



**EXPLORATION OF TEACHERS' OPINION AND ATTITUDE ON  
INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS:  
THE CASE OF SELECTED BASIC SCHOOLS IN THE ATWIMA  
NWABIAGYA DISTRICT, GHANA**

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**Abstract:**

The study explored teachers' opinion and attitude on the inclusion of students with special educational needs in Selected Basic Schools in the Atwima Nwabiagya District, Ghana. The study used qualitative approach with case study as the design. Ten (10) teachers were used as participants who were made up of six (6) females and four (4) male selected purposively from two schools. Semi-structured interview was used as an instrument to collect data for the study. The findings revealed that generally teachers accepted the philosophy of inclusive education. They however, showed unwillingness to accommodate children with emotional problems and behavioural disorders. The teachers avowed having limited knowledge and experience essential to educate varied learners. The teachers decried the fact that the inclusive education policy was not followed by appropriate measures such as specific training on how to teach effectively children with special educational needs.

**Keywords:** exploration, teachers' opinion, attitude, inclusion, special educational needs

**1. Introduction**

Philosophies regarding the education of children with learning difficulties or disabilities have changed over the past two decades and several countries have led in the effort to implement policies which foster the integration and, more recently, inclusion of these students into mainstream environments (Avramidis & Norwich 2002). Although divergence of view persists on the policy and the implementation of inclusive, several United Nations policies affirm the right of all children to be valued equally, treated with respect and provided with equal opportunities within the mainstream system. These include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien (1990), the UN Standard Rules for the Equalization of

Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994). More recently the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which was adopted in 2008 implores nations to ensure inclusion at all levels of education system.

In almost every country, inclusive education has emerged as one of the most dominant issues in the education of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). In the past 40 years, the field of special needs education has moved from a segregation paradigm through integration to a point where inclusion is central to contemporary discourse (Mitchell, 2010). Mittler (2000) also added that, there has been considerable activity in many countries to move educational policy and practice in a more inclusive direction ten years subsequent to the Salamanca Declaration.

The UNESCO Monitoring Report on Education For All (EFA) of 2001 recognized that inclusive education is a primary approach to achieving Education for all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The same report affirmed that disability is a crosscutting issue; therefore, the flagship on Education for All will contribute to the important work of the other flagship programmes by making them more inclusive, particularly, those focusing on early childhood care and development, school health, HIV/AIDS, teacher training, adult learning, and reaching girls and other excluded groups. Attaining EFA goals is a pressing issue already expressed in the Dakar Framework for Action of 2000. The Forum aimed at assessing the achievement, lessons and failures of the World Education Conference held in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand. It has been stated that, Governments have an obligation to ensure that EFA goals and targets are reached and sustained (Dakar Framework for Action). Achieving EFA goals should be postponed no longer. The basic learning needs of all can and must be met as a matter of urgency (Dakar Framework for Action).

On the basis of achieving EFA goals and more importantly on the basis of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, sense of dignity and human diversity, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), urged States Parties in its article 24, to ensure that Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are not excluded from the general education system on the account of their disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability. The Convention and many other declarations have led to a shift in the Education of PWDs from special centres to inclusive settings. Although the immediate focus of the Salamanca Conference was on special needs education, its conclusion was that special needs education cannot advance in isolation. It has to form part of an overall educational strategy and, indeed of new social and economic policies. It calls for major reform of the ordinary school. An inclusive education system can only be created if ordinary schools become more inclusive; in other words, if they become better at educating all children in their communities. The conference proclaimed that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities,

building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. As a result of these new developments, the UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report of 2008 indicated that, access to and participation in primary education have sharply increased since Dakar Framework and the number of out-of-school children dropped from 96 million to 72 million between 1999 and 2005.

In recent years, the concept of inclusive education has been broadened to encompass not only students with disabilities, but also all students who may be disadvantaged. Earlier, Skrtic (1991) had argued that inclusive education goes far beyond physical placement of students with disabilities in general classrooms, but should involve schools meeting the needs of all their students within common, but fluid, environments and activities. This broadened conceptualization of inclusive education was recently articulated in the meeting at the forty-eighth session of the UNESCO International Conference on Education (2008) held in Geneva, where it was acknowledged that *"inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination"* (UNESCO, 2008). UNESCO Teacher Education Resource Pack (2008) stated that the main reason for promoting the attendance in ordinary schools of children with disabilities or from deprived backgrounds is to increase their opportunities to learn through interaction with others and to promote their participation in the life of their community.

Inclusive education started in the more developed countries, in USA and in Europe as a special education initiative on behalf of students with disabilities as early as the 1980s. Schools in those countries are changing as educators, parents, politicians and communities try to prepare for the new challenges and promises of the 21st century (Fergusun, 2008). However, there is a huge disparity, in terms of policy and implementation of inclusive education, which exists between those Developed Countries and the situation in the Developing Countries (DCs). In a paper presented at the International Special Education Congress (ISEC) in Manchester in 2000, Eleweke and Rodda, estimated that 80% of the world's population of people with disabilities live in Developing Countries of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Middle East, some 150 million of them being children, but only 2% are receiving any form of special needs services.

Charema (2007) also added in another report that, 87% of individuals with disabilities in developing countries live in rural areas. Evidences indicate that Inclusive Education (IE) is not being satisfactorily implemented in these countries. Factors such the absence of support services, relevant materials, inadequate personnel training programme, lack of funding structure and the absence of enabling legislation are the major problems of effective implementation of IE in these countries (Eleweke & Rodda, 2000). In Bangladesh for instance, statistics suggest that 10% of the total Bangladeshi population have a disability and 89% of the school age children with disabilities are not involved in mainstream education; with the situation being worse in rural areas

(Directorate of Primary Education & Centre for Services and Information on Disability (DPE & CSID, 2002). The education of PWDs in regular classrooms in Ghana is parallel to other DCs. The next paragraphs will present a succinct, but complete, picture of the education of PWDs and the inclusive education in the country.

Prior to 1990 World Education Conference in Jomtien, it should be noted that in Ghana the General Education Policy Act of 1961 does not separate the education of children with disability with that of “normal” children. Provisions were made for every child to benefit for the general education services available. But one year after the Act, in 1962, the Henderson committee recommended that all special schools should be taken over by the Ministry of Education. The same year, this recommendation was reinforced by the Education Amendment Act to enable the Special Education Division of the Ghana Education Service (GES) to provide special education for children with disability. This means that all children with disability could then benefit from the Government’s support for quality education provisions. Special Schools created and managed by the Special Education Division were mainly focused at the traditional disabilities, namely visual, hearing, intellectual and physical. The 1987 educational reforms were essentially aimed at empowering children in Ghana to effectively participate in the civic, social and economic life of the country (Aboagye, 1999). The 1992 constitution affirms the inalienable right of education for every Ghanaian. It states in its article 25(a) that,

*“All persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and with the view to achieving the full realization for this right, basic education shall be free”.*

This provision in the constitution led to the adoption of Free and Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in 1995. The 2006’s Persons With Disability Law (Act 715) also emphasized the need for quality education for all irrespective of their disability. Moreover, the Ministry of Education Strategic Plan (2003-2015) emphasized 4 focal areas: equitable access to education; equal and quality education for all; efficiency in educational management; science technology, vocational/technical education and ICT (Gadagbui, 2013). The Government of Ghana Education Strategic Plan (ESP, 2010–2020) uses the 2008 Education Act definition of “basic education”: two years of kindergarten, six years of primary school, and three years of junior high school. Universal Primary education is mandated in Ghana: in line with the 1992 Constitution, National Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals, basic level education shall be free for all children of school going age.

All these efforts, in terms of policy-making and implementation, have not contributed significantly to attitudinal change in Ghana as concluded by (Ocloo, 2003). He reported that, people with disabilities were basically seen as liabilities in their families and communities. This in effect meant that no provisions were made for their balanced growth and development. Most of these individuals were killed or over protected, misdiagnosed and undereducated such that they lived a life that was segregated and

debased. Special Attention Programme on Learning Difficulties in Public Basic Schools in Ghana (S.A.P., 2011) confirmed that among the parents and former teachers of the children with learning difficulties, awareness on this issue is generally low. Learning difficulties and behavioural problems are often attributed to spiritual causes.

Concerning inclusive education, it should be noted that Ghana like all other nations in the world is engaged in building not only inclusive classrooms but also inclusive society where everyone is given equal chance and opportunity of success. It is a well-known fact that education plays a central role in every nation's socio-economic development. That is why the nation is committed to providing quality education for all citizens irrespective of their physical, mental abilities or disabilities. Signatory of international conventions on the right to education including the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, the UNESCO statement on principles and practices of Special Need Education, the Education For All (EFA) goals and MDGs, which have been incorporated into national laws, the nation shows ceaselessly her determination to steadily build inclusive society where the right and the dignity of each person is acknowledged and respected. These efforts aimed at providing quality education for persons with disabilities in inclusive settings.

The nation's endeavour for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in regular classrooms dated from the colonial period (1951). The first President Kwame Nkrumah, in the Education Reform under the Accelerated Development Plan of 1951, introduced Fee-free Compulsory Basic Education for all children aged five and below sixteen. Despite these praiseworthy efforts of the beginning, nothing was done in practice to really include children with disability in the mainstream education for more than three decades. The 1968 resolution adopted by the conference of Teachers of the Disabled merely asked for a separate directorate to be created for special schools in the country. The Dzobo Committee Report of 1972 also narrowed its view of special educational needs by mentioning only slow learners and the gifted. This vacuum observed has led to the fact that few children with special educational needs were included in regular classrooms in the country before 1990. These children were generally admitted to special schools.

The 1990 World Conference on education for all and the Salamanca Declaration constituted the click which opened the door for change. In line with the Conference and the Declaration, Ghana launched 'The Community-Based Rehabilitation and the Inclusive Education Programme' so as to partake in the world movement of equality and justice which aimed to promote inclusive society where diversity is welcomed and appreciated. Officially in Ghana, IE started as a pilot programme in 2003/2004 academic year with the Education Strategic Plan (2003-2015) when the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (MOESS) adopted IE as the main principle which will inform the direction for the educational provisions in Ghana (Gadagbui, 2013). She reported that IE education started as a pilot project with children having mild and moderate disabilities from three regions in Ghana, namely: Central, Eastern and Greater Accra Region.

Ghana's education sector has made some strides in promoting inclusive education by expanding access and improving quality delivery. Government spending in the sector increased from \$ 384.5 million (US) in 1999 to 1 billion (US) in 2006. Consequently, the education share of GDP increased from 5.0% to 5.7% between 1999 and 2006. Ghana's spending on education is said to be more than many African countries and is above the Education For All target (Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008). The cumulated effect of quality delivery and financing has contributed to a remarkable increment in terms of school access and participation and de facto reducing gender and regional disparities.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Inclusive education policy has been demonstrated to be beneficial for all children especially those with disabilities. The policy aims at promoting inclusive society where the right and the dignity of everyone is acknowledged and respected. However, inclusive education practice in Ghana seems to be affected by many challenges. The most influential challenge seems to be the attitudes of teachers towards it. It appears that not all teachers believe that children with disability can learn and achieve something worthwhile; their opinions may vary on the ability and the potential that these children are endowed with. My conversation with some of the teachers in Atwima Nwabiagya North District suggested that they have serious reservations about the inclusion of children with disability in their classrooms. It also appears that teachers do not believe they received adequate training or have sufficient knowledge or experiences to handle children with diverse disability conditions in inclusive settings.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

This research aimed at exploring teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs in Abuakwa and Manhyia Basic Schools in the Atwima Nwabiagya North District.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study sought to specifically:

1. Describe the teachers' opinion on the concept of inclusive education.
2. Describe teachers' attitudes towards the diverse degrees of the pupils' disabilities in Abuakwa and Manhyia Basic Schools.
3. Describe teachers' knowledge and experiences about the education of children with disability in regular classrooms.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What are the regular classroom teachers' opinions on the concept of inclusive education in Abuakwa and Manhyia Basic Schools in the Atwima Nwabiagya North District?

2. What are the teachers' attitudes towards the diverse degrees of pupils' disabilities in inclusive setting?
3. What are the teachers' competences in terms of knowledge and experiences about the education of children with disability in regular classrooms?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education

Sarfo (2011) conducted a study on basic schools teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Ghana. The study was carried out in public schools in three selected districts in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The population was picked based on the researcher's desire to examine and compare the attitudes of teachers towards Inclusive Education in rural, peri-rural and urban settlements. A simple random sampling procedure was adopted to select 400 teachers from the schools in the study area which is about 5% of the population. Closed structured questions were administered. The study revealed that teachers have little experiences and knowledge of SEN. The One-Way ANOVA test ( $f = 31.921$ ,  $p = .000$ ) showed that teachers with lower academic qualifications had less knowledge on SEN than those with higher academic qualifications. In terms of teachers' experiences in teaching children with SEN, the findings indicated that, (6.5%) of them had very much experience with children with SEN, (25.8%) indicated much experience. (50.5%) of teachers said they had little experience with children with SEN and (17.3%) of them said they had no experience at all with children with SEN. The study further revealed that teachers do not largely support Inclusive Education. Generally, teachers thought that pupils with severe disabilities were best educated in segregated schools whereas their counterparts with moderate disability were recommended to receive education in mainstream classrooms. However, they were ready to receive children with severe specific learning difficulties (in writing, spelling, mathematics, reading etc...) in mainstream classrooms. This is congruent with the fact that they believe Inclusive Education is a platform for ensuring education for all.

Dukmak (2013) conducted another study on regular classroom teachers' attitudes towards including students with disabilities in the regular classroom in the United Arab Emirates. The study used all the government primary schools in all Emirates ( $n=451$ ) to be the school sample in the study. The researcher selected randomly a sample of 800 primary teachers to complete the questionnaires. Two instruments were used to gather data from the sample. The Adult Attitude Scale was used to measure the three components of attitudes namely the behavioural, emotional and cognitive. The items on the scales were reviewed by experts in the field and its internal consistency was also studied on a sample of 587 people and Cronbach's Alpha was 0.96. A total of 455 teachers responded to the instruments. The findings revealed that, in general, teachers showed positive attitudes towards educational inclusion, but male teachers showed more positive attitudes than females did.

In order to determine the best educational placement for each disability, descriptive statistics using frequencies were calculated. Four educational placements for students with disabilities were considered: (1) full-time outside the regular school, (2) full-time in special education classrooms in the regular school, (3) part-time in regular classroom with part-time in a resource room, and (4) full-time in regular classroom with other support services. The disabilities include intellectual disability, behavioural and emotional disorders, autism, hearing impairment, health impairment, specific learning difficulty, visual impairment, speech and language disorders, and physical disabilities. The regular classroom placement was suggested by many teachers (46.4%) to students with health disabilities. The results indicated that, generally, (43.1%) of teachers found that the best educational placement for students with disabilities is outside the regular school, whereas (31.9%) suggested special education classrooms in the regular school. The regular classroom placement was suggested by (46.4%) of teachers to students with health disabilities. Conversely, (50.5%) of teachers suggested regular classroom placement to students with autism, (48.1%) of the teachers suggest regular classroom placement to those with intellectual disabilities, (47.3%) of them to those with physical disabilities and (39.6%) of them to those with emotional and behavioural.

The influence of teachers' views about educational placements for students with various disabilities on their attitudes towards inclusion was also studied using mean scores, which indicated teachers' attitudes towards each of the four alternative educational placements of each disability. Teachers' views about the educational placements for students with intellectual disability in relation to their attitudes towards inclusion were investigated using Tukey Post Hoc tests. The results showed that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion become most positive when they view the educational placement of students with intellectual disability to be the regular classroom. Moreover, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion become less positive when they view educational placement of students with intellectual disability to be the special education classroom in regular school and regular classroom with resource room services. Teachers' attitudes become the least positive when they view educational placement of students with intellectual disability to be outside the regular school.

### **3. Research Methods**

The qualitative research design was adopted for the study. This was so because it enabled the respondents to express their views and understandings of inclusive education in a more detailed way using a small number of participants (Coll & Chapman, 2000). The researcher sought to explore rich and comprehensive understanding of teachers' opinions and competences in inclusive education. Jennifer (2002) indicated that qualitative research aims at producing rounded understandings on the basis of rich, contextual and detailed data.



### **3.1 Sample and Sampling Procedure**

Ten (10) teachers representing 30% of the teachers' population were purposively sampled for the study. This was in line with the suggestion of Asamoah-Gyimah and Duodu (2005) that for qualitative studies, a sample size of 10% to 30% of the population size is sufficient for generalisation purpose. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) asserted that, purposive sampling enables researchers to handpick cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment and typicality. The sample comprised six (6) female and four (4) male teachers. These teachers were selected because they were judged by the researcher to provide rich information on the chosen topic. Creswell (2007) stresses on the importance of acquiring participants who will be willing to openly and honestly share information or "their story".

### **3.2 Instrument**

The semi-structured interview was the sole instrument for data collection. For this study, the semi-structured interview guide was constructed by the researcher based upon the research questions. Avoke (2003) opines that, questions asked during interviews ought to be based on the objectives or the purpose of the research. The one-on-one interview was used by asking questions to one teacher at a time. Creswell (2005) considered one-on-one interview as an ideal for interviewing participants who are willing to speak, articulate and share freely their ideas. Digital Recorder VN-722PC was used for recording and then transcribed upon consent from the interviewees. This recorder was preferred because it provided superior sound for longer period and it was convenient for file management.

To ensure reliability of the instrument, the researcher submitted the transcription of the interview and its original version to be cross-checked for congruency by experts in the field. The instrument was piloted on other teachers who were not part of the study. The One-on-one interview involving five teachers was conducted to last for 25 minutes for each teacher. This was to determine the efficacy of the questions. Subsequent to the pilot study the researcher modified the interview questions that were ambiguous.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedure**

The participants were interviewed one-on-one. Each interview lasted for 45 minutes. During the interviews, the researcher used prompts and probes in order to allow the interviewees provide more details to issues under investigation. Written notes which included interpretations on key issues, major themes and impression of the setting of participants to help in the analyses were recorded.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

**Research Question 1:** What are the regular classroom teachers' opinions on inclusive education in Abuakwa and Manhyia Basic Schools in the Atwima Nwabiagya North District?

The teachers' comments demonstrated that they hold positive opinion on the policy inclusive education. Two teachers said:

*"As a man of faith, I believe that God created them as they are. He knows why He created them. I think we should let them also enjoy normal life. Inclusive education is something I personally welcome"* (Teacher 6)

*"So far as we are all God creation, I think we don't have to discriminate, so the policy is good"* (Teacher 5).

This participant insisted that the inclusion of children with disabilities should be encouraged. Some declared:

*"They should be included in regular classroom because they are also human beings. They are also created by God. Every person is born with his/her own talent. We are not equal, therefore they should be included. We don't need to discriminate against them. We need to have patient on them and teach them as we teach the normal children"* (Teacher 3)

*"I personally think that inclusive education is a very good policy. As human beings, we are all equal; so I don't see the reason why they should be separated from others in their education, simply because we consider them to be different from us."* (Teacher 2)

Overall, teachers were in favour of the policy of inclusive education. This is consistent with other findings in the literature. Abbott (2006) stated that, teachers are positive towards the general philosophy of inclusive education. Contrary the teachers disclosed some of the challenges they go through with the inclusion of students with special educational needs. One of the participants said:

*"It is not an easy task at all to include them in regular classroom. But at the end of it, it is really exciting."* (Teacher 2)

Another participant added that:

*"Every child is unique and different; therefore he/she should be treated with singleness. The discovery of this fact constitutes a whole lot and a new experience for me. Though it goes with difficulties, I just put aside other considerations and difficulties."* (Teacher 1)

These revelations are similar to those of Subban and Sharma (2005) who concluded that, while teachers view inclusive education as a challenge, they emerge as accepting of students with disabilities into their regular classrooms. Inclusive settings appear to provide a forum for teachers to experiment with different techniques and strategies to ensure that all students within this setting are achieving learning success.

**Research Question 2:** What are the teachers' attitudes towards the diverse degrees of pupils' disabilities in inclusive setting?

Although the fact that the majority of the teachers hold positive opinion on inclusive education, they conveyed the sense that they cannot receive and teach effectively all children in inclusive setting. They expressed different views regarding the nature and the degree of the disability in question when being asked about each one of them. From the teachers' comments, it appears that their attitudes may differ depending on the type of disability of the children they welcome in their classroom. Teachers welcomed willingly children who are partially blind or deaf or with physical disabilities but were reluctant to receive those with emotional and behavioural disorders or with intellectual disabilities.

Two of the participants openly declared that:

*"It is difficult for me to have a child with undesirable behaviours. They often make learning problematic for the whole class."* (Teacher 3)

*"Children with disruptive behaviours are challenging...seriously they are not meant to normal classes."* (Teacher 5)

These findings are analogous to many other studies which demonstrated that children with emotional and behavioural disabilities are deemed to be particularly problematic for inclusion in mainstream educational settings (Avramidis et al, 2000,). Alghazo and Gaad (2004) also found that, teachers were mostly negative about the inclusion of pupils with behavioural difficulties. It was reported that some teachers would not agree to include children with severe difficulties or those who displayed bad behaviour (Singal, 2006). Furthermore, Avramidis et al. (2000) concluded that, pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are seen as triggering significantly more problems for teachers than pupils with other types of disability. Hofman and Kilimo (2014) reported about teachers who claimed that it was hard for them to control classroom behaviours.

One of the participants stressed on the fact that she preferred children with intellectual disability to those with behavioural problems. She said that:

*"It becomes more complicated in terms of classroom management when you have in children with emotional and behavioural problems."* (Teacher 1)

This is similar to Hastings and Oakford's (2003) discoveries. They reported that, general education teachers were more favourable toward inclusion for children with intellectual disabilities than for children with emotional and behavioural problems. It is also consistent with the findings of Hofman and Kilimo (2014) that, teachers who showed supportive attitudes towards children with physical disabilities, such as hearing disabilities, did not always show the same support for children with learning or behavioural difficulties. Students with intellectual disabilities, emotional or behavioural disabilities, or multiple disabilities caused the most concern for teachers. They were more accepting of those students with physical or medical disabilities (Sze, 2006). They felt that they will have more classroom management problems in inclusion classes (Charema (2007).

Beattie, Anderson and Antonak (1997) remarked that, teachers' responses to misbehaviour may be mediated by their beliefs about their ability to deal with behaviour, as well as their beliefs about the causes of student misbehaviour. Teachers rejected in most cases to welcome any child with severe disability regardless of the type. To confirm this, two participants stated that:

*"I cannot receive a child who hardly hear or see in my classroom. This will be very difficult."* (Teacher 1)

*"In my opinion, it is impractical to deal with students with severe conditions in regular classroom. Maybe others will accept that, but me I can't."* (Teacher 7)

Another participant suggested placement in special schools for those with critical conditions because of classroom management problem he foresees. He declared that:

*"It is all about how the problem affects the student. Students who have critical situations should be placed in special schools not in regular classrooms, otherwise we cannot not manage them. They will receive better instruction with special teachers"* (Teacher 4)

One of the participants claimed justice for students without disabilities. She said that:

*"Children with severe disabilities take up so much of the time to the detriment of other children. We need to be fair with everybody. Non-disabled children are right to benefit fully from instruction time."* (Teacher 3)

These findings are consistent with many other studies which have consistently demonstrated that, generally teachers are more receptive toward including students with mild or high incidence disabilities (e.g. learning disabilities) and less receptive toward including children with severe or low incident disabilities (e.g. autism) in their general

education classrooms. For example, the study of Subban and Sharma (2005) noted that, student's level of disability may emerge as a factor shaping the attitudes of teachers to the inclusion of students with disabilities. Research showed that the degree and severity of the disabilities that children have are major factors that influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich 2002). Their attitudes toward including students with more severe disabilities rated less positively than those with mild disabilities (Lambert, Curran, Prigge, & Shorr, 2005).

**Research Question 3:** What are the teachers' competences in terms of knowledge and experiences about the education of children with disability in regular classrooms?

The findings indicated that teachers had no in-service training or seminar to prepare them for the inclusion process and had little experience with inclusion. Two participants noted that:

*"Since the idea of inclusive education has been introduced in this District. We are only struggling. We don't have any in-service training to help us." (Teacher 3)*

*"We have been promised that we'll receive some time to time training. But nothing for now. We are still waiting for them" (Teacher 5)*

Teachers in their majority show understanding on the fact that learners are diverse. However, they become perplexed on practical issues due to their lack of training. Teachers perceived themselves as lacking the basic skills needed to teach children with disabilities effectively. They often refer to their introductory courses on special education they have taken as rudimentary. Beattie et al., (1997) pointed out that introductory courses offered through teacher preparation programs may sometimes be inadequate in preparing the general educator for successful inclusion. In regard to this, inadequate training may explain the teachers' low confidence which in return may affect their efficiency even before they are confronted to real classroom issues.

The third participant explained in the following terms:

*"The idea to include children with disabilities is good. But not all teachers know about them adequately. Me for instance, I know little about how they can be taught together with other children. If I have sufficient knowledge, I will not hesitate. For this particular reason there should always be special educators. They have special knowledge on how to handle them appropriately." (Teacher 3)*

Another participant also added to the insufficiency of the training received:

*"In my opinion they need special attention, for that matter those who are specially trained to educate them. If they are included in normal classes, we don't have knowledge for that."*

*Though we have done special education it was just a subject, it wasn't as detailed as it should be." (Teacher 2)*

These findings are in line with the findings of Lambert, et al. (2005) who noticed that teachers are concerned about the limited knowledge on various aspects of meeting the learning needs of various categories of students with disabilities.

The same preoccupation regarding the knowledge was expressed by the fourth participant but in a more optimistic manner. She said:

*"So far as I have an idea about it. I can do something for the benefit of these children. When I try it for more years, I think I will be better off." (Teacher 5)*

Other researchers' conclusions are consistent with these findings. Heiman (2001) noted that, teachers may resist inclusive practices on account of inadequate training. It would appear that teachers perceive themselves as unprepared for inclusive education because they lack appropriate training in this area (Malone, Gallagher, & Long 2001). From the participants' responses, they may lack beliefs about their capabilities to be efficacious in inclusive classroom due to deficiency in training. What most of the participants pointed out is how to adjust to the new situation they found themselves in. One of them remarked explicitly:

*"It is something new for me. It is not easy to adapt oneself suddenly to something you were not expecting. But what can we do." (Teacher 2)?*

Much of the past research assessing teacher self-efficacy has focused on teaching skills and abilities generally. However, Bandura (1986) asserts that self-efficacy is a situational and domain specific construct whereby confidence varies depending upon the skill required, or the situation faced.

## **5. Conclusion**

Inclusive education which aims at creating a welcoming society for everybody irrespective of his or her conditions should be encouraged by all governments and all Men of walks. Teachers, who are regarded as pivotal agents for its successful implementation, need to be well-equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities which will make them effective inclusive education practitioners in order to create inclusive society. Maximum effort should be made and the necessary measures be put in place by GES, school administrators and other stakeholders so as to shape positively teachers' attitudes and make them competent for the crucial task of preparing children for inclusive society.

## 6. Recommendations

Based upon the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. GES should offer training programmes which will equip the general classroom educators with practical knowledge on how to handle inclusive classrooms. These programmes may be in a form of in-service training or seminars.
2. Schools must provide necessary training through a variety of vehicles, including in-service opportunities, coursework, co-teaching, professional support groups, and other coaching and mentoring activities.
3. Less experience teachers ought to be paired with more experienced ones so as to provide hands-on training for them.
4. Teachers should be actively involved in decision making processes related to the educational policy of the schools, in curriculum planning and even in organizing training programme.

### Conflicts of interest statement

The author certifies that this original document has no commercial associations that might pose a conflict of interest in connection with this submitted article.

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