analysis provide a better understanding of the topic under review.

3.2 RECRUITMENT

Purposeful sampling was used for the initial recruitment and was later continued by snowball sampling. According to Curtis, Gesler, Smith, and Washburn (2000), when samples are small, they are studied intensively and give rich information. Three participants were initially purposefully selected by the researcher, and three others were referred by the way of the initial participants. Four of the participants are employed by the government, the Ghana Education Service, and two are employed by private institutions, all in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. One of the four employed by the government has a disability a visual impairment) Four of the participants were females and two were males. The utmost goal for purposeful sampling is to provide rich information for the purpose of this study (Sandelowski, 2000).

The four participants who were recruited have been in the inclusive education field for more than five years and have been teachers of people with disabilities and non-disabled people. The first approach by the researcher was via email in order to explain the purpose of the research and requirements needed from them. Participants were informed that the 40-minute to 1-hour phone interview would be recorded. Informed consent forms were emailed to participants for

signatures when they agreed to participate in the study. These consent forms were scanned and emailed back to the researcher. Afterwards, there was a request from the researcher of the participants to refer two people who are teachers in schools that are practising inclusion. Six participants were recruited because of time and financial constraints of the researcher. Once the study group reached six participants who were willing to participate number of participants provided a rich source of information. They shared their experiences. According to Curtis et al. (2000), sample sizes for qualitative research are normally small, and each one provides rich information. The selection of both government and private settings produced heterogeneity within the sample generalizing of findings.

3.3 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The recruitment of participants for this study involved Ghanaians who are residents of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. They were teachers from both private and government sectors of education and they were all teachers in inclusive schools. They all had access to phones to receive foreign calls, and printers and scanners. Those with auditory impairment were excluded due to the fact that the researcher was not able to provide support to participants to go on with the interview. The experiences of people with auditory impairment were missed and this is a limitation of the study.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was done via individual interviews. According to Novick (2008), the face-to-face interview has been viewed as superior to telephone interviews in qualitative research. Data was collected via individual in-depth telephone interviews. Using telephone interviews as a

primary data collection method challenges the unnatural concept and purpose of qualitative interviews and the extent to which qualitative research can be conducted at a distance.

According to Novick (2008), the loss of contextual data, distortion of data and the loss of nonverbal data such as nonverbal gestures, actions and other visual cues are all lost in telephone interviews and such data can provide richness to data which most literature showed as biased. Nevertheless, there has not been any proof that these issues come about. In addition, face-to-face can generate, for example, reluctance to disclose. The interviewers would need a particular style to judge the mode of the interviewees and answer properly to prevent these challenges. Also, non-verbal data can be misunderstood or misinterpreted if the interviewer does not inquire from the interviewee about some actions.

During the interviews for this study, most non-verbal data I faced were short and long pauses, of "erms, hum and ums," low voice to show disapproval, laughter and rising of voice to give emphasis, which were all transcribed in order not to lose the worth of responses.

In addition, as argued by Novick (2008), participants are calmer on the phone with telephone interviews and are free to share private information. It also reduces social pressure, increases rapport, and permits privacy and anonymity. Furthermore, telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews do have significant disparities, although previous literature proposed that different results may be achieved depending on interview modes (Struges & Hamaham, 2004). For this study, participants chose telephone calls over other video calls like Whats App and Skype calls. This is because participants would have needed to have access to the internet, which is expensive on the participants' side (Ghana) compared to telephone (international calls), where only the researcher bears the cost and there is no cost to participants. Although participants were

given the option to choose, the researcher tried as much as possible to have no financial cost borne by the participants. Hence, telephone calls were chosen and no participant chose either Whats App or Skype, all interviews were conducted via a telephone call.

The researcher inquired from participants the most convenient time they would like to be called, and interviewed them for 40 minutes to an hour. Interviews were scheduled immediately and consent was sought from each participant. All participants had their interviews done during the afternoon between 12 noon and 4 pm in Winnipeg. The interview was done at each participant's convenient time. At the beginning of the interview, participants were informed that the conversation would be recorded and also that they were free to let me know if there was any question that they did not want to answer. I had the time to talk to participants about the research and that the purpose was for the benefit of people with disabilities and the academic community. This gave the interviewees some sort of encouragement to share their experiences and helped build trust in the interviewer. The questions on the interview schedule (Appendix I) were intended to obtain opinions, experiences and perceptions on inclusive education.

Due to the homogeneity of responses, the interview schedule utilized a semi-structured interview, which produces clarity of instructions for the interviewers and also provides more data (Stuckey, 2013). Based on the literature which was obtained on the experiences of teachers on inclusive education, the interview questions were obtained. Sub-questions under the main questions were asked for participants to give their responses with examples and this helped me to ask for further questions and better understanding and detailed information. I said "Thank you" to participants right after the interviews were ended and followed with an email expressing my appreciation for their contribution and time.

After the interview was concluded, the recorded conversations were transcribed onto my personal computer. I transferred the recorded phone conversations to my personal computer right after each interview was conducted. No names were used to identify the transcribed conversations which were saved. Letters and digits were used to identify participants. The letter A was used for the first participant, B for the second, etc. in the order of how they were recruited.

Transcripts were sent via email to participants for accuracy and understanding after the transcription of the recorded interviews was done, and participants emailed the transcripts back to me. That is the interviews were shared among participants. Due to no changes, the final data was stored. The data collection of this study was done within a month (October 11 – November 15). The data collection phase of this study was very fast due to fast referral and the cooperation and willingness of participants.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was personally done by the researcher manually. Thematic analysis was derived based on the findings of the data and the research questions. Themes and patterns were identified, and these themes and patterns helped to find the research questions. According to the responses that were produced by the interviewees, patterns and themes were noted based on each question on the interview schedule with either the same or opposite response. Also, themes that supported the existing literature were noted and recorded. Identified themes and patterns were put into broad themes based on the research questions of the study. Review of the literature and findings was done under the guidance of the researcher's advisor Finally, the findings were organized and concluded.

3.6 DATA

Recorded interviews were transcribed word for word into a Word document by me. I familiarized myself with each participant's tone, ideas and perception as I went through the data. This helped in the context of the credibility of findings and helped make sure that a clear picture of the experiences of participants was presented and not assumptions. Several readings of the transcripts enabled me to be familiar with the data of the participants, and that enhanced the perception of the participants in the context of the data. Transcripts were emailed to participants right after transcriptions for accuracy and also to ensure the reliability of the findings, and participants sent transcripts with corrections back to me.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research was reviewed and approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. Participants signed the consent form before the study started and during the interview, participants were reminded of their consent and freedom to withdraw at any time if they wished. Also, participants of the study were safe and protected in a way of ensuring confidentiality and anonymity as well as improving the quality of data. This was done by conducting interviews outside instructional time, by deleting recorded interviews right after transcription was done from the phone and computer, by storing data anonymously on a password-protected computer and saving demographic information separately, and by sending transcripts to participants to confirm that all personal and potentially identifying information were removed from their transcripts. Further, names were not used to identify participants in reporting the findings of the study.

In summary, this study undertook a qualitative approach to the issues under inquiry. The recruitment of participants was done by an initial purposeful sample, which was followed by snowball sampling. There were six participants in this study and they all reside in the Southern part of Ghana and are teachers of inclusive education. Data was collected via in-depth telephone interviews, which were conducted outside the teachers' instructional hours, and recorded conversations were transcribed by me to ensure the accuracy of data and confidentiality. I analyzed data manually, and themes used to achieve the research objectives were organized and presented in the results as well.

CHAPTER Four

RESULTS

This section presents the results regarding teachers' experiences and attitudes towards inclusive education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Relying on the qualitative approach, the study specifically examined how inclusive education is understood by teachers in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, how their experiences, practices and attitudes create educational barriers for people with disability in the Region, and the specific challenges that teachers encounter in the implementation of inclusive education there. Data was collected from six teachers in the Ashanti Region, three of which were selected purposively, and the other three were selected through the snowballing approach. The data was gathered through interviews via the phone and recorded. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and read through several times to ensure coherence and consistency between the audio recordings and the transcribed data. The researcher immersed herself into the data to obtain themes from the presentation of results. The identified themes were connected to the objectives of the study and again appeared frequently or several times within the discourse between the interviewer and the interviewees.

PARTICIPANTS' CHARACTERISTICS

The participants of the study were comprised of teachers (four from public schools and two from private educational institutions). Four of the participants were females while two were males. All the six participants were between the ages of 25 and 40 years and had five and more years of teaching experience. The participants had teacher's certificates and a bachelor's degree. The geographical locations of the participants represent the three principal demarcations of the region. Three of the participants lived in urban areas, 1 lived in a rural area, and one of them resided in a

suburban area. This distribution fairly represents the rural-urban distribution of the Ashanti Region, where the majority of the residents live in urban and urban settlements, with a minority living in rural areas. Aside from gender and disability (one of the participants is a disabled teacher) all the participants were almost homogenous; nonetheless, there was no association between gender and any of the variables identified or studied. Specifically, all the participants were from the Akan ethnic group (the dominant ethnic group within the study area). The people of the Ashanti Region (the Asantes) are the largest ethnic group among the Akans and thus it is not surprising that all the participants come from the Akan ethnic group. In terms of social structure, all the participants were moderately well to do, since they earn an income above the poverty line.

4.1 UNDERSTANDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Within this section, the discussion centres on how inclusive education is understood by teachers in the Ashanti Region of Ghana since teachers are perceived to be an integral component in the implementation of inclusive education. The discussion of results is organized under the following themes: teacher perceptions on Ghana's inclusive education policy, mediums by which they (teachers) became aware of the policy, and their perceptions on the effectiveness of the policy vis-a-vis the objectives.

4.1.1 Teacher perception of inclusive education

All the participants were knowledgeable of inclusive education, and they conceptualized it as providing equal educational opportunities to all students. This conceptualization the participants alluded to as connoting the education of children with disabilities concurrently with “normal” students.

> Hmmm!!! Ghana's policy on inclusive education denotes that, regardless of a child's disability they are all supposed to learn under the same environment. That is, they have to study in the same classroom setting without discriminating against each other and giving children with disabilities support services so that they will be able to achieve their goals, for every child is educable as outlined in the constitution of Ghana. -Participant F.

> We [teachers] are to help decentralize inclusive education, that is to say, that schools must accept children or students with disabilities so that they will not be sent to the original schools or the segregated schools. I'm aware it has started in some parts of the Central and Volta Region and some other regions as well -Participant B.

While the participants could not provide evidence as to the commencement of the inclusive policy in Ghana, they were fairly to largely aware of the intent or the purpose of the policy. Two of the participants reported that they are not aware of the period the policy took effect neither the Act nor statute that gave legal backing to the policy; they have a fair knowledge of the objectives of the policy. As an interviewee describes;

> I don't know if the 1991/1992 Constitution of Ghana or an Act or statute promulgated the inclusive education policy in Ghana. But I'm aware the policy states that education should be for all, and by all means, every school-going child whether the child has a disability or not, whether that child is female or male, must be given the necessary education at all levels within the same environment.-Participant C.

The majority of the participants indicated that inclusive education (when practised well as envisioned in the policy document) is of much importance because it will enable all children to be able to be part of their community and develop a sense of belonging and become better prepared

for life in the community as children and adults. It was also reported that inclusive education will better prepare students to be more accommodating towards people with disabilities and help all children with opportunities to develop friendships with one another and the challenges of discrimination and marginalization.

4.1.2 Mediums of obtaining information on inclusive education

As reported earlier, all the participants were knowledgeable of inclusive education policy in Ghana, although they were unable to provide information on the commencement of implementation of the policy. This section of the results presents the mediums by which the participants became aware of the inclusive education policy. Largely, the participants became aware of Ghana's inclusive education policy through courses they read in school as part of their preparation for teaching. This is to say, the majority of the participants became knowledgeable of inclusive education through courses they took while in the university or colleges of education. This viewpoint is buttressed by these quotations from two of the participants:

> Yeah! I will say, yes, I'm aware of the policy. I became aware during my university education. I remember back in the university we have a course called the introduction to inclusive education. From that course, I understood inclusive education as educating students with disabilities alongside students without disabilities in regular classrooms with adequate support services for the disabled children. -Participant B.

> My knowledge of inclusive education comes from the university. Specifically, at the University of Education, where I had my tertiary education, we were introduced to the concept. In addition, I attended an inclusive school and I also read inclusive education as a

course in both the college of education and the university, so it has expanded my knowledge on the subject matter.-Participant E.

The results also show that two of the participants obtained their knowledge of inclusive education through in-service training organized for teachers at periodic intervals. This evidence implies that teachers who might have not learnt anything about inclusive education while at the college of education or the university will have the opportunity to acquire vital skills, knowledge and competencies to deal with students with disabilities. Here is a quotation to epitomize this assertion:

> Frankly speaking, I have never participated in any inclusive education course or seminar during my school days. However, on two or three occasions we were trained and equipped with knowledge as to how to manage students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. To me, it was awesome because I had no idea about teaching students with disabilities prior to such training. -Participant C.

One of the participants reported that the internet served as the dominant source of information on inclusive education. To this participant, neither was he taught inclusive education in school nor in seminars or workshops organized to build the capacity of teachers. Thus, reading on the web provided him with much information on Ghana's inclusive education policy, which seeks to integrate both children with disabilities and children without disabilities:

> In fact, I read articles on the internet so it was through that I got to know about the inclusive education policy. Through the articles I read, I got to know that inclusive education meant to provide both pupils that are disabled and those who are not disabled including both females and males in the same learning environment as against the specialized schools that were established for disabled students in the past. -Participant F.

While the participants indicated that they mostly obtained information on inclusive education through courses they read at schools, in-service training and personal research or readings, it is worth mentioning that the participants reported supplementing the information they obtained from the dominant source with information from other sources. Some even reported receiving briefings from their colleague teachers or friends.

4.1.3 Perceptions on the effectiveness of the policy

Queried about their perceptions regarding the workability or applicability of the policy directive, the responses rather showed a high level of pessimism. Out of the six persons interviewed, three of them were of the view that, within the shortest possible time, the objectives of the policy will not be accomplished. These participants reiterated that within the Ghanaian context, disability largely is seen as inability and as such educating such children is a waste of time and resources. These statements from the participants provide a summary of their pessimistic views on the inclusive policy:

> Ooh now, for now, I will say, no, the policy is not working effectively because most Ghanaians haven't got to that level yet. Our understanding of disability is engulfed with negativity and the society seems to perceive people with disabilities to be unfit for anything. Thus, when it comes to education, the majority of people think educating children with disabilities is of no use. So, in the short term, we will not achieve the objectives of the policy. -Participant E.

> Sadly, society has already shaped the minds of people on disability and they see educating children with disabilities as not a priority. As such, I don't think we will get there anytime time soon. - Participant B.

Their pessimism also stems from the limited commitment to the implementation of the policy, which is manifested in the inadequacy of resources (financial, human and physical) to support the smooth implementation and running of the programme. The following statements to attest to this viewpoint:

> I know by and by we will get there but now as I speak with you, there are inadequate resources, and appropriate infrastructure like ramps on school campuses, and inadequacy of providing teaching and learning materials. How will the policy function without these and other essential materials? -Participant F.

> Hmm! no! no!! no!!! It's not practical and workable at all. At least not in the immediate future, because we don't have enough materials to support the policy and inclusive educators or teachers are not available and when they are available, the materials to use to help these children are also not available. Unless commitment is made towards the policy, it will be just passed as one of the usual policies and international conventions Ghana signs on to. -Participant A.

Despite their pessimism, these participants were of the view that putting in a mechanism to prepare parents, teachers and other educational stakeholders as well providing adequate financial, physical and human resources in the long-run will help the country achieve the objectives of the inclusive policy. However, in the short term, the policy objectives are unattainable.

Two of the other participants, however, expressed optimism about the inclusive education policy intended to admit and educate children with disabilities alongside children without disabilities in Ghana. To these participants, the policy is already integrating both categories of children and equipping them to become accommodating to disability and diversities of society.

> I think the inclusive education policy is yielding much impact. There are several children with disability who are in mainstream schools who might have been out of school in the absence of such a policy. Much of the students with disabilities will not have been in school if the policy is implemented, thus the policy is serving its purpose and working effectively.- Participant B.
>
> Much prospect lies in the inclusive education policy to not only educate children with disabilities but also create an avenue where both children get to interact and integrate as integration with people with disabilities will eventually happen in the world of work.- Participant A.

Although they were optimistic about the impact the programme is having on education, they lamented the inadequacy of resources for the implementation of the programme. If teachers were given the necessary training due to adapt to the demands of the various students the system could be improved. Thus, by providing teachers with the necessary or adequate training, then teachers will be equipped to improve the gains already made from implementing the inclusive education programme.

4.2 TEACHER BEHAVIOUR AS IMPEDIMENTS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The discussion in this section focuses on the experiences, practices and attitudes of teachers that create educational challenges for children with disabilities in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. These experiences, practices and attitudes of teachers are intentional or out of unconsciousness and serve as impediments or create educational barriers for children with disabilities. The identified teacher experiences, practices and attitudes which served as hindrances to the education of children with disabilities are negative perceptions with regards to inclusive education, less

commitment towards students with disabilities, discriminatory practices and non-usage of assistive teaching materials. The subsequent paragraphs provide a detailed account of the specific teacher attitudes that hinder the education of children with disabilities in mainstream schools in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

4.2.1 Negative perceptions about inclusive education

From the results, it was found that two out of the six participants reported negative teacher perceptions about inclusive education. While they pointed out that they had a positive perception about children's disabilities, in their line of work, they have come across several teachers who still have negative mind-sets towards disability and the inclusion of such children in mainstream schools. The results further indicated that these attitudes were magnified as a result of infrequent in-service training provided to the teachers in order to teach children with disabilities:

> You know as humans, we are shaped by our culture and over the years, children or people with disabilities have been seen in a certain negative light. Unfortunately, education has not changed the minds of some teachers and as a result, they are less receptive to including children with disabilities in mainstream schools alongside other normal children. This ultimately creates educational challenges to these children.-Participant A.

> We've not done enough as a country to drive home the idea of inclusive education among the populace. I don't think all stakeholders have been briefed and informed adequately. Some teachers still hold negative views about inclusive education and believe students with disabilities should not be educated or if they must be educated at all, that must be done in a specialized school. I'm a teacher with a disability and some teachers look down on me

because of that. They believe I should be teaching in a specialized school and not in mainstream schools.-Participant D

The negative perceptions of some teachers regarding inclusive education inhibit the education of children with disability alongside “normal” children stem from the limited training and orientation given to teachers on the policy. Prior to the implementation of the inclusive education policy, children with a disability were educated in special schools. The Akoropong School for the Blind in the Eastern Region, Dzoworlo Special School in Greater Accra region and Garden City Special School in Ashanti Region. All these schools operate as special schools in Ghana, and the training they received was provided by teachers with adequate training and knowledge on dealing with such students. As such, changing the status quo which has some cultural underpinnings is difficult especially without provisions to disabuse the minds of teachers about disability and education.

4.2.2 Less commitment to children with disabilities

Lack of commitment to children with disabilities is another roadblock that attitude of teachers serves as a barrier to inclusive education. This attitude is a consequence of the negative perception they have about educating children with disabilities in the same environment with children without disabilities. This problem is exacerbated by the misconception some of the teachers about disability. These misconceptions inevitably create a sense of non-commitment to teaching such students and obstruct the education of children with disabilities:

I have seen instances in which teachers were hesitant to teach children with disabilities. They do not pay attention to them as expected and as a result, these students lag behind the students without disabilities.-Participant A.

> Some time ago, I heard of a story in which a child with disability dropped out of school due to the less attention accorded to her by teachers…the child was suffering from hearing impairment and the teachers in the school were unwilling to pay particular attention to her. -Participant F.

> Most teachers handle large class sizes and it's difficult to attend to different children with different forms of disabilities and also to adapt to the needs of gifted children with disabilities. In effect, most of these children with disabilities exit school after enrolment because the teaching methods are inflexible and do not accommodate their varied learning needs and challenges. -Participant D.

School leaving by children with disabilities is the most significant recurring consequence of less commitment of teachers to inclusive education. Children with disabilities generally leave school at Basic 6 (grade 9) going to junior high school. Since teachers devote less attention to these children, they become easily frustrated as a result of being left behind as most children with disabilities need extra time in the classroom. This among other psychological effects pushes some children with disabilities to drop out of school. Discriminatory behaviour of some teachers towards children with disabilities is a demonstration of limited insights as to the causes of disability and a perceived notion of contagion. Teachers who have a misconception on disability due to lack of knowledge and the lack of usage of various teaching methodologies neglect the needs of students with disabilities and only concentrate on students without a disability. In effect, the prospects of educating children with disabilities in mainstream schools are challenged or hindered by teachers' attitudes or behaviours, which are underlined by cultural beliefs and misconceptions.

4.2.3 Discriminatory practices

The findings further demonstrated that individuals with disabilities were victims of varied discrimination from teachers. These discriminatory practices epitomize the deep-rooted traditional and/or cultural beliefs that children with disabilities must be excluded from mainstream societal activities, including education. These societal misconceptions are still evident within the current dispensation of inclusive education and serve as a barrier to the education of children with disabilities. The study again found that the isolation, victimization and stigmatization they experience go a long way to impact their perception and self-worth. These are statements from some teachers emphasizing the discrimination faced by children with disabilities:

> Some people believe disability is a consequence of a curse against humanity or the gods. Others think it's a result of sin against the gods. Teachers are not left out of this misconception. This erroneous notion about disability largely predisposes some of my colleague teachers to give preferential treatments to the children without disability compared to children [with] disabilities. -Participant A.

> Often, some of us teachers always use these children with disabilities in citing examples and, in most cases, these examples are demeaning and unpleasant. These discriminatory acts or behaviours ultimately dampen their confidence and self-esteem among their colleagues.-Participant D.

Other discriminatory behaviours identified from the study include not giving persons with disabilities the required opportunity to either express themselves or participate in class discussions. These attitudes increase the inequality between children with disabilities and the supposed "normal" children. In the long-run, some of the children with disabilities drop out of school or

become less involved in school activities. It is therefore important to state that, inclusive education not only seeks to integrate children with disabilities into the mainstream academic environment but also, systems are supposed to be tailored towards making such environments conducive and accommodating to them. The behaviour and attitudes of certain teachers thus serve as a barrier to the attainment of this objective since the self-esteem and self-worth of these students are weakened or damaged, thus exposing them to further societal abuse. Due to the stigmatization and discrimination experienced by children with disabilities, they come to believe that they possess certain attributes that are devalued by the larger society.

4.2.4 Non-usage of assistive teaching materials

The findings established that, although to a large extent, there is a lack or inadequacy of assistive teaching and learning materials for children with disabilities, in instances where these devices and materials exist, teachers fail to use them. The findings further revealed that, while on the surface teachers agree to inclusive education, at the implementing stage (classrooms), they exhibit less commitment or higher reservation about the policy. Non-acceptance and harsh treatment from some teachers were also identified as some behaviours that threaten the education of children with disabilities in inclusive schools. The non-acceptance or harsh treatment is seen in the refusal to use assistive teaching and learning materials. These are some statements from the participants to buttress this point:

> Some of the children with disabilities usually don't know how to use the assistive devices independently. Also, some of the teachers don't also have time to help the children utilize these devices. Teachers always complain of the fact that, there's too much work to cover and that the curriculum standards have to be addressed. In this regard, the students do not

feel comfortable since they cannot use assistive devices. This eventually limits their participation in class.-Participant B.

Some of the teachers also lack the technical expertise to fix and use these devices. The training provided to us sometimes does not cover these things. In some cases, only a few selected teachers are trained in the fixing of these devices. As a result, when they are not around, those who can't fix it neglect the children.-Participant E

Most often, assistive devices like hand frames for the visually impaired, hearing devices for hearing impaired, embossed reading materials, etc., are not available in schools. But in instances where they exist, there is limited usage stemming from the inability of the students to use the devices coupled with the inability of some teachers to use the device as well. One thing discovered by the study is that some teachers are less inclined towards helping students with disabilities by refusing to use assistive devices. Their refusal to use the assistive devices is a consequence of the misconceptions they have about disability and inclusive education in general. It is thus worth noting that neglecting the use of these assistive devices (hearing aid or the Braille machine or the stylus and the hand frame) has the potency of compounding the educational barriers encountered by children with disabilities. In all, children with disabilities were found to be at the receiving end.

4.2.5 Level of previous teacher experience with inclusive education

The results also showed that teachers with much experience were more accommodating and provided much care to children with disabilities. One of the participants reported that older teachers were more likely to create conducive environments for children with disabilities than inexperienced teachers. Their experience, the participant noted, will combine prolonged periods

of in-service training, personal learning and adaptive strategies that aid them to better integrate children with disabilities into mainstream academic environments than teachers who are inexperienced. In affirmation, the participant had this to say:

> Personally, I have been teaching for several years and the periodic in-service training I've been taken through has equipped me to handle children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. However, inexperienced teachers are more likely to be hostile to these children with disabilities and this creates an unfriendly environment for these children…In the long run, they either leave school or are not motivated any longer. -Participant C.

4.3 CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

Inclusive education requires the education of children with disabilities in regular schools, in their own community and by regular teachers. Inclusion values diversity. It acknowledges every learner's fundamental right to learn and accepts that every child has unique abilities and needs. In spite of all the efforts made in this direction, teachers are confronted with numerous barriers that hinder the effective implementation of the inclusive education policy. Thus, teachers in regular schools with inclusive education face many barriers and challenges. From the results, it was discovered that out of the numerous barriers that teachers encounter in teaching children with and without disabilities, these were paramount: inadequacy of resources, inaccessible facilities, lack of in-service training, lack of parental awareness on disability, poor class control due the large class size and the absence of specialized teachers.

4.3.1 Inadequacy of resources (teaching and learning materials)

Teaching children with disabilities within an inclusive classroom digresses from the "regular" programme. The findings revealed that children with disabilities require more contact

time or period, diverse methodologies and professional knowledge. This is only possible through an increase in resource allocation for teaching and learning. Further, the participants in the interviews unanimously indicated that children with disabilities are not required to meet the classroom standards, rather the classroom must meet the individual needs of all these children. However, the participants reported that teaching and learning resources, which include peripatetic services, support staff (sign language interpreters and Braille transcribers), regular and resource teachers among others, are not always available.

> The educational system has failed children with disabilities by not equipping them with appropriate teaching and learning materials. To me, the educational system has worked to exclude them from both the education process and broader social life. How do you expect teachers to teach children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms without these resources? Even the committed ones are complaining, and then ask you what the uncommitted ones will do?-Participant A.

> Imagine teaching a child with both visual and hearing impairment without teaching aids, for example, no tactile materials. What do you want the teacher to do? The teacher performed in the absence of requisite assistive learning materials? The school does not have a range of textbooks in Braille or materials in audio or easy-to-read formats. We are suffering as teachers in the implementation of this inclusive educational policy. We give our best, but without the requisite resources . . . it's a zero-sum game.-Participant C.

Additionally, it was found that the instructional methods, examination systems and inflexible curriculum also serve as barriers to teachers in the implementation of inclusive education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It was found that the curricula and the syllabus in most instances

are silent on how the contents must be delivered to individuals with disabilities. The problem is even compounded by the unavailability of teaching and learning materials. Teachers were compelled to devise strategies to teach and examine these students which are challenging to almost all of them. Implementing a successful inclusive education hinges on the provision of adequate teaching and learning resources, and this, the participants lamented, is lacking in most schools. This poses great barriers to implementing successful inclusion policies in the schools.

> You know we teachers have to adapt the curriculum to the school especially when the school does not have any material. Though I am trying my best, for me to be frank with you, I don't really consider children with disabilities in my class. I don't prepare any teaching materials to help students with disabilities; because it is difficult and time-consuming.-Participant E.

> During examinations and tests, it becomes difficult to test and evaluate them. Some of them are like strangers in the class but we as teachers can do little to help them since the learning materials they need are mostly not available. They come for class lessons and go from the classroom to their homes without learning anything especially the visually and hearing-impaired students. To me, they are enrolled to add to the numbers within the current system of inclusive education, but no one really considers them.-Participant A.

It was also reported that in instances where they devote their time to assist students with a disability, the entire class lags behind because most students with a disability need more time than their counterparts without disability to perform or finish a particular task. They end up spending a much longer period covering little and, in the end, they have difficulty completing their schedules as outlined in the syllabus. In effect, helping the students with disabilities or going beyond the

stipulated time for their lessons rather slows down the entire class and throws teachers out of their schedules. In support of this point, a participant stated that she was unable to complete a syllabus in a particular year because of the excessive time she spent on two students with disabilities. A teacher reported her to the headmistress for not completing her syllabus before the end of the academic year.

4.3.2 Inaccessible facilities (classrooms, washrooms, canteen and walkways)

The results also showed that all the participants lamented the inaccessible physical environments in the school. According to the participants, the schools were built without cognizance of children with disabilities. This inaccessibility is seen in the absence of disability-friendly walkways, washrooms, canteens, and classrooms. The schools had limited physical access for children with disabilities. This inaccessible nature of physical environments in the schools puts pressure on teachers with regards to guiding the school children with disabilities around the school premises. They lamented that on regular occasions, they had abandoned their classes to attend to children with disabilities. The time spent on overseeing the children with disabilities access canteens, washrooms and classrooms reduce their contact hours with their students, which invariably impacts teaching and learning. These are some statements to support this point:

> Most of the schools have limited physical access for students with disabilities, including school entrances, classrooms, and toilets. In some instances, some children who use wheelchairs cannot remain in school. For us [teachers] who wanted to avert the challenges these students were confronted with, we have to spend additional time attending to them thereby leaving the class or contact hours. In the end, where lies the academic performance we want to achieve? - Participant B.

> Some time ago, a parent enrolled her daughter in one public school but then, the teachers told him her child is disabled and does not fit with children without disabilities since facilities do not exist to make life comfortable for her. When some of us pleaded with the administration to accept the student, we became the only caretakers. When we are not in school, no teacher is willing to help the child. This is really frustrating and challenges the education of children with disabilities alongside those without disabilities.-Participant A.

The participants also reported that the schools have inaccessible entrances and classrooms, no internal stairs, an inaccessible toilet, inaccessible cafeterias and playgrounds that were hostile to, for example, children who use wheelchairs to move freely. Three of the participants indicated that the school does not provide specific, individualized support for children in the classroom, such as an aide who can provide direct support in personal care, moving around the school, or other tasks. As an alternative, teachers encourage other students (those without disabilities) to support their peers who have physical disabilities by moving them around and caring from them. Despite this, the participants indicated that they have to continually check on these students, and this increases their responsibility, and sometimes engages them outside the classroom. This consequently limits the contact hours they have to interact.

> In the absence of a disability-friendly environment in our schools, we teachers only encourage the students without disability to help their colleagues… and when there is no student without disability around to help, the teacher has to just leave a class regardless of what you the teacher you are doing at that particular time and go attend to the student with disability. -Participant D

The reasons for the unfriendly disability environment in the schools were attributed to the old buildings and the lesser financial commitment to the implementation of the inclusive education policy. From the interviews, it was established that the school buildings and facilities were built several years ago in the 1970s to 1990s after Ghana's independence, in most cases before the implementation of the inclusive education policy. These buildings were thus designed and built without conscious efforts to accommodate people with disabilities.

4.3.3 Lack of in-service training

The problem of inadequacy of in-service training was reported by the participants as challenges teachers encounter in teaching children with disabilities alongside those without a disability. In all, three of the participants had no formal in-service training with regards to inclusive education. They only rely on the knowledge they acquired during school days in courses they read on inclusive education. The absence of in-service training to equip and re-strengthen their skills and competencies regarding teaching and dealing with diverse students with disabilities aggravates the obstacles the teachers encounter.

> Ever since I've started teaching, there has not been a single workshop on how to handle children with disabilities. And these students have different needs. We only rely on our personal learning or knowledge to scale through. It's challenging especially for the young teachers, and you see some of them yelling, beating, knocking and punishing such students regularly.- Participant A.

> Every day, you see different students with different disabilities and you ask yourself how I'm going to deal with them? We are not trained to help them, yet they push them to us. It

is so nauseating and we always have difficulty handling them. We wish they still educate them in special schools.-Participant A.

The results also showed that for the participants who received some form of training on teaching students with disabilities, nonetheless the training was inadequate, and also each teacher received a particular training to handle a type of student, relative to the demands of teaching such children. In most cases, the training was not focused on teaching children with disabilities alongside children without disabilities. In instances where the training centred on inclusive education, the participants noted that they were trained in only some selected aspects of disabilities, that is, either a teacher is trained to teach a person with visual impairment, hearing impairment or mobility impairment, etc. This instance creates a problem for them with regard to meeting the demands of the different children with different types of disabilities. It is thus left with teachers to improvise and learn to adjust to these new situations in the absence of training. Not only does this put pressure on teachers, but it creates discomfort for them and students without a disability, as well as students with a disability, who think and feel they are neglected and their needs are not met as well. This discourages students with disabilities and hinders their learning process.

No, I wasn't trained on all the different kinds of disabilities. For example, I was trained in the visual aspect that’s the education of the visually impaired but we have other aspects like education in intellectual disability and education in hearing impaired. So if I meet a child who is suffering from mental or intellectual disability, to handle such a child becomes a problem unless I find someone who was trained in that aspect to help the child or that situation.-Participant C.

The inadequacy, infrequency and nature of the workshops, seminars and training and in major cases, the absence of these training incapacitates teachers with regards to teaching children with disabilities. This challenge encountered by the teachers invariably affects their commitment and dedication to inclusive education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

4.3.4 Lack of parental awareness of disabilities

Three of the study participants noted that some parents of children with disabilities are disinterested in the welfare of their children and fail to provide them with adequate care. In another instance, some of these parents are overly protective. Both scenarios are viewed to be problematic for the child and for their teachers. The disinterested parents have no involvement with their child's education or interaction with their teachers, whereas overprotective parents may have unrealistic expectations from the child and the child's teachers. Both attitudes shape children in negative ways. Parental disinterest makes children with disabilities less motivated and parents who are overprotective often diminish their child's confidence and make it harder for them to learn. Some participants said this affirmation of the above point.

> Hmmm, lack of awareness on the part of some parents leads to negligence. Actually, some of the parents just neglect their children since they think it is a taboo or is a curse having such children around them so they rely on their teachers to take care of their children. Like I have a situation here, we are doing everything to get the child what he is supposed to have to make learning easy but the parents are not helping or are not coping.-Participant D.

The misconception that children with disabilities can transmit disability to other children also constitutes a major for teachers. In some instances, parents with children without a disability do not want their children to sit at same desk with those children with disabilities. When these

parents see their children together or in groups with children with disabilities, they become irritated and attack the teachers. Sometimes the children without disabilities report to their parents the next day; parents sometimes confront teachers at the school premises to attack them. In explaining this point, the following statement was made by a teacher:

> I had an experience with a parent who brought cane into my classroom to whip me up because I made her son share the same desk with a child with a disability. Not for the timely intervention of a male colleague of mine, I don't know what will happen. It's challenging dealing with these parents. -Participant B.

Meanwhile, some parents of children with disabilities reported that they have seen much improvement in the children due to the fact that they are in an inclusive school. The parents of children without disabilities are of the view that children with disabilities should be taken to special schools where their compatriots with disabilities exist. This challenge thus compounds the already underscored obstacles the teachers are facing.

4.3.5 Poor class control due to the large size of the classroom

The findings depict that the concept of having classrooms that contain both students with disabilities and students without disability is a challenge for teachers. This type of education poses new challenges for inclusive education teachers with regard to the management of classes and students. For an illustration, two of the participants noted that many students who have no disabilities are unaccustomed to dealing or interacting with those with disabilities. Teachers in these classes are charged with eliminating cruelty and insensitivity from among their students and ensuring that those with disabilities are treated with respect. However, the difficulty comes when

the classes are large and it becomes difficult to manage and oversee everything that goes on in the class.

> Hmmm, it is not easy, we have a class size of over 40 children and out of this class, you get about 10 people with different disabilities and our lessons have a time frame. Sometimes 30 minutes, sometimes 50 minutes, so after teaching you have to attend to those children with disabilities. So, you attend so many children. While helping one, the other student will also bring his work. So, after you finish a class then another class will be looking for you to come in and help so it is so tedious everyone needs attention in the class. I am the only person who is a special educator in my school and I have to attend to all children with disability in the different classes.-Participant E.

> Sometimes, it's difficult to identify issues of abuse among the students because the classes are too large and we cannot see to all the activities. Some of the normal students hide behind this and bully the disabled students. But we can't do anything because you don't have evidence. To me, I think there should be cameras [Closed Circuit Television] on the compounds of schools with several children with disability to circumvent these abuses. -Participant B.

There is an expectation for teachers to always ensure they manage their classes effectively, irrespective of the size, to identify and rectify any form of abuse, and to provide maximum attention to all students with or without a disability. This inclusion becomes a herculean task according to the participants. This stems from the numerous tasks and responsibilities teachers have aside from tending to their students. This situation puts excessive pressures on some teachers

and the less committed ones easily overlook such abuses and pay lesser attention to children with disabilities.

> Hmmm, it is not easy in the Ghanaian setting. We have a class of about 40 students and out of this class there are about 10 students with different type of disabilities and our lessons also have a time frame. We have 30 minutes for half a lesson and 50 minutes full lesson so after teaching, you need to attend to students with disabilities. So, you attend to so many students at a time. While helping one student, another student will bring his work. So, after I finish one class then another class will be looking for me to come in and help so it is so tedious everyone needs attention in the class. I am the only person who is an inclusive educator in my school and I have to attend to all these children with disabilities in their different classes and sometimes it is overwhelming.-Participant E

4.3.6 Absence of specialized teachers

The absence of specialized educators or teachers was identified as one of the challenges confronting inclusive education from the perspective of teachers. Two of the participants who made this assertion indicated that, although they love to teach in inclusive classrooms, there is a lack of in-service training to equip teachers with the requisite skills to accomplish the purpose of the existence of inclusive education in schools.

> It is thus common to see a teacher taken from class to attend to a child with a disability simply because he or she is caring and there is no inclusive education teacher or aide. Sometimes you return to your class and find out that, the period is over. How do you expect me to make up for the lost period?-Participant C.

One of the participants indicated that in other instances, these inclusive education teachers exist and are willing to teach but they find themselves tasked with responsibilities that remove them from the classroom. Inclusive education teachers often find themselves being required to go to meetings, conduct assessments and deal with loads of paperwork. These challenge other teachers without requisite competencies in managing these children.

> Since I am the co-ordinator for the Girl-child Education in my school, sometimes I am called for meetings and workshops and I am unable to be in the classroom to help the students with disabilities and these students are unattended to for as long as my meeting or workshop is done. They miss some lessons because I was not around and also when have to mark students' assignments and to do report cards. -Participant A

4.3.7 Low motivation of students with disabilities

The low motivation of children with disabilities was also identified as an obstacle that teachers encounter while teaching in inclusive classrooms. One of the participants noted that the children with disabilities are a bit isolated, especially those with a severe impairment. Their low motivation and low self-esteem are consequences of the societal perception of disability and the treatments meted out to them. Some of them have parents that are overprotective or less concerned about their children.

> I will say most of them are not happy because of the discrimination and stigmatization they encounter. So, students with disability isolate themselves from students without disability and most of them don't contribute to class discussions. Most of them see themselves as incapable. In class when the 'normal' students are talking the students with disabilities do

not talk, and sometimes too they don't feel like writing when you give class assignments, and all this is because of the isolation. - Participant D.

The low motivation of students with disabilities is further worsened by the perceptions and attitudes of teachers and colleagues. These attitudes and behaviours inevitably derogate children with disabilities and create in them a sense of not belonging to the school environment. This compels them to develop a coping mechanism, which is to isolate themselves from school and classroom activities. Teachers are confronted with finding means and ways to motivate and lift up the self-confidence of these children to effectively take part in classroom discussions and other activities in the schools. In some instances, teachers themselves lack the motivation to teach students with disabilities. The inadequate materials and minimal salaries from the government and school authorities do not motivate teachers.

Remarks from other teachers are discouraging, sometimes the teachers are against you the inclusive educator. They ask questions like "but you what are you doing?" 'Why don't you find something better to do than wasting your time on these children?' 'So won't you come to the classroom?' These children are worrying; they are worrying you, because they lack motivation. Just leave them to their fate. These comments thus discourage some of my colleagues.-Participant A

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that all the participants have adequate knowledge of Ghana's inclusive education policy that seeks to integrate children with and without a disability. The participants became aware of this mainstreaming policy within the educational sector through courses they took while receiving training at the colleges of education or the university. In-service and personal initiatives through reading on the web were other sources or mediums through which the participants obtained knowledge and information about the policy. On the whole, negative perceptions and discriminatory practices of teachers were identified as behaviours and attitudes of teachers that create educational challenges to students with disabilities. One major challenge faced by teachers is inaccessible school environments and the absence of teaching and learning materials, absence of in-service training and poor parental awareness of disability among others.

5.1 TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The findings revealed that all the study participants are knowledgeable of Ghana's inclusive educational policy. The participants of the study understand or comprehend inclusive education as a policy initiative directed at ensuring children with disabilities are educated in the same schools or environments as children without disabilities. This mainstreaming they believe is important towards ensuring children with disabilities are educated. This finding is in conformity with the assertion made by Avramidis et al. (2000), where they indicated that research has shown those teachers who have past experiences by way of education or handling persons with disabilities appear to see the concept of inclusive education as feasible and important. The positive perceptions

of teachers regarding inclusive education inadvertently impact or influence the way and manner in which they interact and help the children (Avramidis et al., 2000).

Largely, the participants became aware of Ghana's inclusive education policy through courses they read in school as part of their preparation for teaching. This is to say, the majority of the participants became knowledgeable of inclusive education through courses they took while in the university or colleges of education. Other participants also indicated that their source of knowledge and information about inclusive education is in-service training and reading of web publications. In their study, "The effects of school-based practice on student teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Northern Ireland, Lambe and Bones (2007) revealed that training in inclusive education and teaching of students with disabilities creates a positive perception and attitude among teachers. These positive perceptions and attitudes invariably inform how they treat and handle these individuals.

The findings further revealed that the participants were divided on the prospects of the inclusive education policy. Three out of the six participants were pessimistic about the prospects of the policy in attaining its objectives. To these participants, their pessimism is a consequence of negative socio-cultural belief about disability and the limited commitment to the materialization of the policy by way of resource provision (human, physical, financial and technical). This point was noted by several researchers when they explored the issue of inclusive education (Polat, 2011; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001).

This statement represents the state of affairs of inclusive education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Within this current state, these participants see no hope or future for the policy as little is being done to make the programme viable and effective as outlined in its objectives. In a study

undertaken in South Africa, Bornman and Rose (2017) found that "lack of support and resources, as well as the prevailing negative attitudes toward disability, are contributory factors to the underperformance of the policy inclusive education. The findings further demonstrated that two of the other participants expressed optimism about the inclusive education policy intended to admit and educate children with disabilities in Ghana. To these participants, the policy is already integrating both children with and without disabilities and equipping them to become accommodating to disability and diversities of society. According to Evers (2014), the implementation of the inclusive education policy helps eliminate the fact that, society thinks children with disabilities at their school-going age need special attention and logistics to be able to learn effectively. The finding also supports the notion that effective teaching processes that address the needs of the pupils with disabilities would create a platform for all to participate in the teaching and learning process (Lindsay, 2003; Ainscow, 2002). If the diverse needs of the student with or without disabilities are met, it will help in the effectiveness of teaching on the side of teachers and learning on the side of students and this will bring equity and equality for all students to take part in the educational process.

Although these participants expressed optimism about the impact the programme is having on education, they lamented the inadequacy of resources for the implementation of the programme. If teachers are given the necessary training due to adapt to the demands of the various students the system can be improved. These lamentations are in accordance with the assertions by Chhabra, Strivasta, and Strivasta (2010) that teacher attitudes, lack of in-service training and inadequate resources in the implementation of inclusive education pose as obstacles to effective inclusive education in Botswana. In Cameroon, Arrah and Swain (2014) found when they investigated teachers' views of students with disabilities in Cameroonian secondary schools that, without

adequacy of resources in all forms, the purpose of inclusive education will remain a dream. Thus, by providing teachers with the necessary or adequate training then teachers will be equipped to improve the gains already made from implementing the inclusive education programme.

5.2 TEACHER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS AS HINDRANCES TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The findings identified teacher experiences, practices and attitudes which served as hindrances to the education of children with disabilities as negative perceptions with regards to inclusive education, less commitment towards students with disabilities, discriminatory practices and non-usage of assistive teaching materials. Negative perceptions with regards to inclusive education are one of the identified teacher traits or characteristics that undermine mainstreaming children with disabilities alongside those without disabilities. These perceptions are born out of the perceptions of the larger society with regard to disability, which is seen as an inability. This perception invariably clouds the minds of some teachers, and they tend to treat children with disabilities in a manner deemed inappropriate. Zollers, Ramanathan, and Yu (1999) opined that attitudes of teachers play an important role in the process of making inclusive education effective since these attitudes affect the decision of pupils as to whether they belong and can participate in school activities or vice versa. The findings also mirror what these scholars (Tiegerman-Farber, 1998; Peltier, 1997) revealed, that most school teachers feel unprepared and scared and find it unbearable to teach pupils with disabilities, and thereby oppose the idea of inclusive education.

To the participants, negative perceptions of the teachers towards inclusive education are magnified by the limited in-service training provided to teachers. This problem strengthens the negative culture or attitude some teachers have built or cultivated over the years through the form

of socialization they received while growing up. Bennett, DeLuca, and Bruns (1997) argued that access to disability-related support services for teachers and training in disability issues are in limited availability, and this creates a challenge for teachers to agree with the idea of inclusive education. However, Leyser and Tappendorf (2001) noted that if teachers are given the necessary skills and training to cope with disabled pupils, then they will succumb to the concept of inclusive education. The consequence of these negative perceptions is a continuous meting of corporal punishments for these children with disabilities in schools. Therefore, as LeyRoy and Simpson (1996 cited in Agbenyega, 2007) in Ghana reported, if mainstream teachers are made to start teaching pupils with disabilities, their confidence level in teaching the pupils with disabilities will increase over time and will transform the negative perceptions they have about the pupils with disabilities in the long-run. Nonetheless, this is only possible through continuous training of teachers to have the capacity to develop positive perceptions and attitudes towards children with disabilities.

The study also established less commitment of teachers towards children with disabilities as behaviour creates barriers to inclusive education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. This attitude is born out of the negative perception they have about educating children with disabilities in the same environment with children without a disability. According to Garland-Thomson (2011), the non-commitment of teachers to students with disabilities creates educational challenges for the children. This problem is exacerbated by the misconception of some of the teachers about disability. These misconceptions inevitably create a sense of non-commitment to teaching such students and obstruct the education of children with disabilities in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. To buttress this point, Briggs et al. (2002) indicated that if training and education in disability and disability-related issues are inadequate, the chances of the teachers not preferring to teach children

with disabilities become higher. The findings established that school dropout is the most significant recurring consequence of less teacher commitment to inclusive education, and it is in tandem with the findings of Loeb, Arne, and Eide (2004). It is thus imperative for educational stakeholders to repeatedly train, monitor and supervise teachers so as not to deviate from accomplishing the objectives of inclusive education.

The findings further showed that individuals with disabilities experienced varied forms of discrimination from their teachers. These discriminatory practices exemplify the deep-rooted traditional and or cultural beliefs that children with disabilities must be excluded from mainstream societal activities including education. The study identified that the various forms of isolation, victimization and stigmatization they experience impact their perception and self-worth. These children experienced neglect, derogatory comments and inhumane treatment from some teachers. The inequality between the children with disabilities and those without a disability is magnified by these teachers' actions. They are pushed to the periphery in classroom discussions and other school activities, and this reinforces the views some of them form about themselves, that they are not needed or accommodated in mainstream schools.

Another behaviour or attitude of teachers that creates educational challenges for children with a disability is the resistance of teachers towards helping children use assistive devices. While it was largely established that assistive devices that are intended to make teaching and learning accessible for children with a disability were mostly unavailable, teachers do not make use of them in jurisdictions where they are available. The non-usage of the devices was attributed to two factors. The first factor has been the lower acceptance of children with disabilities by the teachers. This point is underscored by Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden (2000), when they touted that several teachers having foreseen the challenges that inclusive education poses to them, coupled with their

negative perception of disability, become resistant to inclusive education. Studies have indicated that teachers have resources like assistive listening devices (small microphones) and headphones, reader talking books, Braille printers and embossers, and tactile teaching aids to teach students with disabilities (Alexander, 2001; Avramidis et al., 2000 UK).

The second reason for which some teachers do not use assistive devices in inclusive classrooms is due to the inability to operate these devices and technologies. There is evidence that assistive devices have significant effects on children with multiple disabilities (Sullivan & Lewis, 2000; Hutinger et al., 1996), however, there is a strong indication that assistive devices are currently underutilized within educational environments (Scott, 1997; Derer et al., 1996). It was discovered in the study that some teachers are less inclined towards helping students with disabilities by refusing to use assistive devices. It is thus worth noting that neglecting the use of these assistive devices (hearing aid or the Braille machine or the stylus and the hand frame) has the potency of compounding the educational barriers encountered by students with disabilities. In the event where these children feel they are treated unfairly, they resort to dropping out of school. This assertion is also made by Loeb, Arne, and Eide (2004) when they stated that, children with disabilities tend to drop out of school when they become frustrated.

The study also established that young teachers are less open to teaching children with disabilities. The finding is well noted in earlier research where teachers who are advanced in age are willing to teach children with disabilities (Agran et al., 2002). Again, the study showed that teachers who are inexperienced are less tolerant of teaching children with disabilities. As stated by Briggs, Johnson, Shepherd, and Sedbrook (2002), teachers who have long periods of teaching experience have encountered several children with disabilities who are able to mingle and are more willing to teach people with disabilities compared to younger teachers. It is apparent that the

number of youthful teachers outnumbers the aged teachers and this creates a challenge for inclusive education. It is, for this reason, training and education in disability and disability-related issues are supposed to equip these teachers, but the inadequacy of this training (Briggs, Johnson, Shepherd, &Sedbrook, 2002), as documented in the earlier discussions, perpetuates this problem.

5.3 BARRIERS FACED BY TEACHERS IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

Despite the prolonged journey of inclusive education, the policy is still challenged with numerous problems. Inclusion values diversity, acknowledges every student's fundamental right to learn, and accepts that every child has unique abilities and needs. In spite of all the efforts made in this direction, teachers are confronted with numerous barriers that hinder the effective implementation of the inclusive education policy. Thus, teachers in regular schools with inclusive education face many barriers and challenges. This section of the discussion will present the discourse of the barriers confronted by teachers in advancing inclusive education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

5.3.1 Inadequacy of teaching and learning materials

One of the prominent challenges the participants touted is the unavailability of teaching and learning materials. The participants reported that teaching and learning resources, which include peripatetic services, support staff (sign language interpreters and Braille transcribers), regular and special teachers among others, are not always available. This problem necessitates teachers to always improvise and become creative in order to meet the demands of the children with disabilities in the absence of these resources and materials. Teaching and learning resources, according to Oyugi and Nyaga (2010), include peripatetic services, support staff (sign language interpreters and Braille transcribers), community involvement, regular and special teachers among

others, and their unavailability or inadequacy threatens the ability to provide functional and effective inclusive education.

In a study conducted by Masuku (2010), he concluded that the absence of adequate teaching and learning materials in Swaziland schools implies the non-preparedness of the country towards the implementation of inclusive education. The study also discovered that, in the absence of teaching and learning materials, teachers have to spend longer periods explaining and assisting such students. In some instances, they have to move at a pace that makes them accomplish little with regards to objectives outlined in the curricula and the syllabus. In extreme cases, the examination of these individuals becomes problematic since the syllabus is prepared in rigid formats that cannot be easily modified to suit the needs of people with disabilities. The inadequacy of resources to provide teaching and learning materials for children with disabilities is thus a matter of great concern to educational actors (Alexander, 2001; Avramidis et al., 2000).

5.3.2 Inaccessible facilities (classrooms, washrooms, canteen and walkways)

The findings demonstrated that inaccessible physical environments in schools constitute a challenge to teachers in the mainstreaming of disabled and non-disabled school children. The inaccessible school environments manifested in the absence of disability-friendly walkways, washrooms, canteens, and classrooms. The absence of these facilities to ease movement for children with disabilities meant that teachers have to always be on the lookout and oversee that these children move around and attend to their needs without barriers. In extreme cases, some of the participants reported having to leave class and attend to the needs of these students. This puts pressure on them since they have to make up time and cover the lost contact hours. According to Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001), the restructuring of the school environment to meet the needs of

children with disabilities involves additional costs which school authorities are not ready to bear, although these facilities are requisites in realizing the objectives of inclusive education. This stems from the unwillingness of educational actors to provide support for disabled pupils in the school (Nel, Müller,& Rheeders, 2011). This implies that teachers must continually check on these students, and this increases their responsibility, sometimes engages them outside the classroom, and consequently limits the contact hours they have to interact with their students.

5.3.3 Lack of in-service training

The study again discovered that some of the participants never received any form of training regarding inclusive education. These teachers rely on the lessons they were taught back in school (colleges of education and or universities). These teachers expressed their frustration at the current situation in which they are determined and willing to teach these children, but they are deficient in the required skills to actually teach. As stated by Chhabra, Strivasta, and Strivasta (2010), lack of training in inclusive education poses difficulties in effective inclusive education, since it makes the teachers either unprepared or less accommodating to inclusive education. The study showed that teachers who are inexperienced are less tolerant of teaching children with disabilities. As stated by Briggs, Johnson, Shepherd, and Sedbrook (2002), teachers who have long periods of teaching experience and have taught children with disabilities are more willing to teach people with disabilities compared to younger teachers. Therefore, in-service training serves as an important avenue for reorienting teachers and providing them with knowledge and the ability to handle inclusive classrooms. Therefore, if training and education in disability and its related issues are inadequate, the teachers become less tolerant and willing to teach children with disabilities (Briggs, Johnson, Shepherd,& Sedbrook, 2002).

5.3.4 Lack of parental awareness of disabilities

Parents' misconceptions about disability and their response and reactions to inclusive education also serve as a source of concern to teachers. Throughout the study, it has been highlighted that Ghanaian society, as of 2017, was gradually coming to terms with disability due to recent education on the media towards Ghana's Vision 2020 on education.

The Ghanaian culture perceives disability as a curse or punishment for wrongdoing and needs to isolate these children or people from the larger society. Parents of children without a disability find it irritating and uncomfortable when their children mingle and associate with children with disabilities (Evers, 2014).This erroneous perception of some parents creates problems or difficulty for teachers as they become constant recipients of abuse and other unfair treatments from these parents. A teacher narrated an incident in which she was chased by an infuriated parent for allowing her child to sit on the same desk with another child with a physical disability. These actions by parents make it hard for the teachers to promote cohesion and oneness among the children since the children frequently report teachers to their parents for encouraging them to either sit with or play with children with disabilities. Similar findings were made when Wehbi (2006) investigated the challenges to inclusive education in Lebanon. He found a lack of parental commitment to the education of their children alongside children with disabilities.

5.3.5 Poor class control due to the large size of the classroom

Inclusive classrooms are supposed to meet the requirements of students with disabilities' situation, which ultimately deviates from what pertains to regular schools (Oliver & Reschly, 2010). Without adequate and conscious efforts towards making classrooms disability-friendly, teachers are confronted with the task of attending to students with varied impairments. From the

study, it was revealed that the class sizes were too large, thus making it difficult for the teachers to adequately monitor and supervise all students, especially the ones with disabilities. The participants reported that, in most cases, due to the large class sizes, some students hide and bully the ones with disabilities. But without much evidence, teachers are left with no option than to let the bullies go scot-free. These children with disabilities are often ridiculed, stigmatized and victimized in class and it becomes difficult for teachers to manage the situation. It was also identified, due to the large class sizes, that it is easier for teachers to neglect these children since they often demand much attention, which invariably holds the class back in accomplishing the objectives outlined in the syllabus. Teachers are therefore torn in between meeting their schedules alongside providing adequate care attention to children with disabilities. Oliver and Reschly (2010) stated that inappropriate classroom management challenges the effectiveness of inclusive education. Obviously, unmanaged classrooms or lack of control in class questions the efficiency of the teacher and also challenges the effectiveness of teaching and learning in an inclusive education environment.

5.3.6 Absence of specialized teachers

The absence of specialized educators or teachers was identified as one of the challenges confronting inclusive education from the perspective of teachers. Also, teachers stated that they like teaching in inclusive classrooms but lack of in-service training to equip them with the requisite skills to accomplish that necessitates the existence of special educators in schools. The findings again demonstrate that, in schools where special educators exist and are willing to teach, they often find themselves tasked with responsibilities that remove them from the classroom. This challenges other teachers without requisite competencies in managing these children. According to Arrah and

Swain (2014), the absence of special teachers to work with students with disabilities puts pressure on teachers in mainstream school.

5.3.7 Low motivation of children with disabilities

The last, but not least, challenge teachers face in mainstream schools is the low motivation of children with disabilities. Children with disabilities are more isolated especially those with a severe impairment and also those with a physical disability. Their low motivation and low self-esteem are a result of societal perception of disability and the treatments and how they are treated. Some of them have parents that are overprotective or less concerned about their children. In effect, most of them are not happy due to the discrimination and stigmatization they face on a daily basis, and they resort to disengagement from other students or school activities. In such instances, teachers are confronted with finding means and ways to motivate and lift up the self-confidence of these children to effectively take part in classroom discussions and other school activities. Similar assertions were made by Ruijs and Peetsma (2009) in the Netherlands, who reported, teachers are challenged with the issue of handling children with disabilities who are not motivated to be in school partly because of stigmatization or the unavailability of a friendly learning environment.

5.4 MISFITS AND FITS ACROSS FINDINGS

This study sought to find how the environment limits the abilities of individuals. According to Garland-Thomson (2011), the concept of misfit is not about the disabled body but in the fullness of varying lived embodiments, and that the experiences of disability are found in time and place. She argues that the notion of a misfit is materialistic. It relates to how bodies interact with the environment relating to space and limited by time. That is, misfit is created when a lack of

resources or the inaccessible environment limits individuals and so disability is seen. The interaction of cultural practices, discriminatory attitudes, and the inadequacy of teaching and learning materials, and the inaccessibility of buildings influence teachers' perceptions and attitudes with regards to inclusive education.

Cultural beliefs constitute a major obstacle to inclusive education in Ghana. Parents' misconceptions about disability and their response and reactions to inclusive education were identified as a concern to teachers. The Ghanaian society has a culture that perceives disability as a curse or a punishment for wrongdoing and, thus, there is a need to isolate these children or people from the larger society. Cultural beliefs, customs, negative attitudes and misconceptions due to societal "norms" can create educational challenges for children with disabilities and without disabilities to fit or misfit in the educational environment. This situation is further worsened by the weak legal system in Ghana, which is not sufficient in itself, to guarantee disability rights in such developing countries (Grischow, 2015). According to the social model, disability is a social construction, hence changes are required to redefine who is disabled and who not (Hughes & Paterson, 1997) is. It is therefore imperative for conscious efforts to be made at reorienting the Ghanaian society through disabusing their minds with regards to the negative perceptions they have about disabled persons. This will inevitably reduce the misfit experiences of disabled people.

Additionally, within the misfits' theory, personal traits influence and other discriminatory practices worsen the situation of individuals with a disability (Davies, 2008). The personal traits which interact to affect how people perceive and relate with children or people with disability are gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, cultural ideologies and the outcomes of theses interactions in terms of power. The cultural attributes of the Ashanti people perceive people with disabilities to be cursed and they

cannot be made leaders, and this cultural belief influences how teachers perceive and relate with children with disabilities, which creates educational challenges. These traits invariably influence teacher experiences, practices and attitudes which serve as hindrances to the education of children with disabilities. These discriminatory practices are negative perceptions of inclusive education, less commitment towards students with disabilities, and non-usage of assistive teaching materials. All these practices can create misfits in the classroom. Prior to the implementation of the inclusive education policy, children with a disability were educated in special schools and this training was done by teachers who had adequate training and knowledge. As such, changing the status quo has some cultural underpinnings, and that is a problem especially without provisions to counter the attitudes of teachers about disability and education.

Also, physical, social and systemic barriers create misfits for students with disabilities. Inaccessibility was identified as a concern in terms of misfits for children with disabilities. How accessible schools are built or designed contributes to a person being a misfit or fit. If wheelchairs are provided to students with mobility impairments and the schools as well as classrooms are accessible, these students will be able to have access to education by going to school and will be able to move in the classroom regardless of their disability, and these students will not be seen as misfits in the society. Despite the promulgation of inclusive education, school authorities are not willing and ready to bear the cost of restructuring the classroom environment to suit the needs of disabled pupils (Zollers et al., 1999).

Teachers have inadequate expertise to teach in inclusive classrooms and this, together with the absence of resources like assistive listening devices (small microphones) and headphones, reader talking books, Braille printers and embossers, tactile teaching aids, computers and computer software, and other teaching and learning materials (Alexander, 2001; Avramidis et al., 2000),

normally transform into severe concerns on the part of teachers to be involved in inclusive educational settings. Kuyini and Desai (2008) discovered that in Ghana the teachers' inadequate knowledge and low positive attitudes were the cause for inadequate use of effective instructional practices, and this has been confirmed by the present study.

Relating the findings to the theory of fits and misfits, which is a social model concept of disability, it was found that socio-cultural practices, personal traits, discriminatory practices, physical barriers, and inadequacy of teaching and learning materials were factors that influenced the teachers' experiences and attitudes towards inclusive education in the Ashanti Region. While the study established that despite the implementation of inclusive education in Ghana over the decades, limited success has been seen. The policy is challenged by the inadequacy of resources and commitment to the effective implementation of the programme. In the face of this, however, the preparedness and willingness of teachers in this study to teach in inclusive classrooms are positive findings that educational actors can rely on going into the future to augment the gains of the policy.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Ghana's inclusive education is encapsulated in the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education policy to increase access, retention and participation for all children of school-going age in Ghana, which includes children with disabilities (GES, 2004). Also, the Ghana Disability Law emphasizes that all public basic schools should adopt inclusive education starting from the year 2016 (Ghana Disability Law, 2006). The feasibility of this policy remains unknown since there are a lot of challenges attached to this concept of inclusive education. Numerous researchers have proven that most principals, school proprietors and teachers, having foreseen the challenges that inclusive education can pose on them, fail to adopt it (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000). This study examined the challenges and experiences of teachers of inclusive education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana and how culture, practices and experiences of teachers influence the education of children with disabilities. The attitudes, experiences and behaviours of teachers play an important role in the process of making inclusive education effective.

The study brought to light the awareness of teachers with regards to inclusive education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The high level of awareness and knowledge about inclusive education on the part of teachers, which is a result of the education they received and to a minimal extent in-service training undertaken, holds prospects for the effective implementation of inclusive education. However, this does not signify the end of the road, since the study further revealed negative teacher perceptions about disability and the education of disabled children alongside children without disabilities required of all educational actors to drive home the need for inclusive education. Teachers are integral components in the implementation of inclusive education. Their

perceptions are the key to the success of inclusive programs, as they are critical to the process of including students with disabilities into regular classes. Nonetheless, the findings also established that the negative perceptions of some teachers about disability and inclusive education make them hostile and unaccommodating to these children, thereby creating educational barriers for disabled children. Contingent on this, the Ghana Education Service is expected, as a matter of urgency, to institute (where there are no existing training and workshop programmes) or reinvigorate the process to equip teachers and also reorient their minds towards inclusive education.

The readiness of Ghana in the implementation of inclusive education is challenged by several barriers among which are lack of trained personnel to manage inclusive classrooms, and lack of funds and instructional materials. The findings demonstrated that teachers were challenged with the inadequacy of teaching and learning resources, which include peripatetic services, support staff (sign language interpreters and Braille transcribers), community involvement, and regular and special teachers among others. The lack of training in inclusive education for teachers and professionals acts as an obstacle to the implementation of inclusive education. It was also highlighted that inaccessible school environments undermine efforts to promote inclusive education. Efforts must be directed at creating disability-friendly academic environments and at making available resources to support the education of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms.

In conclusion, the realization of the slogan of Education for All is not possible unless educational opportunities are provided to all including children with disabilities. It is important for actors within the educational space to attach prominence to providing conducive learning environments for these students. This must cut across providing disability-friendly classrooms and other facilities, adequate provision of teaching and learning materials, training of teachers and

disabusing the negative perceptions the society has about children with disabilities and the need for educating them in mainstream classrooms. The study also points to the fact that these children must be given the needed support and encouragement for them to feel a sense of belonging in mainstream schools.

6.1 CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study examined the attitudes and behaviours of teachers towards inclusive education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Specifically, the study addressed the perceptions of teachers towards inclusive education; how the experiences of teachers influence inclusive education; how these experiences create misfits in the classrooms; and the specific challenges concerning inclusive education. The literature on inclusive education in Ghana was largely silent on these issues despite their relevance to the discourse on inclusive education. It is therefore believed that the findings will provide insight to educational actors in Ghana, for instance, the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, teachers and principals of schools, parents and NGOs into educational reforms in the arena of policy reforms, and strategic implementation of programmes to mitigate these challenges faced by teachers in mainstream classrooms. Again, the findings of the study are expected to reengineer conversations within the political, academic and media landscape with regards to the provision of disability-friendly education environments as well as informing future research into inclusive education in Ghana and beyond.

The study is limited in scope in terms of the transferability of the findings. Qualitative studies are known for their reliance on purposively selected samples, which introduces some level of bias in the generalization of the study findings. Despite this limitation, the study offers prospects

in comprehending the attitudes and behaviours of teachers towards inclusive education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

6.2 SHARING THE FINDINGS AND FURTHER STUDIES

Despite having provided an in-depth knowledge with regards to understanding the attitudes and behaviours of teachers towards inclusive education, there is much more to be accomplished as far as research into inclusive education in Ghana is concerned. In this regard, this study recommends future research to look into demographic, perceptual and environmental factors that influence teachers' receptiveness or non-receptive behaviour towards inclusive education in Ghana. This stems from evidence in the literature that suggests these factors positively or negatively impact teachers' perception and behaviour towards inclusive education. As it stands, little is documented by way of research on these factors despite their extreme importance to the discourse on inclusive education. Investigating such issues and factors will provide evidence-based policies to address the challenges of confronting inclusive education in Ghana.

Another imperative although side-lined issue in the implementation of inclusive education in Ghana has to do with stakeholder engagements. Evidence from the findings demonstrates that some parents, students and teachers have reservations against children with disabilities and for that matter their education in mainstream schools. Despite this, there is no known study that has delved into stakeholder participation in the implementation of inclusive education. It is therefore prudent and long overdue for future studies to explore such an important topic.

Also, it is recommended that studies into inclusive education in the future should adopt a pragmatic approach to knowing the world so as to bring out both the qualitative dimension as well as the positivist approach. This approach will help establish relationships, make predictions and

increase the scope of generalizing the findings while gaining in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon through the qualitative approach. This will provide comprehensive knowledge and perspectives on the issues that will be considered. Also, in order to reach students, teachers and even parents, the researcher will conduct presentations on the study findings during Parent/Teachers' Association meetings. Finally, findings will be shared through the media and organized workshops in schools to affect change.

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APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Opening: "Hello (name), thanks a lot for making yourself available to receive my phone call. I understand it is not easy to make time to be interviewed at this time in Ghana. The aim of this study is to get a better and clearer understanding of the experiences of teachers on inclusive education. The information that will be gained from this research is to put in public the actual experiences of teachers of inclusion. This will help in the development of policies and the provision of services to suit people with disabilities, teachers and to improve the educational standards as well as further research on the findings of this study.

Basically, I will be asking you questions about inclusive education and your experiences so far.

Importance of the interview: this information will provide the academic community and also policymakers the idea and the practicality of teachers' experiences and their influences on education.

Time: the timeline for this interview is a minimum of forty and a maximum of 1 hour will be spent. There may be a possibility of finishing early but nothing more than an hour.

"Let me start by asking you your knowledge on inclusion in education".

Interview Questions

1. Have you as a teacher heard anything about inclusive education?

* If yes, where first did you hear about inclusive education and how do you understand inclusive education?

* What do you know about Ghana's policy on inclusive education?

* Do you as a teacher think the related policy of Ghana's inclusive education practical or workable?

2. Have you ever received any training in dealing with or teaching pupils or students with a disability?

* If yes, did the training adequately prepare you to teach students with a disability?

* What preparation do you put in place especially in terms of teaching and learning materials before you begin a lesson in your inclusive classroom?

* Does the school support you in providing the suitable teaching aids for effective teaching and learning processes?

* If no, why do you think you have not received training?

3. What are workable and unworkable teaching strategies?

4. What are your biggest concerns and frustrations with inclusive education?

5. Is your school supportive of inclusion?

* What accommodations is your school making for students with different kinds of disabilities?

6. What are the attitudes of your school authorities and parents to including disabled children?

7. What are the attitudes students with disabilities themselves towards inclusive education?

8. What are the attitudes of parents of students without disability towards students with a disability?

9. Are you comfortable teaching students with a disability?

10. How difficult or easy is it for you to pay equal attention to all students in your inclusive classroom?

In closing: I really appreciate your time, patience and contribution in this interview. Thanks for the enlightenment you have provided, it is my hope that one day there will be a change in Ghana and it may be a result of your contribution today. Thank you very much once again.