
Leadership of Inclusive Education in Effutu Municipality (Ghana): Challenges Facing Headteachers of Basic Schools and Existing Support Systems

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Abstract – This study explored challenges headteachers of basic schools in the Effutu municipality of Ghana encounter in implementing inclusive education and existing support systems for effective implementation of the policy. It employed a case study, one of the qualitative research designs, grounded in the interpretivist paradigm. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data from 18 purposively selected participants, comprising 6 headteachers, 8 special education teachers, and 4 Ghana Education Service officials. Data collected was analysed thematically. Among others, the study revealed that the headteachers did not have adequate number of Special Education Resource teachers for the implementation of inclusive education. The teachers available had to offer support to special needs pupils in multiple schools, making their workload excessive. The study concluded that although the Government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Education, post teachers to the schools for implementation of special education, the headteachers found it difficult to retain such teachers as most of them either go on study leave without returning to the schools or leave for better job opportunities. Therefore, the study, among others, that the headteachers, through the Effutu Municipal Education Directorate, and Municipal Assembly, should liaise with the University of Education, Winneba, which is located in the study area and trains special education teachers so that trainee teachers could be sent to the schools during their internship to augment the effort of the Special Education Resource teachers for a more meaningful implementation of the inclusive education policy.

Keywords – Headteachers, Resource Teachers, Special Needs, Challenges, Support Systems.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education has proven to promote the development of individuals, society and the nation at large. It plays an essential role in one's life through the contribution it makes in terms of higher earnings, better health, longer life and other related benefits (UNESCO, 2009). The enormous benefits derived from education have created the necessity for all to gain access and participation on an equitable basis. It is, therefore, not surprising that all children of school going age are obliged under Ghana's constitution and other international conventions to be in school. In addition to giving everybody the opportunity to be in school, emphasis is also laid on the need to get all children educated under same conditions. Wertheimer (1997), for instance, posits the growing consensus all nations have on the right children have to be educated together.

Several policies have been formulated both globally and locally, with all geared towards equity. The United Nations, for instance, has policies such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the UN Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994), all of which affirm the right of children to be valued equally, treated with respect and provided

with equal opportunities within the mainstream educational system. These policies also lay more emphasis on the fact that people with disabilities must be involved in every aspect of the education process. Again, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations demonstrates a great deal of concern to the issue of inclusiveness and equity. Goals 8, 9, 10, 11 and 16 aim at addressing inclusiveness and equality to an extent, with goal 4 emphasizing the promotion of inclusive and equitable quality education for all. These documents are powerful tools which present a strong case for inclusion. In essence, they provide an opportunity for inclusive education to be firmly placed on the agenda of national governments (Wertheimer, 1997).

In 2015, the Ministry of Education in Ghana formulated the Inclusive Education Policy, which aims at redefining educational delivery and management to respond to the diverse needs of all learners (Ministry of Education, 2015). The objectives of this policy are to:

- Improve and adapt education and related systems and structures to ensure the inclusion of all learners particularly those with special educational needs;
- Promote learner friendly school environment for enhancing the quality of education for all learners;
- Promote the development of a well-informed and trained human resource cadre for the quality delivery of inclusive education throughout Ghana; and
- Ensure sustainability of inclusive education implementation. (Ministry of Education, 2015: 5-9)

In ensuring the implementation of this policy, the Ministry of Education has put in place some measures. Among such are sensitization workshops for all relevant stakeholders on the policy, review of school curricula to make it inclusive, provision of requisite teaching and learning materials to assist pupils with special education needs and provision of disability friendly facilities in existing schools to be disability friendly (Ministry of Education, 2015). These notwithstanding, some children face exclusion of one form or the other in education.

Children with disabilities are facing educational exclusion, as they have been reported to account for one third of all out-of-school children (UNESCO, 2009). The situation appears to be not different in Ghana considering the fact that in spite of government's efforts to achieve full enrolment, there still seem to be reports of out-of-school children, significant among them being learners with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2015). These cases of out-of-school children have been largely due to the difficulty such children have in fitting into the mainstream school environment. This, in effect, makes the process of learning difficult for them, resulting in many of them dropping out of the school system.

Headteachers in Ghana are among the key stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education policies in the country. Effective leadership provided by headteachers is pivotal for effective implementation of inclusive education (Caston & Theoharis, 2014; Hehir & Katzman, 2012). Headteachers' role in such policy include ensuring that their schools collaborate with the community to create awareness on disability issues to foster attitudinal change in many areas including the use of Information, Education and Communication packages to reinforce positive attitudes in the community (Ministry of Education, 2013). Strong leadership from headteachers of inclusive schools creates both a sense of common purpose and internal accountability as well as conditions for high-quality teaching and learning to take place (Maina, 2014). In performing their role in the implementation of inclusive education, school heads have been faced with a number of challenges in the wake of this new arrangement in the provision of educational services (Praisner, 2003).

Through the Special Education Division of the Ghana Education Service, the Government of Ghana has implemented inclusive education on pilot basis in three regions - Central, Greater Accra and Eastern Regions (Ministry of Education, 2015). This study focused on Effutu municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. The researchers considered Central region, specifically the Effutu Municipality as the study setting since it was one of the districts devoted for piloting inclusive education in the country. Personal interaction between the researchers, who are educationist and some headteachers in the municipality suggested that stakeholders, including the headteachers themselves, have concerns about the effectiveness of the policy implementation process because of challenges they are confronted with. The Ministry of Education (2015) also acknowledges this view, arguing that stakeholders are likely to face challenges in implementing new education policies, including inclusive education, pointing out the need to put in place support mechanisms to facilitate policy implementation processes. However, it appears no empirical study exists in the Effutu Municipality on the challenges the headteachers face in implementing inclusive education and how they could be supported. A related study conducted by Gyasi (2015) focused on academic and social experiences of the disabled students at the University of Education, Winneba, in Effutu Municipality. This particular study, therefore, explores challenges the headteachers in the municipality encounter in implementing inclusive education, and existing support systems for a more meaningful implementation of the policy. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What challenges do the headteachers of basic schools in the Effutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana face in implementing inclusive education?
2. What support systems exist for the headteachers to implement inclusive education policy in the schools?

This study significant in diverse ways. To begin with, it is envisaged that the findings of this study will inform stakeholders of inclusive education in the Effutu municipality about the challenges headteachers face in their efforts to effectively implement the policy in their schools, so that necessary measures could be put in place to address such challenges. The study will also draw the attention of key stakeholders of inclusive education in the study area to available support systems for the implementation of the policy. Last but not least, the study contributes to limited empirical literature on implementation of inclusive education policies, especially in the Ghanaian educational context.

Effutu Municipality in Context

The Effutu Municipality is one of the 20 administrative districts in the Central region of Ghana. It is situated between latitudes 5°16' and 20.18"N and longitudes 0°32' and 48.32"W of the eastern part of Central region. The Municipality is bordered to the west, north and east by the Gomoa East District and to the south by Gulf of Guinea. The administrative capital of the Municipality is Winneba. The municipality is predominantly inhabited by the Effutus who are among the Guan speaking group of the country. Fanti is the widely spoken language by the people. The main economic activities in the municipality are fishing and farming (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

The goal of the Municipality, among others, is to improve quality of life of the people through accelerated access to quality education (Effutu MPCU, 2014). For the purposes of education management, the Municipality has been divided into three Circuits (Educational Zones) namely, Winneba Central, Winneba East and Winneba West Circuits. There are a total of 247 educational institutions in the Municipality, of which 74 (30%) are public

institutions and 173 (70%) are private institutions (Effutu MPCU, 2014). Among such institutions is a public university, University of Education, Winneba (UEW), a school designated to train teachers in the country.

About 1,828 (3.7%) of the population in the Municipality have some form of disability, commonest among them being visual impairment. The proportion of persons with disabilities who had ever attended school constituted 63.1% whilst 36.9% have never attended school in the Municipality (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on the constructivist and social constructivist theories to explain the call for school leadership to come to terms with the need to provide all learners with the enabling environment that promotes the participation of pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, in inclusive classrooms. Basically, constructivism refers to the belief that children or adults construct their knowledge based on personal experiences. Socio-constructivism adds to this the impact social and cultural factors have on that knowledge construction (Pekeberg, 2012), pointing to the relevance of the provision of support systems in positively influencing the learning experiences of children with special educational needs in the mainstream school. As posited by Tsyawo (2015), the participation of pupils with disabilities in inclusive classrooms is paramount to their academic achievement. Including learners with special education needs in a regular classroom and providing the appropriate support may enable them to acquire many skills and other relevant forms of classroom behaviours by observing and imitating their peers and teachers in an inclusive setting. Likewise, limitations to the learning of these children are likely to have a toll on their construction of knowledge.

The Concept of Inclusive Education

The debate about inclusive education has then been a topic of educational interest throughout the world, with many countries in Africa adopting the policy in their education systems. The concept of inclusive education, as argued by Tassoni (2003), is the result of pressure put on successive governments by parents and persons with disability to change the educational system in such a way that allows all children to have equitable access to education. Farris (2011) describes inclusive education as a paradigm shift - from getting the child with special educational needs ready for the mainstream school to getting the mainstream school ready for the child. This emphasizes the point that the general classroom and school should be accommodating to the need of every student rather than students trying to adjust to whatever condition there is in the school.

Inclusive education has been defined differently in different contexts. Some countries have supposedly seen it as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). More often than not, inclusive education is viewed as an agenda to include those groups who have been previously marginalized. From the international point of view, it is generally seen as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners (UNESCO 2001). Inclusive education focuses on discouraging segregation while providing all learners with the opportunity to learn in the settings they would have preferred even in the absence of any disability. It stems from the notion of education being a basic human right and, as such, the foundation upon which a more just society is built.

The principles of inclusive education not only give children the opportunity to access and participate in main

-stream education, but also, in a broader context, make them exposed to accessing and participating in the mainstream society (Pekeberg, 2012). This makes the social benefits of inclusive education carry as much weight as the academic through the elimination of discrimination, creation of welcoming communities, and building inclusive and non-discriminative societies.

Leadership of Inclusive Education

One vital ingredient that cannot be overlooked in an attempt to bring about sustainable change is leadership. Leadership can be defined as a process of influencing individuals or group of people to act towards the attainment of set goals. It has been identified as an important factor with the ability to manage change in organizations (Sarro & Santora, 2001 cited in Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012). Like every other sector, the leadership practice adopted in an educational setting contributes to the promotion or otherwise of inclusive values. Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu and Brown (2010) argued that headteachers are the main source of leadership in their schools and, therefore, their role in providing leadership for inclusive processes is crucial (Reihl, 2000). There has been recognition of the relationship between leadership and the success of schools - the headteacher's leadership being critical in influencing improvement in the school's organization (Scott & McNeish, 2013).

Dillon and Bourke (2016) consider inclusive leadership to be mirrored in transformational, servant and authentic leadership. This implies that every leader that promotes inclusive education should portray transformational, servant and authentic leadership traits. This, according to them, looks beyond traditional leadership assessment tools and frameworks. According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership focuses on social values and appears in times of change. Northouse (2001) also simply defined transformational leadership as the ability to get people to want to change, improve and be led. Thus, as schools are undergoing the period of change trying to adopt inclusive education, Lewis, Goodman and Fandt (1998) assert that school leaders are expected to cope with a rapidly changing world of work to be effective in their schools. Moolenaar, Daly and Slegers (2010) draw a positive relationship between transformational leadership and schools' innovative climate, changed teacher practices and organizational commitment and extra effort for change.

The role of leadership is one that cannot be side-lined in an attempt to successfully implement every policy, of which inclusive education is no exception. Wertheimer (1997) agrees to the ownership of educating learners with special needs resting with the school community and not with the individual (child with special need). Thus, educating children with special needs holds school leaders responsible, putting them at the forefront of inclusive education practice. Ngwokabuenui (2013) and Ramirez (2006) also emphasized how essential the role and attitude of principals towards inclusive education are to the success or failure of inclusion in schools. It is worth mentioning that the education of children with special educational needs, from their initial class placements to their subsequent achievement, are impacted by the instructional leadership of school heads (Livingston, Reed & Good, 2001). This stresses how administrative and leadership supports, among others, are influential factors in the effectiveness of any school programme, inclusive education being no exception.

As part of their tasks, school heads are expected to foster new meanings about diversity and promote inclusive practices in schools. Ngwokabuenui (2013) points out that school heads play a critical role in the creation of an educational climate that makes way for interactions between students with and those without special educational needs. He further argues how headteachers' instructional leadership, for instance, impacts greatly on the initial placement and subsequent achievement of students with special educational needs. In mobilizing resources to

promote inclusive practices, Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello and Spagna, M. (2004) found school heads as an important source of support. Black and Simon (2014) also identified as a very critical leadership function the acquisition of resources such as aides and technology supports. Added to this is headteachers' crucial role in creating the environment where inclusion can thrive and setting the leadership tone for how to implement a successful inclusive practice (Garrison-Wade, Sobel & Fulmer, 2007).

III. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Challenges to Implementing Inclusive Education

The major challenge facing educational systems is including all children in education, one that is typical of both developed and developing countries (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Garrison-Wade, Sobel & Fulmer, 2007). Developing schools that provide wide and flexible systems of supports for students with variable and sometimes significant support needs is recognized as a complex and significant challenge within educational leadership (Rayner, 2007; Shields, 2010; Theoharis, 2010). Given such complexity, inclusive education is often misunderstood and sometimes met with resistance from teachers and usually not gaining the full support from school administrators (Garrison-Wade, Sobel & Fulmer, 2007). Taking into account the natural resistance to change, the change process associated with inclusion is usually met with much resistance from the grassroots implementers (Livingston, Reed & Good, 2001). This is, to an extent, due to the assumption of new roles accompanying such change. Ainscow and Sandill (2010) then assert that developing more inclusive forms of education is arguably the biggest challenge facing school systems throughout the world. Headteachers in the wake of this change are faced with taking key decisions such as which students with special needs are to benefit from inclusive education and, generally, how the whole process should be implemented (Ramirez, 2006).

Regardless of the undeniable benefits associated with inclusive education, a number of arguments have been presented against its success. One aspect of the debate relates to whether the mainstream school is in the capacity to better serve the needs of learners with special needs than the special school which has been designated for such services. On the side of parents, there is a plausible anxiety about how their children are more prone to vulnerability in the mainstream system (Scott & McNeish, 2013). Adding to their anxiety is the minimal assurance they have in the school as these mainstream schools may lack the appropriate resources to meet the diverse range of learners' needs.

Human resource plays an indisputable role in ensuring the smooth implementation of inclusive education. Since teachers are the primary resource for achieving the goal of inclusive education, it is essential for them to receive adequate training for the new demands that accompany inclusive education. However, one of the major issues that school heads are faced with is linked to the recruitment and retention of good quality staff that will carry out the inclusive vision (Scott & McNeish, 2013). Cook, Semmel and Gerber (1999) observed that teachers lack instructional skills to meet the needs of students with disabilities in mainstream schools, supporting Tassoni (2003)'s was that poor resources, both physical and human, are frequent barriers to inclusive education. Similarly, Mungai (2015) noted that limited human and infrastructural resources are possible factors hindering efforts to implement inclusive education.

The material resource base of schools practicing inclusion has also been threatened. Cook, Semmel and Gerber (1999) argue that the resources committed to inclusion have been relatively few, a situation that is most likely to

result in the mere enrolment of children with special needs with no commensurate active participation. In their study on support services delivery to children with special needs in the Volta region of Ghana, Afful-Broni and Ankutse (2009) found the Ghana Education Service to be faced with lack of material resources and insufficient financial provisions in their attempt to support children with special educational needs. Funding is seen as a necessary input for education policy implementation. However, the implementation of such policies are challenged by inadequate funding and organizational resources (Viennet & Pont, 2017). Related to this is the challenge class size presents to teachers, as it was noted to be a contributing factor to the problem of unsuccessfully implementing inclusive education (Burstein et al., 2004).

Support Systems for Implementing Inclusive Education

It is noteworthy that the mere development of an inclusive education policy does not guarantee meeting the diverse needs of children in the mainstream school. In developing an inclusive environment, Ainscow and Sandill (2010) posit that a detailed analysis of existing arrangements provides a rational basis. In the same vein, Riehl (2000) recognises the essence of providing support as much as he believes in communicating ideas about inclusive practice. Thus, a critical look at existing support systems and potential threats to success cannot to be overlooked in ensuring inclusiveness in education.

In order for special needs education to make its desired impact, it should be supported by some important social services (Afful-Broni & Ankutse, 2009). Essentially, these revolve around effective and efficient human resources. Burstein et al. (2004) raised concerns about the limited knowledge on supporting mechanisms for inclusive practices. This regardless, Scott and McNeish (2013) suggested key areas that need to be attended to: improving the quality of assessment and ensuring that where additional support is provided, it is effective; improving teaching and pastoral support; developing strategy for specialist provision and services; simplifying legislation so that the system is clearer for parents, schools and other providers; ensuring that schools do not identify pupils as having special educational needs when they simply need better teaching; and ensuring that those providing services focus on the outcomes for children and young people.

The results from Burstein et al. (2004)'s study revealed that forming collaborative teams between special and general educators, sharing students, team teaching and grouping students according to need rather than label are effective activities undertaken in efforts to move toward inclusive practices. The study also showed instances where whereas the curriculum was planned and implemented by educators in the mainstream system, support was given to students with special educational needs by special educators. Also, while assistants were usually used to support students with special needs in general education classes, special educators provided support mainly through consultation and cooperative teaching. School heads have also been seen as important source of support in promoting inclusive education through their mobilization of resources.

In spite of their direct and influential roles in the implementation of inclusive education, special education teachers doubt the effectiveness of inclusion in the educational system (Cook, Semmel & Gerber, 1999). This could hold the unavailability of adequate systems that support inclusive education accountable. Mungai (2015) admits how the opportunities of learners with special educational needs are maximized with the provision of human, infrastructural and material resources. This places headteachers, who are at the forefront of school level management, in a position to secure the support of all necessary service providers prior to the implementation of inclusion in their schools.

Thus, the review of empirical studies focused on challenges often faced by headteachers in implementing inclusive education as well as support systems available for them to implement the policy more effectively.

IV. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the purpose of the study, a qualitative research approach, underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm was used. Specifically, a case study design was employed. According to Creswell (2014), a case study research is conducted to explore and understand the meaning people give to a social phenomenon. A case study provides an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in the socio-cultural contexts of participants and enables researchers to collect the views, feelings and experiences of participants as data. Thus, in conducting a case study, data is collected more in words than numbers. A case study design was employed for this study because our aim was to explore the challenges the headteachers face in implementing inclusive education in the Effutu municipality and existing support systems in-depth. Therefore, we used a semi-structured interview schedule to collect the views of headteachers, special education teachers and some education officers on the phenomenon under study as data, helping to build multiple perspectives into the research.

The study was conducted in six (6) primary schools in the municipality. A total of 18 participants - 6 headteachers, 8 special education teachers and 4 Ghana Education Service officials - constituted the sample for the study. Although the study focused on the headteachers, the Ghana Education Service officials and the teachers were included to ensure triangulation of the views of the headteachers on the phenomenon under study. All the categories of professionals were purposively involved in the study on the basis that they are active participants in the implementation of inclusive education in the municipality, making them 'information rich' (Creswell, 2014).

A semi-structured interview schedule was employed to gather data for the study. The instrument was most appropriate for collecting data as it allows participants to express themselves, making room for the discovery of complex issues (Denscombe, 2008). Also, the guide is flexible and offers participants the opportunity to express their views freely while giving the interviewer the freedom to divert from the questions in the interview guide where the need arises for further clarifications to be sought (Kusi, 2012). The basis of the questions in the interview guide were the research questions and some key issues in the research questions. Specifically, the questions for all the category of participants were related to challenges facing the headteachers in implementing inclusive education as well as the existing support systems for a more meaningful implementation of the policy in the study area.

All the sets of instruments were validated before using them to collect data for the study. Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Two forms of validity were established with regard to the instruments and these were face and content validity. To establish the face validity, the instruments was given to some Master of Philosophy students and colleague lecturers at the University of Education, Winneba for their comments, while the content validity was established by 3 experts in the field of educational administration and management at the same institution. The comments from these colleague expert lecturers were considered in the finalization of the instrument for the study.

To ensure the dependability of the instruments for collecting data for the study, they were piloted with 3 headteachers who were implementing inclusive education in their schools, 2 Ghana Education Service officers and 4 special education teachers in Agona East district which is closer to the context of the study. The participants

of the pilot exercise had similar characteristics as those in the main study in that they were headteachers and teachers of inclusive schools and education officers who were also working at the Ghana Education Directorate in the area.

Before collecting data for the study, permission was sought from the ‘gate-keepers’ of the education directorate of Effutu municipality, and consent of each of the participants was sought before being engaged in the study. Interview session with each of the participants lasted for about 40 minutes and the conversations were audio-taped. Also, notes were taken to make provision for any tape-recorder malfunction. The data collected was analysed thematically. This processes involved transcribing the audio recordings, immersing ourselves in the transcripts, identifying relevant themes, coding the data under relevant themes, and describing and discussing the data to form frameworks under identified themes. Also, direct quoted from the interviewees were used to support the discussion when necessary. To attribute comments to the interviewees, individuals within each category was given a serial number. The 4 education officers were given serial numbers EO-1 to EO-4, where EO represents Education Officer, while the 8 Special Education Teacher were given serial numbers SET-1 to SET-8, SET represents Special Education Teacher. The headteachers interviewed, comprised 3 males and 3 females. Therefore, the 3 Male Headteachers were given the serial numbers MHT-1 to MHT-3, where MHT represents Male Headteacher, while the 3 Female Headteachers were assigned FHT-1 to FHT-3, where FHT stands for Female Headteacher.

Trustworthiness criteria is often used to establish the quality of qualitative studies. Guba (1992) posits that trustworthiness is the process of ensuring the credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability of a qualitative research study. Credibility was ensured through respondent triangulation. This strategy enabled us to gather data from the headteachers, special education teachers and the education officers for comparison before conclusions were drawn. Dependability is the consistency of research findings (Morrow, 2005). It was ensured in the study by audio-taping conversations with the participants to have a verbatim account of the interviews. This helped us to listen attentively to each of the interviewees and capture the interviewee’s words accurately (Gray, 2013). In order to ensure an inquiry audit of our research, the interview schedule was shown to colleague lecturers for rectifications before it was administered. Moreover, although we did not intend to generalize the findings of the study, they could be applied to contexts that have enough similarities as the context of our study, thereby ensuring transferability.

Confirmability refers to the accuracy of the data and the reflexivity of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). To ensure the confirmability of our research, we carried out an audit trail, detailing the process of my data collection, data analysis and interpretation of the data by coming up with themes and sub-themes. Also, we ensured that the findings of the study were guaranteed to be grounded in the raw data gathered from the field and devoid of our preconceived notions and ideas.

V. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Two major themes emerged from the data collected for the study and these were related to challenges the headteachers face in implementing inclusive education, and the existing support systems for the implementation of the policy. Each of the themes is discussed in relation to relevant literature under this section.

5.1 *Challenges Facing the Headteachers in Implementing Inclusive Education*

An aspect of the interview schedule collected data on the challenges facing the headteachers in implementing inclusive education. It emerged from the study that the challenges were related to human and material resources, infrastructure, finance and time.

Human resources in the form of Special Education Resource teachers, play crucial role in smooth implementation of inclusive education. However, it emerged from the data that such teachers were inadequate in the schools in the study area, posing a challenge to the headteachers' effort in implementing the policy. The data suggested that the headteachers find it difficult to retain the resource teachers posted to the schools as they either leave for further studies without returning or leave for better job opportunities. MHT-2, for example, commented that *'Initially, we had a resource teacher but he has left to pursue further studies. Everything pointed out that he would return. That has been the case!'* MHT-1, however, believed the resources teachers posted to the school leave to occupy better job opportunities in higher educational institutions:

At the moment, my school does not have a resource teacher. We used to have, but we lost him almost a year ago he has had an opportunity to be a lecturer at the university and that resulted in his leaving. So for the past two terms, we've not had any resource teacher.

The comments by MHT-2 and MHT-1 suggest that the teachers either lack motivation to work in the schools or have higher career objectives, making it difficult for the headteachers to retain them. The headteachers therefore have to make conscious effort to keep these teachers in their respective organizations. For employee retention does not occur by chance, but rather through a planned and coordinated activities which builds a congenial working atmosphere and boosts employees desire to remain part of the organization (Michael, 2008).

The data further suggested that each of the resource teachers in the municipality was required to offer support in many schools, placing high work demands on them, as the following comments suggest:

We have a resource person who has been helping them [the special needs pupils]. He has been assigned to two schools, so sometimes he will be here and at times he will be at the other school. This makes his work difficult! (FHT-2)

As for us the resource teachers, we are in the schools and we are doing the work alright. The issue, however, is that we are not enough. That is how I can say it. We are not enough for all of the schools, so one teacher has to serve many schools, when necessary, and this makes our work difficult (SET-1).

EO-4 and FHT-1 shared that views of FHT-2 and SET-1, adding that more resource teachers should be posted to the schools to ensure smooth implementation of the inclusive education policy:

But even now, in Winneba we have 8 resource teachers. You can imagine one resource teacher attached to 3 or 4 schools. How can the resource teacher meet the needs of these [special needs children] children? So, at least, if a resource teacher is attached to every school, I think it will go a long way to help. So it's our plea that more resource teachers should be posted so that at least each school will have one of them (EO-4).

We need these resource teachers because some of these children are visually impaired and other conditions and they have to help us. So we've asked the office, at least we need them working effectively about twice or three times in the week. If he could dedicate 2 or 3 days for us, I think it will be of great help (FHT-1).

Thus, the comments from the interviewees suggested that limited available resource teachers had to render support services to more than one school in the area, making their workload excessive, which could, in turn, affect their effectiveness. Scott and McNeish (2013) also found that headteachers were confronted with the problem of not having adequate and quality staff to aid the implementation of inclusive education in their schools.

Moreover, the interview data suggested that another major challenge to smooth implementation of inclusive education in the municipality was related to material resources. Some of the interviewees complained that some key material resources were either unavailable or usually inadequately supplied to the schools, posing problems to the headteachers. Such resources included materials for screening children to detect any special need condition. An education officer, for example, commented:

One of the challenges schools in the [Effutu] municipality have has to do with the materials, mainly the screening materials and the facilities. Normally they are not adequate. For instance, we have something we call includer frames for checking the eyes. As I was saying, we don't have includer frames, the pen light and then the Snelling chat. These are the materials that we need to help implement inclusive education. If these materials are adequate, we will be supported to implement the policy (EO-3).

Unavailability of teaching and learning materials also emerged as a challenge to smooth inclusive practices in the schools. The data revealed that relevant resources needed for the pupils to benefit from the mainstream classrooms were not supplied, making it difficult for them to acquire relevant learning experiences:

The challenge that schools face in terms of teaching is that the necessary things the physically challenged pupils need to be able to cope with or learn with the physically fit pupils are not provided. In fact, I'm not sure they benefit much from the normal teaching processes (EO-1).

If you say you are talking about the blind, are you ready with the braille that they will use to learn? If you are talking about the hearing impaired, are you ready with the hearing aid? They are not in! The parents cannot afford to buy them for their kids! This make our work difficult (SET-5).

These comments imply that although children with special needs had been given access to the mainstream classrooms in the municipality, the necessary materials to make them feel included were unavailable, preventing them from acquiring the intended educational experiences. This corroborates Cook, Semmel and Gerber's (1999) finding where resources invested into inclusive education were few, a situation they predicted to result in the mere enrolment of children with special needs in mainstream schools without their accompanying active participation in school activities.

Provision of infrastructure for implementation of inclusive education is as equally vital as human and material resources. Provision of human and material resources at the expense of infrastructure in the bid to effectively implement the policy could be detrimental to its success. The main infrastructure that appears to be the centre of discussions about inclusive education is the access ramp. Usually, one of the key indicators that a facility or building is inclusive-friendly or disability-friendly is the presence of access ramps. Facilities with these ramps are seen as an attempt to grant everybody access, regardless of disability. Due to this, the absence of ramps in schools, especially to the classroom, is seen as a way of limiting access to children with special needs. This was evident in a headteacher's comment on the challenges faced in implementing inclusive education: "*There are no ramps in the school and this limits access to the disabled children!*" (FHT-3). This challenge was found to have its root in

insufficient funds. Thus, as a result of financial constraints in the various schools, the headteachers found it difficult to construct ramps that would grant the pupils with special needs access to their classrooms. EO-4 shared this view, commenting that:

Another problem is the ramps. Most of the heads are complaining that the funds coming are not enough for them to construct these ramps. And it's true! Visit the schools and you will see this for yourself!

To one of the education officers, it is inappropriate to admit the pupils into the mainstream schools without providing them access to the classrooms:

You cannot just say you are giving admission to say the blind in the regular school while you don't have any means to grant them access to the classroom. Access in the sense that the way the school buildings are put, can the blind or visually impaired easily get in there? It's a challenge (EO-2).

The comments from the education officers seem to suggest that provision of appropriate infrastructure, especially those relating to access is crucial for successful implementation of inclusive education. Poor access to mainstream classroom is a worry to parents who have vulnerable children with special needs (Scott & McNeish, 2013). The absence of the appropriate infrastructure in mainstream schools rendered them disability-unfriendly. The study found that the challenges associated with all the resources, particularly materials and infrastructure, were attributed to insufficient funds. Afful-Broni and Ankutse (2009) also found that the Ghana Education Service face material resources and financial challenge in its attempt to support children with special educational needs, affecting the quality of inclusive practices.

5.2 Existing Support Systems for Implementation of Inclusive Education

As indicated earlier, the data suggested that some of the schools in the municipality received human, material, infrastructure and financial support for implementation of inclusive education. Mungai (2015) noted that no inclusive education policy could be implemented with these forms of support.

As indicated earlier, human resource is one of the key elements needed to make the practice of inclusive education worthwhile. Special Education Resource teachers play key role in inclusive practices (Ministry of Education, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2013). To ensure effective implementation of inclusive education in the schools, the data revealed that provisions have been made by the Government of Ghana through the Ghana Education Service to employ teachers who have been trained in special education to handle pupils with special needs. These teachers are usually attached to schools to assist the general classroom teachers in carrying out their roles, when necessary. The situation regarding the resource teachers in the municipality was presented by some education officers:

We have resource teachers in the municipality. They are posted to the municipality [by the government] and the education office attaches them to schools. At the moment, some have left anyway, but we have about 8 of them who are attached to the schools - a maximum of about 3 to 4 schools for each resource teacher. But still there are some schools without resource teachers so we are working to bring more of them (EO-4).

When it comes to human resource, for instance, we receive resource teachers and post them to the schools. So, when they bring resource teachers, we don't reject them. We accept them and allocate them

to the various schools because we are in support of inclusive education. But, if they come to this municipality, they don't stay for long (EO-3).

Generally, the data suggested that arrangements have been made by the Government of Ghana for the posting of resource teachers in the municipality and this is followed in due course by the Municipal Education Directorate. It emerged from the data that the resource teachers perform several functions in an attempt to contribute to effective implementation of inclusive education in the schools:

The resource teachers help in identifying pupils with special needs. They go to schools to look at the eyes, ears and the physical health of pupils in Winneba [the capital town of the municipality]. The one in my school has devoted his time for these pupils. He comes around with his team to look at their eyes, ears and then give them advice. So, he has been helping. Sometimes, he even goes with them [the pupils] to the hospital (FHT-1).

.....That's why we have the resource teachers. They have been doing screening for the children. You know, the resource teachers are also part of the [education] system. Maybe one or two weeks they will come as a group, screen all the children and then give them the necessary attention (FHT-2).

We are available to perform the screening of pupils' eyes/ears every year, and support those with difficulties in the classrooms...we are attached to the schools to assist the regular teachers and support pupils with special needs" (SET-1).

As seen in the above quotations, resource teachers have been observed to be performing vital roles towards effectiveness of inclusive education in the schools in the Municipality. However, the data suggested that their numbers were limited, making them carry out multiple roles and responsibilities.

The data revealed that another form of support for effective implementation of inclusive education in the municipality was the establishment of Special Education Unit, with the mandate to assist the resource teachers in performing their duties effectively, and to offer relevant services to the pupils. Some of the participants interviewed highlighted the role performed by the Unit Coordinator:

Well, we have a Special Education Coordinator for the municipality. She moves from school to school to help the pupils with special needs, to identify and to see how they can be supported. We have the special needs services at this place [the Unit] where the officer will go from school to school to identify those pupils with disabilities and to see how best we can help them to enable their situation (EO-2).

But once a while, the office has a Special Education Unit and the Coordinator comes to screen the children [pupils] and then also assist those with special needs. That's not as frequent as the resource teacher because, for the resource teacher, he is always with us... (MHT-1).

These comments suggest that the Coordinator of the Special Education Unit works collaboratively with the resource and mainstream teachers to provide relevant services to the pupils. School pupils experience a variety of disabilities, which could affect their academic experiences negatively without adequate relevant support. Therefore, collaboration among the teachers and Unit Coordinator could help them identify the variety of needs the pupils have and to offer relevant support to them. Burstein et al. (2004) support this view, arguing that teamwork among teachers and special education educators is paramount for success of inclusive practices.

Material resources, like human resources, are essential for effective implementation of inclusive education. The various special needs conditions require adequate material resources to make the practice meaningful. The data collected suggested that the Municipal Education Directorate receives some materials for inclusive education in the schools.

Sometimes, support comes in the form of materials such as Snelling chat. At times, we the teachers go for national workshops and we are given the materials to be used in the municipality. Such materials help us to work effectively although they are inadequate (SET-3).

This comment points out that material resources are provided to the municipality for inclusive education. To ensure the effectiveness of the work of the Special Education Unit, the data suggested that in-service training programmes were sometimes organised for the personnel in the unit. Such programmes equip them with relevant knowledge, skills and competencies to improve their professional practices.

As noted earlier, generally, the schools in the municipality did not have adequate infrastructure for effective implementation of inclusive education. However, the data pointed out that some schools were well-positioned for the policy. For instance, one headteacher, in demonstrating preparedness for inclusive education stated that;

For the time that I have been in this school, I can say that the school is disability friendly. We have Walk-ways for them [the special needs pupils] - one here and one there [pointing to some Walk-ways]. So that if you are physically impaired or visually impaired, you will be given access to inclusive classroom. I have the human resource, and some facilities, including Walk-ways, (MHT-3).

This comment suggests that some schools were disability-friendly in terms of the infrastructure and facilities needed to make the practice of inclusive education effective. Such schools had access ramps to classrooms to facilitate easy movement of pupils who were found to be mobility impaired.

It also came out of the study that the Municipal Education Directorate was occasionally provided with funds, some of which are channelled to implement inclusive education in the schools. The data gathered further revealed that some of the schools in the municipality were using a portion of the Capitation Grant [the financial assistance given by the Ghana government for acquisition of material resources to promote teaching and learning] allocated to them to acquire some basic resources required by the special needs pupils.

Thus, it emerged from the study that the support systems that were available for the headteachers to implement inclusive education in the study area were related to Special Education Resource teachers, material, infrastructure and finance, but these were inadequate for effective implementation of the policy.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that one of the major challenges faced by the headteachers in the context of the study in implementing inclusive education was limited number of Special Education Resource teachers, who offer relevant services to the pupils with special needs, it emerged that although the Government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Education, post teachers to the schools for implementation of special education, the headteachers found it difficult to retain such teachers as most of them either go on study leave without returning or leave for better job opportunities. Therefore, the study recommends that the headteachers, through the Effutu Municipal Education Directorate, and Municipal Assembly, should liaise with the University of Education, Winneba, which is located

in the study area and trains special education teachers so that trainee teachers could be sent to the schools during their internship to augment the effort of the Special Education Resource teachers for a more meaningful implementation of inclusive education. The Municipal Education Directorate could also work with the Ministry of Education to ensure that National Service Persons with special education background are posted to the area to support for inclusive education.

The study also concluded that most of the schools in the municipality did not have relevant material resources, posing a challenge to the headteachers in implementation of inclusive education. This challenge was attributed to the inability of the Ministry of Education and the Municipal Education Directorate in the study area to provide adequate financial support to the schools. The study therefore recommends that the headteachers, through the Municipal Education Directorate, should contact relevant government agencies such as the Ghana Federation for the Disabled, and Non-Governmental Organizations interested in inclusive education to seek material and financial support to supplement the government's effort.

Last, but not least, the study concluded that support systems in the form of human, material, infrastructure and finance existed for the headteachers to implement inclusive education in the municipality, but these were inadequate. Since inclusive education is a key component of the Sustainable Development Goals, the study recommends that collaborative efforts must be made by the schools, Education Directorate, and Municipal Assembly in the study area to adequately equip the schools for inclusive education.

Limitations of the Study

Like other qualitative studies, this particular one had some limitations. Firstly, study used a relatively small sample of 18 participants and, therefore, the findings could not be generalized beyond the context of the study; they helped to understand the phenomenon in the Effutu municipality. However, it is possible for readers to transfer the findings to their contexts, if they identify commonalities between their contexts and that of Effutu municipality. Also, before conducting this study, we had our personal views, beliefs and understandings about leadership and inclusive education, which, sometimes, could lead to subjectivity of findings. Being aware of these potential threats, we deliberately avoided relying on our initial intuitive interpretation rooted in our own personal experience (Kusi, 2012) and allowed the data collected to speak for itself.

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