



Roles of Special Education Needs Coordinators in Selected Basic Schools in Ghana

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the role of Special Education Need Coordinators (SENCOs) in selected basic schools in the Pusiga District, Ghana. The study adopted cross-sectional survey design and questionnaire to gather data from 50 participants selected through purposive sampling and convenience sampling techniques. The findings of the study showed that significant roles performed by SENCOs in the Pusiga District included helping to promote inclusive education, visiting schools and advising teachers on how to address the needs of special students, bridging the gap between children with special needs and their parents, children with special needs and their teachers, and children with special needs with their peer, providing guidance and counselling services to pupils, teachers and parents and providing education to reduce stigmatization. On how SENCOs support pupils and teachers in the basic schools, it was found that SENCOs work in connection with NGOs to provide some basic needs for special children. They organize in-service training to assist regular teachers to apply appropriate techniques, instructional materials and methods to assist children with special needs. The study further unveiled inadequate provision of teaching and learning materials, lack of support from most parents because of superstitions and misconceptions about special needs children, undesirable and offensive labeling, irregular in-service training and inadequate knowledge, training and skills as major challenges facing the SENCOs. The study therefore, recommends that regular sensitization meetings

and community education should be organized within the communities in the Pusiga District to sensitize stakeholders about the value of community engagement in the education of children with disabilities.

Keywords: Special Education Needs Co-ordinator, Children with Disabilities and SEND.

Background to the Study

Access to education is recognized as a basic right in both the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (King & McGrath, 2002). Mansaray, (2006), the rapid development of African societies is largely dependent on the extent to which appropriate education is made available to as many people as possible.

Education has been viewed by nations and international organizations not only as a “human right” but also as a “merit good”. This view is fueled by persisting assumptions and the enduring belief that education can liberate and empower, develop a literate citizenry, and be a catalyst for social and economic development. Education is also seen as an investment in a country’s future and can equip people with particular competencies and attitudes; it can transfer wisdom, expectations, and ways of thinking and discipline to the next generation (Semali, 2007).

In order to ensure that special education takes place there are many things to be considered. Semali, (2007) suggests that, necessary facilities like teaching and learning materials, equipment and some environmental settings that are important for children with special needs, should be considered. These facilities include items like Braille materials, audio and visual devices, various teaching aids, mobility equipment like white cane for individuals who are blind, wheelchairs for people who are physically challenged, and special classroom designs and toilets.

Okyere and Adams, (2003), special education or special needs education is the education of students with special needs in a way that addresses students’ individual differences and needs. This process involves individually-planned and systematically-monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, and other interventions designed to help learners with special needs to achieve a higher level or personal self-sufficiency and success in school and community. Common special educational needs include challenges with learning, communication, emotional and behavioral disorders, physical disabilities and developmental disorders, to mention a few. Pupils with these kinds of special needs are likely to benefit from additional educational services, such as different approaches to teaching, use of technology, specialized adapted

teaching and learning environment and resource room personnel service. Children with disabilities therefore have a right to live and to acquire education as enshrined in Article 29 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

The 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain, declared that although children, the youth and adults have differing characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs, they must all have access to regular education, through child-centred pedagogy, that is capable of meeting their special educational needs (SEN). The Salamanca Statement – reaffirming the right to education of every individual, as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and committing to the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA), called upon countries to adopt inclusive education as a matter of law or policy (UNESCO, 2005).

The Salamanca Statement (1994) has been a considerable source of influence in the formulation of local educational policies and has rekindled Ghana's commitment to improve the access, quality and provision of equal educational opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities. In particular, the Education Strategic Plans (ESP) of 2005 to 2015 and 2010 to 2020 have decreed inclusive education as the most appropriate educational provision for students with disabilities, with the goal of achieving an inclusive education system by 2015. The recently drafted inclusive education policy of Ghana is founded on the premise that every child has the right to education. This policy therefore seeks inclusive education for all persons with mild as well as severe SEN at all levels of education (MoE, 2013).

The role of the special educational needs co-coordinator (SENCO) has been given greater attention recently in Government of Ghana announcements on special educational needs (SEN), partly due to the SENCO's ostensibly pivotal role in SEN policy and strategy. There also has been much discussion of the role of other staff in the provision of support for children with SEN and disabilities as a result of reforms such as Every Child Matters and the Children's Plan. Special education can be defined as instruction that is specially designed to meet the unique needs of children who are exceptional. It is founded on the understanding that all children and youth can reach their full potential given the opportunity, effective teaching and proper resources (Zajda, 2005). Special education is designed to serve students who have differences that significantly influence the way they learn and behave. In the initial stages, special education served those who conformed to the normative categories of deaf, blind, and mentally retarded. More recently, other groups have been identified who have mild learning and behaviour problems, such as mild intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities and behaviour disorders. According to Phyllis, (2005), disability is becoming a social phenomenon, owned by the

society as a group, rather than an individual as a person. This view is shared by Ocloo, (2011) who argues that the concept of special needs is socially constructed because each society is unique and will develop its own meaningful concept of special needs, ways to identify gaps in services, and plans for service provision.

Special needs education is also viewed as an academic delivery system focused primarily on enhancing students with SENCO to learn in the modified environment and/or to learn with individualized accommodations (Kopetz & Ifimu, 2008). The Kenya Institute of Education (MOE, 2001) defines special education as “education of children who have learning difficulties as a result of not coping with the normal school organization and instruction methods” (p. 2). This definition seems to emphasize children’s deficits rather than the inability of an education system to accommodate diverse needs. Special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) or peripatetic teachers as was called some years back, are regular specialized trained persons who move from school to school to provide support service to students and teachers who have special problems in the classroom (Okyerere & Adams, 2003). These supportive services are offered from the resource education unit of the special education through District SENCOs to pupils or students and teachers in the integrated school system to foster the concept of inclusive education as much as possible (Ocloo, Agbeke, Avoke, Opong, Hayford, Gagdabui & Boison, 2002).

Disability is a restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. It further describes a functional limitation or activity restriction caused by impairment. Disabilities are descriptions of disturbances in function at the level of the person. Examples of disabilities include difficulty seeing, speaking, hearing, difficulty moving and climbing stairs amongst others (Opong, 2003). Children with these problems would therefore need the support services from SENCOs to enable them function and achieve optimal level in education.

Statement of the Problem

Pusiga District is one of the newly created Districts in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The inhabitants are mainly peasant farmers and some few government workers. There are 43 basic schools within the Pusiga District, and they all need the support of related service providers to assist SENCOs due to the high level of disabilities among pupils in the various schools. These disabilities include hearing impairment, visual impairment, orthopedic impairments or physical disabilities, and in most cases cerebral palsy. The children with disabilities in the District would therefore need instructional supervision from SENCOs to help them go through the basic level of education with less difficulty. According to Glanz and Behar–Horenstein, (2000), instructional

supervision is the process which utilizes wide array of strategies, methodologies and approaches aimed at improving instruction. This implies that the students with disabilities academic improvement will not be realized unless school heads and special educational needs co-ordinators play a very effective role in supervising these children in the various schools to help them

It appears that academic achievement is on the low side with persons with special educational needs. One of the factors that accounts for the poor academic achievement of students with disabilities is poor instructional supervision from SENCOs which could have some negative impact on the child's learning. There are challenges that SENCOs encounter, which could be an impediment to their duties. Research has shown that clinical supervision improves students' performance (Opore, 1999). This kind of supervision could be done perfectly by someone on the ground. For instance, professional development for the teachers on inclusion is not adequate (Avoke & Avoke, 2004). Thus, teacher preparation in some of the universities in Ghana focused purely on methodologies and assessment practices that were not tailored to the needs of children with disabilities in inclusive schools. It appears also that, segment of trained teachers from the Colleges of Education as well as other tertiary institutions lack the capacity to teach pupils with special educational needs (SENs) in inclusive classes. Further, the nature of curriculum seems to lack the element of flexibility, which would be suitable for all learners with diverse backgrounds. The physical environments of schools counter the effectiveness of inclusion. For example, the kind of physical environment that is being used must be seen to be user friendly to all manner of pupils, hence the need for SENCOs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the roles of SENCO in selected basic schools in the Pusiga District of Ghana.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the roles of SENCO in the Pusiga District of Ghana.
2. To assess how SENCO roles influence teacher performance in the selected basic schools
3. To identify the challenges, face by SENCO of their duties in the schools
4. To determine the mechanisms put in place to support SENCO in the schools

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study;

1. What are the roles of SENCO?
2. How does SENCO support pupils and teachers in the basic schools?
3. What challenges do SENCO face as they carry out their duties?
4. What mechanisms are put in place to support SENCO to improve upon their work in the Pusiga District?

Significance of the Study

It is believed that the outcome of the study will add to the existing literature on the roles of special education needs coordinators. It will serve as basis for further research and as reference material. The study would help teachers, policy makers and implementers the opportunity to take a look at the roles of SENCOS in the supervision of persons with disabilities to enable them to offer logistics and support services. The findings of the study would bring to light the concept of mainstreaming and inclusive education as much as possible because some children with disabilities learn with their colleagues non disable peers in the same classroom setting.

Delimitation of the Study

According to Simon and Goes (2011), the delimitations of a study are those characteristics that arise from limitations in the scope of the study defining the boundaries and by the conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions made during the development of the study plan. Examples of these exclusionary and inclusionary decisions are the choice of objectives and research question(s), variables of interest, the choice of theoretical perspectives that will be used, the methodology, and the choice of participants. The study was restricted to some selected basic schools in the Pusiga District. The study was also delimited to special education needs coordinators, regular teachers and pupils. The study was restricted to the roles of special education needs co-coordinators.

Limitation of the Study

The sample size was small. This made the findings unlikely to be generalized to a whole population especially considering the fact that there are few SENCO. The study could have generated wider findings on a large number of participants. Also the researcher will have wanted the study to cover general education teachers

in the entire Pusiga District, but the immense size of the population and geographical distribution of them, time for the study, the financial constraint and non-availability of other resources will not permit her to do so.

Theoretical Framework for the Research Study

For the research study, I utilized the Social Model and Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1970) benchmarks children with special needs and their need to belong, with factors (variables) that motivate learning and eventually their acceptance into the society. This theoretical framework proposed highlights the view that in the hierarchy of human needs 'belonging' is an essential and prerequisite element that should be met before one could ever achieve a sense a self-worth. This framework highlights five levels (in ascending order): Physiological, Safety or Security, Belonging/Social Affiliation, Self-Esteem and Self- Actualization, as the five levels that determine an individual's level of belonging in the society. The framework shows the priority needs that all have to be satisfied; in ascending order before an individual feel like they belong. This framework was adapted in this work to show how the different levels proposed by (Maslow, 1970) helps us to further understand the level of inclusion for children with special needs in Ghana. Figure 1 is the diagram of the theoretical framework



Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of human needs. (Adapted from Maslow, A. (1970))

Psychological needs

According to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, the first level in this pyramid is the psychological stage. This stage consists of needs such as food, water, shelter and warmth; individuals do not seek the satisfaction of a need at one level until the previous level of need has been satisfied or met. At this stage the child is still very dependent on their parents as well as the society in general for the provision of the basic

everyday necessities. Regarding children with special needs this dependency is relatively higher compared with those without special needs. Not all disabilities are easy to recognize most especially learning disabilities as children with this disability often have average or above average intelligence. Learning disabilities, in particular, may be difficult to identify, for example children with dyslexia, a learning disability involving difficulties in acquiring and processing language that is typically manifested by a lack of proficiency in reading, spelling and writing. So like any other child without disabilities they need and deserve the basic necessities such as food, water, shelter and warmth. At this stage the child is still developing and is still finding out who they are, hence the need for some form of reassurance from parents and others in the society that despite the fact that they are different they do not need to be “repaired” or “fixed” before they can be included with their peers. (Willis, 2006)

Safety needs

This is the second stage in Maslow’s (1970) pyramid of needs. After the psychological needs have been duly satisfied, the child in question moves to the next stage. Here needs such, as freedom from danger and absence of threat has to be provided or ensured for the child. Here the individual has the need to feel safe in his/her environment, be able to express him or herself freely without being judged unfairly or discriminated against. For younger children this sense of security is, satisfied in the form of their parents or guardians, while an older person could have security in terms of a job, a house in a safe area. For children with special needs the provision of their safety concerns is very important because if they feel they are in a secure area, such as their classroom they would tend to respond better to what they are taught and how well they relate with their peers and teachers. In Ghana most special schools are usually situated away from the cities as well as mainstream school. This is due to the fact that these special schools have been portrayed as “safe havens” where persons with disabilities are protected from exposure to the hazards associated with inclusion in mainstream society (Artkinson, Jackson, & Walmsky, 1997; Avoke, 2001; Schedule of Events for the Twelfth Biennial Conference Windhock, Namibia, 2011).

Belong – love needs

This third stage in Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs, include needs such as: friends, family, spouse, lover, and membership in associations within one’s community. According to Maslow at this point in any individual’s life (after the first two needs have been satisfied), one craves to belong and be accepted in the society they are in. He or she would not want to be accepted by not just family, but also be able to make friends

outside one's family such as in schools and the wider community. In the case of a child with special needs, the need to belong is very important because the child is obviously very different from the other children so he/she should not be made to feel inferior. As a result, they may exhibit behavior that tests acceptance, or they act out, attack others, or behave in ways that show they deserve to be rejected.

These children benefit from being around adults who are consistent and caring, not harsh and judgmental. Using Ghana as an example, this is a need that is seriously lacking and a major cause of worry to the child's community, because according to Agbenyega (2003), the language used to label, inscribe and construct disabilities in Ghana is premised by cultural ideology that marginalizes, silences and constructs subjectivities through the society and the school system.

Self-esteem needs

Self Esteem needs constitute the fourth stage in Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs. Following the satisfaction of the previous stage, Abraham Maslow believed that only when do we have some form of security in community do we develop self-esteem. This need manifests in the desire to assure ourselves of our own worth as individuals can be satisfied through personal achievements in any given field, gaining respect or recognition from others. It is a very important need hence its position in the pyramid because if the individual does not feel accepted or appreciated although all other needs before this have been satisfied everything would have been for nothing. It is important to note that every child enjoys being praised and acknowledged by adults and peers in his/her life, irrespective of the fact that the child has a disability or not.

The child would want to feel accepted both by the teacher and their peers especially when a new skill is mastered or more control is gained over the environment. The need to be accepted and praised as well is due to the fact that with any disability it is more difficult to remember skills learnt already not to mention new ones learnt. According to Snow (2007) to separate children from others of similar age and qualification generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community.

Self-actualization

This is the final level in Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs in which he stated that after self-esteem needs have been largely met, "we will develop a new restlessness and the urge to pursue the unique gifts or talents that may be particular to that person...what a person can be, he or she must be. He must be true to his

own nature”. (Maslow's hierarchy of needs, 1943) At this point all four previous levels have been satisfied, so the individual now feels the need to develop himself up until the point where he would have a sense of accomplishment as shown by their occupation of path of choice. Maslow stated that until the individual is free of the domination of lower needs, such as for security and esteem, the pursuit of self-actualization cannot begin as the pursuit of higher needs is itself one index of psychological health.

The social model

Jelicic, Theokas, Phelps, & Lerner, (2007), a model is a theoretical construct that represents something with a set of variables and a set of logical and quantitative relationship between them. Jelicic et al. (2007) again describes models as framework for thinking and acting suggests that any profession in which people intervene in the lives of others must have a model of practice which guides those interventions. This is important because models provide a framework for selecting, sequencing and organizing interventions and they guide the process of decision-making and assist in answering questions in research.

The social Model of Disability is defined by Finkelstein & Stuart (1996) as a model that incorporates a holistic interpretation of the situation facing disable children. They suggest that children with physical, mental, and visual impairment can have satisfying life-styles as disable children if the focus of attention is shifted towards the removal of disabling barriers rather than concentrating on rehabilitation of children with this ability in the basic school setting. The issue of concern is not with individual but rather the society and this can be done by working on the attitudinal, institutional and physical barriers in the society. This therefore means that society has to look at the barriers preventing disable children from functioning and provide all the necessary needs to make children function at whatever level that they find themselves.

Special Education in Ghana

In the Education Act of 2008 (Act 778), Article 5 captures ‘Inclusive Education’ and states that design’ and ‘infrastructure’ of schools need to be disability friendly. Parents should take a child with a disability to school. And the last provision is a definition of ‘Inclusive Education’, which speaks of a value system that holds that all persons who attend an educational facility should have equal access to learning, which transcends the idea of physical location but promotes participation, friendship and interaction (Hayford, 2013).

Ghana Education Service (GES) reported a total enrolment in all special education schools of only 5,654 for the 2007-2008 academic years, less than 1% of those estimated to need services. There may also be over a million students currently enrolled in basic schools across Ghana who have unidentified learning difficulties (Anthony & Kwadade, 2006). Special educational services offered through GES take three main forms: (i) segregated 'special schools,' (ii) segregated 'units' contained onsite with mainstream schools, and (iii) inclusive education. Government special education needs (SEN) services are largely concentrated on basic years' education (Anthony & Kwadade, 2006), in the southern and urban areas of the country like other developing countries (Avoke, 2001).

In Ghana, education of children and youth with disabilities started in 1936 and led to the establishment of a school for the blind at Akropong-Akwapim in 1946. Other schools were built for the students with deafness and intellectual disabilities in the sixties. These schools were mostly segregated. The children grew up with their peers with disabilities and developed a common culture. The schools developed as centres of excellence. There was concentration of expertise on specific impairments and student-teacher ratio enabled each child to have more attention. On the other side of those provisions, the schools were usually not available in the child's immediate environment. The expertise was only available for a small group of children. The cost of special education per child remained too high. Nowadays, however, governments are recognizing the need to develop a more affordable system which provides quality education for all children, hence inclusive education. In the light of these global development, and since Ghana was a participant at the Salamanca and Dakar Conferences, the Ministry of Education has pursued those rights, and in its Education Strategic Plan of 2003–2015, hence the Ghana Education Service adopted inclusive education.

UNESCO (2009) elaborates on how an inclusive education system should be conducted by stating that: An 'inclusive' education system can only be formed if normal schools become more inclusive. This is to say, if they improve at educating all children in their communities. The Conference proclaimed that: 'regular schools with an inclusive direction are the most active means of fighting discriminatory attitudes, building welcoming societies, establishing an inclusive society and attaining education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to many children and improve competence and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the whole education system.'

Hayford, (2013) defines inclusive education as a process of increasing the participation of all students in schools including those with disabilities. It is about restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality. According to Hayford, inclusive education concept focuses on those groups who, in the past, had been excluded from educational opportunities. These groups include children living in poverty, those from ethnic and linguistic minorities, girls (in some societies), children from remote areas, those with disabilities or other special educational needs, and children who are gifted and talented. The latter are often the most marginalized, both within education and society in general.

Mmbaga, (2002) argues that inclusive education needs to be part of the whole school equal opportunity policy; in this case children with learning difficulties, girls' and boys' learning needs would be incorporated into the curriculum and the school-learning environment. According to Idol (2006), inclusion means that students with special needs attend general school programmes and are enrolled in age-appropriate classes for 100% of their schooling. UNESCO (2009) puts inclusive education as a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. Mmbaga (2002) gives some of the elements of inclusive education. Customary education was always being inculcated in the process of socialization, child rearing, formal/informal/non formal learning facilitated by parents, siblings, peers, elders, community leaders, artist and artisans and experts in such areas as language and oratory arbitrary and legal issues, health, plants, metallurgy, astronomy and military science in fact by any adult. The process was non-discriminatory, functional and took place in and was relevant to the local community. These are also the current indicators of inclusive education. According to Westwood and Graham (2003) an inclusive school should have the following characteristics: the use of adaptation of teaching and learning materials, flexible curriculum, supportive methodologies to students with learning barriers, proper organization of the classes, examination system and friendly physical environment and infrastructure. Furthermore, Ballard's stresses some factors to be fixed in inclusive education that, education needs to be non-discriminatory in terms of disability, culture and gender, it should involve all in the community with no exceptions, students should have equal rights to access the culturally valued curriculum as full time appropriate regular classroom and there should be an emphasis on diversity rather than assimilation (Westwood & Graham, 2003).

Education is a fundamental right of every child. Some children experience difficulties in school, ranging from problems with concentration, learning, language, and perception to problems with behavior and/or making

and keeping friends. Regular education is designed to meet the needs of average learners. Children with disabilities may not profit fully from the regular classroom experiences. Due to the inclusion movement in education, students with disabilities are attending public school with typically developing peers. These students are also attending general education classes together. In the past, students with disabilities were taught in separate classrooms, and in some cases separate schools. The transition to inclusive education has not been easy for these two diverse groups of students, both academically and socially. For many reasons, students with disabilities have socialization issues. Many have behavior problems or act inappropriately in social situations which calls for effective behavioral management strategies by teachers. These types of behaviors are disconcerting to typically developing children who do not have experience interacting with individuals with disabilities. This can make having peers with disabilities in the classroom an uncomfortable experience for many students. This experience can be equally uncomfortable for students with disabilities who are lonely and depressed because they are unable to make friends in their classes. Many of these students do not understand why they have so much trouble socializing. Unfortunately, they do understand what it feels like to be rejected. The emotional pain from rejection and friendlessness can have damaging consequences on the psychosocial development of children. These consequences can perpetuate throughout adolescence and into adulthood. In view of this, the study seeks to investigate teachers' behavioural management strategies that are useful for learners with intellectual disability. However, due to increasing demands on teachers to raise achievement scores on statewide testing, little time remains to provide social skills instruction. Life skills and social skills training programs have been placed on the backburner in special education and have been replaced with an emphasis on raising test scores. While student academic achievement is a crucial component of special education, behavioral management, life skills and social skills training are areas that are necessary to promote a healthy and successful life after the school years are over.

Inclusion provides opportunities for the development of appropriate attitudes towards people with a range of disabilities. Exposure to students of all types on a daily basis allows typical students to see that, just like themselves, students with disabilities have strengths and weakness, and good days and bad days (Westwood & Graham, 2003). Research has long established that changing attitudes towards people with disabilities requires, both, information about these disabilities and experience with people with disabilities (Bandy & Boyer, 1994). Inclusion facilitates both of these requirements. With the appropriate supports in place, students with

intellectual disabilities can achieve a high quality of life in many different aspects. Curriculum and instruction must be carefully modified to help these students reach their potential in both academics and other functional areas such as independent living. While these students will have limitations in many adaptive behaviors, these limitations will co-exist alongside strengths in other areas within the individual. Independence and self-reliance should always be primary goals of all instructional strategies employed with students with intellectual disabilities. People with intellectual disabilities (ID) have a wide range of needs and most exhibit behavioral problems. Training them to overcome the limitations in adaptive behaviour is the primary aim of any individual who is working for persons with Intellectual disability. A few of them also have problem behavioural posing challenges to the educator. A problem or a challenging behaviour in the individual interferes with his acquiring new skills, or strengthening old skills or it interferes in someone else's activities. The behaviour may be harmful to him or may causes harm or disrespect to others. If the problem behaviour occurs more frequently or for longer period of time or is very severe in nature, then those do require management. It is important to manage problem behaviours in children because problem behaviours may interfere with learning, social acceptance, harm the child or others and at severe level they contribute to the burden of care-giving and also institutionalization. To be successful in an inclusive settings intellectually disabled students need to demonstrate classroom behaviours that are consistent with teacher's demands and expectations and that promote socializations with peers (Kauffman, Lloyd, & McGee, 1989).

Access to Inclusive Education for Children with special needs

The marginalization and the exclusion of children with disabilities from educational systems across the world education forum was in April 2000 and it was so aptly captured in the statement. The key challenge is to ensure that a broad vision of Education for all as an inclusive concept is reflected in national, government, and funding agency policies. Education for all must take account of the need for the poor and most disadvantaged. Young people and adult affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health, and those with special learning needs. The turning point for all countries to value the need for education for those with disabilities has taken place. The fundamental right basic education and addressing the imbalances of the past by focusing on the key issues of access, equity and redress have been echoed. Endorsing the framework, for action on special needs education, it was proclaimed further that:

- Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.
- Every child has unique characteristics, interest, abilities and learning needs.
- Education system should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs.

The philosophy of inclusive education does not simply refer to the placement of children with special needs into regular schools but it is also concerned with the condition under which all can be educated effectively. The goal is nothing less than the inclusion of the world's children in schools and the reform of the school system to make their possible.

Benefits of Inclusive Education

Avoke, (2005) the benefits of inclusive education are numerous for both students with and without disabilities.

Benefits of Inclusion for Students with disabilities

1. Friendships
2. Increased social initiations, relationships and networks
3. Peer role models for academic, social and behavior skills
4. Increased achievement of goals
5. Greater access to general curriculum
6. Enhanced skill acquisition and generalization
7. Increased inclusion in future environments
8. Greater opportunities for interactions
9. Higher expectations
10. Increased school staff collaboration
11. Increased parent participation
12. It affords them the sense of belonging to the diverse human family
13. It provides the opportunity to be educated with same community peers.
14. Provides a diverse stimulating environment in which to grow and learn
15. Friendships

Benefits of inclusion for students without disabilities

1. Meaningful friendships
2. Increased appreciation and acceptance of individual differences
3. Increased understanding and acceptance of diversity
4. Respect for all people
5. Prepares all students for adult life in an inclusive society
6. Opportunities to master activities by practicing and teaching others
7. Greater academic outcomes
8. All student's needs are better met, greater resources for everyone
9. Provides the opportunity to understand why diversity in human learning and behaviours
10. Appreciate diversity of individual's uniqueness and differences.

For the regular classroom teacher

- a. Create avenue for the need of individualization of teaching method
- b. Appreciate diversity in children's learning and behaviours.

For general education administrators and other authorities

- a. Provide opportunities to understand the complex nature of school system
- b. Appreciate frustrations and concerns of teachers.

For the general society

- a. Promotes the civil right of an individual
- b. Support social value of equality
- c. Teachers socialization and collaborative.

Researches that focus on negative effects of inclusion have not been given much attention. Friendships are an important foundation in the inclusive classroom. Aside from being physically included in the curriculum and day-to-day activities, a child with special needs also needs to genuinely feel included. This feeling of inclusion stems from a sense of belonging and relating to other children in the class. The sense of emotional well-being and stability derived from friendships allows students to be more receptive and open to learning new concepts as suggested by recent research in the field of neuroscience. SENCO and teachers play an essential

role in creating and maintaining the friendships amongst the students in the inclusive classroom. This is done in several different ways:

1. Identify Interests

By identifying the various interests of the class, the teacher has taken one of the first steps to helping the students identify with one another. Allowing the students to express their interests through discussion, surveys, games, and school clubs also help them discover other students who are like-minded.

2. Highlight Strengths

Regardless of academic ability level, each student has strengths and skill sets that teachers recognize and highlight. By doing so, students feel valued and confident amongst his/her classmates. For example, a student who does not excel in math may be an exceptionally talented soccer player. Teachers highlight student strengths during class discussions, projects, and leadership opportunities.

3. Emphasize Social Skills

In addition to creating classrooms where students feel welcomed and friendships are encouraged, there is an effort to maintain these friendships. This is often done by embedding a social skills component in the curriculum. Within this curriculum, students are taught skills such as how to communicate and problem-solve. In addition, there are activities scheduled in the day when the students are encouraged to use their social skills such as during a class meeting or group discussions.

4. Provide Opportunities

Above all, teachers provide students with opportunities within the school day to create and maintain friendships. Despite the heavy emphasis on academics in today's education system, students have the chance to be social with one another. Allowing time in the early grades for centers, giving older students group projects, or designing lessons, which encourage student interaction all facilitate connections and relationships amongst one another.

5. Parent Fostering Friendships in inclusive education

Parents know that having friends is one of the most rewarding aspects of a child's life. Parents of children with disabilities want their children to be loved, feel a sense of belonging, and share similar experiences with their siblings and other children. Research supports what parents have always known – that friendships are

beneficial to children. Friendships boost a child's social competence, self-esteem, and confidence. Friendships support social, emotional, and intellectual development. Having a good friend means sharing fun times and difficult times. A good friend can offer comfort and connection through words, gestures, or silence. A group of friends can provide a wonderful and important opportunity for a child to fit in and to be accepted.

Children with disabilities may need extra support from adults to play and make friends. Sometimes children with disabilities are at risk of having social interactions only with adults who are paid to be with them (such as teachers, therapists, and doctors). All children need to play and interact with other children. Parents, caregivers and teachers can play a key role in teaching young children how to make friends with children with and without disabilities. Although some friendships develop naturally, it is important to teach children specific social skills and provide many different kinds of opportunities for friendships to develop.

Teacher's Preparation in Teaching Children with special needs in the Regular Classroom

Teacher's preparedness for children who are visually handicapped has been influenced by many factors. These factors include leadership of outstanding people, changes in regular education, the number and types handicapping conditions of visually handicapped children entering regular schools, state and federal legislation required equal opportunities for promoting inclusive system of education for all children in the society.

➤ **Knowledge of instructional strategies;**

Instructional strategies/ materials are basically materials that appeal to the sense of sight, touch and hearing. They can also be materials that can produce sounds like the bell balls; the main importance is that it helps children to discriminate from sounds in terms of pitch loudness or rhythm. These materials can also serve as toys which can engage the children in purposeful play leading to learning with understanding through the sounds (Ocloo, 2011)

➤ **Knowledge of the roles and ability to work with other specialists, agencies and appropriate organizations to provide services for children with visual impairment (Bhan, 2012).** The wide variation in teaching roles requires not only a knowledge of regular education and special education as it relates to the Visual Impairment comparative autonomy handicapped child, but administrative and organizational skills as well. Teachers of visually handicapped children and youth can choose to, as in an itinerant programmer for a close historical educational experience, as in residential school setting or a specific- contained

class. This varied setting provides teachers with an opportunity to develop a variety of skills in team teaching, management, community organization and public education for children with special needs.

- Teachers' preparation in teaching children with Visual Impairments should aim at providing the necessary modifications which include adaptation to give the children skills which will eventually help them to acquire the necessary skills essential for becoming fully functional, fully participating members of the society. In preparing teaching aids for children with Visual Impairments, it is necessary for the teacher to remember some of the skills which were useful to the pupils, example concreteness of experiences, self- activity and learning by doing, additional stimulation that will build the confidence of the Visual Impairments children in the regular classroom (Ocloo, 2011). A teacher should know that through the interaction with Teaching and Learning. It is through play with teaching aids that motivate and organizes activity to explore and handle learning materials. Scholl (1986) stated the purposeful play is the key to learning with understanding for all categories of pupils. The predictions of teacher's role cannot rely on theoretical role expectation but must be complemented by observation of teacher's actual behavior.

Strategies for Managing Children with disabilities in the Regular Classroom

Managing children with special needs in the regular classroom is a skill every regular teacher is supposed to have. This is because many some children with special needs find themselves in the regular classroom (Ocloo, 2011). He further contents that it is because regular classroom privies them with education in the least restrictive environment. To manage these children in the regular classroom, Lownefeld (1974) and Best (1992) suggest the following management procedures; choice of seating, management in class, special Teaching and Learning Materials.

To decide on where a child would be in the classroom, Ocloo (2011) suggest that the child should first be consulted. This is because how individuals see differs from one person to another. No two people can see in the same way. Therefore, the child should be allowed to sit at where he or she will fill comfortable during teaching and learning process. For instance, a child with restricted vision can see better when he or she is allowed to sit at a bit far away from the chalk board. He can be positioned at the middle of the classroom to enable him or her direct the head to any position he or she wishes. This aims at familiarizing the child with where all

important things in the classroom can be located. Ocloo et al. (2002) stated that the child should have good spatial concept of the physical space in the classroom.

Orientation will occur more smoothly if the teacher introduces sequentially, perhaps adding one or two new locations a day. School (1986) expressed that persons with Visual Impaired will not have any problem since the chairs in the classroom have boundaries in the classroom. This will prevent them from bumping into objects. Using special teaching methods in regular classroom is another strategy suggested by Best (1992). Ferrel, (1996) said that taking into consideration the importance of the visual clues for learning, it is now being recognized that children with visual impaired need time to put together linked jumbles of incidents; indeed, some need deliberate teaching. To redeem these children from experiencing difficulty in reading from the chalkboard, the teacher may need to verbalize whatever he or she writes or does in class which is necessary for the pupils to know. Ferrel further suggested that the teacher should ensure that his writings on the chalkboard appears legible and bold enough to ensure easy reading.

The last strategy suggested by Best (1992) to manage children with special needs in the regular classroom is that children should be encouraged to use many special materials which will assist them in learning (Ocloo, 2011). Some of these children will need to use ordinary print, a close circuit television, and large optical devices such as prisms, and lenses in spectacles or specially programmed computers such as personal readers. Rather, they are an individualized educational tool which provides access to regular prints for those who can benefit from them.

Social Integration of Children with Special Needs in the Regular Classroom

Even though many children with visual impairment find themselves in the regular classroom, little on the promotion of social integration is considered. Morris (2001) acknowledges that while education policy both in terms of school age children and further and higher education is now more motivated by a philosophy of integration, there is very little recognition of the steps necessary for disabled children which visual impairment individuals are of no exception and young people genuinely mix with their peer group. Morris (2001) research findings revealed that disabled people are not being listened to whenever they intend to advocate for their right. They are also neglected as far as making friends is concerned. That is nobody wants to make friends with them. The report also reveals that they also find it difficult to do the kind of things non- disabled people of their age do and they are being made to fill that they have no contribution socially. Children with visual impairments are

relegated to the background. However, according to Morris, there are few directly concerned with how schools and teachers might support and help young people with visual impairments develop their social skills in competency. Best, (1992) claimed that the child's self-concept is largely a product of his interaction with others, as he expresses his ideas and thoughts and when he receives feedback from other individuals in the community or at school. But there appears to be increasing recognition that some children with visual impairment develop slower than others and may follow a different sequence of development with unusual behaviours being learnt in different order (Ferrel, 1996).

The consequences of not fitting in or good about being in school can affect many different areas of life such as friendships, academic achievements, self-esteem and feelings of well-being (Lewis & Doorlag, 2011). A study by Awini (2015) revealed that the some of the important factors relating to what makes a good integrated school all related to social interpersonal aspect of school life; A teacher who really listens and classmates who do not bully or tease. Kekellis, (1992) elaborated on this idea and suggested that if integration of students who are visually impaired is to be optimized, classroom teachers must consider social interactions a top priority.

The role of the classroom teacher was also highlighted by Vaughn, Bos, and Schumm, (1997) who discussed the integration of children with disabilities and the role of the classroom teacher as orchestrating a positive social climate in the classroom by providing a model of acceptance, understanding and social support, knowledge and confidence to take on this responsibility. For that matter, there is the need for better awareness and training for teachers in regular schools about the needs of vision impairment pupils.

Behavioural Improvement Intervention in Special Education.

Pupils with special needs have a wide range of needs and most exhibit behavioral problems. Around 7-15% of pupils with special needs have severely challenging behavioral problems. (WHO, 2014). The nature and severity of these behavioral problems vary with the degree of Pupils with special needs. In children with pupils with special needs, the social environment in which they live and interact also shapes their behavior. Having a child with special needs is stressful for families and the child's behavioral problems can create additional stress and frustration for parents and caretakers. Furthermore, behavioral problems also impede the child's learning in a number of settings, including at school and at home. Many children with special needs are isolated from their peers and are therefore deprived of interaction and play because of their behavioral issues. This isolation limits their opportunities to learn through observation and interaction with other children. Due to a lack of awareness

and knowledge, such behavioral problems are mistakenly considered manifestations of mental illness. However, in individuals with special needs, behavioral problems do increase the likelihood of mental illness and can lead to serious life-threatening situations if not treated. (Kauffman, Lioyd, & McGee, 1989)

Managing behavioral problems is a major concern in the comprehensive rehabilitation of people with pupils with special needs. Children with special needs that attend schools receive some form of behavioral management, irrespective of the nature of school (special or regular). Insufficient awareness, misinformation, malpractice and social issues negatively affect the management of behavioral problems in children with special needs. In the absence of institutional support, teachers and parents apply various methods of handling such behavioral problems. According to the principles of behavior modification, children's undesired behaviors get stronger and more when behavior management involves inconsistent or inadequate reinforcement. There is an unmet need for studies that focus on behavioral interventions for children with special needs that live in low- and middle-income countries such as Ghana. For example, we do not yet know which Pupils with special needs benefit more from behavioral intervention or if there is any relationship between a child's intelligence quotient (IQ) (a child who has children with special needs and their behavioral improvement after an intervention.

Teaching Strategies for Pupils with Special Needs

To fully address the limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior often experienced by individuals with intellectual disabilities, teachers need to provide direct instruction in a number of skill areas outside of the general curriculum. These skills are more functional in nature but are absolutely essential for the future independence of the individual. Additional skill areas include money concepts, time concepts, independent living skills, self-care and hygiene, community access, leisure activities, and vocational training. Students with intellectual disabilities learn these skills most effectively in the settings or activities in which they will be asked to apply these skills. Once the skills are mastered, then additional environments can be added to work towards generalization.

General curriculum areas should not be neglected however, and there are some promising practices to help support these students in a number of academic areas. One effective early literacy strategy with these students is paralinguistic milieu teaching (Patton, 2005) of the individual child. This language acquisition instructional strategy also helps support effective self-determination, as a key component of the training is frequent requesting behavior from the student. Breaking down larger tasks into their specific component parts

can be an effective technique for teaching any number of skills to students with intellectual disabilities. More complex concepts or activities can then be taught over time, and as the student masters one component of the task, another is added to the routine. This type of task analysis can be taught using a variety of instructional supports, from physical and verbal prompting to observational learning. As always, the specific instructional strategies and materials used with the student should be aligned to the student's own interests and strengths.

Useful strategies for teaching students with intellectual disabilities include, but are not limited to, the following techniques:

- Teach one concept or activity component at a time
- Teach one step at a time to help support memorization and sequencing
- Teach students in small groups, or one-on-one, if possible
- Always provide multiple opportunities to practice skills in a number of different settings
- Use physical and verbal prompting to guide correct responses, and provide specific verbal praise to reinforce these responses

Using Educational Technology to Assist Children with Special Needs

The use of real materials or actual tools in natural environments is an essential component in the effective instruction of students with pupils with special needs. Although these materials would be labeled as “low tech” teaching resources, they serve to both motivate the student and facilitate generalization to multiple environments. An example of this type of technology would be the use of manipulatives or concrete objects for a math lesson. Teachers should keep in mind that students with intellectual disabilities in inclusive classrooms also benefit from using the same materials as the rest of the students whenever possible. In other words, a high school student would use a calculator to work math problems whereas an elementary student may be more likely to use counting blocks. There are a number of existing software packages designed to support students with special needs in the classroom. One promising approach in literacy software utilizes universal design for learning principles. This approach combines reading for meaning with direct instruction for decoding and understanding. The resulting software consists of an audio and video-based curriculum that can be adjusted by the teacher to meet the specific academic capacities of the student.

Ultimately, any learning software that can tailor content to address the interests of the student can be useful in supporting learning with individuals with intellectual disabilities, given that the instruction can be adapted to meet the needs of the individual. One such strategy is to break down learning tasks into small steps. Each learning task is introduced, one step at a time. This avoids overwhelming the student. Once the student has mastered one step, the next step is introduced. This is a progressive, step-wise, learning approach. It is characteristic of many learning models. The only difference is the number and size of the sequential steps.

A second strategy is to modify the teaching approach. Lengthy verbal directions and abstract lectures are ineffective teaching methods for most audiences. Most people are kinesthetic learners. This means they learn best by performing a task "hands-on." This is in contrast to thinking about performing it in the abstract. A hands-on approach is particularly helpful for students with special needs. They learn best when information is concrete and observed. For example, there are several ways to teach the concept of gravity. Teachers can talk about gravity in the abstract. They can describe the force of gravitational pull. Second, teachers could demonstrate how gravity works by dropping something. Third, teachers can ask students directly experience gravity by performing an exercise. The students might be asked to jump up and down, or to drop a pen. Most students retain more information from experiencing gravity firsthand. This concrete experience of gravity is easier to understand than abstract explanations.

Third, pupils with special needs do best in learning environments where visual aids are used. This might include charts, pictures, and graphs. These visual tools are also useful for helping students to understand what behaviors are expected of them. For instance, using charts to map students' progress is very effective. Charts can also be used as a means of providing positive reinforcement for appropriate, on-task behavior.

A fourth teaching strategy is to provide direct and immediate feedback. Individuals with special needs require immediate feedback. This enables them to make a connection between their behavior and the teacher's response. A delay in providing feedback makes it difficult to form connection between cause and effect. As a result, the learning point may be missed.

Collaborative Planning and Teaching for Special Education Needs Coordinators Teachers

No classroom is an island, especially an inclusive classroom. Opening up your room to service providers, paraprofessionals, special education teachers, and parents gives you valuable opportunities to participate in

collaborative teaching. Collaborative teaching looks differently depending on what school, level, and setting you are working. Collaborative teaching must be encouraged and celebrated in school. Teachers can have common planning times for collaborative teaching, which spans grade levels and subject areas.

Develop a strong behaviour management plan

Having a successful inclusive classroom depends upon having control of your classroom. It is essential to have clearly communicated expectations and goals that are accessible to all students. Your classroom environment should be tailored to better suit diverse students' needs. Some specific behaviour management strategies that support effective instruction are:

- Posting daily schedules
- Displaying classroom rules and expectations
- Encouraging peer to peer instruction and leadership
- Using signals to quiet down, start working, and putting away materials.
- Giving students folders, labels and containers to organize supplies.
- Checking in with students while they work
- Utilizing proactive rather than reactive interventions as needed
- Speaking to students privately about any concerns
- Employing specific, targeted positive reinforcement when a student meets a behavioral or academic goal.

Positive reinforcement:

Positive reinforcement is to reinforce the child positively every time he learns a new skill, or performs or practices a known skill. It is a great way to motivate children with intellectual disabilities. Use reinforcements that are appropriate for the child. These are just a few effective teaching strategies for students with intellectual disabilities. The best way to teach, however, is to understand the child, understand his abilities and his needs. From there comes the natural selection of strategies and methods that fit him or her.

Praise and encouragement are the building blocks of emotional and social development for all children, regardless of their special need or disability. A child with special needs might often exhibit signs of intentional misbehavior or a disrespectful attitude, or have a physical setback that prevents them from learning in a traditional manner. These attributes can lead to frustration, anger, tension and emotional outbursts from both

you and your child, which why it's of utmost importance to remember that your child did not ask for these educational roadblocks; they are the product of unforeseen circumstance, and not the problem of the child themselves.

Specific examples of positive reinforcement are:

• **Rewarding good behaviour** – This strategy is as simple in planning and execution as it sounds. Letting your child with special needs know when their behaviour is acceptable is a great way to subtly implement a good cycle of praise and encouragement. Your child will learn that good work gets rewarded, while negative or “naughty” actions don't receive the same type of attention and gratification as the other. After a certain goal is reached for the day/week/month, reward the child. Find the reward that displeases the child's curiosity, and let them know how much you appreciate their working towards a specific achievement.

• **Using your words and actions** – A bright smile, an encouraging pat on the back or a quick hug goes a long way in letting the child with special needs know you care about their work and development, and gives them a needed boost of confidence each time. Try incorporating phrases like, “Great job!” or “That was a really good effort!” into your language as positive indicators of good actions. It's often the intangible things we remember later on in life, and small gestures can go a long way.

• **Making it fun** – If there is one sure way to engage a child's interest while positively reinforcing a behavior or action, it's through fun! When you take the aspect of learning being “work” out of the environment, you can help the child with special needs learn in a fun and engaging manner that doesn't seem hard at all. There is a multitude of board games, books and interactive software to help you accomplish these goals, or you can make your own learning games at home, should you be so inclined. No matter what constitutes fun for your child, there is a way to keep learning fresh and light.

• **Spending some one-on-one time** children who experience positive reinforcement on a regular basis flourish in a number of educational and social areas. Once some while teachers must structure their day to include at least twenty minutes of personal time with ID learners, listening to their frustrations, concerns and achievements. Children are eager to have their world and experiences recognized by those they love, and personal attention shows them a positive example of how to treat others. They will feel more confident about interacting with social groups, and build the self-esteem needed to succeed in school and life.

A child with special needs perceives the world differently than we do, which might be a difficult concept to grasp for those who are not afflicted in that particular way, so keep in mind that positive reinforcement despite the situation is the difference between scoring a win or suffering from a loss.

Types of Positive Reinforcement

There are clear and definable definitions for each stage of reinforcement.

- **Primary reinforcers** are the tangible rewards for good behavior such as an ice cream treat, or new book. These are the main rewards for positive outcomes.

- **Secondary reinforcers** are the ones that are learned, like verbal praise and social recognition and, when coupled with primary positive reinforcement, can be a powerful combination to getting the desired results.

- **Intrinsic reinforcement** means the child will start to evaluate themselves and their own behavior, and reward themselves in some manner without outside reinforcement. As this is not always possible for a child with special needs, it's important to use as many primary and secondary reinforcers as necessary to get the desired results.

Alternatively, special education tutoring is rapidly growing in popularity among those parents searching for additional tools and resources to help their child reach their excellence. Special Education Resource focuses on molding the curriculum your child is already learning in a way that makes it easier based on their specific learning needs. A child with special needs has unique talents and abilities that need to be celebrated, not judged, in order for them to feel not only good about themselves but their accomplishments, as well. A kind word, small physical gesture or token of appreciation teaches a lot more than momentary gratification for a job well done. You are teaching the building blocks of life.

Chaining

Chaining is the process of breaking a task into its small steps and teaching them in a sequential manner. It is usually used to teach daily living skills and life skills. For example, we first teach a child to hold a pant with two hands, then we teach him to hold it and bring it down to his legs. Next we teach him to hold it, bring it down to his legs, and put one leg inside. This process is called forward chaining. Backward chaining is when you teach the child the last step first. We do the activity of the child and let the child do the last step on his own. Then we do the activity till the second last step. In this way the child does more and more of the activity and we do less till the child can do the whole activity on his own.

Group learning

Group learning is one of the most effective teaching strategies for students with intellectual disabilities. It is when you bring children together in a group to teach various skills. Children often do better when they are in a group. Behavior difficulties are less, and children motivate each other. The only difficulty in group learning is that you need enough hands to help children learn together

Play-based learning

Play-based learning is when we use play activities to teach cognitive skills. For example, if a child is playing with cars, we sit with the child and start playing too. While playing we use statements like “can I play with the red car? Can you give it to me?” In this way we teach skills to the child while he or she is playing.

Baby steps

Children with intellectual disabilities need to learn through baby steps. Every task, skill or activity needs to be broken down into small baby steps. The child is taught one small step at a time. Slowly, he or she learns to combine these baby steps to learn a bigger concept. For example, we will not teach the concept of red color in one day, we will first teach sorting red, then matching red, then identifying red, then naming red and finally generalizing red. In this way try to break up every skill into small baby steps.

Hands-on learning

Hands-on learning is the process of using activities and other hands-on tasks to teach skills. All children and especially children with intellectual impairments learn best through this process. An example would be to do science experiments to learn science concepts. Another idea is to use play dough and make letter shapes to learn letters. Hands-on learning is also a great way to learn math.

Other promising teaching strategies and approaches may include

- Early identification and intervention. Early intervention is key to implementing successful teaching strategies for pupils with intellectual disabilities (Fraser, 1998).
- Involvement of parents and families in a collaborative partnership.
- Collaborative working with other agencies in a child centred approach. This is particularly important since support services may have differing foci on the form and purpose of the intervention they envisage (Wright and Kersner 1998; Law, Lindsay, Peacey, Gascoigne, Soloff, Radford, & Band, 2001)

- Teaching approaches that adopt additional (visual) reinforcement strategies to supplement verbal instruction.
- An emphasis on teaching language and cognitive process, and the strategies needed for effective generalization through varying degrees of structure designed to match the child's needs (Adams and Conti-Ramsden, 1995).

Beyond these general conclusions, there is some benefit in considering the approaches to teaching the three sub-groups identified within this strand separately, since there is some evidence suggesting that the needs of the children in each of these groups will likely be best addressed by different means. Some promising teaching approaches and strategies for each of the three groups are provided below:

Behavioural Patterns among Disabled and Nondisabled Students

The attitudes of typically developing students toward students with disabilities are becoming a heavily researched topic due to the momentum of the inclusion movement in education. These attitudes can have life-long impacts on children with disabilities. Negative attitudes can have damaging consequences for students with disabilities, such as loneliness, few friendships, and the potential for becoming victims of bullying (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2012). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2014), the number of children receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) comprises approximately 13% of all public school students. The U.S. Department of Education stated further that students with specific learning disabilities account for about 36% of all students receiving services, which is higher than any other type of disability.

Also, the percentage of students with disabilities who spend at least 80% of the school day in general education classes is about 60%, a figure that has doubled in size since 1990. These statistics reflect the growing trend of inclusive education in the United States. Research has consistently shown that there are multiple factors that affect the attitudes of typically developing children toward students with disabilities. Children younger in age tend to hold more positive attitudes while older children express more negative feelings (Tang, Davis, Wu, & Oliver, 2000). Gender also plays a role, as girls have been found to be more positive than boys (de Boer et al., 2012) explained that students with behavior problems are more likely to garner negative attitudes from peers.

However, all students with disabilities do not exhibit negative attitudes. Ladd and Troop-Gordon (2010) found that children who are aggressive are likely to be friendless and experience rejection from peers, as well

as victimization. Both outcomes can lead to internalizing and externalizing psychological problems (Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2003).

A (2011) study by Litvack, Ritchie, and Shore examined the attitudes of high and average achieving students, as well as students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom, toward disability. The study yielded interesting results. Based on the finding that 16.7% of the students (10 out of the 60 participants) were not aware of any classmates having disabilities, the researchers inferred that students with disabilities that are not visibly noticeable may be perceived as lazy, inept, or disruptive. Litvack et al. found that 50% (15) of the high achieving students participating in the study reported learning less because of the presence of students with disabilities in their class. The following quote from a high-achieving male student in the study describes the frustrations many gifted students experience in inclusive classrooms:

It's kind of annoying if you really understand...and you have to wait for everybody else to learn it and [the teacher] already repeated it seven times...If you get bored, you don't really want to pay attention and you might start going down in school. (Litvack et al., 2011, p. 483)

Children with disabilities may have more difficulty than nondisabled peers developing and sustaining friendships (Reed, McIntyre, Dusek, & Quintero, 2011). Solish, Perry, and Minnes (2010) explained that delays in motor, cognitive, language, communication, perceptual, and/or social skills could be contributing factors. Reed et al. (2011) found that disabled students were less likely to be nominated as a first choice to sit with at lunch, play with at recess, or be a part of a small cooperative group. Another contributing factor to this problem is that students with disabilities may have fewer opportunities to interact with typically developing peers. Children with disabilities are generally less involved with recreational activities outside of school time (Solish et al., 2010). Extra-curricular activities, such as sports or clubs, are an excellent avenue for children to develop and maintain friendships. Since children with disabilities generally do not participate in outside of school activities there are less opportunities for interactions with typically developing peers. According to Smith-D'Arezzo (2003), students' perceptions of peers with disabilities is linked with exposure (or lack thereof) to family members with disabilities.

Stainback, Stainback, East, and Sapon-Shevin (1994) acknowledge that the practice of inclusion can have an impact on the ability of students with disabilities to develop a positive self-identity. Stainback et al. (1994) contended that:

the goal of inclusion is to create a community in which all children work and learn together and develop mutually supportive repertoires of peer support, the goal has never been to become oblivious to children's individual differences (pp. 486-487).

Schools must therefore embrace individual differences among students and provide an environment conducive for all students to develop positive self-identities (Stainback & et al., 1994).

Behavioural Management Strategies for Special Education needs Coordinators and Education

People with intellectual disabilities (ID) have a wide range of needs and most exhibit behavioral problems. Around 7-15% of people with ID have severely challenging behavioral problems. (WHO, 2014). The nature and severity of these behavioral problems vary with the degree of ID. In children with ID, the social environment in which they live and interact also shapes their behavior. Having a child with ID is stressful for families and the child's behavioral problems can create additional stress and frustration for parents and caretakers. Furthermore, behavioral problems also impede the child's learning in a number of settings, including at school and at home. Many children with ID are sometimes isolated from their peers and are therefore deprived of interaction and play because of their behavioral issues. This isolation limits their opportunities to learn through observation and interaction with other children. Due to a lack of awareness and knowledge, such behavioral problems are mistakenly considered manifestations of mental illness. However, in people with ID, behavioral problems do increase the likelihood of mental illness and can lead to serious life-threatening situations if not treated. (Kauffman, Lloyd, & McGee, 1989)

Managing behavioral problems is a major concern in the comprehensive rehabilitation of people with ID. Children with ID that attend schools receive some form of behavioral management, irrespective of the nature of school (special or regular). Insufficient awareness, misinformation, malpractice and social issues negatively affect the management of behavioral problems in children with ID. In the absence of institutional support, teachers and parents apply various methods of handling such behavioral problems. According to the principles of behavior modification, children's undesired behaviors get stronger and more when behavior management involves inconsistent or inadequate reinforcement. There is an unmet need for studies that focus on behavioral interventions for children with ID that live in low- and middle-income countries such as Ghana for example, we do not yet know which ID benefit more from behavioral intervention or if there is any relationship between a child's intelligence quotient (IQ) (a child who has ID) and their behavioral improvement after an intervention.

These behavioral management strategies can be considered by educators:

- Model desired behaviors, and clearly identify what behaviors you expect in the classroom.
- Use behavior contracts or token economies if necessary.
- Ensure consistency of rules and routine.
- Reinforce desirable behaviors that serve as alternatives to inappropriate behaviors.
- Ensure that the student knows the day's schedule at the start of each day and can reference schedule throughout day.
- Have a "hands to yourself" rule to respect personal space of all students.
- Ensure understanding of all assignments and tasks (and materials needed).
- Ensure consistency of expectations among all staff.
- Create a structured environment with predictable routines.
- Create a visual / picture schedule with daily routine.
- Allow students opportunities to move during instruction.
- Use visual organizers to help the student evaluate appropriate alternatives to maladaptive behavior.
- Create a "calming area" or a "sensory area."
- Explicitly teach and practice coping, calming strategies.
- When dealing with conflict, explain what happened in as few words as possible and use a calm, not-angry voice.
- Point out consequences of the student's behavior.
- Brainstorm better choice(s) with students.
- Use language to describe feelings and experiences.
- Explain your reasons for limits and rules in language that students can understand.
- Model the benefits involved in cooperating.
- Use natural consequences when possible to reinforce cause and effect involved in a rule, request, or limit
- Use short and simple sentences to ensure understanding.
- Repeat instructions or directions frequently.
- Ask student if further clarification is necessary.
- Keep distractions and transitions to a minimum.

- Teach specific skills whenever necessary.
- Provide an encouraging and supportive learning environment.
- Use alternative instructional strategies and alternative assessment methods.
- Explicitly teach organizational skills.
- Keep conversations as normal as possible for inclusion with peers.
- Teach the difference between literal and figurative language.
- Direct student's attention to critical differences when teaching concepts.
- Remove distractions that may keep student from attending.
- Increase difficulty of tasks over time.
- Teach student decision-making rules for discriminating important from unimportant details.
- Use strategies for remembering such as elaborative rehearsal and clustering information together.
- Use strategies such as chunking, backward shaping (teach the last part of a skill first), forward shaping, and role modeling.
- Use mnemonics (words, sentences, pictures, devices, or techniques for improving or strengthening memory).
- Intermix high probability tasks (easier tasks) with lower probability tasks (more difficult tasks).
- Use concrete items and examples to explain new concepts.
- Do not overwhelm a student with multiple or complex instructions.
- Be explicit about what it is you want the student to do.
- Do not assume that the student will perform the same way today as they did yesterday.
- Ask student for input about how they learn best, and help them to be in control of their learning.
- Put all skills in context so there is a purpose for learning certain tasks.
- Involve families and significant others in learning activities.
- Develop a procedure for the student to ask for help (e.g. cue card, raising hand).
- When it appears that a student needs help, discretely ask if you can help.
- Be aware that a student may be treated with medications that could affect performance and processing speed.
- Maintain high yet realistic expectations to encourage social and educational potential.
- Proceed in small ordered steps and review each frequently.

- Emphasize the student's successes.
- Consider alternate activities that would be less difficult for the student, while maintaining the same or similar learning objectives.
- Provide direct instruction in reading skills.
- Offer "standard" print and electronic texts.
- Provide specific and immediate corrective feedback.
- Encourage students to use relaxation and other stress reducing techniques during exams.
- Allow more time for examinations, tests, and quizzes.
- Show what you mean rather than just giving verbal directions.
- Use visual supports when relating new information verbally.
- Provide the student with hands-on materials and experiences.
- Break longer, new tasks into small steps.
- Demonstrate the steps in a task, and have student perform the steps, one at a time.
- Address the student and use a tone of voice consistent with their age.
- Speak directly to the student.
- Avoid long, complex words, technical words, or jargon.
- Ask one question at a time and provide adequate time for student to reply.
- Use heavy visual cues (e.g. objects, pictures, models, or diagrams) to promote understanding.
- Target functional academics that will best prepare student for independent living and vocational contexts.

Reinforcing positive student behaviour

Reinforcement is a stimulus that follows and is contingent upon a behavior and increases the probability of a behavior being repeated. Positive reinforcement can increase the probability of not only desirable behavior but also undesirable behavior. For example, if a student whines to get attention and is successful in getting it, the attention serves as positive reinforcement, which increases the likelihood that the student will continue to whine.

Types of Reinforcers?

Natural and direct reinforcement: This type of reinforcement results directly from the appropriate behavior. For example, interacting appropriately with peers in group activities will lead to more invitations to join such activities. The natural reinforcement for appropriate bids for attention, help, participation, etc. is providing the attention, help and opportunity to participate. The goal should always be to move the student to natural and intrinsic reinforcement.

Social reinforcers: These are reinforcers that are socially mediated by teachers, parents, other adults and peers that express approval and praise for appropriate behavior. Comments (“Good job,” “I can tell you are working really hard,” “You’re nice”), written approval (“Super”), and expressions of approval (nodding your head, smiling, clapping, a pat on the back) are all very effective reinforcers.

Activity reinforcers: Activity reinforcers are very effective and positive for students. Allowing students to participate in preferred activities (such as games, computer time, etc.) is very powerful, especially if part of the reinforcement is being allowed to choose a classmate with whom to participate in the activity. This also provides social reinforcement from the partner.

Tangible reinforcers: This category includes edibles, toys, balloons, stickers and awards. Edibles and toys should be used with caution. Parents may have reason to object to edibles as reinforcement (for example, if a student has a weight problem) and toys can make other students envious. Awards can be in the form of certificates, displaying work and letters home to parents commending the student’s progress. These are powerfully motivating reinforcers.

Token reinforcement: Token reinforcement involves awarding points or tokens for appropriate behaviour. These rewards have little value in themselves but can be exchanged for something of value.

Achieving successful implementation of behavioral management strategies

- Use positive reinforcement-verbal or non-verbal (interactive, token, or activity)-to acknowledge and strengthen *already-existing* behaviors. Avoid attempting to use reinforcement before the desired behavior has occurred. (Strategies to encourage the student to initiate a desired behavior or to intervene a disruptive behavior are presented in elsewhere on this Web site. See links below.)
- Watch for a tendency to use praise to help a student solve a problem or feel good about himself. Flattery can appear manipulative even to a young or needy student. Such messages are superficial at best and will not contribute to the student's genuine sense of self-worth.
- Avoid praising one child (or group) to motivate others. "I like the way Bobby is sitting" only serves to reinforce Bobby (and May, in fact, back-fire if Bobby isn't happy about the attention), promising conditional approval to others when they, too, sit.
- Avoid using teacher approval as a means of reinforcing desired behavior. Learn to distinguish between reinforcers intended to maintain a particular student behavior and genuine expressions of appreciation, affection or enjoyment of your students. In a win-win classroom, behaviors such as a smile, touch, nod or wink—which obviously communicate the fact that the teacher is pleased—are not used as expressions of conditional approval or caring. Although they may sometimes be used as reinforcers, such behaviours may also appear randomly, regardless of the student's performance or behavior, as expressions of appreciation or affection.
- Phrase reinforcements as a recognition, affirmation, or acknowledgement of a behaviour the student has demonstrated and the positive consequences now available (not as "if . . . then" statements, which are more useful for *motivating* behaviour that has not yet been demonstrated).
- Recognition or acknowledgement may be effectively communicated in either oral or written form.
- To reinforce a desirable behavior, first *describe* the behavior that took place. Be specific and concrete and avoid making judgments about the behaviour or the worth of the student.

- Secondly, whenever possible, attach a comment that connects the immediate *benefits* of the student's behavior to the student. Occasionally, it may be appropriate to state the positive outcomes in terms of their benefits to the group. Focus on the payoff for the student, making sure the outcome is positive and meaningful. Avoid projecting your own feelings and values, which may or may not be relevant to those of the student, or suggesting how the student should feel.
- Look for the positive. You can almost always find something to recognize in any performance. Reinforce what was done right and work to correct or improve the rest.
- Perhaps because of the rigidity of roles earlier in our history, there was a tendency for teachers to recognize certain behaviors in boys (such as strength, mechanical skill, and ability in math and the sciences) more frequently than girls (who are more often reinforced for neatness, creativity, attractiveness, and writing and artistic abilities). In recognizing students, be aware of any tendencies to promote stereotypes.
- **Reinforcement must be consistently delivered.** Use a planned reinforcement schedule. If it is not, no connection will develop between appropriate behavior and the reinforcement and the behavior will not change
- **Reinforcement must be delivered immediately.** Students should know when they can expect reinforcement. If you wait until the end of the day to reinforce a student for remaining in her seat during second period, the effect of reinforcement is reduced if not lost. If it is impossible to deliver reinforcement immediately, verbal reinforcement should be given and the student should be told when he or she can expect to receive other reinforcement. In this way, a contingency between behaviour and reinforcement will be strengthened or maintained.
- **Improvement should be reinforced.** Do not wait until the student's behaviour is perfect to deliver reinforcement. You should recognize improvement and let the student know that you recognize the effort.
- **Reinforcement must be contingent on behaviour.** Do not give reinforcement because you feel sorry for a student. If a student does not achieve the required criterion, delivering reinforcement will only teach the student that rewards are readily available regardless of behavior and may even lead to an

escalation of the behaviour. Rather, recognize that you know the student is disappointed but that they will have the opportunity to try again tomorrow.

- **Whenever possible, pair any reinforcement with social reinforcement.** If your reinforcement plan is letting students participate in preferred activities, make sure to give some sort of social reinforcement, such as telling the student, “You really did an excellent job today. You should be really proud of yourself” or let the student choose another student for the activity.
- **Make sure that social reinforcers are not ambiguous.** They should be sincere, clear and identify the specific behavior for which they are being delivered.
- **Reinforcement should be age-appropriate.** Expecting a high school student to change his behavior by rewarding him with stickers is likely to be ineffective and insulting to the student.

Roles of Special Education Needs Co-ordinator

A Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is a teacher who is responsible for the special educational needs (SEN) in a school. All schools have a SENCO and they work with parents to make sure that pupils with special education needs get the right support and help they need at school (Okyere & Adams, 2003). Also, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator is a regular trained teacher who has responsibility for the day-to-day management of special educational needs in a school. All schools must have a named person to co-ordinate special education needs by whatever name they are called. A SENCO often has practical and professional experience of teaching children with special educational needs. They provide support and advice for practitioners in the community (Solish et al., 2010)

Again, Okyere and Adams (2003) postulated that, SENCOs are teachers who provide in-service training for the other teachers on how to manage children with disabilities. The techniques and methods of teaching some subjects are demonstrated for regular classroom teachers to adopt. In the community, the SENCO targets the schools, clinics as well as moving to homes to educate pupils and parents on disability issues. Before one can be qualified as a special education needs coordinator, the person needs to possess some unique qualities which will prepare him or her to be ready to discharge his or her roles.

Avoke, Hayford, Ihenacho, and Ocloo (1998) enumerate the qualities as; patience, alert, resourceful, emotional matured to show empathy, friendly, sensitive, objective and openness. To explain a few of such qualities, Avoke et al observed that to be resourceful is to be able to find one’s way round difficult situations. Thus,

resourcefulness shows up one's ability to create original materials or try out new strategies in the classroom. They need to be opened and patience to approach them for the needed assistance. They need at times to have interpersonal skills to be able to listen, empathize and be trusted.

The philosophy of peripatetic services now Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO) dates back to the period of Aristotle. Aristotle preached most of his ideas by walking round the Greek city states. In other words, he was known as a walking teacher who moved from place to place to teach, the meaning of peripatetic the Greek word therefore was to walk or a covered walk. According to Avoke et al (1998), the need for peripatetic teachers or SENCOs in Ghana was motivated by the concern to help children with Special Education Needs to fit in schools and the society. SENCOs are therefore regular teachers who are trained to move from school to school to provide services to teachers and pupils within the school setting.

According to Reeve (2015), SENCOs are in-charge of co-coordinating the day to day operation of the school's special educational needs policy. The overall responsibility for SEN in a school, therefore, rests with the Board of Governors (BoG) as in senior high schools. One of the ways the BoG has found it useful to drive good practice for SEN and inclusion is to have a teacher responsible for SEN. In cases where this takes place, the teacher maintains a watching brief on all aspects of SEN and inclusion and may challenge practice ensuring the SEN and inclusion agenda remains at the forefront of school setting.

Specific responsibilities for SEN are delegated to the principal and the SENCO to ensure that the day to day operation of the school's SEN policy is embedded in practice. In keeping with an inclusive ethos there should be a whole school approach to SEN and inclusion Okyere & Adams (2003). The implication is that every teacher needs to be made aware that they have a professional responsibility to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEN and/or disability since the whole school approach enhances the capacity of the school to meet the needs of all pupils. The SENCO should work in a co-coordinating role Oppong, (2003) explains that, it is coordinating, rather than having total responsibility, for the identification, assessment and provision of SEN and inclusion. In order to inform the day to day operation of SEN, it will be necessary for the SENCO to understand the process for identification and assessment of SEN and how that process operates within the school for meeting the needs of pupils with SEN.

According to Oppong, (2003), this is best achieved using a self - evaluative approach, which may include undertaking audits, for example the Quality Indicators for the Work of the Special Education Needs. In effect SENCOs should understand that policy formulation is a collaborative whole school process. The best school

policies are produced through a process of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. When members of the school community operate as a team, they feel involved, valued, and are committed to the successful implementation of the policies. SENCOs may take a lead role in co-coordinating the formulation of the SEN / inclusion policy and should follow the process for development as recommended in the School Improvement Programme (SIP). They further stated that, SENCOs should understand that the SEN policy is statutory and should be part of a suite of school policies and not seen as a stand-alone policy. Where possible, links should be made to other relevant policies, both curricular and pastoral to reflect the ethos of the school.

Taylor and Buku, (2003) were of the view that, SENCOs are responsive to requests for advice from other teachers. Therefore, the SENCO should consider carefully any requests for advice from teachers. While a SENCO does not need to know the answer to everything to do with SEN, support can be given to their colleagues by seeking information and providing direction regarding issues raised. Consideration should include auditing and any training the teachers have had in relation to specific areas and deciding on any training that may be required.

Teaching and learning is more effective in an appropriate environment Oppong, (2003), therefore says, it may be necessary to consider what barriers to learning that exist within structured and unstructured areas throughout the school. There is also the need to make reasonable adjustments/accessibility plans. Oppong, (1998) further posited that before making a referral to the SENCO, teachers should be encouraged to implement and keep a record of a range of appropriate teaching and learning strategies aimed at helping overcome difficulties a child may be facing, including those identified in the good practice guidelines for schools to meet the special educational needs of pupils. These Guidelines act as a useful reference point for teachers and SENCOs in determining strategies or reasonable adjustments that can be made to assist in improving the progress of a child with SEN. It is therefore important that the SENCO supports teachers in meeting their training needs. The SENCO should develop his/her own role, knowledge and credibility through undertaking research in the context of professional reflective practice to co-ordinate SEN provision, including secondary schools, ensuring appropriate liaison with the various teachers who will teach any given child with special education needs.

The SENCO must acknowledge his/her role as a coordinator and ensure that class/subject teachers undertake their professional responsibility for the provision for pupils with SEN (Farrell, 1998). The SENCO must liaise with the class teacher (primary) or subject teacher (post primary) in the drawing up of the Action

Plans or individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in order to ensure that appropriate meaningful targets are set for the pupils by the staff who teach them and understand how best to meet their needs. The SENCO needs to develop appropriate monitoring arrangements to ensure that IEPs are used effectively and meaningfully to measure progress and raise achievement. The SENCO must develop effective reviewing processes; liaise with appropriate staff in reviewing IEPs, evaluating the child's progress and set new targets as appropriate. Staff should be encouraged by SENCO to identify and collate evidence of attainment of targets as part of the monitoring process (Ferrell, 1998). Evidence could include marked books, examples of pupils' work and photographs to exemplify targets attained. He added that classroom assistants or other appropriate support staff should be included where possible in the target setting, monitoring and reviewing of the education planning process. The SENCO needs to develop and implement a strategy for sharing information with all other staff regarding SEN issues. Possibilities for doing so include: 1. regular input in INSET days; 2. regular input at staff meetings; 3. having SEN as a standard item on agenda of all departmental meetings; 5. in school online communication; and to the development of electronic IEPs where staff monitor and review online and where the SENCO has on-going and continual access to these processes.

The SENCO should identify a teacher within each large department in post primary schools to act as a link between the SENCO and the teaching and learning in the school, including providing information on how to meet the specific needs of pupils within a particular area of learning. Ideally this could be a Head of Department (HoD) or to develop expertise other teachers could volunteer for the role on an annual rotational basis. The HoD still needs to ensure that all members of their department maintain their professional responsibilities for managing SEN (Taylor & Buku, 2003).

Again, Reeve (2015) postulates that, every school needs to maintain a SEN register, with records on pupils with special educational needs. He added that the register should include information such as, the pupil name, date of birth, class and the category of SEN as outlined in Guidance for Schools. Schools are legally required to inform parents that they are making SEN provision for their child. Good practice would be to put this in writing and seek confirmation from the parent(s) that they have read, understood and are supportive of the school's approach. A range of approaches, such as how data and teacher observation should be used to identify pupils whose names should be recorded on the SEN register.

Reeve, (2015) is of the view further that schools may also wish to have a register for those pupils with medical or health related difficulties which may not impact on pupil learning. Further information is available

from Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs. To facilitate the wide diversity of pupils, some schools have found it useful to also maintain a register of other supported groups, for example newcomer children, Gifted and Talented. Where pupils' names are added to the register it is imperative that the provision is available in school to meet their needs.

Reeve (2015) again, he posits that a pupils' name is recorded on the register, an Action Plan or IEP should be developed, written and reviewed regularly. In most cases, schools find that a termly or twice a year review of progress against the targets set in the Action Plan or IEP is appropriate; this will depend on the individual pupil needs and efficient use of resources. It is imperative that the child (subject to their age and understanding) has a voice in the process of establishing and reviewing their IEP. Where the child has a statement of special educational needs or an educational psychologists report should be reflected in the IEP. Data should be used alongside appropriate provision to ensure that pupils whose names are recorded on the SEN register make appropriate progress. The SEN register should be updated regularly to accurately reflect the number of pupils with SEN and/or disability in the school. Regular reviews should be held to ensure that the provision being made for pupils on the register continues to be appropriate. In addition to maintaining the school's SEN register, it is important that the SENCO takes account of the need to also maintain a number of other records.

The Disability Act (2006) (Act 715), explains that to liaise with parents of children with special educational needs, the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) should state that where a school is making special educational provision for a pupil, the parents should be notified. Good practice would be to put this in writing and seek confirmation from the parent(s) that they have read, understood and are supportive of the school's approach.

On occasions, parents may not have come to the realization that their children have special educational needs, and a sensitive approach is required by the SENCO. Some SENCOs have found it useful to refer to the Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle to help them understand the stages that a parent may go through when coming to terms with their situation. This understanding will enable the SENCO to adjust their approach accordingly when liaising with the parent.

Whilst parental permission is not required for a school to place a child's name on the SEN register, good practice suggests that a partnership approach be adopted. In all cases the school should remember that the rights of the child are paramount. Outcomes for pupils with special educational needs have been found to be better

where all stakeholders have worked together. In cases where a child requires out of school provision, for example, speech and language therapy, a good relationship with the parent should be maintained as it may be the parent has to provide transport and also inform the school of the programme being followed.

According to Rivers (2017), liaising with parents can be done in a number of ways, for example through parent-teacher interviews, informal discussions and after school appointments, parents teacher association (P.T.A), written communication (newsletters, email etc.) telephone calls, school website etc. Schools should have clear concern/complaint procedures for all children and in particular for pupils with SEN and/or disability.

Opong, (2003) postulated that SENCO needs to establish the SEN in-service training requirements of the staff, and contributing as appropriate to their training. Within the inclusive education and school improvement model, this is one of the most important roles for the SENCO. This will contribute to building the capacity of teachers to meet a wider range of pupil needs. A register should be maintained of expertise that teachers may have, and all training that has taken place in relation to special educational needs and inclusion for teachers and classroom assistants. This may include accredited courses, for example In-service education and training (INSET). An annual audit should take place to address a number of areas, to ensure that: 1. teachers have the necessary expertise or training to meet the full range of pupil needs; 2. priorities are identified which will, in turn, feed into the school development plan; 3. all staff become more self-reflective; 4. all the good work that is taking place is affirmed; 5. school strengths and areas for improvement are identified; 6 opportunities for monitoring, evaluation and review are in place; and 7. data are up to date.

It is recognized that for some SENCOs, leading and managing training may prove to be daunting task, however, the SENCO can commission training from other providers. There are a range of training methods available as Obi and Mensah (2005) suggested such as coaching, counselling, mentoring, presentation online. SENCOs should co-ordinate whatever type is appropriate to the needs of the individual and school and contribute as appropriate.

Reeve (2015) say, the SENCO liaises with external agencies for effective action to be taken on behalf of children with special educational needs, which will often depend upon close co-operation between education, health and social services. It is important that the SENCO is fully conversant with Child Health and Social Services to provide guidance. There can be a wide range of external agencies involved with children with SEN and/or disability. These include Educational Psychologist, Clinical Psychologist; Educational Welfare Officer, Senior

Clinical Medical Officer, Consultant Community Pediatrician, Speech and Language Therapist, Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist; Transitions Officer, Careers Officer and Social Worker.

It is useful to create a list of relevant external agencies which contains names, roles, addresses and phone numbers, in addition to working with external specialists, SENCOs may also wish to collaborate with other schools. A number of special schools are active in supporting pupils with SEN and/or disabilities in mainstream schools. All special schools should have a major supporting role in the assessment of pupil's needs and the preparation of individual intervention plans. Educational plans, of necessity, should contain an inclusion statement identifying the experiences and resources available to support the education of pupils with SEN.

According to Okyere and Adams (2003), SENCOs in mainstream schools are encouraged to establish links with local special schools. The links should be seen as a two-way process: 1. Inclusion can be enhanced through greater interaction between mainstream and special school pupils; 2. mainstream capacity to meet the needs of pupils can be developed; 3. specialist expertise in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN and/or disability can be shared from the special school; and 4. specialist curriculum expertise can be shared with the mainstream school. Taylor and Buku, (2003) also said SENCOs offer guidance and counselling services to schools, teachers, pupils, parents, and the community on the effective education and management of the special needs child.

Counselling which is part of the guidance programme is a person -to-person relationship in which a counsellor assists a counselee to resolve a problem in the life of the counselee. From this assertion, the counsellor who is now the special needs co-ordinators helps to explain to the masses of people about the causes, assessment centres, special schools available for children with disabilities and educational policies in place for children with special needs through parent teachers' association meeting, open days, school durbars, conferences, amongst other. According to Morsink, (1987), the SENCO has the responsibility of assisting other teachers to adapting or modifying a particular lesson or activity. He comments that if the SENCO has established a routine and ongoing communication system with all teachers. It is relatively easy to anticipate an activity that may need modification or adaptation. **Challenges SENCOs Encounter**

According to Oppong (2003), SENCOs still face certain problems or challenges. Some of these are:

- a) Inadequate in-service training: In-service training for SENCO staff which could help improve their knowledge and skills is usually insufficient. The workshops they attend are not enough in a year to enable them acquire the requisite knowledge and skills.

- b) Less skills from supervisors: Supervisors would need more skills through staff development and more workshops training sections so that they could be well informed about special educational needs policies.
- c) Lack of accommodation: Accommodation is a big challenge since most of them when posted to a station usually finds it difficult to get a place to stay. This makes some not to give off their best to help children with disabilities. However, when the accommodation is provided it would encourage the co-ordinators to work effectively.

Furthermore, derogatory names like “Mad Children Teacher”, “Deaf and dumb Children Teacher”, “Blind Children Teacher” some have been referred to as collaborating teachers, itinerant/roaming teachers and now mainstream or inclusive facilitators (Stainback and Stainback.1989). These names do not encourage the co-ordinators to work effectively. Obi and Mensah (2005) postulated that, provision of itinerant services require much resources. But there is lack of these resources for integration of persons with disabilities. This includes Special Educators such as special educational needs co-ordinators or itinerant or peripatetic teachers, counsellors, resource persons, therapist and logistics. For example, the regular teachers may lack essential skills for assisting pupils with low vision and hearing problems. Also, availability of materials resources could be very helpful to them. Materials such as Snellen and E charts, braille papers, CCTV and machines are inadequate in supply.

Also, supply of logistics in the form of motor bikes and Lorries are usually provided late making some coordinators not able to get this logistics in time to execute their duties effectively, since they have to move from one school to the other (Oppong, 2005). They usually have more schools to cover, and since SENCOs are few within the District, their work usually becomes very difficult. Obi and Mensah (2005) further stated that, the task of adapting instructional materials to the special education needs (SEN) children and other pupils adds to the regular teacher’s worry. This is because in integrated settings, instructional materials are used by the teacher to facilitate learning for the individual child. The materials are therefore determined based on the needs of particular children with disabilities in the classroom. Regular classroom teachers will be faced with challenges of adapting materials and equipment to meet the needs of the children.

Support Services for Pupils and Teachers in the Regular school setting

Pupils within the regular school setting would require the following levels of support services; According to Okyere and Adams (2003), pupils with disabilities would need Intermittent, limited, extensive and pervasive support services to be able to function in the regular school system. With the intermittent support, the

person may only need short-term support either with high or low intensity for periodic transition such as learning to perform a basic task in information communication technology, where the teacher would need to go over again with the task several times for children to understand the concept much better. Limited support needs intense support over time on the job training or support during transitional period between schools or from school to adulthood. For example, pupils with disability trying to perform a particular skill in basic design and technology would require support services from the teachers to learn such a skill. Extensive support enables the pupils to receive regular support on daily basis in at least one environment. Pupils within the regular school system would need teachers who are well knowledgeable in the strategies and methods of teaching to help them acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.

Pervasive support allows the pupils to receive constant and high intensity support needed in all parts of the person's life. The support may involve more than one support, which may therefore need an interdisciplinary support team. Thus pupils suffering from visual, hearing, and physical deformities may need the help of an ophthalmologist, audiologist and physiotherapist to help the pupil to adjust well in the classroom.

Empirical Studies

In Praisner's (2003) study which surveyed 408 elementary school principals, it was found that only one in five principals' attitudes towards inclusion were positive. This meant that principals who had positive attitudes supported the inclusion by placing students in less restrictive settings. To add to this, Bui and Baruch, (2010) summed up that "efforts aimed at providing teachers and administrators with meaningful contact with people with disabilities as well as information on special education concepts makes a difference in the quality of students' educational programming" (p. 10). Therefore, it can be concluded that both teachers' and principals' attitude are essential factors that support the education of children with SEN.

In Kenya, there seems to be a trend where the little research that has been carried out on special education is centred in urban areas. One such study was conducted by Muuya (2002) who stated:

...in terms of children with special educational needs, there is no reason to believe that they (in urban areas) differ from the rest of Kenya. However, because of their locations around the capital and their more urban characteristics, it is likely that special educational provision is more developed in these areas than elsewhere. (p. 231).

Muuya conducted her research in the urban area because of its "practicality" and "accessibility"; a trend, if not checked, is likely to alienate children and schools in rural settings whose needs may be different from those in urban areas.

Many studies emphasize the need for strengthening pre-service education in teacher colleges to promote inclusive education (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012; Woodcock, Hemmings, & Kay, 2012). According to Lambe and Bones (2006), the pre-service training stage is one of the most effective periods during which teachers can develop positive attitudes and build confidence to work with children with SEN.

Lambe and Bones (2006) argued that many teachers assume that some children with SEN are not capable of learning and these children do not receive the required support for learning in the class. Keeping a positive attitude is the single most important quality for any teacher who works with children with SEN. In the same vein, Asempa, (2013) found that among teachers of inclusive education in Pakistan, more teachers in private schools held negative perceptions about inclusion when compared to teachers who taught in public schools. The researcher provides two justifications to support the findings in his study: 1) the quality of training received while on the job; and 2) the amount of pre-service training received by the teachers. Like the other aforementioned researchers, Asempa also ascertained that “attempting to educate teachers at the pre-service level may help to diminish the concerns regarding the implementation of inclusion” (p. 1007).

Research Design

Burns and Grove (2003) define a research design as a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings. Amedahe (2002) has noted that in every research study, the choice of a particular research design must be appropriate to the subject under investigation, and that the various designs in research have specific advantages and disadvantages. Kothari (2008) noted that different research designs can be conveniently described if we categorize them as: (1) research design in case of exploratory research studies; (2) research design in case of descriptive and diagnostic research studies, and (3) research design in case of hypothesis-testing research studies.

According to Amedahe (2000) some examples of research designs are survey, case study, quasi-experimental and action research or experimental. Kothari (2008) further noted that research design appropriate for a particular research problem, usually involves the consideration of the following factors:

- i. The means of obtaining information;
- ii. The availability and skills of the researcher and his staff, if any;
- iii. The objective of the problem to be studied;
- iv. The nature of the problem to be studied; and

- v. The availability of time and money for the research work.

The design employed for the present study is a cross sectional survey. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), cross sectional survey research involves the collection of data in order to test hypothesis or answer research questions concerning the current status of the subject of study. Cross sectional surveys can, he states, be useful for gathering facts in order to establish important and useful information for the educational purposes. Survey methods collect data through questionnaires or/ and interviews (Orodho, 2005). Surveys attempt to collect data from members of a population for the purpose of establishing the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables.

The cross sectional survey design was selected for this study because the study was involved in describing, analyzing, interpreting and reporting issues, as they currently exist. A cross sectional survey design was used because it is fact finding in nature. Cross-sectional studies are usually relatively inexpensive and allow researchers to collect a great deal of information quite quickly. Data are often obtained using self-report surveys and researchers are then able to amass large amounts of information from a large pool of participants. The researchers' intention for the use of this type of design is because surveys are frequently used to collect information on attitudes and behaviors of phenomena (Polland, 2005). This method (survey) was supported by Newman (2000) who holds the belief that a survey research uses a smaller group of selected people but generalizes the results to the whole group from which the small group was chosen.

Population of the Study

Kusi, (2012), a population is a group of individuals or people with the same characteristics that the researcher is interested. Population is a group of individuals or a group of organisation having common defining characteristics that a researcher can identify and study (Creswell, 2012). Population has been defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2001) as a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects or events that conform to specific criteria in research. According to Creswell (2008), a target population is a group of individual with some common defining characteristic that the researcher can identify and study. He added that within the target population, researchers then select a sample for the study. The accessible population is the aggregate of cases or elements that conform to the designated criteria that are accessible to the researcher as a pool of subjects or participants for the study.

The accessible population is the group that a researcher actually can measure. Time and budgetary constraints, for example, often limit the number of subjects or participants a researcher can study, making the experimentally accessible population much smaller than the target population. Moreover, physical limitations also often compel a researcher to study groups that are smaller than the target population (Creswell, 2008). The population of the study comprised: SENCOs (both retired and current), and regular teachers and pupils in the Pusiga District. Studying the whole population would have greatly enhanced the outcome of the study. However, this is often most impracticable owing to the limited academic period for the study. Sampling therefore became the only effective means for conducting the study.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The process of selecting the sample is called sampling. There are two sampling strategies that are used in educational research which are probability and non-probability samples (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008). Cohen et al. were of the opinion that probability sampling is useful if the researcher wishes to make generalization, because it seeks representativeness of the wider population. They also added that, probability sampling is used when two-tailed tests are to be administered in statistical analysis of quantitative data. In non-probability sampling, elements or subjects are selected by non-random methods. Usually, not every element or subject in the population has a chance of being selected. This method is less strict and makes no claim for representativeness. According to Cohen et al.), there are many types of non-probability sampling: convenience sampling, quota sampling, and dimensional sampling, snowballing sampling, volunteer sampling, theoretical sampling, and purposive sampling. They added that, purposive sampling is often (but by no means exclusive) a feature of qualitative research, in which the researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought.

In this study the purposive sampling and convenience sampling were used to select respondents to participate in the study. Creswell (2003) stated that, in purposive sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand a phenomenon. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2003), cited in Avoke (2005) also assert that purposive sampling enables researchers to handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment and typicality. In this way, the researcher builds up a sample that is satisfactory to specific needs. Again the researcher used his own judgment to select population members whom he felt would give him the desired or accurate information (Adentwi & Amartei, 2009). The purposive sampling technique

was chosen because it is less costly and less time consuming and is free from bias, and prevents unnecessary and irrelevant items or units entering into the sample per chance. Purposive sampling technique gives better results if the investigator is unbiased and has the capacity of keen observation and sound judgment while ensuring intensive study of the selected items.

Furthermore, the convenience sampling (also known as accidental, incidental or grab sampling) technique of the non-probability sampling was used to identify the participants for the research work to be conducted. According to Agyedu, Donkor, and Obeng (2010), convenience sampling technique is a simple approach where a sample is selected according to the convenience of the researcher. This convenience may be used in respect of available data, accessibility of the subjects, etc. Thus the convenience sampling allows the use of any available group of research subjects as the sample.

Bogdan and Biklen, (2007) assertion that convenient sampling method used in educational researcher lowers cost; has greater accuracy of result; has greater speed of data collection; and guarantee the availability of population elements. The convenience sampling technique was adopted because it is very easy to carry out with few rules governing how the sample should be collected. The relative cost and time required to carry out a convenience sample are small in comparison to probability sampling techniques. This enables you to achieve the sample size you want in a relatively fast and inexpensive way. The purposive sampling strategy was used to identify 3 SENCOs (consist of one retiree, one at post and one on sick leave) and 30 teachers and the convenience sampling technique was used to select 20 pupils in the Pusiga District. The entire sample consisted of 53 participants. (3 SENCOs, 30 teachers & 20 pupils).

Research Instrument

Research instruments are tools used to collect data to answer the research questions. There are various research instruments for data collection. Zohrabi (2013) some examples of research instruments are questionnaire, interview, classroom observation and test. The instrument that was used in the collection of data for this study was questionnaire. Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Razavieh, (2010), questionnaire and/or interview are the two basic ways in which data are gathered in survey research.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a set of questions or statements that assesses attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and biographical information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). A questionnaire consists of a number of questions

printed or typed in a definite order on a form or set of forms. The questionnaire is given to respondents who are expected to read and understand the questions and write down the reply in the space meant for the purpose in the questionnaire itself. The respondents have to answer the questions on their own.

Jack and Norman (2003), there are two forms of questionnaire: closed-ended and open-ended form. The closed-ended form is also known as restricted or structured calls for short, check-mark and require the respondent to provide “yes” / “no” responses or rank alternatives provided based on how one feels about the issue. The respondent’s choices are limited to the set of opinions. However, the open-ended questionnaire which is also termed as unrestricted or unstructured calls for a free response in the respondent’s own words. The respondent frames and supplies the answers to the questions raised in the questionnaire. In view of Leedy and Ormrod (2005), questionnaires offer participants the advantage of answering questions with the assurance of anonymity for their responses. Questionnaires are used when researchers want to obtain information on a large number of issues and from large sample size. Consequently, questionnaires are usually employed in survey researches. Data were obtained from the 50 sampled teachers, pupils and SENCO using open-ended form of questionnaires. The data collection instruments were designed by the researcher in line with the objectives of the study.

Validity of the Research Instrument

According to Patton (2005), validity of a research instrument is how well it measures what it is intended to measure. Bell (2005) also argued that, validity of any instrument is important because it determines whether an item measures or describes what is intended to measure or describe. To Orodho (2004), validity would be concerned with establishing whether the right questionnaire content is measuring what they were intended to measure. Efforts were made to ensure the validity of the research instruments with the view of ensuring that they were capable of eliciting the desired data. These were accomplished in two ways: first, extensive literature search on the role of SENCOs was done. The content validation was found appropriate in determining the extent to which the set of items provided relevant and representative sample of the domain of tasks under consideration. The researcher and his supervisors ensured that data collected represented the content area under study. This made it possible to identify the relevant content areas to be captured during the itemization stage of the instrument. Secondly, items in the instrument were prepared in line with the objectives of the study. For purposes of face validity, the research instrument was given to colleagues to check for wrong spellings, omissions and grammatical errors.

Pilot-Testing

Researchers must practice the tools for data collection that they will use in carrying out their studies before conducting the actual research to help them be acquainted with these tools before conducting the research also themselves as researchers (Drew, Hardman, & Hosp, 2008). A pilot study was planned and it was conducted before starting the collection of data.

The instrument was pre- tested in schools with similar characteristic as the schools under study to determine reliability and validity of the instruments. The pre-testing of the instruments was done at Widana basic school and Kulungungu basic school. This helped to evaluate the clarity, sequence, wording, and redundancy of survey items (Babbie, 2010; Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002). It also helped the researcher to review and to restructure the tool for data collection in order to obtain information that focuses on the research questions and to develop a deeper understanding of the situation to be studied and improved the appropriateness of the instruments and quality of the data collected.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

Joppe, (2000) defined reliability as the extent to which results are consistent over time. It implies that, if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument of the study can be considered as being reliable. Reliability concerns with the degree to which an experiment, test or any measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials (Patton, 2007). Orodho (2004) reliability in research concerns the degree to which a particular measuring procedure gives similar results over a number of repeated trials. In order to test the reliability of the instruments the researcher used the test-retest method. The data and results obtained were consistent with that of the respondents used in the current study.

Data Collection Procedure

According to Creswell (2003), the site where research takes place and gaining permission before entering a site is very paramount in research. An introductory letter will be obtained from the Department of Special Education, University of Education, Winneba stating the aims and purpose of the study and the need for the participants to give their consent and co-operation. A copy of the letter was given to the Pusiga District Education office and heads of the selected schools and permission was granted to administer questionnaires. Trust and rapport was established with the participants. The researcher then administered the questionnaires and collected them soon after completion.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis is the practice of extracting useful information from raw data. Data analysis is the process of organizing the data collected for example into categories (Kothari, 2008). Data analysis is important for interpreting these raw data, in order to obtain the meaning and pattern from data (Bell, 2005). Data analysis should begin immediately after the first data collection process to discover if there is any information that is necessary or missing.

In the analyses of the quantitative data, the questionnaires were categorized under themes with respect to the research questions. Editing and coding were made, after which, the data were entered into the computer using the statistical package for social science software (SPSS). Before performing the desired data transformation, the data were also cleaned by running consistency checks on every variable. Corrections were made after verification from the questionnaires and the database was generated. The data were represented using descriptive statistics involving mainly frequency distribution tables and percentages and bar chart.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration is part of the research works, and cannot be avoided (Bryman, 2012). Informants were ensured their protection from harm, exposure and anonymity. Ethical guidelines and legal rules should be considered by the researcher. According to Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011), ethical issues have the following considerations:

1. Informed consent. Individual should be provided with sufficient information about the research, in a format that is comprehensible to them, and make a voluntary decision to participate in a research study.
2. Self-determination. Individuals have the right to determine their own participation in research, including the right to refuse participation and also pull out at any time.
3. Minimization of harm. Researchers should not do any harm to participants or put them at risk.
4. Anonymity. Researchers should protect the identity of research participants at all times.
5. Confidentiality. Researches should ensure that all data records are kept confidential at all times.

From the considerations above, it should be noted that the consent of all participants were obtained prior to the commencement of the study. The researcher met participants in the selected basic schools and to discuss the purpose of the research, the expected time commitments and the procedure for the research activities. All participants were given a guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity in reporting the information provided for the study.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (special needs coordinators and teachers)

This section discusses the demographic characteristics of the special needs coordinators and teachers involved in the study. The parameters discussed include: gender, age, marital status, academic status and length of teaching experience.

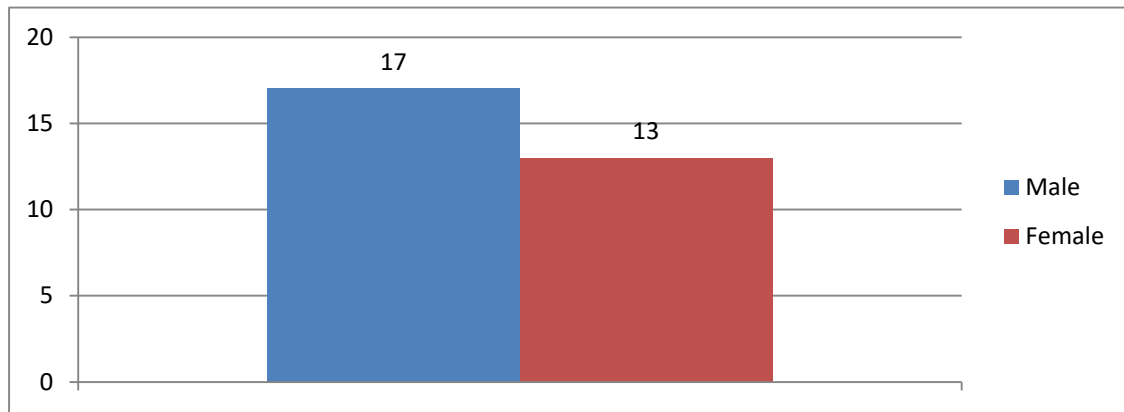


Figure 2: Demographic data of respondents in relation to gender

Source: Field work 2022

Figure 2 above showed the demographic data for gender of the respondents for the study. From the data, seventeen (17) representing 56.7 % are males whiles thirteen (13) representing 43.3% are females. Zuzovsky, (2003) also reported that in her study in Israel, students taught by female teachers achieved more than those taught by male teachers. However, the studies of Arbuckle and Williams (2003) declared that male teachers performed better than female teachers in areas of asserting authority and using meaningful voice tones during teaching. The researcher of this study is of the view that there is no significant relationship between teacher's gender and student's academic achievement since in most schools, pupils are taught by both male and female teachers who together shape the academic outcomes of pupils.

Table 1: Demographic data of teachers (respondents) in relation to Age

Range of Age(s)	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 29 years	5	16.7%
30 – 39 years	15	50%
40 – 49 years	7	23.3%
50 + years	3	10%
Total	30	100%

Source: Field work (2022)

Table 1 above shows the ages of respondents for the study. Five (16.7%) are between the ages 20 and 29 years (young age). fifteen (15) teachers representing 50% fell within 30 to 39 years; (middle age), seven (7) representing 23.3% were in between the ages 40 and 49 years (middle age) whiles three (3) representing 10% were also above 50 years (old age). Martin and Smith (1990) categorize teachers' ages into three levels young age, middle age and old age. According to Martin and Smith, the middle aged teachers were found to be more effective than the young and old teachers. They also concur that students who were taught by middle aged teachers achieved higher scores than those who were taught by younger and older teachers. The data indicate that 22 teachers representing 73.3% fall within the middle age group. This is a potential for good teaching and learning in the Pusiga District.

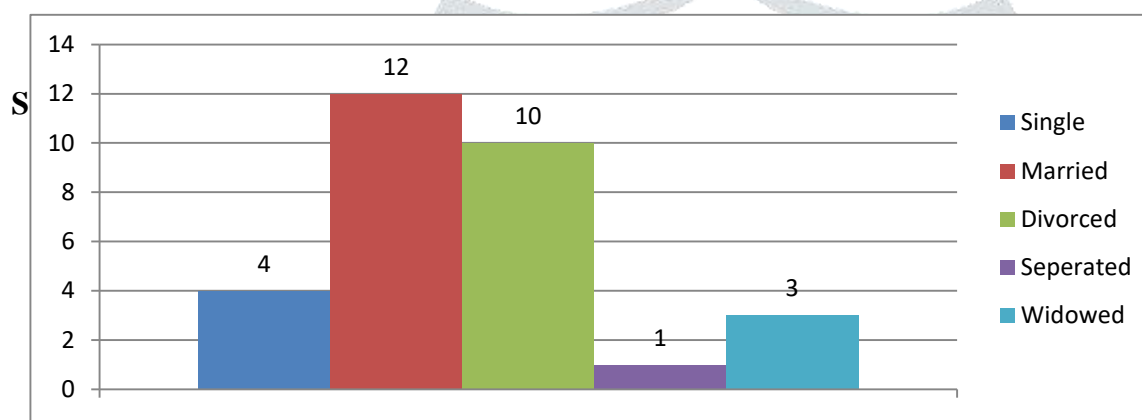


Figure 3: Demographic data of respondents in relation to marital status

Source: Field work data (2022)

Figure 3 above shows the marital status of the respondent four (4) representing 13.3% is single, twelve (12) representing 40% are married whiles ten (10) representing 33.3% were divorced. One (1) representing 3.3% is separated and three (3) representing 10% are widowed. This indicates that most of them are either married or divorced. On the variable, teacher's marital status, Kong (2008) discovered that single and married teachers had higher scores than those separated and divorced in the dimensions of job engagement, especially in the dimension of vigor and dedication. According to Zhang and Fang (1999), psychological problems such as separation and divorce affect teachers' dedication to duty. For Ayeop, (2003), married teachers have higher job satisfaction compared to single teachers and those in the group of others (that is, separated and divorced). He further states students of the married and single teachers achieved higher scores, than those of separated and divorced teachers.

Table 2: Academic status of respondents

Academic status	Frequency	Percentage
Teacher certificate A	3	10%
Diploma in education	9	30%
First Degree	12	40%
Masters	1	3.3%
Postgraduate Diploma	5	16.7%
Total	30	100%

Source: Field work data (2022)

Table 2 above presents the academic status of the respondents for this study. It was observed that 3 representing 10% held Teacher Certificate A, nine (9) representing 30% held Diploma certificate, twelve (12) representing 40% had obtained Bachelor Degree, one (1) representing 3.3% had Masters' Degree certificate and five (5) representing 16.7% held Postgraduate Diploma. The data obviously indicate that the greater percentage of respondents had obtained the requisite teaching qualification. Many research findings have established that teacher's teaching qualification is positively correlated with learning outcome. Abe and Adu (2013) found out that teachers' qualification contributed to the improvement of students' scores in their academic performance.

Table 3: Teaching experience of teachers

Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5 years	8	26.7
6-10 years	13	43.3
11-15 years	6	20
16-20 years	2	6.7
Unanswered question	1	3.3
Total	30	100

Source: Field work data (2022)

In finding out the teaching experience of the teachers, it was realized that, eight (8) representing 26.7% have been in the teaching profession from 1 to 5 years. 13 (43.3%) have been in the teaching profession from 6 to 10 years. Six (6) representing 20% have had 11-15 years teaching experience and two (2) teacher representing 6.7% have had 16-20 years teaching experience. Research findings have also established that teacher's teaching experience is positively correlated with learning outcome. Akinsolu, (2005) advocated that experienced teachers need to be retained in schools if higher productivity is to be obtained because learners achieve more from these teachers. Experienced teachers can identify student's problems and be able to change methodology to aid

effective teaching and learning. Over 70% of the teachers have between 6-20 years teaching experience. This is a potential for good performance. Raw (2003) asserted that teachers with years of experience in the profession turned out students with higher academic performance,

Demographic Characteristics of Pupils

This section discusses the demographic characteristics of pupils involved in the study. The parameters discussed include gender and age.

Table 4: Gender distributions of pupils

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	8	40
Female	12	60
Total	20	100

Source: Field work data (2022)

Table 4 above showed the demographic data for gender of the respondents (pupils) for the study. From the data, eight (8) representing 40% are males and twelve (12) representing 60% female. This means majority of the pupils who participated in the study were females.

Table 5: Age distributions of pupils

Age range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15 years and below	8	40
16- 20 years	7	35
21 years and above	5	25
Total	20	100

Source: Field work data (2022)

Table 5 above shows the ages of the pupils who participated in the study. Eight (40%) of the students were aged 15 years and younger, 7 (35%) were aged between 16 years and 20 years; and 5 (25%) were aged 21 years old and above.

Research question one: What are the roles of SENCOs in the Pusiga District? This question sought to find out from the study participants, the roles of Special Education Needs Co-ordinators play in the Pusiga District. Respondents were therefore required to express their views on the issue. The data gathered from the questionnaires were as follows:

1. SENCOs visit schools and advice teachers on how to address the needs of special students. This assertion support Taylor and Buku (2003) who are of the view that, SENCOs are responsive to requests for advice from other teachers. Therefore, the SENCO should consider carefully any requests for advice from teachers.
2. SENCOs help bridge the gap between the special child and the parent, the special child and the teacher and the special child with his or her peers in the formal education setting. According to Rivers (2017), SENCOs liaise with teachers and parents. He further states that liaising with parents can be done in a number of ways, for example through parent-teacher interviews, informal discussions and after school appointments, parents teacher association. (P.T.A), written communication (newsletters, email etc.) telephone calls, school website etc. Schools should have clear concern/complaint procedures for all children and in particular for pupils with SEN and/or disability. Another teacher suggested that the role of SENCOs is to liaise with teachers in normal schools for the purpose of identifying handicapped children in order to offer professional advice
3. SENCOs provide guidance and counselling services to pupils, teachers and parents. This assertion confirms Taylor and Buku, (2003:52) who said, SENCOs offer guidance and counselling services to schools, teachers, pupils, parents, and the community on the effective education and management of the special needs child. Counselling which is part of the guidance programme is a person -to-person relationship in which a counselor assists a counselee to resolve a problem in the life of the counselee.
4. SENCOs help in the promotion of inclusive educations. Education is a fundamental right of every child Inclusive education provides opportunities for the development of appropriate attitudes towards people with a range of disabilities. Exposure to students of all types on a daily basis allows typical students to see that, just like themselves, students with disabilities have strengths and weakness, and good days and bad days (Westwood & Graham 2003). SENCOs may take a lead role in coordinating the formulation of the SEN / inclusion policy and should follow the process for development as recommended in the School Improvement Programme (SIP) (Glanz & Kahn. 2000). According to Reeve (2015), SENCOs are in-charge of coordinating the day to day operation of the school's special educational needs policy. In cases where this takes place, the teacher maintains a watching brief on all aspects of SEN and inclusion and may challenge practice ensuring the SEN and inclusion agenda remains at the forefront of school setting.

5. Through the efforts of special education needs coordinators the government provides the basic needs of special pupils and also put in place the needed infrastructure to support special needs.
6. Special education needs coordinators identify of special children and pay attention to them by assisting them to manage themselves in the school settings.
7. Special education needs coordinators help to provide monitoring and support services and special training for classroom teachers to handle special needs children. SENCOs enables teachers to plan and prepare for special needs pupils to learn better in regular class
8. SENCOs provide education to reduces mass stigmatization attached to disability to enables regular pupils to accept and assist special colleagues

Research question two: How does SENCOs support pupils and teachers in the basic schools? Here study participants were expected to provide information on how SENCOs support pupils and teachers teaching and learning in the basic schools. The data gathered from the questionnaires were as follows:

1. SENCOs work in connection with NGOs to provide some basic needs for special children. The coordinators indicated that they seek support from NGOs, government, and other religious bodies to assist special needs pupils. this supports Reeve (2015) who found that SENCO liaises with external agencies for effective action to be taken on behalf of children with special educational needs, which will often depend upon close co-operation between education, health and social services, It is important that the SENCO is fully conversant with Child Health and Social Services to provide guidance.
2. SENCOs organize in-service training to assist regular teachers to apply appropriate techniques, instructional materials and methods to assist children with special needs. This finding is in consonance with Oppong (2003) who postulates that SENCO needs to establish the SEN in-service training requirements of the staff, and contributing as appropriate to their training. Oppong maintains that within the inclusive education and school improvement model, this is one of the most important roles for the SENCO. Again, Okyere and Adams (2003) postulated that, SENCOs are teachers who provide in-service training for the other teachers on how to manage children with disabilities. The techniques and methods of teaching some subjects are demonstrated for regular classroom teachers to adopt. In the community, the SENCO targets the schools, clinics as well as moving to homes to educate pupils and parents on

disability issues. Three teachers however observed that Special needs coordinators do not organize any in-service training nor visit schools regularly.

3. SENCOs keep records on the progress of all pupils with special needs. The views expressed by these respondents are in conformity with Reeve (2015) who postulates that, every SENCOs and school needs to maintain a SEN register, with records on pupils with special educational needs. He added that the register should include information such as, the pupil name, date of birth, class and the category of SEN as outlined in Guidance for Schools. Schools are legally required to inform parents that they are making SEN provision for their child.
4. SENCOs ensure that special children at school going age are enrolled in mainstream or regular in other to enhance inclusive education in schools. This point of view suggests that SENCOs have special role to play in special education. According to Okyere & Adams (2003), SENCOs in mainstream schools are encouraged to establish links with local special schools. The links should be seen as a two-way process:
 1. Inclusion can be through greater interaction between mainstream and special school pupils;
 2. mainstream capacity to meet the needs of pupils can be developed;
 3. specialist expertise in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN and/or disability can be shared from the special school; and
 4. specialist curriculum expertise can be shared with the mainstream school.SENCOs also assist children with disabilities to get appropriate educational placement medical attention for their special need children through counseling.
5. SENCOs provide orientation for non-specially trained teachers to manage special children alongside the normal children during. They also support teachers in selecting appropriate materials for teaching special children in and help address educational challenges of special needs pupils. They also encourage special needs children to keep their dreams and aspirations alive, motivate pupils with special needs to be active class participants and encourage regular pupils to do group studies and share ideas with special children without difficulties based on the advice of the special needs coordinator.
6. SENCOs coordinate between the school and the office to ensure the availability of resources to special children. They serve as the mediators between the government and the special need child. They also serve as facilitators to special education in schools

Research question three: What challenges SENCOs face as they carry out their duties? This question sought to find out from respondents their general views on challenges SENCOs face as they carry out their works in the basic schools? The data gathered from the questionnaires were as follows:

1. Inadequate provision of teaching and learning materials. A few of the study participant stated that availability of materials resources such as Snellen and E charts, braille papers, CCTV and machines are textbooks, teachers' guides, wall pictures, maps, atlases and other learning aids videotapes and pictures to the Internet are inadequate in supply. Teachers rely heavily on a diverse range of materials to support their teaching and their student s' learning. These are essential to effective instruction as they assist to reinforce and supplement the instructor's communication during the presentation of the lesson. The TLMs enhances teaching and learning because pupils are able to see and often feel what the teacher teaches and this go a long way to stimulate pupils' interest and increase understanding and retention. These are essential to effective instruction as they assist to reinforce and supplement the instructor's communication during the presentation of the lesson. Inadequate provision of teaching and learning materials poses significant challenge to the special education needs coordinators within the Pusiga District
2. Lack of support from most parents because of superstitions and misconceptions about special children. The academic performance of students heavily depends upon the parental involvement in their academic activities to attain the higher level of quality in academic success (Barnard, 2004). Parent of special needs children must be educated to support their wards, they must provide emotional support to assist their wards to manage and improve their behavior, self-esteem, confidence, personal adjustment and socialization. Emotional support fosters a better awareness of feelings, thoughts and behaviors and help special students to develop independence and autonomy necessary for successful integration into the regular school
3. The data also showed undesirable and offensive name labeling as one of the challenges SENCOs encounter. Some indicated that Special Education Needs Coordinators are called names such as Deaf and dumb Teacher or disabled coordinator or teacher which makes them feel uncomfortable. The findings support Stainback and Stainback (1989) concur that derogatory names like "Mad Children Teacher", "Deaf and dumb Children Teacher", "Blind Children Teacher" some have been referred to as collaborating teachers, itinerant/roaming teachers and now mainstream or inclusive facilitators. The authors argue that these names do not encourage the coordinators to work effectively.

4. Lack of vehicle for monitoring all the schools in the District concerning special needs children. Some of the special education needs coordinators said they don't have a mean of transports (car or motor bikes) due to financial constraints as a result are unable to visit the schools regularly. The finding buttress the views of Opong (2005) that supply of logistics in the form of motors bikes and Lorries are usually provided late making some coordinators not to get this logistics in time to execute their duties effectively, since they have to move from one school to the other They usually have more schools to cover, since special educational needs coordinators are few within the District, the work usually becomes very difficult for them. The coordinators also recounted poor road network within the District thus making their movements extremely difficult.
5. The data reveals the fifth challenge as irregular in- service training: Inadequate in-service for special education needs coordinators which could help improve their knowledge and skills are usually insufficient. The workshops they attend are not enough in a year to enable them acquire the requisite knowledge and skills. A teacher remarked *"I once asked one of the special education needs coordinators when they will organize in- service training for head teachers and teachers, he told me categorically that they themselves It been long since they had one."* This was also confirmed by one coordinator who said *"we don't normally have professional in- service training organized for us"* According to Opong (2003), SENCOs still face certain problems or challenges. One of these challenges is Inadequate in-service. The above confirms the finding of the researcher.
6. Inadequate knowledge, training and skills: some of the respondents were of the view that, some of the coordinators do not have adequate knowledge, training and skills they require as coordinators six teachers made the following remarks *"If you keep long in the school then they transfer you to the office to become a special education coordinator whether you can do it or not. SENCOs would need more skills through staff development and more workshops training sections so that they could be well informed about special educational needs policies. For example, the regular teachers may lack essential skills for assisting pupils with low vision and hearing problems and have to be assisted by Special education needs coordinators. Obi and Mensah (2005) states that, the task of adapting instructional materials to the special education needs (SEN) children and other pupils adds to the regular teacher's worry. This is because in integrated setting instructional materials are used by the teacher to facilitate learning for the individual child. The materials are therefore determined based on the needs of particular disabled children in the classroom. Regular*

classroom teachers will be faced with challenges of adapting materials to meet the needs of the children if they are not assisted.

7. The questionnaire data further revealed lack of accommodation as a key challenge. Accommodation is a big challenge since most of coordinators when posted to a station usually finds it difficult to get a place to stay. This makes some not to give off their best to help children with disabilities. However, when the accommodation is provided it would encourage the Co-coordinators to work effectively.

Research question four: What mechanisms are put in place to support Special Education Needs Coordinators in the schools to improve upon their work in the Pusiga District? This question was posed to ascertain the mechanisms that can be put in place to support SENCOs to improve upon their work in the Pusiga District?

1. Provision of the necessary educational resources, logistics and materials: The respondent suggested that SENCOs should be given all the resources they need to function effectively and efficiently on their jobs. Government must ensure adequate funding and provision of materials and logistics. These finding are in consonance with Avoke (2002) who found in his study that for effective coordination and supervision there should be the provision of the necessary materials which would aid in goal attainment.
2. Another strategy that was suggested by the respondents was regular in- service training for both coordinators and teachers. Some of the coordinators and teachers said they do not usually have in-service training organized for them. It will be best to organize frequent in-service training for them in other to upgrade their knowledge and skills on the job and assist them to carry out their roles very well. The findings therefore suggest that there should be Regular workshops and training for SENCOs, teachers and parents on issues concerning the education of special need children in the Pusiga District.
3. The study further revealed better remuneration, incentives and allowance for SENCOs and teachers as a tool for effective coordination and supervision in special need education. They indicated that Poor salary and allowance sometimes discourages them from working effectively. They were of the view that the government has to increase their salaries and allowances and improve their working condition. The findings support Avoke (2002) who mentioned that in other to improve supervision, monitoring coordination, SENCO and teachers should be adequately remunerated.

4. The data indicated further that to improve special education in inclusive setting; SENCOs should carry out supervision on regular basis. Some teachers underscore that the Coordinators should visit the schools regularly for supervision and monitoring do follow up and provide feedbacks to some schools and be more abreast with school activities concerning special pupils. They further indicated that the directors themselves should also pay more visits to the schools; they shouldn't always sit at the office and wait for our reports".
5. Parents and Community Partnerships: The academic performance of pupils can be influenced by parents and community partnerships. Importance and relevance of schooling to their children and the extent to which members of the community perceive education as an important avenue to occupational and social status contributes a lot to the student's commitment to work hard to produce good result. Regular education should be given to the community and parents concerning their children with special needs. Parents and members of the community must encourage, tolerant, support and respect the special needs child. The community involvement through P.T.A and B.O.G can be an instrumental force in bringing out the best academic performance of pupils. Their co-operation in maintaining school discipline initiating projects, offering moral support to both students and teachers can lead to smooth running of the school and increased academic performance (Wango, 2009). The level parents and community partnerships in educational activities is a strategy that can improve performance. A conscientious establishment or participation in a number of activities and events that concerned the local community and its inhabitants is a way of nurturing a dynamic relationship with parents and the community, and also promoting the involvement of the community in the affairs of the school and supporting the School. Advocacy through newspapers, televisions and other media on the needs to support special needs children should also be encouraged.

Summary of Findings

A number of significant roles perform by SENCOs in the Pusiga District was identified. These include helping to promote inclusive education, visiting schools and advising teachers on how to address the needs of special students, bridging the gap between the special child and the parent, the special child and the teacher and the special child with his or her peers in the formal education setting, providing guidance and counselling services to pupils, teachers and parents, providing education to reduces mass stigmatization attached to disability

and helping to provide monitoring and support services and special training for classroom teachers to handle special needs children. On how SENCOs support pupils and teachers in the basic schools. It was found that SENCOs work in connection with NGOs to provide some basic needs for special children. They organize in-service training to assist regular teachers to apply appropriate techniques, instructional materials and methods to assist children with special needs. SENCO keep records on the progress of all pupils with special need. The coordinators also assist children with disabilities to get appropriate educational placement medical attention. Finally, SENCOs provides orientation for non-specially trained teachers to manage special children alongside the regular children. The study further unveiled (a) inadequate provision of teaching and learning materials; (b) lack of support from most parents because of superstitions and misconceptions about special children; (c) undesirable and offensive name labeling; (d) irregular in-service training; (e) inadequate knowledge, training and skills; and (f) lack of accommodation as major challenges faced the SENCOs.

Regarding what mechanisms can be in place to support SENCOs to improve upon their work in the Pusiga District, the following was identified: (a) provision of the necessary educational resources, logistics and materials; (b) regular in-service training for both coordinators and teachers. (c) better remuneration, incentives and allowance for SENCOs; (d) teachers, supervision on regular basis; and (e) parents and community partnerships

Conclusion

This study attempted investigating the role SENCO in basic schools in the Pusiga District. The study revealed significant roles played by SENCOs. In general, most of the respondents identified promotion of inclusive education, visiting schools and advising teachers on how to address the needs of special students, bridging the gap between the special child and the parent, the special child and the teacher and the special child with his or her peers in the formal education setting, providing guidance and counselling services to pupils, teachers and parents, providing education to reduces mass stigmatization attached to disability

Other results that were identified on how SENCOs support pupils and teachers in the basic schools included collaborating with NGOs to provide some basic needs for special children, organizing in-service training to assist regular teachers to apply appropriate techniques, instructional materials and methods to assist

children with special needs, assisting children with disabilities to get appropriate educational placement medical attention and providing orientation for non-specially trained teachers to manage special children alongside the regular children. The study further unveiled inadequate provision of teaching and learning materials, lack of support from most parents because of superstitions and misconceptions about special children, undesirable and offensive name labeling, irregular in- service training, inadequate knowledge, training and skills and lack of accommodation major challenges faced the SENCOS. A number of strategies to improve SENCOS work were also uncovered they include provision of the necessary educational resources, logistics and materials, regular in- service training for both coordinators and teachers, better remuneration, incentives and allowance for SENCOS and teachers, supervision on regular basis, parents and community partnerships.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made from the findings of the study:

The Pusiga District Education Directorate should effectively monitor special education needs coordinators and teachers' instructional activities in the basic schools in order to ensure effective and efficient instructional activities and to enhance performance. Government should recruit and retain highly effective and competent SENCOS in schools. There should be regular, effective and efficient organization of in-service training for special education needs coordinators and teachers. These will enable SENCOS and teachers to continue to improve their knowledge, skills and teaching methods. Stakeholders especially parents should actively involve in school activities to ensure quality education for of their wards

Regular sensitization meetings and community education should be organized within the Communities in the Pusiga District to sensitize stake holders about the value of community engagement in education and the need to provide children with educational and basic needs. This can be done in community and social gathering such as church, durbar or through the use of community information service and other radio stations. Supervision should be strengthened and special education needs coordinators should be more regular in the schools. Regular visits to the schools would motivate the teachers to attend to the needs of special children. Parents and Teacher Association (PTA), School Management Committees (SMC), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), Municipal Assemblies (M.A), Religious and Corporate Bodies and Ghana Education

Service (GES) should work out incentive packages to increase initiators (SENCOs) and teachers' motivation and job satisfaction. Effective guidance and counseling in schools and at home must be encouraged.

Suggestions for Further Research

Some area for further research emanated during the study that I will recommend for further research.

Some of these areas are;

1. An investigation can be carried into the professional needs of SENCOS and teachers within the Pusiga Districts.
2. A study could also be done on the socio economic status of parents and its effect on academic performance of pupils with special needs.
3. An investigation on the role of for SENCO and teachers in junior secondary schools in the Upper east region of Ghana involving a larger sample of over 80% of the target population for the betterment of the generalization of the findings can also be conducted.

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