

## **1. Introduction**

The current study sought to investigate the implementation of inclusive education in two selected Ethiopian high schools located in Dilla town. These high schools were selected purposively since they implement integration/inclusive education and found in relatively nearby areas that would assist for the investigation.

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Inclusive education is a critical component in the development of the whole child. Inclusion promotes quality and equity education for all, without any type of barrier or exclusion, including those who may be potentially marginalized due to disability, gender, emotional/ behavioural problems, family background, ethnicity, giftedness, migrants, poverty, hearing or visual impairment, language delay, among others (UNESCO (1994). Within recent years, there has been a paradigm shift regarding global legislation to incorporate the objectives of the Salamanca Statement (1994) with the view of accommodating inclusive education principles. One such legislation occurred in The United States, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of (1975) which was subsequently revised as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in (1990) and later reviewed again in (1997).

This act was established to promote a whole school approach to inclusion (Evans & Lunt, 2002). The inclusive education movement has been endorsed internationally by The United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Salamanca Statement UNESCO (1994) and reflects the United Nation's global strategy of Education for All (Farrell & Ainscow, 2002). Despite this widely accepted approach to inclusive education, Eleweke and Rodda (2000), found that 80% of the world's population of people with disabilities live in developing countries with an estimated 150 million of them being children with 2% receiving any form of

special needs service. Within the educational system, teachers are expected to be the most significant stakeholders of its nation's youth. However, there are still determinants that inhibit teachers from advocating the vision of inclusive education. Andrews and Frankel (2010) recognized major concerns participants expressed about the implementation of inclusive education including inadequate training, lack of skills to teach students with special needs, lack of appropriate infrastructure, and the nonexistence of adapted curricula in the classroom. Each of these factors affected the experiences of the teacher in the inclusive classroom and their attitude towards inclusive education.

The attitude of teachers is paramount to the successful implementation of inclusive education. Further, evidence from inclusive education literature indicates that teacher attitude, both positive and negative, toward inclusive education are underpinned on certain variables. According to Cipkin and Rizza (n.d.), "attitudes are essential in the success of educating students with disabilities in regular education classrooms, preservice programs should emphasize and concentrate on enhancing teachers attitude towards inclusion" (p. 1). In addition, Valeo (2008) reported that the attitudes of teachers are an important factor to the success of integrative practices in special education. Educational researchers have taken varied positions regarding inclusion. Proponents Campbell, Gilmore, and Cuskelly, (2003); Gal, Schreur, and Engel-Yeger, (2010); Monsen and Frederickson, (2003) allude that teachers generally held positive views toward inclusion.

Although evidence from the Equal Opportunity Commission, 2012 suggests that inclusive education is being considered by most governments, unless the proper framework is established and implemented, there was continue to be a stagnation regarding its successful implementation. The development of inclusive education was examined in various countries including Canada,

South Africa, Hong Kong, Russia, Finland, Norway, Turkey, U.S., Korea and some developing countries in Asia-Pacific region. The results showed that resources, manpower, attitude, discrimination, equal learning opportunities and the modes of support prevented the successful introduction of inclusive education (Equal Opportunity Commission, 2012, p. 10). Slavica (2010), Hwang and Evans (2011), Kalyva et al. (2007), and Fuchs (2010) further reported that lack of support by administrators posed a challenge for inclusive education.

According to Gaad & Khan, (2007); Kalyva et al., (2007) lack of resources and insufficient teacher preparation hindered the process of inclusion. Similarly, Ali, Mustapha, & Jelas, (2006); Bigham, (2010); Fuchs, (2010) mentioned that inadequate training in the field has contributed for slow progress of implementation of inclusive education. Teachers experience, education, and collaboration were further identified as a barrier to inclusion (Ali, Mustapha, & Jelas, 2006; Bigham, 2010; Dupoux et al., 2006; Hwang & Evans, 2011; Slavica, 2010). According to Vaughn, Bos, and Schumm, (2011) understanding the limits of personal expertise is vital, and knowing when and how to solicit advice from colleagues with specialized training is important to inclusive education.

In the context of Ethiopia, The Ministry of education (MOE) aims at an education system that is to be open to all learners, regardless of poverty, gender, ethnic backgrounds, language, learning difficulties and impairments. The principle behind this policy is that all children are included. Recognizing the exclusion and barriers to active learning and participation, the Ministry of education has designed a strategy for special needs education. The strategy emphasizes that all children and students can learn and many of them need some form of support in learning and active participation. Providing education for all requires identifying barriers that hinder learning

and removing barriers. This condition should be applied in early education, high schools, technical and vocational training, teacher education and higher education.

Studies conducted on assessing the successfulness of inclusive education and provision of special need education support in various high schools of Ethiopia reported that children with both detected and undetected form of disabilities were not sent to high schools. Even those who were sent to schools were not advantaged from the special need education. As it was stated in the specific objective of the Education and Training policy of Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) (1994) (that “children with disabilities and gifted should learn in accordance with their potential and need”. For instance, a study conducted in Ethiopia, by Abate 2001 as cited in Gezahagn and Y. (2005) : 6p), which is small-scale studies (survey- likert type scale), indicates that the majority of teachers, who were participating in inclusive programs, had strong negative feelings about inclusion. The teachers identified several factors that would affect the success of inclusion, such as class size, inadequate resources, lack of adapted curriculum and lack of adequate training. Research has suggested that teachers’ attitudes might be influenced by a number of factors, which are in many ways, interrelated.

This notion reveals that, attitude studies reviewed earlier appeared to vary according to disabling conditions. In other words, the natures of the disabilities and educational problems presented have been noted to influence teachers’ attitudes. Forlin (1995) as cited in Eavramidis and Brahmnorwich, (2002) found that: educators were cautiously accepting of including a child with cognitive disability and were more accepting of children with physical disabilities. The degree of acceptance for inclusion was high for children considered to have mild or moderate disabilities. Researchers have explored other more specific variables which affect teachers’ attitude in teaching children with special need education in ordinary school such as: gender, age, and years

of teaching experience, grade level, and contact with disabled persons and personality factors, which might influence teachers' acceptance of the inclusion principle.

Teaching experience is another factor mentioned in several studies as having an influence on teachers' attitudes. In this case, much of the research conducted seems consistent. For example, as mentioned by Eavramidis and Brahmnorwich(2002) , younger teachers and those with fewer years of experience *have been found to be supportive to integration/inclusion than with those more experience.*

Another factor that has attracted considerable attention is the knowledge about children with disabilities gained through pre- and in-service training.

This was considered as an important factor in improving teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of an inclusive policy. Without a coherent plan for teacher training in the educational needs of children with special needs, attempts to include these children in the mainstream would be difficult (Eavramidis & Brahmnorwich. 2002).

Thus, the researchers conducted in some schools of Addis Ababa show a high correlation of teachers' attitudes with factors like availability of support, adapted curriculum, training, materials, and classroom size.

*It is the fact that regular schools and regular classroom environment often fail to accommodate the education needs of many students, especially individual with disability. This is the reason that so many children and adults with special need education in Ethiopia do not attend regular schools. It is difficult to argue for inclusion in such a way Millions of children with special need education are out of school and left in locked doors in the country including the research site in which the condition is more painful.*

*One of the major challenges to achieve this goal lies on the changing task of the regular classroom teacher (Steenladt, 1995; as cited in Tilahun, 2007).*

The positive impact of empowering teachers attitude towards inclusion of children with special need in general education has the following benefit. According to UNESCO (1994) citing in Ajuwon (2008) emphasized that for inclusion to achieve its objectives, education practices must be child-centred. This means that teachers must find out where each of their students are academically, socially, and culturally to determine how best to facilitate learning (Gildner, 2001). A logical consequence of this realization is that these teachers was need to acquire skills in curriculum-based assessment, team teaching, mastery learning, assessing learning styles, cooperative learning strategies, facilitating peer tutoring, or social skills training. Given that children have varied learning styles or multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1991); both general and special education teachers must plan and coordinate classroom instruction to capitalize on each child's needs, interests and aptitudes.

On this premise, this study was conducted with the view of exploring high school teachers' attitudes of inclusive education and to determine what factors influence these attitudes. As inclusive education is an issue of great importance within the Ethiopian it is anticipated that the findings from this study would be useful in mitigating negative attitudes of high school teacher regarding inclusion. Further, the study would provide a foundational platform for policy makers, administrators, and teachers with the view of exploring varied instructional methods, and investigating approaches to integrate, diversify, differentiate, train, and support teachers who work in the inclusive classroom setting while addressing the gap in the literature regarding inclusive education in a Ethiopian context. Finally, the study aims to sensitize readers about inclusive education and to address the gap in current literature related to the attitudes of teachers

*toward inclusive education at the high school level. This was the main rationale to come up with research theme of exploring the state of the general education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion of students with special need. As a result, this study was conducted in 2 high school selected sample schools across Gedio educational administrative zone in Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia. In this research, an attempt was made to explore teachers' attitude towards students with special need. In the context of this research, students with special need refers to: Students who are from mild to moderate level of physical and emotional exceptional learning needs. Which means students who have sensory impairment (visual, hearing), orthopaedic and other students with intellectual challenge was focus areas of the study. The rationale why such group of learners included in the study is because, such kind of learners were observed attending school integrated in ordinary classroom and the number of served students are few in number. It does not mean that all children with profound special need education provision should be sent to regular school. It depends upon the level, nature, type and potential need of each child. There are different educational settings which includes from Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to at home to inclusive education in regular school under which such group of learners was accommodated.*

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

With specific to my research site in 2 high schools in Dilla town in Gedio Zone in Southern Nations and Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia, the situation of children and adults with special need is very embarrassing and frustrating. In the high schools where I have made an observation to know the categories, number of students and how they are served, not more than 2 or 3 students with sensory or orthopaedic impairments are found learning with no any accommodation or adaptation of the learning materials as well as modifying learning

environment. As a result, this condition instigated me to explore the problem in-depth and come up to recommend inclusive teaching strategies. The ultimate purpose was to create friendly and inclusive learning ground for all. The research questions that guide this study are:

1. How teachers' attitude is explained towards inclusive education in Dilla high schools in Gedio zone?
2. How teachers perceive the factors that influence their attitudes towards inclusive education in Dilla high school?
3. How teachers' recommend measures for promoting best practices for inclusive education in Dilla high school?

### **1.3. Objective of the study**

The main objective of this study was to investigate the nature of general education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion of students with special need in selected 2 sample high schools.

#### **Specific objectives:**

- Describe general education teacher's attitude towards student with special need and their participation in mainstreamed classroom;
- Identify factors that influence general education teacher attitudes toward teaching learners with special need in ordinary classrooms; and
- Suggest other practical inclusive learning intervention strategies in accordance with various groups of learners with special need from mild to moderate categories of disabilities which was adapted and customized in the research site.



## **2. Methodology**

The research method used in this study was qualitative and the research designed was phenomenology. It was semi-structured and unstructured interviews data collecting tool used to gather the information from participants. The sample consisted of eight high school teachers who participated in the study. Among Eight participants, six of them male while 2 of them were female teachers. The participants ranged from teacher to Department head which four of them were Department heads and four were teachers. Four of the participants were between the ages of 40 and 34 years while four of them are between 23-30. Teaching experience varied between 13 and 33 years. Three teachers taught between 13-20 years two teachers had 20-30 years of experience one teacher had 33 years of teaching experience and 2 teachers taught between 33-37 years.

The academic level varied and included teachers with Bachelor's Trained and Master's Degree Trained. The participants were selected utilizing convenience sampling of schools that are in two high schools of Dilla town. Convenience sampling was utilized, because of feasibility and access to the participants (Andrews & Frankel, 2010). Further, participants were selected as they were available, interested and possessed the characteristics necessary to participate in this research which included employed with Ministry of Education full time at the secondary level and included both genders. Participants of the study were informed of their rights to withdraw in case they fell discomfort in the process of interview session. Interviews were conducted by an interview team of two people. One person was designated as the interviewer and the other as the note taker. Prior to the interview, participants were asked to complete a participant demographic sheet. Interviews adhered to a semi structure interview protocol and were recorded using audio tape recording. On completion of the

interview, the recordings were immediately transcribed verbatim and compared with the notes of the note taker. Utilizing the research objectives coupled with the theoretical framework as a platform, data analysis was analyzed using opening coding to establish themes and main concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Recurring topics in the text were recognized as themes and subthemes. A table of central themes and sub-themes was constructed. This process allowed a deeper understanding and explanation of issues that were being studied. To ensure greater validity and reliability a peer reviewer read through the data to ensure themes and categories corresponded with the research questions. The findings were synthesized according to the aspects of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, and other related matters concerning the successful implementation of inclusive education.

### **3. Findings and Discussion**

#### **Research Question 1 How teachers attitude is explained towards inclusive education in Dilla high schools in Gedio zone?**

Teachers understood inclusive education to demonstrate a variety of meanings. “Inclusive education is the provision of educational instruction to a diverse group of students in one class no matter their differences” said one teacher. Another responded, “inclusive education is a type of education that includes all learners (visual, hearing impaired, those with behavioural problems etc.). Inclusive education...eliminates segregation in the school.”

Another teacher suggested, “Inclusive education dictates that all students and are welcome by their neighbourhood schools in age appropriate regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute, and participate in all aspects of the life of the school.”

The majority of participants made statements which revealed that they had positive views toward inclusion.

One of the participants expressed that, *“I think it is an exceptional idea because children can learn from each other and teachers can collaborate on best practices.”*

Teacher interviewee two portrayed that, *“I believe that as an Ethiopian citizen, everybody has a right to education and a right to learn. Therefore, inclusive education should be implemented in order to create a more participatory and adequate learning environment.”*

Another response was:

*“I feel that this [inclusive education] should be implemented especially within the high school setting because as a teacher I have seen students just give up because they feel they are not smart enough and some have even expressed that they do not get the attention the smarter students are receiving”.*

Subsequently, 2 teachers welcomed the idea of inclusion, but exhibited mixed feelings toward the idea of inclusive education. The teachers believed that certain factors were necessary for inclusion to be effective. For example, one teacher said, “at this time, I believe inclusive education is already happening. In order for it to be implemented better students need to be properly tested and teachers need to be trained. Resources must be in place and aides available.”

*One teacher commented, “I believe inclusive education can be embraced in all stages. If disabilities are categorized and some of the less severe disabilities can initiate the process then we can measure how effective it is.”*

Subsequently, one participant perceived

Inclusion as negative and in irate voice she expressed, “I did not train to teach students with special needs because I don’t have the patience.” This comment suggests that training was playing a critical role in how teachers’ perceive inclusive education.

Teachers also commented on the general attitude of teachers regarding inclusive education at the high school level. As one teacher shared, “many teachers may not have the ability to plan and execute lessons to all ability levels.

Teacher interviewee Three mentioned:

“Some teachers oppose the idea of implementing inclusive education simply because...they feel that it would be very tedious and time consuming”.

Others...argue that inclusive education ensures no one is left behind and that everyone learns.”

In addition, “the general attitude, I believe is not favourable. There is a negative stigma attached to students with special needs. I believe that the educational system has caused this. It basically shows that if you can’t pass national exams, then you are not smart”.

A senior teacher interviewee 6 expressed that, “in the high school level most teachers are not open to inclusive education. There has always been a separation as it relates to how children are categorized for the various schools.”

Most of the teachers collectively agreed that they were receptive to teaching students with various disabilities.

Teacher interviewee one commented, “all students should be given the opportunity to get an education.”

Teacher interviewee 7 affirmed, “it was depend on the disability. Physical and learning disabilities could be grouped together in a class setting, but the mental and emotional disabilities could be grouped together.” A senior teacher reflected that:

*Although I believe that everyone has a right to learn, I do not believe that students with such disabilities should be placed in a regular classroom setting at first. I believe they should be taught in an environment with others who are disabled and then slowly be up graded to a regular classroom. In doing so, the child was not feeling as though they are just thrown into an environment that they know nothing about.*

From the eight participants interviewed, two of the teachers did not have exposure to inclusive education. All of the informants (8), despite their views of inclusion were supporting to participate in additional training and felt that ongoing training was important to disseminate current and research based best practices regarding inclusion.

Research Question 2 how teachers perceive the factors that influence their attitudes towards inclusive education in Dilla high school?

The participants were asked specifically to list in order of priority five possible factors that negatively influence their attitudes toward inclusion. The following categories were identified and ranked from highest to lowest:

- I. lack of resources (6),
- II. insufficient training (5),
- III. inadequate information about inclusive education (4), lack of support
- IV. and administrative support (2)

Subsequently, teachers also listed positive factors that influenced on attitudes.

Results confirmed that the following factors in order of significance:

- I. equal opportunity for students (8 participants),
- II. training opportunities (6 participants),
- III. Eliminate stigma toward inclusive education (5 participants), (d) differentiated instruction (3 participants) and funding (2 participants).

When questioned about the obstacles that may hinder the implementation of inclusive education at the high school level, responses were analyzed and the following themes emerged

- I. training,
- II. knowledge,
- III. resources and facilities,
- IV. support,
- V. funding, and
- VI. class size.

#### I. Training

Training plays a critical role in the effective implementation of inclusive education. A teacher commented that, “teachers need to be trained about the different disabilities and strategies or interventions. Further, they would need to be trained on how to develop a curriculum for their students that would speak to the students’ needs and assessment.”

Supporting this comment, teacher interviewee Five said that training is important because teachers, administrators, parents, and students need to be aware of the latest trends and best practices in inclusive education. A similar view expressed by another participant was, “introduce seminars and working sessions to empower educators to facilitate lessons for special need students. This would help improve the stigma that engulfs inclusive education.” A final

comment on this theme by another participant was, “the student and the teacher should be sensitized to work around and with these students. These students with disabilities have needs that must be met by the teacher; hence that teacher should have the tools, resources, abilities, and adequate training.” None of the participants have a formal degree in Special Education hence the need for more education and training to make the implementation of inclusive education more successful.

## II. Knowledge

The participants of this study appeared to be concerned about the limited knowledge on inclusive education. One of the participants stated, “all teachers must be educated as to what inclusive education means. Another emphasized, “If teachers have not been adequately trained, then they were not feel confident enough to teach all students.” One teacher said, “the need for periodic training, workshops, and seminars could be used to relay information to teachers on inclusive education.” These sentiments were further affirmed by another participant who replied, “of course teachers must be knowledgeable about special needs and have the training of how to deal with students. Teachers must also be made aware of any condition students have, so that they are able to respond properly during a crises. This can be done with ongoing seminars and workshops.”

## III. Resources and facilities

Teachers who had favourable views of inclusive classrooms emphasized the need to address the structural problems and limited resources to facilitate effective implementation of inclusive education. One of the participants of the study revealed, “I am not against inclusive education. However, I feel that the facilities and resources would need to be in place.”

Teacher interviewee Four commented, “lack of resources...teaching [the] regular student is a challenge because the school lacks sufficient supplies. Could you imagine lacking the resources to teach students with special needs that require more resources? It would be very strenuous.”

Another teacher strongly expressed, “I don’t see how this was work without proper training and resources.” A similar response by teacher interviewee Seven articulated, “these factors [resources, finances, training] are extremely important for the implementation of inclusive education to be effective because materials and resources must be available for all students.”

When asked to comment on facilities teacher interviewee Four said, “If inclusive education is implemented there should be facilities to accommodate the students that may have physical or mental handicaps and resources for the education of those students to be a success.” In agreement with this statement a different teacher said, “Each school would have to be redesigned for ramps, audio, and visual equipments.”

In spite of challenges that face the implementation of inclusion, participants also mentioned some possible features that may promote inclusive education at the secondary level.

Teacher interviewee Six asserted “selecting teachers who are recommending to teach in the inclusive classroom, ongoing training seminars and workshops, financial aid from the government, the support of parents, the school (teachers, administrators, and community), proper facilities, and technology.” Another teacher expressed that, “leadership, school climate, curriculum, individual student support, collaborative planning, and professional development are important.”

All participants commented that finances, method of instruction, resources, training, and the curriculum were crucial to inclusion practices. This understanding was supported by one teacher who affirmed, “finances play an important role as it is the overall capsule for inclusiveness.



Without materials, assistance, proper accommodations, we were never be able to properly provide the level of instruction required for inclusion of students within the normal classroom setting.

Subsequently, all teachers revealed that the following training is necessary for teachers to be effective and efficient as an inclusive educator:

- I. workshops,
- II. degrees in field of special education,
- III. first aid courses,
- IV. courses on differentiated instruction, and
- V. courses on intervention strategies.

Research Question 3 How teachers' recommend measures for promoting best practices for inclusive education in Dilla high school?

This research has identified a number of factors which can contribute to the development of the teacher's attitude towards inclusive education at the high school level.

These factors cannot function properly in isolation. However, they must be incorporated and aligned to meet the needs of all learners. Responses were thematically analyzed.

#### I. Support

The Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education is charged with the responsibility of supporting the implementation of inclusive education. The interviews indicated that this Department has not adequately supported teachers. Teacher interviewee Seven stated, "if the Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education would offer courses in inclusive education, then teachers would feel more confident in teaching in an inclusive environment."

Teacher interviewee Six also replied, “policy makers have to make certain that proper tools are in place for the success of inclusive education.”

While the Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education is instrumental in supporting inclusion initiatives collaboration is vital.

Teacher interviewee One shared, “for inclusive education to be a success, stakeholders involved must be active participants. There should be no rushed decisions; all avenues must be well planned and thought-out. Additionally, policy makers’ must have the funds in place for adequate training of teachers, facilities, and resources for students. Each school would have to be redesigned for ramps, audio, and visual equipments.”

## II. Funding

Funding by government to support inclusive education is necessary because it serves as the foundation for educational programs to be successful. It was discovered that direct funding is not allotted to secondary school teachers for buying equipment and materials, training, and support for the inclusive classroom. When one of the teachers was asked about this issue she confirmed, “finances play an important role as it is the overall capsule for inclusiveness. Without material, assistance, and proper accommodation, we were never be able to properly provide the level of instruction required for inclusion of students within the normal classroom setting.” Reflecting on the issue of funding another teacher acknowledged, “adequate funding is very important especially for pilot projects that need to be maintained and continuously enhanced.” \

### III. Class size

The participants expressed frustration about the class sizes they have to contend with in the secondary schools. One teachers' frustration was reflected in the following remark, "class sizes need to be reduced and additional teachers need to be employed." It appeared that the teachers' effectiveness would also be influenced by student teacher ratio. One of the participants was explicit about class size, "class sizes should be small enough to be able to meet the needs of each student. This should be between 30–40 students." Another response was, "class sizes would have to be reduced to allow the teacher sufficient time to accommodate all the students or to assist." In addition to class size, teacher interviewee Two commented that, "the size of the school may not be big enough, the school might not have a culture of acceptance, and teachers may not be encouraged to create an inclusive learning environment."

### IV. Curriculum and instruction

Most respondents suggested curriculum revision to integrate workforce ready skills, and diverse learning activities. Additionally, the review of the curriculum to incorporate the special needs student was also positively impact the program because it was require teachers to prepare lessons that was meet the needs of all students. One respondent asserted, "teachers must be familiar with intervention strategies through professional development, incorporate all levels from blooms taxonomy in instruction, Peer coach and experiment with project based learning."

### V. Best practices

In an effort to be persistent inclusivist and to attain inclusive world in the classroom, teacher interviewee Five articulated, "collaboration with other teachers in the field, attending annual conferences, securing membership in professional organizations, and implementing research

based practices was bolster the confidence of teacher efficacy in developing a positive attitude towards inclusive education.”

Teacher interviewee Three said, “the support from government, administrators, teachers, and parents is timely and crucial successfully to implement inclusive at the secondary level.”

#### **4. Discussion**

The aim of this study was to examine the attitude of high school teachers towards inclusive education in Dilla town in Gedio zone. Results of the study were consistent with findings from

The findings further revealed that insufficient training, lack of knowledge and skills of teachers were the overarching theme that resulted in teachers feeling a sense of inadequacy to teach in an inclusive education classroom.

These findings were consistent with Bigham (2010) and Ali et al. (2006), who also found a correlation between attitudes and training. To triangulate these phenomena, it is of utmost importance that mainstream teachers who would be required to teach in an inclusive classroom receive relevant training to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge, skills and abilities effectively execute best practices within the learning environment and to encourage the ideology of inclusion. Such training initiatives could include but is not limited to:

- I. in-depth courses with a focal point on accommodating students with special needs,
- II. periodic seminars and workshops for training in teaching diverse learners,
- III. promotional videos of inclusion in action at the school level,
- IV. training for parents and the school community,
- V. technology,
- VI. first aid training, and

## VII. Annual professional development training on inclusive education.

In an attempt to encourage a positive attitude towards inclusive education and to ensure that teachers value inclusive education training, it is suggested that teachers' participation in the training be evaluated and taken into consideration for their end of year performance evaluation. In addition, the knowledge gained from this professional development would provide an opportunity for peer coaching, research based strategies, and interventions which could improve attitudes of teachers regarding inclusive education and the overall success rate of implementation strategies within the classroom.

It is imperative that teachers portray a positive attitude towards inclusive education.

Contrary attitudes of teachers (negative attitudes) towards students can affect the manner in which students learn and socialize. Further, teachers who are not open to the inclusion concept is minimizing the opportunities for students to enhance their socialization skills, an important component to the learning process

It is evident that the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms is additionally viewed as fostering increased feelings of understanding and respect among all participants within the inclusive setting. However, a student's level of disability may emerge as a factor shaping the attitudes of teachers to the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Moreover, participants in this study preferred to teach learners with mild disabilities as opposed to learners with severe behavioural, intellectual, and hearing challenges. These mainstream teachers were of the opinion that such learners would need additional assistance, proper resources and technology, and the proper training to meet learners' needs.

These findings are consistent with recent literature that established that while teachers were positive about inclusive education they still preferred to include certain categories of learners (Campbell, Gilmore, & Cuskelly, 2003; Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010; Monsen & Frederickson, 2003).

Additionally, teachers commented that access to resources and support from administrators for teachers and students would prove beneficial to the implementation of inclusive education at the secondary level as consistent with previous research (Fuchs, 2010;

Hwang & Evans, 2011; Kalyva et al., 2007; Slavica 2010). To this end, it is paramount that school administration and relevant authority figures ensure all resources are made available, properly maintained and teachers and students are properly training with the usage of all resources. Further, administrators could be more visible and exhibit a supportive environment for teachers, students and parents. This supportive environment can be augmented in collaboration with parents and teachers with the introduction of support groups, educational sessions and a more “hands on approach” to the inclusive classroom.

In addition, the Gedio zonal administration should consider the long term-effects of substantial financing of inclusion practices as it relates to the investment of necessary resources, facilities and professionals needed to make the idea of inclusion veracity.

Large class size is evidently a concern not only regarding inclusive education but also mainstream education. To this end, more challenges may be evidently visible in an inclusive classroom compared to mainstream education classroom.

On this premise, it is imperative that class sizes are kept at a minimum and a teacher’s aide available to assist.

## Implications for the Educational System

This study has many implications for the educational system in Dilla high schools.

Primarily, it sensitizes teachers (mainstream and inclusive) regarding perceptual influential factors which may inhibit the successful implementation and execution of inclusive education.

Secondly, the study identified possible recommendation and best practices that would aid teachers, administrators and parents regarding inclusive education.

Thirdly, the study served as a platform for future studies in Gedio Zone in the field of inclusive education.

Fourthly, the research suggests that the more sustainability that educators have for inclusion, the more effective its implementation would be. Therefore, it is probable that the modification and implementation of future legislation and policies was increase greater awareness of the needs and rights of special needs children.

To this end, it is paramount that once these elements have been established, curriculum specialists and other stakeholders would revisit the Federal curriculum to ensure the infusion of an inclusive education curriculum.

Consequently, a revised curriculum would also entail revised assessments. Currently, The Dilla high schools in Gedio zone have no norm-referenced assessments for inclusive education. Such assessments are crucial for the country to ensure there are nationwide standards with norm groups so that qualitative decisions can be made as to how to remedy the needs of all learners in the country.

## **All national exams (The Grade Level Assessment Test, Dilla town Junior Certificate and**

Ethiopian Certificate exams given at grade eight, ten and twelve are Criterion-Referenced Tests that do ethically make special accommodations for students with disabilities such as visual and hearing impairment that have to involve in Listening Comprehension exams, or the visually impaired child. Policy makers need to revisit and modify standards of the national examinations to accommodate the need of all students.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

#### 5.1. Conclusion

Teachers' attitude plays a pivotal role regarding the successful implementation of inclusive education. On this premise, this study was conducted to determine the attitude of high school teachers in the Dilla town regarding inclusive education. Further to determine possible influential factors regarding their attitude. The study revealed that high school teachers within the Dilla town generally had a positive attitude towards inclusive education.

However, the major themes that emerged regarding influential factors of teachers' attitude were

I. training,

II. knowledge,

III. resources and facilities,

IV. support,

V. funding, and

VI. class size.

#### 5.2. Recommendations

The study has much implication (theoretical and practical) for the educational system in Gedio zone.



First, it contributes to the gap in literature regarding inclusive education in Dilla town in Gedio zone.

Second, it serves as a foundation to policy implementers regarding influential factor of teachers' attitude in regards to inclusive education which is crucial to the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Third, it provides possible recommendation and best practices regarding the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Fourth, this paper serves as a foundational platform for future research on inclusive education in the study area. References

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