

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL:
INSIGHTS FROM KRACHI WEST MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY, GHANA

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Abstract

*This study provides empirical evidence of the implementation of inclusive education policy at the local level in Ghana. Using a quantitative approach and survey questionnaire, the study gathered data from 150 participants including school administrators, students, parents, and teachers who were sampled through convenience and purposive sampling techniques. The Critical Disability and Intergroup Theories were employed to ground the study and guide the analysis. The results of the statistical analysis show that inclusive education at the local level is sustained by determinants such as effective leadership, political commitment, availability of resources, and positive cultural attitudes. The study also highlighted stakeholder collaboration and public advocacy as pillars of inclusive education policy implementation. Further, a strong positive correlation was observed between inclusive education and variables such as social and emotional support ($r=.877^{**}$; $p=.000$), staff training and development ($r=.873^{**}$; $p=.000$), accessible school facilities ($r=.902^{**}$; $p=.000$), flexible curriculum ($r=.855^{**}$; $p=.000$), and availability of material and financial resources ($r=.857^{**}$; $p=.000$). Finally, the study underscored persistent challenges associated with the implementation of the policy including the absence of community and stakeholder engagement, unclear policy goals, negative cultural attitudes, and infrastructural deficits. The study concludes with a recommendation for immediate interventions and a renewed approach to address systemic gaps in policy formulation and implementation processes for successful inclusive education outcomes at the local level.*

Keywords: Inclusive education, Disability, Educational policy, Diversity, Social justice

Résumé

*Cette étude fournit des preuves empiriques de la mise en œuvre de la politique d'éducation inclusive au niveau local au Ghana. En adoptant une approche quantitative et un questionnaire d'enquête, l'étude a recueilli des données auprès de 150 participants, y compris des administrateurs scolaires, des apprenants, des parents et des enseignants, sélectionnés par des techniques d'échantillonnage par convenance et par choix raisonné. Les théories critiques du handicap et des relations intergroupes ont été mobilisées pour fonder l'étude et orienter l'analyse. Les résultats de l'analyse statistique montrent que l'éducation inclusive au niveau local est soutenue par des facteurs tels que la gestion efficace, l'engagement politique, la disponibilité des ressources et des attitudes culturelles positives. L'étude a également mis en évidence la collaboration entre parties prenantes et le plaidoyer public comme piliers de la mise en œuvre de la politique d'éducation inclusive. De plus, une forte corrélation positive a été observée entre l'éducation inclusive et des variables telles que le soutien social et émotionnel ($r = .877^{**}$; $p = .000$), la formation et le développement du personnel ($r = .873^{**}$; $p = .000$), les infrastructures scolaires accessibles ($r = .902^{**}$; $p = .000$), et la disponibilité de ressources matérielles et financières ($r = .857^{**}$; $p = .000$). Enfin, l'étude a souligné des défis persistents associés à la mise en œuvre de la politique, y compris l'absence d'engagement communautaire et des parties prenantes, des objectifs de politique flous, des attitudes culturelles négatives et des déficits infrastructurels. L'étude conclut avec une recommandation pour des interventions immédiates et une nouvelle approche pour adresser les lacunes systémiques dans les processus de formulation et de mise en œuvre de la politique pour des résultats éducatifs inclusifs réussis au niveau local.*

= .000), un programme d'étude flexible ($r = .855^{**}$; $p = .000$) ainsi que la disponibilité des ressources matérielles et financières ($r = .857^{**}$; $p = .000$). Enfin, l'étude a souligné les défis persistants liés à la mise en œuvre de la politique, notamment l'absence d'implication des communautés et des parties prenantes, des objectifs politiques peu clairs, des attitudes culturelles négatives et des insuffisances en matière d'infrastructures. L'étude se termine par une recommandation en faveur d'interventions immédiates et d'une nouvelle approche visant à combler les lacunes systémiques dans la formulation et la mise en œuvre des politiques pour assurer des résultats positifs en matière d'éducation inclusive au niveau local.

Mots clés: Éducation inclusive, Handicap, Politique éducative, Diversité, Justice sociale

1. Introduction

In sub-Saharan Africa, the adoption and implementation of inclusive education policies continues to be a challenge due to existing socio-cultural norms and practices among other factors (Bibiana et al., 2020; Mitchell, 2015). However, in the Ghanaian context, efforts have been made to implement inclusive education policy at all levels of the educational system. A comprehensive inclusive education policy was adopted in 2015 after years of piloting in selected schools in parts of the country (Naami & Mort, 2023; Asamoah et al., 2021). The policy outlines the strategic and specific measures to provide education to children with special learning abilities in Ghana.

In inclusive education literature, a body of empirical studies has outlined the impact of inclusive education on the learning outcomes of both students with special needs and those without any disability (Kefallinou et al., 2020; Hehir et al., 2016; De Vroey et al., 2015). Some studies have observed that students who are taught in a more inclusive environment exhibit high academic performance compared to those who received instruction from an isolated or specialized school systems (Kefallinou et al., 2020; Hehir et al., 2016). Along similar lines, empirical research suggests that inclusive education is a necessary condition for the social inclusion of individuals with disabilities during and beyond their school years. Specifically, an analysis of the literature revealed a high positive relationship between inclusive education and social inclusion in

the domains of learning, work, and life in neighborhoods (Kefallinou et al., 2020; European Agency, 2018).

It is worth noting that inclusive education is essentially a sensitive topic not only in the Ghanaian context in that without such policies minority groups such as people with disability may not have the opportunity to access education to develop their potential (Mag et al., 2017). The adoption and implementation of the policy provides the opportunity of making education universal with equal facilities and quality assurance for all students, including those with special needs (Kaya & Akdemir, 2016). In the broader context, inclusive educational policies advance the removal of all barriers that hinder children with disability that come with unique educational needs to be included in the general educational system (Fantaye Kocha & Senapathy, 2022). To this end, specific provisions and alterations are to be made in the traditional systems to accommodate physiological, socio-economic, and cultural diversities (Bibiana et al., 2015).

At the local level, the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) play a significant role in supporting the implementation of the policy (UNESCO, 2021). Generally, embracing inclusive education at the local level involves the adoption of a wide range of practices, principles, and methodologies specifically designed to provide every child with the opportunity and the enabling

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environment for high-quality education for all (Pedaste et al., 2021; Almalky & Alwahbi, 2023). Since the introduction of the policy, several studies have been conducted to examine the policy from diverse standpoints. For instance, Naami and Mort (2023) investigated the preparedness of teachers to implement inclusive education policy in local communities in Ghana. Nti-Adarkwah et al., (2023) examined the factors that influence tutors' perception of inclusive education and the extent to which they embrace the policy. Equally, Opoku-Nkoom and Ackah Jnr. (2023) assessed inclusive culture, environment, and practices that support the implementation of the policy in Ghana. Other studies also focused on the status of the implementation, the progress so far and the challenges encountered (Komabu-Pomeyie, 2020; Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015). This study adds to the existing literature by providing empirical insight into the implementation of the policy in the Krachi west municipality. The following research questions guide the study:

- RQ1. What are the determinants of inclusive education at the local level?*
- RQ2. What are the factors that support the implementation of inclusive education policy at the local level?*
- RQ3. What are the challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education policy at the local level?*

2. Theoretical Review

Critical Theory of Disability

Critical Disability Theory provides a theoretical framework for analyzing disability from multiple dimensions including political, bio-medical, and socio-cultural systems that sustain the marginalization of individuals with disability. Particularly, the theory challenges socio-cultural and medical models that operationalize disability in the context of pathology, impairment, medical, and social limitations (Goodley, 2017). It further

criticizes societal norms and cultural practices that disadvantage the disabled from mainstream social systems (Chichaya et al., 2019).

Historically, the origin of the theory is traced to the developments in disability discourse in the 20th century. During this period, scholars and activists advanced the debates on disability beyond biological deficit or the medical sense of what constitutes ableness and disability (Pothier and Devlin, 2006). Drawing from the perspective of the social model of disability, proponents of the theory argued for a paradigm shift in the understanding of disability as a social construction rather than a medical condition (Symeonduo, 2009; Vehmas and Watson, 2013; Meekosha et al., 2013). This new paradigm challenged traditional medical and materialist approaches which dominated the discipline (Vehmas and Watson, 2013). Thus, the extension of critical thinking to disability studies offered a reflective and self-critical framework that highlighted the historical, socio-cultural and political underpinnings of social oppression against the disabled (Schlegel, 2017; Goodley et al., 2019).

Traditionally, the foundational works upon which the theory was built focused on distinguishing the social-cultural norms that facilitate the exclusion of individuals with biomedical impairment from the actual physical or mental conditions that constitute the deficit (Oliver, 1983; Pothier and Devlin, 2006; Shakespear, 2006). This theoretical clarification underscored institutional arrangements, policies, and practices of social oppression that exclude individuals with cognitive, sensory, and physical impairment from mainstream social activities (Oliver, 1996).

However, over the years, theoretical contributions from diverse disciplines have expanded the scope by incorporating insights from multiple perspectives including posthumanism, feminist theory, and critical race theory. This approach has made it possible to analyze the intersection of disability and

other social variables such as gender, ethnicity, and race (Cambell, 2008; Annamma et al., 2013; Goodley et al., 2017). For instance, through the DisCrit framework, scholars like Cambell, (2008) and Annamma et al., (2013) have examined how race and gender intersect with disability to reinforce social exclusion and oppression.

The critical disability theory lends itself as an effective theory for studying inclusive education. In line with the argument of the theory which calls for accommodation of persons with disability, inclusive education also supports the active involvement of both able-bodied and disabled people in the same educational setting (Angwaomaodoko, 2023). Here, educational systems make adjustments and implement inclusive practices and support systems to enable students with special learning needs to have access to education in a regular system rather than segregating them. Several researchers have employed this theory in recent empirical studies on inclusive education in different contexts (Madhesh, 2023; Pickard, 2021; Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Bixby, 2023).

The intergroup contact theory

The intergroup contact theory is used in studying how distinct social groups can be put together as a single unit. The theory emerged in the mid-20th century as a social-psychological response to racial and colonial prejudices and as a tool for maintaining harmony between individuals from distinct socio-economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006; Hammack et al., 2014). The foundation of the theory was laid by Allport's (1945) seminal work "The Nature of Prejudice" which contended that under certain conditions, prejudices can be reduced through intergroup contact. These necessary conditions include the existence of common goals, equal status, cooperation, and institutional support (Allport, 1945).

Fundamentally, the theory is underpinned by the following assumptions. First, the proponents of the theory maintain the view that bringing together individuals from diverse and opposing social backgrounds under certain conditions has the potential to bring about intergroup acceptance and harmony (Mohammed Alhassan, 2014, Pettigrew, 2011). They also argue that constructive interactions between members of the in-group and the out-group can change attitudes, lessen prejudice, and strengthen bonds (Brown and Hewston, 2005). Further, they provide that such interactions reduce perceived threat, decrease intergroup anxiety, enhance empathy and perspective-taking, and improve views toward outgroups.

Thus, the theory suggests that the interaction of individuals from diverse social groups in a common institution that is designed to support meaningful collaborative contact reduces prejudice, rejection, and discrimination against one group (Young et al., 2023). In the context of inclusive education, the integration of students with disability in the same school environment with other students improves the perception people have about disability and hence accept them as equal members of society. This is because the interaction between different groups leads to the formation of friendships and changes in attitudes (Bigler et al., 2016). When school children are made to study, play, and converse with their peers with special needs, it enables them to appreciate, embrace, and support them in the end (Cabrera et al., 2016). Empirical evidence shows that students who are trained in educational systems where different groups are put together in a classroom tend to have higher levels of positive sentiments toward out-group individuals and higher levels of intergroup engagement outside of the classroom compared to students who have had no interaction with students from different backgrounds (Reimer et al., 2022). By encouraging positive attitudes, building friendships, and improving engagement and well-being, intergroup

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contact initiatives such as inclusive education in schools can have a positive impact on students and reduce stigma, rejection, and prejudices (Ali et al., 2023).

In educational environments, intergroup interaction is essential for the healthy development of young people, especially in socially diverse societies. The school system provides an ideal opportunity for students to connect with members of other socioeconomic or cultural groups, which helps to challenge structural divides and lessen prejudice (Ali et al., 2023). The intergroup contact of students improves cognitive liberalization, allowing students to change the way they think and approach social problems (Jolley et al., 2023; Hodson et al., 2018).

Conceptualizing Inclusive Education

The term inclusive education has been conceptualized in different ways among academics, practitioners, and in policy documents. However, the Salamanca Statement of the UNESCO provides a comprehensive definition to the concept. The document defines inclusive education as a deliberate attempt to integrate students with disabilities into regular school communities and establish equality in their education (UNESCO, 2020). This notion embraces issues of social justice, human rights, and social inclusion. It is also predicated on the idea that all children should receive care in local schools without limitations based on social, emotional, cultural, intellectual, or other differences or disabilities (Ginja and Chen, 2021; Florain, Young & Rouse, 2010; Hornby, 2014). Likewise, Kauffman and Hornby (2020), underscore that inclusive education makes it possible to move from practices of segregating and classifying learning environments into special and general educational systems which breeds discrimination.

For Dovigo (2017), inclusive education must encompass the eradication of all forms of norms and practices that seek to isolate the disabled from the

general school environment. Achieving this demands the adoption of socio-ecological strategies which can facilitate the integration of the capabilities and the environmental needs of students from diverse backgrounds (Amor et al., 2018). In the works of Murungi, (2015), the author operationalized inclusive education as a holistic approach and a continuous effort to provide the necessary support system to students who are otherwise restricted from the mainstream educational system based on disability, sexual orientation, racial background, or poverty. Thus, unlike exclusive systems, inclusive practices welcome and provide support that meets the needs of all students in the general environment (Faragher, et al., 2021). From this perspective, Ball and Collet-Sabe, (2021) provide that, a conscious effort should be made to transform the traditional educational goals to embrace a more collective approach to meeting the learning needs of all groups in society. Similarly, Alhammadi (2023) calls for the training of specialist educators to embrace and promote the implementation of inclusive policies at all levels.

This idea is also echoed by Meda et al, (2023) who argue that the fundamental objective of inclusive education should be the transformation of learning experiences and the development of the potential of students with special needs in the normal educational system. Hence, the inclusive policy brings into focus a rethinking of the existing educational system to provide a supportive learning environment for minority groups (Martin et al., 2022). Here, state institutions like the local government must ensure the existence of political will and adequate resources to adopt methodological changes in collaboration with experts, parents, educators, and the necessary stakeholders (Rojas and Heya, 2020; Martin et al., 2022; Jardi et al., 2020).

Factors that Support the Implementation of Inclusive Education

Successful implementation of inclusive education policy requires necessary conditions and support systems. Examining the factors that support inclusive education, Xue et al., (2023) outlined that the competency of teachers is a key determinant influencing the implementation of inclusive education. This involves characteristics such as personal traits, attitudes, knowledge, training, and the ability of teachers to deal with students with special needs in the same classroom as regular students (Xue et al., 2023). In a similar study Littlecott et al. (2018), acknowledged that the implementation of inclusive education hinges on the favourable attitude of teachers toward the policy. From the same viewpoint, Anderson and Graham (2016) also found that the kind of relationship that exists between teachers and students determines the adoption of inclusive practices among teachers. Also, Olufemi (2015), highlight that it is impossible to implement inclusive policies without the acceptance and support from teachers who are the primary stakeholders of the policy.

Another factor that is dominant in the literature is reforms in the educational system to accommodate the needs of persons with disability. Reforms involve strategic changes in the physical environment, curriculum, and lesson plans among other factors to incorporate the special needs of minority groups (Somma & Bennett, 2020). Also, it can take the form of making the school environment accessible and conducive for disabled students (Mann et al, 2023). In a study conducted by AuCoin et al., (2020), the authors argued that changes in the physical environment of an educational system enhances the success of inclusive education implementation. In the same vein, Somma, (2020) found that structural transformation in traditional curriculum and infrastructure has a positive effect on implementation of inclusive practices.

The extent to which a policy is implemented at all levels depends on the allocation of resources needed for the implementation. This includes financial and material resources necessary to ensure inclusive policies are implemented (AuCoin et al., 2020). For instance, physical changes in a school environment to allow persons with disability to have access to school facilities require logistics supply and financial resources (Mann et al., 2023). The availability of adequate resources, such as human, financial, physical, and information resources is fundamental to the implementation of inclusive policies at all levels (Mbon et al., 2023; Akah et al., 2020). Also, the training and development of teaching staff or human resources with special skills to meet the demands of students with special needs involves the allocation of financial resources from authoritative sources (Masana and Kgothule, 2022; Hlaywayo and Mapolisa, 2020). The lack of funding and resource presents a limitation to the execution of inclusive education (Makodle and Burmistrova, 2020)

Also, inclusive education is supported by collaborative effort (Garcia-Melger et al., 2022). The collaboration of key stakeholders such as teachers, head teachers, health professionals, parents and the entire community to develop a common and shared vision, strategies and student-centred approaches toward addressing the concerns of persons with disability is found be an important factor (Cuskelly, 2020; Iacono et al., 2020). This makes it possible to maintain support from school, community, and home environment to ensure a holistic implementation of inclusive educational practices at the local level (Heras et al., 2021; Garcia-Melgar, 2022). Empirical studies reveal that collaborative consultation of appropriate stakeholders has a positive impact on inclusive policy and the educational outcomes of students with special needs (Hargreave et al., 2021; Cuskelly, 2020; Iacono et al., 2020).

Challenges of the Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy

Several studies have identified a significant number of challenges to the implementation of inclusive education (Marongwe and Buka, 2020; Gajendrabhai and Saini, 2020; Chibwe and Mulenga, 2021; Mpu and Adu, 2021). For instance, Marongwe and Buka found negative impact of inconsistent supply of financial resources on inclusive policy implementation in. Also, the lack of supply of the needed materials to aid the implementation of inclusive practices in the classroom, school environment, and community impede the success of the policy (Mpu and Adu, 2021). Another empirical evidence from Chibwe and Muleng (2021) also demonstrates that financial constraints have a negative effect on the implementation of inclusive education at all levels.

Additionally, implementing inclusive education requires the effort of stakeholders with the necessary training and skills to handle people with disability. The knowledge of teachers and personnel in the teaching field serves as the mechanism for advancing inclusive education. Bugti and Kazimi (2021) found that teachers without special training finds it very difficult to deal with students with disability in the same classroom and school environment. Morongwe and Buke (2020) observed that teachers without the knowledge and skills needed to meet the learning needs of disabled students become frustrated when teaching them. This reduces the commitment and dedication of teachers to implement the inclusive education policy (Bugti and Kazimi, 2021)

It is worth noting that poor infrastructural development poses a significant challenge to the implementation of inclusive education. Mpu and Adu (2021) found that poor infrastructure is a major problem that policymakers and stakeholders face in implementing inclusive education in South Africa. The study found that existing infrastructure is

characterized by overcrowding and limited access to people with disability. Chibwe and Mulenga, (2021) also observed that inclusive education has not been successful in primary schools in the Kitwe District in Zambia due to inadequate school buildings and poor infrastructure in the schools located in the district.

More importantly, the ideas, perceptions, and general attitudes of the main stakeholders in the policy implementation process are found to influence progress toward achieving the goals of inclusive education. Genjendrabhai and Saini (2020) have shown that negative attitudes exhibited by families, teachers, and the general public towards the education of persons with disability and special learning needs undermine the core import of inclusive education. Begum (2017), discussed how the poor attitude of teachers in particular towards persons with special educational needs accounts for the limited success achieved in the implementation process. Similarly, Sijuola et al., (2022) identified that the poor attitude of government and state agencies towards the concerns of disabled students is another challenge to the policy. The authors found that though the government and its agencies make inclusive policies to be implemented, they fail to provide the necessary financial and material resources to ensure inclusive educational goals are achieved.

Empirical Review

Globally, there is significant empirical evidence to show the implementation of inclusive education across different levels of government. Massouti (2021) examined pre-service teachers' perspectives on the preparation for inclusive education teaching. The findings demonstrated that pre-service teachers view inclusive education as a cooperative policy practice that requires support, a positive outlook, and respect for all students. In a similar study, Knight et al. (2022) reveal that poor understanding of the ideals and philosophy of inclusive education

affect the readiness of teachers to embrace inclusive practices.

In the Ghanaian context, a growing body of literature reveal varying study outcomes on the implementation of inclusive education. Opoku-Nkum and Ackah Jnr. (2023) found a strong collaboration among parents, community members and teachers in promoting inclusive education practices in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem district assembly in the central region of Ghana. Also, Ackah-Jnr and Fluckiger (2023) observed that material and financial resources, human resources and motivation significantly influence the success of the policy in early childhood schools. Other scholar like Ackah-Jnr (2022) indicate that headmasters were in a good position to initiate and coordinate other teachers' efforts in implementing inclusive practices. Finally, Ahiavi and Sam (2021) examined the opinion of teachers on the implementation of an inclusive education programme in the Awuto Senya East municipality of Ghana. In the findings, it was observed that teachers are not given enough training to advance inclusive education at the local level. The study also revealed inadequate administrative support and in-service training of teachers who are major stakeholders in the implementation of the policy.

3. Methods

Study Approach and Design

The study adopted a quantitative research approach and a single case study design. The Karachi West District, which forms part of the eight Municipalities and Districts Assemblies in the Oti Region, was used as a case study. Using the quantitative approach, the researchers administered 160 structured close-ended questionnaires to major stakeholders including parents, teachers, head teachers, and employees at the district education office from August to November, 2024. Out of 160 questionnaires, 150

were received and used for the analysis which indicates a 98.1% response rate.

Sampling procedure

Employing the Yamene's (1967) formula for sample determination, a total of 160 was reached at a 95% confidence level. The convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used to draw 160 participants to whom the researchers self-administered the questionnaire to measure their level of agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert scale. A convenience sampling technique was used to draw participants based on their availability and willingness to take part in the study (Golzar, 2022). Purposive sampling helped to identify participants with the knowledge, expertise and experience in inclusive education (Sharma, 2017). These sampling techniques were used due to the focus of the study. The study gathered collect data from experts, educationists, teachers, policymakers, and school children with disability and special learning needs.

Measurement and Data Analysis

In the questionnaire design, the researchers employed sub-indicators to measure the variables of interest in the study. The determinant of inclusive education policy (DIEP) was measured using leadership and political commitment, flexibility and adaptability of curriculum, legal and regulatory frameworks, material and financial commitment, cultural attitudes and perceptions, and educational reforms. Also, indicators such as accessible school facilities, social and emotional support, community engagement and participation, staff training and development, and collaboration among stakeholders were used to assess the factors that support the implementation of inclusive education policy (FSIIEP). Finally, the variable "challenges of implementation (CIP)" was measured with the following indicators; cultural attitudes, poor

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communication of policy goals, and inadequate specialized teachers.

In the analysis, the scales were first computed into sub-indicators, which were used for the descriptive statistical analysis. Further, the researcher transformed the indicators into the main variables by combining all the sub-indicators measuring each of the objectives of the study. This was used for the reliability test and the correlation analysis. The quantitative analysis was performed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS version 27).

Test for reliability

The reliability test, as shown in the Table 1 below reveals that the scales employed in the study provide an accurate measurement of the variables of interest. The Cronbach Alpha (α) of the variables show the highest value DIEP ($\alpha=.928$), followed by PSIEP ($\alpha=.923$), and finally CIP (.898). From the corresponding alpha (α) values, it can be observed that the combined scales accurately and reliably measure the main variables.

Table 1: Test for Reliability

Variable	Cronbach Alpha (α)	No. of indicators	N
Determinants of inclusive education policy (DIEP)	.928	6	150
Factors that support inclusive education policy (FSIEP)	.923	7	150
Challenges with the implementation of the policy (CIP)	.898	8	150

4. Results and Discussion

Determinants of Inclusive Education Policy

The descriptive statistical analysis reveals that legal and regulatory frameworks is the major determinant of inclusive education policy at the local level (Mean=3.71; SD=1.024), followed by effective leadership and political commitment (Mean=3.62; SD=1.020), flexibility and adaptability of curriculum (Mean=3.57; SD=1.012), financial and material

commitment (Mean=3.28; SD=1.065), educational reforms (Mean=3.26; SD=1.021), and finally cultural attitudes and perceptions (Mean=3.16; SD=1.127). These observations suggest that the existence of effective legal backing, effective administrative as well as political leadership can significantly influence other determinants such as educational reforms, and resource allocation that shape the adoption of a more flexible and adaptive curriculum needed for inclusive education to thrive.

Table 2: Determinants of Inclusive Education Policy

Indicators	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Leadership and political commitment	150	1	5	3.62	1.020
Flexibility and adaptability of curriculum	150	1	5	3.57	1.012
Legal and regulatory frameworks	150	1	5	3.71	1.024
Material and financial commitment	150	1	5	3.28	1.065
Cultural attitudes and perceptions	150	1	5	3.16	1.127
Educational reforms	150	1	5	3.26	1.021
Valid N (listwise)	150				

Factors that Support the Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy

The study also examined the factors that support the implementation of inclusive education policy in the Krachi West District Assembly. The results demonstrate factors such as public awareness and advocacy (Mean=3.51; SD=.923), collaboration among stakeholders (Mean=3.46; SD=1.012), effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism (Mean=3.45; SD=.968), community engagement and participation (Mean=3.41; SD=1.028), staff

training and development (Mean=3.40; SD=.970), social and emotional support (Mean=3.25; SD=1.033), and accessible school facilities (Mean=3.23; SD=1.033). The findings imply that local government authorities that prioritize awareness creation and the participation of key stakeholders in major decision-making process not only stand to benefit from mobilizing the community support for implementing the policy but also maintain the sustainability of the success achieved.

Table 3: Factors that Support the Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy

Indicators	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Accessible school facilities	150	1	5	3.23	1.033
Social and emotional support	150	1	5	3.25	1.033
Community engagement and participation	150	1	5	3.41	1.028
Staff training and development	150	1	5	3.40	.970
Collaboration among stakeholders	150	1	5	3.46	1.012
Public awareness and advocacy	150	1	5	3.51	.923
Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms	150	1	5	3.45	.968
Valid N (listwise)	150				

Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education Policy

The study also highlights significant barriers to the implementation of inclusive education policy in the Krachi West Assembly. These challenges include poor monitoring mechanisms (Mean=3.60; SD=1.016), the absence of stakeholder and community engagements (Mean=3.45; SD=.973), negative cultural attitudes (Mean=3.36; SD=.887), inadequate specialized teachers (Mean=3.35; SD=.991), financial and material constraints

(Mean=3.33; SD=.985), poor communication of policy goals (Mean=3.27; SD1.088), poor infrastructural development (Mean=3.23; SD=1.503), and rigid curriculum (Mean=3.04; SD=.942). These barriers reflect institutional, socio-political, administrative, and economic limitations that are systemic and cut across different levels of government.

Table 4: Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education Policy

Indicators	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Negative cultural attitudes	150	1	5	3.36	.887
Rigid curriculum	150	1	5	3.04	.942
Poor communication of policy goals	150	1	5	3.27	1.088
Poor infrastructural development	150	1	5	3.23	1.503
Absence of stakeholder and community engagement	150	1	5	3.45	.973

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Inadequate specialized teachers	150	1	5	3.35	.991
Financial and material resource constraints	150	1	5	3.33	.985
Poor monitoring mechanisms	150	1	5	3.60	1.016
Valid N (listwise)	150				

Correlation Analysis

The output of the Pearson correlation analysis of the variables reveals a high positive and statistically significant relationship between inclusive education policy and the indicators. As shown in Table 5 below, a strong positive correlation was observed between inclusive education and accessible school facilities ($r=.902^{**}$; $p=.000$), social and emotional support ($r=.877^{**}$; $p=.00$), staff training and development ($r=.873^{**}$; $p<.01$), material and financial resource availability ($r=.857^{**}$; $p<.001$), flexible and adaptive curriculum ($r=.855^{**}$; $p<.01$), legal and regulatory frameworks ($r=.819^{**}$; $p<.01$),

and leadership and political commitment ($r=.804^{**}$; $p<.01$). The correlation coefficients demonstrate how significant these indicators contribute to achieving the goals of inclusive education policy goals and objectives. It further demonstrates that the presence or absence of these factors influences the success or failure of the policy. Thus, in line with intergroup contact theory which grounded the study, these indicators are the necessary conditions through which the policy can be implemented to address the learning needs of students with different abilities.

Table 5: Correlation Results

s/n	Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1.	Inclusive education policy	1							
2.	Legal and regulatory framework	.819^{**}	1						
3.	Flexible and adaptive curriculum	.855[*]	.721 ^{**}	1					
4.	Leadership and political commitment	.804^{**}	.692 ^{**}	.660 ^{**}	1				
5.	Material and financial resources	.857^{**}	.702 ^{**}	.778 ^{**}	.760 ^{**}	1			
6.	Accessible school facilities	.902^{**}	.719 ^{**}	.782 ^{**}	.771 ^{**}		1		
7.	Social and emotional support	.877^{**}	.653 ^{**}	.760 ^{**}	.798 ^{**}	.816 ^{**}	.710 ^{**}	1	
8.	Staff training and development	.873^{**}	.621 ^{**}	.627 ^{**}	.691 [*]	.744 ^{**}	.770 ^{**}	.695 ^{**}	1

**** Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed), n=150**

Discussion

This section presents a discussion of the findings of the study with relevant literature. A wide range of

determinants has been reported by different scholars who have studied different aspects of inclusive education. Among these determinants are the qualification of personnel, the flexibility and

adaptability of curriculum, policy goals and objectives, material and financial support, and government commitment among many others (Massouti, 2021; Sijuola et al., 2020; Mpu and Adu, 2021; Opoku-Nkum and Ackah Jnr., 2023). Sijuola et al., (2020), indicated that the availability of skilled and qualified personnel positively impacts the implementation of inclusive policies at all levels. The outcome of the current study supports the observation made by Sijuola and colleagues. Also, the findings resonate Mpu and Adu, (2021) who found that flexible and adaptive curricula influence the implementation of inclusive education. Notwithstanding, this study confirms the assertion by Opoku-Nkum and Ackah Jnr., (2023) that clear policy goals and objectives are key determinants of the success or the failure of inclusive policies. Additionally, this re-echoes the findings of Lambrecht et al., (2020) and Faragher et al., (2020) of the central role of effective leadership as a determinant of inclusive education policy.

The current study has demonstrated how factors such as accessible school facilities, social and emotional support, community engagement and participation, collaboration among stakeholders, and staff training and development among others support the implementation of inclusive education policy at the local level. Related studies have also documented similar empirical observations (Somma, 2020; Mann et al., 2023; AuCoin et al., 2020; Xue et al., 2023; Mbon et al., 2023). Xue et al., (2023) reported that the acceptance and support of individuals with disabilities leads to the achievement of the inclusive education policy goals and objectives. The results also support existing evidence that the ratio of skilled teacher to student has a significant influence on the success of inclusive education (Mbon et al., 2023; Marcia-Melgeret et al., 2022). Training and development were found to be a major factor in the implementation of the policy of inclusion just as Littlecott et al., (2018) provided in their study.

A growing body of literature has identified challenges that affect the implementation of inclusive policies at different levels (Chibwe and Mulega, 2021; Bugti and Kazinma, 2021; Mpu and Adu, 2021; Begum, 2017; Marongwe and Buka, 2020). This study highlighted the absence of stakeholder engagement and consultation as a major challenge to making education accessible to all people including people with disabilities. This outcome is in line with the view of Bugti and Kazinma, (2021) and Mpu and Adu, (2021). Similar to Chibwe and Mulega's (2021) conclusion that the implementation becomes difficult in schools where there are inadequate skilled teachers and professional bodies to assist PWDs, this study also underscores how inadequate trained teachers in the municipality have negatively affected the implementation of inclusive education. It can be observed that the finding confirms the outcome of a study conducted by Marongwe and Buka, (2020) which concluded that limited educational facilities and infrastructure support hinder the pursuit of inclusive education. Again, the study is in line with the conclusion made by Genjeabhindr and Saini (2020) that limited funds and lack of participation of key stakeholders in decisions affecting the welfare of students with special learning needs hinder the progress of the policy.

5. Conclusion

Through this paper, the researchers have provided a detailed examination of the implementation of inclusive education policy at the local level in Ghana, using Krachi West district as a case study. The outcome of the study underscores valuable empirical insights into the determinants of inclusive education, the factors that influence the implementation of the policy, and the barriers that hinder efforts toward achieving the policy goals.

The study has established that inclusive education is sustained by major determinants including effective leadership and political commitment, legal and

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regulatory frameworks, flexible and adaptive curriculum, adequate supply of financial and material resources, reforms in traditional educational systems, and positive cultural attitudes. The existence of these determinants contribute significantly to the adoption and implementation of both international and domestic inclusive practices in the mainstream educational systems, especially within the local administrative and governance districts. For instance, as observed in the study, effective leadership coupled with strong political commitment ensures that not only are inclusive educational policies adopted but also the corresponding human capital, material, and financial resources are made available to achieve the policy goals.

The study further highlighted factors that support the successful implementation of inclusive education policies. These include stakeholder collaboration, public awareness and advocacy, effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, community engagement, accessible school facilities, staff training and development, and social and emotional support. This suggests that through public education programmes and proper stakeholder engagements, a conducive environment can be created for the implementation of inclusive education as these efforts have the potential to transform negative public perceptions about students with disability and enhance community by- ins. Also, the availability of training and development opportunities for teachers, social and emotional support, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms contribute to the sustainability of the policy.

The study also found persistent challenges which include the absence of monitoring mechanisms, the lack of community and stakeholder engagement, poor communication of policy goals, negative cultural attitudes, underdeveloped infrastructure, and rigid curriculum. These barriers underscore the

need for immediate interventions and a renewed approach to address systemic gaps in policy formulation and implementation processes for successful inclusive education outcomes at the local level.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this paper.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research and publication of this paper.

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