

Review

The Challenges of Inclusive Education in Ghana: A Literature Review

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Abstract: This article presents a comprehensive review of peer-reviewed scholarship on perceptions and knowledge of Inclusive Education (IE) in Ghana. Sixty-five publications, released between 2007 and 2022, were identified through a systematic search of major academic databases and analyzed to map the evolution of IE research in the country. The studies were organized into two overarching thematic domains: (1) core focus areas—including attitudes toward IE, levels of knowledge among stakeholders, and the practical realities of implementation—and (2) policy-oriented recommendations. Across the literature, there is broad agreement that Ghana has established a solid legislative and policy foundation for IE. However, the transition from policy to practice remains uneven and slow, constrained by persistent gaps in resources, training, and public awareness. While the existing body of work offers rigorous and multidimensional examinations of IE, notable limitations remain. Research has disproportionately centered on teachers, with comparatively limited attention to other key stakeholders such as students, parents, school leaders, and community actors—though recent studies show a gradual shift toward more inclusive perspectives. Additionally, diachronic analyses are scarce, despite the long-term and evolving nature of IE implementation in Ghana. Overall, the reviewed studies illuminate the complexity of IE as both a policy agenda and a lived educational reality. The article concludes with targeted policy recommendations aimed at strengthening IE in Ghana, emphasizing the need for sustained professional development, improved resource allocation, and broader public engagement to reinforce inclusive education as a national priority.

Keywords: inclusive education, Ghana, Africa, literature review

1. Introduction

Universal education has long been a central objective for governments, Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). For much of the twentieth century, efforts to educate all children—particularly those with Special Education Needs (SEN)—were pursued through segregated schooling models. These

systems, while intended to provide specialized support, reinforced separation and often limited the social and academic opportunities available to students with SEN. Over the past several decades, however, global thinking has shifted toward Inclusive Education (IE), a model that places students with SEN and their non-SEN peers in the same learning environment and adapts instruction, resources, and classroom structures to meet diverse individual needs.

A major catalyst for this paradigm shift was the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and UNESCO's 2020 Global Report on Inclusion and Education (UNESCO, 2020), which articulated a global commitment to IE and urged governments to adopt policies that recognize inclusive schooling as the preferred approach to achieving equitable education for all. The Statement and its accompanying Framework for Action provided both the philosophical foundation and practical guidance that shaped subsequent national reforms around the world.

Ghana's policy trajectory reflects this international influence. Following the Salamanca Statement, the country introduced a series of Education Strategic Plans (Ministry of Education, 2003) and enacted the Education Act (Republic of Ghana, 2008), all of which explicitly positioned IE as a national priority. These initiatives were reinforced by earlier legislative commitments, including the Persons with Disability Act (Republic of Ghana, 2006), which mandated access to education for persons with disabilities, and the Children's Act (Republic of Ghana, 1998), which affirmed education as a fundamental right for all children. Across successive policy cycles, Ghana progressively broadened its IE agenda—from small-scale pilot programs to more ambitious goals aimed at expanding access, increasing enrolment, and promoting participation for all learners.

As policy commitments deepened, scholarly interest in IE in Ghana expanded rapidly. A growing body of peer-reviewed research has examined the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of various stakeholders, as well as the practical challenges and successes associated with implementing IE in diverse educational settings. This paper offers a critical review of that scholarship, synthesizing findings from studies that explore how IE is understood, enacted, and experienced across the Ghanaian educational landscape.

Our analysis is guided by three central questions:

1. What does the existing body of scholarship reveal about the state of inclusive education in Ghana?
2. Which dimensions of inclusive education have been substantively examined within the Ghanaian context, and where do significant gaps in the research remain?
3. What policy recommendations articulated within the scholarly literature offer pathways for strengthening the implementation of inclusive education in Ghana?

2. Method

We set out to conduct a critical review of peer-reviewed scholarship that examines IE in Ghana, either wholly or in part. To identify relevant studies, we carried out an extensive search across major academic databases. Our initial search used the broad terms *Ghana*, *disability*, and *education* in EBSCOhost, ProQuest, PubMed, and Web of Science, yielding 403, 246, 209, and 142 results respectively. A second search replaced *education* with *inclusive education*, which produced fewer but more targeted results (90, 47, 3, and 36). To ensure the inclusion of the most recent scholarship, we supplemented these searches with a manual review of articles published between 2021 and 2022.

Using Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and UNESCO's 2020 Global Report on Inclusion and Education—a landmark in the global movement toward inclusive education—as the conceptual starting point, we screened the collected articles. After removing duplicates, we narrowed the selection to peer-reviewed studies that addressed the thematic areas and policy considerations outlined in the abstract. This process resulted in a final dataset of 65 articles published between 2007 and 2022. Notably, more than half of these studies appeared within the last four years, indicating both sustained scholarly engagement and a recent surge of interest in IE in Ghana. The earliest publications align closely with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), suggesting that global policy developments may have catalyzed academic attention.

Except for two comparative studies, one examining Ghana and Botswana (Kuyini & Mangope, 2011) and another comparing Ghana with Germany and Spain (Mónico et al., 2018)—the reviewed literature focuses exclusively on the Ghanaian context. Several studies adopt a national lens, particularly theoretical analyses such as Ametepee and Anastasiou (2015), who assess Ghana's progress toward its 2003 IE goals; Lamptey et al. (2015), who analyze

the language of Ghana's IE policy; and Okyere et al. (2019), who propose alternative conceptual frameworks for understanding disability. However, most studies are grounded in empirical fieldwork conducted in specific regions, including Greater Accra (Agbenyega, 2007; Gregorius, 2016), the Central, Brong Ahafo, and Ashanti Regions (Gyimah & Amoako, 2016; Asamoah et al., 2022), and Cape Coast (Vanderpuye et al., 2020). Collectively, these studies provide broad geographic representation across the country.

A significant proportion of the literature—41 of the 65 articles—focuses on educators, including teachers, administrators, and preservice teachers. This emphasis is expected, given the central role educators play in implementing IE and shaping its success. Fourteen studies examine students with SEN, while smaller numbers focus on parents (three studies), nonSEN students (four studies), nonteaching professionals (two studies), and the general Ghanaian public (two studies). Four articles center on environmental or nonhuman factors, and five focus primarily on policy analysis.

The reviewed studies employ a wide range of methodological approaches, from questionnaires and semistructured interviews to policy and conceptual analyses. Policy-oriented studies interrogate how disability and IE are defined and conceptualized, often proposing alternative frameworks (Lampitey et al., 2015; Okyere et al., 2019). Empirical studies, meanwhile, provide qualitative and quantitative insights into the implementation of IE and the extent to which it aligns with national goals. Many researchers adopt established instruments such as the Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education Scale (ATIES), used by Kuyini and Mangope (2011) and Kuyini and Desai (2007). Others develop context-specific questionnaires to assess perceptions of IE (Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017; Gyimah et al., 2008; Issaka et al., 2022; Mamah et al., 2011; Nketsia et al., 2016). Semistructured interviews are widely used to explore knowledge, attitudes, and lived experiences (Botts & Owusu, 2013; Gregorius, 2016; Opoku et al., 2017; Singal et al., 2015). Recent studies have introduced more innovative qualitative methods, including photovoice (Braun & Naami, 2021) and narrative inquiry (Hamenoo & Dayan, 2021). Across these studies, standard statistical techniques (e.g., Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), *t*-tests) and qualitative coding procedures are applied to analyze data and identify patterns.

To synthesize the findings, we conducted a content analysis of the selected articles (Krippendorff, 2022). Guided by our three research questions, we coded relevant sections of each study and grouped similar codes into two overarching thematic categories: (1) issues related to the substantive focus of the articles, and (2) issues pertaining to policy recommendations. These broad themes and their associated subthemes form the structure of the findings presented in the next section.

See Appendix A for summary of methodology (Table 1).

3. Results

3.1 Focus areas of the articles

3.1.1 Attitudes

Attitudes toward IE and disability constitute the most frequently examined theme in the literature, appearing in nearly 43 of the reviewed articles. Most of these studies focus on teachers and other educational professionals (e.g., Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017; Gyimah & Amoako, 2016; Mamah et al., 2011; Nketsia et al., 2016), reflecting the central role educators play in shaping the success of IE initiatives. A smaller but important subset examines the attitudes of students (Asamoah et al., 2018; Gregorius, 2016) and parents (Amponteng et al., 2018), offering a more holistic view of stakeholder perspectives.

The studies explore a wide range of attitudinal dimensions, including general attitudes toward IE (Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017), broader perceptions of disability (Botts & Owusu, 2013), and more specific emotional or affective responses to inclusive practices (Gyimah et al., 2008). Attitudinal research spans the entire period under review, from early foundational studies (Agbenyega, 2007; Kuyini & Desai, 2007; Obeng, 2007) to the most recent publications (Issaka et al., 2022), demonstrating the enduring relevance of this theme.

Overall, the literature reveals a pattern of cautious optimism: stakeholders generally support the idea of IE but express significant reservations about its practical implementation. Common concerns include insufficient teacher training (Agbenyega, 2007; Gregorius, 2016), lack of accessible teaching materials (Ntuli, 2013), and persistent stigma toward disability (Ocloo & Subbey, 2008; Adera & Asimeng-Boahene, 2011). These findings underscore the gap between policy aspirations and the lived realities of educators and learners.

3.1.2 Knowledge

Knowledge emerges as a second major theme, appearing in 34 of the 61 articles. The literature consistently identifies knowledge-particularly among educators-as a critical determinant of IE implementation. Studies assess teachers' understanding of IE policies, their familiarity with best practices, and their ability to translate conceptual knowledge into classroom strategies (Kuyini et al., 2016; Subbey, 2020; Agbenyega & Deku, 2011).

While many educators are aware of IE as a national policy, the literature highlights a widespread lack of practical knowledge about how to implement inclusive pedagogies. This knowledge gap is one of the most frequently cited barriers to effective IE. A smaller number of studies examine parental knowledge (Amponteng et al., 2018), revealing similar patterns of limited understanding and uncertainty about IE processes.

Knowledge is not only a focus area in half the articles but also a central component of policy recommendations in nearly two-thirds of the studies. The literature makes clear that without substantial improvements in stakeholder knowledge-especially among teachers-IE implementation will continue to fall short of national goals.

3.1.3 Practicalities of implementation

More than one-third of the reviewed articles examine the practical, structural, and institutional challenges that impede IE implementation in Ghana. These studies highlight the importance of contextual factors such as school architecture (Ackah-Jnr & Danso, 2019; Gregorius, 2016), transportation barriers (Nketsia et al., 2016), and financial constraints (Obeng, 2007; Singal et al., 2015).

Although these practicalities receive less attention than attitudes or knowledge, they are essential for understanding the systemic obstacles that shape the everyday realities of IE. The literature shows that even when attitudes are positive and knowledge is adequate, structural barriers can severely limit the feasibility of inclusive practices. This theme reinforces the need for a holistic approach to IE that addresses both human and environmental factors.

3.1.4 Policy recommendations (General)

Nearly all the reviewed articles offer policy recommendations, which cluster around three broad categories: resources, training, and information. These recommendations must be understood within Ghana's broader socioeconomic context, characterized by widespread poverty, limited public spending, and increasing enrolments following IE policy adoption.

Since the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), Ghana has made significant commitments to IE, including the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) program (Republic of Ghana, 1996), the prioritization of IE in the Education Strategic Plan (2003-2015) (Ministry of Education, 2003), and partnerships with NGOs to expand access for children with disabilities. These initiatives have increased enrolment, but they have also intensified pressure on schools, teachers, and support systems.

The literature consistently argues that without substantial investment in resources, training, and public awareness, IE will remain an aspirational rather than an operational policy.

3.1.5 Resources

Two-thirds of the articles identify resource shortages as a major barrier to IE. The literature calls for increased investment in general IE resources (Agbenyega, 2007; Botts & Owusu, 2013), as well as specific improvements in technological tools (Hampton, 2013), funding mechanisms (Ocloo & Subbey, 2008), curriculum materials (Nketsia et al., 2016), and student supports (Mamah et al., 2011).

A recurring theme is that resource scarcity in Ghana often amounts to complete absence rather than mere insufficiency. For example, deaf and hard-of-hearing students frequently lack access to sign language interpreters, hearing aids, captioned videos, or note-takers (Hampton, 2013). Similarly, students with visual impairments often have no access to braille materials (Gregorius, 2016). Large class sizes further exacerbate these challenges (Kuyini et al., 2016). These findings highlight the urgent need for systemic investment in the material foundations of IE.

3.1.6 Teacher training

Training is closely linked to resource availability and is discussed in more than half of the reviewed articles.

The literature reveals that many teachers lack even basic knowledge of IE principles, let alone specialized training in inclusive pedagogies (Vanderpuye et al., 2020; Opoku et al., 2017). Students with disabilities report that teachers are often unprepared for fundamental inclusive practices, such as maintaining visual contact for lip-reading (Hampton, 2013).

Thirteen articles call for general improvements in teacher training (Agbenyega, 2007; Mensah et al., 2022), while others emphasize pre-service training (Mensah & Badu-Shayar, 2016; Obeng, 2007) and ongoing professional development through workshops and in-service programs (Butakor et al., 2020; Subbey, 2020). The literature makes clear that without sustained and well-funded training initiatives, IE implementation will remain inconsistent and incomplete.

3.1.7 Information

One-third of the articles highlight the need for improved dissemination of information about IE. This theme extends beyond schools to the broader community, where low literacy levels, limited access to public information, and persistent stigma toward disability pose significant challenges.

Recommendations include grassroots community education (Adera & Asimeng-Boahene, 2011; Amponteng et al., 2018), assessments of broader social attitudes (Botts & Owusu, 2013), and the development of holistic disability frameworks for use by government ministries and community agencies (Gyimah et al., 2009; Okyere et al., 2019).

These studies emphasize that IE cannot succeed without widespread public understanding and support.

See Appendix B for comprehensive Table 2.

4. Discussion

The body of scholarship on IE in Ghana demonstrates sustained and growing academic engagement with the topic. Over the past two decades, researchers have examined IE from multiple angles-policy, pedagogy, attitudes, institutional capacity, and lived experience-producing a rich and increasingly nuanced understanding of both the progress made and the persistent challenges. Taken together, these studies reveal a system in transition: one that has embraced the principles of IE at the policy level but continues to struggle with implementation, resource allocation, and cultural attitudes. The literature collectively affirms that Ghana has taken meaningful steps toward inclusive schooling, yet the journey toward full realization remains incomplete.

4.1 Growth and distribution of IE research in Ghana

The rapid expansion of IE research in Ghana reflects both the relatively recent adoption of IE as a national policy priority and the growing scholarly interest in documenting its implementation. Although no single study adopts a nationwide scope, the collective body of research spans nearly all regions of the country. This geographical spread-covering Ashanti, Greater Accra, Brong Ahafo, Central, Eastern, Northern, Volta, Upper East, and Western regions-provides a reasonably representative picture of the national IE landscape. The only region not featured in the reviewed studies is Upper West.

This broad coverage enhances the credibility of the synthesized findings and suggests that IE research in Ghana has matured into a diverse and regionally distributed field. The growth of scholarship has also introduced greater nuance, with studies examining varied stakeholder groups, educational levels, and conceptual framings of IE.

4.2 Teachers as predominant informants in IE research

Across the reviewed literature, teachers constitute the most frequently studied stakeholder group, appearing in approximately twothirds of the studies (41 of 61). This concentration is unsurprising: teachers occupy a central position in the implementation of IE, serving as the primary link between policy directives and classroom practice. They are also a readily identifiable and accessible population for researchers, which has contributed to their prominence in the evidence base.

This dominance has nonetheless yielded substantial benefits. Studies focusing on teachers provide rich insights into multiple dimensions of IE implementation. They illuminate issues of training and institutional preparedness (Gyimah & Amoako, 2016; Nketsia & Saloviita, 2013), offer detailed accounts of classroom-level realities (Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017; Kuyini et al., 2016), and identify persistent shortcomings in the current system. Teachers' perspectives shed light on a wide range of concerns, including the physical environment of schools (Achah-Jnr & Danso, 2019), funding and resource allocation (Opoku et al., 2017), preservice preparation (Gyimah & Amoako, 2016), and curriculum challenges (Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017). Collectively, these studies provide a comprehensive view of the institutional strengths and weaknesses of IE from the vantage point of those most directly responsible for its day-to-day enactment.

Although teachers dominate the literature, the reviewed studies also incorporate perspectives from other categories of educators, thereby broadening the analytical lens. Research includes teachers working in established IE programs (e.g., Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017; Gyimah et al., 2009; Kuyini et al., 2016), teachers-in-training (Gyimah & Amoako, 2016; Nketsia, 2017), early childhood educators (Ntuli & Traore, 2013; Achah-Jnr & Fluckiger, 2023), and school heads (Kuyini & Desai, 2007; Subbey, 2020). This diversity enriches the evidence base by capturing perspectives from different points within the educational hierarchy and across various stages of professional development.

Importantly, the literature recognizes that the challenges facing IE in Ghana are not solely structural but also ideological. Several studies therefore examine educators' attitudes, including perceptions of preparedness (Kuyini et al., 2016), emotional responses to inclusion (Gyimah et al., 2008), general attitudes toward IE (Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017; Gyimah et al., 2010; Kuyini & Desai, 2007; Nketsia & Saloviita, 2013; Nketsia et al., 2016; Ocloo & Subbey, 2008; Vanderpuye et al., 2020), and attitudes toward students with SEN across different disability categories (Asamoah et al., 2018; Gyimah et al., 2009; Hampton, 2013; Mamah et al., 2011; Obeng, 2007). These studies deepen our understanding of IE by highlighting areas where knowledge and awareness are relatively strong, while also identifying ideological barriers that continue to impede implementation.

A consistent theme across this body of work is that educators generally express support for the principles of IE, but this support is often tempered by concerns about feasibility. Institutional realities—particularly inadequate training, insufficient resources, and large class sizes—shape educators' attitudes and can reinforce negative perceptions of students with SEN. These findings underscore a critical insight: the success of IE depends not only on policy frameworks but also on the extent to which educators feel equipped, supported, and confident in their ability to implement inclusive practices.

Taken together, the literature suggests that while a policy foundation for IE exists in Ghana, practical limitations—especially those related to training, resources, and institutional capacity—continue to constrain progress. Teachers' perspectives therefore serve as both a diagnostic tool and a barometer of system readiness, offering essential guidance for strengthening IE implementation moving forward.

4.3 Including multiple stakeholder perspectives

While educators form the predominant focus of the studies examined here, they are not the only subjects or sources of data. Rather, some of the studies look instead—or as well—at students, parents, or the wider population (Amponteng et al., 2018; Botts & Owusu, 2013). Others, not based on field research, engage with more theoretical subjects, such as definitions of disability and their bearing on IE. And as important as it is to canvas educators for their knowledge and attitudes, relying exclusively on teachers provides a narrow perspective on IE. It is for that reason that it is crucial for other stakeholders to be included. The studies that do so are helping to address a significant gap in our understanding of IE in Ghana. Students' and parents' perspectives are still underrepresented, but where they are featured, they provide a much-needed contribution.

Amponteng et al. (2018) examined the perceptions of parents of children with SEN, and their study highlighted the need for better grassroots knowledge dissemination in communities about IE and about persons with disabilities more generally. Botts and Owusu (2013) also investigated persons with disabilities and their families and how they were perceived in their communities; they found that negative perceptions impacted IE as well as general social interactions in school settings between students with special needs and classmates. Both Stefanie Gregorius (2016) and Singal et al. (2015) studied persons with disabilities as students and beyond; that is, both articles looked at education—and IE—within the broader context of the employment and livelihoods of persons with disabilities. These articles presented three important points. First, although employment opportunities are limited for Ghanaian youth in general (with and without

disabilities), between 2015 and 2019 those with formal education fared better than those with no schooling. Second, children with disabilities were much less likely to receive formal education than children without disabilities. Third, although youth with disabilities faced discrimination in hiring practices, they and their parents reported that formal education did give them a better chance at finding work and securing livelihoods. Following that thread in another direction, some recent articles also study students with visual or other impairments in a post-secondary setting (Akoto et al., 2023; Braun & Naami, 2021; Odame et al., 2021; Odame et al., 2021; Vanderpuye et al., 2022), highlighting the unique context and common difficulties faced within that education environment. Finally, Asamoah et al. (2022) and Bentum et al. (2020) include the perspectives of social workers, as non-teacher professionals with an important role to play in IE.

In the case of studies that do not rely on field research, there tends to be a strong discursive and theoretical focus—examining the definitions of disability and IE used in policy and legislation, and the impact that those definitions have had. For instance, Lamprey et al. (2015) assert that the vague and narrow medical definitions of disability in IE policy have generated several problems with its implementation and evaluation. Okyere et al. (2019) similarly seize upon the problems of a narrow medical definition of disability and suggest using the World Health Organization (WHO)’s International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) as a basis for a more holistic approach to IE. The ICF-CY recognizes biomedical causes of disability (e.g. physical impairments). However, it equally emphasizes environmental factors (e.g. government policies, social attitudes) and personal factors (e.g. gender, age), which Okyere et al. argue need to be considered in refining the design of IE in Ghana moving forward. At a more general level, Agbenyega and Deku (2011) provide a post-colonial critique of pedagogical practices in Ghana, arguing that teacher training for IE in Ghana should focus on breaking down the “binary divide between teachers as the givers of knowledge and the students as receive” (p. 8) (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011). Under this model, everyone in the classroom becomes both teachers and learners, and pedagogy becomes inclusive. This approach and the others discussed above are important in that they might help to ensure that research on IE in Ghana explores more than the practical side of implementation, by considering critical and discursive concerns as well.

Overall, studies that look beyond educators provide a crucial elaboration of how the implementation of IE in Ghana to date is understood, and how it can be better achieved going forward. It is natural that the focus of most research has been on educators, and for good reason. Educators have a privileged perspective, and they play key roles in the implementation of IE. However, ignoring the voices of other stakeholders would result in an incomplete picture. By and large, students and parents reiterate many of the insights and concerns that educators do; however, they also highlight unique social and pedagogical challenges and illuminate important cultural and economic issues beyond the classroom.

4.4 Key revelations

Having explored key characteristics of the articles, the crucial question remains: what do the articles reveal? In the first place, they demonstrate how the state of IE in Ghana is the product of a unique national historical trajectory shaped by participation in international developments. In the first place, Ghana is signatory to international statements championing the principles of IE and that is reflected in legislation and policy. Moreover, inter- and non-governmental agencies exist in Ghana to support the implementation of IE. However, their work tends to be filtered through the potent influence of domestic dynamics, which include economic constraints on the part of the state and individual families (e.g. Amponteng et al., 2018; Botts & Owusu, 2013) and negative cultural perceptions of disability (Asamoah et al., 2018; Singal et al., 2015).

In Ghana then, IE (as above noted) is a work in progress. There appears to be effective government policy in place and this policy aligns with prevailing principles of IE. Moreover, there is broad-if sometimes tentative-support for IE among many sectors of the Ghanaian public sector and society. Educators are largely in favor of IE because of the value it offers to SEN students, although they voice misgivings about institutional preparedness and support. SEN students and their families are also generally supportive of IE, although again it is not an unreserved support on account of the institutional and social difficulties at present, and because some prefer the alternative forms of schooling where SEN students are taught in separate schools. Similarly, non-SEN students and their families often support IE in principle but are wary of the impact it will have on their education in practice.

The most unqualified support for IE in Ghana, it would seem, comes from government policy and from the authors themselves of the noted research studies. From such sources we find the benefits of IE most clearly articulated, whether

with respect to learning outcomes, socialization, or simply reiterating prevailing opinion in general. The authors of the studies also reflect the apprehensions of their subjects about the shortcomings of IE. Again, though, those critiques are focused on current implementation, not on IE in principle.

As described above, a lack of training and a lack of resources are the main critiques levelled against the state of IE in Ghana over the past few years. A lack of training was especially prominent among the perceived problems noted by educators and was linked to the minimal pre-service teacher preparation as well as inadequate access to ongoing instruction. Suggested solutions address both areas: more thorough training to prepare teachers for the diverse needs of SEN students; and a more robust selection of workshops and seminars to better ensure that teachers' competencies are as suitable as possible for the IE context. These steps will lead, it is hoped, to more effective teaching and, importantly, increased confidence among educators.

The perceived lack of resources entails a more diverse range of issues but is a common theme too among the many studies cited here. It is a generalized lack of resources that is manifested in a number of ways: funding problems; a dearth of appropriate classroom material, syllabi, and technical support; environmental obstacles on school grounds and within the classroom; access to specialized personnel (e.g. special education resource teachers and counsellors); and, from the students' perspective, the many financial constraints that prevent ready access to education. The result is that classrooms are often ill-equipped to properly implement an IE curriculum or address the needs of the students, whether through physical or social barriers, unwieldy class sizes, or the lack of appropriate material. The generally understood solution, naturally enough, is increased funding and application of that funding where it is needed.

For these reasons, despite the positive foundation in policy and legislation, the literature on IE in Ghana shows that the government's goals are not being met, whether with respect to the number of students with SEN enrolled in schools or to the quality and effectiveness of education available in IE classrooms. However, some positives also exist. In the first place, while the goals set out in Ghana's previous two Education Strategic Plans, from 2003 and 2010, have not been met, the articles reviewed here report some modest progress towards IE, including increased enrolments (albeit in a context of scarce public resources). It will be of great interest, therefore, to examine the impact of the latest Education Strategic Plan (ESP) (Ministry of Education, 2018) as it begins to have an impact.

Moreover, the research cited here demonstrates a sustained and growing interest in IE in Ghana, which is itself a positive development. The insights and critiques that have come out of this body of research can serve as a rich resource for policy amendments. While policy might not be a fundamental hindrance to the implementation of IE, there is plenty of room for improvement, as many studies point out. This includes revising terminology and ensuring greater clarity and precision. And it also includes specific issues to address-resources and training, social and economic constraints, cultural attitudes, and the institutional inertia of the education system as it currently exists. Therefore, as new government targets are established, there will be a growing body of scholarship to make use of, and a significant number of scholars who can continue to study its implementation.

How might future scholarship address gaps in our understanding of IE in Ghana? First, our understanding of IE in Ghana would be enhanced by more studies framed diachronically; that is, research with a greater focus on change over time. Such an approach is present in some studies examined here, most notably in the articles by Ntuli and Traore (2013) and Opoku et al. (2017). The latter study, for instance, is interested specifically in evaluating the success of IE since the pilot programme was introduced in 2003. Nonetheless, most of the studies examined here primarily offer detailed snapshots of attitudes and institutional capability. With IE now having been an expressly stated goal of policy for two decades now, it is imperative that more research become concerned with tracing the trajectory of its implementation over that time.

Second, another gap that needs to be addressed is how to better foreground the perspectives of stakeholders who are not educators, or how to diversify the types of voices represented in the research. Naturally, educators will not-and should not-be ignored by researchers, for they are a key factor in the success of IE, and an important set of witnesses to the process. The research that focuses on educators-such as the work by Emmanuel Kofi Gyimah, William Nketsia, and many others-has provided invaluable insights into the state of IE in Ghana. One recent area of growth in this respect can be seen in the increased focus on Early Childhood Education (ECE) and post-secondary contexts. Of course, non-educators have already featured in the research examined here, notably in the articles by Amponteng et al. (2018) and Singal et al. (2015). But, their voices are still not sufficiently part of the conversation, or a part of the data that shape analysis. Where they do appear, students, parents, and others contribute to a more nuanced and holistic understanding

of IE. Their attitudes and experiences are a key element of gauging the success of implementation. Therefore, a more prominent place for a wide range of perspectives in future research would be a valuable complement to the strong body of research that currently exists.

Finally, we would propose that future scholarship provide further international and comparative perspectives on IE. Since IE policy and implementation in individual countries is influenced by international agreements and the work of IGOs and NGOs, it is important to consider how IE is realized in different contexts. International and comparative studies can inform the development of IE in a particular country and can also provide insights from one context that may be of value to other countries. The value of adopting such an approach is seen in two recent articles which place Ghana within an international context (Shamrock & Ginn, 2021) and Global South context (Swanwick et al., 2022) respectively.

5. Study limitation

Several methodological limitations should be acknowledged in interpreting the findings of this literature review. First, the quality and heterogeneity of the included studies may influence the strength and comparability of the synthesized results. The reviewed publications varied in research design, sample size, analytical rigor, and reporting detail, which may have shaped the thematic patterns identified.

Second, the review was bounded by a defined publication time frame and restricted to peerreviewed studies published in English. These criteria, while necessary for feasibility and consistency, may have excluded relevant earlier work, grey literature, or studies published in local or regional outlets not indexed in major databases. As a result, the findings may not fully capture the breadth of IE research conducted in Ghana.

Third, despite employing a systematic search strategy, limitations inherent in database indexing and keyword sensitivity may have resulted in the omission of relevant studies. Variations in terminology such as the use of “special education”, “inclusive practices”, or “disability education” may have affected retrieval, and publication bias may have further constrained the available evidence base.

Fourth, the geographical and methodological distribution of the included studies was uneven. Research was concentrated in certain regions and educational levels, with limited representation from rural areas, early childhood settings, or nonformal education contexts. This imbalance may restrict the generalizability of the synthesized findings.

Finally, the use of qualitative content analysis, while appropriate for identifying patterns across diverse studies, involves interpretive judgment. Although efforts were made to ensure transparency and consistency in coding, the analysis remains shaped by the researchers’ interpretive lens.

Taken together, these limitations suggest the need for further empirical work that expands the geographical scope of IE research in Ghana, incorporates a wider range of stakeholder perspectives, and employs more diverse methodological approaches. Future studies would also benefit from greater attention to underrepresented educational settings and from longitudinal designs that capture changes in perceptions and practices over time.

6. Conclusion

There is now a substantial and increasingly diverse body of research on IE in Ghana. This scholarship has expanded rapidly in recent years and collectively offers a multidimensional understanding of a complex and evolving field. The studies document several important achievements: the establishment of a strong policy foundation supported by government and partner agencies; broad conceptual endorsement of IE across key stakeholder groups; and incremental improvements in teacher competencies and the enrolment of learners with SEN. At the same time, the literature consistently underscores Ghana’s difficulty in meeting its own policy targets. Persistent shortages of financial and material resources entrenched environmental and social barriers, and ongoing doubts about the feasibility and value of IE—at least in its current form—continue to impede progress. Taken together, the research affirms that IE in Ghana remains very much a work in progress.

Crucially, the studies reviewed do more than diagnose challenges; they also illuminate pathways for accelerating

progress. Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative methods, and incorporating the perspectives of educators, students with SEN, parents, and other stakeholders, this scholarship captures the lived realities of IE implementation. These insights highlight where reforms are most urgently needed, whether in teacher preparation, resource allocation, community engagement, or schoollevel support systems. Although gaps remain, particularly in longitudinal research and in work that foregrounds the voices of noneducators and this growing body of literature constitutes an invaluable resource. It provides a nuanced, evidencebased window into the implementation of IE in Ghana and offers a solid foundation for future policy development, scholarly inquiry, and practical intervention.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, that could have influenced the development, analysis, or reporting of this manuscript. All authors confirm that the research was conducted independently and without any commercial or institutional pressures that could be perceived to affect the integrity of the work.

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Appendix A

Table 1. Summary of methodology

Methodological component	Description
Search purpose	To identify peerreviewed studies examining IE in Ghana, either wholly or in part.
Databases searched	EBSCOhost, ProQuest, PubMed, Web of Science.
Initial search terms	<i>Ghana, disability, education.</i>
Initial search results	EBSCOhost (403), ProQuest (246), PubMed (209), Web of Science (142).
Secondary search terms	<i>Ghana, disability, inclusive education.</i>
Secondary search results	EBSCOhost (90), ProQuest (47), PubMed (3), Web of Science (36).
Additional search strategy	Manual search of articles published in 2021-2022 to capture the most recent studies.
Time frame considered	Post1994, using UNESCO's Salamanca Statement as the conceptual starting point.
Inclusion criteria	Peerreviewed articles; focus on IE in Ghana; addressed attitudes, knowledge, implementation, or policy recommendations.
Exclusion criteria	Duplicate records; nonpeerreviewed publications; studies not addressing IE or Ghana.
Final dataset	65 articles published between 2007 and 2022.
Geographic scope of studies	Mostly Ghanafocused; two comparative studies (Ghana-Botswana; Ghana-Germany/Spain).
Stakeholder groups represented	Educators (41), SEN students (14), parents (3), nonSEN students (4), nonteaching professionals (2), general population (2), environmental factors (4), policyfocused (5).
Methodological approaches	Questionnaires, semistructured interviews, policy analysis, conceptual analysis, photovoice, narrative inquiry.
Common instruments used	Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education Scale (ATIES); custom perception questionnaires.
Analytical techniques	Statistical analysis (e.g., ANOVA, ttests); qualitative coding; thematic content analysis.
Analytical framework	Content analysis guided by three research questions; coding of relevant sections; grouping into two broad themes (focus areas and policy recommendations).

Appendix B

Table 2. Literature review table: inclusive education in Ghana

Study/Authors	Focus area	Key findings	Policy implications
Agbenyega (2007); Kuyini & Desai (2007); Obeng (2007)	Attitudes toward IE	General support for IE but concerns about feasibility; teachers report limited training and materials	Need for foundational IE training; investment in basic resources
Deku & Vanderpuye (2017); Gyimah & Amoako (2016); Nketsia et al. (2016)	Teacher attitudes	Positive attitudes but low confidence in implementation	Strengthen teacher preparation programs
Asamoah et al. (2018); Gregorius (2016)	Student attitudes	Students generally supportive of inclusion; report barriers in classroom practices	Improve classroom accessibility and peersupport structures
Ampongeng et al. (2018)	Parental attitudes & knowledge	Parents aware of IE policy but lack practical understanding	Communitylevel education campaigns
Botts & Owusu (2013); Gyimah et al. (2008)	Attitudes toward disability	Stigma persists among educators and communities	Antistigma public education
Kuyini et al. (2016); Subbey (2018)	Knowledge of IE policy	Educators aware of IE policy but lack implementation knowledge	Policytopractice training modules
Agbenyega & Deku (2011)	Curricular knowledge	Teachers struggle to adapt curriculum for diverse learners	Curriculum redesign for inclusion
Ackah-Jnr & Danso (2019); Opoku et al. (2017)	School architecture & accessibility	Physical environments often inaccessible	Infrastructure upgrades and accessibility audits
Nketsia et al. (2016); Obeng (2007); Singal et al. (2015)	Financial & transportation barriers	Costs and distance limit participation for students with disabilities	Transportation support and targeted funding
Adera & Asimeng-Boahene (2011); Vanderpuye et al. (2020)	Resource shortages	Severe lack of teaching materials and assistive devices	Increase funding and resource distribution
Hampton (2013); Gregorius (2016)	Assistive technology	AT often completely absent in schools	Provision of interpreters, braille, hearing aids
Mensah & Badu-Shayar (2016); Butakor et al. (2020)	Teacher training	Preservice and inservice training insufficient	Mandatory IE modules and ongoing workshops
Adera & Asimeng-Boahene (2011); Nketsia & Saloviita (2013)	Information dissemination	Low public awareness; stigma reinforced by misinformation	Grassroots disability education
Okyere et al. (2019)	Holistic disability understanding	Government agencies lack coordinated disability knowledge	Crosssector disability training