



Collaborative classroom: Perspectives of regular school teachers and special educators in the volta region

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Abstract

The perspectives of regular school teachers and special education teachers were investigated using 125 participants. This comprises of 25 special educators, 23 itinerant teachers and 77 regular school teachers. The descriptive research design was used. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Demographic data were analysed using percentages. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. The mean and the Standard Deviation were used to interpret the data. The result showed that in collaborative teaching, teachers ask questions at a variety of levels to meet all students' needs, the instructions progress smoothly with evidence of co-planning and communication between both teachers. Students participate in lesson activities by both answering and asking questions. Also, the results revealed that teachers face a challenge with inadequate meeting space, increase in workload and Personal and philosophical conflicts in teaching. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education in collaboration with District Assemblies should provide more classrooms with enough space in schools for collaborative teaching; teachers should schedule adequate time for to plan collaboratively taking into consideration their respective challenges.

Keywords: least restrictive environment, mainstreaming, collaboration, co-planning, inclusive education

Introduction

During the past two decades, special education programs have been monitored, regulated, evaluated, and critiqued by public officials, parents, teachers and researchers interested in educational policy (Adams; Harris & Jones, 2016) ^[1]. Demands for cost containment and growing concerns over the labelling of students fuelled interest in a merger of general education and special education. The primary impetus for the merger was the mainstreaming movement with the concept of the least restrictive environment (LRE) catalysed by the passage of Public Law 94-142 (that was, put forth by the 94th Congress as their 142nd piece of legislation). After that legislation was passed, educators could no longer arbitrarily place individuals with disabilities in a special school or self-contained classroom (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 2005) ^[4]. The collaborative practices movement gained more support recently in schools because of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1973 (Burton, 2015) ^[2]. Efforts were made to address the learning needs of students with disabilities through special education and general education collaborative practices. Debates about inclusion continued in the 1980s through the 1990s and served as a motivating factor of teacher collaboration (Pugach, Blanton, & Correa, 2011; Burton, 2015) ^[17, 2]. The integrated approach compelled both general and special education teachers to work cooperatively with one another to provide students with disabilities a quality education in the least restrictive environment. The value in collaboration evolved in settings from just focusing on students with disabilities, to focus on providing all students with engaging and innovative learning opportunities. As a result of No Child Left Behind and growing diversity in student populations, many schools have adopted collaborative systems and programs to assist in addressing the needs of students (Pugach, Blanton & Correa, 2011; Burton, 2015) ^[17].

^{2]}. Recent research has also suggested that teacher collaboration has positive outcomes for teachers. This is the reason why teachers are pushing for a continuum of service Options to be available and the type of service or placement to be as close to the normal environment as possible, with general education teachers responsible for the success of those students. To meet this new responsibility, teachers were to collaborate with special education teachers. Furtherance to this, a position paper issued by Madeleine C Will former director of the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services 1986, stated that too many children were being inappropriately identified and placed in learning disabilities programs. In that paper, Madeleine C. Will called for a collaboration model between special education teachers and general education teachers in providing services within the general classroom (Burton, 2015) ^[2]. Thus, the Regular Education Initiative (REI), referred to by some educators as the General Education Initiative (GEI), precipitated major changes in the way education is delivered. All students, except for those with severe disabilities, were from that time to be served primarily in a regular education setting (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 2005) ^[4]. This was done to serve many students not currently eligible for special education services and the stigma of placement in special education programs separate from age peers were eliminated. Also, it is to enable early intervention and prevention to be provided before more serious learning deficiencies occur. In the Ghanaian situation, for example, Ghana's active planning in special education began with its signing of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) which advocated inclusive education for all students. The Government of Ghana through the Special Education Division of GES by 2015 has implemented Inclusive Education on a pilot basis in three regions namely the Central, Greater Accra and Eastern

Region all in the struggle to implement inclusive education. The pilot was based on best practices around the world. By the end of 2011, the Government of Ghana through the Special Education Division of Ghana Education Service has implemented Inclusive Education on pilot programmes in 529 schools in 34 districts (MoE, 2015) ^[10] 2015. As of 2014, there are 45 primary schools officially being used as a pilot project for Inclusive Education in Ghana. However, almost every regular school in the country has children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) receiving education in them. The reason for the pilot approach was that there is no model anywhere to emulate (Vanderpuye, 2013) ^[13]. This pilot was crucial because care needs to be exercised in the process of its implementation. For instance, inclusive pilot schools are found in three regions in Ghana. These schools include Amasaman, Ada and Accra Metro in the Greater Accra Region. In the Central Region, there are inclusive schools in Winneba, Swedru and Cape Coast Districts. The Eastern Region has four Districts with inclusive pilot schools namely Somanya, Koforidua (New Juaben), Oda and Odumase (Danso, 2009) ^[3]. These projects were piloted and implemented by a team of experts led by Professor Ainscow in 1996. In line with the Salamanca declaration, the Government of Ghana had an objective to fully implement inclusive education by 2015, that is to provide “equitable educational opportunities by integrating all children with mild SENs in mainstream schools and full enrolments of hard-to-reach and out of school children by 2015” (Danso, 2009) ^[3]. Moreover, the Persons with Disability Act, Act 715, mandates that no school in the country should reject any child, the only exception being where assessment results show that regular education placement is inappropriate (Vanderpuye, 2013) ^[13]. This law passed was intended to prohibit discrimination against persons of all ages with disabilities in education, transportation, public access, local government, and telecommunications. It required schools to make all reasonable accommodations for accessibility of students with disabilities and extended provisions concerning fairness in employment to employers’ tax to be subsidised. The struggles in Ghana upon the start of the pilot inclusive schools saw the introduction of inclusive education nationwide in response to The Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education in 2015 (MoE, 2015) ^[10] in which the need to address equal educational opportunity and access for all students including those with special educational needs (SENs) were highlighted. This inclusive model is focused on the child’s right to equal education without discrimination and the school’s responsibility to accept them, these rights are highly recognised and accepted by most international organizations. For instance, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): This was Adopted and Proclaimed by General Assembly Resolution 217A December 1948. This being the first international Human Rights Instrument to be drawn declares that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Article 1 UDHR. Article 25(2) of UDHR, provides that motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance and, all children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection and education (Iguh, 2011) ^[6]. Also, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights: Article 18 (3) of the African Charter provides that State parties

should ensure the protection of the educational rights of the child as stipulated in international declarations and covenants. By this provision, the African Charter effectively endorses internationally accepted principle on Children’s rights including all the provisions on the administration of juvenile justice and educational provisions (Iguh, 2011) ^[6]. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWA) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are the two international instruments, which make special provisions for the rights for that matter educational right of the child. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child has been signed and ratified by Ghana. The highlight of its provisions is that “Every Child has the inherent right to life and education, and States shall ensure to the maximum child survival and development (Iguh, 2011) ^[6]. The Child Rights Act: The Convention on the Rights of the Child enjoins that, State Parties shall undertake to disseminate the convention’s principles and take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the Rights recognized in the present Convention. Again, in Ghana, The Minister of Education by Legislative Instrument designates schools or institutions in each region which shall provide the necessary facilities and equipment that will enable persons with disability to fully benefit from the school or institution. The Minister of Education should provide free education for a person with a disability, and establish special schools for persons with disability who because of their disability cannot be enrolled in formal schools (P W D Act, 2006 Act 715). In the educational process, there is a need to provide appropriate facilities and support to meet the needs of SEN students (Lee, 2010; Iguh, 2011) ^[6]. To see the success of the supported learners there is the need for more collaboration. Collaborative teaching involves teachers or a group of teachers working purposefully, regularly, and cooperatively to help children with disabilities of any age to learn (Burton, 2015) ^[2]. Teachers together set goals for a course, design a syllabus, prepare individual lesson plans, teach students, and evaluate the results. They share insights, argue with one another, and perhaps even challenge students to decide which approach is better. When teachers work collaboratively with each other, they share experiences and innovative strategies; during collaborative discussions, teachers are given a voice in curricular implementation and a variety of skills to support student learning needs. Teacher collaboration is a systematic process that allows teachers to analyse and improve instructional practices and student learning outcomes (Burton, 2015) ^[2]. In this situation, children with a disability would have higher expectations established and met due to access to the general curriculum and exposure to a range of instructional alternatives. Again, this will enhance positive social outcomes and improved self-esteem on the part of the student while it also leads to increased teacher satisfaction and enhanced opportunities for professional growth. In doing these, teachers must have the support they need to educate all children in their classes. This support may be needed in the form of extra planning time, educational assistants, specific training in teaching methods or learning styles or even environmental aids, such as appropriate desks and other physical materials for students (Burton, 2015) ^[2]. In a collaboration process, instruction is the primary focus of all teachers. In a collaborative teaching arrangement, both teachers must be

responsible for planning, delivering and assessing instruction as well as planning the accommodations and modifications for diverse learners. This can be successful only when appropriate modifications are used (Louisiana, 2011) [8]. This suggests that teachers must identify and design modifications for all students including children with disabilities. Managing behaviour is critical to successful instruction in inclusive schools. In a collaborative teaching arrangement, regular education and special education teachers must be able to manage behaviour and intervene with appropriate interventions as needed. This will not only help in shared responsibilities for classroom workload but also reduced behaviour problems. However, this contradicts the view of Jordan (2011) who was of the view that even when co-teachers fully supported and participated in a collaborative model, the reported deep levels of collaboration could be viewed as adding to the teachers' workload. In some situations, tasks could be shared, and co-teachers considered this a benefit. Sometimes, reflection causes an increase in workload and in some ways, it adds to our workload, especially once you started to work on problems and solutions. Assessment is critical to fine-tuning instructional strategies (Louisiana, 2011) [8]. In a collaborative arrangement, both teachers must be familiar with various assessment procedures and formats so that an accurate picture of students' progress is available. Walker (2017) [16] found that teachers need continuous training to provide and foster effective collaboration in the classroom. Sufficiently trained teachers can cultivate collaboration skills in their students, as well. This will bring about a mutual appreciation of general education and special education roles and give the learner more opportunities for creativity. Also, this will help both regular and special education teachers to openly and regularly share information and to discuss all issues related to the instructional programmes for students in their class. In the collaborative situation one teacher, one observer can be used. The good news in collaborative teaching is that more detailed observation of students engaged in the learning process can occur. With this approach, for example, co-teachers can decide in advance what types of specific observational information to gather during instruction and can agree on a system for gathering data. Afterwards, the teachers should analyse the information together (Friend & Cook, 2004) [5]. This data will help the planning of instruction in inclusive schools and assessment and referral purposes in the schools setting, and the data collected can facilitate the decision process of the child with disabilities in an inclusive school, leading to placement decisions. However, it can be said that in collaborative teaching a lot more planning and preparation is involved for class the next day and teachers have very little time for planning work together. In the situation where we talk about one teacher, one assist approach to collaborative teaching, one person would keep primary responsibility for teaching while the other professionals move about the room providing unobtrusive assistance to students as and when needed (Jordan 2011) [7]. This practice will reduce the load of the regular school teacher coordinating all instructional objectives, methods and materials requiring in terms of time and effort from the regular teacher (Friend & Cook, 2004) [5]. However, critics argue that the two teachers with the same degree, but different teaching styles are not good examples of

collaborative teaching because learners will not benefit from their styles. While a few collaborative teachers reported working relationship strains, many predicted collaborative work would be difficult if personal or philosophical conflicts existed. If you had people that do not get along, do not want to share, do not want to communicate, it could be a long school year. Collaborative teachers described philosophical conflicts as the basis for personal conflicts or personality issues. Collaborative teachers reported this conflict rooted in a belief system different from the other member of the team, and in some cases, differences in teaching style (Walker, 2017) [16]. Again, Stark (2015) [12], referred to another method as parallel teaching where student learning would be greatly facilitated if they had more supervision from the teacher or more opportunities to respond. In parallel teaching, the teachers are both covering the same information, but they divide the class into two groups and teach simultaneously. A look at this collaborative teaching requires extra classes to get teachers prepared for this new way of teaching, which many teachers do not want to do because it requires more hours for them along with more preparation (Stark, 2015) [12]. This tends to deter many teachers from being put into a collaborative teaching situation because of all the extra classes and time and preparation that they have to do when they can simply stick to what they know and prepare their class the way they want instead of trying to merge two different styles. When a teacher decides to teach by him or herself, he/she misses out on some opportunities to work with students that may be having troubles with the content. Since teachers on average have a large class size in a classroom one teacher cannot do so much by himself or herself. Having another helping hand would be helpful in this situation since Walker (2017) [16], believe that teachers overworked and overstressed leads to frustrations and burn-outs. Teachers can transfer this frustration to students resulting in shutting down or giving up. When this happens, school days are less productive for both students and teachers. One critical strategy mentioned as station teaching in a collaborative teaching approach is where teachers divide content and students. Each teacher then teaches the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction for the other group. If appropriate, a third station could allow students to work independently (Stark, 2015) [12]. The proponents of this view believe that having this pairing of teachers allows the general education teacher to teach in a style that is comfortable for them and having a special education teacher with them allows someone else to simplify or allow children with disabilities to learn in a way that is helpful for them. Due to these students will feel more confident when taking any type of testing that they need to facilitate their teaching and learning. However, many of the collaborative teachers complain of inadequate time as a critical hindrance to the collaborative process. Collaborative teachers simply expressed an interest in having more time in addition to the total number of hours; teachers stressed the importance of blocks of time. Jordan (2011) [7] finds out that, collaboration was less productive when there were interruptions, even if they were anticipated. It takes time to sit down and feed off each other even though collaboration teachers reported the collaborative process resulted in the team generating new ideas or approaches, resulting in changes in teaching practice, or the development of new materials. In the view

of Walker (2017) ^[16], the alternative teaching is where one teacher takes responsibility for the large group while the other works with a smaller group. In this situation, teachers will learn how to create successful collaborative lessons which are inspiring and engaging to students. Teachers tend to maximize the learning potential of a classroom by modifying curriculum, teaching methods, learning resources and activities to address the needs of the students, as individuals or small groups gathered by learning level or readiness. The teacher adjusts the pace of the teaching according to the needs of the students as well as their interests and learning styles. However, finding adequate meeting space was a hindrance. Adequate space away from students, especially for two teachers and materials needed for collaboration was difficult to find. Collaboration teachers also reported that frequent interruptions from other staff and parents or students hinder the smooth flow of teaching and learning. Collaborative teachers may bring on board individualizing content, the process, the materials used, or the learning environment. An important element of collaborative instruction is an ongoing assessment and necessary adjustments, as well as flexible grouping of students by readiness level and interests. In team teaching, both teachers are delivering the same instruction at the same time. Some teachers refer to this as having one brain in two bodies (Walker, 2017) ^[16] and most collaborative teachers consider this approach the most complex but satisfying way to co-teach, but the approach that is most dependent on teachers' styles. It is important for a teacher, to learn the challenges that wait for them in the classroom, for example, addressing several areas by the resource teacher will need a lot of time, therefore the need to use skills such as creativity, determination and flexibility to help guide their teaching through these challenges that will help them emerge a successful and effective educator.

Lev Vygotsky Social Development Theory

Lev Vygotsky's theories stress the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition (McLeod, 2014) ^[9]. Vygotsky believed strongly that community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning." rather than in Piaget's notion that children's' development must necessarily precede their learning (McLeod, 2014) ^[9]. Vygotsky argued, "Learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function" (1978, p. 90). In other words, social learning tends to precede development.

Social Influences on Cognitive Development

Vygotsky believes that young children are curious and actively involved in their learning and the discovery and development of new understandings. He placed more emphasis on social contributions to the process of development, whereas Piaget emphasized self-initiated discovery (McLeod, 2014) ^[9]. Vygotsky's work has not received the same level of intense scrutiny that Piaget's has, partly due to the time-consuming process of translating Vygotsky's work from Russian. Also, Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective does not provide as many specific hypotheses to test as did Piaget's theory, making refutation difficult, if not impossible. Perhaps the main criticism of Vygotsky's work concerns the assumption that it is relevant to all cultures (McLeod, 2014) ^[9]. Rogoff (1990) dismisses

the idea that Vygotsky's ideas are culturally universal and instead states the concept of scaffolding - which is heavily dependent on verbal instruction - may not be equally useful in all cultures for all types of learning. Indeed, in some instances, observation and practice may be more effective ways of learning certain skills (McLeod, 2014) ^[9]. According to Vygotsky (1978) ^[14], much important learning by the child occurs through social interaction with skilful teachers therefore skilful teaching through a collaborative teaching process is fundamental to the successful development of the child with disabilities in inclusive schools. The regular teacher through collaboration with the special education teacher may model behaviours and/or provide verbal instructions for the child in an inclusive setting to emulate. Vygotsky refers to this as cooperative or collaborative dialogue for the teaching and learning of the child in inclusive schools. The child seeks to understand the actions or instructions provided by the regular classroom teacher and the special education teacher then internalizes the information, using it to guide or regulate their performance (McLeod, 2014) ^[9]. Shaffer (1996) as cited in McLeod, (2014) ^[9] gives the example of a young girl who is given her first jigsaw. Alone, she performs poorly in attempting to solve the puzzle. The teacher then sits with her and describes or demonstrates some basic strategies, such as finding all the corner/edge pieces and provides a couple of pieces for the child to put together herself and offers encouragement when she does so. As the child becomes more competent, the teacher allows the child to work more independently. According to Vygotsky, this type of social interaction involved cooperative or collaborative dialogue which promotes cognitive development. To gain an understanding of Vygotsky's theories on cognitive development; one must understand two main principles of Vygotsky's work: the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

More Knowledgeable Other

The more knowledgeable other (MKO) is somewhat self-explanatory; it refers to someone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner in this situation the regular education teacher and special education teacher, concerning a particular task, process, or concept teaching in an inclusive classroom. Although the implication is that the MKO is a teacher or a special education teacher, this is not necessarily the case. Many times, a child's peers or an adult's children may be the individuals with more knowledge or experience in an inclusive classroom who are more likely to know more about the newest teenage music groups, how to win at the most recent PlayStation game, or how to correctly perform the newest dance craze - a child or their parents (McLeod, 2014) ^[9].

Zone of Proximal Development

The Zone of Proximal Development is an important concept that relates to the difference between what a child can achieve independently and what a child can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled regular education teacher and special education teacher in collaboration in an inclusive school. For example, the child could not solve the jigsaw puzzle (in the example above) by itself and would have taken along time to do so (if at all)

(McLeod, 2014) ^[9] but was able to solve it following interaction with the father, and has developed competence at this skill that will be applied to future jigsaws. Vygotsky (1978) ^[9] sees the Zone of Proximal Development as the area where the most sensitive instruction or guidance should be given allowing children to develop skills they will then use on their own developing higher mental functions. Vygotsky also views interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies. He suggests that teachers use collaborative learning exercises where children with disability in inclusive setting develop with help from more skilful peers within the zone of proximal development. This suggests that Vygotsky's theory is "reciprocal teaching"; it is used to improve students' ability to learn from a text more collaboratively. In this method, regular school teachers and special education teachers collaborate in teaching and learning and practising skills, for example, summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting in an inclusive school. The teacher's role in the process is reduced over time as the child with disabilities picks up. Also, Vygotsky's theories are relevant to instructional concepts such as "scaffolding" and "apprenticeship", in which a teacher or more advanced peer helps to structure or arrange a task so that a novice can work on it successfully. Vygotsky's theories also feed into the current interest in collaborative learning, suggesting that group members should have different levels of ability so more advanced peers can help less advanced members operate within their Zone of Proximal Development.

Statement of the Problem

Students with disabilities are being educated in the general education classroom as a policy direction of Ghana Education Service since 2015. The law requires that they are educated in a general education classroom. The inclusion of students with disabilities has become a phenomenon that has gained much attention from the education community. This spike in interest was due to legislation that mandates students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment which for many students was the general education classroom (Jordan, 2011) ^[7]. Schools are searching for alternatives to meet the mandates of special education legislation that requires the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. While many educators argue that creating effective collaborative relationships takes time, patience and willingness for educators to work together, equally (Louisiana, 2011) ^[8], the style of interaction between and among individuals was a major component of collaboration, and many schools have responded by choosing the collaboration of general education and special education teachers as a means for promoting effective instruction in inclusive classrooms (Jordan, 2011) ^[7]. However, in research conducted by Jordan (2011) ^[7], on collaboration in the classroom, the empirical literature is quiet on what strategies and challenges teachers face. The topic of teacher collaboration, particularly between general and special educators has gained attention in academic research partly due to the controversial issue of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Louisiana, 2011) ^[7]

Research Questions

1. What strategies are used in the collaborative process in

an inclusive school?

2. What challenges do teachers face in collaborative teaching?

Significance of the study

In an attempt to provide meaningful and sustained professional learning opportunities for teachers through effective collaborative efforts in the classroom, this study seeks to understand how teachers implement their collaborative methods in the inclusive classroom. The study aimed at adding attitudinal value to the domain of collaborative efforts in inclusive education. The study is to contribute to the knowledge base of available guidance on the implementation of a collaborative effort to make inclusion very successful. This study will invoke suggestions and recommendations on possible and better ways of involving all stakeholders as a matter of right and responsibilities. The study will reveal both merits and demerits of the existing condition to collaborate in inclusive schools. The responses from teachers' and observations would assist in gaining insight from teachers' perspectives. The results from this study will add to the existing and related literature on how to adapt the curriculum. This study will inform the Ghana Education Service about the nature of the effort teachers have made towards the practice of inclusive education. The study will go a long way to reveal the gap in teachers' collaborative effort and assessment in inclusion which will inform the Special Education Division of Ghana Education Service to equip teachers with the needed skills through in-service training.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design involving 125 teachers selected from 10 inclusive schools constituted the participants. The population of the teachers in the schools was 240. Purposive sampling was used to select teachers who were directly practicing collaborative teaching in the selected schools. The purposive sampling was used to select the schools and because the number of inclusive schools practicing collaboration was few, therefore the researchers decided to purposively include all those schools in the sample.

Instrument

The data collection instrument was a questionnaire developed by the researchers. The instrument was finalised after it was scrutinised for clarity, the relevance of terminology and concepts by a team of special education experts in the University of Education Winneba, Special Education Department. The instrument was piloted in Ghana national schools using 30 teachers. The internal consistency of the instrument yielded Cronbach's Alpha of 0.85. The questionnaire was in three sections A, B and C. Section A was concerned with information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents while section B consisted of the variables such as teachers' strategies used in the collaborative process in an inclusive school. The respondents were asked to rate these variables in terms of adequacy of their preparation, appropriateness in collaborative practice, and whether those strategies were used in the collaborative teaching process. In section B and C, the teachers were requested to indicate their responses on a 4-point Likert type scale ranging from Strongly Agree 4, Agree 3, Disagree 2 and Strongly Disagree 1, which

measured the overall views on the variables.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researchers trained research assistants who helped to collect the data from the selected schools. In each school, permission was sought from the school head and informed consent of the participants obtained. The selected teachers were contacted in their classrooms in their various inclusive schools. The distributed questionnaires were collected after one week. A few respondents failed to return the questionnaires however I gave the questionnaires to other equally competent teachers who made up for the shortfall.

Data Analysis

The completed questionnaires were serially numbered and coded. Different statistical techniques for data analysis were used. Frequencies and percentages were employed to analyse the data for the demographic characteristics of the respondents while mean and standard deviation were used to analyse data for research questions 1 and 2.

Results and Discussion

The study sought to explore the collaborative classroom for inclusive practice; the perspective of classroom teachers and special educators among inclusive schools in the Volta Region. Out of the 130 questionnaires administered, 125 of them were completely responded to and returned. All the analyses were based on 125 respondents. This unit presents the results and discussion of the data collected from the field. The results were presented in three sections. The first section presents a result on the demographic distribution of respondents; the second and third sections present results and discussion of the main data.

Background Information of Respondents

This section presents results on the demographic characteristics of respondents. Demographic variables for the respondents included; gender, age range, highest academic qualification, profession and working experience. Table 1, presents the summary of the demographics of respondents.

Table 1: Demographic variables of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	75	60
Female	50	40
Age		
Under 30yrs	36	28.8
30-40yrs	31	24.8
41-50yrs	35	28.0
Above 50yrs	23	18.4
Qualification		
Master's degree	10	8
Bachelor' degree	57	45.6
Diploma	56	44.8
Cert 'A'	2	1.6
Profession		
Special Educator	25	20.0
Regular School Teacher	77	61.6
Itinerant Teacher	23	18.4
Working experience		
Less than 6yrs	40	32.0
6-12yrs	22	17.6
13yrs	63	50.4

Source: field survey, (2020)

Table 1 indicated that, out of 125 respondents that took part in the study, the majority of them were male (n=75, 60%) while their female counterpart was in the minority (n=50, 40%). Again, respondents' information regarding their age-range were also taken, a majority (n= 36, 28.8%) of the respondents were the ages below 30years. This was followed by respondents who were between the ages of 41-50years, thus (n=35, 28.0%). Table 1, further showed that respondents who were between the ages of 30-40years (n=31, 24.8%) and above 50 years were in the minority (n= 23, 18.4%). Furthermore, information regarding their educational level was obtained, the majority (n=57, 45.6%) were bachelor degree holders. This was followed closely by diploma holders who were (n=56,44.8%) while respondents who hold master' degree were (n=10, 8%) and (n=2, 1.6%) were the minority. Again, participants' information regarding their profession were also taken, the majority (n= 77, 61.6%) of the participants were regular school teachers. This was followed by respondents who were special

educators. Thus (n=25, 20%). Table 1, further showed that respondents were (n=23, 18%) in the minority. Another, information regarding their working experience were obtained, the majority (n=63, 50.4%) were working for over 13 years. This was followed by those working for less than 6 years who were (n=40, 32%) and who were in minority were between 6-12 years with (n=22, 17.6%). This section presents the results and discussion of the main data. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with a list of items about strategies use and challenges faced in a collaborative classroom in the Volta Region. The mean scores for the responses were used for the analysis. The overall mean of all the responses was 2.5. Items with mean scores 2.5 and above show that respondents agreed, whereas, items with mean scores below 2.5 depict disagreement.

Research question 1: What strategies are used in the collaborative process in an inclusive school?

This research question sought to find out the strategies teachers use in collaborative teaching process in an

inclusive classroom. The responses were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: strategies used in teaching in collaborative classroom

Statements	M	SD
1. Both teachers provide feedback to the student to guide their learning	3.49	.617
2. Both teachers use language ("we"; "our") to demonstrate true collaboration and shared responsibility	3.48	.642
3. Both teachers ask questions at a variety of levels to meet all students' needs	3.44	.547
4. Two or more professionals working together in the same physical space	3.23	.824
5. During instruction, both teachers assist students with and without disabilities	3.59	.889
6. The class moves smoothly with evidence of co-planning and communication between both teachers	3.60	1.218
7. Both teachers use differentiated strategies, for example, technology, are used to meet the range of learning needs	3.33	.671
8. A variety of instructional approaches are used, including regrouping students	3.57	.542
9. Both teachers engage in appropriate behaviour management strategies as needed and are consistent in their approach to behaviour management	3.35	.557
10. Class environment demonstrates parity and collaboration (both names on board, sharing materials and space)	3.24	.679
11. Both teachers are actively involved in the lesson presentation and assessment process.	3.52	.547
12. Both teachers' voices are heard in the teaching/learning process.	3.15	.916
13. Learning expectations, directions and procedures are clearly defined for students	3.49	.617
14. Students are participating in lesson activities by both answering and asking question	3.45	560
15. A variety of instructional materials appropriate to learner's age/grade are used to engage and motivate learners.	3.34	.730
Grand mean	3.65	

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviation of the specific strategies used in collaborative teaching. As already stated, the criterion for determining agreement is 2.5 or above. Fifteen strategies were examined by respondents and all the items indicated a mean score above 2.5 that suggest good practices in collaborative strategies. This might be as a result of the population that was used in the data collection and the tools that were used in collecting data. This can also be attributed to the fact that some of the respondents were not truthful in the process of answering the questionnaire. Responses indicate that respondents agreed (M=3.49, SD=.617) that "both teachers provide feedback to the student to guide their learning" this means that feedback in teaching and learning cumulatively enable the learners to identify their weaknesses and strengths to help the teachers address the shortcoming of the learners in collaborative teaching. This finding disagrees with Jordan (2011) [7] who was of the view that in collaboration teaching there is less time to meet to provide feedback to both teachers and learners. Looking very closely to the second item "both teachers use language ("we"; "our") to demonstrate true collaboration and shared responsibility" results shows that respondents agreed (M=3.48, SD=.642) meaning teachers see themselves as part of the process in collaborative teaching. This indicates the level of teacher commitment in the collaboration in inclusive practice where they see their work of being responsible for the success and the failure of the learning process. This implies that all teachers should do well to own the process of teaching and learning where the learner is seen at the centre of the learning process. This was followed by respondents agreed (M=3.48, SD=.547) to the item that says "both teachers ask questions at a variety of levels to meet all students' needs". This suggests that teachers in a collaborative classroom raise basic recall questions to higher-order thinking questions to meet the various degrees of needs of learners. This enables the teachers to address the needs of the learners in the collaborative teaching process. Again, regarding the statement "two or more professionals working together in the same physical space" as a strategy in collaborative teaching, the respondents agreed (M=3.23, SD=.824). This

is done to help give support where the need is in addressing the challenges of all learners in the collaborative classroom. This is in line with Walker, (2017) [16] who mentioned that one of the good strategies in collaborative teaching is where teaching is done with both teachers delivering the same instruction at the same time using the same physical space. Some teachers refer to this as having one brain in two bodies and most collaborative teachers consider this approach the most complex but satisfying way to collaborative teaching. However, in Ghana today it is difficult to find classrooms to accommodate students in the school for effective classroom activities. This poses a challenge to collaborative teaching. Another concern highly interesting is that during instruction both teachers assist students with and without disabilities. This was demonstrated when the respondents' data indicated a mean score of (M=3.59, SD.889). This needs to be highly commended since the practice is at the heart of collaborative teaching and learning. This finding corroborates the results of Burton, (2015) [2] who mentioned that in collaborative practice support is needed in the form of teachers assisting students in learning styles or even environmental aids, such as appropriate desks and other physical materials for students. The finding that teaching moves smoothly with evidence of co-planning and communication between both teachers had the highest respondent agreed (M=3.60, SD=1.218). This suggests that the practice is highly common in all schools in the region. This might be a reason for the high mean score that was indicated in the data collected. This then calls for more supervision and monitoring to help maintain the practice in the region, if possible, teachers in the other regions are made to understudy the practice. Also, there was an indication that both teachers use differentiated strategies, to include technology to meet the range of learning needs. There was evidence of (M=3.33, SD=.671) in that regard looking at the data. This is where Burton, (2015) [2] agrees that in collaborative teaching various materials; different strategies and technology are used for the success of collaborative teaching. The data brought up the issue of a variety of instructional approaches used strongly with (M=3.57,

SD=542) as evidence. This shows the respondent desire to address all needs of learners in the collaborative class by use of various skills in the teaching strategy. This also calls for continues in-service training for teachers to maintain the practice and the availability of materials, including access to technology, proper room arrangement. One crucial finding brought to the fore by the respondents was that teachers engage in appropriate behaviour management strategies as needed and are consistent in their approach to behaviour management. This was supported in the data where respondents agreed (M=3.57, SD=.542). This is because of teachers' belief that all behaviours are learnt and can be unlearned through reinforcement and punishment. This suggests that teachers identify what triggers the behaviour the nature of the behaviour and the consequence of the behaviour before management procedures are followed. Considering the issue of class environment and how teachers demonstrate parity and collaboration the result shows (M=3.24, SD=.679) suggesting that in the classroom both teachers write on board, sharing materials to learners and use space for effective mobility and instruction. This was one of the reasons for the concept of the least restrictive environment (LRE) catalysed by the passage of Public Law 94-142 (that was, put forth by the 94th Congress as their 142nd piece of legislation). One of the significant areas that responses were overwhelming was that teachers actively involved in lesson presentation and assessment process. This was agreed to with (M=3.52, SD=.547) suggesting a good reason for effective feedback for the learners in collaborative schools. This goes a long way to confirm the stand of Jordan (2011) [7] mentioning issues of assessment and feedback in a collaborative classroom. Moreover, the Persons with Disability Act, Act 715, mandates that no school in the country should reject any child, the only exception being where assessment results show that regular education placement is inappropriate

(Vanderpuye, 2013) [13]. This also suggests that teachers have fundamental knowledge about the Persons with Disability Act, Act 715 raising issues in the collaborative classroom which is seen as the guiding constitution for persons with disabilities. From the study also, it was found that a strategy teacher's use was to be sure their voices are heard in the teaching and learning process clearly by the learners. There was a shred of evidence where respondents agreed (M=3.15, SD=.916). This shows that a bigger majority shows competency in speaking in a clear voice to the learners. The advantage of practical learning may be derived from the way learners are involved in related activities and situations in the classroom since the interaction is spaced. This might be the reason why other findings show that Students participating in lesson activities is high when teachers use the strategy of both answering and asking question in the classroom. The evidence was shown when respondents agreed (M=3.45, SD=.560) by so doing learning is child centre and curriculum made accessible for persons with disabilities.

This corroborates Jordan (2011) who was of the view that even when co-teachers fully supported and participated in a collaborative model, the reported deep levels of learners' participation and collaboration could be viewed as adding to the teachers' workload. It was also indicated that learning expectations, directions and procedures are clearly defined for students.

Research question 2: What challenges do teachers face in collaborative teaching?

This research question sought to find out challenges teachers face in collaborative teaching process in an inclusive classroom. These responses were presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Strategies used in teaching in collaborative classroom

Statements	M	SD
Inadequate meeting space	3.24	.797
Increase in teachers workload	3.28	.878
Strain working relationship	3.06	.849
Personal and philosophical conflict in teaching	2.98	.906
Limited time and structure on planning	3.21	.809
A team member's inability to get along affects the teaching process.	3.21	.799
Instruction look different with 2 teachers in the classroom	3.00	.915
Grand mean	3.14	

In the output presented in table 3, the information we requested for each of the statements is summarised. A mean score of 3.24 on a four-point Likert type scale (1= SA-strongly agree, 2=A- agree, 3=D- disagree, 4=SD- strongly disagree) indicated that the teachers have inadequate meeting space in the collaborative teaching process. This may reduce mobility and the teachers' ability to manoeuvre from group to group in the teaching and learning process. This will hinder the movement of individuals using wheelchairs, crutches, white cane and others. This will also affect occasions where teachers decide to use deferent venues to meet to address the unique needs of learners in the teaching process. Generally, it can be noted that as a result of the free Compulsory Universal Basic School Policy, free school uniform, school feeding programme and capitation

grants have increased enrolment in Ghanaian schools. This law was enacted in 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that all qualifying children with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate public education. The law outlines the special education benefit, including individualized special education services that can take place in collaborative classrooms. In this regard, every country has different procedures for implementing the law, but they all must be consistent with the (IDEA, 2004). On the issue of increase in workload, the record of 3.28 as the mean score equally gives a high agreement to the problem of workload. These challenges are likely to occur in the areas of meetings to plan and prepare to address the needs of the learners where it is crucial to use adaptable teaching and learning resources to address the needs of the learners.

Looking at this issue support from management is important for effective instruction especially with a large class size. It is the school management that determines the class size. The class size has to be manageable for the teacher to be able to give individual attention to children with special needs in collaborative teaching. Furthermore, the school management through the supervision of teachers can identify staff needs and staff development requirements. Such support from the school management has to facilitate learning. This is in line with Jordan (2011) who was of the view that even when collaborative teachers fully supported and participated in a collaborative model, deep levels of collaboration could be viewed as adding to the teachers' workload. The teachers viewing their workload to be on the higher side would tend to reduce teacher effectiveness. Teachers' ability to accommodate the unique needs of learners is questioned. This might be because not much special education teachers are in the schools. This was confirmed looking at the demographic analyses that were done in the data analysed. One other challenge mentioned was the issue of strain working relationship between the teachers. This recorded a mean score of 3.06 suggesting that a good number of teachers have developed a bad working relationship in the collaborative process. This challenge might come up in the process of the decision-making process in collaborative teaching. This can be managed when supervisors implement procedural safeguards. Procedural safeguards ensure that teachers, children and their parents' rights are protected and established clear steps to address disputes. The challenge faced in their personal and philosophical thinking process in teaching recorded a mean score of 2.98. This issue is closely linked to having a strained relationship with each other. A teacher has different teaching and learning philosophy where at times in taking decisions that contradict their teaching philosophy could lead to a strained relationship being developed between the teachers. This is in line with a walker (2017) [16] who says that teachers described philosophical conflicts as the basis for the personal conflicts or personality issues in collaborative teaching. Again, other challenges that emerged with regards to collaborative teaching were the issue of limited time and structure on planning. The question is at what time do teachers meet to plan their collaborative lessons taking into considerations the teaching standards and needs of learners? Where individual teachers have their different plans from home, community and environment? Different programmes from their children and families? This finding is in line with Burton, (2015) [2] who mentioned that teachers need extra planning time, educational assistants, specific training in teaching methods or learning styles or even environmental aids, such as appropriate desks and other physical materials for students. Furthermore, the issue of team member's inability to get along affects the teaching process scored a mean mark of 3.21. Suggesting that collaborative teachers have used good strategies but there are issues relating to how well they get along as a team is nothing to write home about. Walker (2017) [16] stated that if you had people that do not get along, do not want to share, do not want to communicate, it could be a long school year without success. The last but not the least mentioned with a mean score of 3.00 was the issue of teachers' instruction look different from teachers in the classroom can be linked to their belief, values, attitude and philosophy. Collaborative

teachers reported this conflict rooted in a belief system different from the other member of the team, and in some cases, differences in teaching style (Walker, 2017) [16].

Conclusion

The findings of our research indicate that teachers expect more support in the process of inclusion, both in a qualitative and a quantitative sense. Such support is essential to teachers due to their insufficient competence to work with students with disabilities, but also because of the unified educational and rehabilitation interventions often required by these students. An improved conceptualisation of collaboration between schools and local communities would certainly contribute to the quality of inclusive education in Volta regional schools, in particular the promotion of teamwork in every school and the local community.

Recommendations

Below are suggested actions to organize collaboration practice in Inclusive schools in the Volta Region.

1. Teachers should schedule adequate time for collaboration planning taking into consideration their respective challenges.
2. Teachers should work to continually align belief and philosophical issues throughout the school to support collaboration that results in increased student achievement.
3. Work to align school improvement goals with the work of co-teacher collaboration.
4. Ministry of Education in collaboration with District Assemblies should provide more classrooms with enough space in schools for collaboration.
5. Special education unit should provide continuous follow-up support, monitoring and training for schools in the region.

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