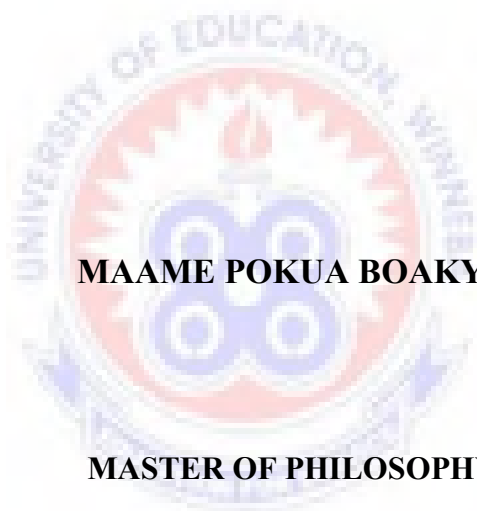


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**KNOWLEDGE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMMUNITY OPINION
LEADERS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION POLICY IN GA WEST MUNICIPALITY OF GHANA**



MAAME POKUA BOAKYE

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

2020

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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LEADERS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION POLICY IN GA WEST MUNICIPALITY OF GHANA**



**MAAME POKUA BOAKYE
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**A thesis in the Department of Special Education,
Faculty of Educational Studies, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Special Education)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

MAY, 2020

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Maame Pokua Boakye, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:

Date:

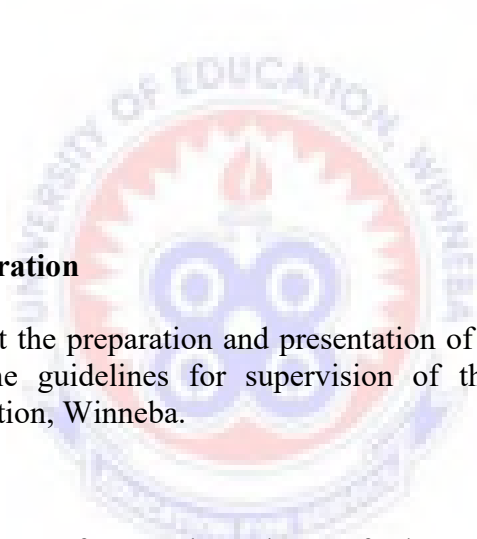
Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: Prof. Samuel Kweku Hayford

Signature:

Date:



DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Norwegian friend, Unni Kristin Berge, my children, Roberta Osei Owusu, Patrick Osei Owusu and my last baby, Michael Osei Owusu as well as my parents Mr. and Mrs. Boakye Yiadom and all members of my family.



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Also, to all the leadership and staff of Ga West Municipal Assembly, the leaders and members of Ga west municipal Chiefs and Queen mothers Association, notably, Nii Okuley Ntrel I and the entire membership of Ga West Municipal community I say thank you very much and God richly bless you all for your cooperation and support.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Page
DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
ABSTRACT	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Background to the Study	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem	6
1.2 Purpose of the Study	7
1.3 Objectives of the Study	7
1.4 Research Questions	8
1.5 Significance of the Study	8
1.6 Limitation	9
1.7 Delimitation of the Study	10
1.8 Definition of Key Terms	11
1.9 Structure of the Study	11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.0 Introduction	12
2.1 Theoretical Framework	12
2.2 The Level of Knowledge of Community Leaders about Inclusive Education Policy	14
2.3 The Contribution of Community Leaders towards Inclusive Education	22

2.4	Community Opinion Leaders“ Motivation to Contribute towards the Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy	25
2.5	Improving Community Leaders“ Knowledge about the Inclusive Education Policy	30
2.6	Summary	47
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY		49
3.0	Introduction	49
3.1	Qualitative Approach	49
3.2	Research Design	50
3.3	Population	51
3.4	Sample size	53
3.5	Sampling Technique	54
3.6	Instrumentation	55
3.7	Trustworthiness	57
3.8	Procedure for Data Collection	58
3.9	Data Analysis	59
3.10	Ethical Considerations	59
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS		61
4.0	Introduction	61
4.1	Knowledge of Community Opinion Leaders about the Inclusive Education	61
4.2	Placement and Participation	62
4.3	Meeting each Child“s Diversity	63
4.4	Special and Inclusive Education are linked	65
4.5	All Education is Inclusive Education.	66

4.6	Contributions of Community Opinion Leaders towards the Implementation of Inclusive Education	67
4.7	Collaboration	68
4.8	Limited Resources	70
4.9	Lack of Awareness	72
4.10	Community Opinion Leaders“Motivation to Contribute towards the Implementation of Inclusive Education	75
4.11	Appreciation of Diversity	78
4.12	Student Learning	79
4.13	Improving Community Opinion Leaders“Knowledge About Inclusive Education	80
4.14	Attendance of Workshops	80
4.15	Change in Understanding	82
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION		84
5.0	Introduction	84
5.1	Summary of Findings	84
5.2	Conclusion	88
5.3	Recommendations	88
REFERENCES		90
APPENDIX: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Participants		107

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1:	Population Distribution for the Study	53
2:	Sample Size Distribution for the Study	54



ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore community leaders' knowledge and contributions towards the implementation of inclusive education (IE) policy in the Ga West Municipality of Ghana. This qualitative study was designed as a case study. Data were collected from 25 participants, purposively sampled from a population of 66 community opinion leaders, who responded to a set of semi-structured interview questions. The study found the following: (i) that community opinion leaders had fair knowledge about the IE policy and valued the philosophy of its implementation, and that (ii) collaboration with key stakeholders contributed to the successful implementation of the IE policy in the Ga West Municipal, (iii) awareness creation about the rights of children with disabilities and provision of resources contribute towards the implementation of IE in the municipality. To improve the knowledge of community opinion leaders about IE policy, sensitization workshops and seminars emerged as one of the strategies to enhance the implementation of the IE policy. It was concluded that the full implementation of the IE policy would combat discrimination, create welcoming communities and build inclusive societies. Therefore, it was recommended that advocates of IE should increase community knowledge about the practicality and benefits of the IE policy and should always involve community opinion leaders since they have a major role to play in the full implementation of IE in their community.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Community leaders' knowledge and contributions in the implementation of Ghana's Inclusive Education Policy is crucial and cannot be overemphasized. In times where basic education, non-discrimination, social justice and equality of opportunities are linked to global human rights, inclusive education policy serves as a valuable entry point to achieve these rights. Community leaders' active participation is very important for the success in implementing change, and improving services. The aim of inclusive education is to ensure that every child of school-going age is able to access schools within their community and be able to learn successfully in order to attain their full potential in society (Hayford, 2013). The Ministry of Education of the Government of Ghana in 2015 launched the Inclusive Education Policy to provide a broad framework to address disparities in access to quality and equitable education by all in the country.

Globally, there is a heightened concern about widening access for persons with disabilities in basic education. In addition to other conventions in the past, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. Ghana, a signatory to the SDGs, has domesticated these tenets in its Education Strategic Plan of 2018-2030 (UNESCO, 2015). The Inclusive Education Policy is based on the value system that all persons who attend an educational institution are entitled to equitable access to quality teaching and learning and which transcends the idea of physical location, but incorporates the basic values that promote participation, friendship and

interaction (IE Policy, 2015). These legal framework and education policy require schools at all levels within the country to have inclusive environments for children with disabilities. For inclusion to be successful, multiple stakeholders have to be involved in the process. Students, parents, the community, teachers, specialists, and community opinion leaders must fully embrace and implement the philosophy of inclusion (Bublitz, 2016; Hatch, 2013).

The right to education is guaranteed by the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, as well as various international and local legislations. This notwithstanding, many factors impede children's access to quality education in Ghana. One of such is inadequate and, in many cases, the lack of disability-friendly facilities, and stakeholder interest and support in many parts of the country. Consequently, many children are denied the full benefits of their legitimate right to education. In 2013, the Government of Ghana launched the Inclusive Education Policy to provide a broad framework to address disparities in access to quality and equitable education by all in the country (Government of Ghana – Ministry of Education, 2015; Hayford, 2013). According to Hayford, the policy has the overarching goal to redefine the delivery and management of education services to respond to the diverse needs of all pupils and students within the framework of universal design for learning (UDL). The strategic focus includes improving equitable access to quality education for all children of diverse educational needs; provision of requisite teaching and learning materials; capacity development for professional and specialized teachers and managers, as well as improvements in education service delivery and encouragement of stakeholder participations. Several years after its introduction, little progress has been made in achieving the policy's ideals due to, among others, little dissemination of the policy and its content to key stakeholders such as community opinion leaders and teachers.

This has resulted in entrenching the status quo and resultantly, leading to school dropout among persons with disability and other learning difficulties; leaving many children behind in education progress; and not fully unearthing and tapping the potentials of many children in Ghana.

Inclusive education has been piloted in Ghana since the 2003-2004 academic year and Greater Accra Region was one of the piloting regions (Anthony, 2011; Gregorius, 2016; Opoku, Badu, Amponteng, & Agyei-Okyere, 2015). Despite some substantial progress made, there are still disparities in terms of the implementation and belief in inclusive education programming (Agbenyega, 2007). Even now, teachers and educational leaders continually report that they lack the knowledge and skills to provide quality inclusive special education services (Opoku, Agbenyega, Mprah, Mckenzie, & Badu, 2017; Williams, 2015).

In an attempt to address the lack of knowledge and skills required to provide quality special education services in inclusive settings, a plethora of researches have been conducted with parents and teachers (Opoku et al., 2015). Undeniably, these two stakeholder groups provide useful insight into the challenges, benefits, strategies, and struggles associated with providing inclusive education services. While the research that explores parents' and teachers' perceptions toward inclusion is insightful, research that examines community leaders' knowledge and contribution towards the implementation of Ghana's inclusive education policy is yet to be explored. There are very few studies that examine the roles, responsibilities, and perceptions of community leaders related to inclusion and even fewer studies that are remotely current (Chandler, 2015). Furthermore, despite the critical role community leaders play in their communities in relation to education, the available research examines

leaders' knowledge and contributions towards inclusion from solely the community perspectives.

Elsewhere, community leaders and heads of institutions work closely to ensure inclusive education is effectively implemented and sustained (Murphy, 2018). Community leaders provide funding, allocate resources, and deliver professional development pertinent to inclusive education to institutional heads. In turn, heads of institutions oversee inclusive education programmes in their schools and provide professional development pertinent to inclusive education to their staff. Inclusion is a district-wide effort, and community leaders are at the forefront of these efforts. Therefore, it is imperative to have an understanding of all community leaders' awareness towards inclusive education policy to ensure a well-rounded understanding of what the policy entails and the role community leaders are supposed to play towards the inclusive education policy implementation.

Collectively, community leaders should be responsible for establishing a vision, culture, and a community of inclusion within their districts (McKinney, Labat, & Labat, 2015; Urton, Wilbert, & Hennemann, 2014). In addition to the myriad of important roles that community leaders play in inclusive education policy implementation, community leaders' positive attitudes toward inclusion is one of the strongest indicators of a district being successfully inclusive (Stith, 2013). Evidently, community leaders play highly important roles in special education programming. The lack of community leaders' voices and their critical input into the dialogue about inclusive education implementation creates urgency and a gap in the research that needs to be filled. Furthermore, community leaders must have an understanding of

their roles and responsibilities related to the implementation of inclusive education policy in order for inclusion to be successful in their districts.

The limited research that is available suggests that there is still a great deal of confusion and mixed perceptions towards inclusive education from the perspective of community leaders. If community leaders, arguably one of the instrumental stakeholder group involved in inclusive education implementation, do not understand their roles and responsibilities pertinent to inclusive education policy, then Ghana's public schools will not stand a chance at providing students with disabilities with the education to which they are entitled.

Evidently, students with disabilities have been repressed for long enough. They have fought assiduously to have equitable rights to those of students without disabilities (Murphy, 2018). The law, educational reform efforts, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service (GES) have taken strides to provide students with disabilities access to free compulsory universal basic education [fCUBE] (Akyeampong, 2009). However, public schools have a long way to go before all students with disabilities are truly be provided with the education to which they are legally entitled (Opoku et al., 2017). The research available from the perspective of parents and teachers is incredibly useful. However, community leaders also have a say in schools, and could have the largest impact on the efficacy and implementation of inclusive education (Hack, 2014). For inclusive education and education reform efforts to be truly successful, it is imperative that the roles, responsibilities, and perceptions of community leaders are understood. Thus, there is an urgent need to explore the knowledge and contribution towards inclusive education policy implementation from the perspectives of community leaders.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Ga West Municipality in the Greater Accra Region was one of the first municipalities in Ghana to pilot inclusive education. For this reason, the Ghana Education Service has posted one special education Coordinator and 14 special education resource teachers to 14 schools in the municipality. These professionals are tasked to collaborate with other community level stakeholders such as school authorities, the parent teacher associations (PTA), traditional rulers, assembly members, parliamentarians and the entire stakeholders to ensure that children with special educational needs are not marginalized.

For inclusion to be successful, multiple stakeholders have to be involved in the process. Students, parents, the community, teachers, specialists, and community opinion leaders must fully embrace and implement the philosophy of inclusion (Bublitz, 2016; Hatch, 2013). However, community opinion leaders who are supposed to be beacons of policy implementation at the community level, appear to be less knowledgeable about the inclusive education policy. A plethora of research has been conducted with parents and teachers to address the lack of knowledge about inclusive education (Opoku et al., 2017). While the researches that have explored parents' and teachers' perceptions toward inclusive education is insightful, research that examines community opinion leaders' knowledge and contribution towards the implementation of Ghana's inclusive education policy is yet to be explored.

There are very few studies that examine the roles, responsibilities, and perceptions of community leaders in relation to inclusive education, and even those few studies are remotely current (Chandler, 2015). Furthermore, despite the critical role community leaders' play in their communities in relation to education, the available research

examines leaders' knowledge and contributions towards inclusive education from solely the community perspectives. Therefore, it is imperative to have an understanding of community leaders' awareness towards inclusive education policy to ensure a well-rounded understanding of what it takes to create and sustain a successful inclusive education programme. The lack of community leaders' voices and their critical input into the dialogue about inclusive education policy implementation creates urgency and a gap in the research that needs to be filled. Thus, there is an urgent need to explore the knowledge and contribution towards inclusive education policy implementation from the perspectives of community opinion leaders in the Ga West Municipality of Ghana.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore community leaders' knowledge and contribution towards the implementation of inclusive education policy in Ga West Municipality in Ghana.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Describe the level of knowledge of community leaders about the Ghana's inclusive education policy.
- ii. Examine community leaders' contribution towards the implementation of inclusive education policy in their community.
- iii. Discuss what motivates community opinion leaders to contribute towards the implementation of inclusive education policy in the Ga West Municipality.
- iv. Strategize how community leaders' knowledge about inclusive education policy can be improved to enhance its implementation.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. What is the level of knowledge of community opinion leaders about the inclusive education policy of Ghana?
- ii. What contributions have community opinion leaders made towards the implementation of Ghana's inclusive education policy in the Ga West Municipality?
- iii. What motivate community opinion leaders to contribute towards the implementation of Ghana's inclusive education policy in the Ga West Municipality?
- iv. How can community opinion leaders' knowledge about the inclusive education policy of Ghana be improved to enhance its implementation?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The outcome of this study will reveal the knowledge and contributions of community opinion leaders towards the implementation of inclusive education policy in their community. This will facilitate the full implementation of inclusive education policy of Ghana in the Ga West Municipality and Ghana at large. In effect, this will lead to an improvement in the provision of access, resources to enhance learning, motivation of teachers, and reduction of discrimination by the community. In addition, the findings of the study will also offer useful information and suggestions to educationist and policy makers on the best way to get community leaders' involved in the implementation of the inclusive education policy. The results of the study would also go a long way to provide information to the government and other stakeholders about the knowledge base of community leaders as far as the Ghana's inclusive education policy is concern which shall provide the lead in the effective design of workshops

and other interventions such as awareness raising and community sensitization. The findings from the study would also reveal to stakeholders on the various evidence-based ways in which the knowledge of community leaders can be increased to ensure the full inclusive practices. Finally, the findings of this study would be new in adding to the little body of knowledge pertaining to the implementation of the inclusive education policy in the Ga West Municipality and in Ghana at large.

1.6 Limitation

During the research process a few limitations were encountered. First, it took much efforts getting the participants to grant ample time for the interview. The limited time did not allow the researcher to delve deeper into some of the relevant information on the context of inclusive education implementation in the Ga West Municipal. However, the researcher found a way of reaching out to some of the participants whose busy schedules did not permit a face-to-face conversational interview through phone calls. Secondly, due to limitation of time on the part of the participants, the researcher was limited to the use of one data collection method. As a result, the study did not include other sources of data to provide complementary information that could strengthen the validity of the research. That is, using other instruments such as observation would have yielded more information on how the community opinion leaders implemented their leadership role. Therefore, it is unclear whether the community opinion leaders were actually contributing to the implementation of inclusive education. However, they seemed confident and knew what they were talking about. Also, some of the participants admitted that they were unaware of their roles in the implementation of inclusive education policy. Nevertheless, relevant data were gathered to address the research problem. Moreover, relevant literature for the study was foreign due to scanty literature in this context of studies conducted in

Ghana. Additionally, the findings were context-bound and relate to certain community opinion leaders at a given time. However, readers decide whether any of the approaches used by community opinion leaders are applicable to their setting or not. Finally, the use of English as the main mode of communication appeared to have led to the misinterpretation of questions and subjectivity of interpretation.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

There are numerous municipalities and districts in Ghana in which inclusive education was being practiced at the time the study was conducted, however, this study was delimited to the Ga West Municipality in the Greater Accra Region. The research site was chosen because it was one of the districts that inclusive education was first piloted in Ghana. It was expected that much progress had been made in the implementation of the inclusive education programme. Again, this study was focused on community opinion leaders, including traditional rulers, members of parliament, the Municipal Chief Executive, elected presiding officer, executive the district executive committee members (e.g., finance, administration, and development planning), assemblymen, clergy, PTA members, and the school management committee (SMC) executives, social welfare officers and non-governmental organization (NGOs) for persons with disabilities. This is because these leaders occupy key positions of authority whether by election or appointment. They were the community-level decision makers in the Ga West Municipality and therefore expected to have a stake in the effective implementation of the inclusive education policy in the municipality. Their participation was necessary since they might have not gone through rigorous education or training about inclusive education.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Community it is frequently based in place and so is local, although it can also represent a community of common interest, purpose or practice.

Community opinion leaders are well-known individuals who have the ability to influence public opinion on a subject matter. They are not necessarily elected to their positions, and usually have no legal powers, but they are often used by the media and the police as a way of determining the general feeling within a particular community, or acting as a point of liaison between that community and authorities.

Inclusive education is a process that involves the transformation of schools and other centers of learning to cater for all children irrespective of their background.

Inclusive Education Policy defines the strategic path of the government for the education of all children irrespective of their background.

1.9 Structure of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one presented the introduction, which consisted of the background to the study, the statement of the problem and purpose of the study, the limitations and scope of the study, as well as definition of terms. Chapter two entails the review of related literature. It makes use of secondary information such as newspapers, encyclopedia, journals, and books related to the research topic while the third chapter examines the methodology used in harvesting data. Chapter four comprised a presentation of data collected accompanied by discussion of results. Chapter five concludes the research by summarizing, concluding, and making recommendations based on the findings. It also covers the implications of the study. References and appendixes follow at the end of chapter five.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the relevant literature for the study. The following strands were covered:

- i. theoretical framework;
- ii. community opinion leaders' knowledge about inclusive education policy of Ghana;
- iii. the roles of community opinion leaders towards the implementation of inclusive education policy;
- iv. community opinion leaders' motivation to contribute towards the implementation of inclusive education policy;
- v. improving community opinion leaders' knowledge to enhance the implementation of inclusive education policy; and
- vi. Summary of literature review.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Several educational leadership theories such as situational, contingency, transactional, and transformational have been proven worthwhile in educational management and policy implementations. This research was guided by the Transformational Leadership Theory, which was developed by Burns (1978).

2.1.1 Transformational leadership

According to Bass and Riggio (2008), there are four components of transformational leadership. These are 1) individualized consideration; 2) inspirational motivation; 3) idealized influence; and 4) intellectual stimulation (Tucker & Russel, 2004). Individualized consideration refers to one's ability to provide individualized, one-on-one support to followers as needed (Tucker & Russell, 2004). Inspirational motivation is the ability for a leader to provide followers with shared motivation by establishing a vision and values that coincide with the organization's mission (Bass & Riggio, 2008). The leader's enthusiasm and integrity to follow her vision, values, and the mission, inspires others to do the same. A third trait of transformational leaders is idealized influence. This refers to transformational leaders being respected and trusted within their organizations (Tucker & Russel, 2004). Followers who trust and respect their leader will emulate the vision and actions of their leader (Chandler, 2015). Lastly, transformational leaders provide their followers with intellectual stimulation, continually motivating others to explore new and creative ways of learning and instructing (Bass & Riggio, 2008). This skill is a necessary trait for leaders to foster positive change and to inspire others to produce creative and effective solutions in their organizations.

2.1.2 Transformational leadership and inclusive education policy implementation

Inclusive education has been an area of focus and debate over the past few decades. With an increased focus on inclusion for students with disabilities, community leaders must be creative and supportive of policies that promote inclusion in order to best meet the needs of all students (Bublitz, 2016). In many circumstances, this requires community leaders to demonstrate transformational leadership traits. Meeting the unique needs of diverse learners is not an easy task, and meeting the needs of all

students in an inclusive environment often requires leaders to challenge the status quo by asking questions, creating new solutions, and problem-solving often-difficult practical solutions (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Additionally, transformational leaders effectively collaborate with multiple stakeholders to establish a vision, goals, and strategies that support increased student learning for all students in inclusive settings (Hack, 2014). Community leaders must possess the fundamental transformational leadership traits of inspiring others, creating a shared vision and mission for the district, and the ability to foster change when warranted (Marzano et al., 2005). For these reasons, it is imperative to have an understanding of community leaders' perceptions regarding inclusive education policy implementation and practices. Moreover, it is important to understand how transformational leadership traits are related to the perceptions of community leaders toward inclusion implementation.

2.2 The Level of Knowledge of Community Leaders about Inclusive Education Policy

The overarching goal of Ghana's inclusive education policy is to redefine and recast the delivery and management of educational services to respond to the diverse needs of all learners within the framework of UDL and Child Friendly School Concept. Literature that relates to inclusive education, as well as the literature that relates to educational leadership, lead to the conclusion that if stakeholders are interested in moving towards more inclusive practices, one of the factors that have to be studied in depth is leadership and its role in the development of an all-inclusive learning environment for all learners. Educational leaders, including principals and district leaders, are the primary special education leaders in public schools today (Murphy, 2018). They are ultimately responsible for the successful implementation of inclusive

special education programs, as outlined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004). The basic goal of many educational systems across the world is the offering of equal educational opportunities in education for all learners. The strategy of the United Nations „Education for All“ declaration supports these initiatives, and the Salamanca Accord (UNESCO, 1994) argues that the ultimate way to achieve „Education for All“ is to give mainstream schools an inclusive orientation.

According to Booth and Ainscow (1998) cited in Angelides (2011), inclusive education is related to the effort of reducing barriers that prevent the participation and learning of all children, regardless of their race, gender, social background, sexuality, disability or attainment in schools. Inclusive education policy implementation does not only focus on the barriers that students face but also focuses on the development of cultures, policies and practices in educational systems and institutions, in order for them to be able to respond to the diversity of their students and to treat them equally (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). In inclusive schools, diversity is welcomed and is considered to be a source of learning rather than a problem. The most important fact is that inclusive education is an on-going process and not a stage we can reach at a specific moment. Many efforts to promote inclusive education are almost exclusively focused on the activities of schools and how they could be reformed in order to become more inclusive (Angelides, 2011).

Despite the fact that these efforts are being made and are constantly becoming more intense, it seems that there is dissatisfaction concerning their success. In parallel to that, the literature that deals with educational leadership underlines the big changes that are taking place in the world today and the need for different forms of leadership that can help schools to respond to the needs of the modern world (Hargreaves &

Fink, 2006; Harris, 2008). The literature that relates to inclusive education as well as the literature that relates to educational leadership lead to the conclusion that if we are interested in moving towards more inclusive practices one of the factors that has to be studied in depth is leadership and the its role in the development of these practices. Therefore, the roles of community leaders, both political and traditional leaders, have an inevitable influence on a successful inclusive policy.

Collaborations and partnerships between school staff, families, and community leaders and/or members are necessary and highly appreciative in ensuring that the school environment is all inclusive and hence ensure the success and full participation of all learners (Epstein, 2011; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sailor & McCart, 2014). Effective collaboration and solid partnerships among these groups contribute to student success and, ultimately, to creating a successful and democratic community (Auerbach, 2010; Burrello, Hoffman, & Murray, 2005) especially in schools with diverse populations (Leonard, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Community-school partnerships, contributing to positive student outcomes, occur when schools work collaboratively with community members, agencies, organizations, businesses and industry around common goals, resulting in (a) direct participation by community representatives in school leadership and (b) enhanced community resources (Gross, 2015 [in press]). Many theories and perspectives have asserted the view that both home and school are important institutions that educate and socialize children. Gross used an open systems perspective to show the relationship between the different parts of the school as a social system. He postulated three different but interrelated levels in a school system thus, the technical, managerial and institutional. At the institutional level, the school is connected to the environment in which the home and community play important roles. In view of Gross's (2015) assertion, the role of and the level of

knowledge of the community leader in full partnering with the school as an institution cannot be undermined.

Michael, Dittus, and Epstein (2007) further determined six types of involvement that operate within the three corresponding spheres of Gross (2015). The six types of involvement identified by Michael et al. include: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Parenting involves organising seminars, workshops, and information on the learning needs of children that relate directly to skills taught in classes for families; communicating takes into account engagements with families about inclusive education classes and courses as well as opportunities to participate in school inclusive programs; volunteering refers to the recruitment and training of families as volunteers to enrich social participation and inclusive education classes; learning at home involves families and students in inclusive schools as well as neighbouring community members learning activities at home; decision-making takes into account student councils, community leaders and parents in assisting the school to develop school inclusive policies; and collaboration with the community is an integral approach in which families and communities can work together to help create a school culture that focuses on school participation and responsive to the diverse needs of all learners through programs such as wellness promotion and violence prevention.

Additional research-based approaches have emphasised the importance of a school learning community to strengthen family–school partnership. Such a learning community emphasizes the teamwork of principals, teachers, students, parents and

community partners who work together to improve the school and enhance students' learning outcomes (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Researchers have recommended that better networks among inclusive schools, social service agencies, and families can absolutely impact learners' school functioning, including academic achievement (Anderson, Wright, Smith, & Kooreman, 2007; Harry, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Meyer, Anderson, & Huberty, 2007; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Walker, Ramsey, and Gresham (2004) further supported this assertion when they also noted that schools need to be supported and encouraged to partner with families and social service agencies so they can help all children and youth to be successful in inclusive schools. Farmer, Burns, Phillips, Angold, and Costello (2003) asserted that while inclusive schools increasingly have become the actual service system for learning disabilities and related service provision for children and youth, it has also become clear that the traditional educational system was not well designed for the broad range of health, physical health, social, and psychological challenges that students may experience (Epstein & Walker, 2002; Robertson, Anderson, & Meyer, 2004).

The child development literature on community-school partnership emphasizes the social and emotional domains of the development of the child. Social and emotional learning is observed as the process of understanding how the child recognizes and manages their emotions, demonstrates thoughtful concerns for others, makes responsible and independent decisions, establishes positive friendship or relationships with adults and peers and handle challenging situations effectively (Patrikakou, 2008). Some research studies have highlighted positive consequences of community-school partnership as in ego development, self-esteem and social functioning (McWayne,

Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). Other findings on the social and emotional development of the child have shown that community members can become more aware of the negative influences of drug abuse and violence and become more concerned in helping their children manage their emotions and become more responsible in decision-making and display much less delinquent behaviour later in life (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004).

A quantitative research using a cross-sectional design was conducted by Gowrie and Ramdass (2014) to investigate the perception of parents on home-school partnership in selected basic schools in Trinidad and Tobago. This study addressed some of the key areas to be considered in building a strong home-school partnership that enhances student learning and makes a significant difference in the lives of children. In this case, three home-school factors were examined in improving and supporting this partnership; namely, home-school relationships, school-related factors, and shared decision-making. The study revealed that shared decision-making was the lowest predictor of family-school partnership. This suggests that a culture of mistrust still exists between parents and teachers, especially in missionary-controlled schools (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). In many of these schools, parental involvement is limited to attendance to school PTA meetings, assistance with school functions and Open Day celebrations. There is a reluctance to have parents involved in curriculum planning, school development policies and other decision-making matters. It is on the basis of this background that the researcher decided to investigate the nature of community-school partnership, more especially, on community leaders in Ghanaian societies such as Ga West Municipality. Partnerships between school staff and community members through the representation of community leaders or other stakeholders in school management is an important strategy for ensuring the success and full participation of

all students including those with special needs in inclusive learning environments (Epstein, 2011; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sailor & McCart, 2014).

Strong collaboration among these groups leads to student success and, ultimately, to creating a thriving and democratic community (Auerbach, 2010; Burrello et al., 2005), especially in schools with heterogeneous students' needs or of a diverse population (Leonard, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Leadership collaborations of that sort benefits all stakeholders (Henderson & Mapp, 2002), it also leads to improved student learning, achievement, behaviour, attendance, and importantly the student's full participation in the inclusive school society (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Epstein, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014); effectiveness and efficiency on the part of the educator (Haines, McCart, & Turnbull, 2013; Lawson, 2003); enhanced quality of life of the learner's family (Burke & Hodapp, 2014); and increased relationship and collaborations among community members (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

In view of these contributions of related literature, one may draw a conclusion that the representation of community members in the school leadership is as important as the curriculum of the school since the members of the community through the immediate family of the learner know the needs of the learner and could also learn from the educators how to render these needs or how they could also help the school management to effectively and efficiently meet the needs of the learners especially those with special needs in an inclusive learning environment. These help may range from the facilitation of peer interaction among the learners in school and at the community levels, the design of the community resources that may meet the learning needs of the learners and the demands of the society that may ensure the self-independent capital living of the students in the near future.

Inasmuch as the inclusive school is established within the community, they may be unexpectedly secluded from the daily activities, agencies, senior centres, and other potentially helpful groups and individuals located in their community (Epstein, 2011). This may be as a result of lack of representation of the community leadership from the affairs of the school. Schools and the leaders who communicate with their communities, of which they are located in a formal and logical manner, enhances their chances of getting better public and community support, minimizing criticism, learning the values and priorities of a community, and receiving many functional ideas and resources that will help educate students better.

For many school leaders, any program of communicating with the public appears to be very limited or non-existent in the extreme. Bagin (2001) stated that school leadership who feel a need for an on-going program usually limit it to parents or to some school-related group and therefore exclude community representation in decision making processes of the school. “A high-performing school requires broad-based community support and support that will come from communities that are well informed and well engaged in the educative processes that go on in the school” (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2011, p 302). This could therefore be realised if there is a representation of community leaders in school decision making processes. Epstein (2011) noted that many schools do not have foreknowledge of the community resources available to support schools. “Many educators, families, and students are unaware of the resources in their communities. Indeed, many are unclear where their community begins and ends” (Epstein, 2011, p. 462). Schools exist within communities. The school leadership needs to be proactive in establishing strong bonded relationships with stakeholders throughout the community. One of such means by teachers in inclusive schools can learn about the community is to create a

community profile in collaboration of the community leadership. This involves identifying resources within the community neighbourhood. Specifically, it may revolve around the area of the school, the home neighbourhoods, and other locations where students, families, and teachers spend time and give and/or receive services. The targeted community resources should include museums, zoos, higher education institutions, libraries, the media, business and industry, shops, youth organizations, places for child care, places of worship, and other locations where students and families visit, work, give and/or obtain services, learn, or play (Epstein, 2011; Cunningham & Cordiero, 2009). 2011; Cunningham & Cordiero, 2009

Inclusive school and community partnerships are built on relationships of trust and effective interpersonal communication. A review of the research revealed that successful school and community partnerships were created through leadership, trust, stability, readiness and sustained outreach (Auerbach, 2010; Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon, & Simon, 2005). Other key factors are reciprocity, where both partners benefit in some way, and the alignment and pooling of resources, so that there is no duplication but instead a filling in of the gaps in service provision. The ultimate responsibility of inclusive schools and the leadership is to be proactive in knowing the community and establishing sustainable relationships.

2.3 The Contribution of Community Leaders towards Inclusive Education

The inclusive education system in Ghana appears to face significant challenges in understanding and addressing issues of student disengagement among the disabled and abled peers. Academic and community leaders are encouraged to seek new and innovative strategies to engage students in meaningful learning experiences that promote positive affective relationships and participation in school activities. School

and community interaction is an important topic in inclusive education, as evidence suggests that communities that value their local schools stimulate more positive long-term success and a strengthening of the social capital for the students from those schools. Although school and community interaction has been explored from the schools' perspective, less research has occurred from the perspective of the key stakeholders and leaders of a community (Watson, Wright, Allen, Hay, Cranston, & Beswick, 2017).

Further, research on the impact of the community on its school and students is pointed in relation to the concept of the communities' social capital (Semo, 2011). Social capital is the extent to which physical, social, and personnel resources within a community can have a direct and indirect impact on the school and its students (Watson et.al, 2017). Researchers have pointed out that inclusive education is the most effective and efficient way of education and that it is key to school improvement and should be cultivated by both school community leaders in order to increase learning opportunities, outcomes and participation for all students (Angelides & Leigh, 2004; Avissar, 2000; Burello, Lashley, & Beatty, 2001; Male, 2000; Powers et al., 2001). Praisner (2003) asserts that for success to be established in inclusion, it is important for leaders to be committed to the philosophy of inclusive education and to develop attitudes and behaviour that promote the inclusion of students who experience difficulties in learning. Furthermore, Attfield and Williams (2003) state that leaders should develop in the minds of teachers a clear conceptual framework of what inclusion is. Leaders should support school staff with regard to their responsibilities and the teaching of children who, for various reasons, are marginalized (Angelides, 2011, citing Freeman & Grey, 1989). Kugelmass and Ainscow (2004) further stipulated that one of the duties of leaders is to foster new

meanings of diversity so as not to isolate individuals who for some reason are marginalized. Such leaders might also try to build connectedness between the schools of a community.

Angelides et al. (2010) conducted a study in Cyprus to determine the particular leadership practices that promoted inclusive education in one school in Cyprus, their stipulated in their finding that these practices are related to (1) the involvement of teachers, parents and the community, (2) the promotion of co-teaching, (3) the construction of collaborative cultures and (4) the treatment of all children with love and care. From this finding, one can conclude that the role of the community as well as the leaders cannot be overemphasized when talking about the success of inclusive education. The research of Angelides and Avraamidou (2010) showed that the role of leaders is important in supporting schools and teachers in their teaching in informal learning environments, and where leaders were negative in teaching in informal settings, inclusion practices were reduced and were not as effective.

Dierking et al., (2003) defined „informal learning environments as learning environments outside the traditional area of schools. Although the existing literature and research in this area is quite limited, however, there are indications that informal learning environments can contribute to social justice education (Dillon & Brant, 2006). While recent research has recognised collaborative engagement as a key factor within the field of special education in preparing pre-service teachers to develop dispositions, beliefs and practices of inclusive education (Gillies, 2014), there remains a dearth of planned, systemic, collaborative approaches. Effective collaboration is described as a communication process in which various and diverse perspectives are interrogated until a consensual understanding is reached between stakeholders (Keeffe

& Carrington, 2007). It involves shared decision-making with staff, students, parents and members of the local community, participating in professional learning communities (Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2011). Nevertheless, Forlin and Chambers (2011) found that simply developing knowledge about inclusive legislation and policy, along with increasing confidence levels, did not adequately address early community leaders and participants concerns about inclusive education.

Loreman (2007), citing Murphy (1996), postulates that negative attitudes towards inclusion, once developed, are extremely difficult to change. This highlights the importance of public education, community participation and pre-service teacher education which stimulates positive attitudes towards inclusive education within the society (Forlin et al., 2001; Sharma, Forlin, Loreman, & Earle, 2006). Moreover, these researchers further suggest that community leaders and education graduates should be encouraged to continue with further education, not only as a matter of professional obligation, but also as a means to stay current with the latest developments in effective education for all and as well be able to educate the general public on it as well. The development of positive attitudes towards inclusive education needs to be tackled at all levels, from family, community, learner, pre-service teacher education to experienced teachers in the field. While positive attitudes may do much to promote the success of an inclusive approach, negative attitudes will surely ensure its failure (Loreman, 2007).

2.4 Community Opinion Leaders' Motivation to Contribute towards the Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy

The sole purpose of education is to ensure that all students gain access to knowledge, skills, and information that will prepare them to contribute to communities and

workplaces. The central purpose becomes more challenging as schools accommodate students with increasingly diverse backgrounds and abilities. As the government strive to meet these challenges, the involvement and cooperation of educators, parents, and community leaders is vital for the creation of better and more inclusive schools. The media has a role to highlight inclusive education because inclusion is an educational approach and philosophy that provides all students with community membership and greater opportunities for academic and social achievement.

Inclusion is about making sure that each and every student feels welcome and that their unique needs and learning styles are attended to and valued. Inclusive schools put the values upon which was founded (pluralism, tolerance, and equality) into action; they ask teachers to provide appropriate individualized supports and services to all students without the stigmatization that comes with separation (Schuelka, 2018). Research shows that most students learn and perform better when exposed to the richness of the general education curriculum, as long as the appropriate strategies and accommodations are in place. At no time does inclusion require the classroom curriculum, or the academic expectations, to be watered down. The media is considered an effective tool of communication, providing a powerful channel of information between the political elite and the electorate. It makes it possible for widely dispersed citizens to receive, disseminate and act on the information availed to them by the mass media (Wheeler, 1997). On the contrary, inclusion enhances learning for students, both with and without special needs. Students learn, and use their learning differently; the goal is to provide all students with the instruction they need to succeed as learners and achieve high standards, alongside their friends and neighbors.

Inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. Inclusive education is about how we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together. Neighbourhood schools are the heart of our communities, and Inclusion believes they are essential for a quality inclusive education system. Therefore, we believe it is important to support a public education system.

Through the media all children benefit from inclusive education by developing individual strengths and gifts, with high and appropriate expectations for each child, working on individual goals while participating in the life of the classroom with other students their own age, involving their parents in their education and in the activities of their local schools, fostering a school culture of respect and belonging. Inclusive education provides opportunities to learn about and accept individual differences, lessening the impact of harassment and bullying, developing friendships with a wide variety of other children, each with their own individual needs and abilities and positively affect both their school and community to appreciate diversity and inclusion on a broader level. The media emphasizes its importance because as, we value our diverse communities. These communities start at school, where all students learn to live alongside peers. They learn together; they play together; they grow and are nurtured together. The media can also highlight what is being done to support teachers to include students with diverse needs in the classroom. The media, through a forum, can also support the school to provide a plan to support teachers and students through good inclusive practices like collaboration, team work, innovative

instructional practices, peer-strategies. McNair (2011) also argued that not only do the media report, they also educate.

The United Nation's Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006 declared the need for countries to facilitate the right of individuals with disabilities to their full inclusion and participation within communities across the globe. The community clearly plays a necessary role in the overall preparation and quality of life of students with disabilities and their families. The present review will specifically address the reasons for the contribution of community leaders towards the implementation of inclusive education policy.

Inclusive education works best when all sectors of society are involved. Key stakeholders within inclusive education programmes include local civil society leaders, community leaders, religious leaders, local government representatives and other relevant contacts. In an inclusive education project, community members can run regular awareness meetings for others in their community and help disabled children. The dynamic nature and changing needs of the world affects the leadership role in both our communities and educational institutions as well. There is a call for transformational models of leadership that decentralises and distributes power and empowers teachers and also makes community representatives integral part of the school leadership, in contrast to the transactional models, which sustain traditional and bureaucratic concepts of hierarchy (Leithwood et al., 1999, cited in Angelides, 2011). Transformational leaders focus on the people around them. They also focus on their relationships, their values, beliefs, feelings and attitudes.

Transformational leaders manage structures and as well also seek to impact upon the school cultures and community inputs in order to change them (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Furthermore, transformational models of leadership have significant effects on organizational conditions and on student engagement with schools (Angelides, 2011). Of late, leaders are no longer just the head teachers of schools but there is a tendency for school leadership to be distributed to as many people as possible, including community leaders and even students (Gronn, 2003).

Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, & Hopkins (2007) argued that when leadership is distributed, then there is a positive impact on school improvement and on educational change. In this sense, Ryan (2006) described inclusive leadership “not in terms of positions or individuals who perform certain tasks but as a collective process in which everyone is included or fairly represented.” (p. 17) Furthermore, authors such as Kugelmass and Ainscow (2004) and Praisner (2003) consider the role of leaders to be significant in developing inclusive education. Researchers have postulated that inclusive education is a key to school improvement and something that should be cultivated by school leaders in order to increase learning opportunities for all students (Angelides & Leigh, 2004).

Praisner claimed that in order to establish the success of inclusion, it is incumbent for leaders both internal and external to show commitment to the philosophy of inclusive education and to develop attitudes and behaviour that promote the inclusion of students who experience difficulties in learning and participation. Additionally, Attfield and Williams (2003) stated that leaders should instil in the minds of teachers and community representatives or leaders a clear picture of what inclusion is. Community leaders should support school staff with regard to their responsibilities

and the teaching of children who, for various reasons, are marginalized (Angelides, 2011, citing Freeman & Grey, 1989). Kugelmass and Ainscow (2004) further suggested that one of the duties of leaders is to foster new meanings of diversity so as not to isolate individuals who for some reason(s) are marginalized. Such leaders might also try to establish a link between the schools of a community.

2.5 Improving Community Leaders' Knowledge about the Inclusive Education

Policy

Inclusion means living among, doing things with, and deciding together with the people without disabilities (Minnow, 1990) and, as a necessary pre-requisite, requires frequenting community environments that allow engagement in meaningful interactions among people with and without disabilities. Such interactions cannot take place if people do not see one another or are kept away from one another or live in different settings because of congregate or segregated living or work arrangements. Supporting people with disabilities to live in typical community contexts is a means to show respect for diversity and to recognise that people with disabilities have the same rights as citizens in every country (Ferrari, Nota, & Soresi, 2006). Equal access is important, though one must ensure that it is not understood superficially as giving people exactly the same supports. As noted, to achieve full participation and, ultimately, be included in school or community contexts, people with disabilities need varying types, durations, and frequencies of supports (Minnow, 1990). That can be done by taking steps to guarantee that people with disabilities are provided the supports they need, and that they are granted the same levels of participation and decisional power as everyone else.

2.5.1 Community involvement in promoting inclusion, participation and self-determination

Promoting inclusion requires access to and the possibility of being part of the community where one lives, which at the same time must pay attention to the way of life and the needs of all its members (Bunning & Horton, 2007). Further, promoting the inclusion of individuals with disabilities requires consideration of the type and level of participation in relation to the phase of a person's life: school inclusion is obviously related to child development and adolescence and work inclusion to adult life (Soresi, Nota, & Wehmeyer, 2011).

School inclusion implies overcoming socio-cultural prejudices and marginalizing social barriers, as well as strengthening active participation. It also requires the presence of technical, social and organisational solutions - as well as rehabilitative and training actions - to cope with the diverse educational needs that characterize a heterogeneous group of students (Soresi & Nota, 2001). At school, the members of any group differ from one another and need diverse types and levels of educational interventions, which require high professionalism and rigorous planning. Inclusive schools cannot just increase the burden of students with disabilities by using ad hoc assessment procedures and implementing special programmes that separate or isolate them. Rather, they should aim at identifying and respecting every student's unique educational needs, establish a policy that welcomes and values every student and promotes means to achieve that policy, for example teaching tolerance and acceptance. Black and Simon (2014) analyzed and highlighted seven intersecting arenas that leaders in a community should attend to in order to support the development of more robust and sustainable inclusive schooling practices: engaging institutional norms and inertia; developing inclusive practice as a planned

organization wide reform; making meaning and developing purpose; aligning structures with purpose; supporting learning as an organizational feature; planning for teacher capacity and professional development; and sustaining commitment to risk, innovation, and learning.

Pervasive institutional practices that provide separate spaces and supports outside the general education setting remain a significant challenge for educational leaders. Current placement trends indicate that, for many students with disability labels, between 80 and 98 percent of students with disabilities spend part of their school day outside of the general education setting (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2010). Leaders should recognize that reforms that support inclusive practice can run counter to broad institutional scripts that are the result of professional norms developed and sustained in separate institutional cultures (special education and general education teacher), and policy structures, such as state and federal regulatory systems which set up distinct special needs programs and funding (Burrello & Sailor, 2013). Such segregated systems and long-standing socially approved practices become interwoven into that which Rowan and Miskel (1999) termed the grammar of schooling. One example of the grammar of schooling for students with disabilities was highlighted by Taylor (2004), who contended that policy language at that time allowed for school-based personnel to focus on the restrictiveness of placements in individual educational plans (IEPs) to continue justifying placing students with disabilities in separate educational environments. Skrtic (2012) pointed out that while IEPs were originally conceptualized as a community activity, they had become overly private, competitive, compliance driven rituals. When applying “practical” and “intensive needs” rationales, proponents of traditional programs can always defend students with disabilities need for separate specialized services, as

discussions of supplementary aids and services are conceptualized in terms of intensity, with the assumption that the most intensive services cannot occur in general education settings (Cole, 1999; Jackson, et al., 2010; Taylor, 2004).

Another pertinent example of the grammar of schooling that leaders should recognize as a challenge is the belief that inclusion will negatively impact typically performing students in general education programs (Huber, et al., 2001; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Sailor, 2009). In this context there may be incentives for “leaders within institutionalized educational environments actually sustain homogeneity by constraining innovation” (Rusch, 2005, p.89), since variations in institutionalized scripts and patterns of behavior can lead to conflict and a potential loss of legitimacy for leaders, special education and general education teachers. Theoharis (2010) notes that leaders should expect significant resistance for multiple reasons “such as staff attitudes about students with diverse need, a lack of understanding by staff and families about the inequities in schools, privileged parents advocating against reforms that are equity oriented, and the pressures of testing/accountability environments against holistic views of students” (p.92). Skrtic (2012) argues that there is a need to directly name the institutional norms around private nature of the IEP process, least restrictive environment discourses, and procedural safeguards that lead to individualized and technical framing of issues. Strong democratic leadership that institutes more collective advocacy for students with disability, their families, district personnel, and community groups is then necessary to crack the ossified nature of non-inclusive ideologies and practices (Skrtic, 2012).

Mayrowetz and Weinstein (1999) posited that inclusion is “at its core, a planned organizational reform” (p. 424) that requires substantial commitment on the part of school leaders (Keys, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999). Mayrowetz and Weinstein’s (1999) in depth analysis of a school-based reform for inclusion noted that it took five years for inclusion to become institutionalized, as evidenced by redundancy in leadership function multiple individuals were in a variety of roles, including those with less formal authority. Federal and state-level policies aim to compel educators to provide students with disabilities access to general education curricula and instruction and to ensure that all students meet state academic standards (Bryant, Linan-Thompson, Ugel, Hamff, & Hougen, 2001; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002). Nevertheless, how policies are implemented vary widely and leadership at local levels matters greatly in successfully planning and implementing a reform organization wide, particularly when the reform touches a sub-field (such as special education) that has not historically occupied a central position in the organization (Fullan, 2005; Hubbard, Mahan & Stein, 2006; Rayner, 2007; Sailor, 2009).

In particular reference to reform for inclusive practice, leaders may need to expand broader educational reform agendas that often either lack attention to students with disabilities and/or have promoted deficit thinking models around disability (Williams, Shealey, & Blanchett, 2009). In planning a school-wide reform in support of inclusive practice, educational leaders are additionally tasked with greater knowledge requirements, including knowledge of legal dimensions of practice that involve students with disabilities (Birnbaum, 2006), knowledge of collaborative teaching and support arrangements (Sailor, 2009), and skill in leveraging accountability requirements in NCLB and IDEA to develop professional development initiatives that

support inclusive practices (Hochberg, 2010; USDOE, 2002). Planned organizational change is sustainable in organizations if moral purpose and an express desire to alter the social environment underpin reform initiatives. Thus, leaders help to create conditions for a community wherein powerful beliefs about the benefits and moral imperative of inclusion would be come to be viewed as practical, highlighted, and nurtured (Fullan, 2005; Gravois, 2013; Reyner, 2007; White, 2013).

English (2008) argued that leaders should initiate reforms and further sustain practice through engagement with central moral questions around them. They examine who they are, what they value, what they believe to be good and true, and ponder over their ability to render decisions about a human being. Sapon-Shevin (2008) further argued that leaders should consistently articulate a vision for inclusive communities and highlight and celebrate inclusive practices as a means to work against differentiating norms constructed and maintained through the duality of special education versus general education conceptualizations. Zaretski (2005) posited that reform for inclusive practice requires understanding of inclusive theories in action. Unexamined notions of “natural limitations” and what is practical can be reinterpreted as leaders help a community contest the limiting interpretations of disability and come to understand their own complicity in limiting the humanity of students with disabilities (Ware, 2003). White (2012) noted that too often students with disabilities are continuously constructed as academic burdens and are compartmentalized as “special education” students. She argues for the need to do the deep community-level work required to reconceptualize the worth of all individuals as a moral stance in which all students are recognized for the various ways they contribute to school communities.

In addition, various iterations of research on educational reform implementation strongly suggest that learning is central to implementation and that implementers (primarily teachers) should understand why an initiative is useful in order to ultimately take ownership and shape the initiative itself (Drago-Severson, 2007; Hubbard, et al., 2006). School leaders' ability to articulate philosophical perspectives that underlie the debates around inclusion are important in order to guide school communities' deliberations around the purposes and vision for inclusive practices. Reyner (2007) concludes that inclusive educational management is praxis-oriented in that communities do need to deliberate about the ideas behind inclusion and the means appropriate to a particular context.

Likewise, leaders may have a responsibility to make meaning of inclusive practices, engaging in "cognitive acts of taking information, framing it, and using it to determine actions and behaviors in a way that manages meaning for individuals" (Evans, 2007, p. 161). Professionals' understanding of purpose and ability to persuade others helps to sustain commitment to ongoing reform for inclusive practice over time, as well as their ability to consider counterevidence (Black & Burrello, 2010; Keys, et al., 1999; Marsh, 2007). Consideration of who is responsible for teaching students with disabilities and concurrently establishing equitable structures and routines for the location and delivery of educational services is central to planning professional development for inclusive education (Anfara, Patterson, Buehler, & Gearity, 2006; Enemoto & Conley, 2008; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Stanovich & Jordan, 2002). Most school variables, considered separately, have little effect on student learning, rather it is the leadership effect of pulling those variables together in a cohesive fashion that matters (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Higher performing schools tend to award

more influence to teacher teams, parents, and students (Hubbard, et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2007; Seashore Louis, et al., 2010). Similarly, successful inclusive programs are characterized by changes in school and classroom structures and clever obtainment of alignment of resources with purpose in order to support diligent and consistent work toward full participation and membership by students with disabilities (Capper & Frattura, 2009; Idol, 200; Skilton-Sylvester & Slesaransky-Poe 2009).

Drawing from Skrtc (1991), Mayrowetz and Weinstein (1999) argue that schools implementing inclusion need to shift from bureaucracies to professionalized “adhocracies” capable of constructing fluid systems of support. Uncertain role definitions might mean less authority to the principal as a role, but greater organizational efficacy and power. Obtaining resources, such as aides and technology supports, is a critical leadership function (Black, 2014). Principals can provide substitutes for students’ teachers to confer with previous teachers and experts that help them to understand the nature of specific disabilities. For reform for inclusion, planned adaptation of standard operating procedures, such as placing students with some of the same friends and adaptations to curriculum, instruction, and assessment become critical and action teams responsible for supporting and monitoring adaptations can be created to meet multiple times a week (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999).

Being attentive to opportunities for mutual adaptation of district and state level policies undergirds successful local reforms in general (Hubbard, et al. 2006; Olsen & Sexton, 2009). School administrators’ roles in strategically marshaling the right information to support and motivate each teacher to work for all students despite external influences and challenges is at the heart of making professional development

work for all students in their schools. Therefore, leadership that catalyzes ownership over inclusive practices powerfully influences the consistency with which those practices are implemented in classrooms and schools (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Little & Houston, 2003). The consistency of implementation also warrants the development of a culture of inquiry, evaluation, and learning (McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002). Gravois (2012) argues that schools typically serve students with disabilities under a triage system of resources with three sources of resources.

The classroom teacher (which is the most plentiful), ad-hoc services, which include providers such as reading specialists, intervention specialists and school counselors that can be used at some discretion of the schools. The third source is programmatic resources for Special Education that tend to be highly regulated and target highly specialized purposes (Gravois, 2013). Therefore, principals need to work creatively with the first two sets of resources in order to align school structures with purposeful inclusive practice. Schools should seek to “distinguish professional needs (i.e. instructional support) from child-centered needs (i.e. disabilities). For a new system to be sustainable, this distinction must be parceled out as part of an integrated planning process and well before resources are allocated to students” (Gravois, 2013, p. 120). As more services become involved, personnel, individual skills, time, responsibility, accountability, and philosophical alignment become more important (Gravois, 2013).

In moving toward more inclusive organizational practices, learning should be positioned as a core activity (Reyner, 2007). Critical reflection, self-evaluation, and individual and collective reflexiveness pervade learning organizations, as leaders commit to strategically and continuously invest resources in cycles of problem posing, decision making, activity enactment, and problem solving (Fullan, 2005; Reyner,

2007). Various stakeholders are sought out and engaged around the work of inclusion (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Reyner, 2007), as effective leaders of learning use networks to share information and build capacity (Fullan, 2005). Risk taking is encouraged and failure that leads to deep learning is expected (Olsen & Sexton, 2006; Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Seashore Louis, 2007).

Shulman (1997) recognized the incredible complexity of teaching and notes that educational leaders should focus on the quality of the pedagogical interaction between teacher and students, as “efforts at school reform must give as much attention to creating the conditions for teacher learning as for student learning” (90). Shulman goes on to say that teachers learn from their own laboratory, so the leaders’ work can be to appropriately support laboratories of inclusionary practice through reasoning and inquiry. Thus the work of leadership is not only to support, but also to legitimize and nurture high levels of reflection, emotion, and collaboration (Shulman, 1997). Learning to move toward inclusive educational practices requires critical reflection on assumptions and behaviors, and principals often need to lead a process that requires teachers to examine their values and build partnerships with parents and community groups with shared values around inclusive practice. Otherwise, the push towards reform would not be sustained and revert to more comfortably understood practices of non-inclusion (Drago-Severson, 2007). While a myriad of approaches and strategies may be employed by school leaders, planning for and sustaining teacher professional development remains a fecund arena for supporting planned organizational reform towards more inclusive schooling environments (Cook & Cameron, 2010; Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Frattura & Capper, 2009; Furney, Hasazi, & Clark-Keefe, 2005).

Many teachers do not feel equipped to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Yell et al., 2004). Leaders can utilize professional development as a means to provide needed training for teachers, particularly in effective instructional and behavioral intervention strategies and collaboration skills that address the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities (Duhaney, 1999; Fisher et al., 2000; Idol, 2006; Katsiyannis, Ellenberg, & Acton, 2000). Teachers that identify as general education teachers often articulate professional development needs in curriculum and instruction modifications as well as progress monitoring (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999). McLeskey & Waldron (2002) note that general education teachers often have to first experience inclusive teaching in order to acknowledge and identify areas where they need professional development. Thus, professional development for inclusive education should begin with providing teachers opportunities to gain new knowledge, practice learned skills, and receive feedback from trainers and colleagues over extended periods (Little & Houston, 2003; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2008).

Generally, teachers require procedural knowledge as well as craft knowledge that allows them to differentiate instruction in response to the variable learning needs among diverse students, including students with disabilities (Buell et al., 1999; Vaughn, Hughes, Schumm, & Klinger, 1998). Even with high quality professional development, educators vary in conceptions of self-efficacy and proficiency in adopting and adapting recently acquired knowledge and practices to their own context (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Van Hover, 2006; Katsiyannis et al., 2000; Vaughn et al., 1998). High adapters and adopters would seem to be particularly suited for inclusive education, as Brownell and colleagues (2006) found that high adopters had the most knowledge of curriculum and pedagogical approaches, student centered

dispositions about managing student behavior and delivering instruction, and the ability to deeply consider students' learning processes.

Early adapting teachers engage in experimentation with instructional strategies, while others request longer-term supports such as in-class modeling and in-service training provided over a significant length of time (Bryant et al., 2001). Educators are apt to adopt and adapt strategies they believe align with high-stakes standardized test preparation or other school reform initiatives (Desimone et al., 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Katsiyannis, Zhang, Ryan, & Jones, 2007).

Teachers participating in one study of eight schools undergoing reform towards more inclusive practice expressed appreciation for increased professional development in effective teaching and accommodation intervention strategies. Professional training activities not only helped teachers gain valued teaching skills, but also increased feelings of efficacy concerning working with students with disabilities with diverse learning needs. Additionally, these teachers valued additional support, particularly from paraprofessionals and special education resource teachers, so much that they considered loss of such support as a deal-breaker in continuing inclusion. As inclusion progressed in the school, general education teachers increasingly viewed students with disabilities as their own and considered it their professional responsibility to teach students with diverse learning needs (Idol, 2006). In each case study school, teachers used strategies learned in professional development to meet the needs of students with disabilities, often realizing that these strategies were effective for all students (Idol, 2006).

Teachers obtain knowledge and skills in multiple contexts in addition to teacher education courses and workshops (Coombs-Richardson & Mead, 2001). According to McLeskey & Waldron (2002), professional development for inclusive practice includes a sequenced set of learning opportunities specifically designed for individual school contexts. Initially, professional development efforts engage teacher and administrator beliefs, understandings, and attitudes towards inclusion. Idol (2006) noted that many school leaders fail to understand the theoretical underpinnings that inform their own orientation toward inclusive practice and the role of special education. Therefore, designers of professional development must consider teachers' individual learning as well as the assumptions principals and other school leaders bring to bear in shaping the context in which professional growth occurs (Borko, 2004).

Growth can be best monitored by leaders not only through direct observation and measured student growth, but also in the informal conversations and daily routines that reveal meaning and cultural norms in a school (Donaldson, 2006). Thoughtful and meaningful planning and development of learning through multiple groupings is important to ensure consistent understanding and delivery of reforms. Often, fragmented and multiple definitions of initiatives can be present, with administrators being more likely to believe full implementation rather than those most responsible for implementing a reform, the teachers (Sanzo, et. al., 2011; Smylie, et al., 2007). In designing teacher professional development for inclusive schooling practices, the lived experiences, value orientations, and dispositions of individual teachers need to be considered (Brownell, et al., 2006; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002). Teachers typically have to differentiate instructional material and methods to meet the diverse needs of all students including students with disabilities and teachers come to those

efforts with varied skills and orientations to the worthiness of differentiated instructional approaches (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010).

Leaders that attend to coordinating systematic and school-wide systems of support and resources are more likely to have teachers whose sense of efficacy and willingness to work with students with disabilities tends to increase (Stanovich & Jordan, 2002). Over time, full implementation and maintenance of learned knowledge about inclusive practices depends on minimizing the degree of divergence between teachers' preconceptions about the inappropriateness or inherently insurmountable challenges of inclusion and the new knowledge and skills that provides individuals a greater sense of moral purpose, as well as competence and efficacy (Black & Burrello, 2010; Brownell et al., 2009; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010).

2.5.2 Training workshops and seminars for community opinion leaders

There is growing consensus that professional development should be ongoing and should incorporate training in various contexts, including the classroom. Drago-Severson's (2007) review of professional development literature argued that principal's role is often one of facilitation of embedded and practice-derived professional development that is ongoing, school-based, integrated with school reforms, and developed in a culture that encourages teachers to try new approaches. Teachers need multiple opportunities to implement knowledge, strategies and skills, and leaders should design support systems that promote consistent reflection and highlight material successes in order to produce change in teachers' beliefs and practices that will help facilitate academic success for students with disabilities in inclusive settings (Birman, Desimone, Garet, & Porter, 2000; Brownell et al., 2006; Bryant et al., 2001; Desimone, Porter, Birman, Garet, & Sukyoon, 2002; Desimone,

2009; Garet, et al., 2001; Kazemi, & Hubbard, 2008; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002; Rayner, 2007).

Teachers are more likely to adopt instructional practices when they have received professional development focused on specific instructional practices in their work setting because transfer of practices across contexts rarely occurs (Desimone et al., 2002). School administrators can provide opportunities to sustain embedded professional development over time through intensive study of content, which offers opportunities for collegial collaboration between general and special education teachers (Borko, 2004; Brownell et al., 2006; Buell, et al., 1999). This collaboration is associated with purpose-driven task enactment associated with distributed leadership models (Smylie, et. al., 2007), capacity building targeting commitment to equitable outcomes (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Theoharis, 2007) as well as improved student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002). Yet sustained and multi-contextualized professional development is not yet a common experience for most teachers (Borko, 2004; Brownell et al., 2006; Buell et al., 1999; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Wayne, et al., 2008). Although content-focused professional development and use of mentoring/coaching support for teachers have been established as professional norms, most professional development still lacks intensity as measured by clock hours provided over the course of the school year. In their study of teacher professional development Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) suggested that professional development experiences lacked opportunities for collaborative work, which Garet et al. (2001) found promote active learning, teacher-skill development, and at the organizational level, reform coherence.

Teacher professional collaboration on professional tasks appears to have even greater impact when teachers focus on meaningful tasks germane to school, content-area, and/or grade level goals and responsibilities (Garet et al., 2001). While 59% of teachers found professional development in content areas to be useful, less than 50% of teachers found other professional development to be useful to them (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Smith and Desimone (2003) similarly found that teachers reported that content-related professional development as most useful. To enable such learning and professional development to occur, schools should align structures with inclusive reform purpose, as school structural changes in terms of teacher roles, student grouping practices, and scheduling are often required to make inclusion work.

Research on sustainability suggests that reforms will not be sustained without substantial investment in capacity building, as organizations that don't plan for capacity building jump from one solution to another in a desperate attempt to comply. Compliance then leads to temporary solutions and cynicism as individuals come to think of the goals of reforms as impossible (Fullan, 2005). The implementation of professional development activities should be guided in a manner that provides opportunity for teacher voice and governance so that the reforms come to be purpose-centered, understood, and "owned" rather than perceived as resource debilitating, incoherent, and distant top down mandates (Ingersoll, 2007; Hubbard, et al., 2006). Meier (1997) posited that for schools to become effective learning communities that sustain democratic principles, leaders and teachers should nurture skepticism and empathy. In terms of skepticism, she argues for leaders helping develop an open mind that what may be found to be a truism or common sense today may "in time turn out to be otherwise. It behooves us, then, to listen carefully to others and to listen even to ourselves" in order to "overcome our own self-righteousness" (p.62). Schools listen to

critics, look at their failures, and school leaders consistently help to question the organizations assumptions. In order not to become cynical, she argued for the habit of empathy, so that individuals would imagine themselves in the shoes of others in ways that want to run towards them, which lead to deliberately democratic habits of the mind being developed in a school community (Meier, 1997).

For example, one study of urban educational leaders of schools that demonstrated slow, but continuous growth found that leaders sustained leadership capacity in high-performing urban schools through centering moral purpose and nurturing teacher-learning families. The principals' sense of moral commitment allowed them to support innovation and risk and bend rules and district procedures in the service of an ethically centered purpose (Weber & Kiefer-Hipp, 2009). In another case study of a school that moved to fully inclusionary practices, inclusion appeared on the agenda of every faculty meeting as a means of keeping the initiative important. The principal also used collective, grade level language rather than individualized language, and created opportunities for staff to gather and celebrate success and reflect on "inclusion moments" (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). Keys, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper's (1999) case study of an inclusive school found a supportive environment where critique and risk was encouraged, although the process of how to get there was debated and alternative frameworks were considered, the ultimate goal of full inclusion was held as non-negotiable. Trust was present and bolstered through consistent communication of successes and the attraction of likeminded teachers to the school. Teachers' sense of efficacy and professional development was facilitated through showing concrete examples and highlighting teacher-led solutions.

In leading schools toward more inclusive practice, uncertainty and complexity are inevitable and schools may struggle with a sense of ceaseless compromise in their attempt to resolve dilemmas of infinite needs and finite resources (Reyner, 2007). Leaders can recognize that problems tend to be more severe and complex at first, and they should actively work on developing consistency and coherence over time, as these tend to make inevitably complex endeavors more manageable (Fullan, 2005). Leaders committed to an equity-related investment in inclusive practices should take a long-term approach that includes feasible actions steps that are undertaken while sustaining the conversation over time. Moreover, leaders should anticipate and persevere in the face of inevitable pushback from groups that might see an investment in inclusive practices as unfair to them (Conner & Ferri, 2007), incorporating change planning, including communicating transformative reform purposes and progress with a broad community, into this long-term approach (Brown, 2006; Plecki, Knapp, Castaneda, Halverson, & LaSota, 2009). Additionally, Seashore Louis and colleagues (2010) highlighted the importance of succession planning and the important concept of leadership as a property of a social system. Stability and improvement are symbiotically constituted as stability in authorized roles at the district, principal, and assistant principal positions are important in sustaining initiatives toward inclusive practice.

2.6 Summary

The theoretical framework that was employed in this study was transformational leadership developed by Burns (1978). It involves leaders exerting influence on followers to increase their commitment to organizational goals. As the purpose of this study was to explore community leaders' knowledge and contribution in the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy, literature was reviewed to find out

the level of knowledge of community leaders“ about inclusive education policy in order to ascertain how community leaders“ contribute towards the implementation of the inclusive education policy.

In addition, the review also covered the reasons why community leaders contribute towards the implementation of the inclusive education policy and also to determine how community leaders“ knowledge about the inclusive education policy can be improved.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter covered research methodology, including information on participants, including sampling techniques, procedure for data collection (including evidence of ethical considerations), and equipment used in both data collection, and analysis. It also dealt with the research approach, design, description and distribution of instruments.

3.1 Qualitative Approach

In order to find out the community leaders' knowledge and contributions in the implementation of inclusive education policy in the Ga West Municipality, qualitative approach was used to collect qualitative data in response to research questions. As explained by Creswell and Creswell (2018), the qualitative approach is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problem.

Creswell (2012) asserted that qualitative approach relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner. This process of research involves emerging questions and procedures; collecting data inductively, building from particulars to general themes, and making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), it is appropriate to use qualitative approach when a problem or issue needs to be explored. This exploration is needed, in turn, because of a need to study a group or

population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured, or hear silenced voices. The qualitative approach was used in this study because of the need to unearth complex, detailed understanding of the problem under study. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what is expected to be found or what was read in the literature. The researcher therefore asked mostly “open-ended” questions that were not necessarily worded in exactly the same way with each participant. The approach was helpful in finding out the opinions of respondents about their knowledge and contributions towards the implementation of inclusive education. Also, with open-ended questions, participants in this study were free to respond in their own words, and these responses tended to be more complex than simply “yes” or “no.” Conversational interview was therefore used in this regard to collect data.

3.2 Research Design

A qualitative case-study design was adopted in this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that case study design begins with the identification of a specific case that will be described and analyzed. The case for study in this research is community leaders’ knowledge and contributions towards the implementation of inclusive education in the Ga West Municipality. Inclusive education is a real-life case that is in progress and so accurate information that has not been lost by time was gathered. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), one key to the identification of a case is that it is time bounded, meaning that it can be defined or described within certain parameters. The parameters for bounding this case study are such the specific place where the case is located, and timeframe in which the case was studied. Also, the community opinion leaders involved in the case were defined as a parameter (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, the intent of conducting this case study was to understand a specific case

– the knowledge and contributions of community opinion leaders towards the implementation of inclusive education. Creswell and Poth (2018) further explained that the hallmark of a good qualitative case study is that it presents an in-depth understanding of the case. In order to accomplish this, the researcher collects data using any of the forms of qualitative data, ranging from interviews, to observations, to documents, to audiovisual materials.

In this study, the researcher relied solely on conversational interviews to develop the in-depth understanding of the problem under study. The approach to data analysis of the case involved a report on the entire case; that is, the community leaders in the Ga West District instead of analyzing multiple units within the case. In generating the description of the case, the researcher identified case themes, which represented issues to study in each case. A complete findings section of the case study involved both the chronological description of the case and themes that the researcher uncovered in studying the case. The case ended with conclusions formed by the researcher about the overall meaning delivered from the cases (Yin, 2009).

3.3 Population

This study was carried out in the Ga West Municipality in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana involving ten community leaders. The study was conducted in this community because it is one of the Municipalities piloting inclusive education in Ghana. The area was appropriate for the study since the researcher resides and works in the Municipality as a Special Education Resource Teacher and is therefore familiar with the community members, making collection of data easier. Ga West Municipality is one of the largest Municipalities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The Municipality which was formally called Ga Rural district shares

boundaries with the Eastern and the Central Regions of Ghana. The Ga West Municipal Assembly has two main electoral areas which is the Trobu and Amasaman electoral areas. The Municipal Chief Executive is the political head while the Municipal Coordinating Director is the administrative head of the Municipality. The Municipality consists of 25 electoral areas which are represented in the Municipal Assembly by elected and appointed Assembly members. The composition of the Assembly is 25 Elected Members, 12 Appointed Members, 2 Members of Parliament and the Municipal Chief Executive.

The Municipality is divided into six Zonal Councils namely; Ofankor, Pokuase, Mayera, Amasaman, Ayikai Doblo and Kotoku. The zonal councils have over hundred Basic Schools with fourteen of the schools having Special Education Resource Teachers attached to them. The community leaders in the Municipality such as the traditional rulers, Assembly members have over the years shown very much interest in the education of the children in the municipality (Ga West Municipal Assembly [GWMA], 2016). However, the researcher was interested in exploring their knowledge and contribution towards the education of persons with special needs in the Municipality. In relation to Creswell's (2012) definition of population as a group of individuals with some common defining characteristic that a researcher can identify and study, the total population for this study was $n=66$. Table 1 is a distribution of the population for the study.

Table 1: Population Distribution for the Study

Ga West Municipal Assembly	Population	Frequency <i>n</i>(66)
	Traditional rulers	5
	Members of Parliament	2
	Municipal chief executive	1
	Elected Presiding Officer	1
	Executive committee members (E.g. Finance and Administration, Development Planning)	7
Community opinion leaders	Assembly men	25
	Clergy	10
	Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and School Management Committee (SMC) Executives	10
	Social Welfare Officer	3
	Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) for persons with disabilities	6
	Total	66

3.4 Sample size

The sample size comprised $n=25$ community opinion leaders. All the community leaders were purposefully selected from Ga West Municipality on the criteria that they are either elected to their positions or act as a point of liaison between the community and authorities. Table 2 is the sample size distribution for the study.

Table 2: Sample Size Distribution for the Study

Ga West Municipal Assembly	Community opinion leaders	Frequency $n = 25$
	Traditional rulers	2
	Member of Parliament	1
	Municipal chief executive	1
	Elected Presiding Officer	1
	Executive committee members (E.g. Finance and Administration, Development Planning)	2
Community opinion leaders	Assembly men	5
	Clergy	5
	Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and School Management Committee (SMC) Executives	5
	Social Welfare Officer	1
	Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) for persons with disabilities	2
	Total	25

3.5 Sampling Technique

In qualitative research, only a sample of a population is selected for any given study. The study's research objectives and the characteristics of the study population (such as size and diversity) determined which and how many people to select. In this study, different categories of community opinion leaders were purposively sampled for the study. Purposive sampling was used to group the participants according to preselected criteria relevant to this particular study. As a result, inclusion criteria involved participants in this study were those who occupied key positions of authority, whether by election or appointment. These leaders were community- level decision makers in the Ga West Municipality and, therefore, were important stakeholders in the effective

implementation of the inclusive education policy in the Municipality. Exclusion criteria included individuals who were either not elected or appointed to any position or act as a point of liaison between their community and authorities. The information gathered from the community leaders could therefore be a representative of the conditions of the other community leaders in the Municipality.

In line with Gall et al. (2007) the researcher intentionally opted to select cases of which it considered to be information rich with respect to its purpose. Creswell and Poth (2018), however, posited that sample size in a qualitative study may or may not be fixed prior to data collection due to the resources and time available, as well as the study's objectives. Purposive sample sizes are often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation (the point in data collection when new data no longer bring additional insights to the research questions). Purposive sampling is therefore most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection.

3.6 Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview guide was utilized in collecting data pertaining to community leaders' knowledge and contribution towards the implementation of inclusive education policy in the Ga West Municipality Ghana.

3.6.1 Semi-structured interview guide

A semi-structured interview guide was extensively used to collect data in this study (See Appendix A). The semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy which allowed the researcher to ask the informants a series of eight predetermined but open-ended questions. These interviews were guided by the research questions but were unstructured enough to allow the discovery of new ideas

ad themes. The questions were inquisitive, exploratory and analytical focusing on the major research question raised for the study:

- i. What is the level of knowledge of community opinion leaders about the inclusive education policy of Ghana?
- ii. What contributions have community opinion leaders made towards the implementation of Ghana's inclusive education policy in the Ga West Municipality?
- iii. What motivate community opinion leaders to contribute towards the implementation of Ghana's inclusive education policy in the Ga West Municipality?
- iv. How can community opinion leaders' knowledge about the inclusive education policy of Ghana be improved to enhance its implementation?

The guide was then modified as data collection proceeded to further refine questions that were not eliciting the intended information and to reflect the categories and concepts that required further development (Spradley, 1979 as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). This data collection tool yielded in-depth information from the individual participants in the study. The interview was conducted once only and generally covered the duration of 30 minutes per interviewee. The interview was conducted in the six zonal councils of the municipality spanning three months due to the size and diversity of the participants. In order to have the interview data captured more effectively, the researcher tape-recorded the interviews with the permission of the interviewees. The researcher did not rely on hand-written notes during the interview since this strategy is relatively unreliable in terms of missing some key points (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The recording of the interview made it easier for the

researcher to focus on the interview content and the verbal prompts and thus enabled the generation of “verbatim transcript” of the interview.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Throughout the study, the researcher used qualitative practices to ensure validity of the study. Consistent with the principles of rigor in qualitative research (Mays & Pope, 2000), a range of strategies were employed to maximize trustworthiness, including clearly describing the context of the study, participants in the study, data collection and coding processes, use of multiple coders, immersion in data during analysis, use of an expert panel in coding decisions and use of illustrative examples to provide transparency to coding decisions (Padgett, 2012). The panel for coding decisions in this study consisted of certified and experienced translators who helped in translating responses of the participants in the local language (Ga or/and Twi). While conducting the interviews, the researcher repeated each participant’s answers back to them to check and review her interpretation of their answer to guarantee the validity of the interview.

The researcher also used dependability throughout her research. She noted if there were any changes to the interview format while asking the questions to each participant. To ensure confirmability, the researcher took steps to demonstrate that the findings emerged from the data and not her own predispositions. Member check was employed as a strategy to allow the participants read through the transcribed data in order to be sure of what was truly said. Triangulation was utilized to reduce the effect of the researcher’s biasness. In terms of transferability, the researcher ensured that the characteristics of the participants in the study were directly related to the research questions. Provision of background data to establish context of study and detailed

description of phenomenon in question was carried out to allow comparisons to be made.

3.8 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher obtained an informed verbal consent from the interviewees to participate in the study. The participants received all of the information needed for the consent verbally and then verbally consent to participate. The research questions that were answered by the interviews were determined. These questions were open-ended, general, and focused on understanding the central phenomenon in the study. An interview protocol was designed using approximately eight (8) open-ended questions and ample spaces within the questions were created to write responses to the interviewees' comments. The interview questions and procedures were refined through pilot testing. Sampson (2004) and Yin (2014) support the use of pilot testing in a case study to refine and develop research instruments, frame questions, collect background information and adapt research procedures.

These pilot cases were selected on the basis of convenience, access, and geographic proximity. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study, the amount of time that was needed to complete the interview, their right to withdraw from the study, and the plan of using the results from the interview. Interviewees in this study were promised a copy of the report or an abstract of the study. With permission of the interviewees, data were collected and tape-recorded at their convenience through one-on-one and phone call for those who could not be reached physically. In order to follow good interview procedures as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018), the researcher stayed within the boundaries reviewed in the design, used the protocol to guide the line of questions, completed the interview

within the time specified (say 30 minutes for each interviewee) with respect and courtesy. Data collection spanned three months due to the size and diversity of the participants.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data processing consists of editing, coding, classifying and entering them for interpretation. Recorded tapes from the interviews were transcribed verbatim while responses in Twi were translated to English. The use of local language (Twi) with some of the interviewees made them not to face any form of language barrier during the interview. After transcriptions, the researcher read through the text, made margin notes, and then formed initial codes for emergent ideas. In order to classify the codes into themes, the case and its context were described. A few key issues or case themes were established, not for generalizing beyond the case but for understanding the complexity of the case (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2014). One analytical strategy was to identify issues within each case and then looked for common themes that transcend the cases (Yin, 2009). Direct interpretations were used to develop reports of the lessons learned from the case, which Stake (1995) in Creswell and Poth (2018) described as assertions. The results from analysis were described in a narrative.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher sought approval from her university which enabled her to consult the various community opinion leaders for professional ethical standards. The participants were then contacted and informed about the general purpose and use of the study data. The participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and therefore were not put under duress to participate.

The researcher tried to build trust to convey the extent of anticipated disruptions in gaining access to the study sites. During data analysis, the researcher avoided siding with participants and disclosed only positive results that contained multiple perspectives of issues while contrary findings were reported. The researcher made sure she respected the privacy of the participants by assigning them with fictitious names – COL 1 to COL 10. COL denotes Community Opinion Leader.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter covered the data presentation and discussion of results. Results were based on the responses of participants to the various research questions that were presented. The results were transcribed, edited, coded and organized into themes. Themes were organized according to the prevalence of themes by number of references and by prevalence of themes by the number of leaders who mentioned each theme. Verbatim quotations were inserted at the appropriate sections of the presentation so as to make reference easier. Verbatim quotations from the participants were referenced as *COL 1* to *COL 25*. The presentation of these subthemes is accompanied by a discussion of the relevant literature.

4.1 Knowledge of Community Opinion Leaders about the Inclusive Education

In a conversational interview with the community opinion leaders of the Ga West Municipality in relation to whether they have heard about inclusive education (IE) policy in Ghana, majority of the interviewees responded in the affirmative. Some of the interviewees mentioned the media as their source of information about IE policy. One respondent specifically mentioned TV3 network as his source of information pertaining to inclusive education. However, no interviewee mentioned any of the three policy documents of Ghana as a source. In a further probe to find out their level of understanding of IE, some themes emerged. The overarching theme concerns the participants' understanding of inclusive education policy of Ghana. As noted earlier, a shared understanding of the concept of inclusive education is an important factor in the process of its implementation to practice. The presentation of this theme is structured according to the four subthemes emerging from the data in relation to

participants' views about what inclusion involves, namely, 1) placement and participation; 2) meeting each child's diversity; 3) it is linked to special education; and 4) all education is inclusive education.

4.2 Placement and Participation

The majority of the responses given indicated the basis of inclusive education involved students with different ability levels and different forms of disability. This was seen to occur in mainstream schools and required the teaching ability on the educators' behalf in order to effectively teach these students with barriers to learning. For example, a respondent said that inclusive education was: *"Incorporating all learners into one learning environment despite their abilities or disabilities"* (COL 6).

A participant explained that:

My understanding about inclusive education has changed in the sense that [I know think that] inclusive education can take place in any educational setting, but it involves participating of all not only placing the child with disability in the general education setting (COL 3).

Some participants felt that inclusive education is a right for all children and all children should receive the same education. It involves the principles of equality, quality, fairness that involves students' "background, religion, gender, race, nationality or even disability". A participant stressed the need to not deny students education in the following quotation,

"You are not allowed to deny anyone education. May not discriminate against anyone. Everyone is equal and are allowed to be educated in the way they choose" (COL 8).

A few mentioned the inclusive educational policies, for example The Implementation Plan (Government of Ghana – Ministry of Education, 2015) and the curriculum

change that is necessary for inclusive education to be successfully implemented. Only one participant reported the benefits of inclusive education to the community and society of that individual. This stressed the role of the community, parents and education departments in the implementation of inclusive education in schools.

This statement illustrates how the respondents have expanded their understanding of inclusion from mere placement, to placement and full participation. Generally, most of the international educational policy documents and research articles highlight placement as a key feature of inclusion. The Salamanca Statement first emphasised the need for governments all over the world to ensure all children are enrolled in regular schools (UNESCO, 1994). Booth and Ainscow (2010) describe placement in mainstream schools as a form of avoiding the exclusion of pupils with special needs. On the other hand, Norwich (2005) argues that participation and belongingness are also important elements of inclusion reminding us that mere mainstream placement is not enough for inclusive education to succeed.

4.3 Meeting each Child's Diversity

An example of a statement that was grouped under the second subtheme is:

Every child has unique characteristics, attitudes and learning needs, which needs to be taken care of individually (COL 7).

Half of the responses were positive about meeting the needs of the students with special needs in inclusive education settings. Some of the positive responses given in relation to inclusive education were very short, with little or no explanation for example “*Really good*”, “*Support it*” and “*Positive*”. These responses seemed to lack any detail on what exactly the participants’ perception towards and what the benefits of inclusive education were. It seemed as though it was a politically correct type of

response, and what they have heard teachers should feel about inclusive education. The majority of the positive responses conclude with a “but” and then a reason or explanation why it may not work. This seems to indicate that opinion leaders’ perception towards inclusive education is positive according to the theory of inclusive education, however, the participants seemed to doubt the thoughts and skills they encompass. Some of the responses included:

“I feel that it is important that children’s needs are taken into consideration and as a leader, I try my best, but in some cases learning difficulties and barriers are so severe, specialized education is necessary” (COL 14).

“I agree with the fact that you must be able to choose where you want to be educated. But it’s not always practical or possible to give enough attention to these learners” (COL 21).

This statement is illustrative of most students’ awareness of diversity in the modern classroom and of the need for educators to meet each child’s individual educational needs. This is in line with a central principle in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) about every child’s right to have the opportunity to education and to maintain an acceptable level of learning based on their unique characteristics, abilities and learning needs. Inclusive education concerns being aware of individual differences and teaching by making adaptations according to the diverse needs of every child (Buli-Holmberg, 2015). This understanding of inclusive education assumes that individual differences are normal and learning must be adapted to the human diversity and different needs.

4.4 Special and Inclusive Education are linked

Examples of statements grouped under this subtheme are:

“Positive change: got more focused on how to include special needs children.” (COL 2).

“I learned that special and inclusive education are linked.” (COLL 6).

I think I cannot address both inclusive and special education without addressing each other, not as synonym, but as complementary. Under the umbrella of inclusion, I would place special education (COL 7).

The first example suggests that the respondents has learned that children with special needs are the focus of inclusive education. Similarly, in the second and third examples, the learning outcome described is the understanding of the link between special and inclusive education. All the above statements clearly reflect an understanding of inclusive education as associated with the education of students with disabilities and special needs. In a nutshell, the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) first introduced the idea of inclusive education for children with disabilities (Hayford, 2013) and since then, inclusion has been associated with those groups of children (Hodkinson, 2010; Sikes, Lawson, & Parker, 2007). Although it is now accepted that inclusive education is a much broader concept that entails removal of barriers for all children, not just those with disabilities (Booth, 2000; Stubbs, 2008), community opinion leaders’ competence in special needs education and specialist knowledge are thought to be necessary for full implementation of inclusive education (Cologn, 2012; Buli-Holmberg, 2015). This is challenging, because teaching children with special needs requires specific knowledge and skills that are not part of all everyone’s education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1993). Mintz and Wyse (2015) stress that lack

of knowledge about specific categories in education adversely affects the ability of some leaders to contribute to implement inclusive education.

4.5 All Education is Inclusive Education.

Finally, in the fourth subtheme we grouped statements such as:

I see more and more the idea of inclusive education as the real meaning of education in itself: An education, which is not inclusive, is not really education (COL 9).

Another respondent has this to say:

Every child should be educated without any form of discrimination – whether with special needs or not.

A respondent also supported that:

“Education is meant for everyone unless the individual chooses not to be educated for personal reasons, so it’s not a preserve for some particular group of people.” (COL 18)

Also,

“In Ghana, there is something called free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE), which implies that education is compulsory and open to all.” (COL 19)

This understanding of inclusive education sees education and inclusive education as synonymous terms, and here we see awareness of a key idea behind inclusive education. Inclusive education can be simply described as a child centred pedagogy that aims to provide a successful and high quality education to all children (UNESCO, 1994). However, it can also be argued that the terms education and inclusion are different. Education concerns teaching and learning, whereas inclusion is about belonging, participating, placement and quality of school life and students’ sense of

wellbeing (Booth & Ainscow, 1998; BuliHolmberg, 2015; Karatzias, Athanasiou Power & Swanson, 2001; Norwich, 2005; Tangen, 2003).

The results from the data show that the participants understood inclusive education in four different ways, all of which reflect some of the relevant literature. The understanding of inclusion as placement and participation is central in Booth and Ainscow (1998), who view inclusion as a process of increasing adaptations to curricula and changes to cultures, and placement in the mainstream local school. Participating is also central in Norwich's perspective of inclusion, but he also brings in belongingness as an important factor (2005). The understanding of inclusive education as meeting children's diverse needs seems to reflect the need for a pedagogical practice that is varied and flexible (Peters, 2007). Students also saw inclusive education as linked to special education as per our third subtheme, and inclusion is often associated to children with disability and their opportunities to participate and contribute in school and society (Oliver, 1990; Barnes, 1997).

Finally, the perception of inclusion as education for all, not only education of those children with special needs, reflects arguments about inclusion being better quality education for all pupils through participation and belonging in the school community (Booth & Ainscow, 1998; Norwich, 2005; Tangen, 2003).

4.6 Contributions of Community Opinion Leaders towards the Implementation of Inclusive Education

When opinion leaders in the Ga West Municipal were asked the extent to which they have involved themselves in the implementation of IE in their various communities, responses given were not encouraging in that majority of the interviewees (12) claimed they have not been involved by the school authorities in the municipality and

that they have not been informed about the responsibilities or roles they have to play in the implementation of the policy. However, minority of the interviewees who seem to have a direct role to play in the implementation of the IE policy highlighted collaboration as one of the themes. Thus, the subthemes in this section include 1) collaboration; 2) limited resources; and 3) lack of awareness.

4.7 Collaboration

Collaboration is necessary in order to maintain a culture of inclusion (Haager & Klinger, 2005; Satterwhite, 2015). Some of the community opinion leaders in this study indicated collaboration as vital for the success of inclusive education programmes. The theme of collaboration arose in a variety of ways including collaboration between teachers, collaboration between students, and collaboration between community opinion leaders and teachers. The interview data suggested that some of the community opinion leaders worked collaboratively to support students with disabilities in inclusive settings. A few interviewees confided in the researcher that they have played major roles and continue to contribute towards the implementation of inclusive education in the Ga West Municipal. Among the roles are collaborations and partnerships with school staff, families, and other community leaders. One of the opinion leaders, for instance, said:

“...I am a board member of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of my child’s school, so whenever a child with disability is brought to the school for admission, I help to ensure that the child with disability gets the necessary support” (COL 21)

Another also said,

“I have used some of the community resources within my jurisdiction to facilitate the implementation of inclusive education policy” (COL 11).

One interviewee also supported the argument that:

“I have used some of the community resources within my jurisdiction and this may have an indirect benefit to the implementation of inclusive education policy” (COL 5).

Some of the interviewees also claimed they provide resources to the inclusive schools and to individuals with disabilities to foster the process of inclusion. In the case of children with disabilities, it was stated that:

“...we often provide equipment that they need like hearing aids, wheelchairs etc. to schools or to individuals to make the school an inclusive one” (COL 15).

One leader asserted that:

“I added my voice to the demand for a new classroom block to help check large class size which was one of the complaints from teachers” (COL 6).

To effectively collaborate with others, and to foster staff collaboration, transformational educational leaders provide their followers with a shared motivation to collaborate for inclusive education matters (Bass & Riggio, 2008). Ensuring teachers are provided with the time and resources to collaborate is imperative to ensure best practices in inclusive education instruction. One leader described her role by explaining,

“As a leader, I am a member of the collaborative teams that serves a variety of services. I work with my leadership and special education teams to ensure our schedule is structured as such to support inclusive practices including collaboration and co-teaching opportunities” (COL 4).

One of the community opinion leaders described their role in inclusive special education as being problem solvers and facilitators. One principal explained,

“If our inclusive education program needs additional support, it is my job to find ways to make that support possible. If it’s not possible, it’s my job to work with my team to help them think creatively and find ways to make it better” (COL 13).

Interviewees elicit their collaboration with educational leaders in building awareness to the rights of children with disabilities. The community opinion leaders mentioned that they help in spreading awareness towards the rights of children with disabilities by conducting sensitization programmes with active participation of people with disabilities. This can help in ensuring that such “children enjoy their rights in the school which in turn is the driving force behind the creation of inclusive schools.” It is imperative that multiple stakeholders collaborate to ensure the success of inclusive special education programs (Hack, 2014). Transformational educational leaders use idealized influence, or their ability to be respected and trusted, to engage in healthy working relationships with other staff members, parents, and the community (Bass & Riggio, 2008). They do their best to provide time and resources to staff to collaborate, and they communicate effectively with staff, students, and the community in order to foster a collaborative culture that supports inclusive education. In turn, the school community collaborates to best meet the needs of students with disabilities.

4.8 Limited Resources

Some of the interviewees described limited resources as some of the challenges associated with their lack of contribution towards the implementation of inclusive special education services in the municipality. Community opinion leaders stated that

the lack of budget and limited staff made collaboration to meet student needs difficult.

According to a district leader, one challenge to inclusion is:

“...providing adequate staffing to support student needs” (COL 12)

As noted by one executive,

“Providing teachers with the resources and training necessary to meet every student’s needs [is a challenge]. Effective instruction takes effective planning. Effective planning takes time and we never have enough of it. My teachers are stretched pretty thin and that can be very challenging” (COL 14).

Similarly, one district leader explained,

“Funds are limiting the ability to provide services to the degree that we want. It is harder to be inclusive when staff are limited... the finances do not provide for the supports necessary to be successful” (COL 23).

One community leader who seemed to have foundation in special education expressed her concerns by stating,

“I am not a believer that 1:1 support is necessary or needed, but to have the ability to co-teach more often helps establish routines and processes that keep ALL our students in the general education classroom” (COL 25).

Another community leader suggested that

“Additional staffing is needed to be able to take [inclusion] to the next level and be even more intentional about supporting students” (COL 22).

Similarly, a zone leader suggested that

“...finances do not provide the supports necessary for purposeful inclusion to be successful” (COL 20).

Another leader expressed that due to tight budgets,

“it can be challenging to provide adequate staff to truly implement best practices, especially in regards to inclusive teaching and learning models” (COL 24).

Dominant in the comments in relation to inadequate time as a reason they (community opinion leaders) are not able to contribute towards the implementation of inclusive education have been outlined. Some (11) community opinion leaders noted that:

“My work schedules does not actually permit me to juggle other responsibilities outside my work” (COL 3).

Another also said:

“I don’t really get time to pay a visit to the schools that practice inclusive to see how feasible the policy is” (COL 15).

In addition:

“I wish I could help whichever way I could, but that has not crossed my mind since I hardly get opportunity to perform adjunct duties.” (COL 19)

4.9 Lack of Awareness

A lot of statements that seem similar emerged from the interviewees who showed lack of awareness about their roles in the implementation of inclusive education in their municipality.

One of them opined,

“I don’t know what my role is. If I’m asked to contribute, why not? It’s my community so I will gladly serve” (COL 9).

Another said:

“...It (contributing towards the implementation of IE) is something I have never thought of outside my work responsibilities” (COL 12).

In the words of one interviewee:

“Although IE is a good policy that I fully support despite its challenges, the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the school authorities including the teachers have the major role to play since it falls within their work description” (COL 14).

To one of the interviewees,

“... (he is) I am not against inclusive education, but I have not contributed in any way because I don't have any of my children in the inclusive schools in the municipality” (COL 13).

Some of the interviewees defined IE as bringing children with disabilities and their counterparts without disabilities together in the same classroom. One of the opinion leaders in the community stated that:

“I have made efforts to observe how inclusive education is being implemented in my community...the last time I took my granddaughter to school, I saw some children who cannot hear. I became curious and wanted to know how they are taught together with their counterparts without disability” (COL 3)

Another opinion leader posited:

“I do not see the possibility of that policy (IE)...I don't know how they (children with disabilities and those disabilities) could learn together” (COL 5)

Community opinion leaders described their role in inclusive education programmes.

Primarily, educational leaders defined their roles as collaborators, problem solvers,

and facilitators. Moreover, all educational leaders defined a primary role as providing appropriate professional development to staff. Haager and Klinger (2005) suggested collaboration is necessary in order to maintain a culture of inclusion. The educational leaders in this study expressed the importance of collaboration between students, teachers, parents, and leaders. They also outlined their roles as problem solvers and facilitators, explaining their responsibilities in aiding teachers to deliver the best possible instruction with available resources.

Lastly, as suggested by Earley and Bubb (2004), a primary responsibility of educational leaders is to provide quality instructional leadership and professional development pertinent to inclusive education. All educational leaders indicated they played a role in providing professional development to others in some way, whether formal or informal. Educational leaders explained their role in professional development primarily as providing appropriate training and staff development that enriches staff members' ability to deliver quality inclusive educational opportunities within schools. In the face of the responses given by the community opinion leaders have an appreciable level of knowledge about the concept of inclusive education policy of Ghana. Despite the doubts on the minds of opinion leaders about the IE policy, discussion on what the Ghanaian policy document says pertaining to IE was fruitful. At the end of the discussion, community opinion leaders pledged their staunch support to the IE policy. They pledged their readiness to support the policy once their opinions and diverse support are sought.

4.10 Community Opinion Leaders' Motivation to Contribute towards the Implementation of Inclusive Education

When interviewees were asked to mention what motivates them to contribute towards the implementation of inclusive education policy in the municipality, a number of themes emerged through the analysis of data. These themes emanated from the interviewees who mentioned collaboration as a way they contribute towards the implementation of inclusive education in the Ga West Municipal. The major themes include:

- i. The principles of inclusion
- ii. Appreciation of Diversity
- iii. Consideration of Individual Needs
- iv. Relationships
- v. Student Learning

4.10.1 The concept of inclusion

Inclusion and equity are overarching principles that guide all education policies, plans, and practices (UNESCO, 2017). According to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2016), inclusive education means:

- i. a fundamental right to education
- ii. a principle that values students' wellbeing, dignity, autonomy, and contribution to society
- iii. a continuing process to eliminate barriers to education and promote reform in the culture, policy, and practice in schools to include all students.

Additionally, and most importantly, principal goal of inclusive education is encouraging values such as casual acceptance, natural belonging, change of negative perceptions, respect for diversity, and concern for equity among students and/or adults with and without disabilities and to enable all students to have access to a high-quality, standards-based education. It was clear under this theme that the concept of inclusive education was one of the themes that arose as a factor that motivates a minority of the interviewees who contribute towards the implementation of inclusive education.

According to Carrington et al. (2016), teachers believed acceptance to be a benefit of inclusive education. Similarly, thirteen of the twenty-five community opinion leaders in this study suggested that inclusion of students with disabilities fostered acceptance in the school community.

One leader described a benefit of inclusion as:

“The mindset it instills in kids to be accepting and grateful to everyone for their unique differences” (COL 3).

A municipal leader shared a similar view, suggesting *“the acceptance of all ability children” (COL 23)* as a benefit of inclusion that motivates him to contribute towards its success.

Another principal described a benefit of inclusion as:

“...developing appreciation, acceptance, and respect for all” (COL 1), and went on to state that inclusive education fosters a *“sense of community and belonging for all.”*

Similar to the findings from Garrick Duhaney and Spencer (2000) and Yssel et al.’s (2007) studies, all community opinion leaders in this study expressed relationships to be a benefit of inclusive education. Leaders referred primarily to relationships

between students. However, they also indicated a bond between teachers and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students. In response to a question about the benefits of inclusive education for students with and without disabilities, one leader wrote,

“[Students are] building strong and positive relationships with same-age peers” (COL 12).

Another principal commented on relationships between students by stating,

“Building relationships with their peers is the most amazing and heart-warming journey” COL 16).

While community opinion leaders wrote primarily about the relationships between students, relationships between students and teachers, and between teachers and teachers, were also addressed. One leader described a benefit of inclusion as,

“...developing relationships – general education students build relationships with special education students and vice versa...classroom teachers building relationships with special education students and vice versa...special education teachers building relationships with general education students and vice versa... special education and general education teachers building relationships with one another” (COL 13).

Of the twenty-five community opinion leaders, 21 leaders described relationships to be a benefit of inclusion that fuels their efforts to promote its course. One leader described the most rewarding part of her job as

“Moments when you see [inclusion] working well and intentionally” (COL 11).

Another theme that emerged from the factors that motivate community opinion leaders to contribute towards the implementation of inclusive education in the Ga West Municipality is appreciation of diversity.

4.11 Appreciation of Diversity

Similar to findings in Carrington et al.'s (2016) study, all community opinion leaders in this study described appreciation of diversity as a benefit to inclusive education. From the interview responses, it appeared that a positive culture of inclusive education resulted in an appreciation of diversity. However, an appreciation of diversity may have also contributed to the ongoing positive culture of inclusive education. When asked to describe the benefits of inclusive education, one leader replied,

“My number one [benefit] would have to be the mindset [inclusion] instills in all kids to be accepting and grateful to everyone for their unique differences” (COL 10).

The same leader went on to say,

“[inclusive education] ... impacts the entire community in many of the same ways. We all learn to better appreciate and benefit from each other's individual differences” (COL 13).

Similarly, a district leader stated that

“...students learn to be accepting of others, understand the challenges of others, and learn about the strengths and qualities of disabled peers” (COL 16).

The majority of community opinion leaders felt that the culture of inclusion resulted in an acceptance of others and a tolerance for diversity. One district leader explained that inclusion is beneficial because it:

“develops an inclusive climate for the school and the opportunities to talk about diversity and differences” (COL 18).

As described by another district leader,

“students get a firsthand lesson on not everyone being the same. Students [with and without disabilities] have the same challenges of being a self-advocate and assisting in their own learning due to a varying degree of needs in the same classroom. They learn empathy as well” (COL 19).

The district leader went on to describe how inclusion fosters an appreciation of diversity by stating,

“It creates a community that reflects the real world and students celebrate each other for who they are” (COL 17).

4.12 Student Learning

Community opinion leaders have a take in students’ placement and monitoring and adjusting educational programmes (Chandler, 2015; Marzano et al., 2005). School heads and community opinion leaders are ultimately responsible for student learning and school improvement. From the interviews, community opinion leaders consistently referred to student learning and having high expectations for all students. Sixteen of twenty-five community opinion leaders expressed student learning to be a factor that would motivate them to support the implementation of inclusive education. One leader described *“seeing the daily progress that all of our students make on a consistent basis” (COL 14)* as a rewarding experience. The same leader believed that *“in an effective inclusive program, you see students enjoy learning and they have a desire to want to improve”*. The majority of community opinion leaders expressed enhanced student learning for students with and without disabilities as a benefit of

inclusion. One community leader suggested students’ shared learning as a motivator by stating “*all students have an opportunity to work with their same age peers and learn from one another*” (COL 9). Similarly, another district leader stated a rewarding part of the job was “*continuing to see students succeed academically and socially*” (COL 5).

4.13 Improving Community Opinion Leaders’ Knowledge About Inclusive Education

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. Ghana has domesticated these tenets in its Education Strategic Plan of 2018-2030 (UNESCO, 2015). Data collected in this section sought to reveal ways that the knowledge of community opinion leaders about inclusive education can be improved. The theme that emerged from the results included organization and attendance of workshops.

4.14 Attendance of Workshops

When interviewees were asked whether they had ever organized or attended workshops on inclusive education policy in Ghana, majority mentioned that they have not participated in any workshop on inclusive education. However, the interviewees explained to the researcher that the media and other major stakeholders in inclusive education policy should put in significant measures to educate the community members the more about the policy. According to the interviewees, the involvement of community leaders and members in workshops/in-service training on inclusive education will help promote the implementation of inclusive education.

One of the opinion leaders opined that

“...leaders in a community should support the development of more robust and sustainable inclusive schooling practices such as development inclusive practice as a planned organization wide reform among others” (COL 18).

In response to research question four, majority of the community opinion leaders asserted that their representation in school management is an important strategy for ensuring the full participation of all students including those with special needs in inclusive learning environments. The opinion leaders believe that IE will benefit all stakeholders such as students, especially those with special needs, teachers, parents, and the community at large. In essence, leadership collaborations will lead to improved student learning, achievement, behaviour, attendance, and importantly the student’s full participation in the inclusive school society. One opinion leader indicated that:

“I believe that when parents and teachers of students with special needs are given the needed support by the community, it will go a long way to promote inclusive education” (COL 5).

Another also observed that:

“it is no fault of the children living with disabilities...so why should they be separated when they are part of the community?”

Another opinion was based on the fact that:

“...children with disabilities are not strangers, but our own children...I think it’s a nice idea to teach them how to relate with their peers without disabilities” (COL 7).

An addition view suggested that:

“Children with disabilities, especially those with hearing impairment can have access to schools that are closer to them and not travel long distances to have access to education” (COL 11).

In support, one opinion leader sums it all by reiterating that:

“It is within their fundamental human right to have access to education, and that no one can deny them access to education” (COL 12).

In sum, one leader explained that:

For IE to materialized, it requires that:

“Persons who occupy positions of authority, such as community opinion leaders, will have a great influence on the policy when they add their voice. Since they represent the people in any given community, they need to relay the need for inclusion of persons with disabilities in general education classrooms” (COL 15).

4.15 Change in Understanding

A few of the community opinion leaders (five) expressed that they have developed their understanding of inclusion during their initial interaction with the researcher.

“My understanding has improved and has been enriched. Another student expressed with other words a broader and deeper understanding of inclusion” (COL 3).

“Yes, [my understanding has changed and] it is because a broadened and deepened understanding and many other perspectives are taken into account” (COL 4).

The changes described here concerned broadening and deepening the understanding of inclusive education. This statement is representative of most of the informants“

answers, and it seems like the students had been reflecting on their learning process and identified their learning outcomes, which are both important factors in developing new knowledge and skills (Senge, 2010). Since the answer was not explained further, it is difficult to draw conclusions about what the enrichment, deepening and broadening concerns, and this was one of the weaknesses of the questionnaire tool used. The students also highlighted their learning through reflection, and that the positive experiences from reflection with others initiated personal reflection (Schon, 2010). For example,

“Yes, the group discussion made me reflect a lot. I had an understanding of Special and Inclusive Education, but I realised that special education is a part of inclusive education. Without knowledge of special needs education, we do not know how we can move toward inclusion (COL 5).

School leadership is crucial for the successful implementation of inclusive education (Shogren, et al., 2015; Villa & Thousand, 2016). Often the most inclusive and high-quality schools are those that have school leaders who lead with vision, inclusive values, motivation, autonomy, and trust in school staff (Schuelka, Sherab & Nidup, 2018; Sherab, et al., 2015). A helpful set of indicators is provided by UNESCO-IBE (2016, p. 47) for school leaders to review their schools: 1. Everyone is made to feel welcome 2. Students are equally valued 3. There are high expectations for all students 4. Staff and students treat one another with respect 5. There is a partnership between staff and families 6. The school is accessible to all students 7. Senior staff support teachers in making sure that all students participate and learn 8. The school monitors the presence, participation, and achievement of all students.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore community leaders' knowledge and contribution in the implementation of inclusive education policy in the Ga West Municipality in Ghana and to determine ways in which their knowledge and contributions towards inclusive education can be improved. The objectives of the study were to: describe the level of knowledge of community leaders about inclusive education policy; examine community leaders' contribution towards the implementation of inclusive education policy; discuss the reasons why community leaders should contribute towards the implementation of inclusive education policy; and strategize how community leaders' knowledge about inclusive education policy can be improved to enhance the implementation of the policy.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The following findings were made from the study. They are presented under the various research questions as follows:

5.1.1 Findings for Research Question 1

- i. The focus of research question 1 was based on the level of knowledge of community opinion leaders about the national inclusive education policy of Ghana. Discussion of results highlighted the depth of community opinion leaders' knowledge about persons with disabilities and their inclusion into general education classrooms. The findings suggest that the community opinion leaders valued the philosophy of inclusive education and held positive

perceptions toward inclusive education. They understood inclusive education in four different ways, all of which reflect some of the relevant literature. The understanding of inclusive education as meeting children's diverse needs seems to reflect the need for a pedagogical practice that is varied and flexible. It was also revealed that inclusive education has a linked to special education, and inclusion is often associated to children with disability and their opportunities to participate and contribute in school and society.

Finally, the perception of inclusion as education for all, not only education of those children with special needs, reflects arguments about inclusion being better quality education for all pupils through participation and belonging in the school community. It is, however, not strange that a few participants had little knowledge about IE and its implementation. This confirms the definition given by the majority of the participants as "bringing children with disabilities and their counterparts without disabilities together in the same classroom," when in practicality, it goes beyond that. They require adequate information to understand that IE is about instructional adaptations made for all learners regardless of their condition.

5.1.2 Findings for Research Question 2

- ii. Under research question two, the contributions of community opinion leaders towards the implementation of inclusive education policy in the Ga West Municipality in Ghana emerged. Primarily, community opinion leaders defined their roles as collaborators, problem solvers, and facilitators. The community opinion leaders expressed the importance of collaboration between students, teachers, parents, and leaders. They also outlined their roles as problem solvers

and facilitators, explaining their responsibilities in aiding teachers to deliver the best possible instruction with available resources.

Also, the provision of quality instructional leadership and professional development pertinent to inclusive education emerged as a primary responsibilities of community opinion leaders. Minority of the opinion leaders indicated they played a role in providing professional development to others in some way, whether formal or informal. Community opinion leaders explained their role in professional development primarily as providing appropriate training and staff development that enriches staff members' ability to deliver quality inclusive educational opportunities within schools. However, limited resources were revealed as one of the challenges associated with the inability to contribute towards the implementation of inclusive special education services in the municipality. Moreover, a lack of budget and limited staff made collaboration to support inclusive schools difficult. Finally, a few participants showed lack of awareness about their roles in the implementation of inclusive education in their municipality.

5.1.3 Findings for Research Question 3

- iii. Research question 3 sought the views of community opinion leaders on the reasons for their contribution towards the implementation of inclusive education policy in the municipality. A number of reasons why community opinion leaders should contribute to the implementation of inclusive education emerged from the study. Among them include: support of civil rights; integration in community life; a sense of belonging and acceptance of differences; varied learning opportunities; relationships with peers; increased instructional support for all students; and team building to improve schools.

5.1.4 Findings for Research Question 4

- iv. Findings about how the knowledge of community opinion leaders about inclusive education policy can be improved were revealed. One of the main principles of IE is that all children, regardless of abilities, needs or interests, shall access, learn and participate together in mainstream (regular) education. Due to its focus on all children, including those with disabilities and other disadvantages, IE refers to an approach that aims at mainstream schools“ possibilities to accommodate and respect the differences and difficulties among their pupils. This does not only imply access to and quality of mainstream education, it also implies social justice and respect and acceptance of diversity and difference.

Inclusive education may therefore not only achieve equal opportunity to education, it may also combat discrimination, create welcoming communities and build inclusive and non-discriminative societies. To achieve IE, however, societies and communities must be fully committed and engaged in achieving its principles; without an inclusive society, inclusion in education is hardly achievable. Promoting inclusion requires access to and the possibility of being part of the community where one lives, which at the same time must pay attention to the way of life and the needs of all its members. Further, promoting the inclusion of individuals with disabilities requires consideration of the type and level of participation in relation to the phase of a person“s life: school inclusion is obviously related to child development and adolescence and work inclusion to adult life. School inclusion implies overcoming socio-cultural prejudices and marginalizing social barriers, as well as strengthening active participation. It also requires the presence of technical, social and organisational

solutions - as well as rehabilitative and training actions - to cope with the diverse educational needs that characterize a heterogeneous group of students. Inclusive schools should aim at identifying and respecting every student's unique educational needs, establish a policy that welcomes and values every student and promotes means to achieve that policy, for example teaching tolerance and acceptance.

5.2 Conclusion

It should be noted that inclusive education, with its principles, may not only serve as a valuable starting point for ensuring all children's access to and participation in mainstream (regular) education, it may also serve as an important starting point for children's access to and participation in mainstream society. Accordingly, it not only calls for a broader understanding of mainstream (regular) education, it also calls for a broader understanding of mainstream society. Inclusive education may therefore not only achieve equal opportunity to education, it may also combat discrimination, create welcoming communities and build inclusive and non-discriminative societies. To achieve a successful inclusive education, however, societies and communities must be fully committed and engaged in achieving its principles; without an inclusive society, inclusion in education is hardly achievable

5.3 Recommendations

In view of the findings and their interpretations a number of recommendations were made.

- i. It is recommended that advocacy of inclusive education should increase community knowledge about the practicality and benefits of IE and always involve community opinion leaders since they have a major role to play in the

full implementation of the IE policy. That is, efforts should be made by the various stakeholders in the inclusive education programme to increase knowledge and awareness about the IE policy. In essence, the three policy documents (Inclusive Education Policy, Inclusive Education Policy Implementation Plan, and Strategic and Guidelines for Practice of Inclusive Education in Ghana) that serve as a blueprint for IE implementation in Ghana should be made available in simplified formats.

- ii. Community opinion leaders should be sensitised and encouraged to develop keen interest and commitment in the inclusion of all children, regardless of their condition, in general education settings. With knowledge of what IE policy is about, they should be willing to provide the resources within their jurisdiction in order to ensure the practical implementation of the policy.
- iii. Community opinion leaders should be informed about the need for their contribution in the implementation of inclusive education. That is, lack of knowledge may generate negative attitude and pessimism towards the implementation of the policy.
- iv. Teachers and other major stakeholders of inclusive education should not hesitate to consult community opinion leaders about the way forward pertaining to the implementation of the policy. Community opinion leaders on the other hand should be willing to support school authorities whenever they are contacted for support that is within their capacity.

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APPENDIX

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Participants

Date:

Duration of interview:

Institution/organization of interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this interview is to discuss with you the knowledge you have about inclusive education and your contribution towards its implementation in the Ga West Municipality in Ghana. Please be as free as possible in answering the questions that follow since your answers would be treated as confidential as possible and for academic purposes only. No information that you give will be used against you as you are giving it anonymously.

Questions:

1. What have you heard about inclusive education in the Ga West Municipal and in Ghana at large?
2. What are your opinions about the inclusion of persons with special needs (disabilities) in the general education classroom?
3. Could you please explain the impact of inclusive education on the students and the school community?
4. How have you contributed towards the implementation of inclusive education in the Ga West Municipal?
5. What are some of the specific roles you have played towards the education of persons with disabilities in the Ga West Municipality?

6. How do you articulate your role as an opinion leader in the implementation of inclusive education in the Ga West Municipal?
7. What encourages you to contribute towards the implementation of inclusive education in the Ga West Municipal?
8. In your opinion, what measures should be put in place to ensure the full inclusion of persons with special needs in the general education classroom?

