



Teachers' Perception towards the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Two Selected Primary Schools of Chipata District, Zambia

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.10100014>

Received: 01 December 2025; Accepted: 06 December 2025; Published: 19 January 2026

ABSTRACT

Zambia is among many countries that has shown commitment towards the implementation of inclusive education following the Salamanca conference of the 1994. However, there are few researches on the teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education. The study was conducted at two selected primary schools of Chipata district. The objective of this study was; to explore the teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in two selected primary schools. The sampling procedure used in the study was Purposive and Quota sampling technique. Primary data was obtained through unstructured interview guide, observation checklist and focused group discussion guide. The Education standard officer- Special Education, School Administrators, Teachers, learners with and without disabilities formed 39 sample of this study. Data analysis was through thematic analysis. The major findings of the study were that the teachers had negative perception towards the implementation of inclusive education and this reflected in failure of accepting learners with disabilities in the two primary schools. The findings showed strong consensus of teachers' negative perception such as lack of having pedagogical skills, having negative attitude, lack of training in special and inclusive education, and they were just following the imposed policy, they lacked formal qualifications and specialized experience as key barriers to implementing inclusive education and affected learners and led to learning barriers and communication, lack of emotional safety and had communication fear. The researcher recommended a similar study on teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education could be carried out in Kalulushi district of copper belt province of Zambia in order to compare the current research findings with what will be discovered.

Key Words: Teachers, Perception, Implementation, Inclusive, Education, Primary, Schools

INTRODUCTION

The perception of teachers towards the implementation of inclusive education has not been thoroughly been determined as to see if it has a positive or negative impact. [7] support the assertion that teachers' perceptions of inclusive education must be evaluated in an effort to improve the deficiencies within the education system which negatively influence their perceptions and attitudes.

Inclusive education has become a global issue while in different countries we can find a number of stated intentions and written policies to move towards its achievement. However, despite the magnitude of the debate towards inclusion efforts to create more inclusive schooling communities, educators are fraught with multiple difficulties, dilemmas and contradictions that often result in piecemeal or sequential reforms. The fundamental characteristic of inclusive education is the teachers' willingness to accept students with special needs; their attitudes and knowledge about inclusive education are important as these are indicators of such willingness.

At international level, laws have been drafted to ensure the implementation of inclusive education. The United Nations Convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of people with disabilities, Article



24, on education shows that, States Parties should recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning [25]. However, the legal framework did not address the teachers' perception towards implementing inclusive education.

The Salamanca conferences that was organised by [26] still remain the land mark document on inclusive education up to date. It came up with the framework of action and it emphasised on issues of recruitment and training of education personnel. [26] indicates that, appropriate preparation of all educational personnel stands out as a key factor in promoting progress towards inclusive schools. However, the document did not address the teachers' perception towards implementing inclusive educations.

Countries and organisations in Africa are taking perceptible actions for inclusive education to succeed internationally as well as in individual African countries. In Africa, countries adopted several treaties in support of inclusive education. The treaties included the Education for All of 1990, Salamanca Statement of 1994, Dakar Framework 2000 and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006. The treaties declared that every learner should be able to access education regardless of their sex, race and disability. Due to international commitments, national governments integrated inclusive education in the development of national education policies and strategies. In Africa, a few examples include South Africa's Department of Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education – Building an Inclusive Education and Training System of 2001, Namibia's Ministry of Education Sector Policy on Inclusive Education of 2013 and Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Education National Policy on Inclusive Education of [5]. However, all these legal frameworks have not addressed the perception of teachers towards inclusive education

Teachers in many African countries have received numerous supports in their quest to push an inclusive education agenda. [22] observed that successful implementation of an inclusive system, educators will need time, on-going support and in-service training, thus, change requires a long-term obligation to professional development. In Swaziland, a study by the [17] stated that the absence of on-going in-service training programmes leads to anxieties, uncertainties, low self-esteem and lack of innovative practices, which in turn impact on the attitudes of teachers. This study spelt out a lot of support given to teachers such as professional development support and in-service training but did not focus on the teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of inclusive education.

In Zambia, support for teachers in the implementation of inclusive education has been seen through the national education policy. [13], states that the government of Zambia has committed itself to give attention to the education needs of exceptional children through training an adequate number of teachers in special education. Recent developments show that teacher trainees both at primary and secondary level receive the basic skills in handling inclusive classes. Furthermore, the implementation guidelines of inclusive education and special education of 2016 indicates that at every special education institution, one of the administrators has to have special education qualifications and experience [14]. The Person with Disability Act, NO. 6 of 2012 states that persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education, secondary and higher education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live [8]. However, the national policy document, the implementation guidelines for inclusive education and special education and the Disability Act. No. 6 of 2012 do not point out the teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of inclusive education.

Despite the milestone achieved by the international community, African as a continent and Zambia to push the agenda of implementing inclusive education, it appears there is no attention being given on the teachers' perception towards implementation of inclusive education particularly in Zambia. Hence, this research ascertained teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in two selected primary schools in Chipata, Eastern Province of Zambia

1.1 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it adds to the body of knowledge of teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. It also contributes to a better understanding of the factors that negatively influence the effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. In



addition, the study is beneficial to educational planners and policy makers in their developmental plans in addressing the gaps in educational provision especially where the implementation of inclusive education is concerned.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature review is presented and matched with the objective under the following themes; acceptance of learners with disabilities, pedagogical services for learners with disabilities and credentials for teachers and teaching experience which are focused on in order to bring out teachers' perceptions.

Inclusive education is a concept where by learners with various types of disabilities learn together with learners without disabilities, using the same teacher, the same class room, the same syllabus, learning the same subjects and obtaining the same qualification. This implies that the environment must be less restrictive and should allow participation of all those in the environment especially learners with disabilities. Therefore, barriers of physical, culture or attitudinal should be removed to allow all learners to participate including learners with disabilities.

2.1 Teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education

2.1.1 Acceptance of learners with disabilities

[7] in a study in Bahamas in the United States of America on what does teachers' perception have to do with inclusive education: A Bahamian context. In this study it was reported that 90% of teachers displayed negative perceptions towards inclusive education and its implementation. Prominent factors which influenced these negative perceptions included poor infrastructure, low salaries for teachers and large class sizes. Teachers also felt that special needs students would not have their needs met in an inclusive setting, and should be educated in specialized schools. The researcher looked at some of perceptions of the teachers towards inclusive education but did not go deeper to check if learners were really accepted by the teachers and that they were willing to teach these learners in public schools, this study took into consideration the acceptance of learners with disabilities.

A study carried out in Zambia by [2] on parents' and teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in selected schools in Kalulushi. The study used mixed approach and reported that teachers' negative attitude is accelerated by the following factors; unclear concept of inclusive education, unclear inclusive education system, examination oriented syllabus in schools, lack of specialized equipment and materials and lack of political will. The approach used contributed to the findings of the study. The study by [2] was important because it focused on the factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education nonetheless, the study focused on attitude and not on teachers' perception, therefore, this study focused on perception of teachers which was not targeted by [2].

2.1.2 Pedagogical Services for learners with Disabilities

[19] conducted a survey study on implementation of inclusive education policy in secondary schools in Zambia. The findings of the survey indicate that educators in Zambia face challenges that hinder the full implementation of inclusive education including a lack of clear and coordinated school inclusive policy guidelines and inadequate government funding, The findings also reveals that there are few facilitators of inclusive education policy in Zambia, including teachers who fully support the inclusion of pupils with special education needs and communities that support schools by subsidizing finances to provide required resources for pupils. These findings were attributed to the research design that was used in the study but this current study used phenomenology research design and results differed. Furthermore, despite this study exposing factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education in Zambia, however, it falls short of bringing out teachers' perception on inclusive education, hence the study.

2.1.3 Credentials for teachers and teaching experience

A Report produced in Chad by [1] on Education sector support project. The report revealed that Chad through the support project from African development fund had built a sustainable school infrastructure and



strengthening the education human resources capacity (training of teachers and pedagogic staff). In particular, created 12,000 new primary school vacancies and put at the disposal of the education system nearly 800 qualified teachers, trainers of teachers and pedagogic advisers. The report revealed the positive impact on the education system of Chad by training more teachers, however inclusive education and special education teachers were not trained among these numbers, hence this current study looked at perception of teachers in terms of those handling special children and their credentials and teaching experience particularly for teachers in the inclusive setting.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Paradigm

The term “paradigm” is used to refer to the philosophical assumptions or to the basic set of beliefs that guide the actions and define the worldview of the researcher. According to [10] research paradigms can also be referred to as ways scientists respond to three basic questions of ontology, epistemology and methodological questions. This study used constructivism research paradigm. [10] states that Constructivism or social constructivism is based on the premise that people seek to understand the world they live in through development of subjective meaning of their experiences. A constructivist’s goal is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation under study and interpret the meanings that the participants attach to the world around them.

According to proponent of constructivism the best option to learn is to fully engaging the student in the teaching and learning processes so that his engagement would enable him personally discover the knowledge or „truth”.

In this study, the researcher engaged teachers, school administrators, standard officer and pupils to construct knowledge and understanding on the teachers’ perception towards implementation of inclusive education through Participants experience, hence, the study had employed constructivism philosophical paradigm and fits well with the qualitative research.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is a framework comprising the methods and strategies that a researcher uses to solve a research problem [10]. It is the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problems with the pertinent (and achievable) empirical research. This study used Phenomenology Research design. The goal of phenomenology is to describe experiences as they are lived by participants. Uniqueness of an individual's lived situations is examined, because every person has his or her own reality, thus reality is subjective [10]. Phenomenological research methods involve garnering insight into a person's past, lived experiences as they recollect them.

This study used phenomenology research design because it had engage teachers, education administrators, Education standards officer-Special education (ESO-Sp.Ed) and pupils to air out their lived experiences of teachers perception on inclusive education using their insights, past and lived experience to understand their perceptions towards the implementation of inclusive education. In this way, it helped the researchers to determine teachers’ perception towards implementation of inclusive education in primary schools.

3.3 Population

A study population is a group of individuals relevant to the research, from which the research wants to draw a sample and to which the research findings will be generalized [12]. The study population had comprised of teachers, school administrators, learners with and without disabilities and Education standard officer- Special education.

3.4 Sample

A sample can be defined as a group of people, objects, or items that are taken from a larger population for measurement. [12] defines sample as a subset of the sampling unit from the target population. It can also be defined as a selected group of some elements from the totality of the population. The sample of this study had comprised of thirty-nine (39) participants, this figure of the sample was arrived at by using the law of saturations.



The law of saturation assumes that the data collected will be adequate to develop a robust and valid understanding of the study phenomenon [15].

The participants had consisted of twelve teachers, twelve learners with disabilities, twelve learners without disabilities, two administrators, and one education standard officer- special education. The sample was selected from school A and B where by six teachers were selected from School A, and the other six teachers came from school B adding to a total of twelve teachers, six learners with disabilities were selected from school A, and the other six were taken from school B totaling twelve learners with disabilities, six learners without disabilities were selected from School A, and the other six were also taken from school B totaling twelve learners without disabilities, one school administrator was taken from School A and the other one was also taken from School B making a total number of two school administrators, The education standards officer was from the district education board secretary's office. The sample was chosen because it is believed to had information on the teachers' perception towards implementation of inclusive education in primary schools.

3.4 Data collection Instruments

In order to meet the objective of the study, the study used three instruments for collecting data and these instruments are; unstructured interview guides, focused group discussion and observation checklist.

3.4.1 Unstructured Interview Guide

The interviews that are deployed in any research may appear in various dimensions. The interview is defined as an interaction between two people on a particular occasion, where one acts as an interviewer and another as an interviewee. This research employed a unstructured interview guide. According to [21] define the unstructured interview as an exploratory interview. The unstructured interview guides are also referred to as qualitative research interviews. The unstructured interview guide was the main data collection instrument designed to enable the researcher to acquire from the interviewee further as a result of seeking clarification. The unstructured interview was prepared in line with the objective and this is: to explore the teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in the two selected schools in Chipata district.

The instrument was used to interview six teachers from school A and six teachers from school B making a total of twelve teachers, one education standard officer – special education from the district education board office of Chipata district and one school administrators from school A and the other one from school B. The unstructured interview guide was suitable in this research because it was used to bring out the interviewee' lived experiences, perception on the implementation of inclusive education.

3.4.2 Observation Checklist

An observation checklist is a list of things that an observer is going to look at when observing a class. According to [11] observation checklist is a technique for gathering of primary data by investigators own direct observation of relevant people, action and situation. The observation checklist was prepared in line with the objective of determining the teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in the two selected schools in Chipata district. In this study, the observation checklist was used to observe twelve participants of which six were teachers from school A and another six teachers came from school B. some teachers were observed in class one at a time for 40minutes

The observation checklist was appropriate for this study because it was used by the researchers and yielded a lot of information from the participants that may be otherwise not taken from the unstructured interview guide and focus group discussion guide.

3.4.3 Focused Group Discussion Guide

According to [9] focus group discussion (FGD) is an in-depth field method that brings together a small homogeneous group (usually six to eight persons) to discuss topics on a study agenda. [3] argues that focused group discussion is a group of participants who are encouraged to share their opinions, experiences, aspirations



attitudes and feelings on a specific topic which is focused on in an interview. The focus group in this study was used in the following way; after interviewing the participants and observing them the focus group discussion was administered in order to probe out response that were not clearly articulated during the interviews. The focus group discussion was administered in school A and B and each group in each school was consisted of six participants. The focus group was used in this study because it helped the researcher to understand how learners with disabilities are treated by teachers hence understanding teachers' perception of inclusive education. The researcher took notes of the deliberation of the discussion. The focused group discussion was a good tool for data collection because it gives room for probing responses and making follow ups on motives and ideas presented by the respondents [3]

3.5 Ethical Consideration

[20] defines ethics as norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. This study up held ethics at each stage of the research. The researcher obtained permission from Kwame Nkrumah university ethics committee then informed consent was obtained from participants through signing on the consent form in order for them to take part in the study. All the participants were assured that the information they gave out was be for academic purpose only. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured to the participants because their names were not disclosed. Pseudo names were used when necessary by way of using letters of the alphabet.

FINDINGS

Results

Results on exploring teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of inclusive education in two selected primary schools of Chipata District, Zambia was generated using systematic coding. The results comprised of an introduction to analysis, coding and theme development, emergent themes and their frequency, evidence of data saturation, thematic ranking matrix, thematic summary and observational corroboration.

Introduction to Analysis

To identify key factors when exploring teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of inclusive education in two selected primary schools of Chipata District, Zambia., a systematic thematic analysis was conducted using manual coding techniques. Responses were collected from administrators, education standard officer, teachers, and learners from schools (X, Y). Thematic analysis involved coding responses, grouping codes into themes, assessing frequency and salience, and organizing the data into thematic matrices.

Coding and Theme Development

Step 1: Initial Manual Coding

All responses were read and manually coded line-by-line to identify recurrent ideas, words, or phrases related to perception of teachers. Codes were then grouped into broader themes.

Step 2: Theme Consolidation

After the first round of coding, overlapping or redundant codes were merged to form concise themes. These themes were defined and verified through repeated readings of the transcripts.

Teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in two selected primary schools

Acceptance of learners with disabilities.

In order to ascertain the teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in two selected primary schools, data was collected from the Education Standards officer – Special Education (SOE) from



District Education Board Office, six teachers (Tr) and one school administrator (Ad) from school "X" and six teachers and one administrator from school "Y". The data was collected using un-structured interview guide, observation checklist and focused group discussion guide.

The researchers needed to find out the perception of teachers concerning the acceptance of learners during the implementation of inclusive education. The answer to the question was reflected as follows; SOE stated that "Almost all the teachers in schools that are implementing inclusive education are not willing to accept learners with disabilities as well as the implementation of inclusive education because some teachers and school head teacher have negative attitudes towards learners with disabilities. So as a district we directed that some of the school need to start implementing inclusive education in accordance to the national education policy and the implementations guidelines of 2016."

4.1 Overview of Data Analysis Procedure

A thematic analysis approach was adopted. Raw transcripts were manually coded, and patterns were identified to generate recurring themes. Codes were clustered based on repetition (frequency) and emphasis (salience). The process reached saturation as no new themes emerged after reviewing all 15 data sources.

4.2 Emerging Themes

The analysis revealed seven major themes reflecting teachers' perceptions on inclusive education implementation in line with acceptance of learners with disabilities. Each theme is presented with supporting evidence.

Table 1: Development of Themes

Theme	Sub-Themes/Descriptors	Frequency	Salience (Intensity)	Sample Quote
1. Negative Attitudes towards Learners with Disabilities	- Teachers' personal bias - Stereotyping (e.g., "short-tempered") - Reluctance to teach	High (9/14)	Very High	"Teachers have just bad negative attitude... they don't just like them." (Ad – School X)
2. Policy-Driven, Not Voluntary Acceptance	- Imposed policy from Ministry of Education - No consultation or ownership by teachers	High (8/14)	High	"The issue of acceptance... is not by choice but a matter of policy..." (Tr E – School X)
3. Lack of Specialized Training	- Teachers lack skills - Need for special education qualifications	High (10/14)	Very High	"It may be easy to accept learners... when we have enough trained teachers." (Tr C – School X)
4. Inadequate Infrastructure and Learning Materials	- Poor facilities (e.g., toilets) - No assistive devices	Medium (6/14)	Moderate	"...takes a lot of time because of the environment." (Tr B – School X)
5. Lack of Incentives for Teachers	- No extra compensation - Added workload	Medium (5/14)	Moderate to High	"Teaching these learners is a lot of work." (Ad – School X)
6. Partial Acceptance ("Theory vs. Practice")	- Acknowledgment of learners as "policy-mandated" - Practical resistance	High (9/14)	High	"In theory... we have accepted learners... in the practical sense... it is in doubt." (Tr F – School X)



7. Top-Down Implementation Approach	- District-level directives - Little school-level autonomy	Medium (4/14)	Moderate	“...when we were directed... some teachers openly said they were not ready...” (Ad – School X)
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Evidence of Data Saturation

Saturation was achieved after analysis of data from:

- 1 **SOE**
- 2 **12 Teachers (6 from each school)**
- 3 **2 School Administrators**

Evidence of Data Saturation

Basing on Table 1 Data saturation was evident as no new significant themes emerged after analyzing multiple groups of respondents across the two schools. Particularly, the top three themes or the redundant statements regarding **negative attitudes**, **lack of training**, and **imposed policy** suggest data adequacy.—were consistently cited by participants regardless of the school.

Exemplar Quotes Matrix (Condensed and Merged for Clarity)

Theme	Condensed Quote
Negative Attitudes	“Some teachers just don’t like teaching learners with disabilities. They were not ready when the directive came.”
Lack of Training	“Without proper skills, teachers struggle to handle different disabilities effectively.”
Infrastructure	“Our school doesn’t have the right environment. Some learners struggle even to use the toilet.”
Policy Imposition	“We accept them because it’s policy, not because we believe in it.”
Lack of Incentives	“Teaching these learners is hard work, but we don’t get any extra support.”
Superficial Acceptance	“We say we accept them, but implementation tells a different story.”
Behavioral Stereotypes	“Some teachers think learners with disabilities are aggressive, making them harder to teach.”

Table 2: Ranking of Themes by Frequency and Salience

Theme	Frequency	Salience	Rank
Negative Attitudes	9/14	Very High	1
Lack of Specialized Training	10/14	Very High	2
Policy-Driven Acceptance	8/14	High	3
Partial Acceptance in Practice	9/14	High	4
Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources	6/14	Moderate	5
Lack of Incentives	5/14	Moderate to High	6
Top-Down Implementation Approach	4/14	Moderate	7



Pedagogical services for learners with disabilities

A systematic thematic analysis was used. Responses were manually coded and grouped into themes based on frequency and salience. Evidence of saturation was established as no new codes emerged in the final transcripts. A thematic matrix was developed to enhance analytical clarity.

Table 3: Themes, Frequency, and Salience Matrix for Pedagogical Services

Theme	Sub-Themes	Frequency (No. of Sources)	Salience (e.g., emphasis, intensity)
Lack of Pedagogical Skills	- Lack of training in special education - Lack of CPD	8/9	Highly emphasized; repeated as the core reason for ineffective inclusion
Negative Teacher Attitudes	- Disregard for materials - Blaming learners - Resistance to adapt	5/9	Strong statements indicating resistance and reluctance to change
Partial/Inconsistent Involvement of Learners with Disabilities (LWDs)	- Token inclusion - Misunderstanding of inclusive practice	6/9	Teachers acknowledge minimal participation of LWDs despite being in the same class

Table 4: Final Thematic Matrix (Ranked by Frequency and Salience) for Pedagogical Services

Rank	Theme	Summary of Issue	Suggested Action
1	Lack of Pedagogical Skills	Widespread absence of teacher training and CPDs in inclusive education	Organize targeted CPDs; increase specialist support
2	Negative Teacher Attitudes	Materials ignored; resistance to change; low belief in learners with disabilities	Promote mindset change through sensitization
3	Inconsistent Involvement of LWDs	Inclusion seen as physical placement only; low participation by LWDs	Reframe inclusion beyond presence; enforce participatory methods

Responses from learners concerning pedagogy from teachers teaching them.

Emergent Themes and Frequency

Theme	Sub-Themes	Sample Quotes	Frequency
Learning Barriers and Comprehension Difficulties	Inability to follow lessons, hearing impairment	“I don’t get what the teachers teaches.”; “It’s difficult to hear the teacher and I fear to ask.”	6
Emotional Safety and Fear of Communication	Intimidation, fear of teachers’ anger	“Some teachers are always annoyed and I fear to ask.”; “I fear to ask.”	5
Limited Inclusive Teaching Practices	Exclusion from participation, favoritism	“Sometimes teachers get us involved, but others don’t.”; “Teacher concentrates on my friends.”	4
Partial Understanding of Lessons	Some understanding achieved, but inconsistent	“I get what the teacher teaches, but not always.”	2
Neglect of Academic Feedback	Teachers not marking work	“The teacher doesn’t mark my books.”	1



It was found that, negative perception of teachers on inclusive education in line with pedagogical skills made learners experience learning barrier and comprehension difficult, lack of emotional safety and fear of communication, limited inclusive teaching practice, partial understanding of a lesson and neglect of academic feedback.

Thematic Matrix: Frequency and Salience Ranking from Learners concerning Pedagogical

Rank	Theme	Frequency	Salience	Interpretation
1	Learning Barriers and Comprehension	6	High	A central issue hindering inclusive learning outcomes.
2	Emotional Safety and Communication Fear	5	High	Emotional insecurity reduces learner engagement.
3	Limited Inclusive Practices	4	Moderate-High	Some learners feel systematically excluded.
4	Partial Understanding	2	Moderate	Indicates occasional instructional success.
5	Neglect of Feedback	1	Low	Points to a lack of academic follow-through.

The top two themes or the redundant statements regarding **learning barriers and communication, emotional safety and communication fear**, suggest data adequacy. —were consistently cited by participants regardless of the school.

Observation corroboration

The researchers administered observations during the lesson delivery by the teachers at school X on a matter concerning the pedagogical services for learners with disabilities in line with the teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in two selected primary schools.

The researchers observed a teacher from school "X" in a grade five class teaching social studies on the topic Sex and Gender roles. The teacher introduced the topic. The teacher explained the gender and sex roles and later asked the class to give examples of gender and sex roles and after a lengthy discussion the teacher gave class exercise as follows, in which there were suppose answer true or false

Exercise

1. Sweeping the floor is a sex role. 2. Boys helping their mothers in the kitchen is a gender role. 3. A man looking after a new born baby is a sex role.

The teacher was audible for all learners. During the delivery of the lesson learners with residual hearing were not engaged. Learners with disabilities were not given chance to participate, work was not marked and were not attended to. The learners with a residual sight were seated almost in the middle of the classroom and the teacher did not show concern to shift them to the front row of the classroom.

Teachers Credentials and experience

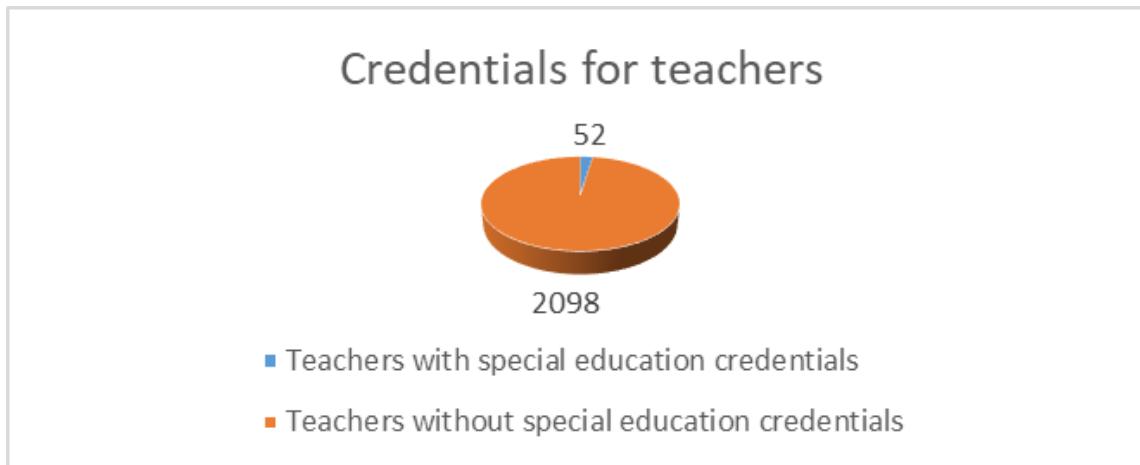
In order to establish the credentials and experiences the teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in two selected schools; The researchers administered unstructured interviews on the education standard officer- for special education, school administrators and teachers in two selected schools.

The question was posed in order to ascertain if credentials and experience affect the implementation of inclusive educations. SOE explained that "The overall view is that, the qualification and experience is a main factors that influence the successful implementation of inclusive education because a lot of teachers complain that they find



it difficult to teach learners with disabilities especially those with intellectual disabilities. it may be of interest to you that we have only fifty two teachers out of two thousand one hundred fifty teachers in the district against one hundred thirty seven schools and most of these teachers are at one school for the deaf and blind." This is reflected in figure1 below.

Figure 1. Number of teachers with and without special education credentials as responded by the SOE.



Source: Field Data, 2023

Main Theme Identified:

"Qualification and Experience in Special Education as a Barrier or Enabler to Inclusive Education Implementation."

Sub-Themes (based on frequency and salience):

Sub-Theme Code	Sub-Theme Description	Frequency	Salience (directness/strength of expression)
T1	Lack of qualification in special education as a barrier	10	High
T2	Lack of experience in inclusive education as a challenge	7	Moderate
T3	Commitment/dedication more important than qualifications	2	Moderate
T4	Availability of trained teachers in schools	2 (Ad)	High

Evidence of Saturation

Saturation was reached as themes—especially T1 and T2 for lack of qualification in special education and experience in inclusive education—were repeated across both schools, across different teachers with varying years of experience and qualifications. No new ideas emerged in the last few interviews, suggesting that participant views had been sufficiently captured.

Ranked Matrix Summary (Exemplar Table) on Qualification of Teachers

School	Participant	Qualification & Experience	Perception on Implementation Barrier	Coded Theme(s)
X	Tr A	Certificate in teaching; 1 yr in inclusive class	Lack of qualification is a hindrance	T1



X	Tr B	Primary diploma; 7 months	Qualification important	T1
X	Tr C	Diploma; 2 years	Lack of qualification is a contributor	T1
X	Tr D	Primary diploma; 1 year	Lack of credentials and experience as a problem	T1, T2
X	Tr E	Primary diploma; 2 years	Commitment matters more than qualification	T3
X	Tr F	Primary diploma; 10 years	Lack of credentials and experience affects it	T1, T2
Y	Tr A	Secondary diploma; 15 years	Passion more important	T3
Y	Tr B	ZATEC; 15 years	Lack of credentials a hindrance	T1
Y	Tr C	Primary diploma; 1 year	Lack of qualification contributes to failure	T1
Y	Tr D	Primary diploma; 1 year	Lack of qualification main reason for failure	T1
Y	Tr E	Diploma in Special Ed; 15 years	Lack of qualification is the main issue	T1
Y	Tr F	Primary certificate; 4 years	Lack of credentials and experience contribute	T1, T2
X	Admin	0/47 trained teachers	Lack of credentials & experience is a barrier	T1, T2, T4
Y	Admin	Only 2 trained teachers	Lack of qualification & experience as main cause	T1, T2, T4

Four dominant themes emerged:

Code	Theme Description	Frequency	Salience
T1	Lack of qualification in special education	10/12	High
T2	Lack of experience in inclusive education	7/12	Moderate
T3	Teacher commitment and passion override qualifications	2/12	Moderate
T4	Insufficient availability of trained teachers in schools (admin views)	2/2	High

The findings show strong consensus of teachers' negative perception such as lack of pedagogical skills, negative attitude, lack of training in special and inclusive education, and imposed policy, lack of formal qualifications and specialized experience as key barriers to implementing inclusive education and affected learners and led to learning barriers and communication, lack of emotional safety and had communication fear.

DISCUSSION

Discussion was based on teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in two selected primary schools in line with research objective.

Acceptance of learners with disabilities.

The study ascertained the teachers' negative perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in relation to acceptance of learners with disabilities, the research revealed that most teachers did not accept learners with disabilities and fewer teachers accepted them. For instance, learners with disabilities were not



accepted because; Schools were not willing to accept learners with disabilities, teachers were not willing to implement inclusive education, in practice learners with disabilities were not accepted, teacher were unwilling to teach them due lack of special pedagogical skills, teachers had negative attitudes, teachers were not attending to learners with disabilities in class.

In addition, [4] in a study carried out in Kenya on the rights to inclusive education for students with disabilities in Kenya the study reported barriers to an inclusive education system that were identified were: lack of transportation services for students and teachers, minimal government funding, a high need for early assessment, a need for basic access to information about disabilities, inaccessible schools, negative attitudes toward disabilities, irrelevant, scarce, and outdated learning materials and need for ability and diversity awareness. The study brought out challenges that hinder inclusive education but left out the aspect of teacher's acceptance of learners with disabilities which this study focused on.

A study carried out in Zambia by [18] on challenges faced by pupils with disabilities in accessing Education in inclusive schools showed that Parents, teachers and traditional leaders indicated that economic factors such as poverty and unemployment contributed greatly to exclusion of children from accessing education. Most parents of children with disabilities were unemployed and poor such that they do struggle to feed and clothe them. Descriptive statistics analysis was used to analyze the data and that may have greatly contributed to finding of the study. The study further indicates issue of inadequate funding to schools to a great extent hinders implementation of inclusive education in Zambia. The study is important because it showed areas which can be improved in implementing inclusive education however, it failed short of bringing out the aspect of acceptance of learners with disabilities by teachers in the inclusive setting and this current study focused on this with use of thematic analysis.

Findings by [6] on the Report submitted to the high commissioner for human rights on the situation of human rights of people with disability in the federal republic of Germany reveals that access to mainstream school is considerably more difficult for disabled pupils in Germany and often has to be fought for in court. Almost all federal states have a legal proviso: A disabled child must only be admitted to mainstream school if the necessary personnel, organizational and practical conditions exist - and these are often lacking. The report is very cardinal because it exposed factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education. This practice need to be applied in inclusive schools in Zambia however, the report did not expose if teachers had accepted learners with disabilities in the inclusive education setting as discovered by the current study.

The findings of the study are similar to the study of [7] in a study in Bahamas in the United States of America on what does teachers' perception have to do with inclusive education: A Bahamian context-in this study it was reported that 90% of teachers displayed negative perceptions towards inclusive education and its implementation. Prominent factors which influenced these negative perceptions included poor infrastructure, low salaries for teachers and large class sizes. Teachers also felt that special needs students would not have their needs met in an inclusive setting, and should be educated in specialized schools. The findings of the current study are similar to the study of [7] because both studies discovered teachers were not willing to implement inclusive education due to negative attitude which is being influenced by several factors.

The researchers voice on the teachers' negative perception towards the implementation of inclusive in relation to acceptance of learners with disabilities in primary schools is that teachers might have sprung from negative attitude towards learners with disabilities and lack of the fundamental characteristic of inclusive education which is the teachers' willingness to accept students with special needs. Thus teachers' attitudes and knowledge about inclusive education was important as these was indicators of such willingness.

Pedagogical services for learners with disability

The study finding concerning ascertaining the teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in line with pedagogical services for learners with disabilities in the process of implementation of inclusive education was that most teachers did not have the pedagogical skills while giving services to learners with disabilities while others had negative attitude towards learners with disabilities. For instance, most teachers expressed that they had no pedagogical skills for learners to enable them teach well and make learners with



disabilities learn better. These were the teachers who showed no concern for learners with disabilities for instances, the teachers did not mark exercise book for learners with disabilities, learners with disabilities were not made to participate in classrooms were withdrawn while learning, the teachers did not engage learners with disabilities during the delivery of the lessons, the teachers did not bring teaching and learning materials designed for learners with disabilities, learners who would learn using special methods were ignored.

The study carried out by [23] on inclusive education: where there are few resources found that lack of adequate textbooks and other instructional materials has been shown to be one of the most negative and inconsistent determinants of teachers' willingness to teach as well as pupils' learning achievements. The findings of this study by [23] is not consistent with the current study were the focus was on perspective of teachers on inclusive education which led to unwillingness to teach due to lack of pedagogical and experiences in special and inclusive education.

The survey was conducted by [19] on implementation of inclusive education policy in secondary schools in Zambia. The findings of the survey indicated that educators in Zambia face challenges that hinder the full implementation of inclusive education including a lack of clear and coordinated school inclusive policy guidelines and inadequate government funding, few facilitators of inclusive education policy in Zambia, including teachers who fully support the inclusion of pupils with special education needs and communities that support schools by subsidizing finances to provide required resources for pupils. The discovery of the current study is different to the study survey of [19]. This is because the current study ascertained that the perception of teachers was negative towards the implementation of inclusive education due to teachers' lack of pedagogical skills and lack of concern for learners with disabilities while [19] brought to light the lack of school policy guidelines, inadequate funding and few facilitators of inclusive education policy in Zambia.

The researchers' voice on the teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive in line with the pedagogical services for learners with disabilities was that teachers were lacking the pedagogical skills that are essential in the implementation of inclusive education and that it exacerbated the negative situation towards learners with disabilities in terms of learning.

In addition, the findings revealed that, lack of pedagogical skills by teachers made learners with disabilities frequently face challenges that compromise their inclusion in learning activities. Difficulties in understanding lessons, emotional insecurity—driven by perceived negative attitudes from teachers which inhibited active participation, inconsistent teacher attention and lack of academic follow-up.

The finding of the study by [16] in a study carried out in Zambia on Barriers to the Inclusion of learners with Hearing impairments: A Review of Literature on Zambia. The study stresses on the rights of learners with disabilities. It further indicates that lack of strict legislature that Compel schools to practice inclusive education. The right of persons with disabilities to receive education in mainstream schools is included in article 24, paragraph 2 (a), of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which stresses emphasis on no rejection of learners from general education on the basis of disability [8], but rather providing alternative modes of communication and reasonable accommodation for learners. The study is inconsistent with the current study. [16] stressed much on the need for a strict legislature that should mandate the schools to practice inclusive education while the current study focused on perspective of teacher in line with inclusive education which later affect learning of learners with disabilities.

The researchers' voice was that, these insights suggest that inclusive education in practice remains fragile, with systemic and pedagogical gaps that limit its effectiveness. Teachers' awareness and adaptation to diverse needs appear uneven, revealing a need for strengthened training in inclusive pedagogies and communication skills.

Credential for teachers and experience

The research findings on the teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in line with the credentials for teachers and experience in two selected primary schools were that credentials for teachers and experience is one of the main factors that hinders the implementation of inclusive education



The findings were validated using Salamanca conferences that was organised by [26] which still remain the landmark document on inclusive education up to date. It came up with the framework of action and it emphasised on issues of training of education personnel. [26] indicating that, appropriate preparation of all educational personnel stands out as a key factor in promoting progress towards inclusive schools. Though the document did not address the teachers' perception towards implementing inclusive educations which this study did

A Report was produced in Chad by [1] on Education sector support project. The report revealed that Chad through the support project from African development fund had built a sustainable school infrastructure and strengthening the education human resources capacity (training of teachers and pedagogic staff). The current study finding is different to the report by [1]. The current study ascertained that most teachers implementing inclusive education did not have credentials and that these credentials and experience were factors that are important for the implementation of inclusive education.

The revelation of the study carried in Ireland by [24] on addressing the challenges and Barriers to inclusion in Irish Schools. The findings where that, lack of time to accommodate the diverse needs of all students in the classroom was identified as a key to inclusion by teachers and lack of time for teachers to plan together for teaching and the need for individual attention and difficulties in table tabling as one of the issue to note in inclusive education. The findings of the study are inconsistent to the current study which brought to light the ways of addressing the challenges among them being provision of qualified teachers in special and inclusive education.

The researchers voice on the teachers' perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in line with the credentials and experience among teachers was that the findings showed strong consensus of teachers' perception that lack of formal qualifications and specialized experience are key barriers to implementing inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the findings of the study that this study highlights key gaps in the implementation of inclusive education from the perspective of teachers who had negative perception towards the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. The negative perception reflected their lack of pedagogical skills, negative attitude, lack of training in special and inclusive education, and imposed policy, lack of formal qualifications and specialized experience as key barriers to implementing inclusive education and affected learners and led to learning barriers and communication, lack of emotional safety and had communication fear. The findings indicate that while inclusive education is being introduced in line with national policy, its implementation remains constrained by negative perception by teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Basing on these finding it was recommended that;

1. There is need for provision of qualified teachers in special education in inclusive schools by the government.
2. There is need to train more teachers in special and inclusive education by the government in order to obtain formal qualifications which is cardinal for the implementation of inclusive education.
3. There is need to implement the inclusive policy by school administrators with necessary support such as continuing professional development activities and mentorship through core-teaching of specialist teachers with non-specialist teachers in order to retrain and equip teachers with pedagogical skills and specialized experience needed when teaching children with special needs in inclusive schools.
4. Teachers need to be commitment and have passion and cultivate good and positive attitude towards learners with disabilities in order to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education in any school.



5. The school need to provide teaching and learning materials such as assistive equipment for learners to learn effectively in inclusive schools.
6. There is need for regular inspection of inclusive schools by standards officers in order promote effective implementation of inclusive education.
7. There is need for teachers to collaborate with learners with disabilities in order to address learning barriers in inclusive schools.
8. There is need to foster emotional safety by promoting positive teacher-learner relationships to encourage open communication and reduce fear among learners with disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the first place, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to Kwame Nkrumah University for giving us an opportunity to do research. We would like to thank the rest of all participants where this study was taking place. Lastly, we would love to acknowledge our family members for their support financially during our research.

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