EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN GHANA: TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND ENACTMENT OF INCLUSION

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explored teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in Early Childhood Education (IECE) in Ghana. Inclusion theorises that, every child of school-going age must have access to quality education regardless of their cultural and socioeconomic dissimilarity. The keystone of the policy is to stimulate inclusion and lessen exclusions in the educational system. By utilising an interpretive qualitative multi-case study approach involving semi-structured interviews, observation, and photo-elicitation instruments, data from six study teachers was collected. The inductive thematic analysis method was used to interpret the data. Findings from the study revealed IECE was understood as the accommodation and merging of learners with disability with their mainstream peers in the same learning environment to reduce stigmatisation, segregation, and exclusionary practices. Disability was a major factor influencing Ghana's IECE practices, more than equity issues, ability, and stage of child's enrolment. Despite the progressive principles underpinning IECE, the enactment of the programmes is encountering challenges due to various debilitating factors such as the lack of educational resources, funding, inappropriate training programmes, and conservative cultural views towards children with disabilities. The study recommended that for a high level of IECE practice, the policy should be supported by effective and ongoing training, Government support by providing the required resources, clear policy guidelines, and employing teachers with knowledge and understanding IECE. For an IECE school to succeed, a culture mind shift must begin at the top, with a coherent understanding, shared vision throughout the entire staff, commitment, and best practices in teaching and learning throughout the whole school community. Teachers, policymakers, and other role-players in education should view IECE in the context of learners' rights to education rather than focusing on disability problems associated with exclusion and segregation. The exploration concludes that, even though the enactment of IECE is fraught with impediments, it is a reasonable practice that should be enacted to achieve national objectives since IECE exposes children to information and skills which is vital for economic growth and confidence building. By meaningfully adopting IECE and enacting it successfully, the nation's current and future human resource development, will be enhanced. building. By meaningfully adopting the IECE policy and enacting it successfully, the nation's current and future human resource development, will be enhanced.

DELARATION

I, Awudu Salaam Mohammed, student number 219093979, declare that:

- This thesis that I submit herewith for the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal is my independent work and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

- This thesis is my original work which does not contain any other person's data, pictures, graphs, or any other information. If so, then it has been specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons or institutions via in-text referencing and in the reference list.

- Where texts or passages from sources were paraphrased, I acknowledged these in-text and in the reference list.

- The intellectual property that was developed during the course of the study at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, will accrue to the university.

Signed: █████   Date: 18 July 2022

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother, Grace Akosua Mansah, for setting the foundation for the academic journey of my life. I owe her insurmountable eternal gratitude. Her loving memory lives on.

This PhD is also dedicated to my wife (Mrs Mariama Ramani Salaam), my three children (Samsudin, Jannat, and Akbar), my two friends (David J. Clarke and Margaret Oduro), and to all orphans and destitute children in Ghana and the entire continent.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	Accelerated Development Plan
BEd	Bachelor of Education
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
DBE	Diploma in Basic Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
IE	Inclusive Education
IECE	Inclusive Early Childhood Education
GES	Ghana Education Service
GoG	Government of Ghana
IEPs	Individualized Education Plans
JHS	Junior High School
KG	Kindergarten
LWDs	Learners with Disabilities
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies
MOE	Ministry of Education
RPD	"Right of Persons with Disability"
MTSS	Multi-tiered System of Support
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TBL	Team-Based Learning
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
SHS	Senior High School
SEN	Special Education Needs
SM	Sense-making
SPED	Special Education Division
TA	Thematic Analysis
UCC	University of Cape Coast

UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UD L	Universal Design for Learning
UNC	United Nations Convention
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WASSCE	West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. 1 INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Inclusion in Early Childhood Education (IECE) was legally adopted into the Ghana Education System [GES] (Government of Ghana Ministry of Education, 2015). This enactment was crucial for all children, including those with disabilities (Ackah-Jnr., 2016; and Ackah-Jnr., & Udah, 2021). According to Hlalele (2021), inclusion opposes and is critical of exclusion. This acknowledgement came before adopting numerous education policies and legislative decrees including the Education Act 715 (Government of Ghana Ministry of Education, 2015) and the 1992 *Ghanaian Constitution*. Torvik (2020) emphasises the importance of increased efforts and initiatives to assist the enactment of Inclusion which should commence in early childhood education which should offer all children rich social and educational opportunities. Teachers, in particular, are major players to enact Inclusion since they are the ones who make it happen in the classroom (Wasburn-Moses & Wasburn, 2020); hence, their awareness of the policy and willingness to implement it, is crucial. This study explored how teachers perceive Inclusion in ECE, the elements that promote its enactment, and identified critical contextual factors that are barriers or facilitators that influence inclusive early childhood education (Arishi, 2020).

In addition, the study explored the kinds of appropriate support for teachers, such as professional development to enact Inclusion in ECE. Lastly, the study explored how teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in ECE may be improved and sustained to meet children's changing and diverse needs. In general, the study was motivated by Ghana's desire to see the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) achieved, especially target 4: guaranteeing fair and high-quality education for everyone and encouraging chances for continuous learning for all (Ackah-Jnr & Udah, 2021; McCowan, 2019; Osei Kwadwo & Konadu, 2020).

Early Childhood Education in Ghana in terms of teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in Mampong Municipality explores essential public and private early childhood inclusion concerns. This chapter established the research background and setting which included the study's objectives to provide insight into teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion. The study's

rationale explained why this research was conducted, and hence examined the phenomenon under investigation; one of the reasons was to explore teachers' views toward inclusion. Included is the study's importance, location, and relevant terminology to understand the direction of the enquiry. Moreover, the theoretical framework was outlined in this chapter to provide insight involving sense-making of the collected data. Also, Ghana's Education Policy Context on Inclusion was described. Lastly, an outline of the findings was provided.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In this study, the terms *Inclusion* and *Inclusive Education* are used synonymously. In recent years, the educational system, especially in the ECE sector, has struggled to accommodate the needs and requirements of learners with diverse abilities; hence, the dire need for Inclusion has grown exponentially (Sharp, 2017; Watson, 2022). Children with a range of abilities, learning styles and needs from various ethnic and language backgrounds, religious cultures, gender boundaries, sexual preferences, age, socio-economic environments, individual characteristics, and family structures are now gradually being included in the ECE system (Ashman, 2015). Hence, children from diverse backgrounds are increasingly recognised and celebrated via inclusive practices. The goal of this movement is to ensure that all children who have reached school-going age must be given equal access to quality education despite their physical, social, and economic status. According to Yin et al. (2020), to advance the goals of Inclusion, ECE institutions must create welcoming and stimulating teaching-learning environments for all children to realise their maximum potential.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how teachers in Ghana's Mampong Municipality understand and practise Inclusion in the ECE classroom. Educational inequities are being addressed through advocating for Inclusive Education (IE) which entails including learners with various disabilities amongst their mainstream 'normal' peers (UNESCO, 2015; & Thomasian, 2020). The term *IECE* does not only refer to the act of being integrated into mainstream schools, but also to accessibility to a school that maximises a child's potential via innovative best practice while promoting equal respect among all children, guardians, school personnel, and local residents. However, past experiences of introducing IECE was entangled in multidimensional experiences that occurred in many different schooling contexts. Since high-quality IECE is crucial for all children to attain their full potential and gain lifelong learning abilities that will help them

succeed in school and in life in general (Bartolo, Giné et al., 2016; Kyriazopoulou, 2016), it is imperative to understand how Inclusion is interpreted and enacted by all role-players. As such, all children of school-going age should be enrolled in ECE programmes. However, several guidelines and legislative policies have been promulgated, but the issue of IECE has yet to be deliberated on in open and honest debates. According to Underwood, Frankel, Spalding, and Brophy (2018), all children (irrespective of ability/disability) have the right to an inclusive, high-quality, and free basic education.

It has been evidenced in several studies that ECE, which is a vital foundational phase of a child's development, may be formal or informal that must be offered at an educational facility for those between one to six years of age but before they start primary school; this promotes physical, motor, health, dietary, intellect, aesthetic, psychological, and societal development of the young child (Baffoe, 2013; Van Laere & Vandenbroeck, 2017; Vandenbroeck, Lenaerts, & Beblavy, 2018). In this regard, UNESCO (2021) declares that ECCE is more than preparation for primary school as it aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. Hence, ECCE can develop caring, capable, and responsible citizens.

Additionally, IECE fosters important development processes that increase human capacities, the promotion of sexual tolerance, recognition of humans as being different, and increasing community harmony. Moreover, ECE is essential in reducing educational disparities for disadvantaged and disabled children in addition to compensating for family limitations. The benefit of having a solid link between learner achievement at the primary-secondary school level and the university (Baffoe, 2013) is that a child's solid foundational education cascades into successes in academic life as well as life in general (Opoku et al., 2022).

According to experts, the degree to which teachers approach the teaching of early childhood learners is dependent on what teachers assume children should be and being measured by their behavioural patterns and academic performance in school (Wang et al., 2020; Bialka & Havlik, 2020). Ardoin and Bowers (2020) agree that the ECE programme is built on a number of basic assumptions about children's personalities. Further, according to Ntumi (2016), the building of

both long-term and short-term school readiness is one of the important goals of the ECE curriculum for children who should be assisted by their parents or guardians. Accordingly, several early childhood education programmes begin with a comprehensive plan that spans a year or more. For shorter periods of time, they are later filled in with particular information; in other words, the curriculum for young children is determined by the interests of the child (Shih, 2020). According to the notion that young ones learn best by actively exploring their environment, a different kind of early childhood curriculum should be developed - this will replace the old one that assumed that toddlers learn passively by being offered certain information and skills.

Furthermore, children are fundamentally curious and need strong supervision in order to learn effectively which necessitates a different strategy as children often strive for acceptance from others by complying with realistic requirements, despite their differences or disabilities (Seisa, 2020). The hallmarks of astuteness when it comes to programmes of Inclusion in ECE is the creativeness and innovativeness of designing curricula to meet the needs of all children. Many salient and relevant teaching-learning aspects of early childhood education must be included in the curriculum, including the programme philosophy, goals and objectives of the programme, and assessment. Since actions and implementation processes are continually scrutinised, the cyclical activity always returns to the initial stage when goals and objectives are re-evaluated and amended as deemed necessary, and then the cycle is repeated (Shih, 2020; Yang & Li, 2019).

Significant stakeholders in early childhood education concerning Inclusion involve mainly teachers who are most engaged in helping ECE learners which includes monitoring, discipline, cultural diversity, appropriate teaching-learning methods, and self-reliance development, among others (Klibthong & Agbenyega, 2020). Establishing reciprocal connections with parents, fostering a caring environment for personnel who assist learners, teaching to support growth, and designing school facilities where early childhood instruction and assessing children's learning and development are of significant importance (Bartolome & bin Mamat, 2020). According to Barnett, Paschall, Mastergeorge, Cutshaw, and Warren (2020), the early childhood curriculum enactment involves personal and environmental aspects that should be seriously considered. Teachers' experiences and opinions about how these young children learn and grow, according to Carley Rizzuto (2017), have an impact on the quality of early childhood development. Heikka, Halttunen,

and Waniganayake (2018) confirm that teachers' understandings of teaching and learning significantly affect how early childhood education is enacted. In other words, once teachers understand the significance of the principle of Inclusion, their performance as early childhood teachers in the actual classroom setting are positively impacted during the enactment (Neuman & Danielson, 2020). Ohemeng (2015) further says that teachers' comprehension of the ECE is critical for successfully enacting Inclusion to fulfil its aims. This indicates that if inclusive early childhood teachers clearly understand what early childhood education comprises, they will be able to successfully enact inclusion in the classroom (Neuman & Danielson, 2020). Early childhood teachers work with children from one to eight years old. They engage children in various activities that contribute to their overall well-being. On the other hand, the early childhood teacher must execute a range of vital duties to be productive in their career. Most of the time, their work as an early childhood teacher will be similar to that of a guide. A guide along unfamiliar paths escorts other. A guide goes beside rather than in front of a passenger on a journey.

Furthermore, a guide shields others from harm. As an early childhood teacher, the teacher will be forced to develop fresh concepts to share with their learners. Children should be guided rather than led along a path that interests them. Another job for teachers, according to Karabon (2021), is to help in the invention, planning, and enactment of a high-quality, play-based, developmentally effective curriculum to support physical, intellectual, psychological, and human growth. Other responsibilities include developing timetables and schedules to familiarise learners with everyday behaviour and basic needs (e.g., handwashing), as well as serving them lunch and making sure they get enough sleep; educating children in pre-literacy, reading, and language abilities, motor skills, and shape and colour recognition; and planning activities to encourage and accelerate their development.

Bakytzhanova (2018) claims that policy actors entrusted with bringing their schools together must combine existing school regulations and practices with creative ideas. As a result, the first step in adequately enacting a policy is for the enactor to attach meaning to the policy. According to Hara (2019), individuals on the ground execute policies based on their past ideas, positionalities, and aims, regardless of their personal views on policy. As a result, when the enactor experiences the meaning of the policy through sense-making, meaning and interpretation of policy occur. Teachers

can also use their previous knowledge, experiences, and practices to understand and enact policy (Weick, 2015). Sense-making permits teachers to perceive circumstances in their surroundings, allowing them to think and behave more adaptively. According to Hara (2019), sense-making is about reality. It is a continuous achievement that occurs when individuals create retrospective meaning for the situations, they and their creations find themselves. According to Deku (2018), Ghanaian early childhood education aims to acknowledge the behaviours that learners actively exhibit through investigation and self-discovery. This is possible if early childhood education is programmed to encourage children to express freely their acceptance in terms of collaboration and participating in all learning activities (Ohemeng, 2015; Yang & Li, 2020).

According to Pinghua and Yinghui (2020), each child's right to Inclusion is a basic human right. According to the United Nations (UN), the child has right to quality education irrespective of the child's diversity (Laubisse, 2018). Ghana's education plan is based on national and international commitments to promote universal education. Following Ghana's independence, successive administrations attempted to improve education at all levels, from kindergarten to post-secondary. According to this system's prescriptions, all persons who attend an academic institution have an equal opportunity to equal and fair access to high standards of teaching and learning. This includes salient and core principles that encourage participation, companionship, and interaction among all persons who attend the institution. This policy acknowledges the fact that learners have a wide range of learning styles and abilities; hence, all role-players in the education system should accommodate the diverse demands of various groups of people through a comprehensive Inclusive-friendly learning programme in a welcoming conducive environment (Government of Ghana Ministry of Education, 2015).

1.3 SETTING THE CONTEXT

This study intended to capture teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion of ECE in Ghana, particularly in the Mampong Municipality of the Ashanti Region. Such an enquiry was relevant as it dissected in-depth the lived experiences of teachers' which produces rich and new knowledge on the phenomenon under study. Hence, the researcher sought to answer the following questions to elicit authentic data:

- What are teachers' understanding of Inclusion in early childhood education in Ghana?

- How do teachers' understanding shape their enactment of inclusion?
- Why do Early Childhood Education teachers enact inclusion in certain ways in Ghana?

It is necessary to mention that Ghana is slow in effectively enacting inclusive ECE which is a requirement set for all schools (Opoku, Agbenyega, Mprah, Mckenzie, & Badu 2017). Hence, looking at Inclusive Early Childhood Education (IECE) from top-down (i.e., from the system level to everyday operations), the voices of educators and other role-players are likely to provide incisive insight into the IECE scenario in Ghana (Yoshikawa, Wuermli, Raikes, & Kabay, 20218). This section provides background information concerning the Ghanaian context of IECE which includes the educational status of diverse-ability-children, Ghana's Inclusion policy in a global education context, and the movement for the right to education for all children.

1.3.1 Ghana's Education Policy Context

When Ghana's first President realised the importance of ECE in developing a strong independent nation, the Ghanaian Government began designing and implementing ECE policies. The Ghanaian ECE policy has been acknowledged internationally as it is aligned to global conventions which Ghana is committed to (Ackah-Jnr & Udah, 2021; Kudewura, 2018). Education is a basic human right (Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948), which demands that "everyone has the right to education" (Ackah-Jnr, 2016; Pinghua & Yinghui, 2020). The child has right to quality education irrespective of the child's diversity, according to the United Nations (Laubisse, 2018). As such, Ghana's education plan relies on a few national and international pledges to deliver quality education for everybody. Since Ghana's independence, successive governments have attempted to expand education boundaries at all levels.

The concept of Inclusion is centred on changing schools and other learning environments to ensure that all children from a variety of cultures and abilities are welcomed and accommodated, free from any form of discrimination. Several studies have proven that education in modern cultures emphasises the importance of success and accomplishment when founded on non-discrimination and equal opportunity, the distinctiveness and integrity of every child, and the right to high-quality education for all students (Anghel, 2017). Hence, Inclusion is articulated in the context of equal

education for all which is characterised by a learning environment that fosters high-quality education centred on best practice (Ekundayo 2018).

According to Ansah (2017) and Nkrumah and Sinha (2020), Ghana's education system is divided into primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Basic Education spans 12 years (from 4 to 15) and is free and mandatory. According to Buabeng (2019) and Quainoo, Quansah, Adams, and Opoku (2020), primary education in Ghana begins in kindergarten, continues through primary school, and culminates in the Basic Education Certificate Examination. In addition, kindergarten lasts two years (for children aged four to six), primary school for six years (for children aged six to eleven), and junior high school for three years (age 12-15). The curriculum at senior high school is also of three-year duration, as are those in nurses' training institutions. Generally, Universities and Teachers' Training Colleges have four-year programmes for the first undergraduate degree.

The importance of education for the growth of any country in all sectors is paramount. Human resource development is founded on sound holistic education. Accordingly, the Ghanaian Government has committed itself to the long-term development of educational structures and policies. As a result, various Acts, Legislation, and Regulations have been promulgated to guide Ghana's educational system (Ackah, 2016; Government of Ghana Ministry of Education, 2010, 2015). The Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) for Education was enacted in early 1950 but attained National Assembly approval in August 1951. The implementation of the ADP allowed many children in Ghana to have access to school (Government of Ghana Ministry of Education, 2010, 2015). The Education Act of 1961 (Act 87) established a policy of obligatory and free education for any school-aged children (Adzahlie-Mensah & Dunne, 2018; Amagnya, 2020). Article 25(1) of Ghana's 1992 Statute states that "All persons, irrespective of the persons' background, shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and achieve the full realisation of that right. In this regard, basic education shall be free, compulsory   and should be available to all" (Government of Ghana Ministry of Education, 2015: p. 4).

The above Government policy was commendable, but it is still not practicable for all Ghanaians of school-going age to attend school. For example, learners with disabilities (LWDs) comprised a sizable proportion of the out-of-school population, were not accommodated. Since admittance to

education for learners with special needs was seen as vital to achieving the goal of holistic education for the growth of the country, the Inclusion movement agitated for easy access for all learners to join mainstream classes. Consequently, the Ghanaian Government's Education Strategic Plan 2010-2020 established the strategic aim (Government of Ghana Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 4) to "provide education for those who were physically and mentally challenged, orphans, and slow or fast learners, by including them wherever possible, within the mainstream of formal system or only when considered necessary within special schools".

The current educational system in Ghana was largely created to satisfy the Education Strategic Goal (Act 778) established by the Ghanaian Government in 2008 (Armah, 2017). Every Ghanaian child is supposed to be guaranteed quality education according to the *Ghana's Constitution* (Anlimachine & Avoada, 2020). The Government of Ghana (GoG) is being encouraged to ratify a number of foreign treaties such as *Ghana's National Convention on the Rights of the Child (*1990), the *World Declaration on Education for All* (Jomtien, 1990), the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action*, and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN Convention CRPD, 2006).

Consequently, ECE, especially kindergarten education, has been integrated into mainstream education to ensure that all children get easy access to equitable and high-quality education. In Ghana, the traditional system encourages parents and families to be responsible for their children's care and education. As such, Ghana's community participation model has produced many types of education avenues. According to Ackah (2016) and Morrison (2001), children's care originated formally before the missionary era in the mid-eighteenth century, when Basel missionaries in Ghana were the first to implement day-care schooling alongside their primary schools to introduce formal education to Ghanaian children while assimilating them into the principles of Christianity (Djarbeng, 2019; Münch, 2020, 2019). The 2008 Schools Act 778 aimed to integrate ECE into the formal education system, allowing all children to benefit from the Government's policy of having an equitable right of entry to high-quality ECE (Armah, 2017; Mumuni, 2019).

1.3.2 The Socio-cultural Context

Childhood development is a fast-paced and collaborative process. Every child has a unique relationship with the environment, thus what they experience and receive from others and the environment impacts on how they think and behave. Children from diverse cultures receive varied kinds of assistance from their environment. Because learning is frequently a social partnership between the teacher and the students, and between parents and children, the sociocultural environment has a significant impact on a child's education (Mukti, 2018). Teachers' opinions on inclusion, as well as their actual teaching strategies and adjustments in various courses, are influenced by their lived-experiences and perceptions of diverse learners. Hence, despite the fact that inclusion has been recommended for enactment in Ghanaian schools, negative attitudes are threatening to become yet another stumbling block to IECE progress and achievement. Disparities - formal and informal - such as completing home chores, attending funerals, and marginalising children with disabilities are perpetuated by sociocultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices (Agana & Miller, 2015). Since learning is generally a social interaction between the teacher, parents, and children, Inclusion should be encouraged to give equal opportunity to all children to uplift the whole community rather than creating an environment of dependency.

Furthermore, people in Mampong Municipality might benefit or impede their academic opportunities depending on their cultural background and beliefs. Mampong, which is populated mainly by the Akan ethnic group located in the Ashanti Region where Twi is the primary language spoken, is approximately 58 kilometres from Kumasi, the Ashanti regional capital which is located in a transitional zone between the forest and the Savanna area of Ghana (Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Report, 2010; Allotey, 2019). One of the unique characteristics of the municipality is its ethnicity. Within the municipality, various ethnic groups from across the country and sub-region may be found. In terms of architectural designs, physical features, and food types, each tribe has its own distinct culture. Because of the ethnic diversity, teachers, parents, children, and learners have a variety of cultural values and beliefs that influence their teaching-learning settings. For instance, learners reared in a bilingual home have an easier time learning since they can connect with the language spoken in various settings. To make learning simpler, such students can transform material from multiple languages into the dialects they understand best. However, the following statistics need to be considered: Akans account for 92.6 per cent of the population,

while other ethnic groups account for 7.4 per cent; Christians account for approximately 87.6 per cent of the people, while Muslims and traditionalists account for about 10.9 per cent and 1.5 per cent, respectively. The Kontonkyi Adaekesie, which commemorates the Mampong people's relocation to their current site, is celebrated in the Mampong Traditional Area (Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Report, 2010).

This study found that a family's cultural history influences its attitude to understanding disability (Jalagat & Ondigi, 2017). As a result, children with disabilities are a social and cultural construct such that families from various cultural backgrounds may have differing notions of what it means to be disabled. As such, African beliefs, culture, and attitudes have affected the traditional African method of mainstreaming LWDs. Some people see disability as a divine punishment, a tragedy, and a societal burden such that LWDs are often hidden in their houses or some other location. This mindset embeds psychological insecurities and prevents LWDs from socialising with their peers. Many traditional people view disability as an ill-omen and refuse to send their LWD children to attend special or mainstream schools (Jalagat & Ondigi, 2017).

In Africa and other developing nations, the treatment of LWDs is not widely documented. Negative attitudes and discrimination are the most debilitating barriers to free and equal universal education for all learners with various needs concerning IECE in Ghana. Some Ghanaians still believe that disabilities are caused by divine curses (Anwar, 2017; Mberimana, 2018); and that people living as LWDs (e.g., those who are physically disabled or blind) in Northern Ghana are not human beings. Sometimes, some newly born babies with disabilities are killed, whiles others are concealed because parents believe it is God's retribution for an act of disobedience. Ramakrishnan (2020) and Hussain, Shahzadi, and Khan (2020) believe that this attitude toward LWDs causes a severe impediment to social and academic Inclusion.

1.3.3 Educational Status of Diverse Children

Inclusion has been effective in developing friendly environments and inclusive societies while inspiring children's to trust in themselves to maximise participation in social activities (Sutton, Kearney, & Ashton, 2021). According to Walton (2018) and Hlalele (2021), Inclusion aims to decrease exclusion (involuntarily encouraging Inclusion) from and within mainstream schools to

ensure everyone's involvement towards successful teaching-learning situations. In Inclusive schools, culture, economic status, religion, level of literacy, athletic skill, experience, gender, attitude, and other aspects all play a role in integrating a diversity of students. This diversity requires that teachers appreciate the individualistic characteristics that distinguish each learner to assist them in embracing otherness and uniqueness in the classroom. Inclusion, according to Hymel and Katz (2019), allows students to analyse ideas and opinions that are different from those they had previously obtained or were ingrained with by society when they were younger. This process enables students to think critically about their beliefs which enables them to analyse the world in fresh ways by exposing them to opposing and modern viewpoints. Accordingly, the United Nations Educational Organization (Sharma, 2015) recommended that member states (such as Ghana) diligently implement and practise inclusiveness. Research indicates that there are many with special needs in both developed and developing countries, with ten per cent of them being children (Sharma, 2015). Special education has been practised in many countries in some form or another, but the *Salamanca Statement* in 1994 shifted the focus to initiate Inclusion (Sharma & Vlcek, 2021). However, not all countries have been able to enact Inclusion fully and effectively.

The *Constitution of Ghana* states that "All persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities … and to achieve the full realisation of that right: (a) basic education shall be free, compulsory, and available to all" (Government of Ghana, 1992, article 25, section 1a). As a result of this promulgation, all children, either able or impaired, should be provided with equal opportunity to receive quality schooling (GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015).

It is disconcerting and a continuation of oppression that negativity toward children with special needs contribute to their marginalisation, making them feel alienated, labelled as 'misfits', and excluded in their quest to access mainstream learning (Sharma, 2015). This adversely influences how individuals view life and the necessity of inclusion (Gadagbui, 2019). In current times, children with challenges are admitted to mainstream learning institutions to access quality education as their non-challenged peers where they are supported by innovative teaching-learning practices that benefit all students. This motivates individuals to feel more at ease in school and in society to form bonds with their peers and school staff who welcome them (Sharma, 2015). Lastly, UNICEF and other NGOs assist and fund Ghana's administration regarding children with diverse

needs and those from impoverished family backgrounds to enrol at normal learning institutions (GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015).

1.3.4 Ghana's Inclusion in Education Context

Scholars (Ackah-Jnr, 2006; Opoku-Nkoom & Dogbe, 2020) emphasise that education is a right - not a privilege - for all residents in Ghana; and that inclusiveness is a policy founded on a value system that pronounces that all individuals who enrol at an academic institution are given equal and fair access to quality teaching-learning processes which should surpass the physical location and integrate the underlying principles that foster involvement, companionship, and harmonious interaction. This inclusion plan, according to Opoku-Nkoom and Dogbe (2020), acknowledges the diverse learning needs of students and demands all interested parties in the education field to tackle the different needs of different communities in the Ghanaian schooling system through global recommendations for learning in a learner-friendly atmosphere for all. Over the years, the Ghanaian administration has stressed the 'all inclusive' approach to schooling by utilising a variety of platforms to expedite implementation by informing all role-players including teachers, guardians, students, non-governmental institutions, lawmakers, and disability organisations; this included guidance on how to assimilate all students of varying abilities (Okyere, Aldersey, Lysaght, & Sulaiman, 2019).

Further, Ghana firmly endorses the *Education for All* programme by embracing the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.* In accordance with the *Education Strategic Plan*, the GoG Ministry of Education must "provide education for those with physical and mental disabilities, orphans, and those who are slow or fast learners by including them, wherever possible, in the mainstream formal system or, only when considered necessary, in special units or schools" (Iriarte, McConkey, & Gilligan, 2015). The cohort of students with special education needs (SEN), as defined by the *Inclusion Policy,* are those who face challenges in their training that hinder them from realising their maximum potential. Ghana's *2015 Inclusion Policy* is a legal Government document that must be implemented and monitored as it offers a more coordinated and methodical framework for planning and funding priorities in order to initiate and enhance inclusion programmes specially to educate all SEN students on a bigger scale (Zero Project, 2021). Hence, special schools are converted into resource centres, school facilities are upgraded, and funds are

provided to uplift the current educational system in terms of the implementation of Inclusivity. Staff, the community, and the media are all conscientized to encourage Inclusion. School curriculum and teacher education (training) are evaluated, and materials are offered to develop a learner-friendly school environment (Global Education Monitoring Report, Peer & UNESCO, 2021). In Ghana, both individual and Government schools must embrace Inclusiveness and under no circumstance refuse admittance to LWDs. The Government is the primary funder, and the education departments' roles are clearly defined via the IE Policy which provides a structure and plan for meeting the diverse educational requirements of all Ghanaians of school-going age by using the *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) that guarantees invitational teaching and learning conditions for all learners and staff.

Additionally, Ghana in 2012 ratified international treaties that protect disabled people such as the *Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* (Tudzi, Bugri, & Danso, 2017), in addition to the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD). This reflects Ghana's commitment to the human rights of disabled persons such that equal opportunities and non-discrimination are assured in *Ghana's 1992 Constitution* (GoG, 2015; Tudzi, Bugri, & Danso, 2017). The *PWDs Act of 2006* is the major enabling law for people with disabilities (Act 715). According to Abedi, Asante and Sasu (2015), the enactment of the *Individuals with Disabilities Act 2006 (Act 715)* was a significant watershed moment in Ghana's human rights movement because it gave disabled people new life and hope, allowing them to engage as normal citizens.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE RESEARCH

According to UNESCO (2015) and Ainscow (2020), education is seen to be crucial to human development. However, many children are not able to access school because they are challenged physically and/or psychologically. As a result, the necessity for this investigation emanated which required purely focusing on IECE in terms of policy and practice in Ghana to promote the holistic development of all young children (Ackah-Jnr, 2018). In order to accomplish this, I dissected various policies including Ghana's 2015 national inclusive legislative framework to unravel the problems faced by SEN students (GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015). It is noteworthy that the policy directive calls for the inclusion of all students with mild to severe SEN at all levels of school,

regardless of their age. This urges all mainstream schools to provide education for all students, regardless of whether they are in some way, or another physically, intellectually, socially, or emotionally challenged. Early Childhood Education (ECE) programmes in Ghana have shown great advancement as evidenced by the number of districts participating which increased from twenty-nine districts in seven regions in 2011 to 46 districts throughout all 16 regions in 2016. (GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015; Ackah-Jnr & Udah, 2021). Since, Inclusion requires additional teacher-training programmes and better school resources, some teachers need to adapt teaching styles and change attitudes to support IE implementation. Also, schools have to adapt school buildings to make them more accessible, acceptable, and appropriate for all children (Ackah-Jnr & Danso, 2019).

Importantly, the gaps that this study attempted to fill, as well as the substantial accomplishments that the research has made in terms of knowledge and skills, clearly demonstrated that teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in ECE in Ghana is not a priority. Hence, this investigation brought to the fore the subject under investigation; and in so doing exposed the weaknesses in order to conscientize all role-players of the importance of IECE and its effective implementation to boost the country's economic growth by developing all learners irrespective of their disability.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Ghana, children spend two years at nursery, six years at primary school and three years of junior high school. Secondary education lasts three years (Quainoo, Quansah, Adams, & Opoku (2020). Through this provision, children, including those with disabilities, receive their education. Inclusion in early childhood education (comprises Kindergarten and Primary 1 to 3) is equitable and critical to all young children and an avenue for developing their potential and their early participation and engagement in education and social provisions of early childhood schools. Generally, all citizens' Inclusion in Ghana is a right (Ackah-Jnr, 2018; Adu-Gyamfi & Otami, 2020). According to the Inclusion (IE) Policy and framework (GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 23):

Inclusion is based on the value system that holds that all persons who attend an educational institution are entitled to equitable access to quality teaching and learning. This transcends the idea of physical location but incorporates the fundamental values that promote participation, friendship, and interaction. This policy recognizes the varied learning needs of learners. It requires all stakeholders in the education sector to address the diverse needs of different groups of citizens in the Ghanaian education system under the universal design for learning and within a learner-friendly environment.

According to Walsh (2018), integrating SEN learners into mainstream classrooms has become a controversial subject for debate. Many schools strive to establish a congenial and inclusive classroom climate in order to fulfil the needs of all learners (Bartolo et al., 2016). However, many teachers were not trained on how to teach learners with special needs; that is, how to incorporate and cater for them in normal education classes (Malva, Leijen, & Arcidiacono, 2021).

Although successive governments made several attempts to address some of the challenges militating against Inclusion for all, research uncovered that most teachers and school management still resist Inclusion of children with disabilities (Ackah-Jnr & Udah, 2021; Kuyini, Yeboah, Das, Alhassan, & Mangope, 2016). For example, some schools discriminate and reject learners on religious basis which impedes the enactment of Inclusion. There is also the problem of negative attitudes among teachers in education and society displayed toward children with disabilities (Kuyini et al., 2016; Murawski & Hughes, 2021). Moreover, there are barriers such as the lack of access to relevant curricula, overcrowded classes, teacher-centred approaches, the high and rising number of teachers who are underprepared to facilitate SEN lessons, and insufficient resources (Ackah-Jnr, 2018; Ackah-Jnr & Udah, 2021; Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015; Singal, Salifu, Iddrisu, Casely-Hayford, & Lundebye, 2015).

Consequently, new information regarding teachers' views toward Inclusion, and how Inclusion is to be applied in their classrooms is required before any new programmes can be initiated. Integration of classroom practice, knowledge, teachers' perspectives and attitudes, available contextual support for teachers and students, and policy enactment levels influence how Inclusion

is to be realised within school communities (Shogren, McCart, Lyon, & Sailor, 2015). According to Engelbrecht and Savolainen (2018), promoting Inclusion necessitates a dynamic and participatory strategy that includes the collaboration of policymakers, teachers, school management, departmental officials, parents, and the school community. Teachers practising Inclusion also need professional support services, ongoing training, policy guidance, and the development of solid identities as effective teachers of learners with diverse educational needs to adopt new and more inclusive ways of teaching. Teachers must become capable of changing their traditional methods of teaching children by migrating to modern, inclusive, and diverse educational strategies. A lack of essential professional help and policy knowledge is more likely to result in teacher unwillingness, negativity and apathy which will impact on their understanding of Inclusion (Ackah-Jnr & Udah, 2021; Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017).

Hayford (2019) notes that the number of children enrolled in ECE classes has grown annually since the passing of legislation relating to the Inclusion of SEN in mainstream classes. It is encouraging that when it comes to IECE, most teachers accept the concept of inclusion; however, inclusive-oriented teachers have little expertise when enacting teaching-learning best practice concerning SEN learners in ECE (Spandgou, Little, Evans, & Bonti, 2020). In other words, according to Hayford (2019), teachers' expertise in inclusive ECE classrooms is questionable due to the lack of knowledge and skills about inclusive teaching-learning practices in general. Training, internal or external, will assist in teachers' preparation of lessons of an inclusive nature. Hence, this should lead to ECE teachers being prepared to teach effectively in diverse classrooms that include learners with and without disabilities.

There are several advantages which ECE offers for children with special needs and their families. Maher, Thomson, Parkinson, Hunt, and Burrows (2021) point out that IECE encourages people to accept and care for other children in their environment. As they learn from one another, each child develops his or her own set of talents. This is so because SEN learners are provided the same opportunities to engage in the same programmes and activities as children who do not have any disability under the umbrella term of Inclusive ECE. Sharpe (2020) adds that social skills, peer representations, problem-solving skills, having a positive self-image, communication skills, and tolerance for everyone are some of the important aspects of IECE. Consequently, this has the

potential to rub-off on learners' parents who learn to be more tolerant and supportive of their children's disabilities. Because parents are the children's first teachers and are the ones who are most familiar with their children, it is imperative to establish open communication lines of contact with them and to ensure consistency between home and school. Creating a collaborative environment with parents is a pivotal aspect of Inclusion which assists children in reaching their full potential (Murawski & Hughes, 2021). Hence, a study on IECE educators' knowledge and practice in Ghana is necessary. Since this area of research has been relatively unexplored in Ghana, I deemed it necessary to conduct this investigation to produce new knowledge on this phenomenon.

Moreover, during my visits to schools, I observed that Inclusion in ECE classrooms enacted by teachers lacks the thrust of promoting Inclusion via teacher-child and learner-peer interaction to create sound relationships. Hayford (2019) agrees that Inclusion in ECE generally lacks promoting children's participation and interactive engagement in daily activities in the classroom. There was little evidence of involving children through learner-centred approaches and practical self-discovery methods.

In Ghana, the implementation and monitoring of Inclusion has been interrogated and this resulted in evidence indicating that there is segregation concerning children with special needs largely related to insufficient inclusive early childhood teachers' understanding which led to traditional methods still being utilised (Carothers, Berghs, & Gebrekidan, 2021). Additionally, mainstream education teachers were not enthusiastic about the flood of learners with special needs into regular schools (Hayford, 2019). An investigation on teachers' understanding of inclusion in Ghana, conducted by Ohemeng (2015), revealed that, despite the fact that teachers exhibit respect and care towards learners with various needs, they are hesitant to include them in their normal classes. To address the issue, this research explored the understanding and enactment of inclusion by IECE teachers across Ghana, with special focus on teachers in the Mampong Municipality.

Ghanaian legislation clarifies that Inclusion ensures that all children have accessibility to mainstream schools and must participate in all classroom practices. However, the enactment of inclusion continues to be hampered by difficulties such as insufficient resources, teachers' lack of knowledge, training and technical development, negative attitudes, and actions in the classroom,

as well as physical inaccessibility to school buildings and facilities. (Ackah-Jnr, 2018; Ackah-Jnr & Danso, 2019) which invariably affects the practice and sustainability of Inclusivity. In my experience as a teacher and a supervisor of teaching and learning in schools, I have become aware that many teachers' practices do not support IECE as a result the inclusion policy has not been fully transformed into reality in most mainstream classrooms. Because Ghana identifies Inclusion as being top priority by ensuring its ongoing commitment and clear guidelines concerning activities to ensure its success (Ackah-Jnr, 2018), there is the need to dissect teachers' understanding and enactment of IECE in order to identify strategies through which its practice could be effectively understood and enacted.

1.6 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.6.1 Aim

The study aimed at finding possible solutions to issues concerning how teachers understand and enact inclusion in early childhood education in Ghana.

1.6.2 Objectives

The study addressed the following objectives concerning teachers' understanding and enactment of IECE.

- To explore teachers' understanding of Inclusion in early childhood education in Ghana;
- To explain how teachers' understanding shape their enactment of Inclusion in early childhood education in Ghana; and
- To investigate why teachers, enact inclusion in certain ways in early childhood education in Ghana.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.7.1 Main Research Question

- How do ECE teachers understand and enact inclusion in early childhood education?

1.7.2 Subsidiary Research Questions

- What are the teachers' understanding of Inclusion in ECE in Ghana?
- How do teachers' understanding, shape their enactment of Inclusion?

- Why and how do ECE teachers enact Inclusion in certain ways?

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research explored teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusive Early Childhood Education (IECE) in Ghana. The research adopted a qualitative and interpretive multiple case study approach to explore IECE practice in three Early Childhood Education (ECE) schools in Ghana, specifically in the Mampong Municipality. The context-specific case sites which were selected included public and private ECE schools which cater for disabled and non-disabled learner in their programmes, activities, and routines.

This study's findings were expected to significantly contribute toward teachers' effective classroom enactment of IECE. It also aimed to establish how the teachers' effect the enactment of the policy via sense-making processes. It was envisaged that this research project will promote and hasten the development of teachers' expertise in the area of IECE by providing awareness of relevant legislation by implementing the guidelines that will lead to the successful integration of SEN learners with mainstream learners.

In elaboration, understanding the enactment of the policy via sense-making will help the teachers develop mechanisms or strategies through which diverse learners can be better assisted to overcome stressors in their learning environment. To the learners, the findings present an opportunity of experiencing what the main role-players experience while seeking ways and means of helping them better manage their workloads in their quest to enhance the quality of learner outcomes. The study also hoped to dissect teachers' attitudes toward Inclusive Early Childhood Education. Moreover, the emerging findings were supposed to assist the Government in evaluating areas where teachers' understanding of Inclusion may need further clarification for effective IECE delivery. In addition, this will inform Government to mobilise and deliver resources to assist the Ministry of Education to support Early Childhood Education teachers to perform their work effectively and efficiently for all types of learner-abilities.

In this study, IECE focuses on all learners with physical challenges and Special Education Needs (SEN) as an aspect of diversity contextualised within Ghana's policy, provision, and practice. As

part of the greater reform of the education system, the inclusion education (IE) policy seeks to provide learning environments sensitive to all students' needs which are conducive to produce quality academic results to eventually create a more equal society (GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015, p.4). This occasioned the inclusion of all learners with Special Education Needs in this study, which encompasses learners who are not necessarily classified as having a disability, as well as children who are struggling in school due to obstacles that hinder them from progressing optimally in learning and holistic growth. The ECE individuals include those with intellectual challenges, street children, talented individuals, learning disabilities, severe hearing and visual impairment, language disorders, emotional behavioural problems, and people with other health issues and persistent illnesses such as rheumatism, epilepsy, asthma, spina bifida, and sickle cell anaemia (MOE, 2015; Saran, White, & Kuper, 2020).

This study's findings can be extended to other Municipal, Metropolitan, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in the country. Obiako (2020) states that IECE is essential for all children and their parents/families, educators, stakeholders, and the Government of Ghana. The study contributes to research on IECE to fill the knowledge gap in Ghana's education system, and inspiring teachers to accept, understand, and promote Inclusion in Early Childhood Education. The Knowledge derived from this investigation was intended to provide contextual information for delivering quality and effective ECE services and support programmes in Ghana (Acharibasam, 2021).

The findings of this study are essential to suggest recommendations in terms of further guidance and enactment of IECE such that all instructional resources and structural equipment required for Inclusion in schools are up to date with the latest trends, including the provision of assistive devices to be made accessible to IECE schools as needed. The study also articulates contextual change factors that are barriers to enacting quality IECE. This study promotes the furtherance of Education IECE schools to develop all learners irrespective of disability. Thus, teachers and head teachers should become agents for developing policies and programmes to uplift Inclusivity. Since the data collected through the case studies (and sites) and the participants provides an insight into enactment, provisions, and practices, it will contribute to essential research knowledge that will complete the development of an IECE framework for Ghana.

In sum, this study is significant because it can maximally benefit learners, teachers, education officials, government officials, researchers, and parents. As such, it can be a springboard for strategic planning concerning Inclusion which may involve formulating a guide for teachers to enact Inclusion effectively in ECE schools.

1.9 LOCATION OF THE STUDY

This research is expressly narrowed to the Early Childhood Education level. The specific physical location of the study is Mampong Municipality in Ghana. The research focuses on teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in ECE schools in Ghana. The study was conducted in three selected public and private inclusive ICEC schools. The choosing of this municipality enabled the researcher to obtain holistic and in-depth information from the school sites to articulate understandings and enactment of Inclusion. Mampong-Ashanti is semi-urban and has an effective transport network, trading centres, and a rich culture with a strong clan relationship. The population constitutes mainly of farmers and merchants. Among the three selected schools, two are public and non-fee-paying because they are Government-owned. The other is private and is a fee-paying school. All the schools have classrooms, playing fields, and furniture to support teaching and learning. Generally, most private school teachers are untrained compared to public schools. However, teachers in private schools undergo in-service training to develop competencies for teaching in those schools. These schools welcome all learners from different backgrounds into their regular classrooms.

There are 260 MMDAs in Ghana, and there are eight in the district. The Mampong Township is one of these eight municipality bodies (Mampong Municipal Assembly, 2016). It is the second-largest Township in the Ashanti Region in terms of population size. In the south, it is bordered by the Sekyere South District, in the east by the Sekyere Central District, and in the north, it is bordered by the Ejura Sekyeredumase Municipality. As seen in Figure 1 below, the administrative capital, Mampong-Ashanti, is bordered by 39 settlements, the majority of which are rural. With an area of approximately 449 square kilometres, it is situated between longitudes 0.05' West and 1.30' West, and latitudes 6.55' North and 7.30' North (Mampong Municipal Assembly, 2016). As reported by the 2010 Demographics and Household Report, Mampong-Ashanti has a populace of around

88,051, with 13,427 males and 45,398 females, according to the latest available census statistics (MMA, 2016).
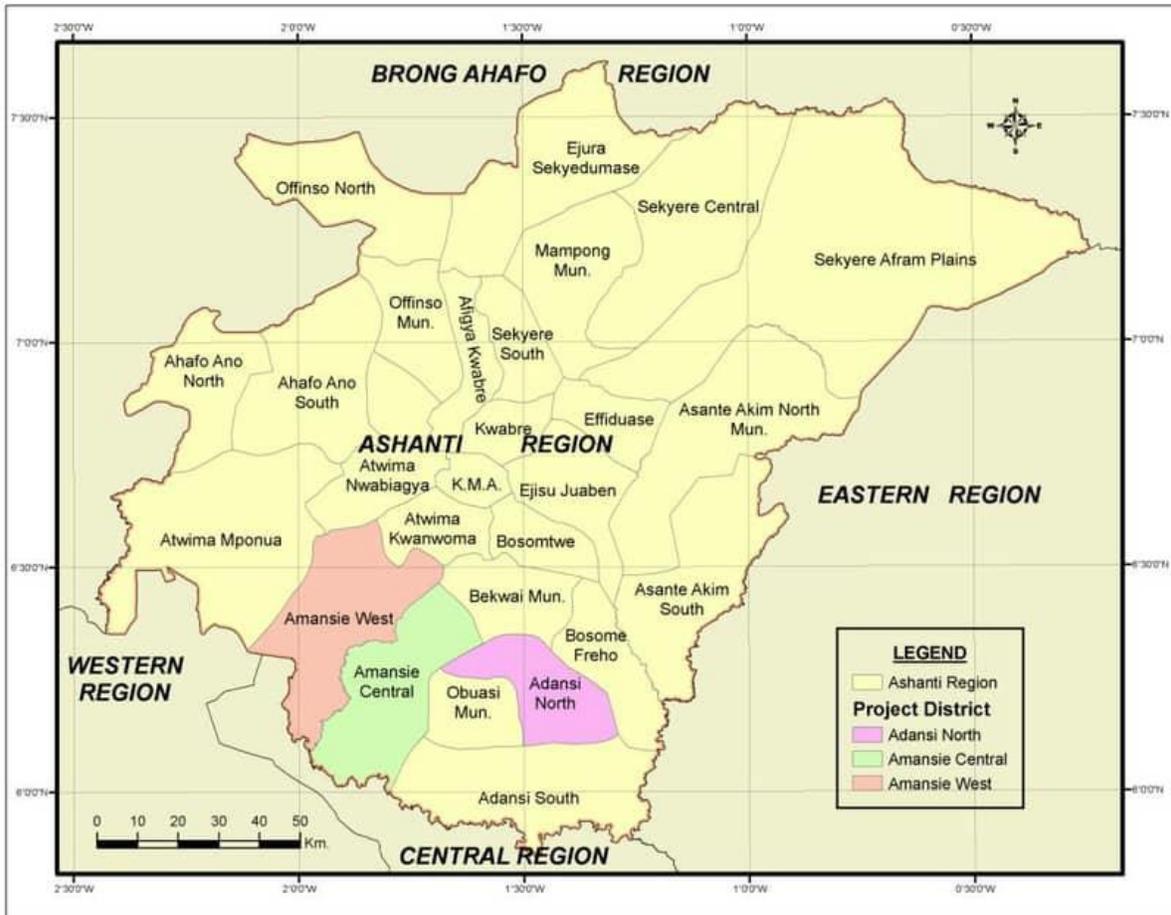
Figure 1.1 Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies in the Ashanti Region of Ghana (Ashiagbor, Ofori-Asenso, Forkuo, & Agyei-Frimpong, 2020).

1.10 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

The following are some of the most important keywords that were mentioned in this study:

Exclusivity: According to *Ghana's 1992 Constitution*, basic education should be made available to all school-going children in order for them to be become literate and treated equally. This was promulgated as some children were unable to enrol in school due to a variety of issues that made it difficult (GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015). Although students may be included in regular education, they can also be debarred from it if they are labelled as being physically handicapped, which is considered discriminatory (Ireri, Kin'endo, Wangila, & Thurannira, 2020). Exclusion

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describes what happens when learners are formally excluded from school thus turning to deviant behaviour and ill-discipline (Waitoller, 2020).

However, in the more appropriate sense, exclusion is used to describe the process of depriving some rights of some access to some learners' right to get access or participation in education (Gachago, 2018). Other exclusionary criteria which learners face include negative attitudes leading to discrimination, poverty, non-provision of resources, non-use of facilities, harassment, and religious intolerance (Cheshire, 2018; GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015). Additionally, there is a scarcity of qualified teachers to help students with physical tasks (Kumari & Raj, 2016). In this context, the GoG Ministry of Education established a strategic objective to *"Provide education for those with physical and mental disabilities, orphans, slow and fast learners, by including them within the mainstream formal education"* (GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 4).

Early Childhood Education (ECE): In the words of Ohemeng (2015) and Cologon (2020), ECE is defined as the education provided to children who still have not achieved the mandatory age for entry into the first year of primary school. The term "preschool" refers to a semi-formal education structure that takes place outside the residence where young children from about the age of three years are allowed to play-like tasks in a team-setting while also receiving psychological, social, and physical lessons appropriate for their developmental phases until they reach the mandatory maturity level for Government-approved proper education. Specifically, ECE is defined as instruction provided at an academic facility to children aged between 3 to 5 years prior to their enrolment in elementary school (Samuel, Acharya & Rao, 2020).

Inclusive Education: A process by which all children in a school, irrespective of their abilities or limits, disabilities, or cultural history, become a part of the school society, despite where they attend school. (Magnusson, Gransson, & Lindqvist, 2019; Nartey et al., 2018; Walsh, 2018; Dayan, 2017; Dewa, 2020; Hlalele, 2021).

Inclusion: Inclusion is a cultural paradigm that involves all persons with disabilities and special learning, that ensures chances for students with disabilities to study among their non-disabled

classmates in regular education classes (Óskarsdóttir, 2017; Walsh, 2018; GoG Ministry of Education, 2015; Dewa 2020; Hlalele, 2021).

Early Childhood Inclusion: Early Childhood Inclusion encompasses the principles, regulations, and procedures that promote the right of every new-born and little child and his or her parents, irrespective of ability, to engage in a wide variety of experiences and situations as entire members of their relatives, towns, and society (UNESCO, 2017; Dewa, 2020).

Enactment: A method through which individual teachers at a school proactively contribute to the creation of the school setting in which they work, and in which they educate their students (Deaw, 2020; Humes & Priestley, 2021).

1.11. OUTLINE OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Policies, mainly in the field of education, are developed at the national level and are likely to be subjected to a barrage of legislative clauses. In the light of this study, we are able to provide rich insight on teachers' knowledge and perspectives concerning implementing inclusion in the ECE settings. In particular, the purpose of this research was to explore teachers' understanding and enactment of IECE schools in Ghana. As such, I as the researcher, devised a framework for investigating teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion in early childhood education settings. Hence, the research was underpinned by Dervin's (1999) sense-making theory as a framework.

According to Naveh and Bronstein (2019), the three aspects that forms the basis of the sense-making theory are circumstance, gap, and assistance. According to Dervin (1999), a phenomenon or social issue offers the framework within which one needs to make-sense of something (a gap), which in turn motivates one to seek assistance. After receiving this assistance, one finds oneself in a new or different situation. When something is not quite right, individuals seek to make-sense of the experiences or information they are presented with (Naveh & Bronstein, 2019). As such, the sense-making theory can positively shape teachers' future experiences by giving meaning to the phenomena being explored. Lawrent (2020) adds that teachers extract sense and meaning when dissecting a policy which then influences their understanding and enactment of a particular policy.

I used the theory of sense-making to frame explanations and interpretations of teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion in ECE in Ghana. The sense-making theory was applied as the theoretical framework for this qualitative inquiry to focus on teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in early childhood education. This enabled me to co-construct meaning with participants in ECE schools.

To make sense of data, one must look for similarities and differences across various data sources in order to arrive at a goal-directed analysis to determine patterns and themes. Since sense-making is a process that serves as the basis for the formation of new knowledge, its strength lies on the impact it has on diagnosing the quality of teaching-learning based on the information elicited (Schudde, Jabbar, Epstein, & Yucel, 2020). In other words, sense-making is a societal analytical practice that entails processes of developing situational consciousness and understanding in circumstances of high difficulty or ambiguity in order to make choices in certain scenarios (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015; Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2019). Further, a substantial part of sense-making occurs during interactive conversations, which rely on the tools of speech to generate and share ideas via dialogue. It utilises scientific enquiry that fosters processes of analysis and integration of information in order to achieve an in-depth and rich grasp of the subject matter under study (Dervin, 2015; Martins & Ortiz, 2019).

Opoku, Cuskelly, Pedersen and Rayner (2021) contend that adopting inclusion policies is insufficient without understanding the perspectives of teachers by observing their active participation in regular schools. Deku and Ackah (2012) emphasises that teachers' conceptualisation of inclusion is paramount if Inclusion has to be successfully implemented. According to Florian, Black-Hawkins, and Rouse (2016), the principle that all students should have access to an equal-opportunity learning environment to receive quality education, is the starting point for the process of inclusion. However, this is dependent on the meanings assigned by teachers to disability and Inclusion (Ackah-Jnr, 2018). In agreement, Soini, Pyhalto and Pietarinen (2021) state that policy enactment in organisations such as schools depends on existing institutional mechanisms and the way in which local teachers make-sense of the concepts of LWD and Inclusion.

Notions that policymakers and role-players form about a programme such as Inclusion are crucial to the enactment process, but such ideas can be the result of a complicated process led by a person's previous encounters. However, "sense-making is not a simple decoding of the policy message; in general, the process of comprehension is an active process of interpretation that draws on the individual's rich knowledge-base of understandings, beliefs, and attitudes" (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 391).

Quraishi (2019) elaborates by mentioning three areas in which sense-making occurs: person cognition, situational or contextual context, and legislative signals. Firstly, persons are sense-makers in that they generate meanings about policies and programmes that are founded on their past understanding, thoughts, and encounters. In other words, it is an "active endeavour to put one's previous structure of information and ideas to stress on the production of meaning" that sense-making is defined (Quraishi, 2019). Examples include teachers who believe that the inclusion policy is congruent with their ideology and views about teaching processes, which may have a good impact on enactment. Secondly, the circumstance or setting in which the transformation is happening has an impact on the sense-making of the enacting entities who are implementing it. A recent study by Lim (2018) indicates that the enacting agency is also a social sense-maker, and that all sense-making takes place within social settings. Therefore, the mindsets and views of teachers and principals, as well as the degree of instruction and tools they get throughout the implementation of Inclusion, may have an impact on the efficacy of the policy. Thirdly, sense-making includes regulatory signals, or the function that "manifestations of ideas about altering practice" play in shaping opinions of the plan and how that influences enactment (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 389). However, teachers receive messages about classroom instruction from inclusion project designs, which may or may not align with their ways of thinking or be explicit enough to promote acceptance or adaptation.

Additionally, sense-making offers a valid conceptual lens to explore elements that impact people's understanding and enactment of Inclusion. The most widespread obstacles to prosperous inclusion implementation, according to Schuelka (2018), are the absence of legislation and lawful support, a lack of qualified special-purpose school staff, a lack of teacher instruction in inclusion thoughts and strategies, didactic and passive pedagogical modalities, a tight syllabus that does not allow for

housing, adjustment, or personalisation, non-supportive school and district governance, and negative social attitudes toward disability. The purpose of this project is to solicit sense-making to investigate what an Inclusion experience means to the teachers who will be participating from ECE schools. That is, sense-making occurs when persons such as students and teachers, come to appreciate the significance of an event they have experienced. Persons collectively make reality in their daily lives in institutions, according to a more complicated definition of sense-making. This is an ongoing process that includes assigning definitions to observations and creating order out of occurrences by making sense of them (Powell & Coles, 2021). Persons collaborate to construct credible interpretations of their encounters via the process of sense-making. It is vital to make-sense of events since they are often ambiguous as they may be understood in a variety of ways. To manage the ambiguity of situations that are distinct from what was anticipated, it is necessary to choose one explanation for the experience out of the numerous possible variants. In other words, one has to choose one particular meaning for an event from among the many possible interpretations that are available to one. As the process of sense-making proceeds, this commitment will have an impact on subsequent acts.

Lastly, an interpretative viewpoint on speech, such as the interpretive or constructivist paradigm employed for this research, is related to sense-making because it stresses how understanding is socially formed via interaction and practice. The researcher was able to explore how people came to a common understanding of their Inclusion experiences because of the use of both the sense-making concept and the interpretive viewpoint. Although common understanding does not imply that there will be a single objective fact (of Inclusion), it does result in an actuality (of inclusive practice) that is representative of the lived occurrences of those who participate in it; in this case, teachers from the selected ECE schools. The sense-making theory will be discussed in detail in chapter two and used to enhance the understanding and interpretation of the study's findings.

1.12 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.12.1 Research Design

Every authorised research project adheres to a set of norms and principles that is methodical in nature. Study design is a pattern or strategy that directs the investigator in the execution of his or her method in order to acquire data for assessment. The present study adopted a qualitative case

investigation study design in order to answer the research questions. The term 'qualitative research' refers to a method of data collection and analysing that emphasises the use of words rather than numbers. The purpose of a qualitative research design is to determine the *why* and *how* of a condition in order to better understand it. Participant- observations, in-depth interviews (either in person or telephonically), and focus group discussions are all instances of qualitative study methodologies that might be explored throughout the design phase. Despite the differences between qualitative methodologies, there are some similarities. Specifically, according to Pandey and Pandey (2021), the purpose of any qualitative research study is to acquire a complete grasp of a certain subject, problem, or to draw broad judgements based on first-hand experiences. Because information collection may be time-consuming, it is preferable to have a small yet concentrated sampling base in order to do this.

The study is a multi-case study comprising school A, School B, and School C. This allows the researcher to have direct contact with teachers to gain an insider's perspective (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) on teachers' Inclusive practices. The researcher prefers qualitative research to quantitative research because qualitative research will allow one to better understand the teacher's perspective on Inclusion (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & De Lacey, 2016). That is, qualitative approaches are used to address questions about encounter, meaning, and viewpoint. These procedures are most often followed from the standpoint of the user. This qualitative case study utilised with prompts, visual images, and observation to build a meaningful understanding, analysis, and enactment of Inclusion as experienced by teachers while guaranteeing validity, traceability, reliability, and confirmability of the study's methods, data, findings, and conclusions (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

1.12.2 Methodology

The methods for generating data and the type of analysis used to develop knowledge are strongly reliant on methodology. To some extent, the methodology chosen is dictated by the phenomenon being studied. Antwi and Hamza (2015, p. 218) define this as a "method used in conducting the investigation". Further, according to Kawulich (2015, p. 1), methodology refers to "how we should investigate the world". Importantly, the methodological part of the study must be consistent with its ontological and epistemological positions. There is no single construction reality in the

interpretivism paradigm, hence the construction of various realities is done through interaction. Since the interpretive paradigm advocates that research techniques should focus on people's thoughts and how they make-sense of things (Lincoln & Guba, 2016), in-depth interviews, observations, and photo-elicitation are common qualitative research techniques that were used in this research project (Creswell, 2018). In sum, this study uses a case study technique guided by the sense-making theory and interpretative paradigm to address the research aim, objectives, and questions.

1.13 DATA COLLECTION

Interviews, observations, and photo-elicitation were the data collection tools employed in this study. Due to the extreme sensitivity of the subject, and in-depth interview guide was used as one of the instruments to elicit data from teachers. The instruments were chosen because of their versatility and substance, with open-ended questions that allowed for in-depth probing and opportunities for clarification. As such, these instruments supplied rich and incisive data about individuals' emotions, thoughts, comprehension, perceptions, and judgements (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & De Lacey, 2016).

1.13.1 Interview

According to Adhabi and Anozie (2017), despite the intricacies an interrogation may present, it may be regarded as a kind of consultation in which the investigator seeks to get a better understanding of a subject from the viewpoint of the individual being interviewed. This sort of technique is inspired by an established research goal which involves an interactive process where the interviewer asks the interviewee probing questions to garner precise information about the phenomenon under investigation. Also, interviews are conducted to collect data from detailed responses of participants; and this builds a strong connection with respondents thus promoting maximum cooperation while sourcing reliable and authentic data (Schutt, 2014). Interviews, when viewed as a conversation and used effectively, allow participants to respond adequately to the cues. In this study, interviews were conducted to elicit information from the selected IECE teachers.

1.13.2 Observation

When it comes to social sciences, observation is one of the many diverse research strategies available. When used in this context, it refers to a wide range of techniques, methods, and techniques that might be difficult to assess in terms of implementation and desired results; thus, it is important to adjust the decision to the research subject and scientific environment (Boström, Öhlander, & Ciesielska, 2018). With observation, one may get a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of an incident, situation, location, as well as the behaviour of members in that context. Observation is essential for understanding the naturalistic environment and the viewpoints of the respondents in a particular context. I used the observation method to gather information about the teacher's pedagogical skills, physical facilities, classroom activities, and any other practice that aids in IECE enactment.

1.13.3 Photo-elicitation

Photo elicitation is a data collection technique that generates verbal discussion pertaining to visual images. The informant or the researcher can produce the visual images. Therefore, I asked participants to take pictures within the research site and comment on them. Photo elicitation is a method that includes one or several graphic images to be discussed in an interview; it allows respondents to express their thoughts on the graphic images that have been used. This included prompts to elicit responses on the visuals, and how they mirrored the participants' perceptions and experiences. The choice of using photo-elicitation interviews was to document the participant's personal meanings and values. The meanings and feelings elicited may be different from or supplement those evoked through verbal questioning Copes et al. (2018).

1.14 SAMPLING AND DATA ANALYSIS

1.14.1 Sampling Techniques

According to the researcher, purposeful sampling (also known as judgemental, selective, or subjective sampling) is a sampling strategy in which people are chosen to participate in the research. Hence, purposeful sampling was used to select respondents whom the researcher believed would be able to offer rich information needed for the research (Yizengaw & Tessega, 2020). Since the aim of this research was to explore Inclusion by eliciting information from ECE participants with sufficient knowledge and expertise on the topic, I therefore relied on the purposive sampling

approach to select the teachers who could provide me with the most relevant and in-depth data for this study.

1.14.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data exploration is a methodological procedure of interpreting the raw information for easy readability and understanding. The data analysis method assists researchers to address the question, *what does it all mean*? (Leavy, 2017, p. 116). The purpose of the analysis and interpretation is to generate a comprehensible report of the data. Since the data I have collected is voiceless, I have to make it 'speak' (Vogt et al., 2014). The analysis and interpretation stage may look blurry because it is a recursive process: analysis to interpretation, interpretation to analysis, and back and forth.

Qualitative or a case study investigation was used to interpret the raw facts collected from the field to find the hidden meanings and patterns of the collected data. Qualitative analysis was used to interpret the text, photos, and observation details. The data analytic technique I adopted for the study was pattern matching (Yin, 2014) by relying on Leavy's (2017) five stages of analysis and interpretation model which entailed: preparing and organisation of data, immersing myself in the data, coding, sorting, and theming, and interpretation. Preparing and organising the data involved transcribing interview recordings (Leavy, 2017). The transcripts (appendix A) were read numerous times for familiarisation with the contents to obtain a more incisive comprehension of them. Because there were diverse responses as indicated in the collected data, I sorted the data as part of the organisation process.

During the second stage, I carefully and systematically read and studied the data several times to make-sense of it. I kept reflecting on the data at this stage which provided me with a holistic picture of the data. Immersing myself into painstakingly studying the collected data, assisted me in gaining a deep (sometimes emotional) insight into the facts about IECE in Ghana (Saldaña, 2021). Thereafter the coding process (word or sentence assigned to data segments) enabled me to reduce and classify all collected data. Coding was manually and descriptively executed which summed up or captured the substance of each data segment (Saldaña, 2021). I then categorised (grouped or sorted similar codes together) all the codes by critically searching for patterns and relationships among codes. Through all these processes, I observed emerging themes when writing notes

(memos) that tentatively explained the themes. Memo-writing includes contemplating and transcribing facts that you have coded and sorted carefully which provides a connection across coding, analysis, recording of one's thoughts, and new concepts. Each memo explained my grasp of the subject, and the appropriate selection of participants which provided new knowledge of the phenomenon under study. I documented various types of information such as vivid accounts of teachers lived-experiences, key data quotes, analysis reports on various codes, and ideas for interpreting the codes. I used such notes to generate meaning from the coded data. I sought for trends in the data, noticed anomalous data, and looked for connections between distinct groups, ideas, and themes. At the interpretation stage, I used the memos (notes) to generate meaning from the coded data (section 4.7.1).

1.15 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The study comprised of seven chapters:

Chapter one outlines the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, aim and objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, and summary of the chapter.

Chapter two provides theoretical framework that guides the analysis of the data.

Chapter three presents the review of the related literature on the subject under exploration.

Chapter four discusses the research methodology.

Chapter five consists of data presentation and analysis.

Chapter six explains the study's results and discusses of the findings of the study.

Chapter seven presents the summary of findings, contribution of the study, conclusions, and recommendations.

1.16 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The goal of Inclusion is to deliver quality learning and social opportunities to all children (with or without disabilities). Since teachers are the crucial implementers of Inclusion, it is vital that they comprehend the policy and why it was enacted. The need for this research is emphatically based on the view that Inclusion, and more specifically, IECE, is a key component of education and practice in Ghana aimed at promoting the holistic growth of all children. Children, especially those with disabilities, are in dire need of a fair, equal, inclusive, and non-discriminatory system of

education in Ghana to develop their full potential. The study aimed to investigate how teachers perceive IECE and the factors that promote/impede its enactment. In addition, the study aimed to look at appropriate support for teachers such as professional development workshops. The study explored how teachers' understanding and enactment of IECE enhanced and sustained children's diverse needs. A qualitative approach was employed by using data collection instruments such as observations, interviews, and photo-elicitation to collect data from teachers who were purposively sampled. The thematic analysis approach was applied to interpret the results to address the research questions of the study. The outcomes of the study would help teachers enact IECE in the classroom more effectively. It also determined how teachers indulge in sense-making of policy which inevitably influences their enactment of IECE. Examining the connection between sense-making and policy is key to teachers' developing expertise in enacting IECE. The following chapter (2) discusses the theoretical framework in depth.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that provides guidelines for the study's direction including interpreting the findings of the research. The theoretical framework aspects are discussed in general, but specifically the sense-making processes are described to highlight how it will assist in exploring teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion of ECE in Ghana.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AS A ROADMAP

In this study, the conceptual model serves as a 'road map' or a guide for the researchers (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Dewa, 2020). It is a framework that is based on an existing concept (theory) in an area of research that is relevant to the study's aim and objectives. Hence, the conceptual model or theoretical framework serves as a blueprint for the purpose of conducting a particular study. This foundational plan is followed by the researcher in order to create his or her unique research endeavour. Using the 'road map' metaphor, Adom, Adu-Agyekum and Husein (2018) explored the function of the conceptual framework in educational settings in terms of guiding the researcher so that there is no breakaway from the confines of established theories in adding to the field of knowledge and scholarship. The theoretical framework, therefore, might be a specific theory or a set of theories regarding elements of human endeavour that can be beneficial for understanding occurrences in more detail. It is made up of theoretical ideas, constructions, ideas, tenets, as well as other elements (Mukumbang et al., 2020).

According to Beck (2011), theories explain how a phenomenon functions, which gives meaning to research studies. Ravitch and Riggan (2017) indicate theoretical framework as being a concept or plan that a researcher selects to guide an intended study. As such, a theoretical framework is defined as a foundational guide that activates a series of mental stimulations to interpret an event or dissecting a phenomenon or social issue in order to provide new knowledge on a subject. Ravitch and Riggan (2017), add that a theoretical framework establishes logical connections throughout the research where the utilisation of creative ideas leads to the diagnosing of the phenomenon under study. Also, a theoretical framework assists in examining discipline-based writing associated with

the identification of a general theory that critiques the basic assertions about the subject (Creswell, 2018).

Eccle and Wigfield (2020) add that a theory is a model that assists in the incisive critiquing of individuals or social phenomena of interest, which is often used in academia at various levels as a lens to examine a phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). In other words, the theoretical framework unfolds the plan for the entire research inquiry. It serves as the guide for building and supporting one's study while providing the structure. Further, it will address the study's aim and objectives in terms of philosophy, epistemology, methodology, and analysis (Pekkanen, 2021). Jaakkola (2020) elaborates that a theoretical framework is a construct that directs a study by employing a proven, coherent interpretation of particular events and connections.

The sense-making approach is based on constructivist assumptions about seeking and using information on social issues about how people assign meaning to a human condition or situation based on our beliefs and experiences (Dervin, 2015). Thus, sense-making is the individual activity of gathering, processing, recreating, and applying information which is a tool created by humans to help them interpret their surroundings (Oduntan & Ruthven, 2021). Moreover, communication techniques and information (knowledge) application are important aspects of sense-making. Dervin (2015) contends that one's internal (cognitive) and exterior (procedural) behaviour that enables one to create and plan one's mobility across time and place is described as sense-making metatheory. Sense-making research, which is included in the concept of knowledge-seeking, utilises gap-bridging but from a procedural and heuristic standpoint to describe how humans process information in order to make meaning of it to reach decisions. Dervin, cited in Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) states that the sense-making theory started in a time-space milieu which involved individuals moving through time-space between certainty and uncertainty resulting in a gap or barrier being created.

In this study, the sense-making theory of Dervin (2015) is used to guide the researcher to assist teachers to bridge the gap between certainty and uncertainty regarding the practice of Inclusion. Therefore, it is critical to understand how teachers make sense of Inclusion as an educational reform effort. Understanding and enactment through the sense-making theory will help teachers explore

how teachers gain an understanding of how to implement a policy on Inclusivity that is designed for transformation in education in Ghana which entails the elements that influence their choices regarding the policy, and the ways in which such choices impact their enactment of the Inclusion. Regarding this study, the gap referred to is a teacher's misunderstanding (or misinterpretation) and reluctance to Inclusion (Grice, 2017).

Johnson and Christensen (2017) maintain that a theoretical framework has a number of advantages for academic research; it provides structure by demonstrating how scientists describe their investigation philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically, among other things. This aids investigators in locating and contextualising basic ideas within their investigations which guides the research path (Nordstrom, 2021). This situates research inside an academic framework and centrepiece relating it to the topic under examination. As a consequence, it has an impact on the choice of a study's design and data analysis approach. Further, according to Anfara and Mertz (2015), the use of a theoretical framework promotes the collection of facts for research. Therefore, the theoretical framework aids researchers in identifying the most appropriate research method, analytical approaches, and processes. According to Kivunja (2018), a study lacking a theoretical framework fails to provide guidance in choosing relevant literature and academic discussions for authentic findings. Swanson and DeVereaux (2017), and Kivunja (2018), agree that the theoretical framework offers a common perspective or lens through which one may analyse the issue via data evaluation. Ravitch and Riggan (2017) advise that the theoretical framework aids investigators in considering other hypotheses that may provide differing viewpoints, so increasing the study's width. In support, Camp (2014) states that theoretical frameworks enrich the core of a research, serving as a fulcrum for the proposed research project.

There are numerous advantages in using a theoretical framework in study projects. It structures and defines the topic philosophically, epistemologically, and analytically, among other things (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). As a result, the theoretical framework assists the investigator in determining the most suitable study method, analytical tools, and processes for their particular research investigation. It improves the significance and generalisability of study findings. (Akintoye, 2015). Imenda (2014) argues that a theoretical framework is necessary for research in order to provide proper guidance to hunt for relevant publications and academic debates of the study discoveries.

For other researchers in the similar area of investigation, the theoretical framework serves as a common ground through which one can discuss the issue and conduct data evaluation (Ahmad, Shah, Latada, & Wahab, 2019).

Wilson and Anagnostopoulos (2020) believe that a theoretical framework should help lead and hold true concerning every facet of the study procedure. This includes the definition of the issue under study, conducting a literature review, and developing a technique for presenting and discussing the findings. Wallace and Wray (2021) agree that the theoretical framework contributes to the understanding of the study's substance. Consequently, research projects must explicitly demonstrate the theoretical framework on which the desired study is based. For both intellectuals and commentators, the appropriate choosing of theories and the adherence to a theoretical framework reassures them that the research project is not centred on the researcher's assumptions and prejudice but is instead firmly grounded in an authentic and tested concept that has been chosen through rigorous analyses (Akintoye, 2015).

2.3 SENSE-MAKING: A THEORY FRAMING THIS STUDY

Sense-making, according to Rom and Eyal (2019), is a human cognitive procedure in which persons and communities form truth from a continuous stream of occurrences. Furey and Rixon (2019) explain that the fundamental principle of sense-making is that reality is a continuous achievement that develops through attempts to build orderly but a reflective sense of what happens. Social constructivism has brought sense-making to the fore. Persons reflect on the sense of their past encounters of the world via logical efforts that allow them to develop acceptable and theoretical models in order to grasp ambiguous knowledge, such as genetic information (Furey & Rixon, 2019). According to Mills (2016), the practice of sense-making occurs when a person or community attempts to make-meaning of acts and occurrences that are unexpected or puzzling. Individuals learn to comprehend or make-sense of occurrences that they are presently witnessing or those they have encountered previously via writing, sense-making, and oral narration of their experiences in society. This building of new knowledge is both a conscious and unconscious action that might seem substantial, trivial, or even go unnoticed at different stages of the procedure (Mills, 2016).

In humans, sense-making is a conceptual process by which a person or group of individuals constructs reality from a continuous stream of occurrences. Tomkins and Eatough (2018) assert that the fundamental idea behind sense-making is the achievement of a living through efforts to arrange and interpret past events. Since social constructivism serves as the foundation for sense-making, one's prior encounters of the world are calls for mental operations that allow one to develop reasonable models in order to comprehend intricate data. McNamara (2017) describes sense-making as the process of negotiating and creating meaning, understanding, or a cogent narrative of the universe is referred to as sense-making. She labels it a sophisticated, nuanced, and vividly evocative body of thought on socialisation, institutional replication and transformation, human agency, and mental representation, reasoning, and activity. All of these concepts are tied to the practice of creating art and its function in IECE. McNamara (2017) adds that the process has tremendous implications for designing and managing institutions, teams, programmes, and technologies.

Consequently, meanings have been expanded via the use of the sense-making theory in a variety of situations and scenarios. In addition, concepts relating to sense-making have been used to unpack a variety of particular scenarios, such as focusing on dangerous events (Zdroik, 2018). People ought to be capacitated at making sense of what is occurring in a world that has become 'smaller' but increasingly complex, with unforeseen events such as shifting governmental, industrial, environmental, and social conditions that affect the common man at every level (Ancona, 2012). To this end, Ancona (2012) suggests that we all need to interpret and critique the greater extended system in order to increase our grasp of truth, generate maps that are accurate reproductions of what is occurring, and participate in the process to change social evils. To overcome our anxieties about the ambiguous situation that is both known and hidden, the best we can do is engage in sense-making to foster organisational capacity among ourselves. John, Cluett and Khanyile (2017) stress that not all events and occurrences can be predicted in advance, making it difficult to act once they do happen. This implies that even while we may be aware of highly dangerous information or situations, our sense-making mechanisms may not be able to handle it and may end in tragedy. Following a disaster or catastrophic event, we begin piecing together the processes that led to it. When unexpected occurrences arise, we sometimes wonder why we were not prepared; but unforeseen or unforeseeable circumstances may catch us off guard. The unknowns in a linear

continuum make it challenging to deal with (Cluett & Khanyile, 2017). As a result, sense-making procedures have been incorporated into the danger administration system to expand the comprehension of likely events and its results.

Barnes-Dabban, Van Tatenhove, Van Koppen and Termeer (2017), Bethany (2019), and DeMatthews (2012) emphasise that the sense-making theory is about how individuals untangle something that was initially unclear. Most research on policy understanding and enactment has not focused on coming to grips with clearing the blurriness of social issues. For the first time, education policy experts are now applying sense-making principles to acquire a more incisive understanding of legislative policy and its implementation that supersedes desire and ability (Becker, 2020). Regarding this investigation, the researcher examined teachers' sense-making endeavours via prompting, observing, and photo-elicitation to ascertain what events constitute a sense-making model. A few theories in sense-making were adopted to explain teachers' views in the three school sites. The most appropriate ones to aid in the discussion comprise Dervin's (2015) theory and Weick's (2015) theory which explains that individuals construct interpretive bridges over a gabby reality, suggesting that the crux of sense-making is a hermeneutic process (Roger, 2019). According to Barnes-Dabban et al. (2017), scholars have looked at how teachers make-sense of framing, deducing, and analysing the plethora of signals, contexts, and dangers that emanate from policy implementation.

Merkus et al. (2017) suggest evaluating participant motivations and their influence on group sense in an inter-organisational setting when it comes to sense-making. In this regard, organisations cooperate inter-organisationally after being confronted with complicated strategic issues that challenge their sense-making skills. Loebbecke et al. (2016) ask for more information about the challenges and opportunities for knowledge-sharing in this context. This allows them to bring together the various viewpoints of the participants to gain a thorough understanding of the subject at hand. More in-depth investigations should be conducted concerning the functions of artifacts, materials, sense-making frameworks, the utilising of alerts, and how individuals may assist in sense-making procedures (Balogun et al., 2014; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012; Weick, 2015; Smy, Cahillane, & MacLean, 2016). In addition, Wheat, Attfield and Field (2016, p.1) explain that "sense-making is concerned with how we use the information to build a picture of the world around

us. It is the medium through which individuals attempt to comprehend situations or occurrences that are unfamiliar, contradictory, perplexing, or otherwise defy expectations. It is said that we recognize and restructure information to help build an understanding of the world".

The findings of Marcum (2018) suggest that the discrepancies amongst sense-making and related cognitive functions such as interpretation and decision-making, have been distorted by sense-making researchers. According to Marcum (2018), explanation is one of several elements inside a sense-making framework, yet it is never identical as sense-making. Mills (2016) explains interpretation as a translation that is admissible and approximate in nature. According to this description, interpretation is a fixed, approximated, and passive depiction of signals or impulses that are presented to the subject. Sense-making extends above this one-dimensional, logical interpretation of information (Mills, 2016). It is rather a dynamic process of building and rebuilding associated with the interpretation and knowledge using clues from an endless supply of knowledge, encounters, occurrences, signals, and stimuli.

Sense-making requires individuals to interpret content which involves analysing objects, speeches, and acts (among others) via arbitrary renditions which assist in making one's reality more understandable (DeMatthews, 2012). Sense-making helps academics to have a better understanding of the conditions that led to a certain choice. Empathising with the actors by re-living their experiences and bringing their memories to life would allow investigators to get a deeper understanding of the significant contextual factors that impacted their encounter that influenced their choices. Moreover, sense-making assists the researcher by facilitating the review of facts in a chronological manner. While considering a number of data types and the varied abilities and capacities of the players, the focus is on how to organise an ensemble of procedures to make-sense of the collected data. As such, it also assists the researcher in identifying potential sources of data of the highest quality, as well as in changing and enhancing data sources to address the study's challenges which assists academics to have a better understanding of the conditions that resulted in making a certain choice. According to Lim (2018) and Li (2019) and the findings of this investigation, sense-making is broader than merely a single theory; rather, it is a composite range of ideas which are anchored in social constructivism as it provides in-depth information on the procedures of creating meaning (Lim, 2018; Li, 2019).

2.3.1 Core Features of Sense-making

According to Kudesia (2017), the fact that action and understanding are iteratively intertwined is perhaps the most important issue underpinning sense-making frameworks. It is impossible to perform by excluding the understanding of the framework in which the act will take place. Nonetheless, knowing much about any context without first working on it is challenging. When the events we are working with are familiar, as they normally are, our existing knowledge frameworks usually suffice. We can make educated guesses about what an occurrence signifies, and in what way we should answer. However, there are periods when we are confronted with uncertain situations. Questionable experiences are unexpected because they complicate the straightforward application of our current knowledge frameworks. We engage in a sense-making process to comprehend what such happenings indicate, and in what way we should react.

According to Weick (2015), the sense-making process has seven features. Even though the bank of literature has grown, and theory has progressed since this publication (sense-making in an organisation), these seven features continue to influence how scholars view the sense-making process (Kudesia 2017). These seven characteristics can assist us in better understanding the sense-making process. Turnbull et al. (2019) describe sense-making as a process by listing these seven core features. These key elements serve as a general framework for investigation into sense-making in terms of how it functions, and when it might malfunction. The seven core features of sense-making (Turnbull et al. 2019) are explained in the following sections:

2.3.1.1 Sense-making is retrospective

According to Schechter, Shaked, Ganon-Shilon, and Goldratt (2018), sense-making consists of looking back and making sense of events that have already occurred. Werner (2020) discusses how we relate the present to an experience that is analogous to or recognisable from our past and rely on the earlier experience to make sense of the present. Kudesia (2017) highlights that sense-making is retrospective because interruptions encourage people to look back at knowledge from the past and try to figure out how the present disturbance occurred; that people and groups employ retrospective procedures to comprehend what the disrupting occurrence implies and then utilise that understanding to look more incisively regarding action in the current moment. It is the manner we perceive connections that are important to our experiences so we can only retroactively perceive

trends. Although teachers can contemplate alternative explanations of expected occurrences, the individual or groups have meaning or commitment to a specific explanation that does not come about until the event occurs (Kudesia, 2017).

2.3.1.2 Sense-making by cues

Several researchers like Weick (2010) and Kubanyiova (2018) have stated that retrieved cues are basic, recognisable components that serve as seeds out of which individuals may create a more comprehensive understanding of what is going on. Sense-making is based on the clues we get from our senses and perceptions. Cognition is the subjective enrichment of these stimuli with meaning. Weick's (2010) "what I say" element is how we express these enhancements through speaking and writing which is added to the conglomeration of retrospective experiences by reifying and reinforcing cues and their significance. Because the data about an event is not considered, individuals emphasise certain elements of an event (extracted cues) to generalise the entire experience. Extracted indicators give reference points to relate ideas to bigger meaning connections. They are essential and familiar structures that are seeds for individuals to create an even greater sense of what is happening (Wick, 1995).

2.3.1.3 Sense-making by plausibility

Weick (2010) and Kubanyiova (2018) expound on the fact that individuals do not depend on their thoughts to be accurate while trying to make sense of a situation Rather, they hunt for clues that will help their reasoning seem convincing to others. Whenever it relates to making sense of what is going on, persons are practical, choosing plausibility above truth whenever it comes to crafting tales about what is going on in their lives. (Kudesia 2017. In an unpredictable, modern world, imbued with the politics of interpretation and competing interests, and populated by individuals who have numerous changing identities, a fixation with correctness seems to be both futile and of little real use (Weick 1995). When evaluating the sense-making process founded on retrieved indications, bear in mind that believability, instead than correctness, is what triggers sense-making. (Kudesia, 2017). Accuracy comes second to plausibility (Marshall, 2016). People, for starters, are continually processing the clues that influence their decisions. People also tend to connect current signals with earlier signals, building current sense on earlier sense. Third, people frequently lack the time required for precision before acting. It is only a matter of their sense being excellent

enough for the following level. To summarize, the description of the sense-making process must "make sense, "not "be true.""

2.3.1.4 Sense-making and sensible environments

Enactment refers to the idea that while circumstances exist independently of cognition, what people notice, and the stories they construct about their events are the product of their interactions with their cases (Weick, 2010; Kubanyiova, 2018). The investigators also argued that there is no monolithic, unified, permanent environment that is independent from the individuals who inhabit it and from those who do not. Rather, the individuals in each situation have a fundamental influence in the development of their environment. As a result of their actions and creation of materials, the limits, and chances that individuals encounter are created. (Weick, 2017). And as they create these materials and environment, they also make sense of it. The environment creates sense-making and vice versa. According to Marshall (2016), individuals can never be completely objective or neutral regarding themselves or their decision-making process from this perspective.

2.3.1.5 Sense-making is social

Becker (2020) notes that, although there is some disagreement in the literature, social contact is often considered an essential aspect of sense-making. Weick (2017) goes so far as to label sense-making as a socially conditioned activity. Furthermore, Weick (2017) portrays sense-making as being dependant on people's relationships with others, regardless they are physically there or otherwise, and emphasizes that social norms impact sense-making in both physical and virtual environments. It is only in multi-person social groupings that one can make sense of anything. Even if an individual finds himself or herself alone, his or her decision-making will take into account the responses of individuals who are not actually involved but whose lives will be influenced or whose responses will be relevant. Sense-making happens primarily among groups of persons who are involved in speech, discourse, and conversation, which serve as the channel through which humans develop their understanding of the world. All sense-making happen in multi-person social groups; even if a person is single, he or she will consider the responses of people who are not actually there but whom will be influenced or whose reply will be crucial in the decision-making process. Sense-making happens mostly in groups of personal teachers who are involved in speech, discourse, and conversation, which serve as the vehicle through which

humans develop their understanding of their students. It is necessary to add that, in our view of the world, our schooling, learning, culture and social standards which formed us and the others with whom we now associate have an enormous impact on how we make sense of the world.

2.3.1.6 Sense-making is ongoing

Lastly, Weick (2017) emphasises that while sense-making is viewed as a three-step process, it never stops. New events and experiences and the sense-makers' actions become the inspiration for subsequent sense-making. As a result, sense-making is a sequential procedure that cannot be completely abolished since its changes remain continual throughout the process (Weick, 2017). In other words, sense-making is a continuous process that occurs in the flow of courses and events that are essential regarding a company's (or institution's) daily operations. From this constant flow, people select relevant knowledge and experience for labelling and assessment, which they then store. These are defined by their observable prominence by the precise activity or tasks that individuals are focused on the moment this action occurs. The process of producing sense does not cease, but it may be slowed or halted. Interruptions provoke emotional responses, which in turn change our ability to make-sense of the prevailing situation. That is, because teachers always observe and contribute to daily occurrences, they should derive meaning from them; even repeated experiences should be interpreted for a more informed perspective. This is due to the fluid and constantly shifting environment, interconnections, and our world of changing knowledge. In support, McNamara (2017) sees sense-making as emerging and ongoing meaning and consciousness.

2.4 HERMENEUTIC SENSE-MAKING THEORY

Generally, the subject of hermeneutics includes two primary fields; one relates to interpretation tasks and the other to understanding (Tomkins & Eatough, 2018). The second is conceptual and philosophical, and it tackles topics including questions like the meaning of understanding and how understanding needs to be achieved. The first is concerned with how to read text. In the earlier case, standards and regulations are generated. In the second case, principles are articulated rather than processes. The former directly affects methodology, and the latter indirectly influences methodology (Scholz, 2015). Although many debates on hermeneutics alternatively utilise these two concepts of interpretation and understanding, it is essential to distinguish between them to

allow the consequences of this discrepancy to emerge. Hermeneutics is a discipline that focuses on defining and defending an interpretation process, primarily texts, but through extension where the understanding of the subject matter calls for interpretive approaches; Hence, hermeneutics plays an essential role in understanding human motives, attitudes and behaviours, or the meaning of human experience as preserved in literature, the arts, and history, among others (George, 2020)

Similarly, according to Mills (2016), hermeneutics relates to the concept and activity of interpretation which entails an understanding (a knowledge) that may be supported by evidence and argumentation. As such, it is concerned with making the incomprehensible both understandable and communicative. Further, hermeneutics is understood as a philosophy of language and information transmission that has evolved from ancient truth to twentieth-century ideas of comprehension, and comprehension of others such that hermeneutic theory had an influence on describing the notion of interpretation, which extended beyond making-sense from a book to creating meaning concerning ourselves and our existence, including knowing the world and our role in it (Mills, 2016). Phelps (2017) adds that hermeneutics is the role of delivering information that is beyond human comprehension in a manner that human intellect can comprehend. As a result, sense-making contributes to the advancement of hermeneutic theory, which simplifies something or a situation from abstract obscurity to comprehension (Nixon, 2017).

This quest for knowledge is impacted by several intriguing elements, all of which are based on presumptions that will either be true or may occur at any time. The first step in knowing anything entails an interpretive function between many viewpoints. The 'hermeneutic circle' or 'cycle' is where you consider incremental advances in knowledge production and attempt to comprehend it 'all'. For sense-making to occur, there must be a coherence between the 'all' and all its component pieces. If understanding is defined as a stable fluctuation between the components of a whole, with each portion displaying coherence, then the process of 'discovering understanding' would be the oscillation or (hermeneutic) cyclic activity. As teachers search for understanding, they attain a new piece of knowledge or a trivial fact which they seek to comprehend in relation to all the other previous knowledge and understanding (Hart & Gregor, 2018). We may ask, how does one know that one has truly understood something. This cyclic transition between the many elements and the entire system will result from inconsistency founded on the totality of facts or information in front

of the investigator. Hence, there would be no means of discovering that fact in such a case. Also, how does one recognise when one has grasped something correctly? The researcher's information or data will suddenly drive uniformity, propelled by the recurrence cycling between the parts and the whole. If the investigator's expertise is lacking, he or she will have no means of knowing the facts. The only truly meaningful test will be to add new data or facts, and then hermeneutically cycle through them again. If the frequency of resultant cycles is small enough (or even nil) one may argue that sense-making has occurred.

2.5 TEACHERS' APPROACH TO SENSE-MAKING

Early childhood is a time of critical development when infants are imbibing information at a rapid rate. If they do not wholesomely and correctly develop, they will suffer long-term developmental setbacks. All children need the opportunity to study with their classmates, even when children have special needs. According to Nasution and Rudiyanto (2020), an educational institution that offers equitable education for every learner regardless of ethnicity, religion, culture, economic status, and physical condition is an IECE institution which provides opportunities for SEN children to participate in activities and develop new skills. Hence, teachers in the field of ECE must have a thorough grasp of how to work with children with special needs. Reed (2020) points out that IECE has evolved into a worldwide phenomenon and countries refer to their educational system as being holistic and part of the global society which results in a number of contentious issues when it comes to its implementation. It still remains blurry about how to translate IECE into practice in diverse contexts and at varied levels of education systems (Van Mieghem, Verschueren, Petry, & Struyf, 2020).

There is a variety of viewpoints on how teachers may successfully promote inclusive ECE strategies for children with disabilities (Cooper, 2020). One standpoint is that teaching-learning processes for children with disabilities must occur inside the school environment, but it is not always necessary that children with disabilities be taught in classrooms with other able-bodied classmates (Cooper, 2020). Another perspective sees Inclusion in ECE as a system of schooling which negatively affects non-disabled children from effective learning (Cooper & Islam, 2021). Since teachers are the most important component of Inclusion their opinions and attitudes may affect Inclusive instruction. However, Inclusion programmes are accepted and effected by most

teachers, but factors such as teamwork between the regular and special education teachers need to be addressed. Also, teachers are concerned about limited resources and the absence of inclusion support workers - this issue needs to be addressed with Government and other role-players as early as possible so as to facilitate Inclusion in the smoothest possible way.

Several researchers have indicated that self-confidence among ECE learners (and educators) is associated with academic success which is due to teachers mainly having favourable attitudes towards SEN learners (Nasution & Rudiyanto, 2020). Because teachers need to address difficulties relating to teaching-learning strategies and administrative practices (especially concerning SEN), it is essential that they develop self-confidence, competency, and innovative best practice to serve different types of learners in inclusive classrooms (Lestari & Herawati, 2020). Knowing how to use one's heart intelligence (intuition experienced when the mind and emotions are in sync) will help the teacher in relating to the children's various ethnicities and disabilities. Since aligning thoughts and feelings is highly recommended for ECE, particularly regarding children of colour and those from poverty-stricken homes, teachers are encouraged to employ aspects of heart intelligence.

Moshel and Berkovich (2020) note that teachers' sense-making practices had changed teachers' negative attitudes towards IECE. Pietarinen, Pyhältö and Soini (2019) add that researchers discovered numerous features influenced by the sense-making process that have increased teachers' trust in their ability to educate students with exceptional educational needs. In support, Gioia (2016) confirms that teachers' views and perspectives toward IECE have continued to positively develop as a result of the teachers' use of sense-making techniques. As such, teachers who had received more instruction in applicable sense-making in ECE, demonstrated greater efficacy, self-belief, and understanding about inclusion, and they were better ready to include a child with special needs into their schools when compared to teachers who had received less training in sense-making (Gioia, 2016).

According to Rasti (2018) and Ganon-Shilon and Chen (2019), sense-making is essential in the arena of educational policy enactment. In agreement, Brown (2015) contends that placing the process of sense-making at the centre of enactment reveals how policymakers and teachers

construct messages about altering their procedures to better understand and enact policy; hence, teachers must explore the mechanisms by which the enactment process is understandable in terms of best practice procedures. In sum, teacher's sense-making of policy is crucial for effective policy enactment which leads to enhanced academic performance.

2.6 STAGES OF SENSE-MAKING

According to Ganon-Shilon and Schechter (2019), sense-making steps are neither simple nor well understood; they concluded that there are many sense-making stages (noticing, scanning, attention, interpretation, encoding, reasoning, performing, actions, and reactions) with the most dominant being noticing, interpretation, and action.

2.6.1 Noticing

According to Glynn and Watkiss (2020), occurrences of sense-making are generally viewed as the beginning when a person notices or perceives something that was not anticipated. They may be an issue, event, thought, or situation that violates expectations and causes confusion, uncertainty, or a sense of ambiguity. According to Ann, Glynn, and Watkiss (2020), when such incidents are experienced, they disturb people's smooth flow causing them to lose their perspective on the environment as they are now unsure of what to do next. It is believed that this occurs when there are differences between assumptions and actuality (Weick, 2017). A sense-making attempt is more likely to occur when the present condition of affairs differs from what one anticipates, or whenever there is no clear means of interacting with the outside world. In other words, a sense-making attempt begins amid disorder such that when circumstances, whatever they might be, evoke an unsettled feeling in a person, an instance of sense-making is initiated (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). According to Weick (2017), in the context of sense-making, when researchers refer to perceiving as a phase of sense-making, they are describing how information might encourage humans to take a step back from the continual flow of knowledge. Weick (2017) maintains that information is more valued when it is new, intense, and uncomfortable, as well as when it is accompanied by other qualities of informational signals that are highly probably to be observed within the flow of encounter. Brown (2015) points out that though not all information that is fresh, intense, or uncomfortable is significant to organising, information acquires importance concerning organising dependent on how it relates to anticipation.

2.6.2 Interpretation

Weick (2017) notes that with the attention precipitated by some cue or trigger, the sense-making process moves to an interpretation phase. Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) state that there are researchers who study sense-making who refer to "noticing" as a phase in the process of making meaning of knowledge, and they describe how people hunt for explanations that will allow them to restart a task and remain in action. Weick (2017) adds that this engages in building plausible explanations for what the sense-maker has perceived. Interpretation involves framing and naming perceptions, thus turning amorphous, disconnected circumstances into a clearly defined and articulated situation (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). This is done not by tracking the detail, but rather by actively developing the case. While Weick (2017) argues that producing meaning involves both writing, interpreting, creating, and discovering new information, Geppert (2011) on the other hand, emphasises that sense-making is less about innovation than invention, and that the initial fleeting thoughts about what is going on are declined. Weick (2017) further notes that sense-makers work through ambiguity of circumstances, weighing perceptions against knowledge, values, beliefs, past experiences, reasoning of others, and understanding of the situation; with plausibility being attained, the sense-maker can now act rationally (Weick, 2017).

2.6.3 Action

According to Ganon-Shilon, Shaked and Schechter (2020), *action* as a stage of sense-making follows the interpretation stage. Barry and Meisiek (2010) indicate that by having a plausible explanation of the situation in mind, sense-making directs the sense-maker onto the next task. While an action might seem to be the concluding point of the sense-making process, *action* (or inaction) serves as an information feedback loop in the ongoing process. Ganon-Shilon, Shaked and Schechter (2020 explain that the practice of creating meaning involves not just perceiving and analysing, but also revising those interpretations in the light of the action and its effects. Sense-makers' acts may be seen of as an inquiry during the action stage, in which their actions become a further piece of knowledge that can be utilised for sense-making (Barry & Meisiek, 2010). Brown and Toyoki (2013) assert that the enactment procedure consists in operating on the more comprehensive understanding that has been established of the disrupted circumstance in order to determine whether or not it recovers the 'stopped' activity. With each subsequent enactment, Barry and Meisiek (2010) state the sense-makers' behaviours become more ingrained in the surroundings;

and the three steps may be repeated as many times as necessary until the 'halted' activity is successfully restored. Thus, the three steps involved in the sense-making process are neither linear nor independent; instead, the steps are interrelated and iterative (Barry & Meisiek, 2010).

2.7 PROCESSES OF SENSE-MAKING

Sense-making is an alternate technique to analyse societal or organisational interactions that involve attaching meaning to the surroundings in order to better comprehend it. It is related with how people make-meaning of their own experiences or those of others (Lin & Luo, 2021). It is commonly defined as the process of experiencing and attaching meaning to issues (Weick, 2010). According to Lin and Luo (2021), knowing or making sense of the contrast between fresh and old environments is a critical component of sense-making throughout the experience. Lin and Luo (2021) add that sense-making may be thought of as a recurrent cycle that is composed of a series of occurrences through the course of time. However, according to Weick (2017), sense-making is not a solitary activity, but rather a collaborative process in which people inter-subjectively build meaning concerning an event. Hence, the sense-making process is necessary to engage in continuous interaction with one another across time (Lin & Luo, 2021). Accordingly, it was discovered that there are three main sense-making procedures: enactment, structuring, and social (Marchionini, 2019).

2.7.1 Enacting

When it comes to making meaning of things, it is all about activity and interaction between the person and the surrounding world. From this viewpoint, the backdrop is more constructed than found (Mills, 2016). Becker (2020) adds that there is no impersonality that generates an atmosphere in front of passive people in organisations. but that moving structures, limitations, and possibilities that were not previously there, are created by the actions of people who work in organisations (Weick 2017). During enactment, the resulting environment is internalised by groups and serves as a source of expectation for any subsequent activity. Groups, via their authoritative actions, contribute to the construction of a portion of the circumstances they find themselves in. According to Artiles and Kozleski (2016), enactment is about answering the question *what do I do next,* or the sense-maker's next step in the process of making meaning. Phelps (2017), on the other hand, states that enactment is composed of two parts: individuals partly design their own environment, and they

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behave in reaction to the environment they have co-constructed with other people. In terms of the way humans construct and react to circumstances, Weick (2017) indicates that it is preferable to understand the process of sense-making by evaluating what is in people's thoughts imposed by a stream of occurrences rather than by attempting to explain what is out there. Enactment highlights the importance of participating in the construction of reality as well as acting in reaction to observed reality (Weick, 2017). In this study, teachers make-sense by reflecting on the current knowledge and experience to explain new teaching methods, frequently constructing new programme messages from various perspective that will emphasise existing practices which will lead to continues transformation. However, teachers' sense-making of policies and messages does not occur individually; it is impacted by socially engaging with colleagues, learners, teaching-learning resources, the situation in the school environment, and the working environment that jointly shapes arrays of reactions and structural significances. By teachers engaging with learners and colleagues, they can make- sense by examining what is on their minds in response to the environment.

2.7.2   Structuring

When a sense-maker tries to grasp and interpret the uncertainty by setting it in a framework, he/she may understand, interpret, explain, ascribe, extrapolate, and forecast events. This is called "structure the unknown" (Weick, 2017, pp. 1-17). The act of creating sense, according to Weick (2017), is the activity that allows the sense-maker to transform the continuing complexity of the universe into a condition that can be grasped clearly in words and that can then be used to motivate action. As a result, structure as a process of sense-making entails and, in fact, necessitates the articulation of the unknown, since often the only way of knowing how much you comprehend something is to attempt to describe it. Weick (2017) accordingly listed the following three principles for structuring:

- Collective sense-making is based on respectful interactions that promote inter-subjectivity (i.e., interchange) and transformation (changing because of interactions with others).
- Structuring starts at the micro-level, with small groups of two to three people who can sustain shared meaning for an extended period.

- Meaning making is achieved structurally through simultaneous centralisation and decentralisation. Centralisation captures knowledge, while decentralisation allows for interpretation and improvisation.

2.7.3 Socialising

According to Dulude (2015) and Guthrie (2016), sense-making is all about shared understandings, basic languages, and social interactions within one's immediate surroundings or environment of choice; since it is concerned with the social environment, academics pay close attention to speaking, discourse, and other forms of social interaction while studying the phenomenon. It is more of a social process in which people need exchanges with peers in order to transform what is going on in their surroundings into meaningful words and phrases. Among the many types of contacts, Ganon-Shilon, Shaked and Schechter (2020) emphasise that face-to-face chats, prior dialogues, informal comments, and conferences (among others) flow across businesses. In addition, the social contact helps to create an organisational environment which is continually evolving as a result of the mixed bag of interactions between people. Social interactions have an impact on the surroundings, as well as on how sense is elicited. Yani, Lakan and Gbaje (2020) maintain that individuals collectively agree on a meaning for understanding experiences through communication. Weick (2017) indicates that some people might be tempted to think independently; however, according to Reinhard (2020), sense-making is rarely isolated - rather, it is always a collaborative effort amongst people. Sense-making is a social activity as what a person accomplishes inwardly is dependent on others. People are often impacted by the real or perceived involvement of other people in their lives (Weick, 2017). The norms, symbols, procedures, and language of the institution will have an influence on a person's sense-making which leads to better behaviour. When these scripts pertaining largely to norms are not available, the person must rely on his or her own methods of making-sense of the situation (Weick, 2017). It is possible for other organisational leaders to influence sense-making throughout policy enactment because of their comprehension of the social character of sense-making. Hence, meaning is negotiated, contested, and co-constructed in the space of a particular situation (Guthrie, 2016; Dulude, 2015).

2.8 THEORY OF SENSE-MAKING AMONG TEACHERS' ENACTING INCLUSION

In most cases, the concept of Inclusion is understood in terms of the integration of learners with disabilities into regular classroom settings (Tilley, 2020; Freer, 2021; Mills 2016; Sharma, 2015; Forlin, 2010; Florian & Linklater, 2010; Florian & Spratt, 2012; Florian, Young & Rouse, 2010; Hummel & Engelbrecht, 2018; Kozleski & Choi, 2018; Magumise & Sefotho, 2018). Walton (2018) and Hlalele (2021) contend that Inclusion in education aims to eliminate exclusion from and within schools, in addition to ensuring everyone's involvement to achieve success. Concerns relating to those who are non-SEN learners such as linguistic difference, belief systems, tribal issues, personal appearance, and socioeconomic factors can all be sources of exclusion. Graham, White, Amy, Sylvia, and Street (2019) add that the feeling of being 'appropriate' in the school concerning rules and practices to promote the welfare of SEN learners in terms of differences in their age, levels of performance, adaptation to school environment, and understanding and application of the laws of equality by teachers and educational institutions are all sources of exclusion.

In the context of this research study, Inclusion concentrates on facilitating all learners with diverse characteristics in the same classrooms. Inclusion in education is learning in an environment that provides access, accommodation, and support to all learners. Education should thus, regardless of the financial situation, be provided to all school students (Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh, 2020. Children with disability are trained to integrate and embrace their differences. This example relates to the whole school environment, including the physical surroundings, instructional staff and a curriculum adapted to every child's specific requirement. Schools' regulations and school cultures should be adaptable and successful in their implementation; this can be aided by parents, teachers, the community, and the Government. Inclusion provides actual learning possibilities for previously marginalised populations who were previously disadvantaged by factors such as cultural differences, beliefs, and disabilities, among others. Inclusion encourages students from all backgrounds to learn and grow together, which benefits everyone. Schools that use a variety of teaching methods to actively engage all students encourage diversity through Inclusive teaching strategies. Incorporating an Inclusion strategy into the classroom fosters the growth of social relationships such that each learner has a feeling of belonging.

The subject of education for children or individuals with disabilities in any nation, established or developing, is a contentious one. This is owing to the complicated and divisive character of Inclusion which is moulded by ethnic, historical, situational, and global variables (Dayan, 2017). Also, the notion of Inclusion necessitates the design, support, and necessary resource provision by institutions to guarantee that all persons with diversities, have access to quality teaching-learning opportunities. As a result, it may be argued that the ultimate responsibility is on society at large and the nation's citizens to adopt Inclusion and contribute to delivering equal education to everyone. The concept of Inclusion is based on the transformation of schools and other learning institutions to accommodate all learners of all backgrounds. According to research, education in postmodern cultures emphasise the importance of accomplishment via educational processes founded on non-discrimination and equal opportunity while focusing on the individuality and dignity of each child to ensure a commitment to excellent education for everyone (Anghel, 2017). As such, education is a right that all Ghanaians have. When it comes to educational institutions, Ackah-Jnr and Danso (2019) confirm that all students have the right to equal access to quality education that extends beyond geographical boundaries integrating fundamental principles that foster participation, companionship, and friendship-building. As part of a wider education change effort, the Inclusion (IE) strategy seeks to create learning settings that are sensitive to the interests of all children while being conducive to attaining high academic performance, and ultimately a more just and advanced society (MoE, 2015, p.4).

According to Fenton-Glynn (2019) and Connery and Weiner (2021), ECE is a very diverse sector of education that educates children from birth to eight years of age in a variety of settings. Through these years, children are exposed to a variety of different types of care and education environments. We see ECE as a broad concept that refers to any education plan that serves children in their pre-school years before they enter formal primary school. The term *IECE* refers to the style of education in which children from diverse backgrounds have been assisted as a means of addressing social injustices in education (UNESCO, 2015; Connery & Weiner, 2021). It seeks to develop the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical aspects (UNESCO, 2021) of children in an integrative and holistic manner to create a stable and extensive foundation for lifetime learning and sound health. Early Childhood Education nurtures future citizens who are compassionate, capable, and accountable. For instance, learners between 2 to 8 years of age at the early childhood level are

taught together in one classroom irrespective of their gender and disability (UNESCO, 2015). In other words, IECE provides every child between 2 to 8 years of age with an opportunity to attend classes together with other learners of their level (UNESCO, 2015). When applied to this research study, Inclusion refers to the gathering of learners from diverse backgrounds in the same classes as learners who do not have physical or mental problems. When it comes to children with disabilities studying among their classmates in normal education settings, this is referred to as *Inclusion* (Tilley, 2020; Freer, 2021). According to Mills (2016), one of the most important goals of Inclusion is to improve the educational performance of children who have a variety of special needs.

Bertrand and Marsh (2015) indicate that the teachers' sense-making of educational reform would improve their work performance to effect the necessary changes as prescribed by policy because their understanding will reflect in the successful application of effective pedagogical skills that cater for the diverse needs of all learners. The likelihood of teachers evolving to modern education trends depends on their making- sense of the situation (Bertrand & Marsh, 2015). Alonzo (2017) reiterates that a teacher's sense-making skills leads to more productive actions on the part of the student and teacher. Szigeti (2020) goes on to say that sense-making is critical because it allows enactors to respond when the universe as they know it seems to have transformed in unexpected ways. Enactors' sense-making is particularly important, according to Bertrand and Marsh (2015) if our knowledge of the world gets incoherent in some manner. According to Patrick and Joshi (2019), teachers' sense-making of reforms targeted at practices within their classrooms attached more emotion with responses being positive. Patrick and Joshi (2019) suggest teachers, therefore, need time and opportunities to develop shared meanings, especially when changes in policies to be enacted are the expectation of the reform. Mills (2016) discovers similar findings when describing teachers' experiences with policy enactment and the extent to which teachers chose to enact policies that are determinants of social and teachers' sense-making processes.

According to Pang (2016), sense-making is a continuous process by which individuals endeavour to comprehend situations or occurrences that generate ambiguities in routine situations, hence it is vital for academics and decision-makers to address the ambiguity by reconstructing their surroundings via an interpretative brain model to make-sense of what has transpired. Since it is challenging enough to manage learner uncertainty and help them make-sense of the unknown in

the relatively safe environment of the classroom, teachers should employ several creative strategies including appropriate teaching skills or modifying the classroom environment for the learner to make-sense of what is occurring. To define and explore how teachers handle uncertainty and make-sense of their surroundings while working in tough conditions, they must use a multi-faceted strategy to overcome the needs of the learners. Teachers dealing with learners in unfamiliar settings, regardless of location, should focus on how they manage learners. Managing learners requires experience so that numerous opportunities for learners to interact individually and collectively about their understanding and interpretation of occurrences are provided (Larson, 2016). Teachers also make-sense by preparing an ever-divergent group of learners to address much more difficult issues by discovering, integrating, and synthesising information, creating new solutions, studying on their own, and cooperating with others. Hence, teachers make-sense of the ongoing flow as they interpret learners' comments and actions as they shape productive events for them.

When it comes to educational objectives, the programme on inclusion is responsible for directing, approving, and disseminating educational plans that are created within the framework of inclusive techniques of teaching and learning activities that help challenged children (Sharma, 2015). A strategy of Inclusion was formed on the principle that education is a fundamental right and the cornerstone of forming a better community (Gregorius, 2016). Formal organisations with an inclusive orientation foster welcoming societies, promote an inclusive society, and provide quality education for all by utilising the most effective methods of combating biased attitudes. Furthermore, they provide appropriate instruction to the vast majority of learners while increasing the efficiency and, ultimately, the cost-effectiveness of the whole learning system. This promotes the right to freedom, including the right to live with dignity, which is basic to education. Unless schools accept *diversity*, the essential tenet of education to mould a person to serve society can never be met (Jelagat & Ondigi, 2017). Inclusion in schools may undoubtedly uncover subtle exclusionary tendencies such as an altered curriculum and so-called value-based programmes, all of which are aimed at discriminating and dividing society.

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes significantly influence how they interact with children which has an impact on the learning environment (Klibthong & Thai, 2016), which should demonstrate the

benefits of a high-quality inclusive education setting for all students (Classen & Westbrook 2020). Accordingly, the attitudes and behaviour of the teachers towards Inclusion determine the quality of Inclusion. Because teachers believe that diverse learners are adding to their teaching load, this negative attitude can lead to resentment and irritation towards children with disabilities. Additionally, they demonstrate unfavourable attitudes toward inclusiveness, little understanding of how to modify training, and an unwillingness to initiate instructional improvements. This may cause teachers to be less effective in dealing and educating pupils in inclusive classrooms. Consequently, specialist trainers for such teachers to accept and accommodate children with diversities are required. Opoku, Cuskelly, Pedersen and Rayner (2020) note specifically that teachers exhibit a negative attitude towards the enactment of Inclusion in ECE in Ghana and state that teachers often do not know what strategies to use help individual such learners. Savolainen, Malinen and Schwab (2020) observed that most teachers who are resistant to the idea of IECE think that a child with a wide range of requirements will consume an excessive amount of the teacher's time. Conversely, Semordey (2020) noted that teachers in inclusive schools are frequently eager to help students who have a range of learning differences. However, largely, teachers have not made major changes to their conventional educational methodologies (Opoku, Cuskelly, Pedersen, & Rayner, 2020).

I believe that the primary route in enacting the inclusion policy is the process of sense-making that occurs by performing the enactment. The method of sense-making occurs as teachers imbibe new ideas and become familiar with the differentiated subject content and its value. Reinhard (2020) asserts that sense-making is a way for individuals to connect the abstract with the concrete. This means that once a concrete understanding is established in the teacher's mind, sense-making to interpret policy via language tools turns into action. Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) point out that sense-making is an interpretive method in which persons judge their experience, operations, and sense of identity concerning specific and generalised others. The quality of information generated, and the result of decisions based on that knowledge, are both influenced by the quality of sense-making (Namvar et al., 2018). Fillers (2019) adds that sense-making is creating plausible accounts that turn perceptions into realities, and that sense-making is the transmission of interpretation into understanding.

2.9 SENSE-MAKING AND TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS

Inclusive measures are being enacted in countries all over the globe, including Ghana, to ensure that all children are provided with quality education. Thus, teachers are encouraged to become familiar with pedagogies and strategies that will assist them in becoming more competent in dealing with students who have a wide range of abilities. (Óskarsdóttir, Guðjónsdóttir, & Tidwell 2019). This recommendation is based on social equality, freedom, individual rights, and universal access to educational ideologies. According to Óskarsdóttir and Iceland (2016, pp.5-6), inclusion is defined in three ways:

- inclusion is concerned with increasing involvement and reducing exclusion;
- inclusive pedagogy is concerned with how to teach in inclusive classrooms; and
- inclusive practice is concerned with how the notion of inclusion gains understanding in practice.

The ongoing search for innovative pedagogy and strategies to accommodate this variability in inclusive schools in ECE is one of the most difficult tasks that teachers face today. Inclusionary principles foster the belief that all students should have equal access to education and that schools should be welcoming to all students to create learning environments to accommodate everyone (Voss, Kunter, & Baumert, 2011; Carlson et al., 2019). When confronted with these difficulties, educational systems and teachers must determine how they will respond. Eradicating negative labelling of disabled learners is a fundamental principle of inclusive pedagogy. For this reason, inclusive education seeks change processes that offer alternative or additional experiences for the minority, because focusing on discrepancies only serves to increase exclusion and marginalisation of SEN children thus stifling their social development (Grenier, 2010).

Hart, Drummond, and McIntyre (2007) identify three fundamental educational principles as being critical to the development of inclusive methods. Firstly, the concept of *everyone*, refers to the teacher's responsibility to his pupils in the sense that teachers are responsible for and devoted to all learners in their class, rather than just a small number of them. Although this function may be shared with other personnel such as special education or assistant teachers (Óskarsdóttir & Iceland, 2016), it is possible that this position will be contested by other employees. Secondly, *co-agency* is a concept where the student is seen as an effective member in his or her own education, such that

the teacher and the learner engage with one another. The teacher creates a learning environment for the students, but the students themselves are in the process of learning with the teacher's guidance and support. Thirdly, *trust* is a notion where the teacher assumes that students want to study and therefore does not hold them accountable if they do not do so. The teacher, instead of questioning what is happening with the student, should ask what ought to be changed to the learning setting, what resources are needed, or what are the tasks where learners are experiencing difficulty (Hart et al., 2007). In this regard, a syllabus for all children is developed by including pedagogical knowledge for comprehension and developing expertise (Óskarsdóttir & Iceland, 2016). Findings in the ability to differentiate between students, settings, methodologies, materials, and results are built on pedagogies that cover more than simply the capacity to use certain instructional strategies while teaching distinct groups of learners. Instead, this technique integrates a professional grasp of teaching, reading, and child advancement with a strong ethical and social dedication to children and their needs. The following areas have been identified as being crucial for the construction of inclusive practices in effective classrooms and schools (Óskarsdóttir & Iceland, 2016, pp.5-6):

- placing a strong focus on student-centred and activity-based training;
- students from a variety of backgrounds should be given special attention in the classroom;
- designing an approach for creative curriculum delivery; and
- interacting cordially with peers and parents.

For learners to learn properly, the teacher must use the appropriate teaching-learning techniques. There are many different learning techniques: independent learning, collaborative learning, and activity-based teaching and learning pedagogies, among others. According to Yildiz (2018), pedagogy is the art of teaching that involves conveying knowledge, skills and values which should be presented in a form that learners can grasp, remember, and practise. The ability to teach effectively in terms of pedagogical expertise is an inclusive pedagogy in the enactment of Inclusion. Inclusive pedagogy is a teaching and learning approach that assists teachers in responding to individual differences among learners while avoiding marginalisation that may arise when certain children are handled differently (Florian, 2014). Then there is hope pedagogy which describes effective learning habits and provides lessons to cater for a variety of learner-backgrounds to encourage children's engagement in their education. Depending on the skills

taught, it is clear that an attempt is being made to address the injustices faced by students with diversities, so that all children have the same rights (Ganon-Shilon, Shaked, & Schechter, 2020) Furthermore, it should be noted that pedagogical abilities may be divided into two categories: classroom leadership skills, and instructional skills. Content-related abilities help learners comprehend, recall, and apply what they have learned from their teachers. Teachers, according to Darling-Hammond, et al. (2017), are the enactors of educational policy on behalf of the national state. Therefore, it is imperative that these teachers who have been entrusted to teach the children can fulfil their duties successfully via sense-making.

While presenting subject content, teachers may create and enact learning activities to foster critical-thinking and sense-making processes in their students (Gutierez, 2019). According to Kervin and Turbill (2013), shared sense-making is an efficient theoretical framework for understanding classroom action that allows creative teacher-pedagogical abilities to be practised. Hence, concentrating on teacher-learner interaction and collaboration leads to the use of effective methods to deliver lessons in the classroom. Kervin and Turbill (2013) describe sense-making as how a teacher answers the question of *what is the story about* when critiquing an event. Brown (2014) notes that sense-making is crucial for improving teaching practices because sense-making precedes decision-making. Hence, teachers' pedagogical skills are enhanced via sense-making which dissects knowledge to make it meaningful to them.

Classroom management skills are key to the sense-making of teachers in the delivery of lessons that cater for all abilities. According to Layikh (2019), classroom management is both an art and a science which is dependent on the teacher's attitude and approach to engaging with pupils both within and beyond the classroom. The classroom teacher is aware of its own rules and regulations which is a collection of behavioural patterns that create and sustain a suitable learning atmosphere to accomplish the intended educational outcomes. Classes are managed by a series of activities where the teacher seeks to promote the learners' desired behaviour while simultaneously striving to eliminate their undesirable behaviour (Layikh 2019). As such, classroom management refers to a collection of actions that a teacher engages in, in order to build and maintain a classroom environment that promotes healthy social relationships between the teacher and learners, as well as among the learners themselves. Teachers should reflect on their teaching especially when

strategies are ineffective. In negotiating solutions for bad behaviour, teachers should be consistent and fair in their approaches. In order for learners to achieve their desired learning goals while remaining engaged and motivated, educators must provide a thought-provoking, open, interactive, and rich educational environment. Learners' hobbies, personalities, and learning styles should be known by teachers to enhance academic performance by utilising interesting and innovative methods of teaching.

In this regard, activity-based methods where learners constantly participate in the lesson instead of passively listening, are recommended (Noreenand & Rana, 2019; Hansraj 2015). It is centred on completing certain hands-on tasks as part of the curriculum in an interactive and practical manner such as reading, writing, conversation, physical tasks, problem-solving, evaluation, synthesis, and evaluation. As opposed to traditional learning where the learner sits silently while the teacher does all the talking, activity-based teaching emphasises the importance in involving the student in a teaching-learning task (Noreen & Rana, 2019). This method stimulates children's cognitive functions by providing continual stimuli which motivates them to respond. Experimentation, expressiveness, and exploration are the three major methods for successfully achieving activity-based learning outcomes. In other words, children memorise and comprehend their study material which assist them in gaining a thorough knowledge of scientific topics. Findings by Çelik (2018) indicate that activity-based learning activities improve students' educational results and behaviours. The activity-based learning teaching approach, according to Shah and Rahat (2014), creates an excellent setting for scientific education, particularly at the elementary level. When children strive to comprehend real-life authentic items instead of artificial or fictional ones, they perform better. This way of teaching makes science classes a lot more entertaining where teachers and/or learners may contribute to this endeavour. For example, if the lesson is supposed to be concerning plant categorisation, learners may be requested to gather various plants, and the teacher could educate them about botanical aspects in class.

Team-based learning (TBL), also known as groupwork (GP) or cooperative learning (CL), is defined as "an active learning and small group instructional strategy that provides students with opportunities to apply conceptual knowledge through a sequence of activities that includes individual work, teamwork, and immediate feedback" (Parmelee, Michaelsen, Cook, & Hudes,

2012, p. 276). In other words, TBL is an instructional technique that involves students working together in small, diverse groups to accomplish a common objective (Burgess et al., 2020; Najmonnisa & Saad, 2017). Using a group-based learning assignment, enables heterogeneous groups to teamwork to achieve a common goal (Reza, Abozar, Ali, & Akbar, 2013). A number of research studies have shown that student engagement increases learning outcomes by sharpening both intellectual and interpersonal skills (Kuri, 2013; Paul & Ray, 2014; Inuwa, Abdullah, & Hassan, 2015; Garcha & Kumar, 2015; Mashhadi & Gazorkhani, 2015; Phiwpong & Dennis, 2016; Alzahrani, 2016).

Despite the fact that the terms *collaborative learning* and *cooperative learning* are often used synonymously, there is a distinction to be drawn. Participatory (collaborative) learning stresses the contributions of individual team members, promotes the sharing of power, and leads to conversation and consensus development on topics when there is no evident right or wrong way to solve the problem, while cooperative learning is sometimes considered a subtype of collaborative learning that requires greater teacher involvement. (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2021). The incorporation of group learning into regular schedules has several benefits in that teachers help children according to their respective needs and abilities based on the size of the group. Individual focus can positively influence the rate at which a learner acquires knowledge and skills. Small groups are also ideal for establishing good classroom connections, emotional stability, and empathy. By observing their classmates solving problems or interacting with one another, children learn more effectively, in addition to developing leadership and collaborative skills through engaging in diverse ability groups.

Additionally, the teacher should be innovative, creative, and interactive in engaging with and learning about students in order to establish a positive learning environment. Hence, the teacher must employ a wide range of instructional methods, tasks, and assignments to accommodate diverse groups of learners' styles, skills, backgrounds, and experiences. To construct accessible and disability-friendly classrooms, teachers must employ universal design principles; for example, they must deliver subject content material both verbally and graphically to accommodate children with visual and auditory impairment as well as learners with different learning styles (Voss, Kunter, & Baumert, 2011; Carlson & Daehler, 2019). When required, teachers should encourage learners

to display their knowledge in a variety of ways; this will also allow for assessing learner-competence and academic growth.

According to Richardson, Byrne, and Liang (2018), learning generic pedagogical principles and emphasising primarily subject matter expertise were insufficient for training content teachers, as was the realisation that the intersection of subject matter and pedagogy was the key to differentiating one's body of knowledge. In order to facilitate student learning, teachers must interpret and modify their subject matter knowledge, according to Richardson, Byrne, and Liang (2018)'s definition of pedagogical content knowledge. A number of key factors such as sense-making teachers' pedagogical abilities in subject knowledge, are anticipated to be present. Teachers must be familiar with in-depth knowledge of particular topics as well as learners' notions of the subject content in order to be effective. Teachers who possess these abilities will display effectiveness and efficiency in educating learners in an inclusive manner.

2.10 SENSE-MAKING OF INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The developing of learners' sense of belonging in ECE environments includes implementing the numerous best practice techniques to serve learners from a variety of backgrounds, abilities, experiences, learning styles, and skills which help to the creation of a holistic inclusive learning space in which all students are treated with respect and dignity. There are advantages to using inclusive teaching as an approach because interaction with a variety of students broadens the knowledgebase and experiences of teachers. When learners find study materials meaningful to their daily lived experiences, they are more likely to engage with them in an active manner because they are comfortable in the classroom setting which is relevant to authentic situations (Carlson & Daehler, 2019). However, a plethora of different and creative pedagogical skills need to be incorporated into the curricula for the teacher to make inclusive teaching successful. In order to satisfy learners with a variety of studying styles, skills, backgrounds, and experiences, the teacher must connect with learners by utilising a variety of instructional strategies, activities, and assignments that are flexible in nature.

2.11 SENSE-MAKING AND ENACTMENT OF INCLUSION

Sense-making is the process of deriving meaning of an event that occurs in our surroundings. Policy enactment is associated with working within the framework of institutions and practices that allow policy goals to be fully comprehended and implemented (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2019). Decision-making is required for legislative enactment, and this process follows the constitutional division of powers amongst the stakeholders in a pyramidal and sequential framework, with several steps that match the pattern of the division of powers. (Kirkfeldt, Van Tatenhove, Nielsen, & Larsen, 2020). The number of stakeholders participating in policy enactment is determined by the degree of enactment (e.g., national, district, or constituency). They are usually individuals or groups who can draft, enact, and execute the policy. Policy enactment is critical because policy cannot be enacted until authorities have formally approved it. Enacting new initiatives in schools, for instance, necessitates official approval, whether from the local authorities or through the passage of a law in the national parliament. Those responsible for enacting a policy give feedback to decision-makers about the targeted objectives success and failures (Graham, 2017).

When it comes to analysing Inclusion enactment procedures, there are two ways that may be used: the top-down and bottom-up approaches (Kirkfeldt, Van Tatenhove, Nielsen, & Larsen, 2020). It is important that the power bestowed on Inclusion authorities flow smoothly such that a top-down strategy is established between Government and stakeholders as recommended by the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service. The bottom-up model acknowledges that local level enactors decide the degree to which laws operate at the bottom (Kirkfeldt, Van Tatenhove, Nielsen, & Larsen, 2020), and that policies at the bottom are determined by grassroots-level enactors. In this scenario, the criteria used to determine whether a policy enactment was successful or not, are not focused on the extent of match or mismatch between the legislation declarations and the decisions of the enactors, nor on the behaviour of the enactors; rather, they are evaluated against what has been accomplished thus far (Kirkfeldt, Van Tatenhove, Nielsen, & Larsen, 2020). In order to do this, policy enactment is necessary; but this is a time-consuming process in which the duty for enacting is divided among parties who stand to gain either directly or indirectly from the policy (Klassen, Verwoerd, Kupper & Regeer, 2020). However, the major objective of policy enactment should be to enable the organisation or the actors to comprehend and perceive the policy. Remian

(2020) adds that enacting the policy's directives more efficiently and effectively depends on sense-making; hence, the theory of sense-making of policy enactment is feasible in this context.

Campbell and Oliver (2013) emphasise that in spite of the fact that policies may be thought of as the foundation upon which a country can build its developmental activities, policy loss is often caused by misinterpretations or misunderstandings of the importance of the relationship within the text and the movement (Ozdemir, 2010). Policy failure may therefore come from an improper or incomplete search, bureaucratic ineptitude, bureaucratic opposition, bad policy design, poor resources or expertise, or unavoidable policy changes during the enactment phase. However, Clough and Lindsay (2011) state that in attempting to enact Inclusion in ECE in Ghana, teachers should make-meaning of theory to enhance effective policy enactment such that its execution will be fruitful since it depends on the sense-making theory. Teachers and directors are seen in policy legislation not only as subjects, but also as policymakers to implement the process, hence their significance in Inclusion (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012; Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011; Marz & Keltchermans, 2013; Tan, 2017). A policy is not cast in stone - it calls for negotiations and understanding which must be subject to re-construction and re-interpretation before being finally enacted (Weick, 1995).

2.12 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND ENACTMENT OF INCLUSION: A SENSE-MAKING PERSPECTIVE

The enactment of inclusion, according to Cunliffe and Coupland (2012), is critical in that it facilitates all students' learning and accomplishment while allowing them to feel a sense of belonging via becoming more and equally involved in all educational activities.

It is necessary to apply three modifications in the way future teachers think about their profession and their learners in order for inclusive education to become effective (Rusznyak & Walton, 2017). Firstly, teachers should migrate away from the mindset of being preoccupied with 'individuals with special needs' in order to promote 'learning for everyone'. Secondly, teachers must shift their focus away from deficit thinking about learner capacity and instead believe that all children can learn and make progress with the right support. Thirdly, teachers must see learning issues as a professional challenge rather as a problem that stems from the learners themselves - they must

acquire new methods of collaborating with others in order to overcome these obstacles (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012). According to Ackah-Jnr (2020), generally teachers play a key role in educating children particularly in supporting education initiatives and schemes. Studies by Wasburn-Moses and Wasburn (2020), Klibthong and Agbenyega (2020), Kim (2020), and Baglieri (2017) reveal that teachers are critical to Inclusion and ECE leadership changes and practices as they are the primary actors and partners who construct the essential administration and educational methods to guarantee learners' improvement, regardless of their ability, limitations, or potential (Ackah-Jnr, 2018; Bredekamp, 2020). Further, researchers have discovered that academics have a strategic role in encouraging appropriate educational and cultural practices in order to reduce gaps and inequalities within the ECE field (Fluckiger et al., 2017).

Agbenyega and Deku (2011) report that the establishment of an inclusive system of education in Ghana is riddled with impediments due to a lack of support concerning legislation via the country's *Constitution*. Moreover, Opoku, Cuskelly, Pedersen and Rayner (2020) attribute the policy's weakness to the vagueness of inclusion guidelines as well as the lack of learner-centred strategies such as co-teaching and peer-assisted approaches. The failure to design a coherent inclusion policy, the lack of commitment to provide relevant resources, and the current disarray concerning the coordination between departments, threatens progress in terms of promoting effective inclusion opportunities particularly for intellectually disabled children (Botts & Owusu, 2013). Botts and Owusu (2013) add that the absence of a consistent strategy on managing learners' intellectual disabilities, is exacerbated by the poor cohesion between stakeholders such as MOE, GES, NaCCA, teachers, and parents. Hence, the school atmosphere, curriculum, and general teacher-training do not foster a feeling of community that is conducive to Inclusion. Evidence (Agbenyega, & Deku, 2011; Ackah-Jnr, 2018; Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017) suggests that educators need to be educated in certain knowledge, skills, and competences in order to work successfully with SEN learners in inclusive environments. For teacher-training programmes, it is critical to include a comprehensive competency-based curriculum that reflects Inclusion as a compulsory component (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). School environments, curricula, and teacher-training must all be re-evaluated and improved on, and this is possible by providing. Such methods aid in the development of flexible lesson plans for all students in an inclusive school. (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). According to Deng (2008), teachers' vital task in the inclusion enactment is to create opportunities

for moulding and improvement of all learners to enhance their future prospects in a global reality. Accordingly, the sense-making process offered by Weick (2005) is presented here as one technique to mapping out the inclusion enactment procedure and capturing the choices and activities that occur throughout the discovery phase.

CHAPTER THREE
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presented the review of literature relevant to the study under various headings. The literature review unpacked several studies and their relevance to Inclusion in education including access, participation, support, challenges, enactment, policies, role of teachers, and progress, among others. These sections dissected existing research and debates relevant to this area of study, specifically Inclusion in Ghanaian schools. They describe, compare, contrast, and evaluate the major theories, arguments, themes, methodologies, approaches, and controversies in the scholarly literature on the subject of Inclusivity in global systems of education. Lastly, the chapter was summarised.

3.2 INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

The importance of ensuring that everyone has the right to schooling has been emphasised internationally. This has been confirmed by several international conventions including the UNESCO *Salamanca Statement* of 1994 on special needs education (SEN), the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), and the *United Nations International Convention 2000 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* [UNCRPD] (Mugambi, 2017). In the years after, Inclusion has become a widely debated and scientifically researched topic involving pedagogical reform initiatives across the world, even though educational systems differ greatly in terms of categorisation and inclusion ratios (Richardson & Powell 2011). Internationally recognised by the UNCRPD (UN, 2006), inclusive education has developed an international standard adopted by 175 countries, including the USA (Powell, Edelstein, & Blanck, 2016).

While maintaining a learner-friendly environment, Inclusion programmes require all stakeholders in the schooling sector to cater for particular learning styles of distinct groups of people. Generally, Inclusion is regarded as a larger educational change effort that attempts to create a more effective school system that will uplift the community. The purpose of the Inclusion strategy is to build an educational system that favours the diversity of learners while ensuring that all students have

equitable access to learning opportunities and relevant resources (GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015).

A variety of definitions of Inclusion exists which obstructs educational research, innovation, and implementation (Jouni, 2020). Sutton, Keamey and Ashton (2021) also indicate that even within a specific country, a single succinct description of Inclusion in education is difficult to unearth. Haug (2017) and Mitchell (2015) echo that despite the request for Inclusion education globally, there is no clear meaning of Inclusion education. Further, Bagree and Lewis (2013) agree that Inclusion in education has no accurate agreed description. Currently, Inclusion is broadly defined as the enrolment of disabled learners in mainstream education programmes (Maciver et al., 2018; Magumise & Sefotho, 2018; Mngo & Mngo, 2018; Walton & Osman, 2018a). Inclusive education is for practical purposes explained as an academic programme that strives to offer maximum educational neutrality for persons with special needs in terms of participation, teaching, access, and assistance in traditional educational settings. For Krause (2020), Inclusion is a principle that permits learners from diverse backgrounds to access mainstream courses and classrooms while being facilitated by dedicated teachers who are themselves from diverse backgrounds.

Additionally, Inclusion refers to a gradual adjustment and adaptation of the educational system so that everyone's needs are satisfied, and everyone may prosper. This means that in order to provide IE for all learners, education systems must undergo significant transformations so that the programme becomes a major focus of legislation, culture, and operation in the school environment, the ministry of education, and in the community where educational institutions are located. The term *education system* refers to the web of interconnections among many partners, organisational levels, and operations that, over time, shape learning programmes for all children in a particular jurisdiction. This is because the presence of learners with learning differences is increasing in schools since opportunities are available for such learners to access equal education. This, however, requires better structures, facilities, and resources to accommodate SEN learners. Hence, the school timetable should be flexible and extended to accommodate the cover increasing number of learners, some of whom will require special attention. Successful Inclusion will be achieved via long-term integration and support processes. Hence, the learners who experience a sense of belonging in the school environment, signal the start of successful Inclusion (Price, 2018). Notwithstanding the

various definitions of Inclusion, students with specific educational needs must be registered in age-appropriate classes to receive appropriate support.

According to Alshoura (2017), Inclusion in education ensures equality which precipitates the need to reorganise the educational system to embrace all students which will engender the reform of curriculum and instruction (Williamson, 2017). The inclusion of learners with disabilities in normal schools, according to Williamson and Gilham (2017), should go beyond the simple act of placing them in regular schools but should focus on making the educational system more accessible and disability-friendly to children with special needs, regardless of age, gender, or disability.

Podzo and Chipika (2019) confirm that the new approach of Inclusion in these modern times recognises learners' unique qualities and provides them with equal education opportunities regardless of their challenges. For example, children from different backgrounds irrespective of culture, religion, language, and disability are catered for and given equal access and support in Inclusive education. A recent study by Dally et al. (2019) found that Inclusion occurs when the needs of persons with disabilities and those of their mainstream peers come together in a stage of tolerance and togetherness (see also Dally et al., 2019). According to Dally et al. (2019), this shifts the conversation away from communal structures and institutions and toward one of change for everyone. As a result, it aspires to expand opportunities for social engagement in traditional educational settings (Booth, 2013).

Ainscow (2020) recommends a framework for categorising Inclusion education as being associated with disability and special learning needs since it entails teaching children with special needs. Ainscow's (2020) suggestion, according to Alquraini (2012), is the most practical because of its capacity to absorb the issues that come from educating children with disabilities. However, Anastasiou and Keller (2014) believe that by focusing on the specific needs of children with disabilities, the concerns of children who do not have disabilities are neglected; they advocate for a shift from the emphasis on special schooling requirements by emphasising system-participation and delivery. Despite the concerns raised by those who are opposed to this strategy, consideration of learners' unique needs as a result of a disability must be top priority. Further, Pazey and Combes (2020) reiterate that Inclusion education should be ingrained in all education systems to avoid

discriminating against SEN learners. Also, in the provision of Inclusive schooling, learners with or without disability, should be ensured of a safe and wholesome educational environment.

According to Gudjonsdottir and Óskarsdóttir (2016) the confusion and lack of adequately defining Inclusion can be attributed to the disparity between interpreting the terms *diversity* and *disability*. This affects how educational institutions react to and view a broad set of 'mixed' learners. Podzo and Chipika (2019) support the new approach of Inclusion in these current times as it serves in recognising every learner's exceptionality and individuality which promotes equal education regardless of their challenges and differences. According to Dally et al. (2019), this changes the discourse from community institutions and processes, to creating a climate of transformation for everyone thus encouraging social engagement in traditional educational settings (Booth, 2013). In elaboration, Makoelle (2020) states that Inclusive education acts as a means of developing a school for all sorts of learners, regardless of their difficulties, which cascades into the community resulting in many advantages. According to Alem (2020), in the United Kingdom (UK), this kind of structure is referred to as a comprehensive school which sees the school community as agents of serving all learners, including those with special needs.

Additionally, Faizefu (2020) defines Inclusion as education where there is the availability of equal educational opportunities to promote regular attendance, interactive involvement in class and school activities, and quality academic performance of all types of learners. In other words, Inclusion as an ongoing process of providing high-quality schooling for all learners while acknowledging diversity and their different needs, abilities, characteristics, and expectations such that their societies ensure that all forms of inequality are eradicated (Hettiaarachi, Ranaweera, Walisundara, Daston-Attanayake, & Das, 2018). This element of Inclusion, which involves learners with or without disabilities, to collaborate in groupwork with all other students in accordance with their own ability. Consequently, a supportive society is developed that is attentive to the needs of everyone as a result of inclusion efforts (Hettiaarachi et al., 2018). Also, when support facilitators collaborate with each other inside the inclusive education system, this is referred to as *inclusion*. Opoku, Cuskelly, Pedersen, and Rayner (2020) contend that although facilitators are often teachers, families are urged to also share in assisting the Inclusive school.

Because of all-round cooperation, facilitators are now not just teachers, but also acting in the capacity of evaluators and supervisors.

Children with disabilities as well as those who have no disability, benefit from Inclusion since it is really about dealing successfully with differences. The adaptability of children connected to a wide range of needs is intrinsically effective in education. The term *quality education* refers to the general educational environment which includes the structural environment, the school personnel, and curricula that are tailored to satisfy all levels of learner-ability. Inclusion, according to Giusti and Bombieri (2020), if implemented knowledgeably, decreases feelings of rejection by learners both inside and outside of the teaching-learning environment. However, there must be modifications and additions to physical structures, subject content, and methodology which should be guided by a common vision that includes all children (Giusti & Bombieri, 2020). Simply stated by Krause (2020), Inclusion is a provision that permits children with special needs to be placed in regular classrooms to receive quality teaching from mainstream teachers. For the purpose of this study, UNESCO's (2005, p.13) description of Inclusion will be adopted:

> [Inclusion] promotes involvement in schooling, cultures, and societies, and minimising exclusion outside and inside schooling. [It] is a practice of recognizing and reacting to the variety of needs of all students. A prevalent sight that includes all children of the suitable age bracket and a judgment that it is the obligation of the routine system to teach every child, are required in order for it to be successful. Adjustments and alteration in material, strategies, frameworks, and techniques are required.

UNESCO's (2005) interpretation of Inclusive schooling implies that the programme must be considered from the perspective of diversity rather than disability issues. In both formal and informal educational contexts, Inclusion is related to meeting a variety of educational requirements. It is a policy that investigates strategies to improve educational systems and other learning settings to better accommodate learners' diversity, other than been a side-issue about absorbing them into traditional schooling settings. It aims to foster a sense of comfort with diversity in teachers and students, as well as an appreciation for it as a source of difficulty and improvement for the educational society, other than as a source of conflict. Inclusion focuses on providing opportunities

for those with diversities (culture, disability, and social) to participate effectively in general education, but it also allows for individual preferences and alternate options for specialised support and resources for those who need them. The effective enactment of policy requires the revamping of the entire educational system in partnership with the community, policymakers, public and private school administrators, teachers, parents, and all other stakeholders. Hence, policy enactment is a complicated process for relevant parties who stand to benefit directly or indirectly from it (Klassen, Verwoerd, Kupper & Regeer, 2020). However, the main goal of policy enactment is to motivate role-players to analyse, understand and implement policy effectively.

3.3 ADVANTAGES OF INCLUSION

Every child is unique with different abilities, diverse learning styles, and varied paces of learning. Therefore, in every school and community, inclusive learner-friendly and unobstructive environments should be developed so that all children can develop to exploit their full potential academically, socially, emotionally, and physically (Rajendran & Nirmala 2016). However, the academic life of a child cannot be separated from the social, emotional, and physical spheres because all are interconnected to the holistic growth of a child (UNESCO, 2021). Several children with disabilities and diversities are hindered from access as some schools lack an integrated support system, hence they will drop out or remain at school but will not achieve their full potential. Inclusion is regarded as a 'revolutionary' concept in education for learners with diverse needs. Inclusive schools combine all learners in regular classrooms irrespective of their different skills or deficiencies in any field by optimising scholastic opportunities for all to promote a socially-just society (Singh, 2016). Conversely, the failure to offer all children with an equal education system including those with learning challenges leads to a societal and national-economic decline that may in future have major ramifications for society. As such, it is astute to develop policies that encourage Inclusion at all stages of education which is crucial to uplift society in general.

According to Semordey (2020), most professionals and academics believe Inclusion education can be practised successfully, while others like Piller and Takahashi (2011), view Inclusion as being too idealistic, and that it is much better if people retain the traditional way of segregation by maintaining 'special' schools. Fuller (2020) indicates that Inclusion could be a result of the human

rights movement which viewed education from a socio-political perspective to ensure equal access to educational support and services. Kim (2020) contends that learners diagnosed as disabled have the legal right to be educated with their peers in age-appropriate settings. Szeto, Cheng, and Sin (2020) add that Inclusion is a dynamic process which is constantly evolving. Dudu (2019) states that Inclusion encompasses a broad variety of approaches and processes that foster the global right to high-quality equal education which contributes to the holistic growth of the child (Heyer, 2021).

The benefit of Inclusion education is not only limited to learners with disability - but it also benefits all children, even those who are abled. A number of studies investigated how successful Inclusion for learners with disabilities works; for instance, Vakil, Welton, O'Conner and Kline (2009) examined specific classroom settings for young children with autism and found that children who were included in regular classrooms together with their abled peers exhibited better academic outcomes. A setting that supports novice parents in the beginning of their child's life boosts their (children's) learning and enhances their synaptic connections which fosters their mental growth (Kline, 2009). Another team of researchers (Waldron, Cole, & Majd, 2001), investigated the impact of inclusive practices and found that in general education classes forty-two percent (42%) of learners with learning disabilities showed significant growth in mathematics, compared to thirty-four percent (34%) in special education programmes without abled classmates. Bui, Quirk, Almazan & Valenti, (2010) agree that Inclusion learners with disabilities can benefit both educationally, socially, and economically when provided for in general education settings.

A study by Mondi, Giovanelli, and Reynolds, (2021) highlights the social and mental growth of diverse learners in inclusive classrooms as a result of the appropriate assistance received in normal classrooms. This revealed that Inclusive learners in regular classroom settings outperformed their counterparts in segregated traditional settings, in addition to their conduct improving toward each other. This proves that able-bodied children have the capacity to improve their empathetic capacities by engaging in similar-age peer interaction with those with disabilities (Diamond & Carpenter, 2000).

Learners with special needs also serve to contribute positively to the inclusiveness process by helping to guide their peers. This type of engagement provides an enriching environment for

learning regarding learners with diverse diversities. Real-life or authentic learning tends to be more fruitful than teacher-facilitated learning and is sometimes described as 'genuine' inclusive learning. Bui, Quirk, Almazan and Valenti (2010) agree with peer-mediation and collaborative teaching methods (e.g., peer- teaching and coaching) because they are beneficial for both able-bodied peers and learners with diverse or special needs.

Inclusive school does not only include learners, but also faculty personnel and the entire school community. It mainly affects the teachers who facilitate inclusion on a daily basis. However, there was widespread belief that most mainstream teachers did not want to accept inclusion. According to DeVore and Russell (2007), teachers stated that the required strategies of facilitation were difficult to implement because they could not always tell if their efforts were suitable or successful. On the positive side, to some extent, team members recognised their colleagues' talents and thus developed characteristics of trust, fairness, and teamwork such that reciprocal information-sharing became increasingly common among preschool teachers and counsellors (DeVore & Russell, 2007). Unfortunately, general education teachers were hesitant to learn more about inclusion from those who were skilled in Inclusion strategies as felt that they were unprepared and unqualified to be teaching combined groups of learners.

3.4 CONCEPT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early childhood (EC) is an important stage of a child's growth that lasts from birth to eight years. The Diplomatic Academy (2021) defines EC as the time of human development from gestation until the beginnings of elementary school (usually at age eight to nine). This is a time of quickening cognitive and physical growth. EC is traditionally understood to be the crucial active phase of neurodevelopment throughout the lifecycle, lasting from the time of conception until age eight (WHO & UNICEF, 2016). The chances and adventures provided in EC set the stage for how kids develop, study, form bonds with others, and become ready for school. Children must have proper care and nourishment in order to develop to their maximum capabilities. They also require chances for childhood education and reactive caring, such as chatting, singing, and playing with families and other loved ones. The child requires the highest care and devotion during this phase because it is crucial for their development. All of this is necessary to feed expanding bodies and nurture developing brains.

As said by UNICEF: "The brain requires multiple inputs: it requires stimulation and care to spark neural connections across multiple regions of the brain to increase its capacity and function. It requires access to good quality early childhood education programmes that provide children with early cognitive and language skills, build social competency, and support emotional development. It requires good health and nutrition at the right time to feed and nourish the architecture of the body, including the brain, during the sensitive periods of development. It requires safety and protection to buffer against stress and allow absorption of nutrients and growth and development of the nervous system - including the brain. All these aspects of the environment must work together to build a better brain." (UNICEF, 2012. p.3):

Early childhood is defined by developmental markers. Early childhood development is the term used to describe a child's physical, neurological, verbal, and social functioning growth from the time of conception until age eight. This growth occurs in a multitude of locations (households, classrooms, healthcare institutions, neighbourhood centres), and it incorporates several actions, such as childcare services, nourishment, and parental involvement. Organizations in the public, private, and non-governmental sectors can all offer services. There are several unique segmentations of childhood development, and each has its own set of requirements: Gestation and maternity care include prenatal care, attended deliveries, certification, postpartum care, infant nourishment and excitability treatments, residence care, crèches for children ages three to six, parent education, kindergarten for children ages six to eight, and better early elementary school (Manas, 2019). Children with specific requirements for early childhood development, as well as other defenceless and underprivileged children, need high-quality services and care the most. A sufficient spending in early development is necessary to guarantee the children of a country grow up healthy.

3.5   OBJECTIVES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

To foster connections amongst IECE learners who are in the similar age category, Takyi, et al., (2021), Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) assert that schools should create an educational atmosphere that stimulates engagement among all learners, develops strong bonds among learners, and allows them to adjust to their circumstances by establishing positive learning

behaviours and improving physical and mental capacities. The following are the additional aims of ECE:

3.5.1 Fostering Social Skills

Early childhood education (ECE) promotes social and psychological development such as social skills, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem (Mondi, Giovanelli, & Reynolds, 2021). The goal of ECE is to foster harmonious relationships among children who are in a similar age category within a stimulating setting that encourages connection with other children to develop solid friendships which assists in them stepping beyond their comfort zones. This encourages one to overcome one's diffidence by socialising with others to promote positive social growth. Every child feels secure and comfortable when teachers and caregivers develop strong connections via cordial interactions with them when they are born. Such teachers must appreciate their different ethnicities and dialects by creating the foundation for healthy social-emotional growth. This process positively affects children's view of their society such that they learn to communicate well, control their desires and emotions, and mould solid relationships with others. That is, friendships between children of similar age are encouraged through teaching-learning situations in IECE as Inclusive schools generally provide an environment in which children may engage with one another to cement strong friendships that enhances social skills.

3.5.2 Developing Enthusiasm for Learning

As children receive their first lessons via a variety of play and other organised activities, the groundwork for future learning and developing their imaginative capability, is established. At this point, the desire to learn further and experience the world around them becomes evident. These schools teach children the fundamentals of reading and writing which help them to understand the value of schooling in their lives. If children are educated through creative and interesting activities, they will be motivated to learn with enthusiasm for the whole of their lives. During this time, children are inspired to problem-solve and not to quit until they have discovered the answers.

3.5.3 Promoting Holistic Development

Holistic development means developing the total wellbeing of the child which includes multidimensional aspects like the   physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual (Ashokan, 2015)

which entail the rational and irrational, the conscious and unconscious. Every facet of growth must be considered and developed if the child is to attain his or her full potential. Additionally, it is critical for a child to develop skills such as emotional intelligence, belief, socioeconomic capability, kindness, excellence, bodily dexterity, responsibility, and critical-thinking – all these aspects assist in the development of the child's intelligence during the initial years. Hence, IECE contributes to a child's holistic growth throughout the schooling years by setting the foundation to develop bodily, social, psychological, and cognitive growth; all of which are important components in the growth of the child as he or she progresses through life. In this regard, it is easier to identify children's frailties when they are raised in surroundings where they can openly demonstrate actions and emotions so that necessary assistance and guidance could be provided timeously to turn weaknesses into strengths.

3.5.4 Teaching Learners Respect

Learners often attempt to imitate behaviour that they witness (Wilson 2021). For instance, as soon as children observe healthy and polite interactions between their parents or teachers at school, they immediately want to emulate such behaviours at home. When children are exposed to Inclusion in educational settings, they learn the importance of appreciating the emotions of other learners, their environment, the teacher's guidance, in addition to developing an awareness and care of their property, and for items that cause harm to them.

3.5.5 Developing a Sharing and Teamwork Attitude

According to Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed (2016), ECE guarantees that young students learn to communicate cordially with everyone while developing a sense of sharing with those around them. For example, when a child does not exchange toys with his or her siblings at home, it is possible that he or she may express strong opposition to the notion of sharing at school, especially within the initial few days of school. Despite the fact that it may be difficult to persuade an adamant child, it is critical that children acquire the value of generosity at a young age. Additionally, the actions at these schools are geared to developing the capacity to respect the opinions of others, listen attentively, and engage in teamwork. Moreover, these institutions instil the quality of resilience in children by simulating real-life situations; for example, a child may last in a race or have minor injuries, but the experience may prepare the child on how to deal with tougher problems in real life

in the future. Accordingly, ECE entails much more than simply playing and enjoying learning; it provides learners with a fundamental education that instils life skills in them through active and hands-on activities which promotes self-esteem, a love of learning, and a genuine tolerance for all students (Kawser, Ahmed, & Ahmed, 2016).

3.6 ACCESS, PARTICIPATION, AND SUPPORT IN INCLUSION CONTEXTS

3.6.1 Access

It is common in educational contexts to use the word *access* to describe the measures taken by schools to guarantee that all students have equal and fair opportunities to exploit their full potential. However, Schools must go the extra mile to offer additional services to learners in order to increase access, which may restrict particular children from participating in specific courses or academic programmes on an equal basis with their classmates (Barrett, Treves, Shmis, Ambasz, & Ustinova, 2019). Barrett et al. (2019) explain that the terms *access* and *inclusion* are interpreted differently by various persons and institutions that apply procedures and criteria for entry and inclusion which can be rigid; they should consider the applicants in terms of nature, capabilities, goals, and whether the organisation has the capacity to accommodate diverse students. Accordingly, the elimination of obstacles to learners becoming fully involved in the activities and operations of a school requires relevant knowledge, appropriate services, and modern equipment to cater for a variety of disabilities, which are the common features of easy access and Inclusion (Barrett et al., 2019).

3.6.2 Participation

Participation, according to Pazey and Combes (2020), boosts involvement in decision-making processes. Such highly participatory procedures are organised in a variety of ways, including welcoming a large number of people to engage in discourse, making the process widely accessible to and representative of the general public, and recording people's input and using it to influence policy-making decisions. While Alshenaifi (2018) describes participation as a process that has been successful in improving the practice of inclusiveness, he also highlights that it helps to build the community's capacity to implement decisions to deal with challenging issues. Baglieri (2017) agrees that Inclusion is aimed at establishing connections between individuals, across problems, and across time. As such, a wide and continuous process of involvement, involves risks as part of developing a community to analyse and diagnose contentious topics (Baglieri, 2017).

3.6.3 Support

The Inclusion of all pupils, despite of their different abilities, into age-appropriate universal education classrooms in their local neighbourhood schools, ensures that they are exposed to high-quality teaching and general guidance that allow them to attain high standards of performance via core curricula which may take various forms, In support, Paulsrud and Nilholm (2020) emphasise that different children need various types of assistance and guidance in order to engage effectively in school. Yan and Deng (2019) add that some children require physical assistance and individual care such as adjustments in seating arrangements, alternate forms of interaction (e.g., children who are speech and hearing impaired), and extra assistance to participate in tasks that would alternatively be impossible for them to do on their own.

Hettiaarachi et al. (2018) assert that positive attitudes support, raises performance levels, and encourages children with disabilities to virtually guarantee their success in inclusive settings. Artiles and Kozleski (2016) agree that attitudes affect the quality of classroom teachers' daily activities; this implies that the many available choices regarding teaching-learning strategies and classroom activities are dependent on teachers' attitudes. When teachers wish to include all students in a lesson, they often design activities to accomplish this goal, but Voellinger and Supanc (2019) found that unfavourable attitudes towards Inclusion are associated with low expectations leading to low outcomes of children with disabilities which has a detrimental influence on learner involvement. Hence, it is critical that educational institutions ensure that their teachers display favourable attitudes concerning students with disabilities as well as the principle of Inclusion.

3.7 HISTORY OF INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Moss (2017) informs us that the practice of Inclusion in Ghana can be traced back to 1951 when the *Accelerated Education Plan* and the *1961 Education Act* established free education which when implemented, resulted in an increase in the number of students enrolled at the primary and secondary levels of education. These two documents or policies were non-discriminatory since they advocated equal educational opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities. As Shamo (2020) reiterates, as far as Ghana is involved, this is an established well-defined approved strategy that assured all learners (able or disabled) access to learn in the same classroom.

Gadagbui (2008) points out that Inclusion for the handicapped had been formalised in Ghana's *Constitution* since 1992. Subsequently, it was recommended that Inclusive practices be introduced in ECE settings (GoG, National Teachers' Standards, Ministry of Education, 2017). As a result, Ghana boosted its image and access to international funding from the World Bank by expanding its education system via IECE programmes, as well as its readiness to aid children in their academic pursuits (Wolf, 2020).

Early introduction into the education system, and intervention to provide equal access to children with disabilities are crucial for the advancement of the citizens and the country as a whole; but the special needs learners were routinely excluded from the early childhood education school contexts.

A recent report by Gyamfi (2020) praises the Ministry for overseeing the enactment of the *Disability Law (Act 2006)* which stipulates the compulsory teaching of SEN children in regular or mainstream institutions. The *Ghanaian Constitution* (1992) states that an individual with a disability seeking entry into a school or any other organisation of teaching ought not be refused entry on the basis of his or her disability, except if the individual with a disability has been evaluated by the ministries of education, health, and social welfare, and determined to be a person who deserves to be in a special school for children with disabilities. This means that indigenous schools in Ghana are legally obliged to accept children with disabilities into their educational institutions without discriminating against any learner. Hence, Opoku, Cuskelly, Pedersen and Rayner (2020) report that initiatives such as re-training programmes (in-service and pre-service) were in progress to enhance the knowledge, skills, and values of teachers in mainstream schools on how to apply inclusive practices.

Ghana experienced a number of hurdles since becoming a member of the United Nations (UN). McGraw (2020) states that one of the most debilitating obstacles was the lack of teacher expertise and the inability to deliver effective lessons that stymied learners' academic progress. In the UK, according to Armstrong, Armstrong, and Barton (2016), the presence of a legislative framework established in the 1992 *Constitution*, did not lead to clarity in the law and policy governing Inclusion, in Ghana, was guided by several policies such as the provision to support students with special educational needs and increasing the number of SEN learners attending school. Since

schooling in Ghana is solely under the control of the Ministry of Education (Opoku et al., 2017), it alone is responsible for providing and managing education services in the country; for instance, The *Education Strategy Plan* (ESP) emphasises inclusiveness as one of its primary targets to uplift Ghanaian society.

3.8 CONCEPT OF INCLUSION

Increasing the capacity to extend schooling for all individuals necessitates Inclusion. In Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990, the *Global Declaration on Education* determined the main objectives concerning the universalisation and promotion of access to education for all persons regardless of individual differences and abilities. This entails the proactive identification of various obstacles that impede the implementation of providing equal education for all. Emphasis was placed on moving away from the traditional method of reforming curriculum towards the need to acknowledge that individuals differ and that some require extra support at any possible time. The Special Education Needs (SEN) conference which was hosted in Salamanca, Spain in 1994 highlighted the need for people with diversity to access quality and equitable education. The key policy reforms required to foster Inclusion strategies was agreed by over 300 members, constituting ninety-two governments and twenty-five international institutions. The major aim was to advertise the *education for all* strategy, especially to schools that primarily fail to practise inclusion. The underlying principle of Inclusion is to guarantee that no child is barred from mainstream schooling, and that the additional support that may be needed will be provided, such that Inclusion may be effectively facilitated and implemented when mainstream schools integrate all learners into their classrooms. It was declared at the *Salamanca Conference* in 1994 that 'normal' education institutions who practise Inclusion methodology reduce prejudicial attitudes, thereby building an educational environment founded on the grounds of fundamental human rights to accommodate an inclusive society that benefits all.

Schooling, according to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* is a basic human right of everyone (United Nations, 1998). *According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,* children with and without disabilities have equitable access to quality and equitable schooling opportunities since education develops the individual's potentiality in life as a result of exposing the individual to high-quality education without considering the individual's diversity

(Laubisse, 2018). From a socio-political standpoint, Fuller (2020) states that Inclusion may be an offshoot of the human rights movement whose objective is to stop segregated placements in school and at work, as well as to ensure equal access to educational support and services. Kim (2020) contends that learners with diversities have the legal right to be educated alongside their classmates in age-appropriate settings. According to Szeto, Cheng, and Sin (2020), Inclusion is a dynamic process that is always growing as a broad and acknowledged right of children to access equal schooling opportunities as per the international human rights law.

3.9 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF INCLUSION

Okyere, Aldersey, Lysaght and Sulaiman (2019) expose many teachers who do not have much positivity towards Inclusion schooling although the drive in the direction of Inclusivity is very much evident, as their observations have shown that some teachers are negative and some optimistic. Ahsan and Sharma (2018) noticed a vast disparity between teachers' impression of Inclusion incorporation and actual classroom organisation where teachers' practice inside the classrooms indicated a more positive Inclusion education approach. Teachers expressed a stronger attitude toward mainstreaming rather than Inclusion in their communications. Those who accepted a specific Inclusive curriculum demonstrated higher levels of success when it came to implementing; but this emanated out of receiving thorough training (Hardwick, 2017). Hardwick (2017) adds that teachers' participation in Inclusion education enhances educational equity, social justice, collaborative involvement, and the eradication of exclusionary practices.

Furthermore, Preece, Murray, Rose, Zhao, and Garner's (2020) study on teachers' understanding of Inclusion revealed that teachers who exhibit creative practical teaching skills are adequate for all learners, with or without special needs. The knowledge of managing and facilitating both mainstream and SEN learners will benefit all role-players socially and academically. However, many teachers lack the knowledge, skills, and competence necessary to succeed in an Inclusive educational environment, thus necessary training in IECE is imperative to ensure that Inclusive education is a success for all students (Preece et al., 2020). Among the various advantages of Inclusive education, Okyere et al. (2019) advises that there are several reasons for teachers to be inclusive-orientated: firstly, adopting an attitude of inclusiveness may help to break down social boundaries and eliminate discrimination; secondly, teachers must devise a method of teaching to

reach all students regardless of their different abilities; thirdly, Inclusion can help students learn more effectively through collaboration which promotes the attainment of success.

According to Peng (2019), there are many factors that may cause teachers to voice concerns that should be taken into account: large numbers in the classroom, funding inadequacies, teachers' burdensome workload, and a wide range of learner variability which makes it complicated to assess them. According to Horishna (2020) and Ainscow (2021), successful teaching includes interactive involvement, astute time-management skills, continuous encouragement, and ongoing assistance of students to reach their goals. Corbin, Alamos, Lowenstein, Downer, and Brown (2019) note that teachers complained about the intricacies of Inclusion education, the lack of time to give learners individual attention, and adjusting teaching schedules and methods to factor in each learner's (both with and without special needs) prior knowledge, skills and experience which sometimes can become time-wasting and exhausting.

3.10 ENACTMENT OF INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

There is widespread agreement in Ghana that Inclusion policies should be implemented, hence measures have been activated. Nevertheless, there are variations in methods, teachers' differing attitudes toward those with learning disabilities, and a disproportionate distribution of resources/services in relation to rural and metropolitan regions, to name a few (Hayford, 2013; Kuyini & Desai, 2007). Following the findings of Hayford (2013), it is apparent that teaching in many Ghanaian educational institutions is not tailored to suit those with disabilities. Issues among researchers and teachers surrounding the Inclusion process include how education may be adjusted to the requirements of children with disabilities in the context of a regular classroom setting. The inclusion of all students is defined by Avramidis and Norwich (2002, p.4) as "everything that occurs on a daily basis in classes and fields", hence, to build conducive classroom settings, teachers' attitudes must transform at classroom level. According to UNESCO (2014), this will allow for various types of knowledge to be gained about students in terms of the adaptation of classroom layouts, design of appropriate interventions, and enacting effective and proven instructional methods to meet the needs of all children.

Further, enacting Inclusion in the classroom is critical in determining academic success that may cascade into improving the country's economic development. In this regard, Ahsan, and Sharma (2018) recommend the necessity to evaluate the role of teaching concerning Inclusion to measure how effectively teachers implement educational changes to suit the specific needs of individual learners. According to Butakor, Ampadu and Suleiman (2020), unless there are concrete actions executed to ensure successful teaching-learning situations in inclusive classrooms, the concept of Inclusion would be rendered meaningless; as such, one of the most important requirements for the successful achievement of Inclusion in a classroom is the use of creative and innovative instructional strategies. It is implied that significant and modern (e.g., learner-centred methods) teaching behaviours positively affect learners' classroom participation. Also, Bruns and Mogharreban (2007) discovered that teachers are required to keep abreast of the global trends in teaching by utilising relevant and attention-grabbing methodology to, among others, improve communication among learners, and encourage collaborative efforts with learners' families in creating approaches that will instil good behaviour toward the learners. This entails astute classroom management by teachers to instil positive behaviour in children while building solid harmonious relations with parents.

In Ghana, enacting Inclusion is fraught with difficulties (Agbenyega, 2007; Kuyini and Mangope, 2011) which are reflected in teachers' reluctance to incorporate children with disabilities into normal classes. According to Semordey (2020) and Opoku et al. (2017), teaching children with special education needs (SEN) in mainstream schools and in the wider society is still a challenge in Ghana, despite some progress made in recent years. Teacher aversion to Inclusion, according to Semordey (2020), is a result of the lack of knowledge about Inclusion, teacher's incompetence in handling a diverse range of learner-needs, and teachers' inflexibility to modify syllabi and teaching techniques in order to enhance learner-performance in 'mixed' classrooms. A study by Offori (2018) discovered other challenging factors impeding effective Inclusion: negative societal attitudes, parents' negative views about disability, reluctance of teachers to accept integration of all types of learners, and insufficient resources and amenities. Moreover, incorporating IE into institutions, adapting practices, and changing established norms (among others) necessitate significant modifications. Because inclusion is a journey, it will be encouraging and inspiring when

all the aspects contributing to its effectiveness are considered and addressed, especially ensuring that essential equipment and materials are available (Ofori, 2018).

According to Kameyama et al. (2017), many SEN learners do not benefit from Inclusion, because the school administration fail to direct or guide personnel on how to implement inclusivity. Boitumelo (2011) adds that inadequate training for student-teachers at HEIs, the absence of regular in-service professional development workshops, unsupportive SMTs, and the lack of holistic programmes are barriers to enacting successful Inclusion.

3.11 FACTORS THAT NECESSITATE ENACTMENT OF INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Makoelle (2020) postulates that Inclusion education necessitates schooling for all categories of learners, irrespective of their differences. Dewa (2020) thus emphasises that Inclusion education requires flexible physical and logistical arrangements, and all school personnel are expected to teamwork to deliver quality education to SEN as well as non-SEN learners such that all learners are able to co-exist harmoniously in general classrooms. Mónico, Mensah, Grünke, Garcia, Fernández and Rodríguez (2020) maintain that by collaborating, teachers are better able support the learning and involvement of all learners. However, collaborative partnerships constitute a considerable shift away from traditional classroom settings where the usual daily activities of teachers involved working on their own.

Baglieri (2017) notes the following follows as some key factors that necessitate the enactment of inclusion:

3.11.1 Support of Civil Rights

Learners with diverse needs, according to Baglieri (2017), have the same right to participate in normal schools and universal education courses as any other learner. Cultural background, economic status, faith, literacy age, athletic ability, sexual identity, and other elements all play a significant role in the integration of learners in diverse schools. Because of this variability, teachers must be sensitive to the distinctive features that differentiate each learner; and should encourage them (learners) in appreciating their individuality in the classroom. According to Baglieri (2017),

everyone should be offered equal opportunities, and all learners should be regarded as national assets who should not be marginalised in a democratic society. Hence, learners in Inclusive schools should have the opportunity to obtain first-hand knowledge, skills and experience within a society that appreciates and includes all members of the community (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018).

3.11.2 Integration in Community Life

Baglieri (2017) highlights that one of the primary goals of education is to effectively assimilate persons from diverse backgrounds into areas of quality teaching, wholesome social living, and equal career prospects since those who participate in inclusion activities achieve better results and are superior to those who do not. Dias and Cadime (2016) contend that homogeneous educational environments do not promote interconnectedness and variety in social life. Additionally, Ahsan and Sharma (2018) observe that studying in a school where learners from diverse backgrounds display a variety of talents and interests, learners accept diversity as a social norm and part of their culture such that preconceptions about disability gradually dissipates. Hence, bringing individuals with and without disabilities together to engage in common activities is an effective strategy. This highlights the goal of inclusive schools which is teaching learners to develop positive attitudes, beliefs, and abilities which are necessary to co-exist and cooperate with others in a diverse society.

3.11.3 Sense of Belonging and Acceptance of Differences

Every person desires a sense of belonging to an institution (Baglieri, 2017). But in most of public education institutions, segmentation and exclusion of students have become established practices. Although the inclusion philosophy states that an education in a regular classroom is ideal for everyone, this is difficult for those with a more substantive cognitive disability.

It can be assumed that as teachers grow more confident and efficient in adopting inclusive practices, fewer students will experience exclusion, and the potential for better academic performance may become a reality. This becomes a reality when learners with disabilities become more integrated into their communities and schools by participating in all aspects of mainstream school and community life such as forming friendships and studying alongside other children (Galovi et al., 2014).

3.11.4 Varied Learning Opportunities

Among the different opportunities available for social and intellectual growth that inclusive environments provide, Behrman (2012) states that curricula revision in mainstream inclusive schools is necessary to merge with the special education programme. This confirms that all learners, including those with special needs, must be involved in and profit from general education opportunities (Behrman, 2012). In support, Ainscow (2007) believes that all learners will benefit from experiencing a wide range of rich situations as Inclusion education environments provide students with a wide range of possibilities to acquire relevant competencies and skills.

3.11.5 Relationships with Peers

Kuittinen (2017) describes Inclusion as an ongoing movement of offering quality academic opportunities to every learner in society by eradicating any form of discrimination from the educational system. According to Shine (2020), these interventions may be the beginnings of long-lasting relationships that provide a foundation for joy and excitement for creative expression during times of stress. One's quality of life is influenced by the people one connects with, thus the opportunity to form a diverse group of acquaintances is crucial for all learners to reap the benefits of Inclusion. (Jigyel, Miller, Mavropoulou, & Berman, 2021).

3.12 FACTORS THAT IMPACT UNDERSTANDING AND ENACTMENT OF INCLUSION IN EARLY EDUCATION

Fuller (2020) states that Inclusion may be an offshoot of the human rights movement from a socio-political standpoint as the goal is to eliminate segregated and discriminatory placements in school to ensure equal access to educational institutions, resources, and services. Kibria and Becerra (2020) agree that education is the right of every child, regardless of disabilities, to equip him/her to meet life's challenges. De Beco (2018) adds that education is a process of being familiar with one's surroundings as a child who should have easy access to inclusive institutions to receive equal and quality education. For this reason, Kielblock (2018) asserts that enhancing Inclusion requires a complete approach, effort, and harmonisation of all the factors that impact on its processes and practices such as family-related, school-related, and teacher-related factors.

3.12.1 Family Related Factors

Lindorff, Sammons, and Hall (2020) indicate that there is growing evidence that efficient parental participation is one of the main strategies for the effective practice of Inclusion which is crucial for educating SEN learners. The significance of home or family-related factors concerning learners with special needs must be seriously considered as it impinges on the understanding and enactment of inclusion on the following levels (Ayling, Walsh, & Williams (2020):

3.12.1.1 The attitudes of parents towards education and disability

As a key enabler of inclusion, parents' views toward children with disabilities and their educational experiences may be of significant value. The perspective of parents is critical in defining the general growth and development of a learner in terms of the educational experiences of the learner. This confirms that Inclusion is possible for all children, regardless of their special needs, if their parents display positive attitudes toward them. However, some parents obstruct the progress of their children as they believe that they cannot be taught in the same way as 'normal' children (Zuurmond, Nyante, Baltussen, Seeley, Abanga, Shakespeare, & Bernays, 2019).

A study by Angelika and Schwab (2000) on teachers' attitudes towards Inclusion revealed that teaching approaches no more relied solely on traditional methods - but there is still room for improvement. Teachers who want to adopt Inclusion need to reflect on how they teach, and the kind of challenges they face to understand if they can rely on parents as critical friends. The challenge that schools and their personnel face is thinking outside their constraints that they have set up, such that they focus on the different strategies for transformation. Inclusion tells us that children with learning difficulties are not the only ones who will benefit from inclusive practices; it also gives staff insight into the strengths and weaknesses that particular children and their parents might have. Increasing collaboration between teachers, schools, the community, and parents could be powerful, but all have to come to the 'collaboration table'. Research reveals that parents who have had the opportunity to include their children in regular classrooms benefit from the experience (Maher, Thomson, Parkinson, Hunt, & Burrows 2022). To have parents increasingly interested in the operations of their institutions, leads to the promotion of school and learner-success as each stakeholder component endeavours to become more proactive. This fosters dialogue with parents, which helps them be more accepting of Inclusion and give them greater awareness of the Inclusion

opportunities for all learners. It can also help to inspire parents as strong collaborators in efforts to improve the institutional settings which lead to the effective enactment of inclusion.

3.12.1.2 Awareness of rights and facilities

Education is fundamental and foundational for every child as enshrined in the Human Rights Charter (UNICEF, 2012); however, the level of parental understanding of this fact has a significant impact on the educational processes of children, particularly those with disabilities. Parents' lack the knowledge of children's rights, opportunities, and resources provided by the Government and other organisations, and this often leads to their children not being enrolled in normal schools. According to Zuurmond et al. (2019), increasing the parents' and community's knowledge of available opportunities concerning education for SEN learners' results in an increase in the number of parents registering their children in 'normal' school.

3.12.1.3 Socio-economic conditions

Concerning the processes of Inclusion, a family's socio-economic status might have a significant influence in children's schooling (Ayling, Walsh, & Williams, 2020). The attitudes, values, and views of the community where children reside may either assist or impede processes of inclusive education. A society that has a favourable attitude toward special needs children exhibits acceptance and better outcomes regarding Inclusion. The likelihood of a child being enrolled at an inclusive school increase when families have adequate financial resources. Also, the financial situation at home impacts on accessing educational opportunities to provide additional support that learners require; for example, the purchasing of some educational resources for after-school use is most times unaffordable such that indigent learners are disadvantaged to participate effectively and fully in inclusive programmes.

On the other hand, families with strong financial standing are in a position to provide educational resources such as expensive technical gadgets, thus ensuring that their children get the maximum out of Inclusion programmes (Ayling, Walsh, & Williams, 2020). Ezewu (2008) asserts that affluent people value education more than low-income families; their children are also more likely to have access to money needed to purchase extra learning materials (e.g., laptops and tablets) required by their schools such that Inclusion is delivered in a modern manner even for learners with

special needs. Educational tools for Inclusion are frequently found in middle-class households, thus most schools recommend access to such learners (Alexander & Entwisle 2014). Moreover, middle-class parents respond to the school's instructions, but go no further. Eamon (2000) states that children who live in households with economic challenges display more emotional distress, while children who are from stable socio-economic families demonstrate healthy personality qualities. Accordingly, a study by Isra (2008) revealed that poverty prevented the full enactment of Inclusion. Families that are financially secure assist financially by maintaining the schools' nutrition schemes to meet the unique dietary needs of SEN students in education.

3.12.2 School-related factors Impacting Understanding and Enactment of IE

Keon (2020) highlights several school factors that impact on the understanding and enactment of Inclusion. Among the critical school-related factors are the following:

3.12.2.1 Availability and accessibility of schools

Every school cannot, on its own, successfully provide the necessities of Inclusion programmes; this significantly affects the access of learners in Inclusion settings (Keon, 2020). Firstly, according to Cox (2015), when schools are distant from learners' home, it impacts adversely on implementing Inclusion because of the difficulties of commuting for children with disabilities who face challenges when schools are located outside of their residential area. According to Miyauchi and Paul (2020), for such children to be placed in Inclusion schools, there must be hostel facilities with suitable staff to service on-campus learners – this enhances accessibility. Furthermore, the classroom, play areas, and school grounds must be disability-friendly and accessible inside the school. In other words, the proximity of the school should not be a hindrance to affect the enrolment of students from various backgrounds (Miyauchi & Paul, 2020).

3.12.2.2 Guiding philosophy and policies of Schools

According to Keon (2020), every school structures a guiding policy based on sound philosophy and adheres to it. It is thus imperative that the school's philosophy becomes integrated with the fundamental essence of Inclusion principles which determines the readiness of the school to implement Inclusion. The school's policies, framed in accordance with sound guiding principles,

significantly contributes to the successful placement and performance of children, especially those with special needs (Keon, 2020).

3.12.2.3 Infrastructure

The existence of supportive infrastructure that accommodates learners with disabilities is critical to the success of Inclusion in education (Keon, 2020). The suggestions of numerous international policies and laws resulted in the installation of wheelchair-friendly access (driveways, wheelchair ramps, toilets/bathrooms etc.) ensuring that students may move freely inside and around the school campus. Also, the site, space, and classroom organisation are essential to foster Inclusion. Inclusion infrastructure and facilities, including computer equipment and hardware, are crucial for assisting teachers and learners in improving teaching-learning performance. This implies that some expensive academic and infrastructure resources must be available so that SEN children can receive quality education. Additionally, teachers' lack of managing inclusive classrooms to adequately prepare for SEN learners is also a challenge.

3.12.2.4 Availability of support resources

According to Miyauchi and Paul (2020), children who have different forms of diversity need specialised resources and technology in order to participate successfully in the school's educational programmes. Ideally, the school should be able to offer learners the basic resources required for Inclusion. Schools should assist parents who are unable to purchase expensive learning materials and gadgets so that no learner is disadvantaged in obtaining the knowledge they have a right to. This implies that schools will be more inclusive if they have the necessary resources (Miyauchi & Paul, 2020).

3.12.3 Teacher Related factors Impacting Understanding and Enactment of IE

Baglieri (2017) identifies the following teacher-related factors that impact the understanding and enactment of Inclusion:

3.12.3.1 Readiness of the teacher

Baglieri (2017) emphasises that the teachers' willingness to work with all children, especially those with disabilities, is reflected in their attitude towards Inclusion which may affect the quality of

social interaction among all learners. When teachers exhibit positive attitudes towards all learners in the inclusion process, the learners feel automatically welcomed and motivated to be a part of such a learning environment. Inclusion can be complete without barriers in the learning environment - the attitude of the teacher (Baglieri, 2017).

3.12.3.2 Teachers' professional competence

The term *professional competence* of teachers, according to Alshoura (2017), refers to the personal knowledge and skills that teachers must possess in order to cope with the demands of their respective fields which can be learnt and imparted by developing qualities of motivation and resilience. In this regard, a thorough knowledge of the subject content, appropriate and innovative teaching pedagogies, and a basic knowledge of child-psychology will lead to the efficiency of instruction and better learner-performance in inclusive classrooms.

3.12.3.3 Instructional strategies

Hardwick (2017) contends that Inclusion focuses on providing individualised and differentiated teaching to meet the needs of all learners, such that the quality and suitability of instructional strategies utilised by the teacher strongly determine the success of Inclusion. This aspect also motivates SEN learners to adapt to regular school life when they receive instruction based on their different needs; but if the teachers follow a rigid and uniform instruction pattern, learners with special needs in the class will become isolated. Thus, learners in Inclusion only feel a sense of belonging when all their special needs are considered, especially receiving instruction that best suits them to gain maximally from lessons (Baglieri, 2017). Hence, the adaptive teaching approach is mostly suited for inclusive classrooms.

Adaptive teaching is a method of accomplishing a shared educational objective with learners who have different levels of past accomplishment, capacity, or differentiated learning (Ikwumelu, Oyibe, & Oketa 2015). In support, Borich (2011) describes adaptive teaching as the use of diverse teaching methodologies for multiple diverse learners in a manner that the inherent variety that exists in the class does not always preclude any student from attaining excellence. When it comes to adaptive teaching skills, there are two basic approaches: the remediation approach, and the compensatory strategy.

In contrast to the proactive remediation strategy, the compensatory approach is reactive. In the former one is supplied with the fundamental or preparatory information or skill that has always been essential to profit from the intended teaching (e.g., student-centred discourse and question-and-answer discussions). The latter, involves a teaching technique that assumes that the learner has a lack of basic understanding, gaps, or ability in certain areas of learning. This may precipitate a more comprehensive delivery of the topic and using additional educational tools with longer class activities.

It is critical at this stage to eliminate the misunderstanding that might arise from the conceptualisation and use of terminology such as *differentiated education* and *customised teaching strategy*, which, on the surface, have meanings that are comparable to those of adaptive teaching. Since the adaptive teaching strategy involves working with learners who have unique and differing styles of learning in order to achieve a shared educational objective, it concentrates on the entire class or on groups of learners in the same classroom who may have varying levels of proficiency.

Individualised or small-group instruction focuses on the educational success of specific students or a small group of students. In differentiated instruction, the teacher's job entails possessing an incisive understanding of each learner's educational and historical knowledge, as well as his or her preferences and aptitude for studying. This enables the teacher to select relevant teaching approaches that can best adapted to the learner's ability. Accordingly, customised teaching occurs in group contexts, but teaching-learning in groups is not long-term as learners are shifted from one group to another that assists them in grasping knowledge and skills (and learning group-dynamics as a social skill) in the most effective manner (Ikwumelu, 2012).

3.13 BARRIERS TO ENACTMENT OF INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Even though Inclusive Education is focused on removing all obstacles to education and ensuring the involvement of all learners at risk of exclusion, Ghana is failing to enact it successfully due to a variety of obstacles. A wide range of barriers to inclusion enactment policy has been identified (Stevens & Walker, 2020): lack of knowledge, low level of persistence, and a culture of exclusion, among others. These are discussed in the sections below:

3.13.1 Lack of Collective Knowledge about Inclusion and its Enactment

Without a comprehensive and critical knowledge of what inclusion is and what it requires, it is doubtful that inclusivity will be effectively enacted as observed in teachers' diverse perspectives on policies and practices relating to the enactment of IECE (Stevens & Walker, 2020). Luther (2019) and Kim & Choi (2020) agree that, despite the fact that there are opportunities of acquiring knowledge and skills on inclusivity, teachers nonetheless lack common understanding about the enactment and relevance of Inclusion. Additionally, Opoku, Cuskelly, Pedersen, and Rayner (2020), note that teachers in Ghana were unqualified and diffident to deal with SEN students. Similarly, Inclusion provision in Ghana, according to Washington-Nortey (2020), lacks legislative support thus teachers lack dedication and commitment to the vision of inclusivity. These findings, together with the lack of common understanding of Inclusion programmes might hinder its implementation.

3.13.2 Exclusionary School Cultures and Practices

As an attitudinal barrier, the continuation of exclusionary school systems and practices, according to Lundberg (2020), may be traced to a reluctance to inclusivity, and the lack of a common understanding of Inclusion policies and their enactment. According to Byrne (2019) and Lundberg (2020), when it comes to school cultures and customs that are exclusionary, both teachers and learners report that misunderstandings, erroneous ideas, and social hurdles stand in the way of Inclusion. Shyman (2015) confirms that all types of social impediments such as communication problems, lifestyles, cultural practices, and faith-based conceptions (among others) are all hindrances to Inclusion. According to Lashley (2021), the kind of social obstacle to equitable education is characterised barriers in our minds and emotions, such that hostility toward disability breeds fear, suspicions, and other worries that may have an impact on teachers' and learners' assumptions and worries.

3.13.3 Inadequate Teacher Development and Support

If teachers are to be competent in educating children with special learning requirements, it is critical that they possess the relevant and necessary training (Gyasi, Okrah, & Anku, 2020). Teachers' inability to assist learners with special academic requirements as a result of insufficient equipment may result in learning deficits for such students. Moreover, Ngulube, Njelesani and Njelesani

(2020) state that there is a correlation between teachers' reluctance to utilise technology that would help children with diverse learning needs, and the lack of training or support for teachers.

Septiana (2018) notes that the manner in which teachers are educated in Inclusion knowledge is flawed, and this results in novice teachers being unable to successfully help SEN learners. Alves (2020) adds that there is inadequate teacher-preparation because professional skills development workshops are virtually non-existent which debilitates effective IECE policy enactment. Furthermore, according to Kisanga (2020), most inclusive classes have teachers who do not know how to communicate with deaf learners using sign language which negatively affects Inclusion.

3.13.4 Ineffective School Leadership to Support Inclusion

The absence of school leadership commitment to Inclusion programmes might greatly impede its implementation (Kantavong & Kiettikunwong, 2020). It is highlighted that the majority of school administrators do not possess astute and strategic leadership qualities, and that there is a lack of genuine commitment towards Inclusion among the general leadership (Du Plessis, 2017a). Maingi, Njoka and Murage (2017) observe that leadership skills in teachers enable them to effectively enact Inclusion for children with disabilities which evokes the keen corporation of parents who are appreciative of teachers' attempts of inclusive practices in their schools.

3.13.5 Systemic Inequalities

According to Harrison and Price (2017), systemic inequalities include inaccessible school buildings and overcrowded classrooms. Amenities, ramp-routes, and equipment are generally partly accessible to disabled children due to the presence of staircases, improper seating, lack of on-site residences for SEN learners, and the absence of restroom facilities for disabled learners. Additionally, Stevens and Walker (2020) found that among the biggest obstacles to Inclusion enactment is the physical limitations such as playgrounds that are not user-friendly to individuals with disabilities. According to Nel (2020), the lack of adequate infrastructure coupled with a hostile anti-inclusive atmosphere, hampered the enactment of an Inclusion policy.

3.13.6 Limited Parental Involvement

Tikkanen (2019) claims that there is a successful way to include parents in their children's learning and development. The absence of parental participation, according to Tan, Lyu, Peng, and Alqahtani (2020), is a result of schools' inability to foster the concepts of collaboration in their communities, which is necessary to preserve and improve the well-being, growth, and learning of all children. Tan et al. (2020) adds that failure by parents to participate and support teachers to effectively assist the children with diversity hinders the effective enactment of IECE.

3.14 TEACHERS' ENACTMENT OF INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A NEEDS ANALYSIS

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a gratifying but stressful job that is significantly more complex than generally thought of. This is enacted through the curiosity, flexibility, and reflection of effective inclusive early childhood educators. They work well with others, get along harmoniously with families, and are aware of the needs and interests of all children. These professionals oversee a wide range of responsibilities such as scheduling, curriculum enactment, learning documentation, and day-to-day chores such as (among others) tying shoelaces, rubbing backs at bedtime, and drying tears. Balancing these duties can be overwhelming for even the most experienced teacher at times. Since teachers encounter challenges to promote IECE, they therefore require support to effectively implement inclusion (Ofori 2018). You, Kim, and Shin (2019) note the following types of support for teachers to enact inclusion in early childhood education are necessary:

3.14.1 Continuous Professional Development

The term *continuous professional development* relates to every action that is targeted at improving the knowledge and abilities of teachers via orientation, induction, and assistance (Yenen & Yöntem, 2020). Furthermore, the improvement has a direct impact on attitudes and methods, which may lead to a better standard of learning and teaching. According to Perry and Boylan (2018), successful continuous professional development should first recognise and address the individual needs of teachers before moving on to other areas of growth. Having recognised these requirements, professional growth activities must be carefully prepared and workshopped to assist teachers in applying knowledge and teaching methods in a creative and confident manner (Perry &

Boylan, 2018). As Cooc and Kiru (2018) point out, a teacher's understanding of Inclusion pedagogy is a critical driver of what occurs in a classroom packed with a varied range of students' experiences. Cooc and Kiru (2018) add that inclusive early childhood development courses for pre-service and in-service teachers, including on-site training, constitute a critical part of their education training during which particular approaches to teaching and care are imparted in order to ensure the holistic development of IECE students; hence, it is essential that teachers utilise specific knowledge, competences, and abilities to deal with the individuality of each learner.

Furthermore, Alemayehu, Neagu and Nistor (2020) emphasise that the most important skill that teachers must master is how to adjust the ECE programme to fulfil the requirements of Inclusion, and how to effectively include children with special needs in everyday activities. It has been noted by Alemayehu et al. (2020) that teachers' pre-service programmes only provide general material; hence, it is necessary that supplementary courses are provided at workshops and conferences to help them expand their knowledge while also gaining practical expertise in the classroom. Charema (2010) agrees that it is critical to incorporate teachers in the development plans of professional training to increase the effectiveness and appropriateness of their classroom teaching-learning activities; however, teachers are rarely included in such processes despite the fact that they implement educational policies – this could jeopardize the desired outcomes of IECE. According to Alemayhu et al. (2020), the basic requirements for teachers are connected to the production of Individualised Education Programmes (IEPs), instructional adaption, behavioural and communication methods, as well as optimal placement, particularly for students with movement disabilities.

3.14.2 Collaboration with Parents

Thompson et al. (2020) indicate that teachers' collaboration with parents is another important support aspect to promote the effectiveness of IECE. Opoku et al. (2020) maintain that while evaluating teachers' experiences in contributing to Inclusion, it is also vital to investigate the cooperative ties that teachers share with to ensure successful enactment of IECE. Stevens (2020) notes that when teachers and parents work as a team, difficulties on the enactment of Inclusion in ECE is minimised - this benefits both parties as it allows teachers to accomplish their ECE

objectives more effectively since they have a more complete image of the children, while parents are able to better track their children's progress (Jigyel et al., 2018).

Teacher-parent collaboration enhances efficient communication to better achieve Inclusion educational goals (Jigyel, Miller, Mavropoulou, & Berman, 2018). Teachers, in this way, keep parents informed about their children's education and offer a feeling of assurance about their child's future. Communication and meaningful ties between the teacher and the parents assist the teacher to better fulfil the requirements of the special children. However, collaboration between teachers and parents is much more challenging to attain especially when they have functioned as different entities in the past (Braley, 2012). To make the connection between teachers and parents, clear channels of interaction for decision-making via the mutual input of creative ideas concerning inclusive programmes, will improve the quality of learners' academic achievement (Taylor, Smiley, & Richards, 2009). In support, Lee and Low (2013) add that teachers must engage with parents in an effort to establish consensus on vital matters concerning IECE, and to provide reciprocally necessary information for both parties. When both teachers and parents are sincere and supportive of one another's obligations and tasks, meaningful communication occurs (Unger, Jones, Park, & Tressel, 2001).

3.14.3 Support from the School

In order to create an inclusive school environment, school authorities must typically take the lead. Learners with diversities will flourish in normal classrooms if administrators and teachers are committed to fulfilling the needs of all students. According to O'Rourke (2015), school support is another kind of teacher-assistance requirement that has been proven to positively influence the outcomes of Inclusion practices. Researchers have shown that providing support at the classroom level results in more favourable teacher perceptions regarding IECE learners (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2016). It includes the provision of both physical and human resources such as classroom-layout, adaptive equipment, and instructional aids (Kim 2020). Moreover, the presence of supportive school principals is a key element in the promotion of positive teacher attitudes as reassurance from the school principal is crucial in reducing teachers' reluctance to accommodate learners with special needs (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2016).

3.15 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES IN ENACTING INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

As a prominent influence in the progress of education and practice, the Inclusion movement is widely hailed as it aims to reform educational institutions in order to cater for a variety of learners (UNESCO, 2009). Instead of seeing variety as a burden, Inclusion attempts to help both teachers and students feel at ease to perceive it as a source of challenge and richness in the learning environment. According to Ahmed, Kaga and Walker (2020), schools should regard Inclusion adhering to the law concerning human rights since it advocates that all persons have the right to get an equal and quality education. According to Sharma and Sokal (2015), the difficulties associated with enacting Inclusion are due to a misalignment between policies and standards on the one hand, and attitudes, knowledge, and practices held by heads of schools, teachers, students, and parents on the other. Because of this, it is preferable to provide situations for teachers to evaluate policy in accordance with their contextual environment and within the institution (Sharma & Sokal, 2015).

More than 15 years ago in South Africa, Inclusion was enacted (Adewumi & Mosito 2019). The *South African Constitution* (1996), the *South African Schools Act of 1996* and the *Education White Paper 6* guided this approach. Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2016) observe that *White Paper 6* prepared the path for the enactment of Inclusion in the South African setting in terms of training and support systems. The SA *Constitution* proclaims the right of everybody to equal and quality basic education in accordance with *White Paper 6* (2001). In line with this statute, the Department of Education (DoE) has stated that all schools must ensure that all students have educational opportunities (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007; Mastropieri et al., 2005). That is, all schools must practice Inclusion, and District officials must oversee that enough support is provided for inclusivity (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007).

Shyman (2015) observes that enacting Inclusion in South African schools continues to be difficult owing to traditional notions that have supported exclusion for many years. A range of concerns was raised by teachers regarding inclusion, notably how to cope with those who require special education (Ainscow, 2012; *SOS Children Newsletter,* 2012). This includes teachers who have difficulties in their schools in terms of coping with a diverse range of students, insufficient training

in diversity, difficulties in adjusting to a curriculum tailored to each student's specific needs, a scarcity of resources, inadequate support for teachers, and an overwhelming workload (Singh, 2010; Skinner, 2016). Moreover, a study by Mpu and Adu (2021) indicates that overcrowding, inexperience, and an insufficient understanding of inclusivity among educators were the underlying variables that made educators feel inadequate to teach in an inclusive classroom.

Additionally, Shyman (2015) notes that South Africa's inclusion programme did not evolve in line with the instructional transformation due to the absence educator-training. Hence, identifying and resolving the challenges among South Africa teachers require in-service training to help them contextualise their thoughts in the direction of inclusive policies (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019; Mpu & Adu, 2021). Further, the DoE should employ specialist personnel in SEN education to assist teachers in their schools, but adequate resources and funding should be available to enable specialists or experts to smoothly execute their responsibilities which includes forming strong partnerships or collaborations between learners, teachers, parents, and the DoE.

Kim (2020) observes that in a similar educational setting in South Korea, where academic accomplishment is a major concern amongst households, it is very difficult to implement an inclusive method since students are under pressure as a result of their parents' high expectations. Hence, teacher-engagement in disseminating information to parents is necessary in order to effectively enact such policies since limited knowledge coupled with unsupportive principals serves as a hindrance to the adoption of Inclusion practices in the classroom. In Ireland, Irish law and the education system help to promote Inclusion by providing guidelines, but the methods in which such rules are implemented in schools are susceptible to the varied interpretations of players in school set-ups such that children with special educational needs are increasingly being excluded from normal schools and being educated in special ones (Kelly et al., 2014). In Ireland too, Inclusion must overcome a number of challenges including an absence of teacher professional development, an inability to accurately diagnose children with special needs, an unsuitable curriculum, and a paucity of resources.

Forlin (2010) contends that the plethora of reasons that impede the acceptance of Inclusion in Hong Kong schools include teachers' inability to implement it, a rigid curriculum, and heavy workloads.

To address these issues, external controls on learners' accomplishment such as assessment procedures must be reduced to enable classroom teachers to enhance their inclusive abilities and observe their learners' academic development (Forlin, 2010). Teachers' familiarity with the application of suitable pedagogy, as well as their belief that all children can study and must be integrated in diverse classrooms, are shown to be important factors in the enactment of inclusive practices (Specht, 2016). The challenge is also building the ability of pre-service teachers and ensuring that they are proficient in inclusive methods. According to Poon-McBrayer and Wong (2013), enacting the Inclusion policy in Hong Kong persists with barriers due to a shortage of available resources for teachers, and a lack of common collaborative efforts among all role-players. Among the most critical considerations for success of reform in *education for all* is ensuring that no child is left adrift by applying context-relevant policies combined with systemic improvements, value-development, training, and relevant resources (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013).

In the state of Queensland, Australia, Naraian's (2017) studies have shown that Inclusion policy models are being pushed into the educational system without considering how they will affect both teachers and students. In Naraian's (2017) opinion, education represents exclusive practices where teachers tend to be dissatisfied by the concept of Inclusion. Since teacher education is essential, employing Inclusion merely to adhere to professional international standards may compromise practising teachers who are sincerely interested in building inclusion techniques. According to Specht (2016), Inclusion is still globally a debatable topic in academic and policymaking circles.

Although Ghana has consistently strengthened its objectives, dedication, and leadership for Inclusion before independence (Ackah-Jnr & Udah, 2021), Semordey (2020) finds that the shortage of qualified teachers hinders Inclusion practices since teachers are the most important component in accomplishing the objective of effective Inclusion. As such, it must be in the best interests of the MoE that teachers get adequate training to meet the modern needs of education. In support, Pitre and Cook (2021) confirm that comprehensive and intense training is required for successful inclusive instruction in Ghana, either as part of their tertiary teacher-training qualification or as properly organised in-service training workshops by qualified experts. Moreover, schools and classrooms must be resourced with the required infrastructure (e.g., ramps, pavements, seating, cloakrooms etc.) in addition to specific resources for learners with Special Needs (SN). The

absence of such resources leads to teachers' apprehension about fully embracing Inclusive Education (IE).

In another study conducted in Ghana, Opoku et al. (2019) discovered that individuals must have positive goals and intents while engaging in the practice of Inclusion in school systems and society. These include a favourable attitude about inclusiveness which promotes a healthy perspective. Increasingly, when parents and other role-players exhibit wholesome attitudes about Inclusion, implementation becomes less difficult. In order to do this, parents especially, must understand the significance of inclusiveness (Amshetu-Osman, 2019) such that their attitudes regarding SEN children must change to positivity. In order to inspire children with disabilities to participate in normal school and communal activities, it is necessary to educate the general population. Enacting and practising inclusion in early childhood schools will become a difficult task if the general population does not establish a good attitude toward disadvantaged children, hence promoting awareness is paramount among all stakeholders (Amshetu-Osman, 2019).

As a result, Obeng-Asamoah (2016) suggests that teachers may struggle to successfully implement IECE if parents do not have a positive attitude toward their children who need special care and attention. Additionally, according to Seidu (2019), some parents are of the opinion that disabled learners should not participate in the same school as their own children since it would negatively impact their grades and academic outcomes. This perspective is impeding the successful implementation of inclusion in early childhood institutions. Further, Obeng-Asamoah (2016) opines that when it comes to factors hindering the effective enactment of IECE, it is important to consider teachers' negative and positive attitudes towards children with disabilities.

Inclusion provides possibilities for disadvantaged children and helps them realise their entitlement to get an education in a normal school setting; consequently, teachers' unfavourable attitudes toward inclusion make it more difficult to enact Inclusion in early childhood settings (Kuyini, 2010). Because of this, it is critical for teachers to possess a positive attitude to gain knowledge of Inclusion. In this regard, it is necessary for teachers to be educated on the importance of IECE, as well as developing a sound attitude toward disadvantaged learners while learning information and skills on how to interact with them (Kuyini, 2010; Semordey, 2020). In the absence of adequate

training, it will be impossible for teachers to manage all of the students in the classroom, regardless of their backgrounds (Semordey, 2020). Teachers who do not have training in teaching techniques and appropriate pedagogies to accommodate disabled students and understand how to manage them in the classroom may not have a pleasant attitude toward disabled learners (Boitumelo, Kuyini, & Major, 2020). According to Obeng-Asamoah (2016) teacher-support and training are essential if they are to effectively educate and understand diverse children in the classroom.

Additionally, Pitre and Cook (2021) identified attitudes and beliefs as the greatest significant impediments to IECE, which have stayed virtually constant throughout the world. Myths and negative attitudes may emanate from misunderstanding about the practicality and advantages of Inclusion, fear of the unknown, reluctance to altering established practices, categorisation of children with disabilities, concern that SEN children would distract their classmates, and insufficient knowledge about the advantages of integrated schools (Pitre & Cook, 2021). A priority on changing attitudes and ideas towards children with disabilities must accompany any attempt to increase access to inclusive early development programmes for these children (UNESCO, 2015).

In Cameroo, Specht (2016) states that the adoption of IECE as a solution for responding to all students' needs, especially those with learning challenges, has been facing many obstacles because the stakeholders do not accept the inclusive policy. Although the Cameroon Government signed international treaties and agreements to promote Inclusion in all primary and secondary schools, the pace of implementation and reform was slow. Neander (2020) indicates that it was due to misconceptions by political actors who presented obstacles concerning the enactment of the policy. Bertrand, and Marsh (2015) add that the slow pace of policy enactment was because the policy's actors found Inclusion as being meaningless. In support, a study by Fallwickl, McNally and Mackie, (2021) reveals that only 36% of children participated in ECE programmes in 2019, which was below the *Growth and Employment Strategy Paper* (GESP) target of 50% for 2020. This is mostly owing to the lack of facilities for rural learners where just 32% of those who qualified to register for kindergarten, enrolled. Registration is less than 10% in the North and Far North of Cameroon. Although the enrolment gap between sexes in pre-schools across the country is modest, the socio-economic disparities affect the accessibility of many families to register their children in private pre-schools. In 2017, more than 50% of children were admitted to the private pre-school

system, 48% in public pre-schools, and only 2% in community pre-school centres; these statistics reflected a dearth of public ECE facilities, and the value of private funding for ECE accessibility.

3.16 THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSION EDUCATION IN GHANA

The 1951 the *Accelerated Education Plan* and the 1961 *Educational Act for free education*, resulted in increases in basic level enrolment (Butakor, Ampadu, and Suleiman, 2020) which were important milestones in the history of Inclusion in Ghana. Hence, Ghana, according to the World Bank (1992), has a very sound legislative framework for individuals with disabilities which includes their participation in conventional schools. Disability education programmes are no longer considered philanthropic; in Ghana, they were established in 1992 as per the stipulations of the *Constitution*, which respects the importance of practically all international accords geared at advancing and preserving the human rights of all people, including those with disabilities (Butakor, Ampadu, & Suleiman, 2020).

The aim of increasing enrolment in inclusive schools was achieved with the assistance of United Nations agencies, NGOs, and the country's legislative structure that promotes educational opportunities for all children. However, the reality is that none of these efforts resulted in the kind of backing that would have been necessary to ensure successful Inclusion. Previous investigations into Ghana's Inclusion programmes identified a number of problems, including a lack of teacher-expertise and abilities to make instructional modifications to suit the needs of special learners (Boitumelo, Kuyini, & Major, 2020). To exacerbate the situation, Ghana, according to Bose and Heymann (2020), lacks explicitly articulated laws as well as a clear-cut strategy on Inclusion. Inclusion as an educational strategy was specified in the *Annual Education Sector Operation Plan 2003-2005* of the Special Education Division (SPED) of the Government of Ghana, which accompanied the *Education Strategic Plan* (ESP). Article 25(1) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states that all people have a right to equal educational opportunities and facilities that are compulsory and should be accessible to everyone. Since IE policy tackles various discriminatory issues in classrooms, where persons with different and unique educational needs, such as slow learners, are excluded from the educational and learning processes, much has to be done to ensure that Ghana does not pay lip-service to Inclusion. It is envisaged as per legislation that children with special educational needs will have support mechanisms in place by 2015 (Bose

& Heymann, 2020). It was ideally expected that their enrolment in public schools will rise to fifty percent (50%) in 2008, eighty percent (80%) by 2012, and one hundred percent (100%) by 2015. To achieve inclusion in Ghana, according to Boakye-Akomeah (2015), screening and identification of special needs children, as well as conducting workshops for parents and children with special needs, are all necessary steps. It is proposed that all educational institutions provide instruction on special needs education. Furthermore, according to Marfo, Mensah and Nantwi (2020), the Ministry of Education that is in charge of the provision and administration of education in Ghana, will particularly focus on developing an Inclusive system as part of its vision, which is embodied in the *Education Strategic Plan*.

Gallagher (2019) cites a report from the MoE that recommended a series of training sessions or workshops for IECE teachers in an effort to improve their knowledge and abilities, hence, they adopted the 'train-the-teacher approach' where teachers who had obtained initial specialised training were obliged to instruct other teachers in Inclusion strategies. Out of this vision emanated a resource team of eight 'mobile' teachers (Fusheini & Salia, 2021) who would offer further training for teachers in districts that were pursuing Inclusion policies. Consequently, the Special Education Division (SPED) of the Ghana Education Service (GES) piloted Inclusion in fourteen (14) districts across five (5) regions: Greater Accra, Eastern, Central, Volta and Northern during the 2003/2004 academic year. Fusheini and Salia (2021) add that this was done in order to discuss policy objectives. Munchan and Agbenyega (2020) noted that, notwithstanding the regulations, some Ghanaian teachers have insufficient awareness of the needs of Inclusion and that they lacked competence to deliver suitable instruction. A similar finding was made by Isaac and Dogbe (2020) who found that Ghanaian schools that embraced Inclusion lacked the ability to adapt instructional materials for diverse learners who differed from their able-bodied peers.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned problems, Inclusion is designed to provide effective education possibilities for all students, including those with special needs, based on their individual learning requirements (Edwin, Asabe, Ardo, & Umar, 2019; Isaac & Dogbe, 2020). The policy aims to review education delivery and management such that it can serve all learners while being guided by the principles of the *Universal Design for Learning*. This comprises ensuring that adequate teaching and learning resources are available, training for teachers and other personnel is

imperative, and enhancements in the delivery of education services. As the world's communities become more diverse and interconnected, education may play an important role in addressing the conventional and structural causes of impoverishment to engender modernity, social cohesion, and cultural assimilation. Nations, including Ghana, are still in the conceptual stages of Inclusion given the extensive planning required, but there is an urgent need for political will and serious community involvement to bring Inclusion to a reality (Edwin, Asabe, Ardo, & Umar, 2019).

3.17 THE GOAL OF GHANA'S INCLUSION IN EDUCATION POLICY

For Isaac and Dogbe (2020), the overall purpose of the Inclusion policy is to reinterpret and reimagine education opportunities in order to react to all learners' different requirements in a child-friendly and universally designed context. When it comes to assisting children to attain equal access and opportunity to study, Isaac and Dogbe (2020) maintain that Inclusion ensures that all children have equal access and opportunity to learn. This includes children with special needs and those from underprivileged backgrounds.

As part of a broader transformation of the school system, the Inclusion policy aspires to establish an environment for learning that is sensitive to the needs of all learners and favourable to better educational results, eventually leading to a more equal society. Beyond the education system, Inclusion extends into learners' homes and communities to guarantee that they are accepted, nourished, and offered the opportunity to develop at their highest potential, including those with disabilities (Buckler et al., 2015). Buckler et al. (2015) explains that the term *learners with special educational needs* includes those who may be classified as having a disability, as well as children who are failing in school because they are experiencing hurdles that prohibit them from making optimum progress in their learning and development. According to Sparrow et al. (2016), learner diversity in Ghana's Inclusion education policy recognises diverse groups of learners with varying educational requirements. They include but are not limited to the following individuals: children with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, specific learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), hearing impairment, visual impairment, and children with speech and communication disorders.

3.18 GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF GHANA'S INCLUSION POLICY

Several basic tenets underpin the Inclusion policy (Sparrow et al., 2016) including the following: children's right to education; every child has the capacity to benefit from education; racial equality; gender equality; and others such as dialect, age, social group, and religion. In consideration of these principles of equality, modifications must be affected across the educational system and in communities in order to guarantee that the school adjusts to the student instead of anticipating the student to conform to the educational programme. All elements of education including the curriculum, teaching techniques, evaluation, the schooling system, and learning settings are highlighted for adaptation to enhance opportunities for Inclusion. The individual differences among learners may be regarded as a reservoir of richness and variety, rather than a problem. Learners' needs and developmental patterns are diverse, and they should be managed with diverse and flexible strategies. In terms of combating prejudice, developing an inclusive society, and promoting universal education will transform traditional schools into inclusive ones. The guiding principles for the effective enactment of the IE policy in Ghana and its strict application in practice can sustain successful inclusion in early childhood education.

3.19 OBJECTIVES OF GHANA'S INCLUSION IN EDUCATION POLICY

For any policy to be effectively enacted, it must have meaningful objectives. Based on this premise, some researchers and institutions (GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015; Ackah-Jnr & Danso, 2019) identify relevant objectives regarding Ghana's Inclusion education policy: Firstly, to improve and adapt education and related systems and structures to ensure the inclusion of all learners, particularly learners with special educational needs; secondly, to promote learner-friendly school environments for enhancing the quality of education for all learners; thirdly, to ensure the development of well-informed and trained human resources for the quality delivery of IE throughout Ghana; lastly, to guarantee the sustainability of Inclusion enactment.

All stakeholders in Ghana's education system can take advantage of a policy that is based on clear goals to meet the unique educational requirements of the nation by using a universal design for learning that will create an atmosphere that is accommodating to all learners. Accordingly, inclusion refers to a broader transformation of the educational system intended to produce a literate society (Sparrow, Brewster, & Chung, 2016).

3.20 POLICY ENACTMENT

The launching of the Inclusion policy in Ghana by the Ministry of Education (MoE) highlighted:

> The government's strategic path for the education of all children with special educational needs. This emphasises relevant sections on inclusivity in the 1992 *Constitution of Ghana*, the *National Development Agenda*, the *Education Strategic Plan*, and international agreements to achieve national and international goals for creating a conducive environment for addressing the diverse educational needs of Ghanaians (GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015, p.3).

This affirms Ghana's commitment to inclusive education via the 1992 *Constitution,* specifically in Article 25(1) which states that "all persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities". In other words, basic education shall be free, compulsory, and available to all, including adjusting education and associated structures and processes to serve all learners, especially those with special needs.

Ayman (2019, p. 486) mentions in his study that "policy refers to a text or a process during which the authority of institutions is exercised". Maguire, Braun, and Ball (2015) elaborate that "policy enactment is a social, cultural, and emotional construction and interpretation, and not all of these processes are reported or integrated into outcomes-driven policy enactment". It is the policy players' socio-cultural influence, as well as the connotations they create in a given setting that determine whether or not policies like Inclusion are enacted effectively. As such, "policy enactment is the way teachers' practices, their shared beliefs, values, and imaginations can collectively inform how policies are translated into contextualized practices" (Koyama, 2015, pp.548-559). According to Donovan and Anderberg (2020) policy enactment involves getting official permission to implement a policy which involves training, management, interpreting policies, enrolment, and learner-attendance, as well as monitoring and implementing intervention programmes to enhance the academic achievement of learners.

3.21 TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

According to Donovan and Anderberg (2020) and Chitiyo et al. (2019), Inclusion training refers to teachers' preparation to promote quality education for all learners regardless of their diversities. Teaching staff are the ones who process information, address needs, and react to the variety of learners' requirements - they are responsible for implementing adjustments and revisions in the content, teaching techniques, and enriching learning processes (Donovan & Anderberg, 2020; Pitre & Cook, 2021). In other words, teacher- training in Inclusion prepares a teacher for the successful enactment of inclusive policies. Boison (2006) states that teachers' philosophies and beliefs depend on processes that support their actions. In this regard, Avoke (2001) adds that the purpose of schooling is to attain knowledge and skills via specific techniques by applying pedagogical principles which may be influenced by teachers' individual philosophies. Also, Alves (2020) observes that teacher-training in Inclusion is offered within a particular period, a particular environment, and includes specific theories and practices such as humanistic theory which encourages democratic thinking such that learner-attention in curriculum delivery is promoted via interactive teaching and learning techniques. This occurs when core curriculum is adapted to accommodate all students (Alves, 2020).

In addition, Tamanja (2016) and Alves (2020) recommend that teacher-preparation must focus on three particular areas: first, it must provide teachers with teacher-specific understanding and skills which will empower them to practise inclusive instructional strategies such as co-teaching and role-play; and second, it must supply teachers with data and skill sets which will permit them to comprehend the national education ideology and sense of direction with respect to Inclusion teaching. These are intended to help teachers implement, supervise, and guide the enactment of Inclusion in ECE (Nelson, & Shilling, 2018; Alves, 2020). In the *United Nations Standard Rules,* the state should take charge to cater for marginalised children and individuals with disabilities by way of making clear policies, protecting their rights, making high-quality resources available, flexible teaching programmes, and support for teacher training (UNESCO, 2015).

Professional development for teachers in Ghana is categorised into two types of training: pre-service and in-service. Teachers, therefore, are key for the enactment of Inclusion since they

perform many activities such as enhancing parental involvement, supporting learners' academic programme, attendance monitoring, promoting learner-participation in related scholastic activities and extracurricular activities targeted to cater for learners with specific educational needs. This means enhancing teachers' skills and knowledge in organising classroom spaces and activities for effective learning and teaching. In other words, teachers need to develop competencies and values for the appropriate management of Inclusion which entails analysing learners' needs and preparing a thorough school teaching-learning plan using approaches that enhances Inclusion (UNESCO, 2015; Schuelke, 2018).

The promotion of Inclusion in education needs to involve co-teaching components such as shared delivery teaching responsibilities with other teachers, interactive communication, and trust between the co-teachers (Donovan & Anderberg, 2020; a Pitre & Cook, 2021). Therefore, when teachers lack knowledge and inclusion skills, their enactment efficacy becomes questionable (Okyere, Aldersey, Lysaght, & Sulaiman, 2019). Sparrow, Brewster, and Chung (2016) observe that some teachers worry about having children with special educational needs placed in their classes, especially those teachers with little or no training and support in inclusive practices. Hence, the training of teachers in Inclusion motivates them to adapt instruction, utilise diverse strategies to cater for different learning styles, and to support marginalised pupils who experience hindrances to education (Buckler, 2015).

3.22 MANAGEMENT OF INCLUSION EDUCATION

This section of policy enactment comprises components promoting the successful enactment of Inclusion through proper management of school and class policy procedures, evaluation, achievement of learners with special educational needs, as well as enrolment and attendance (Buckler, 2015). Donovan and Anderberg (2020) indicate that education is for learning - to know, to do, and to live together - which starts in the classroom such that instruction becomes inclusive to remove all differences, including teachers' negativity. Moreover, Sparrow, Brewster, and Chung (2016) confirm that astute planning at the local level could generate more ambitious and visionary goals for those who work in the organisation which leads to a system and climate that fosters efficiency, high morale, and success.

According to Donovan and Anderberg (2020), teachers who received thorough Inclusion training exhibited a greater capacity to manage, attended effectively to learners' queries, and displayed confidence when dealing with those with differences. In support, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) add that teachers are educational policy enactment service managers because they plan, direct, coordinate, and supervise activities in an organisation. This, according to Booth (2013), motivates learners with special educational needs not to miss school. Tamakloe (2020) emphasises that the inclusion of learners with diverse needs within the normal classroom settings has increased in Ghana since the teaching of learners with diverse needs was adapted in several ways by changing learning environments and teaching techniques to cater for learners' diversity. By increasing involvement in learning, and identifying and removing barriers that inhibit learning, an inclusive environment becomes a pleasure to work in (Tamakloe, 2020; Jewel, Drew, Akter, & Chowdhury, 2020).

3.23 SCHOOL CLASS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Tamakloe, Jewel, Drew, Akter, and Chowdhury (2020) emphasise that the success of Inclusion depends on the effective enactment of policy procedures. The term policy entails a direct plan to guide the school programme (Kuger, Marcus, & Spiess, 2019) such that Inclusion creates a better and rich school climate. Hence, teachers in inclusive school environments involve themselves in restructuring the academic programme, changing attitudes, guiding children, adapting policies, and effecting diverse practices in classrooms that respond to a variety of learners' differences (Kuger, Marcus, & Spiess, 2019). For more effect, the school instructions on inclusiveness and its enactment should set out the school aims and objectives for all learners which should be linked to the vision and mission of the school (Tamakloe, 2020; Jewel, Drew, Akter, & Chowdhury, 2020).

3.24 EVALUATION AND ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN INCLUSION

Donovan and Anderberg (2020) suggest that the assessment and accomplishment of learners with special needs should be the primary focus of the teacher's attention in teaching, and in internal exams such that learners are offered the opportunity to demonstrate their learning ability in a manner that does not marginalise them because of their differences or educational requirements. Mmbuji (2017), states that in Uganda, special educational needs learners need an extra 20 minutes

to finish examinations which emphasises that adequate flexibility for learners with special educational needs is necessary. Mmbuji (2017) adds that SEN learners have extreme difficulties with formal or written tests; therefore, it is important to establish the accommodations and test modifications for such learners, which implies evaluating attitudes of teachers, understanding and the means they apply in classroom assignments, formative assessments such as school examinations, and weekly class tests.

3.25 DEFINING ENACTMENT QUALITY

Elenwa (2020) notes that the excellence initiative is a manuscript created by administrators to communicate the directive of an institution in the promotion of high performance. According to Kuger, Marcus and Spiess (2019), a policy on quality is defined as a concise statement that is consistent with the organisation's mission and the steps be taken to attain quality goals which encompasses a commitment to satisfy relevant criteria in order to continuously improve the organisation's practices. In other words, it explains the values and systems in place at the organisation, and reveals the processes used to assist to meet expectations.

Although quality enactment criteria are important because it improves children's academic achievement, it can also do harm it if they are of poorly instituted and managed (Kuger, Marcus, & Spiess, 2019). Kim (2020) indicates that enactment quality focuses on integrating quality childcare goals and ECE objectives to benefit children, families, and economies. In addition, Kim (2020) points out that quality enactment is powered by interconnected quality attributes including the rapport between learners and teachers, academic interventions to promote education and progress in an inclusive classroom, communication with families, and support from the school administrators to monitor and enhance the growth, health, and safety of all learners. Bunch (2017) adds that the enactment quality policy is accessible and inexpensive to all families and their children, and this promotes participation, enhances social Inclusion, and celebrates diversity, while fostering ongoing professional growth for all staff including care-workers to provide successful teaching and learning environments for children.

The enactment quality policy has three components (Bunch, 2017): the material (physical features of the schools that vary based on the situation), the interpretative (the issue of understanding), and

the discursive components. It is generally agreed that none of the three components is satisfactory in terms of capturing, understanding, and representing the act of working policy into effective implementation. Stratford et al. (2020) maintain that an encouraging and professional workplace environment provides the opportunity for observation, contemplation, planning, collaboration, and interaction with parents - all of which are beneficial to children, especially where qualified teachers whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their roles qualitatively.

3.26 THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN INCLUSION

According to Copelj, Gill, Love and Crebbin (2017), the term *role* had two meanings: the position the persons hold in an organisation and the prescribed expectations or behaviours; and in the education system, it entails specifically a position a teacher holds along with the expectations from that position. Inclusion is a global policy in the education system that every country needs to enact, and teachers have important roles in its enactment (UNESCO, 2015). This implies that teachers are the engine-rooms to ensure the inclusion of learners with special needs in different practices such as enrolment, attendance, health, and safety; specifically, to learners with albinism, victims of bullying and labelling, and those who are under-performing (Kim, 2020). In order to deliver Inclusion successfully, teachers must acquire a wide range of skill sets because these are essential to assist (emotionally and otherwise) those with diverse qualities.

Kim (2020) emphasises that since teachers are key in influencing what happens in classrooms, they will need to adjust the curriculum in order to meet the requirements of learners with varying learning styles. UNESCO (2015) recognises that teachers are crucial in promoting Inclusion, equality, equity, and improving curricula and pedagogy. Mihai (2017) believes that Inclusion is a public programme where teachers have important roles in promoting the right to quality education for all. Ainscow (2020) agrees that teachers are the drivers to satisfy international level objectives such as the *Millennium Development Goal 2,* which focuses on learners who are marginalised. Mihai (2017) adds that inclusive teachers are expected to adopt effective teaching strategies, identify the particular needs of the learners, assess learners' learning difficulties, and adopt effective classroom organisation and management strategies to make Inclusion successful.

When a student is not progressing as expected, the IECE education system believes that the fault is with the school structure rather than with the learner (Tyagi, 2016). This implies that the school administration and its staff are accountable for learners' under-performance which leads to ensuring that teachers are sufficiently prepared, their classrooms are well-managed and accessible, and that learners have easy access to learning resources. Inclusive teachers are aware that learners' abilities vary; some are quick to grasp knowledge and skills, while others are slower. Some children learn mathematics concepts quicker than their peers, while others might be particularly talented in other areas such as reading and comprehension. While the teacher is responsible for teaching various types of learners, they should also be provided with supplementary training in areas like mobility training, individualised tutoring, the creation of teaching materials that are designed to meet the requirements of disabled learners, modern SEN teaching techniques, and the use and management of assistive equipment, among others. (Florian, 2008). To enhance SEN learners' performance, responding to personal variation throughout the whole instruction session, making astute decisions regarding groupwork, and drawing on expert knowledge, are further examples of inclusion strategies.

3.27 TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCLUSION

3.27.1 Defining Attitude

Attitudes are beliefs that influence people to react positively, negatively, or ambivalent to a person, object, or idea (Desalegn, 2020). An attitude can be defined as a pattern of emotions, beliefs, and behaviours with respect to a certain subject (Otto, 2021). A person's attitude is strongly influenced by their experiences or background; and attitudes have such a significant impact on conduct. Attitudes can be long-term, but they can also be changed. According to Boyle, Anderson, and Allen (2020), attitude is learned and adopted. In daily life, an attitude refers to a view that a person has toward a certain topic or item. It is possible for everyone to acquire either a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward an item or a concept or a person. However, in order to perform a specific activity properly, one must have a favourable attitude about the task at hand (Boyle, Anderson, & Allen, 2020).

Various research studies have been conducted to investigate aspects that could be correlated between teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy regarding Inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

According to Mata, Clipa & Lazar (2020) three common elements emanated from such studies: the first variable referred to characteristics of learners, followed by teacher-related aspects (gender and qualification), and the final one referred to other variables such as resources, education support, and administrative leadership. Teachers' views regarding Inclusion have been found to change over time as they become older and have more years of experience teaching (Kuyini, Desai, & Sharma 2020). Studies revealed that young teachers (20 to 30 years of age) are more supportive than those above 40 years of age (Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel, & Malinen, 2012; Yada & Savolainen, 2017). However, some research revealed no age and experience-related associations with the attitudes and beliefs of educators in Inclusion (Nels, Malinen, Savolais, Engelbrecht, 2012). Concerning teachers with vast teaching experience, evidence shows that past teacher-assigned experiences in inclusive classes relate to positive views (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2002; Avramidis, Bayliss, 2002). Wilson et al. (2016) advises that teachers examine and reflect on their prior performance in order to assess how they and others see themselves as inclusive teachers. These findings reveal the relevance of reciprocity in the social cognition theory between conduct and individual aspects where teachers reflect on their performance.

As Goddard and Evans (2018) point out, attitudes influence Inclusion, and the efficacy of any programme is contingent on the attitudes of the individuals who are involved in the enactment of the programme. Generally speaking, this seems to be accurate since persons with good attitudes might be more eager to expend their efforts favourably because they value the programme and believe it will succeed. Additionally, in order for Inclusion to succeed, both persons with disabilities and the teachers who educate them should have a positive attitude to successfully satisfy all requirements of the programme (Desalegn, 2020). As such, favourable attitudes among persons with disabilities, their peers who are not impaired, teachers, and school administrators are critical to the effective implementation of Inclusion policies. Since teachers are the most important stakeholders in the implementation of Inclusion, their positive attitudes toward children with disabilities are critical (Forrester, 2016).

3.27.2 Factors that Influence Teachers' Attitude
Gavish (2017) found that favourable views displayed towards Inclusion were expressed by teachers whose conviction led to assisting students in integrated settings by adjusting classroom layouts,

resources, and practices to meet SEN standards. On the other hand, researchers Forlin and Chambers (2020) discovered that teachers who had unfavourable views toward Inclusion utilised inclusive teaching practices less often which produced mediocre results. Kiel et al. (2019) also found that general classroom teachers reported lower levels of self-efficacy, learner-performance, capacity, and comprehension to inclusive practice than individual SEN teachers, hence they voiced an urgent need for in-service SEN training, assistance, and relevant resources.

Additionally, the number of learners with disability that teachers are expected to integrate in their classrooms has an impact on the attitudes of teachers (Forlin & Chambers, 2020). According to Schipper, Van der Lans, Vries, Goei, and Van Veen (2020), teachers generally agreed with the Inclusion philosophy when questioned specifically about their desire to integrate students with certain disabilities in their classrooms; but they were only ready to accept such students with moderate physical disabilities. Also, teachers develop a negative attitude if they experience difficulties in facilitating SEN learners. Such attitudes are harmful since it hinders teachers from doing their jobs effectively while teaching students in inclusive classrooms, therefore it is vital to provide opportunities for more training concerning SEN.

When teachers have unfavourable views about those learners who have been diagnosed with a disability, this may result in frustration for the learner and the teacher which can lead to an even lower standard of performance. In other words, teachers' perceptions and understanding of children with special education needs have a significant impact on the social, intellectual, and emotional development of these learners (Connell, 2020). Desalegn (2020) divides elements affecting teachers' attitudes regarding Inclusion into three groups: variables that are connected to children, factors that are linked to teachers, and elements that are related to the educational environment.

3.27.2.1 Child-related variables

In most cases, teachers' conceptions of children with special educational needs are based on the type of disability they encounter, the frequency with which they occur, and the educational demands they require (Pelt, 2020). It is possible to categorise teachers' perceptions into three categories: physical and sensory perception, cognitive perception, and behavioural and emotional perception (Gaitas & Martins, 2017). Learners with physical and sensory disabilities are more

likely to be integrated into 'normal' classrooms than children with severe learning disabilities or acute emotional-behavioural challenges (Williams, 2018).

3.27.2.2 Teacher-related variables

A number of researchers, such as Callicutt (2020), have looked into a wide range of specific teacher-characteristics such as gender, age, number of years of work experience, expertise, engagement with disabled students, and other personal characteristics in order to determine whether or not teachers may embrace the Inclusion principles. Some of these characteristics are outline below:

3.27.2.3 Gender

Callicutt (2020) observes that female teachers had a higher degree of tolerance for assimilation and SEN students than male teachers.

3.27.2.4 Age and Teaching experience

When it comes to teachers' teaching experience, novice teachers and those with fewer years of experience are more likely to be critical of Inclusion (Callicutt, 2020). Horishna (2020) and Ainscow (2021) found that primary school teachers have the necessary training to accommodate students with unique educational needs into their classrooms. When comparing highly-skilled experienced teachers to beginner-teachers in terms of their preparedness to integrate SEN learners, there was a clear difference in their willingness to do so: novice teachers had positive views regarding assimilation when they first entered the teaching profession, but this waned progressively in further years; experienced teachers were tolerant but were averse to inclusivity as they were ingrained in their traditional teaching methods – hence in-service training is imperative.

3.27.2.5 Experience of contact

When it comes to developing teacher attitudes regarding Inclusion, the prior involvement of teachers with SEN learners is a critical determinant (Frizzell) (2018). In addition, Frizzell (2018) asserts that when teachers adopt inclusive programmes and, as a result, get more familiar with learners who have major disabilities, their attitudes toward SEN learners may improve. On the other hand, Garrad, Rayner and Pedersen (2019) discovered that teachers with a great deal of

experience working with handicapped learners had more positive views about Inclusion than teachers with minimal or no experience with working with learners with disabilities.

3.27.2.6 Training

As reported by Goddard and Evans (2018), pre-service and in-service training was deemed to be an essential component in changing teachers' attitudes about successfully enacting IE policy, hence, efforts to incorporate learners with special educational requirements in a regular school would be challenging if there was no systematic strategy for teacher-training regarding 'mixed' educational requirements. Increasing recognition of the role of training in the development of good attitudes toward Inclusion is urgently required (Letzel & Schneider, 2020). Pelt's (2020) survey regarding an attitude poll involving normal and special education educators found that both groups of teachers had more favourable views about Inclusion after undergoing in-service training than they had prior to the training, with regular education teachers demonstrating the most significant positive attitude shift.

3.27.2.7 Teachers' beliefs

According to Letzel and Schneider (2020), there is an additional element that determines not just teachers' attitudes toward Inclusion, but also their actual teaching methods and modifications in a variety of classroom settings; this concerns teachers' perception of their obligations when interacting with SEN learners. According to UNESCO (2017), teachers who believe that disability is permanent in individuals vary in their teaching approach from those who have a more 'interventionist' viewpoint where the teacher explains learner difficulties as a result of an interplay between the learner and the surroundings.

3.27.2.8 Educational environment

Czy (2018), Goddard (2018), and Evans (2018) state that a few studies looked at educational ecological variables and their effect on the development of teachers' attitudes toward Inclusion, which indicated that attitudes about learning are more likely to be positive when support services are readily available in the classroom and in the school. Support may take the form of learning resources, instructional equipment, and human resources, among others.

3.28 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the literature of the topic under investigation. It was discovered that there are differences among nations concerning the strategy used to understand and enact Inclusion at the early childhood stage, as well as the decisions taken to provide education for everyone. International and national initiatives to minimise marginalisation and prejudice against learners from diverse backgrounds are highlighted in the literature. Additionally, the literature analysis recognised IE as an effective strategy for eradicating stigma and discrimination to close gaps in the delivery of education globally. As such, IE contributes to the development of a cohesive equal society that is critical to practise favourable treatment to all people. Teachers' roles were significant as they possessed the skills to modify, adapt, and rearrange the teaching environment to accommodate the specific educational demands of disadvantaged children, in partnership with parents and school administrators who have a beneficial influence on the learning careers of disabled learners by enhancing the delivery of high-quality instruction. To surmount challenges in doing a job that is part of the daily schooling routine for affected children, persons close to them, such as parents and teachers, should provide quality assistance. The presentation of international viewpoints on IE as a means of effectively removing prejudice and providing children with equitable educational opportunities, was compared to Ghanaian practices of inclusivity.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Creswell (2018) explains that research methodology is a thorough examination of the theory that underpins a particular research topic which involves selecting research methods that are appropriate and with relevant norms. The research methodology is how processes to find answers to challenging issues are conducted scientifically involving authentic techniques to realise the aim of the study. Accordingly, I view research methodology as a systematic and scientific combination of different mechanisms and techniques that guides research inquiry to find answers to address a specific situation that needs investigating. A research study is guided by procedures such as methodologies, designs, assumptions, instrumentation, and analysis (Biddix, 2018). The appropriate research technique for a given topic is determined by the ontology and epistemology that have to be selected for the study. The methodological approaches, ontology, and epistemology used in the research are defined by the research paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). There may be multiple techniques in a single paradigm, and the researcher may use any of them. In a more practical sense, ontology asks: do teachers play a key role in Inclusion? The epistemology will ask: how do we know teachers play a key role in inclusion? The approach used in this study is concerned with the procedures and methods that can assist in finding answers to these questions.

There are two major research methodologies: quantitative and qualitative. According to theory, quantitative research is a measurable approach that is concerned with sampling and design measuring techniques. This strategy utilises statistical and analytical tools to gather information and determine causal linkages between events (Leavy, 2017). It adheres to natural scientific principles, notably positivism, and considers society to be external and objective in its view of the world. Rather than measuring data collection and analysis, the qualitative research uses a word to describe methodology regarding data collection and analysis. This study technique is not objective, but rather investigative, and it is characterised by its exploratory nature (Yin, 2014). When it comes to social science, descriptive explanation is at the heart of qualitative inquiry and follows a dynamical research route.

By using a qualitative research technique, this study was able to evaluate data in a more contextualised manner than is often possible. The goal of qualitative investigation is to acquire an in-depth understanding of a certain social setting, occurrence, or interaction. Silverman (2015) believes that applying a qualitative method to research may assist researchers address the common hurdles that obstruct validity and reliability aspects encountered through research processes. The use of words rather than numbers (statistics) in data collection and analysis is emphasised by Bryman (2016) who defines qualitative research as knowledge formed via the meanings associated with the phenomenon under investigation. Throughout the data gathering process, investigators may communicate (e.g., via interviews) with the study participants. In other words, phenomena or issues of a controversial nature emanate from are the results of social construction (Yin, 2014). Because of its focus on the subject-researcher connection (as well as linguistic, experience, understanding, and sentiments), interpretivism is often related to qualitative research approaches such as case studies (Yin, 2014).

The qualitative research approach generates comprehensive data that, when dissected, leads to the incisive knowledge of people and their circumstances which come under the spotlight Schutt (2014). Qualitative research may be used to gather descriptive and investigative data from participants' verbal and written responses and other readily available resources such as documents, photographs, and videos (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the event that quantitative methods fail to capture crucial issues, Schutt (2014) recommends that qualitative research be employed. Researchers may use qualitative tools to study general viewpoints and personal viewpoints that are otherwise out of reach when using quantitative ways. Additionally, contact or communication between the investigator and the study subjects elicits more in-depth knowledge of a phenomenon via qualitative research (Harrison, Reilly, & Creswell, 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). That is, qualitative approaches allow for a more detailed investigation of issues, and they are particularly useful when conducting exploratory research (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, according to Bryman (2010), qualitative approaches lead to a greater decrease in generalisation that allows investigators to get a more thorough and unambiguous understanding of people's lived experiences. In sum, the qualitative approach is suitable for producing rich, in-depth descriptions to understand the intricate links between action and context when diagnosing novel occurrences to produce new perspectives

into challenging issues (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), hence rendering it more convincing and trustworthy (Yin, 2014).

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

The study adopted qualitative multi-case study research design to guide the study process. Qualitative approaches may be used to examine the data in the context of the study. According to Schutt (2014), qualitative research offers comprehensive information, and when the data is examined, the knowledge of the person and the scenario under inquiry is discovered. A qualitative approach may be used to generate descriptive and exploratory data from participants' spoken words and other observable resources using their own words and other observable resources. According to Schutt (2014), qualitative research should be conducted when a quantitative approach is unlikely to capture major problems in the study. In the case of quantitative methodologies, the researcher's capacity to examine views and personal opinions is severely limited. The researcher chose the qualitative over quantitative research method to understand better how people cope in real-life settings (Lewis &Yin, 2015). The rationale behind this was that the researcher saw qualitative methods as being better to understand how people think and process information, and how they learn and use their environment to shape their behaviours (Gray & Hayes, 2021).

The case study technique is defined as an approach of inquiry rather than a methodology - a problem within a constrained system (Charmaz & Bryant, 2011). Other academics, however, consider case study research as a methodology or a complete research strategy; for instance, case study research in education (Yin, 2014). For Yin (2014), a case study concerns objective research of a current phenomenon in its real-life setting. Generally speaking, case studies may be divided into two types: Firstly, single cases that involve exploratory in-depth research of a phenomenon that elicits incisive knowledge of a situation or an occurrence; secondly, multiple cases that are studies of much more than a single subject with the primary purpose of comparing 'cross-case findings. It was clear that the topics and theoretical framework that underpin this qualitative study lend themselves to case study techniques which favour investigating current events (Yin, 2014). In this research, the topics and research questions addressed, represent the knowledge and enactment of IECE teachers in their classrooms. Lastly, it promotes, authenticity of the research process and data collections procedures via triangulation of data sources, including prompts (semi-structured

interviews), non-participant observations, and photo-elicitation – all of which provided a holistic nature of the issue at hand.

A multi-case approach, as described by Cresswell (2013), investigates a live multiple-bounded practise through extensive, detailed information gathering incorporating numerous sources of dataset. The multiple sources of evidence in this study were photo elicitation, interview, and a non-participant observation. By employing multiples source of evidence, a broader perspective from dissimilar dimensions could help unearth an in-debt findings and conclusion. A broader study of the study topic and conceptual formulation helped me to comprehend the variations and parallels in teachers' understanding and enactment of IECE amongst the three schools investigated utilising a multiple-case methodology. This allowed me to handle teachers' complicated concerns that must be thoroughly investigated, as well as to comprehend the behavioural circumstances of inclusion in education, depending on inclusion in education teachers' observations and interpretive viewpoints.

This multi-case (the case represents the schools) study involved three unique but different schools: School A, School B, and School C. This allowed the researcher to access teachers personally to attain an insider's perspective (Creswell & Creswell 2018) which fostered a deeper understanding of teachers' inclusive practice. Yin (2018) advises researchers to guarantee sufficient access to information and evaluate data collection process before choosing between single- and multi-case case study. Therefore, before deciding on multi-case study approach, I had to ensure that participant for the interview, photo-elicitation process, and review document are accessible. Data availability and method of data gathering informed the choice of multi-case study because it determined whether to maintain or adjust the study objectives. Fieldwork was done differently at every school; and the multi-case study initially treated each school as a single-case study after which the findings were linked across cases to reach the study conclusion. I obeyed an analogous logic during the creation of multi-case study design by meticulously selecting each case study. The goal was to ensure each case study either reach analogous outcome (a literal replication) or come out with dissimilar findings but for expectable reasons (a theoretical replication).

The sense-making theory facilitated the exploration of teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in this qualitative case study. It adheres to the sense-making stages of noticing, interpreting, and enactment as it utilises semi-structured interviews, observations, and photo-elicitation to probe teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in early childhood education. Essentially, a qualitative case study involving prompts, visual images, and observation to construct meaningful understanding, interpretation, and enactment of inclusion via the lived experiences of teachers. This approach also ensures the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the processes, data, findings, and conclusions of the study (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

This study's research topic's questions were addressed via the use of a qualitative case study technique, which was determined to be most suitable. Case study methodologies are suitable when rigorously undertaken, and they are particularly useful in developing and emerging areas of knowledge (Yin, 2014). Case study research makes it possible to get a more comprehensive and a deeper understanding of social phenomena by using many sources of information as opposed to a single qualitative technique (Charmaz, 2014). Additionally, when there is little knowledge about phenomena, when present viewpoints provide little new insight, and when established theory is regarded insufficient, the case study method is considered as being appropriate (Clayton, 2010). By employing the case study approach, researchers may learn how and why social situations originate and become visible (Yin, 2014).

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The word *etymology* comes from the Greek word 'pattern'. When it comes to educational research, paradigm relates to an investigator's worldview (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) which refers to a point of view, style of reasoning, philosophy, or set of common ideas that drives the interpretation or the meaning of study findings (Kankam, 2019).

In elaboration, a paradigm consists of conceptual assumptions and philosophies that define how an investigator perceives and understands the world and how they act inside it. It is the perspective that a researcher adopts when observing the world. A research paradigm is a philosophical prism where the researcher evaluates the methodological and theoretical foundations of a research

endeavour in order to select appropriate and relevant research methods and data analysis techniques that must be employed. Mertens (2015) identifies a paradigm as an entire system of beliefs that directs and inquiry or investigation. In the views of Hughes (2011, p.35), "paradigm is perceived as a way of seeing the world that frames a research topic and influences how researchers think about the topic". Thus, paradigms are critical tools because they provide beliefs and guidelines that determine what should be examined, the investigation principles, and the evaluation of a study's results for academic in a chosen subject. The paradigm establishes a researcher's philosophical perspective which affects decisions made throughout the research process, including method selection. In other words, a paradigm informs us about the process by which meaning will be elicited from the facts or data based on one's understandings. As such, the interpretive paradigm was chosen to guide this study.

4.3.1 Interpretive Paradigm

Through the interpretive paradigm approach, the researcher explored teachers' experiences by dissecting their thoughts and views of others to make-sense of Inclusion and how they enacted IE in early childhood education. From a constructivist perspective, shared sense-making is a social construction process involving interactions between teachers. Sharing their experiences is a collaborative process through which they use language to derive meaning through communication (Coburn, 2005). Understanding Inclusion from a sense-making perspective means constructing and enacting a collective sense of policy messages in everyday school situations (Fullan, 2015). Therefore, the understanding of collective knowledge and practices is important to teachers' sense-making processes that focus on a shared construction of meaning. Sense-making is thus a central requirement for the successful comprehension of teachers' experiences (Pietarinen, Pyhältö, & Soini, 2017).

According to Bryman (2010), qualitative research draws on researchers' interpretations, the participants' responses, and the research reports. Stake (2010) identifies the researcher as the research instrument because of their personal experience to make interpretations. Yin (2014) remarks that the researcher is the primary research instrument because external instruments cannot measure some critical real-world phenomena which can only be analysed by making inferences from observed data and talking to people. However, since the researcher is the main research

instrument in qualitative research, this can lead to concerns about research bias especially in terms of personal interest (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Because the researcher's life influences how he/she approaches essential aspects of a study, he/she cannot avoid personal interest in a study he/she is conducting (Hughes, 2010). De Vaus (2012) recommends identifying and monitoring researchers' biases and how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data. De Vaus (2012) adds that research conducted under interpretive ontology principles, sees reality as subjective and socially constructed, with both researcher and the (object) respondent involved in the knowing process. Accordingly, only through personal interpretation and intervention can that reality be apprehended. Charmaz (2014) states that the subjective researcher seeks to know the truth through the eyes of the respondent. This indicates that what exists is the same as what we all acknowledge exists.

To understand a specific phenomenon, interpretive epistemology advocates that the recommended approach is to dissect it thoroughly by analysing all perspectives, that the right method is adopted to grasp what is happening to engage fully in the topic under study, and to participate in the study to experience what it means to understand the most important premises of interpretive epistemology (Charmaz, 2014) which explains that the investigators and societal facts influence one another since reality is created by studying participants (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In other words, researchers are unable to avoid their influence on the phenomenon they are investigating, which implies that every inquiry is somehow skewed by the investigator's personal opinions of the subject (Denscombe, 2010). As a result, reality is formed in a social context via diverse interpretations of the phenomena under examination. Since truth is made up of several realities, the concept of truth is a combination of all of them. Nevertheless, it is the qualitative process that is employed by the interpretative researcher that are important as it entails observation, prompts, and photo-elicitation. A cordial and trusting engagement between the investigator and study participants is imperative considering that the researcher is the main research instrument. A further advantage of using this flexible approach to gather data is that it is relevant to the social context from which the data is being gathered.

4.3.1.1 Ontology

A qualitative approach of the sense-making theory was selected in combination with the interpretative paradigm in terms of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. The interpretative paradigm focused on interpreting the world based on teachers' subjective experiences. Further, the sense-making techniques such as interviewing, observation, and photo-elicitation rely on a cordial and dignified relationship among the participants (and the researcher) to explore teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion. Through the medium of interpretive paradigms, teachers explore their experiences by shaping their thoughts and views to understand and enact Inclusion in ECE. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) and Farrow et al. (2020, p. 26) contend that "it is important to have a firm understanding of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology that explain basic assumptions, beliefs, norms, and values that each paradigm holds". Accordingly, the researcher adhered to all principles pertaining to the interpretative paradigm.

This approach ensured that teachers shared their knowledge and experiences with others in order to better comprehend the society surrounding them. In support, Cohen and Manion (2018) theorize that, qualitative research views individuals as meaning making creatures who conscientiously create their explanations of events and use those explanations to make sense of their reality and act in it.

4.3.1.2 Epistemology

Gray (2014) and Farrow et al. (2020) maintain that epistemology includes valuable and practical kinds of knowledge, while Kivunji and Kuyini (2017) and Okesina (2020) explain epistemology as the process by which the researcher comes to know the truth and reality. As a result, the insight into teachers' personal observation is increased, allowing them to make meaning of their engagements. Kivunji and Kuyini (2017) and Okesina (2020) emphasise that sense-making may be impacted by a variety of circumstances including past experiences, expertise, and gender of teachers. It is assumed that the investigator interprets their data by analysing it in a way that is shaped by the encounters with participants (teachers). This implies that the researcher is capable of sociological knowledge construction as a result of personal experiences in natural environments. A basic premise of this approach is that researchers and participants are involved in collaborative activities that include listening to elicit research data, reading collected information aloud to one

another, writing it down, and recording it. Hence, Interpretivism involves more than mere collection of information from teachers; it is based on how the researcher and participants interpret reality, and it promotes the understanding that there are multiple ways of engaging in the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

4.3.1.3 Axiology

Axiology is one of the ethical concerns that should be considered when planning a research project to arrive at proper judgements via analysing philosophical perspectives (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It requires generating, measuring, and grasping conceptions of suitable and improper behaviours in the study. In this research, axiology was used to determine the relevance and value assigned to various aspects such as participants, data collection and analysis, as well as the audience to whom I will present the results. Consequently, I answered the aspect of where morality or ethical behaviour gets its foundational principles from. Moreover, as the researcher evokes responses, he or she should consider protecting the inherent rights of everyone participating in the study.

In the course of the research, I adhered to ethical considerations (appendix A). Hence, I applied a theoretical method that assisted in making the appropriate selections concerning all aspects of the research process. Axiological principles assisted in that it outlined the definition, interpretation, and comprehension of concepts concerning ethical and unethical behaviour related to teachers' knowledge and enactment of Inclusion. In order to abide by sound ethics, the investigator must evaluate the value assigned to the various parts of the study, including the participants, the data, and the population to whom the study findings will be communicated. Hence, the researcher considered human values, safety, rights, privacy, respect, and moral issues (ARC, 2015; Farrow et al., 2020; Okesina, 2020).

4.4 METHODOLOGY

Data generation methods and data analysis processes were utilised to generate knowledge aligned to the aim, objectives, and research questions (Cunliffe, 2011). The choice of methodology, to some extent, is always ordered by the phenomenon being researched. Antwi and Hamza (2015, p. 218) define methodology as "the method used in conducting the study". Further, Kawulich (2015, p. 1) explains methodology as "how should we study the world". Lincoln and Guba's (2013, p.39)

interpret methodology as: "how does one go about acquiring knowledge?" The researcher agrees that methodology must be aligned to its ontological and epistemological perspectives since the research paradigm is inextricably linked to them. These assist researchers in providing answers to research questions about the topic under study which is dependent on the interpretative structure that will guide all study procedures.

Since paradigm selection includes the consideration of research questions, recruitment of participants, data collecting equipment and methods, and data analysis processes, there is a strong link between a research paradigm and research methodology. The ontological aspect is essential to a paradigm's relevance and importance since it assists in the understanding of the forces that contribute to the universe as we recognise it in terms of its value embedded in the research data (Scott & Usher, 2004). Additionally, epistemology facilitates individuals' interpretation of their perceptions within their very own situations or experiences. As such, an interpretivist epistemology was suitable for this study because it confirmed the notion that knowledge is negotiated independently or collectively, rather than found. This paradigm assisted me to understand that teachers create their own reality by interpreting and analysing their observations, and that there are different truths - confirming that truth is a product of our efforts (Furlong, 2013).

My choice of qualitative methods to direct this study in order to answer the research questions was influenced by my sense-making of epistemological and ontological factors. Since a qualitative direction in research leads to the acquisition of information that is created via conversation and collaboration, knowledge is not assumed to be merely 'out there' but instead confined to individual and collective perceptions; that is, humans construct or generate knowledge (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Moreover, a qualitative researcher believes that comprehending an object by looking at its pieces is not beneficial; instead, one needs to look at the broader situations in which individuals operate and communicate. Accordingly, the qualitative approach focuses on interviewing participants, observing their actions and behaviours, and analysing existing literature and audio-visual items that generally access information via language processes (Leavy, 2017). Further, axiologically, I conducted semi-structured interviews (prompts) and applied the inductive thematic analysis approach which enabled participants to express opinions about themes that affected them without subjecting their knowledge and experiences to preconceived interpretations.

In addition, because of the abovementioned ontological and epistemological assumptions, an analysis of participants' responses sought to dissect their educational philosophy and real-life lived experiences that influenced their perceptions and behaviours on the topic under investigation.

Concerning interpretivism, multiple realities were constructed through participatory interaction as research methodology explores the minds and sense-making processes of individuals or groups, but do not necessarily lead to unravelling 'reality'.

This case study seeks to unearth understandings or constructs of the meaning of Inclusion in school contexts. This includes how participants understand and interpret how teachers understand and enact Inclusion in ECE spaces. Before embarking on a research journey, it is necessary to apply philosophical and theoretical judgements on the project's scope, objectives and merits which serve as 'pre-assessing criteria' concerning the research design which assists in deciding the study's overall quality or lack thereof; this leads to decision-making such as whether to utilise a quantitative or qualitative approach (Englander, 2012).

Qualitative research is understood as an approach to elicit incisive and interpretive knowledge of the social environment via, among others, interviews, and focus groups (Creswell, 2010). Accordingly, since the researcher chose to explore teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion, it was suitable to use the qualitative approach aligned to interpretivism that suggests that the social world may be better understood through philosophical and theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 2015).

4.5 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The initial step in every research project is to define the study population - who or what is going to be sampled - and then to develop a sample frame for this group (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study population should include participants who can answer the research questions by providing rich, relevant, and in-depth data (Stake, 2010). The study population, therefore, included IECE teachers. I judged that the participants were suitable because they had previously discussed their work experiences with me in other contexts and made some telling points. Participant-recruitment was done based on their knowledge of Inclusion in ECE settings. Purposive sampling was used for

this study to select those teachers most likely to possess vital and relevant information on the subject at hand (Creswell, 2018).

Purposive sampling, despite its merits, is prone to bias. Because it was challenging to defend the representativeness of the sample, I maintained a researcher's distance during sampling and data generation as it avoided me from the risk of making a judgement or limiting choices.

Six (6) teachers from three (3) schools were selected for this study (Table 4.1). Because qualitative research is time-consuming, the six teachers who were selected were critical and adequate in number for this study. Every participant chosen for their knowledge and experience on inclusive practices was taken through visual image discussion, prompts, and observation in three schools and classrooms. By using photo-elicitation, prompts, and non-participant observation, I was able to derive an in-depth focus and extensive gathering of information on all aspects of Inclusion from the three schools and teachers including social, economic, and historical dimensions. Thus, a holistic study of teachers and schools produced a comprehensive insight into teachers' knowledge and enactment of inclusivity in ECE settings in Ghana's Mampong Municipality.

Before the prompts (semi-structured interviews), observations, and photo-elicitation at early childhood schools were used, the researcher obtained informed written consent (signed) from all participants (Appendices B1, B2, B3, B4, and B5) who were also provided with an explanatory statement that detailed all processes of the study, their rights and responsibilities concerning the research process, including the liberty to withdraw at any stage from the research if they so desired (Bryman, 2016). Data collection commenced after ethical clearance was obtained from the UZKN Ethics Committee. Thereafter consent was obtained from the Ghana Education Service (GES), and school authorities, and the participants (see appendix A). All safety protocols and preventive measures regarding the COVID-19 pandemic were observed at all the participating schools during data collection. Data was collected during individual school visits at a convenient time arranged with the selected participants and school authorities. Participants were taken through one-on-one prompts (in-depth interviews), photo-elicitations (visual images) and observations (appendices C, D, and E). Prompts were audio-taped, transcribed (Appendix I), and incorporated into the data analysis process. Since the researcher was interested in strictly adhering to time frames to gather

information, the duration of participants' engagement in interviews was between 45 minutes and 1 hour. The data was collected such that there would be minimal interruption of daily school activities. Table 4.1 (below) outlines some of the teachers' details:

Table 4.1: Information concerning participants

School	Gender	Teacher	Class Taught	Professional Qualification
School A	Female	TA1	Kindergarten 2	BEd (Basic Education)
	Male	TA2	Basic Level 3	Diploma in Basic Education
School B	Female	TB1	Kindergarten 2A	WASSCE
	Male	TB2	Kindergarten 2B	Diploma in Basic Education
School C	Female	TC1	Kindergarten 1A	BEd (Early Childhood)
	Female	TC2	Kindergarten 2	BEd (Basic Education0

Table 4.1 above provides details of the chosen participants for the study. As noted earlier, the purposive sampling method was used to select two participants from each research site (three unique schools). The sites and participants were selected to provide rich information that defined the enactment of IECE in Ghana.

4.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The data collection instruments used in this study were probes and prompts (interview schedule), observation schedule, and photo-elicitation. Because of the sensitivity of the subject under investigation, an in-depth interview guide was designed and employed. These instruments were used because of their flexibility and open-ended character, which made it easier to acquire in-depth data from participants. Individuals' responses via a common set of interview questions for all, led to the elicitation of extensive and rich information regarding methods, knowledge, views, and perceptions of the topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

4.6.1 Probes and Prompts

Using an interview guide, according to Schutt (2014), is a versatile method for data collection that allows for the application of several senses, including linguistic, non-verbal, spoken, and audible communication. This allowed for a regulated but spontaneous interview, such that the interviewer's probes fostered elaboration and in-depth discussion on important and complicated themes, while allowing for flexibility (Schutt, 2014). Creswell (2018) adds that probes and prompts, seen as a conversation, allowed participants to respond to questions of clarification while presenting incisive and appropriate data.

4.7 DATA GENERATION

Qualitative studies require spending adequate time in the field to generate data. Data was generated through prompts and probes, photo elicitations, and observation (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Prompts offer an opportunity to researchers to listen attentively, interact harmoniously, and collect relevant information from the participants (Silverman, 2006). The prompts (semi-structured interviews) involved open-ended questions because they helped make sense of participants' understanding of issues (Simon, 2020). To ensure that all interviews were conducted independently with each participant, all data was recorded and transcribed, and included into the data processing procedure before being analysed. The non-participant observation was conducted for each school where key information from documents and activities were noted, analysed, and recorded. The observation involved noting the date, time, number of learners, physical setting, teaching resources, classroom activities, and class observation of teaching and learning. Other key classroom activities were recorded for easy referencing when reviewing observation notes.

To realise teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion, teachers were taken through the stages of sense-making: noticing, interpretation, and action (Abdirad, 2020). As teachers are continuously involved in noticing, semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation foster processes of noticing when understanding and enacting Inclusion. According to Abdirad (2020), noticing is an effort from which people draw awareness to certain aspects of their experiences and knowledge in order to facilitate future interpretation. Noticing is a self-reflective action of re-creating that which is understood by interrogating some complex sections of our conscious being in challenging circumstances. The researcher perceived that early childhood education teachers'

understanding of Inclusion did not fit what was anticipated. This situation violates expectations and causes confusion and a sense of ambiguity. Therefore, the noticing stage of sense-making describes how information can prompt teachers to step out of the ongoing routine flow of events (Weick, 2017). Teachers, therefore, interpret, create, and discover the situation they find themselves in. As such, teachers' sense-making enables one to question ambiguity or equivocality of circumstances by weighing external perceptions against their own understanding and enactment of Inclusion (Weick, 2017).

Sense-making is not an isolated activity, but rather a collaborative process so that teachers create meaning of a situation through critical discussion. This demands, continued interaction with each other to find creative and new ideas of practice for themselves as they analyse their previous experiences - these evolve as enactment, structuring, and socialising occurs (Lin & Luo, 2021).

Pursuant to the interpretation stage, teachers grasped the prompts through appropriate cues and photo-elicitation. Teachers then devised a strategy based on their interpretation, which they used as a foundation for implementing innovative action (Abdirad, 2020). Sense-making is about action and interaction between the teachers and their environment (Mills, Artiles, & Kozleski, 2016; Phelps, 2017). Action requires expert knowledge and interpretation for the successful implementation of Inclusion where the transformation of innovative policy into actual practice is attained (Bethany, 2019; Abdirad, 2020).

Additionally, key documents on Inclusion and early childhood education in Ghana were also collected and reviewed in this study's literature review with the intention of grasping the realities of inclusiveness in IECE schools. I used reflective journals to complement data generation in the field. Bashan and Holsblat (2017) explain that a reflective journal is an effective method to generate data in qualitative research to obtain information about a participant's feelings which allows the researcher to interpret participants' voices when they express their thoughts openly which fosters changes in their understanding and practice (Bashan & Holsblat, 2017). The journal assisted me in understanding what and why events occurred in this manner, while exposing my beliefs and lessons gained from previous experiences to reflection by sharing my views with others in the field.

The semi-structured interviews with teacher-participants were used to complement the observation process of the physical environment and class activities. The non-participant observation was used to collect additional information on teacher activities in the classroom and other physical elements of schools relevant to understanding the enactment of IECE. The non-participant researcher did not participate in the observed activity but instead 'sat on the side-lines' and took down notes. The researcher was not directly involved in the situation being observed. During the observation, the researcher positioned himself strategically to observe both teachers and children interacting and participating in lessons and other activities in and outside the classroom. The methods used to collect data during observation included taking field notes and photographing evidence from documents and critical incidences in the classroom environment. Thus, by conducting the observation, the researcher gathered data more accurately since he could see the actual phenomenon play out in and outside the classroom which helped in interpreting issues about understanding and the enactment of IECE.

Alam (2020) contends that the qualitative research's best approach concerning data collection is the utilisation of the interview guide. Also, probing was utilised to collect incisive information from participants, and to establish a positive connection with them in order to gain quality collaboration and authentic data (De Rosa, 2019). For this reason, interview guidelines were useful to gather information from the ECE teachers who had been selected by using a purposive sampling process. Preparation for the main interview included developing a cooperative and cordial connection with participants in order to engender maximum participation to gain quality authentic information. A series of unstructured and open-ended questions were presented to the participants in order to elicit their thoughts and ideas.

4.8 PROFILING OF RESEARCH SITES

This study was conducted in Ghana, specifically in three selected public and private IECE schools within the Mampong Municipality where most teachers had the required degree in early childhood education and were practising in the various early childhood schools in the municipality (MEO, 2019). Three schools were found to show interest in participating in the study, and they were thus selected purposively. This enabled the researcher to obtain holistic and in-depth information from

the school sites to grasp understandings and enactment of Inclusion. The criterion for the selection of research sites was that they must be public and private ECE schools.

Each school is a specific unit to be explored in terms of its unique features regarding having trained teachers, teaching, and learning resources, including well-furnished classrooms and playgrounds. Each school differs in terms of in-house school elements, such as a specific focus on teaching and learning, favourable school philosophy, training, and active participation in supporting learners. Among the three schools, two are public non-fee-paying schools because they are government controlled, while the private school is fee-paying. All the schools have sufficient facilities such as classrooms, playing fields, and furniture to support teaching and learning. However, a few teachers in the private schools are unqualified. All schools welcome all learners from different backgrounds, irrespective of their socio-economic and cultural background, gender, and religion. The researcher found that they used approaches that support education for all learners in these schools. Therefore, the researcher noticed that the selected schools could assist the exploration of the phenomenon under study. Table 4.2 (below) presents information on the research sites.

Table 4.2: Research Sites

Site Name	Designation	Location	Detail of Activities	Date Visited
School A	Public KG and Primary	Bosofour Ashanti	Primary research site; interviews with two teachers, observation, and photo-elicitation.	8th February 2021
School B	Private KG and Primary	Mampong Ashanti	Primary research site; interviews with two teachers, observation, and photo-elicitation.	11th February 2021
School C	Public KG and Primary	Mampong Ashanti	Primary research site; interviews with two teachers, observation, and photo-elicitation.	26th February 2021

Note: Names of schools are coded.

Figure 4.1: Map of Mampong Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

4.8.1 Prompts (Semi-structured Interviews)

The semi-structured interview is an information-gathering method where the interviewer may not rigidly stick to a prescribed list of questions (Doyle, 2020). An open-ended question list is used rather than a traditional question-and-answer strategy which allows the interviewee to participate freely in a discussion with the interviewer. However, the researcher may compose questions in advance, but he or she will not pose them or analyse them in any particular sequence, preferring to use them to guide the discussion rather than asking them. When the interviewer has a list of questions to ask, it is more likely to be focused. Magaldi and Berler (2020) explain that a semi-structured interview is an exploratory process that is often employed in social research to collect qualitative or medical evidence. When conducting an interview, semi-structured instruments offer a wide range of possibilities, often following a predetermined guide or procedures which includes a framework for possible additional discussions.

Because there are no clear rules for prompting, it might be seen as a method or as requiring abilities which might primarily be gained via experience (Wyche, 2020). By using prompts, I garnered information on participants' personal experiences and knowledge regarding the enactment of Inclusion. A comprehensive discussion of all pertinent themes ensued which enabled both the researcher and the teachers to pose questions, especially for clarity purposes. The additional information obtained via probing confirmed what was already established, while providing opportunities for fresh discoveries and the logical understanding of responses.

Prompts are important data gathering methods in qualitative research because they motivate participants to engage in a discussion with a goal in mind (Myers, 2018). According to Creswell (2012), they are interpersonal dialogues where participants express their ideas and experiences whilst simultaneously discovering new characteristics about themselves. Because a researcher cannot observe accurately the emotions, thinking, and ways in which human beings organise their world via observation, probing becomes necessary for elaboration and clarification after an interview.

Further, prompts or semi-structured interview questions were written in a manner that was suitable for the study subject of enquiry. Revisions were made to the questions, when necessary, in order

to unambiguously explain the data patterns. For the researcher to acquire a better knowledge concerning the enactment of IECE, the questions were framed such that the teachers had a significant amount of latitude and versatility in responding to them. This meant avoiding blurry, ambiguous, emotional, threatening, and laden (double-barrelled) questions (Cohen & Manion, 2018). The interviewer hence revised and rearranged the list of questions with better and clearer wording to enhance data gathering since the interview was conversational in nature. The interviewer could provide clarifications or omit questions that appeared to be repetitious. Moreover, while the interview was progressing, most of these questions were re-created, allowing the interviewer and the individual being interviewed the opportunity to ask about particular aspects to avoid misunderstandings. Lastly, in using prompts, the interviewer adhered to the script but deviated when necessary.

Prompts were used in the first phase of data gathering (Appendix F), and in order to complete the data collection tasks. The researcher arrived on time to create good ambience for the inclusive teachers I was going to interview and to remind them of the goals of the interview. Arriving earlier than scheduled created rapport between us. According to Ryan et al. (2009), though researchers might consider one-one-interview as conversation, it is crucial to remember that, both parties are dissimilar in their roles, therefore establishing rapport from the onset is necessary. The rapport created a flexible, self-assured, and concentrating approach for me and assisted a successful interview affiliation to evolve.

Another role I had to perform was to ensure the teachers were comfortable and not endangered so I chose a serene environment for the conversation so the trust could be built. Other scholars have in fact made the case that in order to encourage individuals to open up about their experiences, they must first establish trust (Dundon & Ryan, 2010), with the interviewer participating more actively and giving oneself more room to express their own viewpoints than is typically conveyed by customary norms. To be able to take note whiles the participants spoke uninterrupted, I was active listener. Active listening involved paying attention to verbal and nonverbal communication mediums which included eye contact and observing facial expression. Providing the participant, the flexibility to speak in crucial in qualitative face-to-face interview (Ryan et al. (2009). Albeit the interview was dialogue, the participant was not permitted to offer judgment on their response

except from further clarification. In doing so the participants were consistent in their response and permitted them to flow freely (Langley & Meziani, 2020). It is critical to note that researcher must unobstruct the participants as they speak but can pass comment and request for additional remarks where necessary. This style offered the teachers the opportunity to communicate effortlessly (Mann, 2016).

Reading the work of Kvale (1996), I realized that, using silence during interview section is crucial in capturing inclusion teachers live experience. When the researcher used silence, he was able to maintain eye contact, and this permitted the interview to suspend and reflect on the experience. The use of echo was (though intermittent) to convey to the teachers that, I was actively listening, and this encouraged them to continue with their conversation.

Additionally, I was aware that the role of research participant is equally crucial in the data collection process. Berg (2009) indicates that participants may have challenging and multifaceted reason for agreeing or disagreeing to a question that are on the blind side of the interviewer. Additionally, participants could feel apprehensive about how I will view them and how their answers will be judged. It was thus my responsibility to portray non-judgemental behaviour so that my influence and the interview setting would not affect the interviewee's replies. The spoken and non-spoken words or cues exchanged between us influenced the social interaction that occurred. Langley and Meziani (2020) hint that, there is a risk that the respondent will conceal information if the interviewer ignores what they perceive to be a delicate region and presses on with the inquiry because they are either afraid to share such insights or fear the researcher will refute them. They argue that it is likely that the conversation will go on if the participant has faith that I will not pass judgement. As a result, I understood the cues and signals given by the participants during the interactions.

4.8.2 Non-Participant Observations

Observation is a systematic data collection approach (Kabir 2016). Observational research can refer to a wide range of qualitative research approaches which rely on gathering visual information in natural environments. In human interaction, educational studies, cultural studies, and other disciplines, observational research can be valuable in various circumstances (Allen 2017).

Non-participant methods require researchers to maintain a more detached position and not engage with study participants (Kertes et al., 2021); they serve as a 'fly on the wall'. Non-participant observation is often used to level off researcher biases in other techniques and to show discrepancies between what individuals say and what they do in reality. Although it is essential to watch not just the activities of the study participant (e.g., by analysing their body language and movements), it is also vital to notice what persons are not doing. Because I wanted to find the quality of interaction between the participant and the learners, choosing non-participant observation was appropriate. With this method, I observed the participants' gestures, such as eye-contact and body language during lessons. The non-participant observation methods allowed observing and taking down notes regarding physical facilities, and teaching-learning resources (TLRs) with minimal disturbances.

Observation was the first phase of data collection in this study to determine how early childhood educators felt about observing students, after prompts were utilised. Observations focused on the participants' everyday activities in order to measure real-life classroom situations of Inclusion teachers. An observer may be able to tell whether or not a teacher's practices are consistent with their beliefs by actually observing lessons. Tan (2020) explains that by doing naturalistic observation in the classroom, researchers may have a chance to see how early childhood teachers understand and enact Inclusion. The researcher noted that there must be a time-gap between interviews and observation sessions (Merriam & Tisdell 2015; Leadly, 2019). Hence, After the interview sessions, a guide was prepared for the observation and photo elicitation stages in order to realise the study's objectives.

During this important phase of data collection, I sat quietly and observed the behaviour and practices of teachers in the classroom. Data concerning TLRs, physical facilities, learner-behaviour, teacher-behaviour, and teaching and learning pedagogies were all recorded (Appendix J). To foster the strategy of observations being beneficial among those interviewed, teacher-opinion on observation in learners' education were noted via body-language in their everyday routine. While teachers think differently about observation, I determined whether their practices mirror their teaching philosophies via classroom observation. I applied the same method used in

analysing the interview data to observation data which was done manually by analysing and synthesising data rather than using computer software and programmes.

4.8.3 Photo-elicitation

For the purpose of closing the gap between researchers and study participants, a qualitative study technique known as photo-elicitation was employed (Howard, 2020). This involves researchers and study participants taking photographs of relevant situations intended for future discussions concerning teachers' experiences. This approach is a unique tool that researchers utilise to get a better understanding of the issue they are investigating (Zuev, 2020). Participants were given the option of selecting whatever photographs they would want to discuss. It was because of this technique that the participants were able to express and build on their experiences throughout their activities. If participants experience difficulty expressing their feelings and ideas, the researcher may assist by providing some leading cues or may provide a response from his/her (the researcher's) point of view. This interaction between the researcher and the participants may result in more in-depth comprehension of the ideas and emotions of the participants.

During the photo-elicitation stage I provided cameras for the participants to take pictures and thereafter comment on them. This allowed me to document the participants' responses, meanings, and values in line with the pictures they took. In addition, they were questioned to respond to the symbolic representations and interpretations of the photographs (Appendix K). This allowed me to make-sense of the items in the photographs, and to determine their interpretations and feelings through verbal questioning (Harper, 2002). Hence throughout the photo-elicitation process, insightful data were garnered, and the technique was discovered as appropriate for qualitative data analysis in educational research.

The process firstly involved the collection of images, and then it considered how many subjects or issues the images had engendered. I demonstrated the number of subject areas that emerged and the mechanisms to dissect them in terms of Inclusion (Thomas, 2009). During the photo-elicitation interviews, I observed the participants' reactions while they talked about the significance of the pictures. Additionally, the participant evokes perceptions that are not always apparent in the pictures. This strategy promotes robustness since it enables triangulation between the interview

and non-participant data sources and contributed new perspectives to the study. A description of the procedure for exploring the photos, emphasising that discussions would be audiotaped and utilised for the research while without mentioning the participants' or learners' identities.

By using photos into the interview procedure, it can elicit strong feelings and rich responses that would not be feasible with only utterances (Straus et al. 2020, April). They further enable the visualisation of individuals being investigated. Readers can relate, recognize, and comprehend them properly. However, there are several moral and practical issues with this design. United Nations "Convention on the Rights of the Child" (UNCRC) states that children must be given the security and support they need to properly fulfil their obligations within the society. Additionally, the UNCRC specifies that we must protect a child's right to maintain their identity, as well as citizenship, name, and family relationships as recognised by law, free from wrongful intrusion. Consequently, Glaw et al. (2017) explains that researchers need to obtain consent from all participants appearing in the photograph for anonymity whys and wherefores.

To avoid potential abuse of children, the study participants were educated about the ethics and principles of photo-elicitation to prepare them for the task. This was followed by explaining the features of the process to create a serene ambience where learners could feel honoured and respected (Appendix E). Another crucial aspect was the issue of anonymity and participants' consent. This was addressed prior to the start of the investigation. Before the process began, teachers were trained on how to take pictures so that the generated visuals could serve the purpose of the study. According to Glaw et al. (2017), because not all participants can use cameras or mobile phones to take pictures, researchers should provide workshops. Albeit, the participants had already been informed about the study objectives, I reminded them and showed them the location, including the time the study could take place. This helped to create rapport between us and eventually led to quality dialogue (Berg, 2009). In the extant study, efforts were made not to capture an unknown person, but in the situation where it occurred, their consent was sought.

Therefore, I sought for consent from parent, school administrators, teachers, and the children. And because the children were not capable to offer written agreement, I engaged and explained the purpose of taking the photographs before the teachers started to take the images. They were assured

of protecting their identity for any potential physical and mental harm; this was done during the analysis as I covered their faces. According to Glaw et al. (2017) if consent cannot be obtained, that image is either not included in the study or the image needs to be blurred so that the people in them are unrecognizable to maintain their anonymity. This project gained consent from all participants and where possible from the people in the images.

This study might have its findings limited by the possibility that I and participants may have differing interpretations of visual elements. To reduce this, I employed picture interviewing as verification technique. To reduce ambiguities or incorrect analyses of the images, auto photography was utilized in combination with interviews. This allowed participants to clarify precisely what the photographs signify (Glaw et al., 2017). Here too, common themes emerged by employing thematic analysis, since words and photos might be more valuable and beneficial than statistics alone.

4.9 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The analysis and interpretation of data assists us in answering the question, "What does it all mean?" By using this procedure, we may produce "intelligible accounts" of gathered data (Wolcott, 1994, p. 1). It is crucial to keep in mind that "the data do not speak for themselves. We have to speak for them "(Vogt et al., 2014, p. 2). Allen et al., (2014, p. 652) define analysis as "summarizing and organizing data" and interpretation as "finding or making meaning". Further, data analysis is a thorough procedure in qualitative research that involves dealing with the data, arranging data into digestible pieces, classifying, contrasting, and finding connections (O'Kane, Smith, & Lerman, 2021). In part, this is due to the fact that a qualitative study often engenders a large quantity of data where the researcher is sometimes overwhelmed with several transcripts of verbatim descriptions of what actually occurred during the interview session (Schnyder, 2021). Because analysis and interpretation are frequently cyclical processes, with analysis leading to interpretation leading to analysis, and so on, these stages may get muddled.

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a form of data analysis that rigorously finds and understands patterns of meaning in qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2014). Since TA can be used in most epistemological studies to answer research questions, it can be beneficial data to identify, analyse, organise, describe, and report themes generated within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Because this method is a simple process, less time-consuming, and adaptable, it is frequently employed in qualitative research. Additionally, one may apply this method by utilising a variety of qualitative data for many different purposes. Therefore, thematic analysis is used frequently as a supplementary analytical tool for many other analytical processes such as grounded theory, narrative analysis, and case studies. Moreover, thematic analysis is commonly employed as a preliminary stage to help researchers identify more general patterns in their work, allowing them to pursue a more nuanced level of analysis, but later using different techniques if needed. I used inductive thematic analysis to discover the analytical structure by using actual evidence to interpret the data. Data-informed themes emanate from this approach since it is data-driven.

Thematic analysis strategy was the ideal method for analysing qualitative data collected (Leavy, 2017). This strategy is used to locate, categorise, and offer insight into meaningful patterns (themes) inside data. TA focuses on relevance across a dataset, allowing investigators to recognise and understand common or connected ideas and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In analysing the data, the study employed the five-stage qualitative analysis method proposed by Leavy (2017): (1) data processing and organization; (2) initial immersion; (3) coding; (4) categorization and theming; and (5) interpretation (Leavy, 2017).

4.9.1 Data processing and organization

When it came time for data processing and analysis, I meticulously transcribed the audio to extract the data. The data was then arranged in a library with backups for simple accessibility (Saldaa, 2014). Since the generated data was so large, I sorted it as part of the organising strategy. It took a lot of effort and time to transcribe the recorded material. Since speech is not "spoken in paragraphs nor do we signal punctuation" all through conversation, the procedure of inputting a punctuation mark, during transcription was a complicated task and could therefore form or modify the connotation of the information collected. Transcribing and coding needed judgements and explanation by the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 164). As a result, the transcription of the interview data was done with great caution. Careful study of the content and careful consideration of all the various connotations it contains come first in inductive coding.

4.9.2 Initial Immersion

I read and reread the information several times during the first immersion period to get a broad comprehension of the subject matter as suggested by Burian et al. (2010). In the beginning, immersion allowed me to "feel" the data's pulse (Saldaa, 2014). I made notes on the growing concepts, insights, and points from the data review at this time so the researcher could refer to them later (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). After one was acquainted with the material, it enabled comprehension of the narrative as well as the codes, themes, or classifications that may be applied to the occurrences contained in the material. Taylor and Lindlof (2010) go on to say that in order to evaluate the outcomes of an inductive data analysis, the analyst is required to investigate and do critical review. The data produce was huge so the earlier absorption into the data helped me to condense the data.

4.9.3 Coding process

The next stage was the coding process. Coding is the process of giving words or phrases to different data sections. The code I chose encapsulated the main points of that section of data. Coding was done using the Atlas.ti version 8 computer programme. In vivo and open coding were mostly used. Data analysis was done using inductive analysis. Inductive analysis generates themes or conceptual considerations that are "grounded in the data and are not given a priority" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 251). As previously noted, the Atlas.ti version 8 software application was utilised to analyse qualitative data. "Computer-assisted analysis can be thought of as a journey" (Friese, 2012, p. 4), although Greyling (2007) correctly notes that interpretation production is not done by the computer, and it is the work of the researcher. The coding procedure helps to simplify and categorize the data collected. Data coding, according to Saldana (2011), is a challenging and sophisticated skill that involves going over content and recoding data. Following the initial phase of coding, codes were connected into categories. To promote comprehension, produce knowledge, and give a way of defining the phenomena, categories are created. The coding procedure "permits data to be segregated, grouped, regrouped and relinked in order to consolidate meaning and explanation" (Saldana 2011, p.8).

4.9.4 Categorization

Following the coding phase, the categorization and theming operations were accomplished. I coded the data and then looked for patterns and linkages between the codes (Leavy, 2017). The connections between the data, according to Richard and Morse (2007), assist generate concepts from the exegesis and analysis of the data. Through this method, the substance of the terminology used in the accessible data is expressed in writing or in a few words (Saldana, 2011). Putting together codes that are similar or seem to be connected is the process of categorising (Saldaa, 2014). The majority of these themes were descriptive in character, and they were broad in scope to allow for some level of freedom. The theming frame elements were in line with the participants' words as a consequence of employing this approach as opposed to imposing a fixed theoretical framework on the data. The loop coding, categorization, and theming processes were ongoing while I was writing memoranda. A memo must be carefully thought out and written using information that has been categorised and coded. Memos serve to capture my thoughts, ideas, and fresh discoveries while acting as a channel between my code and interpretation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Holistic explanations of the information studied were presented when categories and themes arose. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011, p. 219), a "story could be told" giving the themes, patterns, and categories significance and consistency while creating connections that are meaningful and are captivating to peruse (Appendix I).

4.9.5 Interpretation Stage

The interpretation phase of the analysis was the last step. Interpretation answers the question "So what?" (Mills, 2007). What meaning do you assign to what you have learned? What does it all mean in the end? To understand coded data, I used the memo notes, looked for comparations across the data, highlighted any unexpected data, and looked for links between different categories, concepts, and/or themes (Mohajan, 2018). To strengthen my confidence in the generated aggregate outcomes, I employed triangulation techniques. Triangulation is a common strategy for tackling a single issue utilising many ways or sources of data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The technique of analysing a claim utilizing data multiple sources of information is known as data triangulation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). To deriving meaning and putting it in a context that could be understood, I used literature and theory. A more precise, thorough, and impartial depiction of the data was made possible by triangulation.

4.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The dependability of data collection tools in qualitative research, according to O'Connor and Joffe (2020), is mostly determined by the researcher, who is considered the principal tool. In qualitative investigations, the validity and reliability of research tools are handled as a single concept, which is alluded to as trustworthiness. Quality requirements, according to Mohajan (2018), are developed by including four factors into qualitative research to ensure its credibility.

However, despite the fact that the quality of certain qualitative research has been called into question, there are no defined standards by which to assess its effectiveness. A lack of criteria gauging quality is considered troublesome by some academics, while others say that there is no alternative for practical judgement in this situation. A lack of agreement exists, according to Bryman and Bell (2015), on exactly what constitutes high-quality narrative study. Individual researchers who conduct qualitative studies, and more especially narrative inquiry, must make their work as clear as possible in order to indicate to others that their study is of top standard and, consequently, reliable. Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest that trustworthiness comprises the following concepts: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

4.10.1 Credibility

Credibility is believed to be the most important factor in ensuring trustworthiness in studies (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2020). All research should be conducted and reported with clarity, and the methodology should be articulated when presenting findings that will influence credibility (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Sound relationships between researchers and their participants (or co-researchers) may help to strengthen the credibility of their findings, which may take more time to present as they act as reviewers who are well-versed in the study's methodology (Flemming & Noyes, 2021). Requesting participants to appraise the study's subject matter requires proper, genuine, and credible descriptions (Yin, 2014). These characteristics may be used to validate the trustworthiness and expertise of the researcher, as well as the authenticity of the data being presented. Hence, appropriately recording data for analysis and interpretation of results may help to alleviate any doubts about credibility. However, it is difficult to establish credibility via communication since it is impossible to distinguish between the source, the message, and the content (Zarouali, Makhortykh, Bastian, & Araujo, 2020).

4.10.2 Transferability

Transferability is established in a qualitative approach by determining whether or not the study results may be valid for different settings (Maxwell, 2020). Because of transferability, it is possible to contrast multiple evaluations in order to have a broader understanding of the phenomenon (Maxwell, 2020). Creswell (2018) expounds that transferability in qualitative research may also be referred to as external validity in certain cases. After completing the transferability stage, the analysis may be customised to a particular scenario. For readers to be able to comprehend and assess the conclusions of the study, the researcher must offer in-depth information as some more scholars may be able to contribute to the findings of the study (Yin, 2014). When it comes to appropriateness, one most important criterion is transferability of application, which indicates whether or not results can be extended to different settings based on how comparable the real scenarios to which the findings were translated are (Rose & Johnson, 2020). The researcher ensured this by submitting findings that had adequate and sound facts for other individuals to evaluate.

4.10.3 Dependability

In a qualitative research, dependability is considered as component of the testing procedure. For the purpose of validating findings, qualitative researchers are urged to incisively dissect and analyse their data. As a result, they are urged to study more widely, reason more critically, and reflect their findings in current literature (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Dependability reaffirms the necessity of taking care of change. As a result, the researcher should document developments seen throughout the study to keep track of how the research evolved. Consistency and dependability guaranteed that the results remained consistent even if the research was repeated (Symon, Casel, & Johnson, 2018). Reviewing the study procedure, recording the collected data, and evaluating the data via analysis ensured that this requirement was attained.

4.10.4 Confirmability

The extent to which a study's findings are repeatable is termed as confirmability (Slusser, 2020). If there are any modifications in the research, the researcher is obliged to makes notes to describe them for audit purposes. Throughout the confirmability phase, the researcher ensures the modifications in the study have been examined and validated by experts. In addition, the researcher performs an assessment to examine the techniques of data gathering and analysis that were used.

Assessments are carried out to ensure that the research is accurate (Escalante 2020). This research process was documented with a full audit trail of information, data analysis, and research notes which were kept throughout the duration of the study (Morales, 2021). In addition, confirmability is the level of objectivity and neutrality of data, as well as to what extent the study's conclusions were moulded by the participants' objectives and perspectives (Bryman, 2012; Hong & Cross Francis, 2020). In this study, I meticulously evaluated the data obtained from the six study participants to maintain objectivity throughout the investigation.

4.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I am mindful of numerous uncontrollable change factors that impacted the study's outcome, which needed to be acknowledged. As the study was qualitatively oriented by utilising prompts (semi-structured interviews), observations, and photo-elicitation data generation methods, the associated thematic analysis employed in this study consumed much time. Moreover, the participants were hard-pressed for time because of their numerous assignments. Again, the sample of six (6) participants selected for the study was small. It is possible that a wider population of participants might have generated a variety of themes. The large volume of data elicited from interviews, observations and photo-elicitation affected the study's time schedules. The study was constrained by time, finances, logistical considerations, limited sample selection, and time overspent by collecting data from the school sites and teachers. An additional limitation to the study involved the data collection process. Since information obtained during the prompts depended on the participant and what they were willing to share, data was limited to the participants' perspectives and lived experiences. The COVID-19 Pandemic exacerbated the challenges as it restricted all social activities, which in research cannot be overlooked. The fear of contracting the virus limited the researcher's capacity to interact freely with participants and to visit libraries to obtain information. All these limitations influenced the outcome of the research. Fortunately, there were comparatively few cases of COVID-19 in Ghana, hence schools were in session and principals allowed me to appear in person at the selected research sites to interact with the teachers (participants) for the purpose of gleaning data.

4.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a result of the concerns that social researchers explore, and the techniques that are employed to collect accurate and trustworthy data, ethical considerations emerge. Ethics were relevant to this study since the topic, data collecting techniques, and participants were all relevant factors in the study's design (Appendix C). The ethical guidelines recommended by Creswell (2015), and Cohen and Manion, (2018) were adhered to.

Researchers, according to Creswell (2015) and Mertens (2018), should take precautions to guarantee that participants are not subjected to any bodily or psychological risk as a result of the study processes. In line with international best practices in education, the researcher revealed the study's intentions to the participants and sought informed consent for their participation. A letter from the researcher to the participants informed them that their names would be kept anonymous, and that the information gathered would be kept confidential. The researcher also promised to assign pseudonyms/codes to participants and research sites especially during the report-writing. All the participants to be interviewed agreed on all aspects of ethics before the researcher commenced the research.

Because the study involved human beings, the study was ethically cleared at UKZN's Ethics Committee with reference number HSSREC/00001608/2020 (Appendix A). The major aim of the ethical clearance was to ensure that I acted within the scope of research ethics. The ethics committee granted ethical clearance on the condition that any unexpected issues or hazards, modifications to the investigation design, or any damage, be it cultural, emotional, material, or legal, should be brought to the attention to the UKZN Ethics Committee. Throughout the research process, I kept in mind that I was still accountable for the research process's credibility and may be found accountable for failing to act responsibly. Moreover, regarding the ethical issue of confidentiality, I safely stored all information in password protected electronic files in my computer which could only be accessed by myself. Hard copies were locked in a cabinet that was only accessible to the supervisor and me.

4.13 SUMMARY

This study adopted the sense-making theory to explore teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in ECE schools. It is structured within a qualitative research method aligned to an interpretative paradigm. A semi-structured interview was used to gather data, which was then transcribed and processed via data analysis. The participants' voices were captured on audio-devices, transcribed, analysed, and interpreted, after which the results were critiqued and presented. The data collected was categorised and thematically grouped for data analysis. Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability processes. Chapter five discussed data presentation, analysis, and interpretation, which focused on teachers' understanding of Inclusion in early childhood education in Ghana.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The analysis of raw data from the study sites regarding teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in early childhood education in Ghana is presented in this chapter. A case study approach was employed to gather data to address the main research question: How do teachers understand and enact inclusion in early childhood education. Six participants (teachers) from three different schools (School A, B and C) were selected using a purposeful sampling strategy. The data was analysed and organised into themes and sub-themes that emerged from the study.

The three themes that emerged from the analysis of the data were: disability-oriented understanding of Inclusion; a disability-informed enactment of Inclusion; and constraints and enablers of Inclusion enactment. Sub-themes emanating out of these major themes were identified. As stated in chapter four, the case sites (schools) were coded or given pseudonyms (School A, B and C). The selected participants from the schools were, for anonymity purposes, assigned codes (TA1, TA2, TB1, TB2, TC1, and TC2). The codes allocated to the participants were according to the schools the participants were selected from. For example, TA1 and TA2 signified that the participants were from School A. I analysed, coded, and categorised the collected data to ascertain the 'hidden' meaning and the associations among them. Transcripts were read several times to ensure that I was thoroughly familiar with the collected information. I apportioned significant descriptive sentences to allow for variations. After organising and coding the data into themes, I performed a case study analysis to interpret the themes and to find answers to the research questions. To avoid inconsistencies, and to enhance the data presentation, themes that emerged were followed by extracts. Selected tables were integrated into the map (plan), including examples of themes identified through thematic analysis. To highlight the exact spoken words of the participant, italicisation was mainly used to map the extract. Next, I presented the analysis and interpretation of the themes and sub-themes which were aligned to the research questions of the study (Appendix I).

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In finding answers to the major research question (*How do teachers understand and enact Inclusion in early childhood education?*) the following sub-research questions arose:

- What are the teachers' understanding of Inclusion in ECE in Ghana?
- How does teachers' understanding of Inclusion shape their enactment of inclusion?
- Why do ECE teachers enact inclusion in certain ways?

What follows is the presentation of themes that resulted from a thorough analysis of the evidence gathered from the study participants across the various case sites.

5.3 THEMES EMERGED FROM THE STUDY

As discussed in chapter four, the study employed an inductive thematic technique to analyse and interpret the raw data by grouping major themes and sub-themes. The sorting and grouping of three major themes and nine sub-themes are illustrated in Table 5.1 (below). The themes were analysed and interpreted in the next section (after Table 5.1) commencing with research question one.

Table 5.1 Themes emerged from the data

Theme	Sub-theme
1. Disability-oriented understanding of inclusion.	Sub-theme One: Mixing students with and without disabilities in the same classroom.
	Sub-theme Two: Equal opportunity for disability.
	Sub-theme Three: Age of Enrolment understanding.
2. Disability-informed enactment of Inclusion.	Sub-theme Four: Ability-oriented understanding.
	Sub-theme Five: Lesson delivery methods.
	Sub-theme Six: Teaching Skills.
3. Constraints and enablers of the enactment of Inclusion.	Sub-theme Seven: Teachers' additional role.

	Sub-theme Eight: Constraints to the enactment of Inclusion. Sub-theme Nine: Enablers of enactment of Inclusion.

5.3.1 Theme one: Predominantly Disability-oriented Understanding of Inclusion

Teachers must thoroughly understand the Inclusion policy by dissecting and making-sense of all sections of the document. As previously said, teachers play an important role in enacting every policy (Wasburn-Moses & Wasburn, 2020) disseminated by the education authorities, hence the way they interpret the policy influences their perceptions of Inclusion, and the way it must be enacted. Like popular understanding, participants' understanding of Inclusion was predominantly disability oriented. Participants felt that children's disability issues must be the aligned to Inclusion practices. This shared understanding of Inclusion was based on the following framework which were articulated under the following sub-themes:

- Mixing students with and without disabilities in the same classroom;
- Equal opportunity for disabled children;
- Age of enrolment understanding; and
- Ability-understanding.

5.3.1.1 Sub-Theme One: Mixing students with and without disabilities in the same classroom

The semi-structured interview data gathered across all the case sites indicated that five participants (except Teacher TB1) felt Inclusion entails the placement of learners with and without disabilities in the same education environment (Figure 5.1). Earlier studies (e.g., Gudjonsdottir & Óskarsdóttir, 2016) identified a similar understanding from teachers implementing Inclusion. Disability, in the teachers' opinion, is the most important yardstick for including children or enacting inclusive education. In the excerpts below, teachers present IECE as involving children with a disability, such as physical and intellectual disabilities, that limits with their capacity to learn, which will require extra support to educate them in the mainstream setting:

Teacher TA1: *That one, I think that we should educate pupils with learning disabilities together with those [without disabilities] in the mainstream.*

Teacher TA2: *In the IECE, all learners are brought together in one classroom to learn as one body. But the other forms of education that are the mainstream, sometimes we put learners together, then we exclude those who are disabled to one side with the idea that they have a low IQ. But in inclusion, they all learn together. The inclusive education policy is a strategy, a path for the government for educating all children with special   education needs.*

Teacher TB1: *[…] including all spheres of life, whether they are disabled or not, they have to be in the same class, not isolating them from the class.*

Teacher TB2: *Physically challenged persons can be part of mainstream education.*

Teacher TC1: *Inclusive education policy gives education to all children no matter the person's disability. We are to include them in our classrooms, and we should not discriminate that the person does not belong here; or there is or there a special school for this child to go to. We should include all children irrespective of the child's background, such as social and economic disability.*

Teacher TC2: *So, inclusion to me means including both the able learners and the disabled learners in the same classroom.*

Evidence from the above excerpts reveals that participants' understanding of Inclusion includes dual placement of disabled and able-bodied children in the same setting, and that the policy requires that no child be discriminated against and separated from the mainstream education system (Sparrow et al., 2016). Participants' views on disability may have been influenced by their observation of children with special needs and disabilities experiencing difficulties and discrimination in certain educational settings. Another factor that may have contributed to the widespread understanding of dual placement is the Government's official policy (the Disability Act 2006, Act 715), which requires and urges stakeholders to revise their regulations to accommodate learners with disabilities. Hence, participants concluded that with the help of the Inclusion

movement, they have decided that it is very important and beneficial to teach all learners under one roof.

Figure 5.1: Photo taken by TB1 showing some learners with physical disabilities in the classroom

Learners with a variety of abilities, including those with physical and intellectual limitations, are shown in Figure 5.1 (above). I noticed that some children in a sleeping position on the table had a visual disability. Others were apparently not focused on the actual delivery of the lesson. This demonstrates that teachers practising Inclusion encountered challenging circumstances in terms of classroom management, especially when dealing with learners who have disabilities.

5.3.1.2 Sub-theme Two: Equal opportunity for disability

In addition to demonstrating participants' understanding of inclusion in ECE, the evidence (above excerpts) demonstrates that participants at each case site (School A, B, and C) also understand Inclusion by providing equal opportunity for all children - without discrimination (Anghel, 2017). The participants who agreed with this point of view said that learners, regardless of their disability, socioeconomic position, and other factors, should have the same access to education and others (Teacher TA1). In other words, they indicated that children, including those with a disability, deserve equitable access to high-quality education from an early age so that they may learn to work together as a group to acquire knowledge and skills for life. Inclusion as a policy is seen as one that

promotes social-justice and helps to decrease prejudice against the disabled and underprivileged, as evidenced in the excerpts below:

> Teacher TA1: *I think there is a policy that every child of school-going age should be in school. Even if they have that disability,* they *should still be in school because they are kids and are at school-going age, and we should have all of them in school. All children shall not be deprived of the right to live with the person's family or the right to participate in social gatherings.*

> Teacher TA2: *This Act is helping all children with disabilities and those without disabilities to come together and work together. Inclusion is based on opportunities that create equal learning opportunities for children with disabilities and provide young ones with more knowledge. Because inclusive education is for everyone,*

> Teacher TB2: *From the Parliament of Ghana, it has been made clear that we need to respect and treat everyone fairly. Every child deserves an education in the early stage,*

> Teacher TC1: *I can say that if a learner is disabled, we should not deprive him or her of being educated. The policy is about children who have reached school-going age and should be educated in our schools, either in private schools or public schools. We should not deprive them as they are children who should be at school. The IE policy in my opinion involves including every learner in a class that does not show discrimination.*

From the participants' responses (above), Inclusion is seen as a way of promoting equal rights and opportunities for children with disability. The IECE strives to disrupt the current exclusion practice in which learners with are denied their right to equal education opportunities in both private schools and public to maximise all children's potential. Some participants believed that children with disability will benefit from the same teaching methods that will help them develop their talents and enhance their self-worth in a group setting. The evidence elicited from the above responses illustrates that the *'Act'* on Inclusion is not mutually exclusive to education but should cascade into to all social structures and other spheres of life including employment, healthcare, and politics. This is because discrimination and segregation against disabled learners are found in a wide range

of fields including education. It was encouraging that participants unanimously agreed that treating everyone fairly and equally will eliminate discrimination in society (Asante & Sasu, 2015).

5.3.1.3 Sub-theme Three: Age of enrolment understanding

Inclusion in ECE also considered the age at which learners must be enrolled to begin their educational journey. The understanding regarding the stage of a child's enrolment was similar. For study participants at case sites, two (2) and three (3), Inclusion in ECE practice dictates that children must be registered at a tender stage, which ranges from birth to eight years of age as indicated in figure 5.2 (Fenton-Glynn 2019). The perspectives on enrolment are demonstrated in the following extracts:

> Teacher TA2: *It [inclusion in ECE] is a good policy because it is a period for a child from birth when he or she enters school, or a child starts from kindergarten upward.*

> Teacher TB1: *The ECE policy came into being so that children at the tender age will get education very early [and be included]. If you start education at a tender age, imparting education to them builds their capacity. If we impart knowledge to the children at an early age, they will grow up and become problem-solvers.*

> Teacher TB2: *Every child deserves an [inclusive] education in the early stage.*

The perceptions about age and enrolment goes against the popular belief among Ghanaians that children must be cared for by their parents from the age of zero (0) to three (3). This practice may result in children having poor cognitive, linguistic, and psychosocial abilities, which prevents them from thriving in ECE environments, and thus eventually fall out of the education system (Smythe et al., 2021). Even though the central theme of the discussion was that children should be registered to begin their education as soon as possible, three participants (Teacher TA1, Teacher TC1, and Teacher TC2) agreed that the appropriate age for IECE should begin at four years. According to the voices of teachers TC1 and TC2, this age is quite important because if the child is beneath the appropriate age, there will be challenges, as depicted below:

> Teacher TA1: *The appropriate age recommended is four years, and six years.*

> Teacher TC1: *... but for KG1, the person must be at least at the age of four years before she/he starts KG1. When he/she is underage, there will be some difficulties.*

When he or she does not pass the age that we want the person to be in KG, there will be difficulties too.

Teacher TC2: *The IECE policy states that at age four, the child must be enrolled in a school that leads to IECE. The ages of learners matter most in the sense that some develop quickly, and others gradually. I do not have the same age in the class. Therefore, those who are developed help the younger ones in such a way that they assist them in doing some activities in the class. Even correcting them is another way of helping them.*

One reason which favours starting Inclusion from age four, is the fact that children who are more developed physically and mentally may assist those who are younger to learn by guiding them to successfully complete activities in class. This will help the younger ones to develop easily and reduce the burden on the teacher. In the end, we agreed that the ultimate objective of ensuring that all children aged zero to eight, especially the most vulnerable, learn and flourish to reach their full potential.

Moreover, the participants demonstrated that children are receptive at these 'early stages', and it is very critical that they begin their education during this part of their development process when they imbibe quicker what they observe and hear. Hence, exposing all children to various educative programmes can help develop their logical and abstract thinking capabilities, and help them grow intellectually to solve critical problems (Dadakhon & Sabohat, 2022). According to the participants, the problem of critical thinking can be eradicated by inclusive practices in ECE that can effectively foster feelings of self-confidence and skills in problem-solving which ensures that all children aged 0 to 8, especially the most vulnerable, live and flourish to reach their full potential.

Figure 5.2: A photo taken by Participant TC1 showing learners between ages zero to eight years

A critical examination of figure 5.2 (above) clearly shows learners at the early stage of their development. This supports the main principle of IECE that children must be exposed to quality educational opportunities at an early stage to help develop them holistically and appropriately.

5.3.1.4 Sub-theme Four: Ability-oriented understanding

From the ability view, participants' understandings are similar, with some variations. Since IECE was aligned to educative and social-justice principles (Teacher TA1, Teacher TA2, and Teacher TC1) across the case sites, this meant that the child's ability or potential to operate, accomplish or do something of worth, served as the foundational elements of IECE, not the child's disability or special educational needs. Participants who had an ability-based viewpoint believed that IECE is all-inclusive and non-discriminatory for children because they all possess unique abilities (Rajendran & Nirmala, 2016). This is supported by the following extracts from three teachers:

> Teacher TA1: *I know that children learn at different levels. They pick up knowledge at different levels. Some are fast learners. Others are slow learners.*

> Teacher TA2: *…but low IQs do not mean that she/he cannot reason and work. She/he can do something. They too have something that they can do special as special needs person can also do activities. With that, you cannot say that children should be deprived, or children should not be allowed to do this or that. Depriving them is not the right thing.*

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Teacher TC1: *I have experienced that some are slow learners and others are fast learners.*

The evidence (above) demonstrated the difference among the learners in terms of their ability and speed to learn (figure 5.3). The response that some children are slow learners, and others are fast, demonstrates that such children may lack high-reasoning capacity that reinforces quicker learning (NDSS, 2021). This may impede the pace at which lessons should be delivered because they may demand special attention to catch up with their peers.

The participants noticed that every child is endowed with unique abilities, and therefore factors such as disability issues and age should not be barriers for IECE enactment. This implies that IECE should be available to all children, which is in contrast to the previous view that IECE was only available to a selected group of children. This also suggests that IECE should include every child irrespective of aptitude, background, or skills.
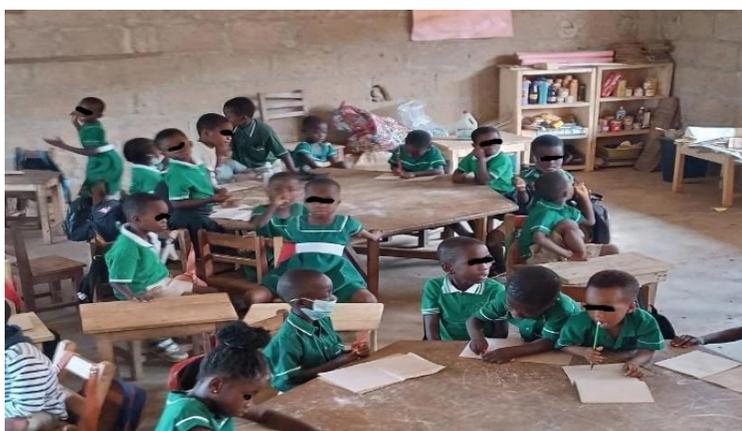
"From the photograph, it could be deduced that there are more learners with different abilities in the class, but I am able to manage them" (Teacher TA1).

Figure 5.3: A photo taken by TA1 of School A, Class KG2, showing learners with different abilities in the classroom.

5.3.1.5 Synthesis of theme one

Participants' understanding of Inclusion was predominantly influenced by traditional common perspectives as they unanimously agreed on the amalgamation of learners with disabilities and normal children being taught in the same school environment. All the participants agreed that in defining Inclusion, the disability issue was critical, even though they held sound beliefs on equity, enrolment, and ability-understanding. They believed that the fundamental principle of Inclusion was to educate children with disabilities together with their 'normal' peers. This idea of Inclusion

was seen as eradicating exclusionary practices and labelling that hinder disability and SEN attempts.

Whether conflicting or similar, the various interpretations have an impact on practice and beliefs concerning IECE. Since individuals and settings are always changing, it would be unlikely to all agree on a common explanation of IECE. The converse is also true; when policymakers and supervisors have the same perspective of IECE, they may work together to guide enactment on the same path which might lead to better conceptions and enactment practices inside settings that can be stress-free to navigate. Consequently, the diverse but relatively understandable perceptions will provide distinct but sometimes common routes for the execution of the IECE.

This primitive but dominant understanding of Inclusion from the perspective of disability may have adverse effects on the IECE programme enactment because teachers may fail to recognise that Inclusion goes beyond physically and intellectually impaired people; and that learner, irrespective of their socio-cultural and economic backgrounds should have equitable access to quality education. It is exceedingly imperative that the central players (teachers) be cognisant of the contemporary definition of the IECE policy and its associated implications to enhance best-practice. In so doing, the fundamental purpose of the policy will be successfully achieved.

The previous section discussed various participant-understandings of Inclusion in IECE policy under the theme, *predominantly disability-oriented understanding of Inclusion,* to address research question one. The following section presents an inductive analysis of theme two (*disability-informed enactment of inclusion*) to answer research question two.

5.3.2 Theme Two: Disability-informed Enactment of Inclusion

One of the most essential attributes of an inclusive teacher is his or her role in the enactment process that will positively impact on learners' knowledge acquisition and skills within and outside the school environment (Klibthong & Agbenyega, 2020). In this study, participant- enactment of Inclusion was informed by disability issues. For instance, their selection of teaching methods and other key practices were disability oriented. The evidence generated shows a correlation between participants' understanding of the Inclusion policy and how it affects the enactment of the inclusive

policy. The choice of pedagogies and role they play were all shaped by their understanding of disability in terms of the IECE policy. I have inductively and thematically recorded them under the following sub-themes:

- Sub-theme five: Lesson delivery methods.
- Sub-theme six: Teaching practices.
- Sub-theme seven: Teachers' additional role.

5.3.2.1 Sub-theme Five: Lesson delivery methods

To impart knowledge successfully to children in the classroom, teachers need to apply appropriate teaching methods, and exhibit proper innovative and creative teaching skills. According to the Higher Education Commission (2012), the teacher-centred method (direct instruction) and learner-centred methods (indirect instruction or inquiry-based learning) are the two significant theories of teaching. A teacher chooses the relevant approach or combination of techniques that are most likely to fulfil the lesson's objectives with a certain set of learners. According to the evidence garnered, three participants (Teacher TA1, and Teacher TB1 and Teacher TC2) at three case sites applied the learner-centred method during lesson delivery revealed in the following responses:

Teacher TA1: *I make teaching and learning learner centred.*

Teacher TBI: *We use the learner-centred method, not the teacher-centred one.*

Teacher TC2: *I use the child-centred method.*

The above responses emphasised the learner-centred method which focuses on the learners being actively engaged in educational activities during the lesson. This type of teaching and learning strategy permits the learners to construct and reflect on their understanding of principles behind concepts and theories with the teacher's guidance. A learner-centred classroom brings all instructions to the learner's doorstep, which motivates them to interact with the teaching and learning resources (Teacher TC1). Teacher TA1 claimed that he uses learner-centred pedagogy in educating the learners; however, data from the observation revealed that he was using teacher-centred approaches. Also, my interview with Teacher TBI contrasted with what I observed in the classroom as he did not exhibit any creative and interesting teaching methods and techniques such as think-pair-share, reciprocity, and collaborative teaching, which meant that he was teacher-centred. This inconsistency in the data may be attributed to the data collection period. Also,

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participants listed specific teaching methods they use to teach the children that primarily focused on the physically challenged and special needs children.

The following sections outline the different teaching methods.

5.3.2.1.1 Participatory teaching method

During the interview, two participants (teacher TA1 and teacher TC2) at school "A" and "C" disclosed that the most dominant choice regarding teaching strategies, is the participatory method, as demonstrated in the extract below:

> Teacher TA1: *Normally we use the participatory method to involve all of them. We involve them in the learning to participate.*

> Teacher TC2: … *that will let the child play most of the roles in the teaching and learning situation.*

The above teaching and learning strategy focus on the learner's collaboration, as the teacher involves all children (Pazey & Combes, 2020). The teacher ensures that every child plays most of the roles in the teaching and learning situations (Teacher TC2). I witnessed across all the case sites that learners actively participated during lesson delivery. At school A, Basic Level 3, I noticed that learners were actively engaged in the lesson as they were able to name some objects they found in the environment. This teaching method emphasises the learner's individuality and their ability to grasp meaning and understanding. It confirms a movement away from the view that students are hollow vessels who must be filled with information; we now migrated to a situation where pupils create their own knowledge and understanding, provided that the inclusive teacher gives them the necessary guidance and support.

5.3.2.1.2 Activity-based methods

In addition to the participatory method of teaching, half the number of the study participants from case sites A and C, shared similar teaching methods. They agreed that the activity-based method is used commonly to ensure that the children always perform activities during lessons. This was evident when they said,

Teacher TA1*: In most times we do set the activity-based method to teach all the kids.*

Teacher TA2: *We have activity methods like brainstorming, jig-saw-puzzles, or games.*

Teacher TC1: *The methods I use are brainstorming, think-pair-share, and fishbowl.*

Apart from School C, KG one, where the activity-based method was evident (figure 5.4), I did not observe any activity-based teaching and learning across the remaining case sites. Activity-based teaching and learning methods ensure that children study at their own pace through varied supervised activities. Moreover, activity-based teaching is a more dynamic and interesting way of 'instructing' children. It enables the supervision of crucial elements such as organisation, communication, motor skills, and social skills. It is a fun way to study because it stimulates children's thinking by triggering regular stimuli and motivating them to respond (Hansraj, 2015). Participants added that jig-saw-puzzles, games, brainstorming activities, think-pair-share, and fishbowl were the most common activities that learners perform.

Figure 5.4: *A photo taken by Participant TC1 showing learners in an activity-based lesson session*

5.3.2.1.3 Demonstration teaching method

Participants (Teacher TC1 and Teacher TC2) at school "C" explicitly stated that as inclusive teachers, they apply demonstration teaching methods in educating both normal and physically challenged learners, as seen in the following extracts:

> Teacher TC1: *In the demonstration, learners love seeing and touching when the lesson is being demonstrated.*

> Teacher TC2: *With the pedagogical method that we use for the IECE, most times, we deal with the demonstration method.*

I also observed that learners' works were displayed in the classroom, in addition to seeing that pictures were distributed among learners. The teacher explained to the learners the work to be done while referring to the images and pictures that identified the topic. This method is effectively applicable in art and abstract lessons (e.g., painting) where learners need to observe, visualise, and practise with objects to conceptualise the whole process. This demonstration was seen as an effective method of teaching and learning because learners see visuals and use the available resources in daily life. In a demonstration, learners love seeing and touching when the lesson is being demonstrated (Teacher TC1). Participants also noted that the goal of adopting the demonstration approach in IECE is to illustrate the process and occurrence of an event by utilising teaching and learning tools (Ramadhan & Surya, 2017). Demonstration also involves using visual aids such as flip charts, posters, and flyers (figure 5.5) to express an idea and allow the child to role-play in the teaching and learning process (Teacher TC2).

"In demonstration, learners love seeing and touching when the lesson is being demonstrated". (Teacher TC1)

Figure 5.5: A photo taken by Participant TC1 depicting the display of posters and flyers in the classroom.

5.3.2.1.4 Group-based method

Children learn in different ways; while some learn by listening to the teacher, doing exercises, and visualising, others learn from group activities or discussions. I observed across all the case sites that participants also adopted the group-based method of teaching (figure 5.6). However, though the children were in groups, it was not activity-based, and the teacher was the dominant figure, which led the learners' attention to be diverted. This could result from the ineffective application of the teaching method used in lesson-delivery or poor classroom management. Using group and activity-based methods in IECE is crucial because it helps learners achieve self-confidence, developing an individual voice, and shape their perspectives via cordial relationships with their peers (Reza et al., 2013). Hence, children with a disability can build self-confidence through group work.

"I know the content of what I teach. As a teacher, I can manage the class even though they exhibit different behaviours. I distribute my questions evenly to learners. I make teaching and learning learner centred. I use relevant and adequate teaching resources. The skills needed to engage learners in classroom activities include classroom management skills, participatory teaching skills, good questioning skills, and sound pedagogical skills."

Figure 5.6: A photo taken by Participant TA1 showing learners participating in group-based activity

The picture (above) shows that the children are part of an activity-based group, but learners are not concentrating due to poor classroom management. The picture clearly shows that the classroom is haphazardly managed, creating congestion - the seating arrangement was not properly done. I observed the teacher guiding the learners to use chalk to draw an item on the table.

5.3.2.2 Sub-theme Six: Teaching skills

Another crucial characteristic of an inclusive teacher is his/her teaching skills. Appropriate and creative teaching skills demonstrate during lesson-delivery that the teacher accurately and gainfully engages learners in the classroom to make learning exciting and interesting (Murray et al., 2020). According to the generated data, participants at the three schools applied several similar teaching skills to engage learners which included adaptability, communication, motivation, and classroom management skills.

5.3.2.2.1 Adaptability skills

As a result of diversities among children in inclusive education, especially the capabilities of the special needs and those with disabilities, teachers must assume dynamic roles to adapt to the demands of diverse learners (Alemayehu et al., 2020). In agreement, three participants at the three cases commented that they adapt the lessons to match learners' abilities by considering learners' *ideas* before choosing a topic and method of teaching, as demonstrated in the following extracts:

> Teacher TC2: *Also, learners' ideas are considered to select the method to be used. This will be used based on the lesson topic.*

> Teacher TA2: *We go down to the learner's needs to get the concepts that we impart to them.*

> Teacher TB1: *When you are preparing a lesson for a class, it should be taken into consideration the level of the learners and their disability, as you have to break information down in a form that they also get their share of understanding it.*

A teacher's capacity to adapt is among the most crucial characteristics that they should exhibit. This also occurs in conjunction with versatility. These two attributes are interconnected. Depending on the scenario in the classroom, it may sometimes become necessary to make last-minute adjustments. Generally, this concept refers to the ability to adjust to new or changing positions such as working with modern TLRs and timetables without being overwhelmed (Gavish, 2017). A participant also mentioned that they develop adaptation skills while in the process of selecting learning materials and utilising them in lesson-delivery.

5.3.2.2.2 Skills in selecting appropriate pedagogy

Selecting teaching methods or pedagogies that are most appropriate for attaining teaching goals to enable learners to reach optimum standards, is a prerequisite for effective teaching and learning. Three teachers at the various cases stated that teachers have to choose the correct and applicable teaching strategies that suit learning objectives to gainfully engage learners and impart knowledge.

Teacher TA1: *I use the right and adequate teaching resources, and suitable pedagogical skills.*

Teacher TA2: *The skills needed to engage learners in classroom activities are role-play, good teaching strategies like problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.*

Teacher TB1: *The use of the right or appropriate pedagogical skills coupled with choosing appropriate teaching resources, makes me competent,*

Teacher TC1: *My pedagogical skills and creativity make me competent.*

Given that learners study in a multitude of situations, it is frequently beneficial to apply a range of techniques within a given class and introduce a varied range of teaching and learning activities (Specht, 2016). These teaching strategies in group-based activities utilise visual aids to demonstrate conceptual understanding, which is aligned to the participatory and activity-based methods. Having this skill of flexibility will aid in selecting and utilising appropriate teaching resources.

5.3.2.2.3 Communications skills

The significance of effective communication in the classroom cannot be overstated, especially when teacher is conveying knowledge or reflecting on how to satisfy the demands of learners (Alemayehu et al., 2020). To ensure that children comprehend school regulations, grasp lesson content, and interact with their families about their academic progress, teachers will frequently employ different types of communication (verbal and nonverbal) skills in their interactions with them. Teachers might also require studying learners' nonverbal 'language' to identify their underperformance, peculiarities, and inattentiveness during lesson-delivery, among others. Astute communication strategies are essential to hold learners' attention or to engage them in various classroom or play activities. The evidence generated at the three schools demonstrated that communication skills are necessary at IECE level as shown below:

Teacher TA1: *The skills needed to engage learners in classroom activities include good teaching and questioning skills.*

Teacher TA2: *The skills needed to engage learners in classroom activities are excellent questioning, writing, speaking, and reading skills.*

Teacher TB1: *I need communication and reading skills to successfully engage learners in classroom activities.*

Teacher TC1: *My writing skills and communication skills make me competent.*

Teacher TC2: *The skills needed to engage learners entail effective communication skills.*

At case sites A and C, communication skills involving as eye-contact, pronunciation, and body language were witnessed. Communication, which is at the heart of all teaching-learning activities involves possessing sound skills in listening, speaking, reading, presentation, questioning, and writing. Importantly, participants noted that communication skills play an essential role in developing teachers so that they can maximise learner-performance. This ensures that they are better equipped to educate, counsel, supervise and encourage the learners in their care. Practical communication skills assist the teacher to fully understand and deconstruct complex concepts and challenging issues, in addition to understanding how to relate to and collaborate with learners, introduce lessons effectively to arouse the attention of learners, and to listen and resolve their problems or queries (Yan & Deng, 2019).

5.3.2.2.4   Motivation skills

Teaching is a demanding profession where perhaps one of the most challenging aspects is knowing how and when to motivate learners. Mediocre (or no) learning occurs when demotivated learners attempt engaging in their studies. Some may be disruptive because they cannot remember knowledge and skills previously taught to engage in group activities. Various factors might contribute to a learner's lack of motivation, including the belief that they will have little enthusiasm for learning because of dissatisfaction with the teacher's approach, or are preoccupied thinking about other interests. Pertaining to these challenges among the learners, I witnessed across all the case sites that teachers also used intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to arouse the learners' interest in lesson-delivery (Fan & Williams 2010). Teacher TC1 and Teacher TC2 at school "C" used warm-up activities or 'starters' such as rhymes to introduce the lesson. When a teacher utilises sound motivational skills, even a learner who seems disinterested or is experiencing problems paying attention, will most times be stirred to complete class activities successfully.

5.3.2.2.5   Classroom management skills

A teacher's capacity to demonstrate quality classroom management skills is vital for effective and productive teaching-learning. Classroom management incorporates a variety of competencies and strategies used by teachers to organise learner-structures, orderly movement, creative learner-tasks, and ensuring learner-acquisition of knowledge and skills, among others. The participants in this study displayed effective classroom management skills which helped them to manage the class even though they (learners) exhibit different behaviours (Teacher TA1). Participant responses (below) bear testimony to this:

> Teacher TC*: What makes me competent is my classroom management skills.*
>
> Teacher TA1: *As a teacher, I can manage the class even though they exhibit different behaviours. The skills needed to engage learners in classroom activities include classroom management skills*.

As part of observing classroom management skills, I witnessed at case site C that the seating arrangement was neatly done (figure 5.7). Effective classroom management limits negative behaviours that hinder studying and engenders improved learning conditions which enhances learner-performance (Ganon-Shilon et al., 2020). Efficient and effective teachers have better classroom management techniques, whereas incompetent ones are less successful in a classroom which is disorderly where learners become inattentive during lesson delivery.

Figure 5.7: A Photo taken by Participant TB1 depicting proper seating arrangement in the class

5.3.2.3 Sub-theme Seven: Teachers' additional roles

Aside from the teacher's primary role an inclusive teacher, additional duties such as visiting learners after school, providing financial support to the needy, counselling, and showing love especially to those with a disability to feel part of society, among others (Czyż, 2018). This was evident when a participant stated that they have been providing several types of support in and outside the school to enhance the enactment of Inclusion in education. Such support included providing additional care and affection and educating the family about inclusive practices concerning children with disability. Some of these support mechanisms are outlined below:

5.3.2.3.1 *Personalised/Individualised support for disability*

Inclusive education teachers play a critical role in guaranteeing that children with different kinds of disabilities s and abilities obtain a sound education. Participants stated that children with physical impairment and intellectual challenges faced much difficulty in learning, so teachers provide personalised support for them in different ways. It was evident that some teachers also offer special assistance after-hours for children with disability so that such SEN children excel in their academic tasks (Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2020). This assistance was offered by two teachers at case "A" and "B". Some participants commented as follows:

Teacher TA2: *My personal support is to modify my teaching strategy. Support to increase reading and arithmetic.*

Teacher TB2: *In my class I have those who have eye-problems - short-sighted and long-sighted - I help them to learn better. Those with disabilities are supported. I guide pupils to copy from the board exactly what I have written the board in their book.*

The above responses suggest that inclusive teachers must be able to identify children who need additional help, and then provide appropriate assistance (Mihai, 2017). Some learners may need physical and academic assistance, others may require individualised support, for example, in reading and simple arithmetic.

5.3.2.3.2   Building affectionate relationships

Every child need affection, and this is expressly true for students with disabilities. Some participants noted that genuine affection and encouragement shown to children with disability can ensure that they grow with increased self-confidence and self-worth, which will provide them with a powerful zeal to succeed amid difficult circumstances. Participants at school "A" and "B" indicated that because they want to boost the children's self-confidence, they bring them close to themselves and show warmth and love to them (Hayford, 2019). The following responses show this:

Teacher TA1: *I brought her close to me. So, in dealing with inclusive education, I think we should help the kid, we should bring them close to us. We should not keep them away from us. We should show love to them and bring them close to us so that they will also feel that they are part of us.*

Teacher TA2: *I offer my love to them as well*.

Teacher TB1: *My support is that I do go to the houses of these children to visit them and let them feel that we love them so that they do not feel rejected.*

The above evidence reveals that by visiting homes, manifesting love, and establishing a strong bond of relationship, the children will not feel rejected (Teacher TB1). By exhibiting such a positive attitude and behaviour, they will also feel that they are part of the school and society. However, while seeking methods to assist children with challenges, inclusive teachers should try to find ways to assist such children to assist themselves. The teacher's responsibility is not to perform the functions of a doctor by curing the problem, but to offer the children the requisite interpersonal and psychological support so that all children are able to navigate and overcome problems. Confronting and conquering a difficulty with the guidance of a teacher, such as a cognitive disability, may assist the child to develop toughness and resilience.

5.3.2.3.3 Family involvement and education

To reduce stigmatisation, prejudice, discrimination, and negative cultural beliefs about children born with disability, visiting parents' homes of such children to educate them on children with disabilities and inclusive education, is paramount to attaining success in IECE classrooms. The following extracts obtained from teachers at case "B" and "C" provide evidence:

> Teacher TB2: *I do talk to the parents by educating them on children with disabilities and inclusive education. Those kids were in that condition because something was not formed during pregnancy.*

> Teacher TC2: *So, my support is to do more for education concerning understanding inclusivity.*

Educating parents about disability issues can ensure that society veers off the stigmatisation path and thus promote the acceptance of such children. The above responses also illustrate teachers' collaboration with parents and the community. It also shows that teachers can establish cordial relationships with parents and the children by visiting their homes. This relationship between teachers and parents is critical for enacting Inclusion in early childhood education. When teachers and parents collaborate, problems connected with teachers' difficulties in enacting IECE can be mitigated (Lindorff et al., 2020).

5.3.2.4 Synthesis of theme two

In pursuit of finding answers to the research question, *how does teachers' understanding, shape their enactment of inclusion,* the themes identified similar and contrasting views. The enactment process was characterised by several interconnected practices such as teachers' choice of the lesson-delivery method (pedagogy), teaching skills, and additional roles teachers have to play to enhance the implementation of the policy.

Teaching methods such as learner-centred pedagogy (participatory, activity-based, group-based, and demonstration) were all evident from the interviews and observations. But it is worth noting that, not all the relevant teaching methods were applied across all the case sites and in the same classroom. For example, only two teachers utilised the participatory method of teaching at case sites A and C. However, whilst participants TA1 and TB1 claimed that they use learner-centred pedagogy, data from the observation revealed that their lessons were teacher-centred – suggesting that they were confused about the various methods of teaching. Apart from School C, KG one, and School A where activity-based (brainstorming, jigsaw puzzle, think-pair-share, and fishbowl) lessons were evident, I did not observe any activity-based teaching technique and learning across the remaining case sites.

The data also suggest that the choice of teaching method and learning resources relies on the teachers' teaching skill such as adaptability skills, selecting appropriate pedagogy, communications skills, motivation skills, and classroom management skills. The use of the appropriate pedagogical skills and teaching resources also makes a teacher competent. This means that a teacher might know the type of teaching method that is suitable, but improper teaching skills will result in the inappropriate selection of pedagogy and learning resources. Furthermore, there is also a relation between teaching methods, teaching skills, and teachers providing additional support to the disabled within and without the school environment. Accordingly, a teacher may be efficient in choosing the appropriate teaching strategy and exhibit correct teaching skills, but because of the presence of learners with diverse abilities, the inclusive teacher needs to exercise patience and assist those who need special assistance to ensure that they achieve their academic objectives.

In sum, it is explicit that the enactment of Inclusion education involves a complicated plethora of interconnected practices ranging from selecting appropriate pedagogy, suitable teaching skills, and teachers providing extra support that will move the current state of the policy to a different level.

5.3.3 Theme Three: Constraints and Enablers of Enactment of Inclusion

According to the data generated across the three case sites, several constraints and enablers influence how teachers enact Inclusion in early childhood education in Ghana. Previous studies (e.g., Ofori, 2018) highlighted that Ghana's Inclusion policy is enacted in certain ways, which are similar to what this study found. The influencing factors are inductively discussed through the following two sub-themes: constraints in the enactment of Inclusion, and enablers of inclusive enactment of inclusion.

5.3.3.1 Sub-theme Eight: Constraints in the enactment of Inclusion

The data revealed that a multitude of problems (from individual, household, education institutions, society, and national level) may impede the enactment of Inclusion. It is necessary to recognise how these hurdles restrict Inclusion. Despite commitments from the Government of Ghana, IECE is enacted differently because of several identified constraints (Ofori, 2018). Across all the case sites, participants noted that the enactment of Inclusion is impacted by several barriers including cultural constraints, lack of resources, large class sizes, and inadequate training and professional development.

5.3.3.1.1   Cultural constraints

Some Ghanaian societies have deeply ingrained negative cultural beliefs toward the origin of disabilities. Some people think that demonic powers and witchcraft are to blame for their infirmities. Prejudices towards people with Special Education Needs and disabilities are a major impediment to social and educational integration (Avoke, 2002) as demonstrated by more than half the number of participants (TA1, TB1, TB2, and TC2) across all the cases, who shared similar understandings. Participants commented:

> Teacher TA1: *Culturally, people believe that those with disabilities are cursed from gods. So, they may tend to neglect them. At home, they would not care for them much.*

Teacher TA2: *Some people believe that when his or her child sits with children with disabilities, they will not follow what the teacher teaches. They believe that it will slow down the learning of able learners.*

Teacher TBI: *Some parents think that when their children mingle with those with disabled learners, it will affect their studies.*

Teacher TC2: *The cultural beliefs that some of the societies have in mind are with the disabled. In my society, for instance, the belief that when you mingle with a down-syndrome person you are "gonna" have such a person in your family.*

These cultural beliefs and perceptions act as a barrier to Inclusion, and it has a destructive impact on IECE enactment. With such conception, parents and families will not educate their SEN children in the belief that they cannot do anything effective for themselves and society.

5.3.3.1.2 Inadequate resources

While some participants at school "A" and "B" indicated that resources are available because they get adequate support from GES, teachers (TA1, TB1, and TB2) lamented over the poor supply of resources. For example, lack of classroom facilities such as tables and chairs, cupboards, picture books, learning corners, indoor play materials, and chalkboards affected the extent to which teachers provide and include all children. The following responses reveal these inadequacies:

Teacher TA1: *For now, we do not have many [material] resources such as tables and chairs to cater for those with special needs; that is, for the inclusion, but we are doing our best with little [resources] and we make sure we help all of them to pass through the school.*

Teacher TB2: *I don't receive support directly from GES, but the school does support me with some cardboard for teaching and learning.*

Teacher TB1: *The lack of teaching and learning materials does not allow teachers to foster quality learner-centred practices.*

Teacher TC1*: The resources available are sometimes brought from our houses by ourselves. Sometimes, we ask the learners to bring them from their homes, but they are not suitable. For instance, empty cans, empty bottles, papers, old magazines, and old graphics can be useful.*

According to some participants, the lack of 'specialised' TLRs made teachers present lessons and other learning content 'abstractly' which does not help or promote effective teaching and learning for many children with disabilities (Kelly et al., 2014). The evidence generated shows that the lack of classroom facilities (figure 5.8) and 'specialised TLMs' are few across the case sites that made teachers enact Inclusion in a mediocre way. Practitioners anticipated cooperation from policymakers including the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, and Municipal Education Directorate, Central Government, and all other stakeholders to put in more resources and measures (Teacher TB1) to aid the teaching of children with disabilities. One participant stated that in order not to segregate the impaired children, much spatial and logistical arrangements (including accessing 'special' furniture) have to be executed so that the children may move freely to sustain Inclusion.

Figure 5.8: A Photo taken by Teacher TC1 showing physical facilities, and teaching and learning resources

The photograph above illustrates the nature of the school building with broken doors and dirty floors. The classroom is spacious enough and well-structured to accommodate all the learners to ensure free movement; physical facilities such as tables and chairs are in good shape and TLRs such as posters, books, and flyers have been removed from the walls for lesson presentation. This wooden school lacks standard facilities as an examination of the picture illustrates that the classrooms are exposed to excessive sunlight and rainfall, which is not safe and conducive for the children and teachers. The class also shows congestion because it lacks space due to large intakes of learners when there is no plan for building more classrooms. Additionally, inadequate furniture in some schools with seventy learners per class leads to poor classroom management, and this is exacerbated by the lack of wheelchair ramps and stairs to doorways which limit easy movement or accessibility to classrooms. Some walkways were not disability friendly, implying that no provision was made for children with physical challenges who use wheelchairs.

5.3.3.1.3 Large class sizes

Teachers enacted Inclusion in ECE in various adaptive ways to accommodate the challenge of teaching overcrowded classes as seen in figure 5.9 (Price, 2018). From the data, half the number of participants at case sites "A" and "B" narrated that the number of children enrolled was too large for one teacher to handle. Many teachers articulated that, large classes require extra hard work, more time, and greater attention to focus on learners' individual needs. In the absence of support and adequate time, and if teachers have a class of over forty learners including those with disabilities, teachers may exclude some children when experiencing challenges. Large class sizes affected teachers' individualisation of assisting and supervising learners during instruction and class activities, which stifled enacting inclusion, as captured in the following extracts:

> Teacher TA2: *Enrolment of learners is also another challenge for us the teachers. Having an enrolment of forty or more, you need to work hard by attending to each one. By the time you finished with them, time is up. … So, if you are teaching more than forty, the effectiveness of what you do [in Inclusion] will not be high or good....*

> Teacher TB1: *The role of a teacher when considering the number of learners if the class is too large burdens the teacher to perform accurate supervision of the learners.*

If the number of learners is manageable, it gives the teacher more room to attend to the learners, especially during teaching and learning as well as supervision. If the class is too large the teacher works extra hard which is not helpful.

Teacher TB2: *When the learners are many, I am not able to reach out to all of them in a class at the same time. It is also difficult to distribute questions and mark their exercises. It is time-consuming to deal with more than the required number of learners in class.*

The voices of teachers (above) demonstrate that teachers find it stressful and demanding to teach in large class sizes with children with diverse abilities and backgrounds. It was observed that if class sizes are manageable, it can give teachers more room and time to devote to learners, especially those with disabilities during teaching and learning as well as supervision. Thus, if a class is too large the teacher may suffer from burnout which may lead to disastrous consequences for the school and learners.

Figure 5.9: Photo taken by TA1 illustrating large class sizes

The figure above shows that the learner-enrolment is too large and above the recommended number. If the class is large, it becomes very challenging for the teacher to be productive. Reducing the number of learners per class by building sufficient classrooms and employing more teachers will mitigate this challenge.

5.3.3.1.4 Inadequate teacher-training and professional development

During the interview with two (2) study participants (TA1 and TC1), at school "A" and "C", a similar understanding was shared concerning the gap between what is learned during their pre-service training and what goes on in practice in the real teaching environment which made them enact Inclusion in ECE in a different way. Some teachers indicated that their initial training for Inclusion had limited practical lessons and application of IE knowledge, different from what they are dealing with at present. Some participants commented as follows:

> Teacher TA1: … *we did not deal with it[inclusion] practically. But when we came into the service, we experienced the real situation. Because we have been taught earlier about it, we know how to manage the situations when we deal with learners with different abilities.*

> Teacher TC1: *When you were at training college, there were no learners with a disability to practise on what you were taught. But in the field, there is a slightly different way to do it [Inclusion]. If we had practised handling such learners [with disability and challenges], it would help you [the teacher] to learn and get more experience.*

The above responses imply that the nature of the pre- and in-service training programmes for teachers designed by the educational institutions or the GES is not tailored towards comprehensive teacher development to enable teachers to enact inclusion efficiently. The lack of on-the-job training (and professional development sessions) and relevant Inclusion support hinders the effective enactment of Inclusion (Semordey, 2020; Opoku et al., 2017).

5.3.3.2 Sub-theme Nine: Enablers of enactment of Inclusion

From the evidence elicited from data, some teachers enact Inclusion in ECE as best as they can due to several identified enablers. Across the case sites, teachers achieved a degree of success in the enactment of Inclusion which could be explained by their opportunity of attending ongoing professional development programmes and having positive beliefs about Inclusion.

5.3.3.2.1 Ongoing professional development

The ECE teachers enacted successful Inclusion in certain ways in Ghana because of the ongoing professional development they receive at the school and system level. Participants at school "A" and "C" identified the value of professional development (an in-service training) as a significant enabler for including and teaching diverse learners. Some indicated how professional development sessions positively enhanced their teaching and learning practice, thus enabling them to enact inclusive education successfully in ECE. It was observed at case site C, that teachers benefited from regular in-service training on the new education curriculum designed to promote Inclusion. The following responses confirm this:

> Teacher TA1: *I think that the programme is being organised for teachers like in-service training. During such times, we teach and learn a lot about Inclusion. So, it has helped us to know much about how to handle children in our class, even though we have children with learning disabilities.*
>
> Teacher TA2: *The in-service training [on inclusive education] is helping teachers to include children with disabilities and challenges into the lesson. I suggest that teachers undergo in-service training.*
>
> Teacher TC1: *What I could add is that I am pleading with GES that they should not post just anyone at KG but rather those who have been trained in that field to be posted to teach KG. For instance, some have studied maths and science at college or university and may be appointed at KG, yet they are not trained in ECE.*

From the evidence presented above, availing competent and adequate human resources would ensure that the Inclusion policy is properly enacted (Gioia, 2016). It is required that teachers who have received proper training be assigned to teach, and that no untrained practitioners be employed, according to the programme's requirements. The participants' voices show that adequate pre-service training and professional development prepare teachers to acquire teacher-specific capabilities and knowledge that enable them to use inclusive pedagogies to effectively cater for all learners in ECE.

5.3.3.2.2 Institutional support for educational resources

Inclusion's long-term survival demands sufficient finance and support. To make Inclusion practicable and sustainable in Ghana, participants at all the cases identified various institutional support-structures (or enablers): funding, qualified teachers, supply of educational resources, realistic workloads (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007; Singh, 2010; Skinner, 2016). One participant stated that the Inclusion programme thrives on the availability of resources for the effective execution of the policy, in addition to material and financial support, without which, the programme would be unsustainable. The following excerpts illustrate the different types of support participants believe that stimulate the successful enactment of the Inclusion policy:

> Teacher TA1: *I suggest that moving forward, the Government or stakeholders will find means of providing us with enough resources to be able to deal with the situations effectively.*

> Teacher TA2: *Giving support to teachers brings success. Success will be achieved when all necessary support is given to teachers to promote Inclusion in ECE.*
> Teacher TB1:   *I will urge the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, and the Municipal Education Directorate to put in more measures to help these children with disabilities. I think this will help improve the quality of education especially the promotion of the Inclusion in our IECE setting. I think these suggestions, if they are considered by the Municipal Education Directorate, will help to improve our education system in Ghana, especially the Inclusion aspect.*

> Teacher TC2: *I can say that every school should open its doors for every child. This will lead to the development of the child in terms of teaching and learning to correct the child's speech, writing, walking, jumping, and what have you. By so doing, success among inclusive children will be one hundred per cent.*

The evidence implies that teachers who follow the Inclusion programme's objectives must be supported by all stakeholders. Where institutional support is limited, children with disabilities suffer the most. Participants appealed for collaboration among decision-makers, including the MoE, GES,

the Municipal Education Directorate, as well as the National Government to allocate sufficient resources and plan regular professional development programmes to support Inclusion.

5.3.3.3 Synthesis of theme three

The themes pointed to several constraints (culture, supply of resources, teacher-training, professional development, and overcrowded classrooms) and enablers (ongoing training, professional development, and institutional support) that influence the way IECE policy is enacted. However, negative attitudes and myths regarding children with disabilities were seen as key inhibitors of inclusionary progress.

Additionally, the lack of educational resources was one of the major obstacles inhibiting progress in IECE policy implementation. Specifically, most schools lack classroom space, cupboards, ramps, walkways, tables, and chairs, among others. This lack of facilities limits learners' ability to participate in extracurricular activities. In addition, inadequate facilities can reduce teacher-job-satisfaction, leading to the use of inappropriate pedagogies as a compensatory strategy. The observation revealed a lack of teaching and learning tools, especially toys related TLRs. To ensure the Inclusion programme's success, Government and authorities must spend heavily on, among others, infrastructure, teaching-learning resources, human resources, tertiary teacher-training, in-service training, and professional development programmes.

It was noted that pre- and in-service training had shortcomings which hampered the understanding of policies and execution of inclusive pedagogies. When asked to outline the inclusive policy, most teachers fumbled. Historically, professional curricula were designed without considering practical demands. Hence, modifying the teacher education curriculum is therefore urgently required. As part of teacher education, pre-service teachers should study inclusiveness and how to interact with children with diverse needs. Additionally, ongoing professional development workshops must be provided to all teachers to enhance Inclusion practices in IECE classrooms.

CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter (5), I presented the thematic analysis and discussion of three themes (disability-oriented understanding of inclusion; disability-informed enactment of inclusion; and constraints and enablers of the enactment of Inclusion) that emerged from the interview, non-participant observation and photo-elicitation within the parameters of the sense-making theory. Sense-making, according to Rom and Eyal (2019), is a human mental activity whereby people and groups form actuality from a continuous stream of occurrences. Interpreting the sense-making theory within this exploratory study, involves the teachers as major enactors of IECE who need to make-sense of the key dynamic factors that guarantee the programme's success.

The study adopted a qualitative approach as a research design to explore the enactment of the IECE policy in Ghana by interrogating teachers' opinions within three (3) selected case sites. As discussed in chapter one and two, literature on IECE is very scant as most relevant literature related to the topic were extracted from Western perspectives or international sources. The study's main objective was to explore teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in early childhood education in Ghana. Data was gathered from secondary and primary sources to answer the three (3) key research questions:

- What are teachers' understanding of Inclusion in early childhood education in Ghana?
- How does teachers' understanding shape their enactment of Inclusion?
- Why do ECE teachers enact Inclusion in certain ways?

This chapter discussed the findings, conclusions, and implications after triangulating the findings from both sources.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One of the crucial stages of the research process is the investigator's ability to discuss and describe the authenticity and relevance of the study's findings in line with the research problem to elucidate

fresh insight gained from the investigation. This discussion was executed via the comparative discussion of both data sources. Accordingly, I presented a discussion of the themes generated in chapter five to address the study questions as enumerated in chapter one.

6.2.1 The Current Understanding of Inclusion is Predicated and Focused on Disability

The understanding that emerged from the study fits into the previous conservative interpretation of Inclusion, which focuses on disability instead of children's diversity (Maciver et al., 2018; Mngo & Mngo, 2018; Walton & Osman, 2018a). In this study, participants emphatically believed that the critical purpose of Inclusion is to tutor children regardless of their disabilities in the same learning environment. However, the policy's sense-making opposes the modern interpretation of Inclusion, which proposes that children from all spheres of life must come together and learn as one body (Podzo & Chipika (2019). By its current definition, Inclusion focuses on the concept of diversity (beliefs, economic status, lifestyle, and traditions) instead of disability (Gudjonsdottir & Óskarsdóttir, 2016). The negative traditional interpretation of the policy's objectives affects its implementation in multiple ways: in the case of teachers, their myopic explanation of the IECE policy may trigger an improper choice of practice thus affecting their dynamic role as an inclusive teacher. When teachers who play a pivotal role in enacting the policy misinterpret the Inclusion concept, achieving policy objectives will be elusive. This leads to how stakeholders view the policy objectives and their preparedness for policy enactment; for example, stakeholders' interdisciplinary and multifaceted approaches in areas such as expenditure will be negatively affected.

This implies that such a blinkered interpretation of Inclusion threatens the smooth enactment of the policy which will diminish the assimilation process. I thus propose that sense-making in Inclusion as a social and revolutionary element motivates all stakeholders, most essentially teachers, to welcome children from different backgrounds to speed up the enactment process. Grounded on the concept of disability, the data analysis and interpretation unearthed diverse understandings of Inclusion in ECE, as discussed in detail below.

6.2.1.1 Inclusion as a revolutionary

Contrary to the joint explication of the term *revolution,* which denotes the energetic overthrow of political system to establish a novel one, the term used in this context explains a gradual evolution in our educational system that seeks to dissolve the customary practices where learners with disability are discriminated against, segregated, and excluded from mainstream education settings. Some decades ago (though still evident), it was rare to observe children with disabilities (physical and intellectual) and normal peers receiving education in the same classroom. There were many biases in Ghana's education system where the widespread practice was that those with disabilities were to be educated in a special setting away from 'normal' children which was an injustice embedded in Ghana's educational education system (Magumise & Sefotho, 2018).

However, with the emergent Inclusion movement in education, these practices of marginalising children evolved to the acceptance and integration of learners with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. Inclusion principles triggered modern thought to regard those with disabilities as equals; and that society needs to transform culturally, educationally, and socially to allow equitable integration into social settings. In line with the study's findings, a child's disability, be it physical or intellectual, should not be the basis for exclusion (c.f. **5.3.1.1**). Though teachers' understanding is somewhat conservative, they believe that children with low IQ, visual disabilities, and speech problems should not be exposed to exclusionary practices. Clearly, Inclusion has activated the sensitive and sensible sides of all the interested parties (teachers, parents, school authorities, and policymakers) in Ghana's education structures, urging us to rethink our attitudes towards learners with disability.

In keeping with the modern definition of Inclusion, the new approach of integration and Inclusion carved a strategic path that focused on children being protected from dehumanisation and ensuring respect and dignity for them. Accordingly, Inclusion recognises children's social and economic differences such as the child's background from the perspective of poverty, culture, belief, and lifestyle such that inclusion accepts children from all spheres of life. With the Inclusion 'revolution', society is now aware that every child possesses a unique potential that can be harnessed and enhanced to help himself/herself and society. In this regard, society must migrate away from rejecting, discriminating, and segregation which have substantial repercussions for the

child, parent, and society in general. Inclusion, in this sense, ensures that every child benefits from quality education.

The study confirmed that Ghana's Government's efforts backed such a revolution as part of a global effort to use legislative and economic means to eliminate marginalisation and discrimination against diversity through Inclusion (MoE, 2015; Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015). As reported by Abedi, Asante and Sasu (2015), "the passage of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2006 (Act 715) has been recognised as a significant milestone in Ghana's human rights discourse, as it has given life and hope to persons with disabilities, allowing them to become fully integrated members of mainstream society". This confirms that the legislative policy protects every child's right against exclusionary practices. Furthermore, with the sense-making theory in mind, the teachers reflected that the legislative policy says that no matter the severity of the child's disability, they must be in school to learn because every child can do something. This highlights the underlying principles of Inclusion in education, and that exclusion based on disability and diversity is malpractice. Thus, the Inclusion ideology emphasises that given equal learning chances for the development of learners with disabilities, while equipping young children with relevant information and understanding, will help build a unified and better society.

The data once again revealed that social perspectives and attitudes about learners with disabilities and IECE were shifting. In addition to parental understanding, social engagement, and communal support, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) supported IECE in terms of resources, and the development of knowledge and skills concerning the role of IECE in educational and social structures, which engendered favourable results. According to the study participants' views, it is obvious that multiple internal and external motivation and effort must be represented to promote the successful enactment of the programme. As discussed in chapter three, society's views are transforming because of the illumination and transformation in learning to lead us to a stage when childhood education will be equal for all learners - a trend that must continue in the future. As such, this harmonious social ecosystem creates an enabling atmosphere for Inclusion. Moreover, it has increasingly been recognised in theoretical and empirical work as a means of driving the enactment of *Ghana's Draft Inclusion Education Policy* (2013) such that intense parental and community engagement will result in the provision of excellent service-delivery in IECE.

6.2.1.2 Inclusion is fundamental for children's development

Inclusion was critically determined as a social movement that develops and grows the child holistically. In the previous chapter (5), it was seen that children have diverse aptitudes that must be exploited differently. Hence, with the 'Inclusion in education movement', such potential can be identified early and nurtured. Because Inclusion in ECE recognises diversity among children, the framework must be creatively designed to improve the relationship between childhood education and child development. Inclusion in ECE develops children's pre-literacy, reading, language abilities, motor skills, and recognition of shapes and colour; preparational activities that encourage and accelerate children's all-round development.

According to the study's findings, children become problem-solvers when they start early education (Ainscow, 2020). Problem-solving is related to making sense of experience and coming up with an informed solution by utilising logic and ingenuity via self-discovery. Hence, IECE develops the child so that they will gain skills, socialise with peers, problem-solve, have a good self-image, engage in cooperative learning, and show respect to all. At an early age, teachers can identify the child's problem and correct it; not to become worse by leaving the child behind. For example, SEN learners must be provided with equal and extra opportunities to participate in the same programmes and activities as 'normal' children which will help the learners gain academic self-confidence, develop an individual voice, and shape their perspectives in relationships with their peers (UT, 2020).

By embracing IECE, children will develop to harmoniously tolerate and live in peace with each other through displaying respect. This is usually possible since those who are older provide help for those who are younger (c.f. **5.3.1.3**.). As a result, they will build significant and life-long friendships with children with disabilities over more extended periods. 'Normal' children will assist their challenged peers, by honing their (SEN) skills and knowledge. With Inclusion in Early Childhood Education, children with special needs, for example, are given an equal and additional opportunity to engage in the same programmes and activities as children without special needs. They gradually develop the ability to tolerate and coexist harmoniously with diverse children and eventually learn to admire their resilience and will to succeed.

Inclusion positively develops the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs of children in a holistic fashion so that they may construct a solid and comprehensive framework for lifelong learning and health. Inclusion in ECE offers the choice of developing future citizens that are caring, competent, and responsible. It promotes equivalent learning prospects for children with disabilities and offers young ones more knowledge and skills (c.f. **5.3.1.2**). However, the rewards of Inclusion in ECE are not exclusive to children with learning disabilities as findings show that 'normal' learners may be motivated by those with disability by observing their strengths and limitations. The objectives of inclusivity are achievable regardless of gender and disability (among others), if learners aged two to eight are educated in the same environment (UNESCO, 2015).

6.2.1.3 Inclusion set the basis for social participation

The study findings emphasised that Inclusion in early childhood education sets the foundation and enhances social participation. It encourages engagement with friends in schools, family, relatives, and the community via shared activities. It was evident that Inclusion plays a critical role in bringing all children from diverse backgrounds together, thus providing hope for the disadvantaged. This mainly occurs when children learn in various teaching and learning spaces such as in activity-based groups, brainstorming sessions, think-pair-share, manipulating teaching and learning resources, and other socially enriching activities that create bonding **(c.f. 5.3.2.1)**. Because Inclusion in education attempts to eliminate exclusion and reduce intolerance, the child's presence in the mainstream education environment is evidence that children can integrate socially while engaged in social activities (Galović et al., 2014) such as learning, gaming, joining a sports club, participating in associations, and other social gatherings.

Hence, IECE promotes social involvement and belongingness among children and their families via interactions and relationships among parents, school personnel, teachers, and their peers if adequately enacted. Teachers bring children close to themselves and to demonstrate unconditional love to foster a feeling of humaneness, belonging, comfort in mingling with others (c.f. **5.3.2.3.2**). To reiterate, Hayford (2019) observes that teachers teaching in Inclusive environments often struggle in terms of supporting all children's full involvement in studying and routine class tasks. This can be minimised by successfully incorporating children in all activities via a child-centred approach by making appropriate changes and providing adequate assistance to ensure that each

child will be able to engage meaningfully in learning and social activities. Because Inclusion in ECE represents children's rights, all role-players, including families, must be actively and purposefully engaged to encourage inclusivity (UNESCO, 2017; Dewa, 2020).

Additionally, inclusion in ECE bolsters the building of relationships between parents, family, and the community within the school (c.f. **5.3.2.3.3**). Participants narrated that they engaged the parents and community in education activities to successfully promote the principles of Inclusion practice. Educating the parent to understand inclusivity was identified being critical to effectively enacting the programme as some parents are deeply rooted in cultural beliefs that view disabled children negatively. This negative attitude hampers the implementation of the inclusion policy, and ultimately learners' study outcomes (Zuurmond et al., 2019). So, by involving them, a parent will begin to develop a positive behaviour towards Inclusion because they will come to understand that no matter their child's condition, they can still be educated. Furthermore, when society begins to realise the benefits of inclusivity, it will make sense to parents and others that every child is educable, irrespective of their diversity.

6.2.1.4 Inclusion is a taxing process

The study's findings revealed that Inclusion is an arduous process involving enrolment, attendance, teaching, and learners' assessment, among other tasks. Hence, certain thematic and dynamic intricacies of the programme must explicitly be comprehended in order to enact Inclusion. Thus, in coordination with interested members, the inclusive teacher should be cognisant that learners' physical, social, cognitive, and emotional needs must be understood and satisfied individually to enact the Inclusion policy efficiently. A combination of these aspects will make every child grow holistically and uniquely. Attending to individual diversity might be extremely demanding and overwhelming for teachers who lack positive attitudes towards Inclusion. As alluded to in the previous chapter, physically challenged learners such as those with *down syndrome,* visual and hearing impairment are given special assistance outside the general teaching practice that the inclusive teacher must provide **(c.f. 5.3.2.3.1)**. According to Yan and Deng (2019), some learners require physical assistance, such as assistance with private care, adjustments for comfortable seating arrangements, alternative ways of communication (for learners with

speech problems), and miscellaneous additional assistance to engage in activities that might normally be inaccessible.

The study found IECE to be a very taxing process which also involves collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community, and that necessitates additional effort of the inclusive teacher. Periodically, schools communicate regularly with parents. In some situations, they visit the parent to share information about the children's progress, especially those with disability. In countries such as Ghana where parents are serious about children's performance, Kim (2020) observes that it is extremely difficult to enact IE strategies since learners are under immense strain owing to their parents' sometimes unrealistic expectations. So, teacher-collaboration with parents is needed because school leaders have insufficient understanding of learners with disabilities, and this constitutes a barrier to the practice of Inclusion. The parent-teacher collaboration may reveal any latent negative character traits and challenges of the child to the school which could lead to better development if a suitable approach is applied to aid the child. The implication is that Inclusion is multi-dimensional (Deng 2019), so enactors must demonstrate astuteness, tolerance, and patience to achieve success.

6.2.1.5 Inclusion in ECE exposes children to a variety of educative programmes at early stage
In line with Fenton-Glynn (2019) and Connery & Weiner (2021), the study found (chapter five) that children from birth-to-eight should begin their educational career because this stage is where they are most receptive to the educational environment. This finding contrasts with many studies that proposed that Inclusion in ECE should begin from one-to-six years (Baffoe, 2013; Van Laere & Vandenbroeck, 2017; Vandenbroeck et al., 2018). In addition, participants' views concerning the date of registering children in IECE differ. While others believe that children should commence their education between birth-to-eight years, some believe that the appropriate age starts from four-to-eight (**c.f**. **5.3.1.3).** But despite the difference, the study established that IECE should begin from one-to-eight years as proposed by Fenton-Glynn (2019), and Connery and Weiner (2021). It is crucial in these years that teachers introduce children to varied learning spaces and provide different learning experiences. A stimulating setting that appeals to the children helps them learn and develop their physical, motor, health, nutrition, intellect, aesthetics, emotions, and social skills.

Another underlying principle of Inclusion is that within the early period of childhood, children should be exposed to diverse curricular activities and teaching pedagogies that are attract the child's interest (Shih, 2020). Because of the unique differences among children, classroom and extra-curricular activities should be designed to cater for the uniqueness of every child, no matter the severity of the disability. To ensure that curriculum activities attain their objectives, the study found that teachers pass through a stringent training programme concerning Inclusion practices to equip the inclusive teacher to be critically conscious of the responsibilities that enhance children's academic performance. As such, IECE occupies children in a range of activities that builds each child's total well-being. However, to be effective in their job, early childhood teachers must perform a variety of critical roles involving child supervision, discipline, cultural variety, teaching and learning techniques, and developing self-reliance (Klibthong & Agbenyega, 2020).

6.2.1.6 Inclusion promotes individuals' knowledge acquisition

Understanding learners' differences regarding knowledge acquisition could be complicated for the teacher. However, it is indispensable that they must analyse how learners acquire information, store the information, and process the information. In this way, the inclusive teacher can deliver appropriate lessons to cater for the uniqueness of every child. The study found different types of children with diverse learning capacities enrolled in an inclusive education environment. This is aligned to policy which recognises that learning patterns among children cannot be the same. Therefore, children with intellectual disabilities should not be deprived of access to quality education.

Furthermore, policy considers the differences in acquiring knowledge, and hence shifts the discourse away from community structures and systems toward transformation in education. As a result, it attempts to expand opportunities for social contact in regular schooling. Inclusion is a ground-breaking principle in education since it caters for learners with a wide range of abilities. According to the study, learners possess diverse abilities – fast and slow- are created differently and thus may not achieve success from the same pathways. Participants' interpretation of Inclusion confirmed policy directives to bring all learners together in the same classroom and setting, regardless of their abilities or limitations in any subject area and attempt to maximise the opportunities for all learners to succeed. Inclusion is listed among the most successful methods of

creating and enhancing uniformity in our society (Singh, 2016). Failing to provide all learners with an adequate inclusive educational system not only results in intellectual shortcomings, but also leads to a social and economic deterioration that has disastrous repercussions for society, both now and in the future. To enable learning regarding Inclusion of all children in school, it is critical to develop policies that foster inclusive practices at all stages of development.

6.2.2 Synthesis

The understanding of Inclusion in ECE is aligned to the education policy's aim which requires that the myopic perception towards learners with disability changes so that children, irrespective of their diversity, can be enrolled in a single institutional environment to study equally together. The study highlighted that the introduction of IECE has revolutionised and nullified the belief that children with disability cannot be assimilated into the mainstream educational environment. Inclusion has broadcast to the whole world that children can have access to equal quality education and enjoy social participation irrespective of their diversity. With the 'Inclusion revolution', society is now aware that every child possesses a unique potential that can be enhanced to help himself or herself and society. Accordingly, IECE ensures that the child gains skills, peer representation, problem-solving abilities, a good self-image, cooperative learning, and respect.

Because society is evolving as a result of knowledge acquisition, and the awareness for the necessity for childhood education for all learners, the policy requires that every child should begin their educational careers at an early stage (from zero to eight years) so that their social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs can be developed in a holistic fashion in order that they may construct a solid and comprehensive framework for lifelong learning and health. Inclusion also promotes social involvement and belongingness among children and their families via interactions and relationships among parents and schools, children and teachers and their peers.

Though IECE is revolutionising societal perception of children with disability, the policy implementation is an arduous process involving, among others, enrolment, attendance, teaching, and learners' assessment. The inclusive spaces' success requires coordination among interested members who must be cognisant that learners' physical, social, cognitive, and emotional needs are satisfied to enact the policy efficiently. Attending to diversity might be extremely demanding and

overwhelming for teachers who lack positive attitudes toward inclusion in IECE. However, Inclusion is recognised as a policy with many benefits; but differences in the uniqueness and styles of knowledge acquisition could be challenging for the inclusive teacher. However, it is a learning experience for teachers who now recognise how diverse learners acquire information, store the information, and process the data. This implies that within early childhood, children should be exposed to diverse curricular activities and teaching pedagogies that are in the child's best interest regarding knowledge acquisition. Because of the differences among the children, classroom and extra-curricular activities should be planned to meet the uniqueness of every child, no matter the disability.

6.3 The Current Enactment of Inclusion is Grounded on Disability-deficit

After teachers have theoretically made sense of the inclusion philosophy incorporated in the education policy, it is time that they put theory into practice. The study has found that teachers presently enact Inclusion policies based on learners' disabilities. This implies that their method of delivering lessons, personal support, engagement with children and the community, and their teamwork with colleagues, are all predicated on the concept of disability. The inclusive teacher must engage all children in a variety of activities that help them grow holistically – in other words the focus must be on promoting the equal development of every child rather than on the extent of the child's disability. This calls for ECE teachers to fulfil a range of critical functions to be successful in inclusive environments. This function may entail child-supervision, discipline, respecting cultural diversity, using suitable teaching, and learning techniques, and developing self-reliance, among other responsibilities (Klibthong &Agbenyega, 2020).

6.3.1 Teaching and Learning Strategies that Focus on the Learner

Teachers in inclusive ECE spaces face several challenges: the continual search for pedagogy and strategies to accommodate student diversity in inclusive classrooms. Voss et al. (2011) contend that all learners should have equal access to education, and that schools should create learning environments in the spirit of unity to accommodate all learners. Teachers and educational institutions must decide how they will react when presented with such issues of diversity. Consequently, inclusive pedagogy aspires to challenge practices that cater for the majority while

providing alternative spaces for others. Focusing on disparities exacerbates children's marginalisation and exclusion, while contributing to societal dysfunctionality.

The term *teaching techniques* describes the various codes, pedagogies, and management styles exercised during the delivery of classroom lessons. According to the study's findings, teacher-centred methods and learner-centred methods were the two major categories of teaching. Participants chose the approach or combination of ways that is most likely to fulfil the lesson's objectives for a specific set of learners. According to the findings of this study, learner-centred pedagogy involved the collaborative approach to teaching and learning, activity-based teaching and learning, group-based learning style, fishbowl, and demonstration because these methods always considered the individual's learning abilities. As such, learners construct their knowledge and understanding to hone their logical and abstract thinking aptitudes. Accordingly, teachers examine children's individual learning styles before preparing a lesson for the class where learners are not viewed as empty vessels that must be filled; instead, they must be assisted to learn independently.

The study found that for an inclusive teacher to be able to teach, different teaching techniques must be integrated into the overall curriculum (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020). As described in the literature review, teaching techniques refer to the various concepts, pedagogies, and management styles utilised in classroom activities. The learners' abilities determine the kind of approach to be used. These instruction strategies that they adopt bring all instructions to the learner's space to engage with the teaching and learning resources (c.f. **5.3.2.1**). Teachers provide a critical and excellent display of teaching skills that ensure that the lesson is delivered with accuracy which interests the learner. This requires the inclusive teacher to determine individual learning patterns so that he/she can select the right teaching and TLRs and change their teaching styles as and when needed.

The principles of teaching and learning focus mainly on the learners, and instructions are given democratically to encourage participation. Classroom activities that are objective-oriented, driven, accommodating, diverse, fully inclusive, and well-organised foster social interconnection in the classroom environment. Assessments must be authentic and focused on higher-order reasoning to promote learning. This enables learners to explore for themselves, evaluate others, and get a great

deal of feedback, which helps them to gauge their progress. During evaluations, children were presented with a selection of activities to choose from, and the opportunity to complete them in several different ways. It was designed to be used not only to benefit pupils but also for the ease-of-use for educators.

6.3.1.1 Learners Learn at their own pace

Children are ready to learn on their own to fulfil their achievements if the inclusive teacher can adequately expose them to interesting learning activities. With this in mind, the inclusive teacher can exploit learners' interest to engage them in various ways so that they can learn and at their own pace to achieve success.

Thus, the study found that participants employ diverse teaching strategies and proficiencies to ensure children learn effectively and at their own pace. Teachers used question and answer strategies to encourage the children to learn. The question-answer technique is suitable as a teaching-learning methodology that provides two-way communication because it is 'dialogue' between the teacher and the learner. Also, teachers use the question-and-answer method in delivering lessons to arouse learners' abstract thinking abilities while supervising them to acquire knowledge (Abdul-Majid, 2013). It was evident in the study that teachers did not give immediate answers to questions they posed to learners, but instead encouraged them to self-discover the answers.

This means that learners participate in the lesson as the teacher does not do all of the talking. This suggests that there is always a collaboration between the learners and the teachers. The teacher assists the learners in promoting thinking and constructing their thoughts (Hansraj, 2015). The use of the question-and-answer method will allow the inclusive teacher to spot the differences in children learning abilities, especially when they (children) struggle to come up with the correct answer. This method allows children with learning disabilities to be quickly identified and assisted, while emphasising the learner's individuality and ability to develop their understanding.

The study also found that teachers strategically used group-based teaching methods for the children to learn as a collective. Because the inclusive classroom consists of learners with different

activities, participants strategically mixed those with higher learning abilities with those with learning disabilities. The teachers believed that this 'mixed' collaboration among the children would foster knowledge-sharing, where the teacher walks around to supervise group activities.

6.3.1.2 Combination of teaching-learning Approaches to advance learners' individuality

An inclusive classroom encompasses a wide range of learners with different learning capabilities - while others are fast learners, some are slow learners (c.f. **5.3.1.4**). This means that inclusive teachers must apply and combine various teaching and learning approaches so that every learner can imbibe core knowledge of the lesson. They must also reinvent and adapt teaching skills to fulfil individual needs. Because participants made sense of the composition of inclusive classrooms, this ensured the application of 'mixed' different teaching approaches in lesson delivery.

Among the teaching strategies adopted by the inclusive teachers, an activity-based teaching-learning technique was regarded as very essential because the participants believed that this approach creates the proper environment for learners to collaborate and learn by doing, studying by playing, learning by enjoying, learning by cooperating, learning by action, learning by thinking and reflection, and studying without pressure. In this approach to teaching and learning, the inclusive teacher played a supervisory role, guiding learners on what to do and what not to do. This finding supports the idea that the activity-based method of teaching and learning ensures that learner's study at their own pace via varied directed activities (Anand, 2021) which is a more dynamic and exciting way of instructing children. Also, Activity-based teaching and learning enables the monitoring of crucial elements such as coordination, communication, motor skills, and social skills. It is fun to study because activity-based lessons stimulate children's brain growth by providing regular stimuli which motivate them to respond. Inclusive teachers judiciously adopt this method to encourage experimentation, engagement, and discovery. I suggest that an activity-based learning strategy should be used at the early stage of learners' development, as they are most receptive in childhood years.

Also, activities like jigsaw and brainstorming were essential in IECE (c.f. **5.3.2.1.2**). However, Sutton-Grier and Stander's (2018) findings show that though jigsaw and brainstorming activities increase creative thinking ability, these pedagogies are not appropriate in early childhood education

because, firstly, the learners must have a minimal ability to read for the jigsaw to be effective, and secondly, the understanding of the basic features of jig-sawing and brainstorming involves a certain degree of abstract ability. But teachers can guide the learners to brainstorm in cases like reading by applying this technique in lesson delivery.

Other teaching methods mentioned by participants was think-pair-share and fishbowl. Fishbowl is a fun, learner-centred technique for improving the understanding of complicated texts and team conversation abilities. In the fishbowl strategy, learners practised reacting to diverse opinions. Learners in the outer circle provide observations that provide insight into what makes for productive small-group discussions. Fishbowl is a particularly successful approach to engage children of various abilities in a diverse context (Yabarmase, 2013). Many teachers utilise a range of social skills using the fishbowl approach which promotes socialising principles that can advance or derail a conversation, in addition to allowing the class to see and learn about interpersonal relationships up close. Fishbowl could be applied when investigating a concept of belonging, personality, and shared interests as its framework lends itself appropriately to debates on challenging texts and cross-cultural subjects. Moreover, fishbowl can assist to create an inclusive setting by giving all learners a speaking-listening function as well as directing their interest in the discussion such that learners find socially acceptable means to engage in conversations. When utilised regularly, fishbowl establishes the limits and norms that are necessary for anti-bias communication.

Similar to activity-based learning, group-based learning, (also known as cooperative teaching and learning) is instrumental in developing children's cognitive abilities and motor senses. Because of the differences in children's learning abilities, participants believed that grouping enhances cooperative learning among the disabled and able-bodied learners. This discovery is in line with Parmelee et al. (2012, pp. 275-287) who define group-based learning as "an active learning and small group instructional strategy that provides learners with opportunities to apply conceptual knowledge through a sequence of activities that includes individual work, teamwork, and immediate feedback". It is an instructional technique that involves learners working together in small, diverse groups to accomplish a common objective (Burgess et al., 2020; Najmonnisa & Ismail Saad, 2017). By using a group-based learning assignment, heterogeneous groups can work

together through interaction and sharing of teaching and learning resources (TRLs) to achieve a common goal (Reza, Abozar, Ali, & Akbar, 2013). When the special needs children learn together with their regular colleagues, they will develop self-confidence and realise that they are also like their peers.

Another teaching strategy evident in the research was the participatory teaching strategy. Although the participatory methods placed teachers as authority figures, both teachers and learners were equally involved in the learning process. As noted in chapter five, participants believed that the inclusive teacher must ensure that the child participates in what happens in the classroom which could be achieved when the teacher employs different kinds of teaching strategies, activities, and assignments to meet the needs of learners who have a diverse learning styles, abilities, backgrounds, and interests. This method allows the children to be continually involved in activities during the lesson by employing participatory skills. Supported by Kucharčíková and Tokarčíková (2016), the significant responsibility of the teacher is to direct and support learners' learning and comprehension of the content while he/she plays a supervisory role. The teacher measures the learner's performance via formal and informal assessment, including activity-based tasks and participation in class where the teacher continuously measures children's learning during instruction.

In sum, the majority of the participants agreed that, since every child learns uniquely, being familiar with the different kinds of teaching strategies makes method selection and modifying lessons by organising novel materials, among others, essential (Voss et al., 2011; Carlson & Daehler, 2019). Hence, teachers should employ various methods to motivate learners to learn by presenting content in multiple ways that fosters interest such that learners are able demonstrate acquired knowledge in real-life situations.

6.3.1.3 Visualisation and practice with teaching-learning objects
Visualisation means the individual capacity to create abstract images predicated on objects such as text or words. It is among the list of the numerous skills that easily make understanding a reality. This approach to teaching and learning in Inclusion is a necessity for learners with reading and writing disabilities (Carlson & Daehler, 2019).

The study also found that demonstration teaching methods were instrumental in educating children in inclusive ECE. This is an effective method of teaching and learning because learners can see and make sense of the use of the resources in daily life (c.f. **5.3.2.1.3**). This approach uses visual aids such as flip charts, posters, and flyers to express an idea (figure 5.4). The teacher who was observed used a step-by-step technique to teach children how to execute a task, which was very productive. Through practical experimentation and observation, learners think, reflect, and bring conceptualisation to reality by repeating what has been demonstrated. One interesting characteristic about visualisation is that learners can practise or demonstrate the lesson at home. This method is effectively applicable in art and abstract lessons (e.g., painting) where learners need to observe, visualise, and practise with objects. This is confirmed by Ramadhan and Surya's (2017) findings that the goal of adopting the demonstration approach in early childhood education is to illustrate the process and occurrence of an event utilising teaching-learning tools. Using teacher-demonstrations may be beneficial for a number of reasons; for example, the teacher has a major effect on how learners react and gain knowledge from a demonstration by planning and executing it properly. Although it is not simple to conduct effective demonstrations in inclusive classrooms, the influence on children's learning may be significant when done correctly.

However, I maintain that though children love seeing and touching TLRs in IECE, teachers' over-reliance on the demonstration method will not benefit the whole class because of those with visual disabilities. This is because such learners cannot see and touch learning materials (visual aids such as cut-outs or pictures, audio-visual, flip charts, posters, and flyers), so it is appropriate that the teacher employs eclectic teaching and learning strategies to achieve the objective of the lesson. Therefore, teachers' sense-making in inclusive ECE is dynamic and persistently hunts for modernised teaching methodologies to help fulfil the needs of diverse children.

6.3.1.4 Lesson-delivery proficiencies that foster teaching-learning processes

Chapter five explained that the teacher's choice of the lesson delivery method and TLRs must result in the exhibition of teaching proficiencies that promote effective teaching (Murray et al., 2020). While serving as a teacher, it is essential to possess strong teaching proficiencies to enable the inclusive teacher to occupy students, especially the physically challenged, to be enthusiastic and involved in the lessons they are teaching. Identifying the most suitable teaching strategies and

how to best demonstrate them, will assist the teacher in job-satisfaction. The study found profound teaching proficiencies that are critical in enacting Inclusion in ECE. According to the participants', skills such as adaptability, communication, motivational skills, and astute classroom management should be paramount if the inclusive teacher desires to instruct skilfully to attain positive results.

Contrary to the view of Hayford (2019) that Inclusion teachers in Ghana lack adaptability skills in engaging learners in child-centred pedagogy, findings indicate that teachers adapt to the learner's needs by accessing prior knowledge of learners' abilities before teaching them. This means that when they are preparing a lesson for class, they consider the level of the learners and their disability and adapt lessons in a form that will be accessible and understood by all. In educational settings, adaptive teaching is a method of reaching a shared instructional objective with learners who have different individual characteristics such as past accomplishment levels, intelligence, or learning styles. Adaptive teaching, according to Borich (2011, p. 41), "applies different instructional strategies to different groups of learners so that the natural diversity prevailing in the classroom does not prevent any learner from achieving success".

Furthermore, all the participants' comments were explicit that teachers' capability to demonstrate high-quality communication is paramount. Hence, IECE is inclusive to both verbal and nonverbal communication, provided there is the need for both. However, not all human speech can be strictly considered as purposeful communicative conduct (Stokes, 1999). Physically challenged children and SEN learners are not faced with physical restrictions that hinder their ability to communicate, but they often have intellectual hurdles to overcome. Communication tools for individuals with disabilities are usually required but money and effort may be required to teach them and to adjust to their new environments.

As noted in chapter five, the study presented a list of teaching communication skills such as effective questioning, writing, speaking, and reading necessary in delivering lessons. Participants agreed that for an inclusive teacher to be competent, high proficiency in all these areas to teach effectively is vital. Communication gestures such as eye-contact, pronunciation, and body language were noted (Khan et al., 2017) as possible aids to children with disabilities in understanding communication gestures such as pointing, bowing, and eye-movement. Children generally enjoy

reacting to dramatized nonverbal cues by displaying emotions and actions; however, gestures are virtually always required to communicate effectively with learners with disabilities.

Additionally, 'practice makes perfect' is true when teaching learners with diverse communication methods. The ability to listen carefully is the first stage in studying a new language. We cannot anticipate that a child will communicate effectively if we do not first educate him/her to listen attentively as this ability to communicate effectively is a critical component of learning in IECE.

According to Hans and Ahmet (2018), a teacher's ability to communicate effectively is imperative in transmitting knowledge, classroom organisation, interaction with learners in the classroom, and instructing children who possess advanced cognitive skills. A teacher who communicates at the IECE level must be different to one in higher education. The teacher must consider the choice of words, tone, and sentence construction to ensure that learners comprehend the lesson. Successful teaching often necessitates an equal split of knowledge and communication abilities (Sword 2020), thus inclusive teachers must be proficient in all four components of communication: listening, speaking, reading, and writing – and understand how to apply these skills and knowledge in the classroom to promote learners' academic success. Therefore, inclusive teachers must communicate effectively so that the learner sees teachers as role-models for enriching their (learners) communication skills which are central for their growth and academic achievement.

Classrooms in the 21st century must be inclusive, with the usual mix of typical peers and those with disabilities. Children who arrive with moderate to severe academic and behavioural limitations are featured in this population of learners. Hence, teachers must offer additional levels of sophistication to classroom management, necessitating extremely organised, persistent, and affirming methods by teachers to maintain control.

Considering triangulation theory and practices, the study found classroom management skills to be key to the sense-making of teachers' pedagogical skills (Layikh, 2019). In academia, classroom management refers to a set of administrative character traits that a teacher uses to establish and maintain a conducive learning environment to attain the lesson's purpose. Classes are managed by a series of activities in which the teacher seeks to promote the learners' desired behaviour while

simultaneously striving to cancel and eliminate the learners' undesirable behaviour (Layikh, 2019). Participants demonstrated various classroom management skills, including marking learners' exercises, supervising, arranging seating, and additional support for disability. The purpose was to engage the learner, bring negative behaviour under control, and facilitate learners' understanding of the lesson. However, although participants emphasised their duty of competently administrating the class, evidence proved that they were challenged concerning this skill. As such, participants' poor administration skills in the class led to disorganisation in learners' behaviour; for example, while the lesson was proceeding, children were aimlessly jumping and playing around, transgressing classroom regulations. If the teacher views classroom management as both an art and a science (Layikh, 2019) he/she should research (and ask advice from experienced colleagues) how to adequately manage the inclusive classroom.

In terms of technology, classroom management is dependent on the teacher's attitude and approach to engaging with learners, both within and outside the classroom. When classroom management is disrupted, inclusive teachers experience violations of the rules and regulations that control them as learners think there are no repercussions for their misbehaviour in the future. The lack of uniformity and consistency on the teacher's part in terms of classroom rule application might lead to learners' improper conduct to test their boundaries. When it comes to teachers, good classroom administration and the necessary consistency are anchored in the classroom administrative rules (Wong & Wong, 2014).

Obot, Essien and Akpan (2014) found that motivation is a significant element to effectively engage and arouse learners' interest. Participants introduced intrinsic and extrinsic motivational starters such as rhymes to begin the lesson; this encouraged and energised learners who developed interest in the classroom and outside activities such that they became self-motivated and independent learners. This skill can also be achieved by ensuring that positive comments are reinforced to support learners' perceptions that they are doing well, that specific responsibilities are neither very simple nor complicated. In this way schoolchildren are motivated in finding individual understanding and value in content knowledge when given opportunities to seek individual purpose and meaning in all lessons. If the atmosphere is transparent and motivating, learners' sense that

they are a part of the education ecosystem; thus, creating an environment that is both inclusive and beneficial for all learners (Kochhar, 2001).

6.3.1.5 Collaborative learning

The study found that participants employed various collaborative teaching-learning techniques, for example, brainstorming. Collaborative learning accentuates individual group members' input and promotes authority sharing by advancing discourse and unanimity-building on subjects with no obvious right or wrong solution (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2021). The incorporation of group learning into a regular schedule has several benefits such as teachers are able to help children according to their individual needs and abilities, based on the size of the group. Although individual focus can positively influence how a learner acquires a skill, small-group activity is also beneficial for establishing sound classroom connections, emotional regulation, and empathy, given that by looking at their classmates solving issues or interacting with one another, children can learn. Since children can exhibit leadership and collaborative efforts in a diverse skills group, evidence has demonstrated that student interaction in groups improves learning by sharpening intellectual and interpersonal skills (Agana & Millar, 2015).

6.3.2 Synthesis

The study found that for an inclusive teacher to be competent to champion the course of Inclusion in ECE, he/she must be conscious of the interplay of the various teaching pedagogies, teaching skills, and modern practices that are suitable to fulfil the needs of diverse learners. It is worth acknowledging that there is no one-size-fits-all set of teaching skills and expertise that all teachers must possess to convey knowledge in inclusive classrooms. Inclusion is a diverse education phenomenon with a set of established principles, skills, values, interventions, and strategies that teachers must possess and implement to successfully educate diverse learners in an inclusive environment.

Considering the above discussion, the most effective strategies include child-centred pedagogies such as activity-based lessons, brainstorming, jig-saw puzzles, participatory learning, games, fishbowl, and group-collaboration – these will assist all teachers who will manage children from various backgrounds, talents, and interests who have diverse educational needs; this is advised

because there are no exclusive teaching methods for teaching learners with or without disabilities (UNESCO, 2014).

Further, inclusive teachers have to change previous perceptions to adapt to Inclusion principles and strategies when teaching a diversity of learners. As such, the teacher must be capable of adapting lessons by using eclecticism to meet the learners' needs rather than utilising a rigid singular strategy in teaching. Hence, the teacher must blend several teaching skills (communication, motivation, adaptability, and classroom management skills) to engage the learners productively. Teachers will need to cultivate a reflective mindset and inclusive attitudes rather than relying on technical skills and theory in teaching practices (UNESCO, 2014). Teachers must think that all students have the right to attend regular school, so they must examine their school and classroom settings and consider ways to improve them. Understanding IECE opens windows for children to develop socially, psychologically, and economically, thus shaping the enactment process. Learners, once motivated by the sense of belonging, will find school staff approachable and helpful, and thus they become gainfully engaged in the learning process. Over time, inclusion will become embedded in education as communities, cultures, children's interests, needs, skills, and teachers' abilities change for the better.

6.4 ENABLERS AND HINDRANCES IN INCLUSION

In chapter five, it was noted that many contextual elements influence Inclusion in education. According to the study, these contextual elements must be considered because they influence the policy drivers. These contextual elements are discussed in the subsequent discussions.

6.4.1 Constraints that Impede the Enactment of Inclusion

The study found that the policy is marred with many challenges despite national and international efforts to extend education for all, including diversity. These include negative cultural attitudes towards disability, insufficient facilities, lack of teaching and learning resources, lack of qualified teachers, and lack of funding (Ofori, 2018). These challenges have widened the gap between the objectives of the policy and policy enactment. All stakeholders must acknowledge that Inclusion in early childhood education is an institutional programme that requires enormous investment. Its

long-term effect is for the betterment of socio-economic growth. The study found the following constraints adversely affecting the enactment of IECE.

6.4.1.1 Negativity towards disability

Certain conservative social attitudes and beliefs remain ingrained in some cultures as the data overwhelmingly revealed that negative sociocultural factors impact adversely on the Inclusion policy and its enactment in most localities (Vanderpuye, Obosu, & Nishimuko, 2018) This study's participants indicated that pervasive societal attitudes attributed to socio-cultural or superstitious beliefs (e.g. disability is contagious, results from reincarnation, sins of past misdeeds, or disability is a curse) hampered the enactment of Inclusion in their respective schools. Such social views may affect the work of teachers, headmasters, and families. These negative sociocultural beliefs highlight how children's characteristics, particularly their disability, impact academic programmes. The acceptability of disability by society sometimes seems elusive, and this shows in the extent to which other 'normal' learners engage with and interrelate with learners who have disabilities. This negative thinking labels learners with disabilities, and they become victims of discrimination, social stigma, and marginalisation, most of which hinder inclusive beliefs and convictions. As a result of these archaic views, teachers, school heads, and families' perspectives about Inclusion in ECE will probably be influenced which may have a detrimental impact on the enactment of the policy. This study strongly supports the social model view on disability, which recognises society as a significant force against exclusion, marginalisation, and degradation of learners with disabilities.

The presence of negative societal attitudes and beliefs as an obstacle to IECE has been identified as one of the greatest inhibitors of change (Avoke, 2002). According to Hayford (2019), certain Ghanaian cultures possess superstitious perceptions concerning individuals with disabilities that are linked to unexplainable supernatural causes (such as curses or past acts) and hence prevent them from participating in inclusive practices. Such myths have impacted the teaching and integration of disabled learners into early childhood teaching environments.

Thus, conservative socio-cultural elements are critical contextual elements that might impact teacher-attitudes concerning learners with disabilities and IECE. As a result, it is recommended

that a comprehensive social and behavioural drive be instituted for IECE to be fully enacted. Developing favourable attitudes among all interested parties needs ongoing education, transformation, and sensitisation regarding disability and the importance of IECE. Attitudinal shifts should also occur to include the acceptance of IECE as a conscientious discipline that promotes children's early development and future prospects via play that leads to all individuals thriving collaboratively in society.

6.4.1.2 Disability integrated into mainstream schools

The inclusive classroom showcases a myriad of learners with miscellaneous abilities who hail from different backgrounds and contexts. Hence, teachers must understand and appreciate that parents are evolving to positively view learners with disability in IECE settings, a step in the right direction. Also, the study found that some parents hold critically injurious beliefs that negatively impact the enactment of IECE policy, while other parents believed that merging the physically and intellectually challenged children with normal peers affects the policy's implementation. It was believed that the placement of learners with disability in mainstream schools will affect the momentum of teaching and learning. From the teaching perspective, parents assumed that the teacher would have to repeat lessons for those who are intellectually challenged to catch up. Hence, they believed this will affect the normal children's learning patterns implying that inclusion is not practical.

Some parents also believed that inclusive education cannot be enacted because they thought that when all the children sit and learn in the same environment, the health and hygiene of their children will be threatened. While the Inclusion principles conceptualise that an inclusion classroom fosters children's physical, psychological, and cognitive growth, such beliefs will lead to stigmatisation, marginalisation, and exclusionary practices. Though they do this (out of a lack of knowledge) to protect their children, such beliefs impede the Inclusion process which stymies all learners' academic progress (Zuurmond et al., 2019).

The study found that teachers played an additional role by extending Inclusion awareness to the parent. They did this by educating the parent on the causes of disability and the benefits of IECE enactment. Drawing on the theory of planned behaviours (Ajzen, 2021), if the parent becomes

aware of the dangers of depriving their children of quality education, they will develop a positive attitude toward Inclusion education and thus take positive action. This pro-activeness by teachers will heighten parent interest and awareness to be more accepting of Inclusion which enhances collaboration between parents and schools to create a conducive environment for all learners and role-players.

6.4.1.3 Incongruous preparations of Inclusion

Inclusion in ECE is a journey that requires adequate preparation; otherwise, it will be challenging to be enacted. Since IECE is a resource-comprehensive programme, it requires substantial financial, technical, and human resource injection for adequate preparation to achieve policy objectives. It appears that though Ghana has agreed to enact the policy to give learners with a disability the opportunity to access quality education equally, the evidence generated from this study and findings by Ofori (2018) reveal that Ghana's Inclusion attempts are characterised by the lack of appropriate preparation that hampers the success of the programme. Participants agreed that the lack of resources is one of the significant factors stifling Inclusion in Ghana. Specifically, hindrances included debilitating factors such as limited space, absence of cupboards, no ramps, lack of walkways, damaged tables and chairs, and unsafe wooden structures.

In elaboration, teaching and learning resources (TLRs) were in short supply; for example, toys were not found across all the study sites. It must be remembered that Inclusion goes beyond accessibility and children's enrolment. The space within which the enactment site must be prepared to create a welcoming and safe environment. Such preparation includes the provision of TLRs, physical facilities, technology, appropriately designed ECE curriculum, staffing, and coordination to align to the principles of Inclusion. Participants narrated that they had to purchase the resources needed to teach the children in some situations. In the end, they all agreed that the lack of TLRs is a major challenge affecting pedagogical choices. Teachers, policymakers, and all other interested parties must acknowledge that because the IECE programme acknowledges multiple learner-diversities, complex preparation and planning processes must be executed so that every child's needs are fulfilled.

6.4.1.4 Inconvenience of overcrowded classrooms

This study's finding revealed that the total number of children enrolled was unwieldy because it was not in proportion to the teacher's capacity to manage abnormally huge numbers of children with diverse abilities. Overcrowded classrooms and burdensome workloads were among the major challenges affecting the effective enactment of the IECE policy. Participants narrated that when the enrolment exceeded thirty learners teaching and monitoring learners' performance become constrained resulting in a loss of quality in teaching-learning. This study exposed the fact that huge enrolment numbers contradict UNESCO's (2015) of one-is-to-twenty-five (1:25) learner-teacher ratio. The study found the ratio of learners exceeding 1:40 which impeded the achievement of high outcomes.

According to the participants' concerns, they cannot teach efficiently because overcrowding increases the workload (Olaleye et al., 2017); thus, ensuring that every child gets sound education is compromised. Having an enrolment of forty 'burns out' the teacher's strength as he/she has to work harder to give individual attention to all learners, especially those with disabilities. This reduces the number of planned lessons the teacher has to deliver. Teachers must instead limit the number of class activities so that they can attend to all learners, mark their exercises, give feedback, undertake corrective work, and institute remediation, before they can proceed to the next subject.

Some children are unruly and must be under strict supervision to conform to classroom rules and regulations. Because of the nature of the class composition (including disability), large classes are inconvenient and unwieldy for the inclusive teacher to manage since he/she must provide additional support to more learners, thus causing much job-stress. Also, this affects the pace at which the teacher must teach. Although the goal of IECE is to raise the current level of enrolment among all children of various skills and so increase diversity, unmanageable learner-numbers impede dynamic teaching and learning. In such conditions, completing the curriculum will be challenging since the time allocated to every lesson is insufficient. Participants recounted that it is difficult to deal with a high enrolment of learners of this nature, especially concerning such as class control, distribution of resource materials, and seating, among others. This overcrowding with insufficient facilities to accommodate them, coupled with constrained human and material resources, culminates in poor academic performance, absenteeism, excessive noisemaking, and health issues

(Olaleye et al., 2017)**.** Moreover, because the enrolment is disproportional to class size, the classroom is always congested, limiting free movement for the learners, particularly those using crutches and wheelchairs. Additionally, teaching pedagogy such as activity-based group teaching is affected as there will not be enough space, and teachers may not be able to supervise learning activities individually.

6.4.1.5 Inappropriate coaching programmes for Inclusion teachers

Coaching is a special kind of professional development provided by experienced people (experts) or institutions that support Inclusion teachers in realising personal and professional objectives by providing training and guidance. The coaching includes facilitation of well-designed and detailed programmes that equip teachers to manage the inclusive classes astutely. Coaching programmes are intended to enhance teacher's knowledge, methodology, and relevant proficiencies via regular induction, education, and assistance. Further, the development of positive attitudes and approaches via coaching and mentoring programmes contribute to the enhancement of the learning and teaching processes (Yenen & Yöntem, 2020).

However, according to the findings, professional development remains a tough challenge in enacting the IECE programme. It was evident that the coaching programme (e.g., pre-service training and in-service training) was not aligned with the actual practicality and reality in the field. First, teachers lack the background education for the IECE programme. These are the teachers who had studied outside the IECE curriculum and may not be able to cope with SEN children. Secondly, the pre-service professional training programme curriculum was not linked with practice, neither was there practical training to prepare teacher-trainees for inclusivity. This was evident in the participants' sense-making and interpretation of the IECE enactment process since the majority were unable to define Inclusion in education. Even though participants agreed that the programme was helpful, it was not structurally and adequately designed to prepare teachers on the ground.

Though special education courses are offered at Ghana's schools of education (UCC and the University of Education, Winneba), it has been found that they do not adequately prepare teachers for Inclusion (Wisdom, Amponteng, & Owusu, 2020). Teachers may not have been effectively trained and provided with the essential skills before the advent of inclusionary education in Ghana.

Therefore, it is urgently necessary to revise the curricula of teacher-training institutes to incorporate additional courses on special needs education. A teacher-coaching programme should also allow trainees to explore inclusion and communicate with children with diverse needs. Their exposure prior to graduation to SEN children builds their confidence and changes their negative views toward inclusion.

Perry and Boylan (2018) believe that effective and relevant professional development must be sensitive to the unique Inclusion requirements of teachers. Once these gaps are recognised, activities must be carefully prepared to assist teachers to creatively and confidently, apply their knowledge and suitable teaching methods. Letzel and Schneider (2020) maintain that integrating these children into regular schools will be challenging without a consistent and practical framework. Also, teachers' knowledge of Inclusion methodology determines what occurs in a classroom of diverse learners. The study has emphasised that inclusive early childhood development is a critical phase of education since they demand unique methods of teaching and care for diverse learners to develop holistically, hence teachers must possess knowledge, competencies, and abilities to deal with children's individuality. As many studies indicate, teachers must study further to supplement the formal professional development in-service programmes. This will enhance teachers' understanding, abilities, and performance through coaching and professional growth programmes such that educators make deliberate efforts to strengthen their professionalism and commitment to IE practice. After in-service training, teachers showed intense positive views about Inclusion and a will to improve the academic standards of all learners.

In summary, the above findings imply that lack of funding, unmanageable learner numbers, a school environment that impedes the movement of physically challenged persons, unfriendly attitudes of some teachers and children, and parents' biases are among the primary challenges hindering the enactment of IECE (Price, 2018).

6.4.2 Some Enablers to Guarantee the Successful Enactment of Inclusion
The study is full of examples of enablers that must be born in mind as a condition for the success of inclusion in IECE. Conditions include recruiting professional teachers, motivating teachers,

resources, and practical policies to support IECE, reforming school policies and providing support for children with disability.

6.4.2.1 Staff with Inclusion expertise

According to the study participants, professionally qualified Inclusion teachers were urgently needed to help boost the potential and capacity of early childhood education settings (Gioia, 2016). Although some headteachers assisted teachers, the extent of this assistance was regarded as being minimal owing to headteachers insufficient inclusive expertise. As a result, competent headteachers well-versed in Inclusion are seen as critical (but scarce) components for success in IECE. Teachers' professional assets such as preparation and readiness to teach, knowledge, abilities, competencies, and their development of inclusive positive mindsets, were among the requisites of teacher-training and professional development (Ainscow, 2005; Fullan et al., 2005; Peters, 2004). However, although participants indicated that the skills and knowledge of teachers and headteachers should be enhanced in preparation for IECE, the crucial factors were reconstruction of understanding, and advanced levels of cognition to deal with the rigours of inclusive environments, were deemed essential in the development of effective inclusive education.

While a minority of the study participants admitted that they had been equipped for IECE at specific case sites, comments from other participants suggested that pre-service training and professional development were inadequate and lacked practical elements to sufficiently build the skills of the number of teachers for IECE. Teacher-training in inclusive practice, both theoretically and practically, was highlighted, as being necessary. The study's results show that training and professional development are required for strengthening teachers' capability.

In sum, the appropriate preparation of teachers is essential to capacitate teachers to exploit learners' potential especially in special educational needs [SEN] (Gyasi, Okrah, & Anku, 2020). Teachers' inability to assist students with special demands as a result of insufficient preparation and support might result in learning hurdles being experienced by these students. In support, Ngulube, Njelesani, and Njelesani (2020) assert that poorly trained teachers led to hurdles that obstructed teaching-learning processes. As a result of poor induction and support, teachers struggle to employ

technology that may help children with learning differences to accelerate their progress. A well-trained teacher selects the appropriate learning strategy for learners to learn appropriately.

6.4.2.2 Motivating Inclusion teachers

Being an effective Inclusion professional teacher is very valuable in the modern education system. In addition to daily activities such as teaching and assessing learners, inclusive teachers are challenged with learners' diverse behavioural attitudes, family biases, learners' intellectual and physical disabilities, infrastructural deficiencies, among others. Keeping teachers motivated with appropriate support is essential (but difficult) because they are the central players in IECE (Wasburn-Moses & Wasburn, 2020). Motivating teachers with appropriate incentives or rewards will be beneficial in realising the objectives of the IECE policy.

According to this study's findings, the policy's success will not only depend on teacher motivation via rewards, but also support from all stakeholders particularly MoE, GES and District Directorates as teachers are the main players who provide quality education through competent lesson-delivery in the classroom; hence, it is essential that authorities do not side-line inclusive teacher-issues to avoid their demotivation. Participants agreed that they would be encouraged to promote inclusive education with motivation and support from all role-players. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors drive inclusive teacher motivation, but these could be complex and challenging (Crehan, 2016; Martin, 2018). The study suggests that teachers' motivation is influenced by many elements such as availability of TLRs, sufficient physical infrastructure, mature parental attitude, and on-site and in-service professional development. Participants stated that with the proper support and provision of adequate resources, they can do much to include all children to achieve better academic performance.

Motivation and support were also seen as a collaborative effort between the participant and all key stakeholders who wished to be integrated into the educational system. Opoku et al. (2020) acknowledge that parents are instrumental in organising support for general education, but inclusion in education may require more assistance as it is a complex educational process involving assessing, guiding, and disciplining children. As a result of the complex nature of the IECE, teachers may be emotionally and psychologically distressed; hence, with collaborative efforts and

words of encouragement, they will be able to maintain their positive attitude when confronted with Inclusion hurdles. Kershner (2013, p. 67-69) sums up inclusive teachers' duties in IECE:

> [Teachers] support more able pupils and those with learning difficulties. [They] facilitate the integration of pupils from remedial into mainstream classes. [They] work cooperatively in classrooms with teachers in lessons across all curriculum areas. [They] give advice on learning and teaching and the use of resources to enhance pupils' learning with special needs. [Their] work includes effective assessment procedures and detailed records of pupils' needs and progress.

Thus, the heavy workloads of inclusive teachers mean they require motivation to deliver lessons productively. Motivation is a critical aspect in increasing inclusive teachers' performance levels to become more productive. For the teaching and learning process to succeed, teacher motivation and support must always be present, and this results in a significant increase in learners' motivation which results in their better performance. Support and encouragement are well-known popular methods to increase the efficacy in teaching-learning processes.

6.4.2.3 Policies to support the enactment of Inclusion

Participants' responses suggested that the existing Ghanaian institutional policies provide for creating favourable settings for IECE to thrive. As detailed in chapter three, IE is supported by key worldwide agreements and pronouncements. Ghana has accepted these agreements and proclamations (UNESCO Salamanca Statement, EFA, UN CRPD, 2006). Inclusive Education (IE) has served as an overarching concept and foundation for the delivery of academic opportunities for all students. This was obvious from most participants' responses that there is formal IECE legislation and law in place in Ghana, and the country's IECE policies and regulations typically serve as a supporting foundation for its execution. According to research, when nations transition to inclusive policies, supporting Government policies are significant and enabling components in policy execution and adoption (Armstrong et al., 2010).

Government and institution policies provide support for IECE enactment. In contrast to Ainscow (2020), who believes that policy texts have a minimal influence on transformation, Hamilton-Jones

and Vail (2013) assert that the formulation of IECE policy guided by dominant cultural considerations, is essential. This was regarded as important guidelines for practice by some of the participants in this research as it highlighted the necessity for an accommodating the IECE programme at Government and institutional levels to stimulate practice in the field. According to the participants, institutional assistance was also mentioned as a crucial aspect for achieving success in IECE. In this regard, IECE's current capability and support, according to the study's results, is dependent on training and professional development, self-learning, collaboration with academic institutions or other training authorities, and a wide range of available learning materials.

The results revealed in this study indicated that IECE support presented itself in a variety of ways: human and material resources were provided by school authorities, and community efforts to effect change (Fullan, 2007; Peters, 2004). The participants also indicated that these assistance types were accessible. Since teachers were thought of as being the most important actors in IECE by most participants, they were identified as requiring the highest need for further assistance to strengthen their environment, enthusiasm, and devotion to IECE. However, though indications demonstrated that teachers' mastery had improved, extra training was judged as being necessary for them to expand their understanding of the inclusive practice. Some participants stated that more zealous teachers and those who saw IECE as a professional obligation, were required to see the apply to IECE project through to completion. Considering this, it can be concluded that teacher-engagement is a critical component of a successful IECE enactment (Armstrong et al., 2010). However, improving enthusiasm and commitment via financial incentives are essential to motivate IECE teachers.

6.4.2.4 Reforming school policies to integrate inclusion practices
Inclusion refers to a gradual adjustment and adaptation of the educational system so that everyone's needs are satisfied, and that everyone may prosper (Klassen et al., 2020). The success of inclusion depends also on a critical condition that all school should reform their regulations and policies to open their doors to those with disability issues. This means that to provide IE for all learners, the education system must undergo transformation so that the programme is aligned to legislation, culture, and operations in the school environment. Also, the Ministry of Education, the community members, and educational institutions need to revise their policies to become diversity friendly.

'Education system', as referred to above, is a complicated web of interconnections among many players at organisational and operational levels, that, over time, shape learning programmes for all children in a particular jurisdiction.

Participants' perceptions emanate from their understanding of the benefits of inclusion; but rigid school policies that do not allow the smooth integration for those with disability, stifles the Inclusion aim. Hence, participants noted that for the effective enacting of IE, the policy requires overhauling in partnership with the community, policymakers, public and private schools, teachers, parents, and all stakeholders so that all learners benefit from inclusivity. This is a complicated process, hence successful enactment of the policy should be supported by all parties who stand to benefit directly or indirectly from it (Klassen et al., 2020). However, the core perspective behind transformation is policy enactment engendered via the re-orienting of the institution and its enactors to understand and make-sense of the policy to deliver sound non-discriminatory inclusive education.

Accordingly, reforming institutional structures also require that the schools (both public and private) create a conducive environment to also cater for those with diverse needs. This requires management and administrators to consider and dissect what happens inside and outside the school environment. This entails, among others, teaching strategies and assessment, available financial resources, physical infrastructure, social behaviour, and norms, changing mindsets, discipline of learners, parent-engagement, and policy reviewing. Institutions need to be conscious of the dynamics and complexities of Inclusion practices to make appropriate preparations and planning for enacting the policy. They should also comprehend that the policy's purpose is to discourage stigmatisation, prejudice, and segregation in the educational system to encourage uniformity, fair-play, and social justice in society. The schools' leadership must share an understanding that the Inclusion conversation must also shift from the increase in enrolment and attendance of children to staff-training, providing additional support for teachers, review of the school's culture, and implementing innovative teaching-learning strategies. Thus, the assimilation of children with diversity into schools will lead to child development in different ways which will benefit the whole of society.

6.4.2.5 Additional help for children with disabilities

Societal attitudes are changing due to education and enlightenment, promoting early childhood education for all children. However, the study indicates that SEN children (and disabled ones) need specific resources and devices to grasp knowledge and skills conveyed during the teaching process (Miyauchi & Paul 2020). In developing countries, it is very challenging for a parent to provide the resources for their children to facilitate Inclusion because of the low socio-economic conditions; hence one participant suggested that the school, in collaboration with the GES, MoE, and Regional Directorate, should provide the resources needed at inclusive schools. Because parents are frequently unable to provide these resources, schools may access funds from sponsors to step in to guarantee that the child gets the high-quality education to which they are entitled. As a result, students' placement in schools that avail basic resources will be more inclusive than those schools that do not supply such resources (Miyauchi & Paul, 2020).

Additionally, Inclusion should not only focus on enrolment and attendance, but also allow for adjustments in many areas to cater for the child's physical, cognitive, sensory, and emotional needs. All dimensions of the education structures must cater for the diverse needs of all children. Schools may need to adapt their physical structures, such as increasing space and halting large enrolment to permit free movement for those who use crutches and wheelchairs. In addition, ongoing professional development for teachers must keep abreast of contemporary approaches to enact inclusion as recommended by policy. Hence, additional, and special staff should be recruited to assist the school to enhance the IE process. Participants thus believed that with such physical, social, and economic support, the child could successfully participate in the Inclusion process.

6.4.3 Synthesis

This study's findings are replete with examples demonstrating that the two primary facilitators of transition are competence and support, which foster the success of IECE programmes and practices. The change theorists also believe that it is vital that competence and support during the adaptation process address barriers, such as negative perceptions towards disability, dilapidated classrooms, and financial constraints. To precipitate competence and support, agencies at the local and national levels must see to it that they are provided. Professional development and support are associated with IECE practice since the education sector is responsible for IECE

(GoG, Ministry of Education, 2015). Therefore, IECE enactment can be sustained if development and support are seen in practice, and are maintained over time (Fullan et al., 2005). The GES-MoE claims that adequate support is provided for IECE to remain constant, comprehensive, and proactive to achieve successful enactment. Hence, the overall context, comprising social, political, cultural, and economic factors, must be considered for successful IE implementation. However, for a successful enactment process, contextual elements provide both possibilities and limits; the environment in which the IE revolution is occurring often includes several variables, making it interact with and impact other aspects. To achieve IECE policy changes, stakeholders' interests must be visible.

Even though various assistance such as professional, material/financial, and human resources were accessible at some case sites, most participants said that more and better resources were desired for a productive IECE activity. The study's results revealed that support presented itself in a variety of ways, mostly from school authorities, thereby increasing individual and community power to effect change (Fullan, 2007; Peters, 2004). In addition to the assistance described in studies as critical for supporting educational reform and IECE, the participants indicated that other assistance types were accessible. Teachers were thought of as the most important actors in IECE by most participants. As a result, they were identified as having the highest need for further assistance to strengthen their ability, enthusiasm, and devotion to IECE. However, though it was demonstrated that teachers' mastery had improved, extra training was required for them to broaden their understanding of inclusive practices. Considering the above information, it can be concluded that teacher-engagement is a critical component for successful IECE enactment (Armstrong et al., 2010).

6.5 CONCLUSION

As part of a global effort to make education available to all persons, regardless of their nature, Ghana was also a signatory to International Treaties to enhance children's education rights. As a result, Ghana's education policy is framed within this framework (inclusion in education). It is grounded on the principle that segregation, stigmatisation, and exclusionary practices in our educational system, must end. The Inclusion policy is founded on the belief that all individuals who attend educational institutions must be granted equal access, quality teaching and learning, accommodation in appropriate physical settings, and that fundamental principles of IECE are

applied such as dedicated involvement, cordial relationships, and sound collaboration. It puts all stakeholders in the education system under obligation to fulfil the diverse needs of all categories of individuals in Ghana's education system through a comprehensive design for learning which includes a welcoming environment.

This study's results have significant implications for understanding the level of progress in IECE, in terms of effectively implementing change techniques for sustainability. The study has determined that children's human rights and socio-economic benefits are key reasons that inform IECE policy and practice. Equity, competence, and necessary resources must be added to facilitate the full realisation of human rights for all learners. Advocates of IECE believe that it is both economically and socially just for society to invest, and hence effect change. In IECE, it is determined that all children should obtain both academic and social outcomes that are socially and culturally valued, but these outcomes vary in the degree of achievement. In addition, IECE principles and objectives also influence practice, teaching, and teacher beliefs, which motivates the need to change.

This study has determined that Ghana has made progress with regard to the provision of principles and objectives of IECE. But the attitudes and behaviour toward the enactment of IECE are diverse: negative views towards children born with disability, irrelevant training programmes, large learner enrolment, insufficient educational resources; all these are detrimental to the successful enactment of Inclusion. Nevertheless, IECE remains a logical and necessary practice worth enacting for achieving SDG objectives. That is, IECE conveys knowledge and skills to all children at an early stage that are essential for future economic development and empowerment. Therefore, IECE policy must be constructive, inspiring, socialising, organised, change-oriented, and have a cultural purpose that draws on the shared effort of all educators, stakeholders, and the Government.

For successful IECE enactment, a common nationwide school level policy is essential to change the prevailing cultural beliefs that tend to adversely influence IECE enactment. Additionally, there is assistance via university collaboration programmes, reliable coaching support, and resource availability. However, IECE requires systemic collaboration and dedication among all stakeholders such as teachers' commitment to practical work and adopting positive attitudes.

The need for in-depth information regarding teachers' views toward Inclusion and how Inclusion is practised in their classrooms is vital before any development programme can be modified. In support, Shogren et al. (2015) note that integrating knowledge of classroom practice with teachers' perspectives and attitudes regarding learners with disability, will promote policy enactment levels. Engelbrecht and Savolainen (2018) reiterate that growing inclusion needs a dynamic and participatory strategy that includes policymakers, educators, and parents to drive the development process to fruition. Teachers in Ghana and other parts of the world need to adopt a positive and committed stance to effect IECE successfully. If they do not have access to crucial professional assistance and policy knowledge, then it is more likely to result in teacher hesitation and indifference which will adversely influence their understanding of inclusion (Ackah-Jnr, 2018; Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017). As a result, advancement in understanding and enacting inclusion in Ghana has been sluggish, owing to barriers such as inaccessible curricula, untrained teachers, large class sizes, inappropriate teacher-centred methodologies, and limited resources (Ackah-Jnr, 2018; Ametepee, & Anastasiou, 2015; Singal, Salifu, Iddrisu, Casely-Hayford, & Lundebye, 2015).

6.6 IMPLICATIONS

This study found compelling evidence of the current state of Ghana's enactment of IECE policy. Thus, to provide children with excellent, non-discriminatory education, and anti-exclusion practices, the study offers the following suggestions:

6.6.1 Shared Understanding of IECE policy

To achieve the comprehensive IECE policy objectives, it is imperative to thoroughly understand the children's right to education through practices, policies, and legislation. Educationists, policymakers, and enactors should continue to contemplate IECE as being grounded on learners' right to education, hence shifting the focus away from a disability perspective that promotes discrimination, segregation, and exclusion, which threatens the goal of education for all. Parents, communities, teachers, institutions, and the Government must negotiate, collaborate, and create a common and consistent understanding of IECE which should be counted as a national programme that leads to economic growth and empowerment for all children as well as the nation as a whole.

6.6.2 Synergy among all Role-players

Parents, communities, teachers, institutions, and the Government must collaborate to develop a shared understanding of IECE. The practice must be viewed as a national programme that will lead to the empowerment of all children, and to the country's development. Despite the limitations of enacting IECE, many participants believed it to be a beneficial practice worth enacting to meet SDG goals. In other words, they identified IECE to expose all children to information and skills critical for economic development and empowerment from an early age. Thus, its enactment is judged as a necessity for the nation's current and future human resource development.

6.6.3 Developing Positive Views towards Learners with Diverse Needs

Teachers must recognise the individual personalities and differences of all learners, especially the potential of learners with disabilities. Teachers must be motivated by the belief that every child is unique and capable of learning. Undesirable attitudes regarding disability obstruct people (both the teacher and the child) who have the verve to promote and exploit learning opportunities. Teacher attitudes influence the connection between teachers and challenged learners, and significantly the judgements of non-disabled peers. Furthermore, teachers' positive perspectives and expertise of managing children with special needs play a critical function in shaping all children's social, intellectual, and cognitive skills (Connell, 2020).

6.6.4 Providing Knowledge and Awareness through Education

The MoE and GES must educate and create awareness among all parents to understand the benefits of Inclusion to both the disabled and non-disabled children. As such, IECE encourages children to learn acceptance of other children, promotes love of learning, increases positive self-esteem, and filial respect for others through peer interaction both within and outside the classroom. Moreover, IECE empowers all children to learn as those with disability are provided with equivalent and additional opportunities to share the same programmes and activities as 'normal' children who co-exist in peace with disabled children by respecting them to build lifelong friendships over extended periods. This will cascade to the community to change their negative cultural belief that learners with disability must not be engaged in social settings; this removes stigmatisation and dehumanisation.

6.6.5 Supporting Learners with Disability

As a result of the low socio-economic conditions in Ghana, most parents of disabled children cannot meet the demands of their physically challenged children. In addressing such challenges, the Government of Ghana, its agencies, and interested parties must develop better and more intervention schemes for the parent/guardian who cannot provide resources such as wheelchairs and crutches for their children/wards.

6.6.6 Improving on Training Programmes

This study recommended that sustained and intensive training would provide teachers with professional growth through Government endeavours in providing IECE pre- and in-service training. Hence, the Government must collaborate with universities and other educational colleges to make IECE training take centre stage in their curriculum by linking pre-service theoretical knowledge to practice. As part of policy transformation, a systematic reformation in teachers' educational programmes should incorporate specific inclusive courses that dwell on a more comprehensive understanding to revolutionise thinking regarding IECE. To help drive and sustain IECE, the programmes presented during pre- and in-service training must focus on the policy's objectives and the needs of the teachers, children, and the country. Schools must establish professional learning platforms and collaborate with higher education institutions to assist teachers in continuously participating in self-education while developing self-empowerment. Teacher education should prepare teachers by providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to apply inclusive pedagogies like co-teaching and role-playing, in addition to accessing information and skills needed to understand the national education philosophy and vision for Inclusion teaching. When conducted appropriately and thoroughly, the training will provide the teacher with the necessary IECE tools, such as appropriate and creative teaching practices that will promote effective teaching-learning activities.

Moreover, it is necessary to have institutional rules, procedures, and assistive programmes and innovative teaching techniques for IECE to be sustainable in the long term, particularly at the elementary school level. For example, teachers may not be inclined to accommodate children with special needs: their dispositions may be contradictory to IECE practices; their training may be inadequate to manage IECE; and there may be an absence of passion and commitment in enacting

inclusive teaching and learning - all of which require urgent intervention. A common misconception is that integrating IECE practices like differentiated instructional strategies or UDL into curriculum is challenging. However, when stakeholders have a sense of unanimity and display mutually supportive behaviour, IECE enactment then has the highest opportunity of being successfully integrated into lesson-planning. Working in isolation is doomed to fail; instead, the fundamental components of IE such as administration, schooling system, personnel competence development, and IE practices, are all interconnected components of a more considerable structure. To guarantee that all role-players work smoothly and are incorporated into the evolving IE nature of the school, it is necessary to examine essential components of IE jointly and to set the stage for planning and preparation.

6.6.7 Providing Sufficient and Quality Educational Resources

This study also recommends that teachers must be supplied with the tools they require, such as TLRs, and data about learners with diversities (such as those from poor economic backgrounds, disabilities, preparation on how to adequately teach learners particularly those with Special Education Needs, and training in adjusting educational content and use of materials). All aspects of Inclusion should be covered in training sessions as well as in the study materials for teachers. This process necessitates rigorous staff training and ongoing professional development to adequately prepare educators for Inclusion. Again, to reduce the challenges impeding IECE enactment in Ghana, GES/MOE must resource ECE settings financially, provide materials, and create proper funding channels to ensure that funds are astutely apportioned to provide the needed support. Additionally, schools can seek help from other stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to obtain supplementary support and resources.

Another area which is well-worth attending to is the provision of physical facilities which is aligned to the promotion of pedagogical content intelligence, supervision of the practice, knowledge of critical pedagogical tasks, freedom of choice, and the engagement of teachers in continuous reflection. Physical facilities also protect the safety of teachers and schoolchildren while allowing them to spend time and space on education.

6.6.8 Designing Standardised Physical Structures

When designing physical facilities, many factors should be considered; firstly, build an adequate number of structures such as spacious classroom blocks that can accommodate the required number of learners to provide free movement of children, specifically those with disabilities. It is critical for all learners to move freely throughout the classroom and have easy accessibility to the storage places, cupboards, and outlets, among other things. They should provide adequate spacing and level access for persons who use assistive devices such as wheelchairs and walkers. A sufficient number of structures will ensure more enrolment of children with diverse needs, particularly those with disability. Authorities should also consider cultural and local conventions, including building bathroom facilities for Muslims; if possible, separate urinal and toilet facilities must be available for Muslim learners. This is because Muslims have religious traditions which must be adhered to. Sanitation facilities should be clean, safe, easy to use and private. The washroom should not be far from the school campus for easy accessibility. The toilets should have covers, wash basins, toilet rolls, sanitisers, soap, towels, a suitable ventilation system, and regularly cleaned and maintained. Further, if hostel facilities are available, then all rules and regulations pertaining to such a facility should be strictly adhered to.

Also, recreational facilities such well-designed playgrounds, a football pitch, merry-go-round, and indoor games (e.g., Ludo, chess etc.) should be provided. Recreational activities will expose learners to various events beyond the comfort of their homes, and academic contexts that help them develop and ultimately gain authority.

6.6.9 Revolutionising Traditional Educational Culture

To achieve effectiveness and long-term viability, IECE must be approached from a holistic perspective across the institution. Establishing inclusive schools takes time, dedication, ongoing reflection, industriousness, and persistent endeavour because it is a complicated and interconnected undertaking that takes much effort and commitment. An IECE school requires a top-down culture shift, a united and coherent understanding with a shared vision by all staff members, and a school culture based on IECE school principals' commitment, a sound management style, and best practices in teaching and learning. It is vital to change schools' conservatism and functioning patterns to raise the standards of teaching-learning, even though it is difficult. Because

IECE necessitates the development of innovative, efficient, and reliable alternatives for encouraging learners' engagement and accomplishment, an adaptable design for the entire school's support services, such as the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) where teachers collaborate with specialised staff or experts to determine, supervise, and assist those who need assistance at various moments and for various reasons. Previously, the more conventional, domain-specific instructional leaders assigned those children with additional requirements to inclusive teachers, which creates segregation from the mainstream primary classrooms; the more innovative teacher's strategy incorporates technology (and other forms of teaching aids) to assist SEN learners into the mainstream classroom settings.

6.6.10 Integrating Motivational Structures into IECE

Government must provide motivational structures for the teachers as teachers with high motivation are more ready to teach and incorporate all learners, irrespective of disabilities or economic background, thus fostering healthy holistic child-development (Hlalele, 2021). Intrinsic and extrinsically driven teachers have more substantial purpose, dedication, and favourable work practices which can help eradicate exclusion. According to the study's findings, enthusiastic and highly motivated teachers will welcome children not because they are loving, caring, and purposeful (Allen & Cowdery, 2015), but also that they interact harmoniously with other players such as parents to encourage positive, inclusive practice.

6.6.11 Synthesis

Underpinned by sensemaking theory, the study explored teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion in education from Ghanaian perspectives. The enormity to which teachers comprehend the multifaceted nature of inclusion will shape their views and inform how they should enact the policy. Crucially, the study has unearthed the enormous contributions education has on children's early childhood development from zero to eight years. The findings have various implications for policy formulation and make a crucial contribution to education literature.

Teachers' understanding of inclusion is myopic, affecting the enactment of inclusive education in Ghana. When inclusive teachers hold onto preview understanding that focuses on the disability paradigm, rather than learners with disparate characteristics such as language differences, lifestyle,

financial positions, cultural values etc., they may possess undesirable views towards the assimilation of these children. The study findings communicate to inclusion in education enactors that there is the need to shift our understanding to current theories, to minimize the exclusionary rate within the educational systems. Whiles also bearing in mind that the policy is taxing and resource intensive and demands collaboration between parents, communities, teachers, institutions, and the Government.

The study has highlighted that understanding alone is inadequate if educationists want to achieve the most out of the IECE policy. This is because having understood the dynamics of inclusion, which includes the application of diverse pedagogies, systems, and structures, must be created to resource the policy. These resources, as the study found, include funding, supply of teaching and learning resources, reliable and consistent training programmes that revolutionize teachers' thinking, adjustment of school rules and regulations that fit every student's needs, recruitment of teachers with expertise, and parent awareness about the consequence and IECE. Integration and engagement are essential for boosting learners' retention and encouraging achievement. Learners with diversities might be supported or hindered by the atmosphere we want to create in the classroom and our instructional strategies. IECE can successfully be enacted if we tackle the process holistically.

6.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Though the current study adds to the understanding of IECE in academia, replicating it with different settings to involve more participants with similar characteristics to explore the practice of IECE, is suggested by using other research methods. To acquire a broader view of IECE practice in Ghana, an additional stakeholder or a broader sample which includes parents must be accessed. Embarking on such studies will importantly capture the missing voice of parents of learners with disability. To obtain a broader understanding and scope of the policy, examining the entire societal attitudes, behaviour, and opinions and how they impact the practice of the IECE programme, will add knowledge to existing literature.

Evaluating IECE policy and changing enactment procedures will produce a valuable addition to studies on ECE in Ghana. Many investigations should explore situational issues on a larger scale

to gather in-depth knowledge and understanding concerning IECE. These future studies must focus on the problem's identification and provide potential solutions. Understandings of practices must be shared with teachers and other stakeholders so that the new knowledge will be utilised to enhance teaching-learning processes to reinforce IECE changes and practice.

Further research is required to contribute to the knowledge of age requirements for children in IECE. This is because previous findings and current findings are inconsistent. While previous studies were uncertain about the specific age requirement, the present study findings indicated the same. Some participants in this study believed that the appropriate age is birth-to-eight years, while others said the IECE policy must prescribe the age four-to-eight years.

Lastly, as the understanding of Inclusion shifts from a disability standpoint to diversity, researchers and educationists must delve deeper into researching the concept of Inclusion to develop a shared incisive understanding. This will shape the views of stakeholders (teachers, Government, and headteachers) resulting in the removal of various barriers such as negative cultural beliefs, religious disparities, lifestyles, and languages which promote exclusion. Specifically, in-depth, and wider studies should capture and change negative culturally dominated views in areas such as the northern part of the country.

CHAPTER SEVEN
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY, AND CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter (6), a theoretical elucidation of the central themes emerged from the data analysis and results, together with recommendations and conclusions. In this chapter (7), it was necessary to round-off the study by re-looking at the study objectives that set the foundation for this study. Also, my reflection as a critical role-player in Inclusion in education was outlined. Finally, the summary of findings, contributions of the study to practice, the chapter's summary, and the conclusion to the study are presented.

7.1.1 Objectives of the Study

As a requirement of the thesis protocol, study objectives were stated to provide the foundation and goals for the exploration. The objectives were the following:

- To explore teachers' understanding of inclusion in early childhood education in Ghana;
- To explore how teachers' understanding shapes their enactment of inclusion in early childhood education in Ghana; and
- To understand why teachers enact inclusion in certain ways in early childhood education in Ghana.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Chapter six detailed the themes that emanated from the study. The key findings that addressed the main research question are outlined. The summary will focus on the following themes:

- Disability is a critical component of teachers' understanding of inclusion.
- Blending diverse teaching and learning practice celebrates individuality.
- Contextual variables shape current enactment of inclusion.

7.2.1 Disability is a Critical Element in teachers' understanding of Inclusion

In chapter two, diverse elements of IECE were identified, which formed the fundamental principles of the policy. Inclusion means that children have belief systems, economic status (rich or poor),

lifestyles, traditions, and disability which should not be the basis for exclusionary practices (Gudjonsdottir & Óskarsdóttir, 2016).

A disability is any limitation or incapability (arising from a disorder) to undertake an action in the fashion or within the scope regarded as normal for a human being. It is defined by Aljanzouri et al. (2014) as individual incapacity to engage in any activity within the parameters considered normal for humans; it is the presence of mental, physical, or anatomical structure malfunctioning. According to the study's findings, these characteristics of children influence the enactment of inclusion in education policy.

As a critical element of the policy enactment, it was evident that education and society have transgressed against these groups of people because they have been excluded from various social gatherings, specifically access to the educational system. According to the study's participants, these societal and education malpractices are aspects that Inclusion seeks to address. Children's disabilities such as speech problems, visual impairment, writing problems, slow learning, and difficulty in reasoning (among others) are realities in society that led thinking individuals to the birthing of the IECE policy which established that the fundamental principle of Inclusion is to integrate disabled children with their normal peers. This was seen as eliminating exclusionary practices such as labelling and restructuring the educational system to accommodate SEN learners in mainstream classes.

Hence, IECE was critically understood from the point of benefiting children with disability with spin-offs into enhancing society. Inclusion was indispensably considered as a development instrument for these segregated and marginalised because it was found that giving every child an equitable opportunity to access quality education at the early stage (birth-to-eight) is a guarantee for their advance in holistic development. As the findings suggest, such children's development will culminate to building the child's social, psychological, intellectual, and cognitive domains. And because every child is endowed with latent abilities, bringing children together to learn as a single body and exposing them to the same curricular activities will enhance and unearth such latent competencies.

However, despite the fact that IECE is usually recognised as a sound policy with a number of benefits, some consider it as time-consuming and frustrating, especially those teachers who have a negative attitude toward IECE. Because children sometimes misbehave, Inclusion becomes difficult to manage, and integrating individuals with disabilities who require extra assistance and attention requires the teacher to take on a variety of roles. Teachers must be able to detect how learners acquire information, store it, and process it, even if it is difficult for them to comprehend variances in learners' knowledge-acquisition. This implies that children should be exposed to a variety of authentic and 'real-life' curricular activities via creative instructional pedagogies during their early years. Though some maintain that inclusion is a difficult road to travel, the policy ensures the promotion of all social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills of children with disabilities that would accelerate the development of a robust and complete foundation for lifelong-learning and health.

7.2.2 Blending Teaching-learning Practices to Celebrate Individuality

Inclusion fundamentally celebrates individual ability, implying that different children with different competencies exist and are of equal importance. Understanding this dimension means that applying a single teaching and learning strategy might not be successful with those with learning difficulties. Thus, as part of the policy guidelines, teachers must be conscious of and proficient in determining every child's unique characteristic and then apply the appropriate method to ensure that every child learns effectively. This was apparent when one participant in this study stated that she first considered the differences among learners prior to preparing a lesson for the class.

For the inclusive teacher to instruct in integrated or 'mixed' classrooms by manipulating various available teaching-learning techniques for every child to benefit equally, is sometimes arduous. Teaching strategies included activity-based tasks, jigsaw puzzles, group-based assignments, participatory methods, demonstration, and collaborative learning. Blending these strategies into a workable mix, was 'mind-stretching' but was regarded as crucial because teachers believed that eclecticism enhanced the teaching-learning environment for learners to collaborate, experiment, visualise, play, cooperate, dramatize, critically think, problem-solve, reflect, and to learn by participation without being under pressure. In this method of teaching and learning, the teacher in

Inclusion acts as a supervisory figure by guiding learners on what to do, and what not to do, in order to allow them to reason freely.

A blend of diverse strategies was a particularly successful approach to engage children of various abilities from multiple contexts. For example, those with hearing and writing problems can visualise and experiment. Because of the differences in children's learning abilities, children working in groups enhance their performance via cooperative learning especially among the disabled and 'slow' developing learners. Because each child learns differently, choosing to learn appropriate methodologies and adapting assessment formats and testing instruments can be advantageous for learners with special needs (Carlson & Daehler, 2019). As such, this approach is on the priority list as it makes Inclusion a reality, especially for learners who struggle with reading and writing tasks as a result of certain disabilities.

In addition, learning strategies such as the demonstration technique is beneficial in educating children in IECE because they fostered the visualisation of teaching and learning resources. Skills such as communication, adaptability, motivation, reading, and writing were vital to ensure that the lesson took on a practical, realistic, and true-to-life nature. These skills were frequently employed in lesson-delivery to activate learners' interest and arouse their curiosity to enhance their theoretical and practical understandings of knowledge. While serving as a teacher, it is essential to have strong teaching proficiencies that enable the inclusive teacher to keep their students, especially the physically challenged, involved and enthusiastic in the lessons they are teaching. Identifying the most effective teaching skill(s) and how to best apply them in inclusive spaces will assist the teacher in enhancing learners' performance.

7.2.3   Contextual Variables Shaping Current Enactment of Inclusion

The IECE policy and its implementation in Ghana is being entrenched, but not without challenges. The participants' responses in this study revealed that critical changes to contextual variables prevalent at various levels in the enactment of IECE in Ghana, are afoot to realise the ideals of inclusive education. Even though enablers of change contributed to the proper enactment of the policy and practice, constraints such as inaccurate preparations towards IECE, learners crowded in classrooms, and inappropriate professional development programmes hampered the

achievement of the expected progress in inclusive classrooms. In addition to providing essential details into the intricacies of IECE in Ghana, these results also unearthed viable strategies for boosting continuous improvement practice in IECE. What emanated clearly from the data analysis was that the non-discrimination of children and the economic advantages that it will bring in the future, were key objectives of the IECE policy in the execution of reform. The full conscientizing and realisation of human rights requires social justice, capacity, and astute planning of the IECE programme and its enactment to function smoothly. From an economic standpoint, investment in IECE is regarded as socially obligatory such that society should provide for all (or some part) of the IECE roll-out. In IECE, all learners are perceived to obtain intellectual and social skills even though there are differences in the pace and methods to achieve these objectives. The values and goals of IECE are also a critical change agent that promote enactment by encouraging the utilisation of appropriate methods and resources while changing the conservative mindsets of educators, amongst other role-players.

Consequently, a common understanding of the fundamental goals, acceptability of these principles, and standards of key stakeholders is crucial to IECE effectiveness. The views and behaviours of teachers, headteachers, and parents also impact IECE policy and enactment, as do the socioeconomic-political settings in which conservatism is embedded. Reform in such settings is progressive and imperative because it influences how much could be accomplished throughout the enactment process. Supportive IECE programmes at country and school levels are required to facilitate the adoption of successful practices. Negative practice, thinking, and attitudes prevalent in certain societies remain a stumbling block in IECE enactment. Teachers' need for ongoing and intense relevant training, professional development workshops, other material assistance will be a source of inspiration to promote the principles of IECE through innovative practical teaching qualities which are also required to arouse the interest and standards of all learners.

7.3 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

The study contributed to research on IECE to fill the knowledge concerning the Inclusion gap in Ghana by exposing teachers' understanding of IECE in schools. The knowledge produced

will provide contextual information for delivering quality and effective ECE services and support programmes.

7.3.1 Inclusion as Applicable Knowledge

Inclusion was identified as the strategy that may help to eliminate exclusion behaviours against the disadvantaged. When children are integrated, they would study and collaboratively gain knowledge. This is because children are astute in that they pick up information from their peers via social contact, practice, and observation. In IECE, learners' experiment with various tools and resources in the learning process which they apply in challenging and real-life situations by accessing previous knowledge. Children become problem-solvers – a role that will have future benefits. For example, learners raised in a multilingual classroom environment have an easier time acquiring knowledge because they can connect with the different linguistic patterns evident in various social situations. Such students can also convert information from other dialects into the dialects they comprehend best to make studying easier. In the future, some of these children will be bilingual or multilingual.

Furthermore, by introducing learners to diverse curriculum activities, students learn and remember information by becoming physically and intellectually involved in the learning process. Knowledge is acquired when children are engaged in conceptual thinking involving learning strategies such as jigsaw-puzzle activities, group-based teaching, and demonstration methods. Teachers with knowledge and understanding of IECE ensure that learners with diverse abilities can learn on their own through supervision and guidance. This method of acquiring knowledge via personal experience is also used to assist children in memorising and comprehending their study material through the understanding of scientific terminology.

Findings in this study have shown that activity-based learning improves students' educational results and behaviours. As such, IECE creates an ideal setting for fostering scientific education, particularly at the elementary level where teachers allow learners to develop their conceptual knowledge and understanding to solve problems especially related to children's arithmetic computations. When children attempt to comprehend real-life authentic items or situations, instead of anything artificial or fictional, they grasp knowledge and skills quicker and better. This is

achieved when learners experiment with TLRs in collaborative learning and activity-based groups which transforms science classes into entertaining and interesting spaces for learning. However, it is significant that both teachers and learners must contribute to this 'fun' classroom climate. For example, if the lesson is supposed to be concerning plant categorisation, learners may be requested to gather various plant kinds so that the teacher successfully educates them about the details of the plant in class. As IECE exposes children to knowledge and skills from an early stage, which is essential for economic development and confidence-building, meaningfully enacting the policy is deemed a prerequisite for contemporary and future human resource development for the nation.

7.3.2 Age Four as an Ideal Head start for Enactment of IECE

Literature has reported contrasting views on the required age for children enrolled in IECE. Findings differ between Fenton-Glynn (2019) and Connery and Weiner (2021), and Baffoe, (2013), Van Laere & Vandenbroeck (2017) and Vandenbroeck et al. (2018): the former advocates that IECE should commence from birth, while the latter believes that the appropriate age is from one-to-six years. Both views support that, children are receptive at an early stage, which suits IECE policy.

In consideration of the above opinions concerning the aspect of age for IECE, this study makes another critical contribution to the age debate necessary for enacting IECE that could impact the current inclusion practices. According to the findings, to reduce the burden on the teacher in the classroom, the study suggested that children's enrolment in IECE should start from four- to-eight years. It was envisaged that elder children will guide the younger ones in doing chores such as cleaning and organising the classroom. They also assist the younger ones in acquiring knowledge during collaborative learning, group-learning, and activity-based learning. According to the study, when children encounter accidents in the classroom or in the playground, such situations become challenging for the teacher; however, elder children assist in such situations, especially helping those with disabilities. Hence, the rationale for educating children within this period is to holistically develop the child socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically.

7.3.3 Inclusion Pedagogy as a Contested Practice

The inclusive teacher's challenge is the ability to determine and combine multiple inclusion pedagogies to fulfil individual needs. Inclusion pedagogy is a learner-centred teaching and learning strategy that focuses on the individual's background, learning patterns and abilities. In IECE, all learners should have equal access to quality education, and schools are obliged to provide learning spaces that adhere to universal design principles. This means that in the end, Inclusion teaching is all about contesting teaching strategies that satisfy the majority, and for those who are marginalised and excluded to create a more diverse society.

To be effective, an inclusive teacher must employ a variety of creative and innovative teaching approaches (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020). The teacher is supposed to design and adapt various teaching methodologies to cater for every individual learner to achieve academic excellence. The challenge here is that the learners' abilities must determine the approach to be utilised. It was discovered that the teaching methods to adopt and apply must be flexible and based on real-life experiences to make-sense of knowledge being conveyed by the teacher; therefore, a rigid template of teaching pedagogy styles is not helpful. This requires that teachers possess a bottomless philosophical understanding of the policy, coupled with ongoing training programmes to keep abreast of inclusive classroom dynamics.

To guarantee that 'no child is left behind', teachers should look at students' previous achievements, intellectual functioning, and interests to cater for individual requirements (differentiated learning) and differences, in addition to the adaptive teaching methods and techniques that concentrate on improving the overall class success. An inclusive teacher is sometimes influenced to adapt and change methods of teaching and management styles when the need arises. In other words, to be effective, the facilitator must change lesson plans to blend with the requirements of the syllabus and special needs of the pupils, rather than adhering to a rigid plan. To successfully and interactively engage learners, teachers must adopt the eclectic approach to include numerous teaching competencies (e.g., communication, drama skills, incentivising, flexibility, classroom management etc.) with diverse pedagogies (activity-based, group-based, demonstration and participatory). Reflective thinking and inclusive attitudes will be necessary for teachers rather than depending on technical skills and knowledge of instructional strategies (UNESCO, 2014). Schools

and classrooms may be improved if teachers believe that all children have a right to regular education and are educable.

7.3.4 Teacher's Responsibilities in Enactment of Inclusion is Multifaceted

The responsibility of an inclusive teacher is multifaceted because, aside from teaching, there are other roles they should perform. The teacher's job-description includes teaching the subject content and providing additional support such as visiting learners after school hours, and training in the use of and maintaining supportive devices, among other things. Additionally, teachers may learn sign language to ensure learners with speech and hearing impairment participate in the teaching-learning process. It is in the nature of most teachers to also create love and a social bond between the school, family, and the learners. When teachers display sincere love and affection to those with disability, it will be exceedingly promoted children's social, cognitive, and emotional adjustment. Moreover, a critical part of an inclusive teacher's responsibility is to apply efficient assessment mechanisms, provide feedback reports on learners' daily, weekly, and monthly performance to the school and the family, as well as remedial interventions to minimise common errors and misunderstandings.

Inclusive teachers educate the parents about the benefit of inclusive education. Inclusive education aims to enlighten parents that children born with a disability are humans and that their conditions are not curses, but they should be regarded as being special to all. It was to establish collaboration between the school and the parent. Similarly, Thompson et al. (2020) add that cooperation between teachers and parents is another critical teacher support that can affect the efficiency of inclusive practices. When teachers and parents collaborate, problems associated with teachers' difficulty in enacting inclusion in early childhood education are reduced.

Another responsibility was in the form of modifying teaching strategies to benefit every child regardless of their abilities. Learners occupy Whiles the class with different abilities; some are quick learners, while others are slow learners; from learner to learner, the comprehension of many courses likewise varies. Some children can grasp mathematical concepts considerably faster than their peers, while others may excel in linguistic skills. In such situations, the teacher should identify these lapses and provide support by modifying the teaching strategy to satisfy the need of every learner. Teachers' support could include adapting how they present a lesson, by providing coping

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techniques and cues in a quiet space to help learners gain full advantage of the lesson-content, while preparing teaching materials tailored to the needs of learners with disabilities.

7.3.5   Inclusion Creates Deficit in Academic Achievement

The IECE philosophy is praised for its propensity to nurture children to be physically, socially, emotionally, and academically developed. Through collaborative learning, cordial social interactions, and exposure to creative and innovatively designed curriculum activities, they gradually acquire relevant knowledge for future use. It is believed that bringing children together under one roof to study not only benefits those with a disability, but the entire class, including the inclusive teachers. In contrast, the study's participants stated that merging those with disability into the mainstream education environment impedes some learners' academic progress.

Some sections of society believe that the inclusive teachers' responsibilities in the classroom are doubled because they need to pay special attention and more time to children with disabilities. Although the presence of learners with disability in mainstream education is a noble one, the teacher becomes burdened with extra work. According to the findings, the inclusive teacher provides additional support such as visiting learners after school hours, training learners in the use and maintenance of supportive equipment, and helping those with writing problems, among other things. Especially where the time allocated for teaching is forty-five minutes, and the number of enrolled students exceeds the recommended limit, teaching in inclusive classrooms becomes exhausting. Hence, participant-teachers believed that providing additional assistance to the physically challenged, and repeating lessons for learners with intellectual challenges slows down the learning pace of 'normal' children. This, according to the findings, means that enacting inclusion is difficult.

7.3.6 Adapting Mainstream School Policies to Accommodate Learners with Diversity

According to MoE, IECE is seen as the Government's strategic vision for the 'education for all children' including those with special educational needs. As the study's findings suggest, the goal of IECE is to ensure that children of school-going age (starting from zero to eight) are granted equal access to quality education without segregating them into different environments or rejecting their enrolment based on diversity. However, it is important to realise that this policy (and its

enactment) is comprehensive and demanding. Thus, the MoE should understand that the policy has many demands to satisfy before quality education can be accessible to every child, regardless of their diversity, especially those with disability and special needs. With the present state of policy enactment, the IECE programme and policy need urgent adaptation, reformation, support, and decrease in content; hence, inputs from the MoE, GES, District Directorate, and the mainstream schools are imperative to draw up a realistic and practical inclusive policy if IECE is to be successful.

Accordingly, to close the existing gap in the present outdated mainstream approach and migrate towards frameworks that are oriented toward merging normal children with those who are challenged, is the most pro-reform initiative that is required. At the end of the day, inclusive education reform is about improving schools and society as a whole. As such, management, teachers, and parents must ensure that sound infrastructure, teaching methods, and relevant resources are at a superlative level to enhance learner achievement efficiently and successfully. Inclusive school reform is an extension of the notion of school enhancement to guarantee that initiatives and results are enjoyed by the totality of varied learner demographics and abilities. To guarantee that school reform is prioritised, practised, accessible, and sustainable, will make inclusivity become a reality such that all role-players contribute to improved educational quality.

7.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study focused on teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in Early Childhood Education in Ghana. The understanding of Inclusion was centred on disability. According to the findings, Inclusion was defined as a critical element in mixing learners with and without disability in mainstream education to receive quality and equitable education to eliminate segregation, stigmatisation, and exclusion concerning learners with disability in the educational system. The study contributes to research since it provides fresh perspectives to a topic in literature where knowledge vacuums were identified. The research's value is mainly on aspects concerning theory, methodology and contribution to practice.

7.4.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study's explorative nature made a critical contribution to research by utilising the principles of the sense-making theory and the interpretive paradigm to gain a deeper understanding of IECE policy and, more importantly, the aspects that guide policy enactment. This thinking emanated from the principle that it is unwise to take action without first understanding the situation. Although it is difficult to grasp a thorough understanding of any setting without first spending sufficient time in the area of inquiry, in most cases our current understandings via dissection of the topic are sufficient when dealing with well-known occurrences. However, there are times when we are faced with unpredictability in our lives when we doubt the practical relevance of our present knowledge foundations, since some encounters are perplexing and unexpected. As part of our inquiry into what the IECE entails and how we should promote it, the sense-making process was instrumental in providing answers. The study thus advocates that to respond to injustices against those with diversity, education and society must be 'revolutionise' their conservative and rigid mindsets, a process that should be coordinated among parents, teachers, schools, and policymakers.

Inclusion begins with individuals' understanding and critically evaluating hierarchical systems and their perspectives toward learners with disabilities. The path to Inclusion can only commence after this key level of knowledge and understanding has been established. As a result, this research suggests strategies for parents, teachers, and institutions to become conscientious and proactive about present patterns of thinking and functioning to challenge non-progressive ways of thinking. This entails taking action to oppose conservative views toward diversity by detecting and eradicating categorisation, prejudice, and injustices in educational spaces. In this study, the researcher aimed to counter anti-diversity thinking by exposing preconceptions, prejudices, and injustices that exist in the education system. The findings of this research also reinforced the notion that, for us to accomplish change, archaic and discriminatory perceptions that interrupt progressive contemporary discourses on Inclusion must be exposed for its blinkered 'vision'. Inclusion can commence in earnest if awareness is implanted in all role-players such that conservatism is eliminated in education.

Further, this study makes a critical contribution to knowledge by emphasising that the sense-making theory in combination with the interpreting paradigm is instrumental for teachers in

particular to understand and interpret the various teaching strategies (activity-based group, participatory, visualisation and collaboration) to celebrate individual learner-potential in the inclusive classroom. Further, the utilising of the sense-making theory created and awareness that society must seriously reflect on the positives and benefits of IECE to the child, family, society, and the nation as a whole, so that any barrier that inhibits the programme enactment should be removed.

7.4.2 Methodological Contribution

A methodological contribution was evident when adopting concepts and theories created in other domains to be applicable to the Ghanaian setting. It has been challenged whether certain investigative theories and methodologies applied in other economies should be adopted (and adapted) to issues being investigated in emerging economies due to the social and cultural disparities between the two. However, the practical application of these frameworks to this research assisted in the development and understanding of case studies in Ghana.

In addition, the methodological contribution of the present study has to do with the research design. The use of a unique research design that included multiple data collection instruments (interview, participant observation, and photo-elicitation) strengthened the credibility of the study's results. More specifically, these three instruments used in combination, have assisted to foster a deeper understanding and interpretation of the data. Lastly, utilising multiple data collection methods enhanced the authenticity (and triangulation) of the results since these helped to moderate the influence of the various data collection methods.

7.4.3 Contribution to Practice

Among the critical contributions that emerged from the application of the three case study approaches was the invaluable acquisition of an incisive understanding of Inclusion. The case studies revealed the need to shift from the traditional understanding of Inclusion which focuses on disability discourse to a more liberal philosophy of diversity. In other words, stakeholders should concentrate on IECE which is anchored on learners' right to quality education, rather than a disability mindset that promotes discrimination, segregation, and exclusion that undermines the aim of education for all. Parents, communities, teachers, institutions, and the Government must

reach consensus on the current understanding of IECE and collaborate to develop a common non-discriminatory practice.

Additionally, a practical contribution of this study involves inclusive teachers being capable of determining individual learners' learning patterns to guide them in choosing appropriate teaching methods and learning materials that celebrate individuality. They should use videos, flyers, books, and PowerPoint presentations to deliver interesting lessons. Teachers must understand that they are the key enactors of the policy as success begins from their understanding, interpretation, and use of strategies (among others) to drive Inclusion. Understanding teaching pedagogies requires ongoing training and development focusing on practice rather than mainly theories. As such, teachers must be conscientized that their responsibility does not end with what transpires in the classroom, but that they must establish cohesive social interaction among themselves and children to build learners' social engagement needs and skills; hence, those with special needs and disability must be given additional attention to increase their social participatory skills. Adaptation becomes an invaluable instrument because teaching skills must be flexible to accommodate all learning styles. The role of the teacher is critical as a facilitator of IECE, which includes exercising a judicious leadership role in the classroom to create a serene but vibrant inclusive classroom environment.

Moreover, this study contributes to practice by promoting the understanding that Inclusion is resource-intensive and time-consuming. To effectively enact IECE, educational authorities such as MoE, GES, the Education Directorate, and school authorities must avail funds to create an inclusive-rich environment. For learners with intellectual challenges and disabilities, syllabus modification is a continuous process to adapt the teaching of the curriculum to match their educational needs regarding information-delivery. Modifications and adaptations may be made to content, instructional processes, assessment, and environmental aspects, and practices should be flexible to accommodate all learners to progress to attain high standards of academic performance. In other words, teachers should adjust the contents of subjects to ensure equality, while catering for a range of learners to benefit from being actively engaged in classroom activities, instead of being passive listeners. Curriculum changes are not meant to devalue the quality of subject content,

but its revision makes schools more inclusive to all learners to ensure that no student is disadvantaged or excluded.

Resources such as spacious structures, modern learning materials, employing teachers with knowledge and understanding of Inclusion, and collaboration among all role-players must be developed to enhance IECE. Lastly, policymakers must ensure existing school policies are reformed to allow children with diversity to be enrolled.

7.5 MY DOCTORAL LEARNING JOURNEY

This section describes what I learned as a researcher, including how the initial research project came to be, and how I dealt with its complexity throughout the research journey. My initial hypothesis centred on exploring teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion by utilising multi-case studies involving three Ghanaian schools. Following my first meeting with my supervisor in March 2019, books on research were recommended; for example, Creswell and Creswell (2018), which assisted me to narrow down my research topic. While researching the literature, I noticed some contradictions between disability and Inclusion; for example, I was perturbed that some schools continue to reject admitting children with special needs.

Thus followed my endeavour to research which looked at how teachers enact IECE, including aspects such as how teachers interpreted and enacted the IECE curriculum in terms of pedagogy, assessment, and disability. At the beginning of my research journey, I devised a precise strategy, confident that I would be able to accomplish my objectives if I followed it. For example, my research plan showed that by August 2021, I would submit all my chapters. Everything changed when the Covid-19 Pandemic struck across the globe. I was also involved in a motor-car accident, which was compounded by contracting malaria which slowed the momentum of conducting the research processes. During these difficult times, I learned how to display empathy when engaging with study participants who were experiencing complex situations in the delivery of IECE.

I connected with my field research participants and learned how to employ data collection methods including semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and photo-elicitation which I applied in my studies. As mentioned in my proposal that I would analyse my data using the sense-

making theory (Dervin, 1999), interpretive paradigm, and the inductive thematic analysis, these frameworks underpinned my study and assisted in collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data. Participants' responses demonstrated both negative and positive attitudes toward teaching children with diverse needs. Also, there was conceptual confusion as many of the teachers in the research were of the view that Inclusion meant disability. It was heartening that some teachers stressed the positive features of disability rather than on IECE teaching-learning deficits. I also realised that inclusive education might flourish if teachers adjusted their pedagogy to match the needs of their learners rather than attempting to change them based on their own 'traditional' teaching methods.

Many people consider obtaining a doctorate to be a difficult task. The three-to four-year trip may appear to be an eternity. After completing the journey, I realised that spending the entire three or four years was not necessary. You may finish your doctorate in less time and have a more enjoyable trip if you have solid support, determination, and resolute focus. As I have reached the conclusion to my doctoral programme, I can now reflect on everything I have gone through, and the many lessons I have learned. It also affords me the opportunity to thank and appreciate important persons like my supervisor, who guided me in a major way along this academic research journey. However, the doctoral journey may not be as straightforward as one might think as there were unexpected challenges as well as twists and turns which make one tiresome and sometimes despairing. As such, it is all about being enthusiastic, persevering, and resilient about your goals. When you are passionate about the subject you are researching, it becomes less of a chore and more of a pleasure, knowing that you are working toward an important goal.

Enrolling for a doctoral degree was a significant endeavour for me as I sought to push the frontiers of knowledge by being committed to add fresh knowledge concerning IECE. Hence, it is vital to have a supervisor that understands me and my situation during arduous times - I was fortunate to be mentored by an excellent supervisor whose assistance was invaluable in assisting me in balancing my obligations. The supervisor knew my responsibilities as a student, husband, and parent so I was not stressed when devoting some time resolving family matters. Working harmoniously with such a supervisor and sharing my challenges outside of the academic work, allowed me to be more productive as I was confident that there was help at hand when I was in a precarious situation along my academic research journey.

Another challenge I was confronted with was shrinking the project's scope to a realistic one, as my initial plan was overly ambitious. After graduating with a master's degree in education and working in the Ghana Education Service, I often relied on mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) rather than mainly the qualitative approach. It seemed difficult to shift my thinking from quantitative to a qualitative paradigm. After a series of meetings, discussions, and attending various subject-related meetings with my supervisor, I finally decided to adhere to the qualitative research method to understand *early childhood education in Ghana: Teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion*. Changing my traditional ideas was a significant challenge but the extensive reading of textbooks, articles, periodicals, and discourse with subject specialists, like my supervisor and other researchers, aided me. Ultimately, I recognised the importance of qualitative research in education, which prompted me to act, resulting in my submission of a book chapter: *Inclusion in Early Childhood Education: A Sense-making Perspective which was published in* a book titled *Inclusion in South Africa Education: Understanding challenges and enablement* by Professors D. J. Hlalele and T. M. Makoelle.

Despite my uneasiness and lack of experience working on a PhD of such a massive scale in terms of time, effort, and volume of work, I believe that a few benefits arose out of this research journey when trying to assess and make-sense of it. I discovered that the entire research process was a powerful learning experience as it inspired me to put research theory into practice. I frequently had to review, refine, and revisit the study objectives, methodology, and data collection and processing tools; it surprised me that I valued my experience because it allowed me to perform a lot of self-reflection and internalisation. Although I had selected individuals and groups for discussion on the topic, things did not go as planned. As a result, I had to practise flexibility and negotiation processes based on the participants' available time, needs, and interests. This made me aware that flexibility in the research process is critical, resulting in a one-of-a-kind learning experience for a beginner-researcher like me. I eventually gained confidence and became more excited and enthusiastic to continue discussions with various people linked to my research topic. I recognised the value of 'interactive conversation' with participants, co-students, and supervisors which were gained during my doctoral research experience.

This study's findings, in my opinion, have the potential to help Ghana's educational system continue to flourish. Policymakers, education officers, teachers, and parents have largely collaborated to turn traditional educational practices into transformative practices for learners. However, Ghanaian schools have yet to fully integrate transformative practices. All stakeholders must collaborate to transform policies and procedures into practice. I learned several personal lessons during my research including working on my academic writing and research skills to produce a research proposal and doctoral thesis. The study's findings have changed people's opinions and knowledge of Inclusion practises for all learners, including those with disabilities.

Despite the difficulties, this doctoral journey has been a profitable, fascinating, and eye-opening experience. Through being industrious and resilient, my doctoral journey has strengthened me and my resolve to increase my optimism to look at the road ahead.

7.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter (7) described the key findings of the study. It highlighted that concept of disability is critical when defining IECE. In Inclusion, a teacher must blend recommended Inclusion pedagogy and skills to celebrate individuality in the classroom. It also demonstrated that teachers must note that their responsibilities go beyond teaching, supervision, marking and grading; also, they must pay special attention to those with physical and cognitive challenges to allow for equal participation. The chapter also focused on the theoretical, methodological, and contribution to practice made by this research. It is envisaged that the findings and recommendations will be beneficial to support teachers (and other role-players) in correctly understanding and applying their insights in IECE.

7.7 CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

This research study aimed at exploring teachers' understanding and enactment of Inclusion in early childhood education (ECE) settings in Ghana. In addressing the main research question in line with the objectives of the study, interviews, observations, and photo-elicitations were centred on teachers' understanding of Inclusion, how such understanding shaped teachers' enactment of Inclusion, and why ECE teachers enact Inclusion in unique ways. The main limitation was that the study was conducted by including only teachers as the participants. Future studies should involve

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a mixed proportion of all stakeholders to widen the scope of the subject of Inclusion. It was mainly recommended that since Inclusion has a relatively long path to travel in Ghana, all stakeholders should collaborate expeditiously to remove conservative thinking that borders on discrimination to plot a direction that is inclusive of educating and accommodating all diverse groups of learners in mainstream classrooms. As a result of the outcomes of this research, it is envisaged that children's experiences in IECE environments would be enhanced, especially those from disadvantaged communities and those challenged by disability who were previously victims of marginalisation.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

21 September 2020

Mr Awudu Salaam Mohammed (219093979)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Mohammed,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001608/2020
Project title: Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion.
Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 26 June 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. **PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 21 September 2021.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood   ■ Howard College   ■ Medical School   ■ Pietermaritzburg   ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX B1: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION LETTER

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

In case of reply the number and
date of the letter should be quoted

Our Ref No: GES/ASH/MPG/EP/.15

Your Ref. No:................

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

Mampong Municipal Education Office
P. O. Box 216
Mampong - Ashanti

Tel. No. (+233) 0248880410
Email: mampongeducationoffice@yahoo.com
6th April, 2020.

AWUDU SALAAM MOHAMMED (MR)
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS
SOUTH AFRICA

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Following your application to Municipal Education Directorate, Mampong Ashanti, Ghana to carry out research on **"Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion"** in three (3) selected Primary Schools; St Monica's Primary School, Emmanuel Presbyterian Model School and Bosofour RC Primary School, I am pleased to inform you that you have been granted permission to undertake research in the selected schools for the period: 1st May, 2020 to 30th July, 2020.

You are duly advised to report to the named schools' Head-teachers before embarking on the research. I am by this letter requesting the Head-teachers of the selected schools to kindly give the Student Researcher the needed support to enable him conduct his research.

Note that all the ethical issues in research must be duly observed and applied to the respondents in the selected schools in this Municipal Education Directorate.

On completion of the research project, you are requested to submit one hard copy of your research report to this office.

I wish you good luck in your assignment.

GABRIEL ANTWI
MUNICIPAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
MAMPONG – ASHANTI

Cc: The Head-teacher, St Monica's Primary School, Mampong – Ashanti, Ghana.
    The Head-teacher, Emmanuel Presbyterian Model School, Mampong – Ashanti, Ghana.
    The Head-teacher, Bosofour RC Primary School, Bosofour-Ashanti, Ghana.
    File

APPENDIX B2: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION LETTER

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

In case of reply the number and
date of the letter should be quoted

Our Ref No: GES/ASH/MPG/EP/.23

Your Ref. No:.................

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

Mampong Municipal Education Office
P. O. Box 216
Mampong - Ashanti

Tel. No. (+233) 0248880410
Email: mampongeducationoffice@yahoo.com

21st August, 2020.

AWUDU SALAAM MOHAMMED (MR)
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS
PRIVATE BAG X03
ASHWOOD 3605
SOUTH AFRICA

RE: PERMISSION OF EXTENSION OF DURATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Following your application to the Municipal Education Directorate, Mampong-Ashanti for an extension of duration to carry out research on *Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion in Mampong Municipality.* I am pleased to inform you that you have been granted permission to undertake research in the selected early childhood classes in the following Primary Schools; *Bosofour R/C Primary, St Monica's Primary, and Emmanuel Model Presbyterian School* in November 2020.

You are duly advised to report to the named schools' authorities before embarking on the research. I am by this letter requesting the Heads of the selected schools to kindly give the Student Researcher the needed support to enable him to conduct his research.

Note that:

1. All the ethical issues in research must be duly observed and applied to the respondents in the selected schools in this Municipal Education Directorate.
2. All Covid-19 pandemic protocols must be duly observed in all cases in the school.
3. Consent of the selected learners and teachers must be sought before they are sampled and used for the research.

On completion of the research project, you are requested to submit one hard copy of your report to this office.

I wish you good luck in your assignment.

GABRIEL ANTWI
(MUNICIPAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION)

Cc:

1. The Headmistress, Bosofour R/C Primary, **Bosofour-Ashanti.**
2. The Headmaster, St Monica's Primary, **Mampong-Ashanti**
3. The Headmistress, Emmanuel Presbyterian Model School. **Mampong-Ashanti**
4. File.

APPENDIX B3: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION LETTER

BOSOFOUR R/C PRIMARY & JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

In case of reply the number and date of the letter should be quoted

My Ref. No: BRCP/SRW/2020/001
Your Ref. No:

Post Office Box MM 21
Via Mampong-Ashanti
Wednesday, 26th August, 2020
Tel: 0243529508/0208337315
E-mail bosofour.rc.primary@gmail.com

Mr. Awudu Salaam Mohammed
University of KwaZulu-Natal
School of Education
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood 3605
South Africa

Dear Student Researcher,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT BOSOFOUR R/C PRIMARY SCHOOL

I write with much pleasure to notify you that, your request to conduct an educational research in the aforementioned school, which was dated on 20th July, 2020 has been received and permission granted to you.

I am ready to make the targeted teachers available for your study, interaction and any necessary information needed. It is my hope that this research will help to keep teachers abreast with the present state of education in the world.

It would also be my pleasure, if all the safety protocols and preventive measures of COVID-19 could be observed as stated in your letter. This is not contrary to what we have been practicing in the school. I do appreciate your effort of selecting this school among a lot in the municipality, for this research. I wish you all the best in your studies.

Yours truly

DERY PROSPERA ZIEM
(HEADMISTRESS)

HEADTEACHER
BOSOFOUR R/C MODEL PRIM. SCH.
P. O. BOX 21
MAMPONG

BANKERS:
Ghana Commercial Bank & Kwamanman Rural Bank Mampong-Ashanti, Ghana

EMMANUEL PRESBYTERIAN MODEL SCHOOL

MOTTO: Nimdeɛ ne Nyansa

P. O. BOX 8
Mampong – Ashanti

Date: 25th August, 2020

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU- NATAL
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS
PRIATE BAG X03
ASHWOOD 3605

Dear Student Researcher,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT EMMANUEL PRESBYTERIAN MODEL SCHOOL

I write to acknowledge receipt of the letter requesting our school to grant you permission to conduct your research on the topic: "Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of inclusion in Mampong Municipality". I am happy to inform you that your request has been granted to use our school as a research site.

The School will make all resources available that will assist you in your research work, putting into consideration all protocols of Covid-19 as we are not in normal times. We believe that you share similar practices with us as and when you visit our school.

Emmanuel Presbyterian Model School is owned by the Church and is a Private school in this Municipality. Our system of education starts from Crèche, Kindergarten, Primary, and Junior High School. You are welcome to the school environment. We wish you a fruitful research work.

Yours faithfully,

Bediako Marfo Kwadwo
(Headteacher)

APPENDIX B5: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION LETTER

ST. MONICA'S PRIMARY SCHOOL (I. J)
EACH FOR ALL AND ALL FOR GOD
(INCASE OF REPLY, THE NUMBER & DATE OF THIS LETTER MUST BE QUOTED)

OUR REFERENCE: STM/P.001/2020   YOUR REFERENCE: ____   DATE: 25-08-2020

University of KwaZulu-Natal
School of Education
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood 3605
South Africa

Dear Sir,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT ST. MONICA'S PRIMARY SCHOOL
MR. AWUDU SALAAM MOHAMMED

With reference to your request letter dated 20th July, 2020 to carry out a research in the St. Monica's Primary School as part of requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, we are pleased to inform you that your request has been granted to carry out the research study.

As a school we whole heartedly welcome and accept your request and we do everything possible for your research study to be successful and supported by all and sundry in the school environment.

Note that COVID 19 pandemic is still hanging on our neck and we practice all the preventive protocols in school. You are reminded that you will follow all the protocols as been practiced in the school during the research study.

We hope our message finds you well and we look forward to seeing you for the research work to begin as and when you have stated.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,
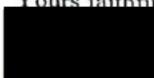
Headteacher
ST. MONICA'S PRIMARY (I.J)
POST OFFICE BOX 5
MAMPONG-ASHANTI

Adjei Amoako George

Headteacher

ST. MONICA'S PRIMARY SCHOOL (I. J)
POST OFFICE BOX 50, MAMPOG - ASHANTI
TEL: +233 243 173 702 / +233 504 741 697
EMAIL : stmonicasprimary@yahoo.com

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APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION TEACHERS

School of Education
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
South Africa

24th February 2020

Dear Early Childhood Education Teacher

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is **Awudu Salaam Mohammed,** and I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa in the Department of Psychology at the School of Education. As part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, I am required to conduct research. My research study is titled: ***Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion.***

You are being invited to consider participating in this research. The aim of this research is to explore teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion in early childhood education and how this impact realisation of the inclusive policy objective in Ghana. The study will ascertain how teachers understand inclusion in Early Childhood Education and the factors that necessitate its enactment, which would further enable the identification of key contextual factors that act as barriers to effective enactment of inclusion in early childhood education. Additionally, the study seeks to identify relevant supports for teachers, including professional development needs, for enacting inclusion in Early Childhood Education. You will be taken through one-on-one prompts (in-depth interviews), visual image, and observation. This will be audio-taped, transcribed and incorporated into the data analysis process. I am interested in time to gather information. The duration of your participation if you choose to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be 45minutes or 1 hour. Enrolment starts from November 2020.

Selection / Identification of participants

Teachers in early childhood schools in Mampong Municipality are asked to participate in this research. The target group is teachers in kindergarten 1 and 2, as well as Basic 1, 2 and 3 in each school will be purposively selected for the study. Mampong Municipal Education Directorate will identify the participants and will be recruited through the distribution of letters.

What you will be asked to do
Teachers at Early Childhood Educations Schools will take part in (prompts) semi-structured interviews for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, recorded for transcription with prior consent. You will be required to teach lesson which will be observed and to take photographs of your lesson delivery. You will also be required to provide documents or materials considered relevant to policy, practice, and enactment of IECE. No confidential accessed.

Benefits of the research
You will not benefit directly from participating in this research. The results of this study will be beneficial by contributing to our knowledge base of teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion.

Costs of participating in this research
This research is not funded. There will be no costs involved for taking part in this research study. No participant will receive any payment to participate in this research project.

Your participation is voluntary/Right to withdraw
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may decline to participate or withdraw anytime without penalty or consequence should you feel any negative treatment in the quest of asking you questions or interviewing you.

Your confidentiality
The information gathered during this research project will always remain confidential. Participants' and schools' names will not be disclosed during the research or publication of the results. Information obtained via the research will be used for research purposes only. All data will be treated confidential and secured on a password protected computer. The data will also be kept in a locked filling cabinet within the School of Education, and only accessible to the research team.

Risks to participants
There are no risks in participating in this research as you will be required to identify your practices, understanding and vital issues in enactment of IECE.

How and when data gathered be disposed
Your information provided to us will be protected. Any personal information you provide will be coded and will not be linked to you. Your information identified will not be stored with the data. You will not be identified in any publication or report. Your information will always be kept private and then all study documents will be destroyed 5 years after we conclude this study.

Feedback on the results of this research
You will be provided with a summary and details on how to access the thesis online once the research has been published.

If you are willing to be observed, interviewed, and photographed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow interview, observation and photographing to be recorded by the following equipment:

Equipment	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		

Contact Information
I can be contacted at:
Email: 219093979@stu.ukzn.ac.za or mohammedasalaam@yahoo.com
Cell: +233244459531

My supervisor is Prof Dipane Joseph Hlalele who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
Contact details:
Email: hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za
Phone number: +27312601127

You may also contact the Research Office through:
HSSREC Research Office
Tel: 031 260 3587 / 4609
Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT

I……………………………………………………………………….(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.
I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Additional consent
I hereby provide consent to:
Audio-record my interview   YES / NO
Permission to use photographs   YES / NO

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Witness   Date
(Where applicable)

_____   _____
Signature of Translator   Date
(Where applicable)

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Title of Research: Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion.

Researcher: Awudu Salaam Mohammed
Email: 219093979@stu.ukzn.ac.za or mohammedasalaam@yahoo.com
Cell: +233244459531

Supervisor: Prof Dipane Joseph Hlalele
Email: hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za
Tel: +27312601127

I…………………………………………………………… have been informed about the study entitled: *Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion* by **Awudu Salaam Mohammed.**

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually entitled to.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study. I understand that I may contact the researcher at:
Email: 219093979@stu.ukzn.ac.za or mohammedasalaam@yahoo.com
Cell: +233244459531

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
PrivateBagX54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: +27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za
Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview	YES / NO
Use of my photographs for research purposes	YES / NO

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Witness   Date
(Where applicable)

_____   _____

Signature of Translator   Date
(Where applicable)

School of Education
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
South Africa

24th February 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER
My name is **Awudu Salaam Mohammed**, and I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa in the Department of Psychology at the School of Education. As part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, I am required to conduct research. My research study is titled: ***Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion.***

Your permission is being sought to have your child observe in this study. The aim of this research is to explore teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion in early childhood education and how this impact realisation of the inclusive policy objective in Ghana. The study will ascertain how teachers understand inclusion in Early Childhood Education and the factors that necessitate its enactment, which would further enable the identification of key contextual factors that act as barriers to effective enactment of inclusion in early childhood education. Additionally, the study seeks to identify relevant supports for teachers, including professional development needs, for enacting inclusion in Early Childhood Education. Your child is not directly involved in this study but will be observed and photographed. Your child will be in class while I take the teacher through prompts, observation, and photo-taking. Nothing more will be expected from your child. The duration of your child's participation if allow to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be 45minutes or 1 hour. Enrolment starts from November 2020. Please read the following information carefully before you decide whether to give your permission.

Selection / Identification of participants
Teachers in early childhood schools in Mampong Municipality will be asked to participate in this research. The target group will only be teachers in kindergarten 1 and 2, as well as Basic 1, 2 and 3 in each school will be purposively selected for the study. Mampong Municipal Education Directorate will identify the participants and will be recruited through the distribution of letters.

What you will be asked to do
Teachers at Early Childhood Educations Schools will take part in (prompts) semi-structured interviews for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, recorded for transcription with prior consent. The teachers will be required to provide documents or materials considered relevant to policy, practice, and enactment of IECE. No confidential accessed.

Benefits of the research
There are no direct benefits to your child, but your child will receive a small gift for participating. The results of this study will be beneficial by contributing to our knowledge base of teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion.

Costs of participating in this research
This research is not funded. There will be no costs involved for taking part in this research study. No participant will receive any payment to participate in this research project.

Participation is voluntary/Right to withdraw
Your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may ask your child to decline to participate or withdraw anytime without penalty or consequence should you feel any negative treatment in the quest of asking your child questions or interviewing him/her. We also ask that you read this letter to your child and inform your child that participation is voluntary. At the time of the study, your child will once again be reminded of this by the researcher.

Your confidentiality
The information gathered during this research project will always remain confidential. Participants' and schools' names will not be disclosed during the research or publication of the results. Information obtained via the research will be used for research purposes only. All data will be treated confidential and secured on a password protected computer. The data will also be kept in a locked filling cabinet within the School of Education, and only accessible to the research team.

Risks to participants
There are no risks in participating in this research as you will be required to identify your practices, understanding and vital issues in enactment of IECE.

How and when data gathered be disposed
Your information provided to us will be protected. Any personal information you provide will be coded and will not be linked to you. Your information identified will not be stored with the data. You will not be identified in any publication or report. Your information will always be kept private and then all study documents will be destroyed 5 years after we conclude this study.

Feedback on the results of this research
You will be provided with a summary and details on how to access the thesis online once the research has been published.

If you are willing to allow your child to be observed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow your child to be observed, photographed, and be recorded by the following equipment:

Equipment	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		

Contact Information
I can be contacted at:
Email: 219093979@stu.ukzn.ac.za or mohammedasalaam@yahoo.com
Cell: +233244459531

My supervisor is Prof Dipane Joseph Hlalele who is located at the School of Education,
Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
Contact details:
Email: hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za
Phone number: +27312601127

You may also contact the Research Office through:
HSSREC Research Office
Tel: 031 260 3587 / 4609
Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION BY PARENT/GUARDIAN

I……………………………………………………………… (full name of parent/guardian) hereby
confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I
consent to allow my child to participate in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my child from the project at any time, should
he/she so desire.

Additional consent
I hereby provide consent to:
Audio-record my interview   YES / NO
Use of my child's photographs for research purposes   YES/ NO

_____   _____

Signature of Parent   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN

Title of Research: Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion.

Researcher: Awudu Salaam Mohammed
Email: 219093979@stu.ukzn.ac.za or mohammedasalaam@yahoo.com
Cell: +233244459531

Supervisor: Prof Dipane Joseph Hlalele
Email: hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za
Tel: +27312601127

I………………………………………………………………… have been informed about the study entitled: *Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion* by **Awudu Salaam Mohammed.**
.
I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I understand that my child will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

I declare that my child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw him/her at any time without affecting any of the benefits that usually entitled to.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research my child's identity will remain anonymous.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study. I understand that I may contact the researcher at:
Email: 219093979@stu.ukzn.ac.za or mohammedasalaam@yahoo.com
Cell: +233244459531

If I have any questions or concerns about my child's rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building

PrivateBagX54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview   YES / NO
Use of my child's photographs for research purposes   YES / NO

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Witness   Date
(Where applicable)

_____   _____
Signature of Translator   Date
(Where applicable)

APPENDIX E: ASSENT FORM FOR LEARNERS

Title of Research
Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion.

Researcher
 Awudu Salaam Mohammed
Email: 219093979@stu.ukzn.ac.za or mohammedasalaam@yahoo.com
Cell: +233244459531

Supervisor: Prof Dipane Joseph Hlalele
Email: hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za
Tel: +27312601127

Hello Learners ……..

I am doing research on **Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion**. This research aims at exploring teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion in early childhood education and how this impact realisation of the inclusive policy objective in Ghana.

I want to observe your teacher's lesson and all the activities and practices in this class.

Your teachers will be taking through one-on-one prompts, photo-taking and observations. I will also audio record and take photographs of your teacher's lesson and all your activities in class.

If you agree, then be in class while I take your teacher through prompts, observation, and photo-taking. Nothing more will be expected from you.

Note that you are not directly involved of the study, but you will be observed.

Are you happy or unhappy as I do my research in your school?

ASSENT DECLARATION

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually entitled to.

I understand that all information gather on me for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at:
Email: 219093979@stu.ukzn.ac.za or mohammedasalaam@yahoo.com
Cell: +233244459531

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
PrivateBagX54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview   YES / NO
Use of my photographs for research purposes   YES / NO

_____   _____

Signature of Learner   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Witness   Date
(Where applicable)

_____   _____

Signature of Translator   Date
(Where applicable)

Research Topic: Early Childhood Education in Ghana: Teachers' Understanding and Enactment of Inclusion.

This study explores teachers' understanding and enactment of inclusion in early childhood education and how this impact the realisation of inclusive education policy objective in Ghana. Teachers are the key stakeholders and forerunners of inclusive education as they make practice to happen.

NOTICING

What are teachers' understanding of inclusion in ECE in Ghana?

1.0 Kindly share with me your personal teaching experience and educational background.

2.0 The age of learners and enrolment of learners in a class matter. Kindly share with me their importance.
   2.1 Also share with me learners' different disabilities in your class.

3.0 There are National and International Policies underpinning the practise of IE in Ghana. With your experience in teaching learners with disabilities, kindly comment on the following.
   3.1 Disability Act 2006, Act715,
   3.2 Inclusive Education Policy,
   3.3 Early Childhood Education Policy.

4.0 You have experience in teaching children with various disabilities. In your work as a teacher, please share with me your teaching experience in Inclusive Early Childhood setting.

5.0 Inclusive education is one kind of strategy to ensure education for all learners in the same classroom. Please share with me your view on Inclusive Early Childhood Education.
   5.1 Please comment on what makes IECE different from other forms of Education.
   5.2 Kindly further share with why IECE is important to all children and the society.

INTERPRETATION
How is teachers' understanding of inclusion in ECE in Ghana enacted?
6.0 You continuously need to develop strategies on a daily basis to provide quality educational opportunities for every learner in your classroom. You need resources and pedagogical skills to ensure effective teaching and learning. Please comment on the available resources at your school to teach learners with learning ability and disability and the support you receive from your school and Ghana Education Service to facilitate teaching your learners.
   6.1 Please share with me the methods you use to educate learners with and without disability in your school.
   6.2 Kindly comment on the success and sustainability of IE in your school.

ACTION

Why is teachers' understanding of inclusion in ECE in Ghana is enacted the way it is?

7.0 The classroom level component of inclusion enactment is most critical. Professional preparation, social barriers and cultural beliefs play indispensable role in defining the reason teachers' understanding of inclusion in ECE in Ghana is enacted the way it is.

    7.1 Kindly comment on cultural beliefs and barriers that influence IE.

    7.2 Please share with me your personal support for IE.

    7.3 Also comment on the importance and barriers of inclusion in ECE.

    7.4 Professional preparation and development, including pre-and in-service affect the enactment of inclusive early childhood education. Please comment on how this influences your IE practice.

    7.5 Share any other comments on possibility and success of inclusion in early childhood settings.

APPENDIX G: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE FOR INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS.

WHAT TO OBSERVE	TIME	REMARKS

Physical Facilities
1. Are the classrooms divided into well-defined areas with adequate spaces for small groups of learners?
2. Are the doors wide enough?
3. Can the learners have access to the cupboards?
4. Are there adequate furniture to support teaching and learning?
5. Are walkways disability friendly?
6. Consider accessibility in terms of ramps or stairs.
7. All furniture is in good condition and are appropriate for learners.

Teaching Resource
1. Picture books.
2. Toys for play.
3. Various learning corners, e.g., sand tray, shopping corner.
4. Teaching learning aids.

Classroom Activities
1. Individual activities in the classroom such as interaction with peers.
2. Group activities in the classroom.
3. Classroom display examples of learner's work Whole class activities.
4. In door play materials.
5. Warm up activities (before starting class how teacher motivates the students towards the present lesson).
6. Plan (daily lesson plan).
7. Teaching methods and techniques (using different teaching methods and techniques such as reciprocal, think/pair/share, collaborative teaching, so on).
8. Classroom management (seating arrangement).
9. Using teaching aids.
10. Communication (gestures, body language, pronunciation, eye contact).

Children
1. Learners are actively engaged in activities.
2. Teacher motivates learners.

3. As learners are interacting during break time.

Documents
1. Records on children with disability.
2. Record on children with disability who improve in class performance.
3. Policy document on inclusive education in Ghana.
4. Record on teachers trained to teach in Inclusive Early Childhood Education.
5. In-service training organised for teachers in early childhood inclusive schools.
6. Curriculum designed to include inclusive education in Ghana.

APPENDIX H: PHOTO-ELICITATION GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

Participants are encouraged to take photographs they feel depict the physical facilities, teaching resources, classroom activities, children, and documents in orderly. The school, teachers and children's identity will be concealed.

Physical Facilities
1. Please share with me how these facilities such as the one in the photographs support you in teaching.
2. Also share with me the support they give to learners.

Teaching Resources
1. Please share with me the resource(s) found in the photographs and how it / they support (s) you and learners in teaching and learning.

Classroom Activities
You are a competent teacher in this school, with special skills.
1. Please share with me what makes you competent.
2. Also, kindly comment on the skills needed to engage learners in classroom activities.

Children

1. Please comment on this photograph and share with me your experiences in teaching learners.

Documents
1. Please share with me the benefits of these documents in inclusion education delivery.
2. Do you support the use of these documents? Kindly share with me your opinion on this.

Interview except	
Theme: Predominantly disability-oriented understanding of inclusion.	Sub-themes
That one, I think says that we should inculcate pupils with learning disability together with those in the mainstream even though with special needs we should have them all together in the mainstream even though with special needs we should have them all together in the mainstream. For the inclusive education policy is a strategy is a path for the government for educating of all children with special education needs. This Act is helping all children those with disability and those without disability to come together and work together	Mixing students with and without disabilities in the same classroom.
Early Childhood Inclusion is based on opportunities that create equal learning opportunities for children with disabilities and provide young ones with more knowledge. So, I have experienced that when you put them together, they are able to work and work well.	Equal opportunity for disability
The ages matter because early childhood starts from zero to eight years. But for KG1, the person must be at least at the age of four years before she/he starts KG1 and when he/she is underage, there will some difficulties. When she/he pass the age that we want the person to be in KG, there will be a difficulty too.	Age of enrolment understanding
I have been teaching for close to ten years now. With my experience as a teacher, I know that children at different levels. They pick knowledge at different levels. Some are fast learners. Others slow learners.	Ability-oriented Understanding
Theme: Disability-informed enactment of inclusion.	Sub-theme
I make teaching and learning a learner centred. I use right and adequate teaching resources",	Lesson delivery methods

With the pedagogical method, that we use for the IECE, most at times we deal with the demonstration method that will let the child play most part of the roles in the teaching and learning skills.	Demonstration method of teaching
We use learner centred method instead of teacher learner centred. We go down to the needs of the learner to get the concepts that we impart to them.	Adaptability skill
Theme: Constraints to the enactment of inclusion	Sub themes
At first, the course was not there. Just recently that has been introduced for teachers to upgrade themselves in the ECE. Some people believe that when his or her child sit with children with disability, they will not follow what the teacher's belief to slow down the learning of able learners. Some parents think that when their able learners. Some parents think that think that when their able children mingle with those with disability learners, it will affect their studies.	Cultural Constraints
For now, we do not have many resources to cater for those with special needs that is for the inclusive education, but we are doing our best with little that we must make sure we help all of them to pass through the school.	Resources constraints
I think that the performance is being organised for teachers like in-service trainings in during those times we teach and learn a lot about inclusive education. So, it has helped us to know much about it and how to handle children in our class even though we have children with learning disabilities. Before the pre-service at college were taught about it. We did not deal with it practically. But when we came into the service and now, we are meeting it because we have been taught earlier about it, we know how to manage the situations we meet with learners with different abilities.	Inadequate teacher training and professional development

Theme: Enablers to inclusion enactment	Sub theme
I think that the programme is being organised for teachers like in-service trainings in during those times we teach and learn a lot about inclusive education. So, it has helped us to know much about it and how to handle children in our class even though we have children with learning disabilities. Before the pre-service at college were taught about it. We did not deal with it practically. But when we came into the service and now, we are meeting it because we have been taught earlier about it, we know how to manage the situations we meet with learners with different abilities.	Ongoing professional development
I will say it is good we have all the children learning together in one environment. It makes them feel that they are also part of humanity. They are also needed their love. I suggest that, moving forward, the government or stakeholders will find means of providing us with enough resources to be able to deal with the situations effectively.	Institutional support for educational resources

APPENDIX J: LETTER FROM THE LANGUAGE EDITOR

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brian.naidoo25@gm

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN GHANA: TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND ENACTMENT OF INCLUSION

AWUDU SALAAM MOHAMMED

ID: **219093979**

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate confirms that the above-mentioned student submitted his draft doctoral thesis to me for language-editing, which included correcting in-text citations and the list of references. This was duly edited and returned to the student for revisions as per suggestions from me. I make no claim as to the accuracy of the research content. The text, as edited by me, is grammatically correct. After completion of the language editing, the student has the option to accept or reject suggestions/changes prior to re-submission to the supervisor.

ID: 5606255134081   DATE: 15/07/2022

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

APPENDIX K: TURNITIN REPORT

MOHAMMED Doctoral Thesis

5%	**4**%	**1**%	**2**%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	**hdl.handle.net** Internet Source	<1%
2	**sapghana.com** Internet Source	<1%
3	"International Handbook of Early Childhood Education", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2018 Publication	<1%
4	**d-nb.info** Internet Source	<1%
5	**ir.lib.uwo.ca** Internet Source	<1%
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