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# Including Students With Special Needs in a Mainstream Classroom in Cameroon

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INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN A MAINSTREAM  
CLASSROOM IN CAMEROON

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of Fort Hays State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
Specialist in Education

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study used a survey research design to collect perception data from ten general educators from Northern Cameroon to examine the attitudes and instructional efficacy of the regular education teacher towards the inclusion of learning disabled students in the Northern part of Cameroon in grades 9 to 12. The findings of this study indicated that there is a need to train general education teachers for inclusion. Participants believe general education teachers need supports, logistics, professional development and training in inclusion practices. They all mentioned teachers need training, support and resources. Teachers should possess the skills that facilitate all learning styles. Participants' perception of the inclusion model was that, inclusion helped students make social, emotional, and academic gains. However, their perceptions were challenged by the negative experiences that they reported having while implementing the inclusion model.

Implications for positive social change are that general education teachers may be more tolerant of students with special needs in general education classrooms. All participants felt that their lived experiences impacted their attitudes, beliefs, and perception of the inclusion model. Further research should focus classroom observations, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators' views, support, perceptions, and instructional practices for inclusion.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education for all is a right which assures every child a quality education and a passport to human development and career readiness. It opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms. It contributes to fostering peace, democracy and economic growth as well as improving health and reducing poverty. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) has recognized the fundamental right to education since its inception in 1948. Article 26 states that “everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free. Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights” (Marshall & Goodall, 2015). Therefore, denying someone the right to education is denying his right to dignity and development.

Despite the growth of the disability movement and the struggles of disabled people to control the decision-making process, referral, parent notification, evaluation, parent consent, final decision and report that shape their lives around the globe and particularly in Cameroon, little attention has been given to students or parents in controlling their education. They are the recipients of other people’s decisions (Allan, 1999; Swain, Finkelstein, & Oliver, 1993). Where parents and students’ voices have been foregrounded (Lewis, 1994; Sheldon, 1991; Lynas, 1986) those decisions have been read either positivistically, connecting truths to objects outside of language or phenomenologically, connecting truth to the consciousness of individual knowers (Liggett, 1988).

## **Background and Statement of the Problem**

Northern cities of Cameroon are among the oldest settlements in West Africa. Many of those cities such as Maroua and Garoua, benefited significantly from the trans-Saharan trade and continue to grow today as a result of such trade (Mbaku, 2005). The largely Muslim north is culturally distinct from the largely Christian and animist south. The northern area includes three provinces: Adamoua, North, and Extreme North. Since the jihad led by an Islamic cleric in 1804, the northern region has been culturally dominated by the Fulani. Urban Fulani are renowned as clerics in the Sunni branch of Islam. Most Fulani are cattle herders.

An important subgroup of Fulani is the Bororo. Bororo engage in long-distance trade involving cattle with their Hausa colleagues. Other northern ethnic groups include the Mandara, Kokoto, and Arab Choa. Major crops include cotton and millet. About two-thirds of Cameroonians live in rural areas, usually in villages or very small towns, and are engaged primarily in agriculture (Mbaku, 2005). This environment mandated the creation of organizations or groupings that would attempt to respond to the needs of a diverse student body in a shared learning environment in several of these cities due to the level of poverty; social perceptions, government policies, inadequate structures, and a lack of highly qualified educators able to differentiate instruction.

Social diversity in school has become an important factor for both learning and social growth leading to the widespread use of inclusion into mainstream classrooms. According to Booth (1999), "Inclusion is the process of increasing the participation of learners in, and reducing their exclusion from, the curricula, cultures and communities of neighborhood mainstream centers of learning" (p. 253). In education, inclusion is an

opportunity for engagement in learning, the curriculum, and access to information, and way to equip students with tools and knowledge to be career ready.

There are many students with disabilities or special needs in Cameroon, whose lives are characterized by exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization. There is a need to have a continuum of placement options available to meet the needs of students with disabilities, i.e., a system of inclusion in which disabilities and special needs students can learn alongside with their non-disabled peers in general education classrooms settings. Also, teachers' attitudes concerning inclusive education are influenced by factors at different environmental level, including government level factors, learners-level factors, cultural and societal factors, as well as factors related to the teachers themselves. Knowing that the attitudes and beliefs of teachers contribute to their abilities to accommodate students with disabilities in their classes (Dupoux, Hammond, Ingalls, & Wolman, 2006), it is important to question the impact of teachers' attitudes on students with exceptional needs performance in Cameroon.

Inclusion should be more than a simple physical placement of any pupil regardless of difficulty in a regular education classroom. This placement must support diversity and equity, but also enhance and engage all students in success via a curriculum that is adapted to the diversity of learners and models a pedagogy and that is interconnected to students' lifestyle. In order to make this study meaningful, it is crucial to examine the attitudes towards inclusion of the regular education teacher and the effectiveness of teaching, learning, and best practices applied by the general educator to address the needs of the underserved students.

## **Theoretical Foundation**

The concept of special education inclusion in Cameroon began long before Public Law No.83/013 and Law No.2010/002. These laws mandated public schools to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom, as well as provide them with a highly qualified teacher. While educational law provides the most important reference for this study, another theory that supports the research is the foundational work of Vygotsky, Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner, and Souberman (1978). His research purported that children with disabilities are not missing development or are delayed in developing, but rather that they have developed differently (Bruster, 2014; Daniels, 2012; Gindis, 1999).

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) consists of two levels of development. The first level of development is identified as the real level, or the level a child can solve problems independently. The other level of development is the potential development level, which requires the assistance either interactions or support from adults or higher functioning peers (Bruster, 2014). The second level is the basis for inclusion. Vygotsky's theory in relation to special education is that students learn through the introduction of concepts that are a little above their ZPD and are provided scaffolding and modeling by teachers and more knowledgeable peers within the social interaction and cultural context they share with others in the classroom (Daniels, 2012; Daniels, Cole, & Wertsch, 2007). Vygotsky found that when children see an assignment as possible and have assistance or scaffolding to accomplish the assignment, they are capable of higher-level skills than those they can complete independently (Daniels et al., 2007; Schmitz,

2012). For students with disabilities this access to more knowledgeable peers and models as well as scaffolding for higher-level tasks is found in the mainstreamed classroom.

Social Learning Theory provides an additional framework for this study.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory states that people learn from one another by imitation, observation, and modeling (Bandura, 1977, 2012). Recent research has found that peer interaction and peer instruction increases the performance and learning of all students (Allison, 2012). According to Bandura (1986), effective modeling has four necessary conditions: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Attention requires the student to attend to the actions of the model. This process is influenced by the characteristics of both the model and the observer (Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 2012).

Retention recognizes that the observer not only watches the behavior, but also remembers it for a later time; this requires rehearsal or practice for retention. Reproduction requires not only physical, but intellectual ability to reproduce the action (Bruster, 2014).

### **Statement of the Purpose**

In Cameroon, in the field of special education, a few researchers have conducted studies related to inclusion in the mainstream. There have been a number of studies world-wide that explored teachers' attitudes and societal factors of inclusion in the mainstream. However, few studies have investigated the implications of the regular classroom teachers' attitudes in terms of student success.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the attitudes and instructional efficacy of the regular education teacher towards the inclusion of learning disabled students in the Northern part of Cameroon in grades 9 to 12. Specifically, the perceptions were explored of the regular education teachers in terms of the level of

support and training they received and how it impacts their goals to reach all students regardless of their background, profile, or readiness.

### **Research Questions**

In order to determine the effectiveness of inclusiveness in secondary schools in Cameroon with regard to students with exceptional needs, this study posited and answered the following research questions:

1. What are general educators' perceptions regarding inclusion of students with exceptional needs and inclusion services in the general education setting?
2. What are educators' perceptions of the overall effectiveness of their instructional strategies in an inclusive environment?
3. What are general educators' perceptions of their instructional efficacy with students with exceptional needs in the inclusion setting?
4. How does inclusion affect self-efficacy for those teaching exceptional needs students in the general education classroom?

### **Significance of the Study**

The intent of this study was to contribute to the overall knowledge base about best practices in high school regarding exceptional students' inclusion into mainstream classrooms in Cameroon. Specifically, this study focused on teachers' perceptions of inclusion of exceptional students in general education settings as well as their perceptions of self-efficacy, competency, and satisfaction in such environment. It was important to better understand the model pedagogy for teaching students with exceptional needs from

the general education teachers' perspective in order to improve the inclusion of these students in the general education classroom.

Understanding the level of teachers' self-efficacy, the surrounding culture, and academic achievement of students in high school assigned to an inclusive classroom was an appropriate starting point for determining the complexities of inclusive and non-inclusive settings. This did improved efforts for ensuring success for all students as this would help advocate for more professional developments, better screening of students and educators needs. The outcome of this research could help evaluate methods and materials needed for exceptional needs students, increase professional development training for educators by enhancing learning through linguistic and cultural diversity.

### **Summary**

In several countries, the commitment to provide quality basic *education for all* children, youth and adults is faced with many barriers due to lack of appropriate legislatures, materials, supports, educators' attitudes, and professional training. To evaluate the state and effectiveness of educating exceptional students in various settings, attention had mostly been focused on teachers' attitudes, and little research has been conducted to evaluate instructional self-efficacy.

Being the main providers in teaching students with exceptional needs in an inclusive classroom, general educators' attitudes and instructional self-efficacy towards educating students with exceptional needs, are key ingredients for effective inclusion. Given the factors that influence the learning of exceptional needs students, it is important to investigate the discrepancy among teachers' self-efficacy, perceptions of the instructional strategies, and perceptions of students in order for teachers to better

incorporate instructional conditions that attend to the students' needs (Collier, 1998; Luft, Bragg, & Peters, 1999; Westby, Dezale, Fradd, & Lee, 1999).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section examined the available literature relating to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom in Cameroon. Firstly, it explored diverse aspects of developments in the field of special education, including the case of mainstream inclusion. Secondly, it presented previous empirical findings of inclusion in Cameroon and Africa. Next, studies of teacher attitudes towards inclusion were presented. Finally, then, an examination of research on teachers' perception of self-efficacy was examined and analyzed. These factors included professional development, collaboration among peers, and experiences.

### **History of Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education has increasingly become a focus of debate in discussions about the development of educational policy and practice around the world (Ainscow, Howes, Farrell, & Frankham, 2003; Thomas, 2012). The education of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities is now an established key policy objective in many countries (Lindsay, 2007). The US paved the way with the introduction of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which was subsequently amended as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990 and updated again in 1997, to promote 'whole-school' approaches to inclusion (Evans & Lunt, 2002; Winter & O'Raw, 2010).

All EU countries now have legislation in place designed to promote or require inclusion. Thus, most national inclusive education systems and school organizations function in line with the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education which states that, "schools should accommodate all children regardless

of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, and children from disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups” (UNESCO, 1994, par 3). However, the current universal trends reveal that the march towards full inclusion for students with SEN in mainstream schools is still an illusion (Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995), given the fact that support services hardly meet the needs of all learners despite the policies and practices.

All children have the right to be educated together regardless of any special need or disability. This requirement led to several controversial evolutions. After three decades of a series of conflicts and critiques in the process of developing theories of special education, three dominant theoretical models namely the psycho-medical, sociological and organizational models have emerged. The psycho-medical approach (Burt, 1937; Cole, 1989; Schonell, 1948) emphasizes the recognition of the child’s special needs arising from impairment which must then be met through special support services.

The sociological model (Barton, 1988; Tomlinson, 1982) acknowledges the technocratic approach to educational provision for diverse categories of learners with SEN. The organizational model (Ainscow, 1991; Dyson, Millward, Skidmore, & Clark, 1997) advocates educational provision for every child, the disabled and non-disabled in the same ordinary school setting/classroom and a child’s educational failure is the responsibility of both the child and the school. While the first two models require the child to adapt to the school system, the last one advocates the school adaptation to the child’s needs. However, despite controversies in terms of their weaknesses and strengths,

practical experiences reveal that a combination of two or all of them is often necessary for adequate support provision (Farrell, 2003), especially in a whole school approach to inclusion.

In addition, conflicts between the values of academic progress and achievement on the one hand and those of the inclusive education process on the other (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2002; Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Benjamin, 2002) constitute some of the major controversies in practical provisions to students with SEN in ordinary or mainstream schools. There is considerable debate about whether it is achievable, how it could be achieved. Debate also exists regarding the extent to which this involves the deconstruction of the field of special educational needs and construction of a regular system that will meet the needs of all students (Norwich, 2002).

### **Inclusion in Africa and Cameroon**

In Africa, inclusive education is driven by politic, economic, cultural and social conditions that influence its developments throughout its input, process and output stages. Service is centered on contextual factors at the level of individual, family, community, organization and government. Every effort to improve practice is geared towards the promotion of human rights, decentralization, partnership for change, and integrated teacher training (Peters, 2003; Thomas, 2012). Like other countries of the South, most African countries have adopted the community based rehabilitation programs which are widely used to facilitate ordinary school and community inclusion of people with disabilities (Khatleli, Mariga, Phachaka, & Stubbs, 1994; Thomas, 2012).

African countries have shown a theoretical interest in terms of formulating national policies in special education, which suggests there is development towards the

equalization of educational opportunities for all children (Abosi, 2004). Nevertheless, the dreams of most disabled people in the areas of educational provision, employment and support services are yet to be fully realized (Abosi, 2004; Abosi, 1985). According to the literature review on African countries, the commonly identified technical setbacks in the inclusive education system include: lack of a common assessment frame for early identification of special needs; effective planning of intervention or support provision in response to the needs of diversity; ineffective policy; development of data collection, statistics and projection; funding; availability of instructional resources; attitude change; equal opportunities and independence; early childhood education; adult education and teachers training (Abosi, 2004; Abosi, 1985; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Thomas, 2012).

*Equal education for all children*, means every child should be given equal opportunity to develop his or her potentials, but in reality, this philosophy is not what is practiced (Abosi, 2004). For most African countries, the practice on the ground does not favor learners with special needs within the school system. For example, the curriculum and scheme of work to guide teachers are designed in such a way that all children are considered the same as above average in intelligence (Abosi, 2004; Abosi, 2007). Because of these multiple setbacks, the area of inclusive education is still underdeveloped in research, theory, policy and practice in Africa.

The severe and complex disabled students, that is, the physically, mentally and sensory impaired students are limited to the acquisition of basic literacy, communication and life skills at primary level and vocational training at post primary level in special schools and community based rehabilitation centers. Consequently, the bulk of students with mild and moderate SEN in ordinary and mainstream schools still attend classes

unscreened and their special needs unmet (Thomas, 2012). This situation partly accounts for the high rate of school underachievement, failures, drop outs or expulsions and explain to some extent why many children in rural and disadvantaged urban areas do not have access to schooling (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Peters, 2003; UNESCO, 2000). In addition, the inclusive education literature indicates that the empirical studies already carried out in African countries are predominantly on primary level (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Peters, 2003) with very few studies on secondary and tertiary levels.

Special Needs Education in Cameroon actually started in informal settings especially in the family circle where parents could teach their local dialects, use local currency in buying and selling as it was one of the main occupations in the early days (Shey, 2003). Before the creation of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1975, formal education for children with disabilities was mostly done in special institutions which were mostly privately owned and with fewer children attending regular schools. The first centers were created in 1972 called Ecole Specialisee pour les enfants Deficients Auditif-ESEDA, which translates as, Special school for children with hearing impairments; and the L'externat Medico Pedagoque-LA COLOMBE, which is the Special school for the mentally handicapped children. These centers were run and managed by religious groups and parents of children with disabilities.

The responsibility for special education is shared between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs. There is no administrative structure that deals specifically with special education. The legislation allows for various grants concerned with the support for schools, special pedagogical assistance, training of specialized staff and the development of curriculum materials (Tukov, 2008).

Since then, there has been a slight positive change towards the education of children with disabilities in Cameroon. “As an accord to this, the Cameroon National Assembly deliberated and adopted Law No 83/013 of July 21, 1983 relative to the protection of persons with disabilities” (Tukov, 2008, p.19). This law was supported by Decree No 90/1516 of November 26, 1990 text of application to support the modalities and protection of persons with disability (Biya, 1990). It can be said that the 1983 Law on disability laid the foundation stone for a stronger government policy towards the education of children and young adults with disabilities in Cameroon. With the help of the special schools and some regular schools having children with disabilities, there has been a great development in enhancing positive attitudes, and also training disability adults to become self-reliant for the socio-economic integration in to the community. There is the lack of government encouragement towards the establishment of training centers for special education teachers, which can lead to an improvement in the level of education of children with disabilities (Tukov, 2008).

To date, there have been numerous acts of legislation that have ordered special education students out of isolated educational environments and into classrooms with their regular education counterparts, but despite that, children with exceptional needs are excluded from the public education system in Cameroon. In fact, there is a lack of identification of students with special education and they are not included in the legislation (Hegarty, 1995).

In Cameroon, the rights of persons with disabilities are protected by Law No.2010/002. Section 24 specifies that persons with physical, sensory, mental and multiple disabilities should have access to general education and professional training

(Mbibeh, 2013). Thus, the political stance for education in Cameroon is inclusive education, creating an environment where students with special needs can have meaningful learning experiences in regular schools. The necessity of primary education for students with special needs was passed in 1983 law on the protection of people with disabilities followed by a 1990 specifying the implementation of the law including sport for schools, special pedagogical assistance, training of specialized staff and the development of curriculum materials (Hegarty, 1995).

An inclusive education is a process which sets out to ensure the enrollment and admission of all learners in classrooms without any discrimination. The inclusiveness of primary education is linked to its being free and compulsory for all, including those with disabilities. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR Committee), which is the UN body in charge of monitoring states' compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) defines primary education as 'the main delivery system for the basic education of children outside the family. According to the ESCR Committee, access to primary education should be compulsory and free for all; it should comply with the 4 A's framework, more specifically, it should be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable, and supplemented with a plan of action to ensure its implementation (Kamga, 2013).

In Cameroon, under the right to primary education framework, state parties to International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) are compelled to adopt a plan of action, with clear deadlines, to give effect to the right to education. In this regard, the plan of action for the progressive implementation of compulsory education free of charge for all is a continuous obligation, compelling states

to monitor and improve a plan to have permanent universal free primary education. In attempting to comply with its international obligations under the right to primary education, the government ensures that the Constitution contains a specific provision on the right to education for all. Accordingly, the Constitution provides that the State shall guarantee the child's right to education. Primary education shall be compulsory. The organization and supervision of education at all levels shall be the bounden duty of the State (Kamga, 2013).

In Cameroon, most previous studies were conducted at primary and post-primary education levels on academic, social and livelihood skills development dimensions of inclusion (Ebontane, 2011). Some of the studies focused on the historical development of inclusive education services for people with special needs. The results illuminate issue of socio-cultural influences like attitudes, beliefs and views that act like barriers or facilitators to inclusion in informal and formal education settings (Yuh & Shey, 2008).

Public Law No 83/013 of July 21, 1983 relative to the protection of persons with disabilities, decree No. 90/1516 of November 26, 1990 and Law No.2010/002. Section 24 have all contributed to changes in the education of students with disabilities and the inclusion of students in general education classrooms. Those changes were supposed to bring a positive move in regard to the mainstreaming of special education students. In fact, certain studies on organization and management of public schools indicate that in other for an educational system in general and schools in a particular to function effectively, decentralization, desegregation, school autonomy among other key factors should be prioritized (Amin & Awung, 2005; Tamukong, 2004).

## **Attitudes on Inclusion**

The need for teachers who have both the knowledge and the ability to teach exceptional needs students is more critical today than ever before, but training programs are inadequate to equip teachers for children with different needs leading educators to have various attitudes when working in a mainstream inclusion. Prior research “noted that special education teacher preparation must prepare teacher candidates for the wide range of contexts in which they may teach, for example, self-contained schools or classrooms, resource room or pullout models of service delivery, and co-teaching or consultation structures” (Gehrke, Cocchiarella, Harris, & Puckett, 2010, p.91). This exposure of educators gives “the hope of making substantive and long-lasting changes in attitudes towards the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities and their acceptance” (Gaad, 2015, p. 137).

In other studies, centered on school and community support services, findings indicated that the roles of educational institutions and attitudes of support providers are indispensable in inclusion, and there is the necessity of inclusive education policy to guide practical inclusion schooling (Ebontane, 2011). According to Avramidis et al. (2000), general educators had a strong negative view of inclusion and felt that decision makers did not understand the realities in the classroom due to several factors, “including class size, inadequate resources, the extent to which all students would benefit from inclusion, and lack of adequate teacher preparation” (Avramidis et al., 2000, p. 280). Moreover, research findings of teachers’ attitudes of inclusion show that “only one-third or less of teachers believed they had sufficient time, skills, training and resources necessary for integration” (Avramidis et al., 2000, p. 279).

Numerous many studies have shown that the success of inclusion depends on the attitudes and efficacy of teachers. According to Olinger (2013), “The teachers’ attitudes could enhance or impede the implementation of inclusion” (p. 34). As noted by Avramidis et al. (2000), teacher professional development and attitudes are essential keys to the inclusion of exceptional needs students into mainstream. “Without a coherent plan for teacher-training in the educational needs of children with exceptional needs, attempts to include these children in the mainstream would be difficult” (Avramidis et al., 2000, p. 280). Also, as educators have favorable attitudes about the inclusion of students, “a striking exception to this was the many times they mentioned that everything changed when a student had serious behavior problems and was disruptive to the class” (Idol, 2006, p. 91).

In a study on school inclusion of some Baka children in a socially disadvantaged locality in East Cameroon, Kamei (2001) discovered that education creates opportunity for socialization and individual development for children from the socially secluded ethno-cultural community. The results indicate that school socialization influences learning, achievement and facilitates inclusion (Thomas, 2012) but such learning is impacted by educators’ attitudes and self-efficacy. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the attitude of educators in Northern Cameroon towards inclusion and how it promotes all students’ achievement.

For a successful inclusion, all staff and parents should display positive attitude and commitment to inclusion. Moreover, argued Praisner (2003), “due to their leadership position, principals’ attitudes about inclusion could result in either increased opportunity for students to be served in general education or in limited efforts to reduce the

segregated nature of special education services. Therefore, for inclusion to be successful, first and foremost, the school administrator must display a positive attitude and commitment to inclusion” (p. 136). According to Billingsley, McLeskey, and Crockett (2014), “in most of the inclusive settings, principals and others provided leadership for ensuring that teachers were well prepared to address the needs of students in their classrooms. This occurred through the extensive use of planning time and opportunities for PD before beginning the inclusive program” (p. 28).

### **Perceptions of Inclusive Teaching Strategies**

Mainstream inclusion requires a development and creation of flexible core educational curriculum responsive to individual students’ needs and diversities, in which accommodation for student differences and varieties of instructional practices would be provided. By sharing their skills, general and special educators can devise effective teaching strategies to overcome most difficulties by incorporating cooperative small group activities, collaboration between students with and without disabilities. Specific gains include: higher achievement for all students, especially among the lowest achieving; greater use of higher order reasoning skills; more on task behavior; better attitudes toward school, peers, and teachers and increased personal and academic self-esteem (Meisel, 1986).

Hardin (2005) stated that teaching experience was a key to better perception of mainstream inclusion. This correlated with Giangreco and Broer’s (2005) finding that skills and training were a major concern in implementing appropriate inclusion, “teachers and special educators could benefit from increased knowledge and skills about how to differentiate instruction for mixed-ability groups within the general education context”

(p. 24). While special educators do have a positive view of inclusion into mainstream and feel more prepared to educate them, incorporating training, professional development and strong support can bring out the positive perspectives among teachers in an inclusive school leading to an improvement of student achievement (Jordan & Stanovich, 2004).

According to Clay and George (2000) it is important to optimize the use of school units by developing positive and constructive strategies that challenge inequalities and promotes justice and equality for plural and democratic societies. By doing so, a school culture of inclusion that reinforces all students' active participation would be created. In fact, there is a " need to create a secure, accepting, collaborating, stimulating community, in which everyone is valued as the foundation for the highest achievements of all students"(Angelides & Hajisoteriou, 2013, p.23). Such school inclusive culture should incorporate values shared by teaching staff, students, and parents.

Research on family- school-community recommends that families and communities be involved in school structures. In fact, successful multi-ethnic schools operate as collaborative communities that mobilize the community, cooperate with students' families, and nurture and develop teaching personnel (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). In such settings, "students are equally valued, whilst differential approaches for different groups and individuals may be required to ensure inclusion in terms of all students' active participation" (Angelides & Hajisoteriou, 2013, p.24).

Therefore, all-inclusive schools should integrate the following cultural features: collaborative work; family involvement; educator ownership; meaningful individual educational plans; and procedures for evaluating effectiveness (Giangreco, 1997). The first factor that appeared to act as a barrier to the teachers' efforts to promote all students'

active participation and inclusion was the culture that prevailed in their schools. The values and beliefs, as well as the norms that determined the practice of their schools and in some cases, the other teachers of the school acted as barriers to the participants' efforts to provide inclusion (Angelides & Hajisoteriou, 2013, p. 28).

Having exceptional needs students in classrooms requires intervention that induces change with multiple factors and training with a focus on interaction between all individuals involved. This includes the need to redefine policy and practice, having in mind that "the gap between policy and practice is evident when teachers attempt to merge the implementation of inclusive education with the pressure of preparing learners for examinations" (Otukile-Mongwaketse, Mangope, & Kuyini, 2016 , p. 175). Such policy should definitely be student driven while allowing extra teaching time, less testing, and requiring teachers to move out from lecture mode into facilitator mode, especially at the secondary level, if we want to make sure students are career ready when they graduate.

### **Perceptions of Overall Effectiveness of Inclusion**

Overall, special educators have a more positive attitude about the effectiveness of inclusion; they have "more positive expectations of the possibility for change among learners with identified support needs or low ability than mainstream regular class and learning support teachers" (Woolfson, Grant, & Campbell, 2007). This may be due to more training and teaching within and inclusive classroom (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999; Subban & Sharma, 2006). However, the daily learning experiences of all students in each classroom is ultimately dependent on the general classroom educator.

Other researchers, Burgstahler, Duclos, and Turcotte (2000) have shown that general education teachers believe that students with physical disabilities present more challenges to accommodate because of architectural barriers presented by field experiences, labs, and older facilities. Also, according Lancaster, Mellard, and Hoffma (2001) “Several teachers cited a lack of time as the biggest obstacle to helping students with disabilities” (p.10). Other studies support this outcome that staff are more willing to provide accommodations that are not time intensive (Sweener, Kundert, May, & Quinn, 2002; Vogel, Leyser, Wyland & Brulle, 2000). “Students with disabilities cost more money and take more time for an already overworked staff.” (Lancaster, et al., 2001, p. 4).

In general, the presence of students with exceptional needs causes teachers to adapt their teaching more effectively to individual differences, and therefore the attainments of all improve. Additionally, “many studies reported no discernable difference in the achievements of pupils without special educational needs following the introduction of pupils with special needs.” (Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, & Kaplan, 2007, p. 369). These findings demonstrate the benefits of mainstreaming despite the overall perceptions that cite numerous challenges.

Merely being present in general classroom is not effective for special education students. Under the mainstream inclusion, “there are limits to the extent to which mainstream schools can transform their pedagogical approaches under the umbrella of performativity” (Glazzard, 2013, p. 95). In fact, “inclusion can result in overall school effectiveness being called into question” (Glazzard, 2013, p. 95). As pointed out by Hansen (2012), there has to be a limit to inclusion in practice because too much diversity

can threaten the stability of a school. “Inclusive schools also need to exclude some children in order to secure their own existence, even though they try to eradicate exclusion.” (Hansen, 2012, p. 94).

### **Perceptions of Self-Efficacy in Inclusive Classrooms**

According to Lohrman and Bambara (2006), teachers’ instructional efficacy depends on a number of supports that should be implemented, “to help a teacher feel more comfortable and less apprehensive prior to the student coming to their class including the following:

- Sharing positive information about the student;
- Offering disability-specific information for the teacher to read or workshops they can attend;
- Creating opportunities for the teacher to observe the student prior to the school year ending;
- Offering opportunities for training on evidence-based behavior support strategies;
- Reassuring the teacher that they will not be alone and that they will have the supports needed to include the student; and
- Ensuring that a plan is in place for providing in-class supports and dealing with emergency situations.” (p.171).

The negative attitudes of educators towards inclusion are an important factor vis-à-vis of teachers’ perception of self-efficacy in inclusive setting. Some general educators believe that students with disabilities may generate more instructional time, and consequently they are less effective in teaching their non-disabled students (Jordan,

Lindsay, & Stanovich, 1997; Jordan, Glenn, & McGhie-Richmond, 2010; Jordan & Stanovich, 2004).

Other studies have shown that teachers who experience pre-service preparation programs that include how to instruct exceptional needs students develop better teaching efficacy in their classrooms. “A fairly consistent finding is that sense of personal efficacy for teaching increases during college teacher preparation and student teaching” (Woolfolk-Hoy & Spero, 2005, p. 346). Gao and Mager (2011) investigated preservice teachers’ attitudes and beliefs toward diversity and found that pre-service teachers’ beliefs and perceptions about inclusion, their sense of efficacy, and their attitudes toward school diversity were positively associated. Another study found that pre-service teachers who demonstrated a belief in their abilities were more likely to serve students with disabilities effectively (Peacock, 2016).

Similarly, Bandura (1993) noted that educators who felt that they were effective put more effort into adjusting instruction for their students (Bandura, 2010) and teachers who felt that they were highly effective were motivated to find solutions to challenges in the classroom (Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010). In fact, “When sense of self-efficacy regarding the disability is higher, i.e., when the teachers feel confident in their capability to teach pupils with learning difficulties, their willingness to include these pupils in regular education is higher, and vice versa” (Lifshitz & Glaubman, 2002, p.416). Although many studies focused on relations among teachers’ perceived efficacy, years of teaching experience, education level and attitudes towards inclusive education, few of the studies, examined these issues relevant to children with exceptional needs in a high school context.

## **Summary**

Research points to a number of significant student, teacher, and environmental factors that contribute to the formation and maintenance of teacher beliefs and self-efficacy, which consequently impact the eventual success of inclusion. While there have been many studies conducted about educators' attitudes and perceptions of mainstream inclusion in Cameroon, there are very few that have explored teachers' self-efficacy in an inclusive setting in Cameroon, which makes it difficult to evaluate academic achievement in a mainstream inclusion. There needs to be more research in evaluating the efficacy of instruction and practices to ensure every effort is made to impact all learners in K-12 inclusion settings.

The review of literature began with the history of special education and the beginning of inclusion in Cameroon. Many legislative acts were developed in order to mandate inclusive settings. The literature also showed that there are positive and negative attitudes from educators regarding inclusion of exceptional needs students in a general classroom. Inclusive classrooms are diverse settings with relationships between, students, teachers, and parents. It is important to look at how the educators in mainstream settings experience the diverse aspects of inclusion, their attitudes, and self-efficacy to develop and implement effective inclusive classrooms for all students.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative study used a survey research design to collect perception data from school educators from Northern Cameroon. North Cameroon is a region known for being clouded by a myriad of education challenges that range from lack of infrastructure, material resources, teaching, and learning resources and teacher shortages. The literature indicated a strong correlation between the perceptions and attitudes of staff in relation to the success of inclusion programs. Analyzing the effectiveness of teacher's efficacy was important for improving instruction and mainstream inclusion.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the attitudes and instructional efficacy of the regular education teacher towards the inclusion of learning disabled students in the Northern part of Cameroon in grades 9 to 12. Specifically, the perception of the regular education teachers in terms of inclusion of exceptional needs students and the perceptions of effectiveness of their own instruction. The goal was to examine how perceptions impact special needs students in high school. Survey questions were aimed at eliciting information from participants to more fully answer the following questions:

1. What are general educators' perceptions regarding inclusion of students with exceptional needs and inclusion services in the general education setting?
2. What are educators' perceptions of the overall effectiveness of their instructional strategies in an inclusive environment?
3. What are general educators' perceptions of their instructional efficacy with students with exceptional needs in the inclusion setting?

5. How does inclusion affect self-efficacy for those teaching exceptional needs students in the general education classroom?

### **Research Design**

The present study was designed to investigate high school teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of exceptional needs students and their efficacy beliefs about their ability to educate those students in inclusive settings. To investigate regular teacher attitudes towards inclusion, a pencil and paper survey was used to assess both attitudes of the effectiveness of inclusion and perceptions of effectiveness of instruction. The survey used an open-ended question design. The survey questions collected qualitative data regarding teacher perceptions of inclusion, overall effectiveness of their instructional strategies, instructional efficacy, and effect of inclusion on self-efficacy.

### **Participants and Research Environment**

Participants included high school general educators from Northern Cameroon currently in practice with teaching experience of more than 5 years. Recruitment were made by contacting the school coordinators of 5 municipality-driven public high schools within a 1000-km radius of Garoua. The criterion to take part in the study was that the teacher had to have more than 5 years' experience, and had to be currently teaching at least one exceptional needs student with additional disabilities.

The participants in the study were comprised of teachers providing instruction in English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Physical Education in mainstreamed secondary schools and who had exceptional needs students in their classes. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used to identify participating schools. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, all participants understood that voluntary

participation was considered consent to participate in the study. To ensure credibility of the findings, the purpose of the study was clearly explained at the beginning of the survey. These explanations helped to make the participating teachers more comfortable. The survey was completed during the Fall 2017 and teachers were allowed to take it home, complete during the weekends and return.

### **Data Collection Procedures and Analysis**

The data utilized in this study was collected from open-ended questions from a comprehensive survey questionnaire which was provided to teachers working with exceptional needs students. Items on the survey reflected research-based indicators of inclusion, mainly the support students with disabilities receive in general education classrooms as well as their interactions with peers and teachers (Idol, 2006; Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001). The survey questions focused on teachers' sense of efficacy, teachers' attitudes, reactions, perception of mainstream inclusion, experiences, and inclusive strategies.

The surveys were distributed to participants in face-to-face settings via site coordinators at each host school. The pencil and paper survey was provided in English. However, the survey was provided both in French and English language to support participants needing more clarity on the questions and were return via a third person who traveled overseas.

The open-ended questions were coded for analysis. The first coding was based on the research questions to group into four main themes namely, teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the education of children with special educational needs in the mainstream, teachers' sense of instructional efficacy, teaching instructional strategies,

and the impact of inclusion on self-efficacy. The second coding used markers of positive, negative, and neutral responses to analyze patterns to identify potential impact on students.

### **Summary**

The qualitative study was designed to enrich and contextualize the data gathered in this study. Data was collected through the use of an open-ended survey, which explored teacher perceptions regarding mainstreaming in regular classrooms in Northern Cameroon. Responses were coded by examining, analyzing and categorizing on the basis of positive, negative and neutral with regard to the research questions.

## **FINDINGS**

The purpose of this chapter was to report the findings of the study. This study examined the attitudes and instructional efficacy of the regular education teacher towards the inclusion of learning disabled students in the Northern part of Cameroon in grades 9 to 12. Specifically, the perceptions of the regular education teachers in terms of inclusion of exceptional needs students and the perceptions of effectiveness of their own instruction were explored. The researcher contacted twenty high school general educators who taught in inclusive classrooms in the Northern part of Cameroon in grades 9 to 12, however only ten responded. The ten participants were employed as full-time general education teachers of high school classrooms in public school districts for the extent of the 2017/2018 school year.

Qualified participants consisted of certified classroom teachers who held an interest in expressing their perception of inclusion of learning disabled students in their classroom. All participants' teachers were informed of the survey and its purpose prior to distribution of questionnaires via flyers and or hard copy. The survey questions asked the teachers to provide feedback about their perceptions about inclusive practices.

Surveys were placed in each teacher's mailbox located at the high school. The consent form was included on the front page of the survey and participants had the option to proceed with completing the survey upon signifying their consent. Informed consent denoted participation was voluntary and with no pressure to participate. Inclusion criteria were a valid teaching certification and agreement to participate. Precautionary steps were taken to avoid collecting any identifying information. There was no personally

identifiable information collected in the surveys and the participating schools were not identified in this research for reasons of confidentiality.

A total of 20 teachers were contacted and invited to participate in the research. There were 10 teachers who responded and completed the survey. Therefore, the overall response rate was 50%. Computer assistance was used in the analysis of the data. Microsoft Word was used to store the survey responses. Surveys were analyzed individually, by coding the responses. The documents were then uploaded into NVIVO 11, which was used to analyze the responses. The codes consolidated the participants' responses into key phrases or words for each question. The documents for each participant were uploaded into NVIVO 11 and coded within the computer program using the node feature. NVIVO stored all of the nodes and therefore kept a running record of the codes. This process was repeated for each survey.

### **Perceptions and Attitudes towards Mainstreaming**

The first question was used to identify general educators' perceptions regarding inclusion of students with exceptional needs and inclusion services in the general education setting. All participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences of having exceptional needs students in their classroom. Through examining the responses of the participants' views, it was evident all the participating teachers were open and accepting of students with learning disabilities in their classroom, but the lack of support, training, resources, and logistics was leading them to have a negative view of mainstream inclusion.

Most general education teachers reported positive views related to their attitudes towards mainstream inclusion, specifically their acceptance of student differences and a

desire for students with learning disabilities to feel a part of the classroom. For instance, Participant 1 described his/her acceptance of students with disabilities in her classroom with his/her statement, "I believe that handicapped children deserve the right to be with typical children. I think they have a place in society and should be accepted by all. They are human and have rights." Participant 3 shared the same type of acceptance, "I personally do not view the education of children with special educational needs as a choice but as a human rights issue; segregation is wrong. A self-contained classroom is like a jail for those kids despite the best funded staff and intentions; An exceptional needs student can have excellent abilities compare to regular student."

Participant 4 stated, "inclusion is advantageous for the socialization as it foster acceptance of individual differences;" participant 9 stated, "I believe all children regardless of disability have a right to education. The issue is about the settings. Depending on the type of disability, there is need to be a restrictive environment not inclusive for inclusive because it sound politically good;" and participant 5 stated, "These students have the same right to be educated in same school as other students.", participant 7 stated, "The integration of children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities is a major dilemma as it requires additional educational support and modifications to the premises that need to be adapted, as well as the deployment of support teachers within them. Of course, I firmly believe that all children, without distinction, are able to learn and progress. Inclusion in itself helps to eliminate discrimination." Most of the participants have a positive view on the education of children with special educational needs and were in favor of mainstream inclusion and only one had a positive view about their academic performance.

One participant expressed a positive view about the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting. Participant 5 shared the benefits of accommodating all learners in a mainstream inclusion “children with special educational needs and their peers, even teachers do benefit when working in a mainstream inclusion as it reduces stigma, provide opportunity for tolerance and acceptance of diversity, provides more opportunity to engage in more academic tasks, and helps reach all learners.”

Few participants have negative attitudes towards mainstreaming inclusion as they did not want exceptional needs students in the mainstream settings. Participant 2 shared, “It is difficult to teach classes with exceptional needs students as we are not equipped to better do so and also such students are mostly socially isolated by peers.”, Participant 6 expressed concern, “I do not disagree with inclusion but I feel like inclusion is not for everyone as there as some level of disability that require to be isolated for special attention.” Participant 8 shared, “We spend more time disciplining and/ or trying to calm them down than teaching the rest of the class”, and participant 10 stated, “Every student should be educated but not in a mainstream setting. The overall situation mainstream inclusion makes the teacher feel helpless and that he is not doing his job.”

In regards to the way forwards for inclusive education in Cameroon, this was the main concern from all participants who raised considerable issues and challenges in properly delivering their instruction. Participant 1 stated, “I think there is a need for school to start reflecting on their cultural ethos and align it to the 21st century cultural dynamics. The school board has to adopt and implement a multilingual approach to developing an inclusive learning environment. A clear nonpartisans conversation on that

issue through forum and conferences should be held at the government level. As a bilingual institution, Cameroon schools need to respond to cultural differences as part of school improvement. Schools should create platforms for discussion of the role and participation of disabled and the formulation of strategies to widen their participation.” Participant 2 stated, “The Cameroon school’s institution need to have comprehensive inclusive strategies which include aspects of policy practice and cultural ethos.”

Participant 3 stated, “More emphasis needs to be put on the quality of teachers training, the awareness of the issue, and the equipment of schools.” participant 4 stated. “the need funding and better legislation which promote the right to education for persons with disabilities of all ages, to learn alongside their peers in inclusive schools (at primary and secondary school levels), for example through individual educational plans.” Participant 5 stated, “The government should provide disability-specific training to all staff working in the education system.” Participant 6 shared, “The government should adopt specific measures and policies including pouring funding which would ensure disabilities are provided reasonable accommodation to facilitate their ability to learn in general education settings.”

Participant 7 stated, “The government needs to make reforms that promote and welcome diversity for all learners. Inclusive education is a process that involves the transformation of schools and other learning centers so that they can take care of all children. The government needs to invest in teacher training, equipment, and educational seminars to equip educators with new strategies and methods, and additional supports for students who have difficulties in their educational process.” Participant 8 stated, “The government need to adopt more inclusive policy and restructure schools, increase funding

and teachers training.” Participant 9 stated, “The government need to sensitize the population to the human rights of children with disabilities, revise teacher preparation, increase funding, revise and update the school infrastructures.” Finally, participant 10 stated, “The government should revise teacher preparation, involvement community and parents in decision making, and increase funding in education.”

The most common academic performance response by most of the participants was regarding the special needs students being poor learners. Participant 1 described why he/she thinks their performance is below average, “Lower. Given the environment, community perception and lack of teacher preparation, I think they cannot perform like anybody else.” Participant 10 shared, “Even with accommodations/ modifications they are struggling and failing.” Participant 2 stated, “Children with special educational needs seem to have a less favorable social position than children without special educational needs. There are children with special needs of such a magnitude that the goal of age-appropriate achievement in reading and mathematics may never be reached. This is most of the time due to the severity of the condition.” Participant 3 stated, “Usually, students with learning disabilities have less interaction with peers and teachers.” Participant 7 shared, “Students with educational needs typically have low education and a low success rate compared to ordinary students.” Participant 8 shared, “My view depends on the degree of disability. Those with strong disability usually perform less.”

The responses between educators’ perceptions of inclusive service and mainstream inclusion were either positive or negative. There were no responses coded as neutral. All participants have a negative view on the way forward for inclusive education in Cameroon.

These responses revealed that teachers lack of support, resources, logistics, materials, and training are big concerns for general educators' perceptions regarding inclusion of students with exceptional needs and inclusion services in the general education setting and that the Cameroon government should address these. Teachers indicated that they felt least prepared to include children with exceptional needs. The data shows that materials, lack of supports and teacher preparation received the highest ratings as barriers to successful inclusion, compared to teacher attitudes.

The overall consensus with general education teachers was that they were unable to properly provide instruction support to all students within the mainstream inclusion setting due to lack of supports, logistics, proper training, infrastructures and most of them do view the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting as below the expectation.

### **Instructional Efficacy**

The second question was used to identify educators' perceptions of overall effectiveness of their instructional strategies in an inclusive environment and was used as a level 2 predictor variable. To offer a comparison to the measure of teacher perceptions outlined above, two questions were asked to determine perceptions of overall effectiveness of their instructional strategies.

The responses from these questions were mixed, based upon participants' views of inclusion in mainstream settings. The most common differentiation or accommodation strategy mentioned by the participants was alternative teaching strategies. Types of teacher's strategies included: re-teaching the concept, presenting multiple examples, encouraging collaboration on alternative solution, use of graphic organizers, reciprocal

teachings, modeling, verbal and visual presentation, regular feedbacks, handout and visual aids, small group collaborative work, cooperative learning, four corners, brainstorming, jigsaw, pair share, alternative assignments, etc.

Most participants positively perceive their instructional efficacy as related to instructional strategies, skills/feedback, sensitivity/support, classroom environment, classroom management, enthusiasm and communication skill. For instance, Participant 1 stated, "I usually reteach the concept. I help students better understand the concept by presenting multiple examples, encouraging collaboration on alternative solutions."

Participant 2 shared, "In regard to exceptional needs students included in regular education classes, most of the time I have no clue as to what to do. But do provide them with them with graphic organizers to help students see the relationship between ideas and new concepts (such as Venn diagrams for large connected concepts, T-charts for compare/contrast, etc.). I also do give them foldable or cheat sheets for new formulas, vocabulary, or geometric shapes."

Participant 3 stated, "I take the time and figure out whatever may be helpful to include that child in the classroom. I use reciprocal teaching whenever possible."

Participant 5 stated, "I reteach. I model what I want students to do. Whenever possible, present information verbally and visually, use diagrams, graphics and pictures to support instruction, and provide regular feedback." Participant 6 shared, "I use handouts and visual aid, present instructions or demonstrations in more than one way, and emphasize small group collaborative work with peers. I have zero special education support and service provided by special education personnel or office." Participant 7 stated, "I teach again by changing strategies." Participant 9 stated, "I use cooperative learning, and other

teaching strategies like four corners, brainstorming, jigsaw, pair share, etc.” Participant 10 stated, “I reteach.”

Fewer participants felt helpless in regard to implementing alternative teaching strategies in their classroom. Participant 1 shared, “I don’t really know what to do except provide more exercise or different type of problems. In fact, I have zero special education support and service provided by special education personnel or office.” Participant 8 also stated, “Not really due to lack of support materials”

There appeared to be an overwhelming positive view of effective instructional strategies. Most of the participants felt that encouraging natural interaction between exceptional children and the other children in the class was the best way to deal with social integration problems and positively view inclusive service and mainstream inclusion.

### **Instructional Strategies**

To identify general educators’ perceptions of their instructional efficacy with students with exceptional needs in the inclusion setting, several questions were asked to general educators. This was used as a level 3 predictor variable. In regard to General educators’ perceptions of their instructional efficacy with students with exceptional needs in the inclusion setting, most of participants expressed a negative view vis-à-vis of their instructional efficacy mainly due to lack of resources, training, and preparation. Also, there were an overwhelming number of challenges raised by all participants that were the causes of their negative views, efficacy and performances in such settings.

Only one participant had a certain confidence or positive perception of his/her instructional efficacy. Participant 6 stated he/she felt “somehow confident” in teaching

student with exceptional needs. However, this participant also acknowledges some challenges when dealing with some cases, “some students with severe disability are too behaviorally disruptive and could hurt others,” shared participant 6.

Lack of support, training, and materials were common themes raised by teachers to demonstrate their negative perceptions of their instructional efficacy with students with exceptional needs in the inclusion setting. For instance, participant 1 stated, “Not really confident. I feel really not prepared with my education to handle some cases of inclusion which make it hard to meet the needs of all children or differentiate instruction. We have lack of resources and preparation.” Participant 2 shared, “I am not really confident due to lack of experience and training.” Participant 3 stated, “I am less confident due to lack of materials, the environments, and zero support both from administration and the community.” Participant 4 stated, “Not confident at all.” Participant 5 shared, “All depend on the degree of disability. For some, it is very difficult due to lack of training and appropriate tools.” Participant 7 stated, “I am less confidential in view of the lack of preparation and the problems that this creates.” Participant 8 stated “I feel really not prepared with my education to handle some cases of inclusion which makes it hard to meet the needs of all children or differentiate instruction. We also have lack of resources.” Participant 9 shared, “I am not confident since my training did not involve any such case.” Participant 10 stated, “Not confident at all due to lack of support”

In regard to challenges faced when teaching exceptional needs students, all participant felt that it negatively affects their instructional strategies. For instance, participant 1 named, “No disabled sport in the school, lack of materials and mission or vision that includes all learners.” Participant 2 stated, “Big classes size and lack of

materials.” Participant 3 shared, “I have to deal with multiple disabilities, discipline issues, lack of parents’ support and appropriate training. “Participant 4 shared, “There is an issue of safety; attitudes of other students (some student preferred others not to know their status to avoid been treated differently); labelling, staff preparedness and program quality; lack of transportation; lack of district commitment which lead to potential for failure.

Participant 5 stated, “I am frustrated with the process used to develop the Individualized Education Program (IEP).” Participant 6 stated, “Some students with severe disability are too behaviorally disruptive and could hurt others. “Participant 7 shared, “There are problems of disciplines, overcrowding, pedagogical support, and so on. “Participant 8 wrote, “Most of students with special needs spend time sleeping during instruction or always get in trouble.” Participant 9 shared, “I am overwhelmed by the large number of exceptional students who always get into trouble. I have to stop teaching several times to address possible verbal and physical abuse by peers, social isolation, which end up reducing services and of quality of instruction. “Participant 10 stated, “Teachers inadequate training, attitudes of general education teachers, lack of appropriate support and resources, and lack of specialized instruction, as well as concerns about the social integration and academic progress of their child. I am also unhappy with the relationship, communication and partnership between home and school.”

### **Impact of Inclusion on Self-Efficacy**

To identify the impact of inclusion on self-efficacy for those teaching exceptional needs students in the general education classroom, several questions were asked to general educators. This was used as a level 4 predictor variable. Regarding the Impact on

teaching skills, more than half of the respondents reported diversity of classes as a strength. The most prevalent theme raised included behavior issues, time consuming, pacing, effective lesson planning, and differentiation.

Most participants indicated that mainstream inclusion was beneficial for their teaching skills and confidence as it had positively impact their self-efficacy. For instance, “Participant 3 shared, “It has helped me to incorporate individualized accommodations and adaptations which usually lead to the improvement for struggling students. It really slows down the scope of my teaching and to impact other students.” “Participant 5 stated, “It has positively influenced my skills as now I tend to differentiate my instruction. My teaching confidence is low due to lack of support. “Participant 6 shared, “It has positively influenced my ability to effectively plan lessons and use varieties of tools including wait time and questioning technique to reach most of the students. It affects my confidence to effectively manage my classroom.” Participant 7 stated, “On a pedagogical or didactical level, I have evolved positively because I am forced to use the waiting period technique, the didactic questioning, and the small group interaction and to reassure me that the students understood before continuing. But this has implications for the progression of the school curriculum which is sometimes half covered. Confidence is greatly impacted by the unpredictable behavior of students with disabilities.” Participant 9 shared, “It positively influences my skills to differentiate instruction and to be aware of different learners’ style. I always have confidence in my own abilities as a teacher to plan lessons and teach but the issue is with behavior, classroom size, and infrastructure.” Finally, participant 10 shared, “I am now able to create more positive school experiences that

promote students' academic, career, and personal/social growth by prevention. This is done by determining areas for intervention and responding accordingly.”

In regard to the impact of inclusion on self-efficacy, few participants indicated that mainstream inclusion has negatively influenced their teaching skills and confidence. These are the cases of Participant 1 who shared, “It is has slow the curriculum progress. It has influence my willingness to have students with special educational needs in my classroom.” Participant 2 stated, “It has negatively influence my teaching since I have to lower the standard to reach their needs and most of the time, end up not covering even half the curriculum. Teaching in such condition is difficult, time-consuming, and frustrating. It has negatively impact my teaching due to management issues including the lack of understanding of the disorder and how it may affect learning. Participant 4 stated, “It has negatively influenced my teaching due to environment, student's behavior, management issues and student lower background knowledge. My teaching confidence is at the lowest due to teacher unpreparedness and lack of co-teachers. Participant 8 shared, “It is negatively influence and slow down my instruction. I feel less confidence to properly manage and teach.” Participant 10 shared, “negatively influence my confidence since I have to spend more than half time to address behavior”

Few participants shared that they experienced negative shifts in their instructional focus/confidence as a result of mainstream inclusion. Some viewed the impact as beneficial to their growth. Generally, educators perceived disabilities as problematic. The main concerns raised included behavior issues, time consuming, pacing, effective lesson planning and differentiation.

## Summary

Survey analyses were performed in order to gather information regarding attitudes and instructional efficacy of the regular education teacher towards the inclusion of learning disabled students in the Northern part of Cameroon in grades 9 to 12. Most educators indicated teaching students with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom had negatively influenced their teaching confidence. These findings may be used to explain the negative view of mainstream inclusion in the northern region of Cameroon.

Regarding Effective instructional strategies, most of the teachers reported that they do their best to help all students. With regard to alternative teaching strategies, they noted that they sometimes modify the lesson. Moreover, some teachers said that mainstream inclusion may have negative effects, because the teacher needs to try more, and this fact may hold up the class. Others evaluated the presence of exceptional needs students in a positive way, because in such cases, the teacher continually tries to improve his/her work.

## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes and instructional efficacy of the regular education teacher towards the inclusion of learning disabled students in the Northern part of Cameroon in grades 9 to 12. Specifically, the perception of the regular education teachers in terms of inclusion of exceptional needs students and the perceptions of effectiveness of their own instruction was explored. Participants were high school teachers in grades nine through twelve, who were certified.

The research questions in this study asked how general education experience and perceive mainstream inclusion in the high school setting. Using the qualitative methodology, this study allowed participants to respond to open ended questions in their own words to avoid limiting the participants' response options. The intent was to provide a rich description of the participants' lived experiences in the phenomenon of inclusion.

The results indicated that teachers generally perceive mainstream inclusion as important. However, this perception does not correlate to their perception of the importance of meeting the needs of all students. The majority of the teachers do not provide alternative teaching strategies beyond those provided in general classroom settings. All the teachers agreed strongly that there were still several things that should be done for inclusive education in Cameroon, most specifically adopting more inclusive policy and restructure schools, increase funding and teacher training.

### **Perceptions and Attitudes towards Mainstreaming**

In regard to perception and attitudes towards mainstreaming the results from the survey showed that most of general educators viewed mainstream inclusion as positive. Some advantages was the notion that inclusion is important for the development,

learning, and self-esteem of all learners which corroborated with Vygotskaya's (1999) suggestion that educators should expose exceptional needs students to their peers so they could learn from each other. From participants' responses, it was obvious that mainstream inclusion does offer some social benefits such as gaining self-confidence, self-esteem, and empathy for others for both students and general education students. Many general educators viewed mainstream inclusion as an issue due to lack of supports, materials, and training which made mainstreaming challenging. The participants' responses make evident a growing frustration of general educators due to lack of supports and training. Several of the teachers voiced concerns about inclusion classes ranging from the limited time and lack of training of the general education staff to adequately teach, and student behavioral issues. These results reflected teachers' frustration, and students not getting the help they needed.

According to Kilanowski-Press, Foote, and Rinaldo (2010), one form of support in the inclusive classroom should be the addition of a second teacher or aide, which seemed not to exist here. In fact, the special education teachers and aides were not mentioned in the participants' comments. It is important for two teachers to work together with a smaller group of students to meet the special needs of students in inclusion classrooms along with special training in how best to work with students who have learning disabilities and behavior issues (Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 1996). Administrative support is critical for inclusion to be successful (Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004), thus it is necessary for administrators to provide adequate resources and establish a vision about inclusion and include faculty in developing that vision.

### **Instructional Efficacy**

A few general educators' felt that their confidence improved because they have worked on building it for years thus would be a good predictor of teachers' efficacy and attitude towards inclusion practices. This highlights the importance of teachers' levels of confidence as they collaborate with other educators, professionals, and parents. Giving more emphasis to collaboration in teaching and planning is recommended. Based on this study, team support has a larger impact in the classroom than having the support of administration. The administrator makes teacher assignments and thereby is responsible for ensuring sufficient professional development is provided.

All general educators expressed some kind of negative challenges they faced in teaching exceptional needs. Findings on general educators' confidence in teaching students with exceptional needs show a negative trend in their perceptions of their instructional efficacy. Several educators reported they really felt not confident, nor prepared with their teaching preparation to handle some cases of inclusion which makes it hard to meet the needs of all children or differentiate instruction. Most of them were concerned about the lack of resources. Most of the general education explained that inclusion led them to slow down the delivery of their lessons in order to reach students in their inclusion classrooms. As a result, the class could be missing valuable information.

Teaching as a field requires practitioners to become proficient at monitoring and adjusting. Adaptability is a professional skill that is beneficial when working in the inclusion model. The results indicated that participants felt professional development training, administrative and stakeholders' supports were key for implementing the inclusion model. Exceptional needs students should be provided with special education

support in the forms of trained personnel, accommodations that would level the playing field for them and two teachers who would work and plan collaboratively to ensure all populations would thrive academically. Training was a topic of concern for teachers; no definite method is prescribed for them to attain the required training needed. Teachers should be provided with more opportunities to get involved with inclusive practices to enhance their efficacy for inclusion.

### **Instructional Strategies**

All teachers reported some degree of differentiated instruction and technology and that they had a variety of experiences teaching in the inclusion model. One of the things mentioned more than once by the teachers was the lack of support and knowledge as the general education teachers were unprepared to assist the students. This finding leads the researcher to conclude that there is a measure of precariousness within the inclusion model which is based upon lack of logistics, training, and support.

Instructional efficacy questions included differentiated instruction strategies, and of implementation of alternative teaching strategies, evaluating the participants' perception of their expertise teaching in the inclusion model. When analyzed, participant responses indicated that their interactions with students were limited to facilitating instruction, assisting all the students in the classroom, monitoring for understanding, and providing accommodations. Participants were clear that general educators' teachers in the mainstream inclusion setting help all students, not just those with learning disabilities.

Effective teacher, educators must learn to know their students and understand their needs. It is important for general education teachers to take time to study the specific needs of their exceptional needs students to better comply with students' IEPs.

Also, specific training on instructional delivery and best practices should be made available to teachers by stakeholders. The administration should provide support and guidance for teachers to build a strong program to serve not only the social aspects of students with disabilities, but build a strong educational support system for the students to succeed in today's world.

### **Impact of Inclusion on Self-Efficacy**

In principle, participants perceived inclusion as positive, as most educators felt like teaching students with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom positively influenced their teaching skills. Many participants viewed mainstream inclusion as a rewarding experience for the student and the teacher. Participants' overall experiences and impact of inclusion on self-efficacy for those teaching exceptional needs students in the general education classroom, the results from the survey showed that most teachers generally felt that inclusion negatively affect self-efficacy for those teaching exceptional needs students in the general education classroom.

In examining how participants felt their experiences impacted their attitudes and beliefs about inclusion, most of educators felt like teaching students with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom has negatively influenced their teaching confidence while few have an opposite view. The emerging theme was that participants did not believe inclusion was beneficial due to behavior challenges and lack of supports.

Schools should provide each mainstream inclusion classroom with a special educator and need to ensure that teachers and staff who work in inclusion classes are properly trained in teaching, co-teaching, and content areas. Schools and districts need to provide ongoing training and support for teachers and staff who work in inclusion

classrooms. The district and schools should offer workshops to meet the needs for their classroom situation (Boardman, Argüelles, Vaughn, Hughes, & Klingner, 2005) and work in partnership with parents to accomplish their goals for the child.

### **Overall Patterns**

In summary, the themes that emerged from survey related to participants' experiences, perceptions, and how their lived experiences impacted their attitude, beliefs, and perception of the inclusion model. In general, participants viewed inclusion as positive, but yet the emerging theme was that participants did not believe inclusion was beneficial due to challenge they faced. It was interesting to note that co-teaching was not mentioned as support received and yet most participants did not acknowledge receiving any formalized training in how to teach in the inclusion model.

The findings of this study also describe unsuccessful inclusion in terms of student progression. The ways forwards of implementing inclusion is something that can be addressed within both the school system and government level, as it directly impacts the practitioners in the field of education and their experience and perception of the inclusion model. In addition, the findings of this study showed that while participants' overall experience and perception of inclusion was negative, they also supported the past research, because many participants noted the lack of time to complete the curriculum, behavior challenge, lack of training that it is not beneficial to students with moderate or severe handicaps, and resources in their opinions of the model.

The survey results also revealed that teachers are under the impression that it is suitable for exceptional needs students to operate in a restricted environment appropriately design to meet their needs with teachers well equipped to fulfill them.

However, this is increasingly difficult to do given the large number of students served by a single general educator. These findings suggest that while teachers are supportive of mainstream inclusion, they also support suitable uses of the instructional time. These results correlate with an earlier study conducted by Lancaster, et al. (2001).

The findings of this study emphasized the needs of proper teachers' preparation and training, logistics, resources and supports as having a major impact on the overall inclusion experience. Participants felt that having sufficient leveled resources, and being flexible are the best knowledge and supports needed to be successful since the students and their needs are very challenging and vary by type of disabilities. It was obvious that lacks of supports or professional development were among the desired support leading to the negative views and yet most participants had not attended any formalized training in how to teach in the inclusion model.

Participants statements from instructional strategies along with those from instructional efficacy are supporting evidence regarding the complexity level of Instructional efficacy in the participants' mainstream inclusion classes. This information indicates that the instructional strategies involved teaching in front of the classroom, using procedural methods of computations, using graphic organizers that show step-by-step procedures for finding answers. These instructional practices are typical in general education classes and may not necessarily be considered as part of the best practices to reach all learners.

### **Limitations of the Study**

A concern with this study was the focus on only one district and on only high school educators with a great proportion deliberately selected from schools identified as

actively implementing inclusive programs. Although this may weaken the scope of the research, it was deemed necessary to restrict the sample in order to reduce the number of variables and thereby provide clearer results. Another limitation is that the information received from the educators was based only on their perceptions of their individual experiences and beliefs regarding exceptional needs students. The survey did not provide a way for a differentiation between attitudes towards the inclusion of children with different exceptionalities nor a account for, or differentiate among, such experiences on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nationality, education, or religion.

The results of this study may not be representative of all teachers regarding mainstream inclusion, but does provide preliminary findings that may be of interest to policy-makers and administrators who are exploring educational options for students. Also, the results of the study may be used by the teachers in the region to gain a better sense of what their inclusion environment and instructional best practice looks like from an outsider's point of view. Teachers may then use this insight to adjust teaching to meet their needs. The administrator in the building where the survey was administered may use the results to share with the community or the school board. Other teachers and administrators may use the results to better understand what is happening in teaching and learning and adjust their practices as needed.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future interventions include following the suggestions of educators needs by implementing and equipping more schools with resources needed, providing more training and supports to teachers, including how the resources are being utilized and these

issues have to be addressed in the school level and at the state level through a reorganization of the support services. School districts should reexamine the way they implement mainstreams inclusion in general classroom settings. This study found a lack of training and support for teacher to implement the inclusion model. Training and professional development would be beneficial to all teachers involved in the inclusion model. General education teachers in this study reported that they did not feel confident in addressing the needs of all students. It is imperative that general education teachers be prepared to teach all children regardless of their learning needs, behavioral, intellectual, emotional, social, and physical capacities and this require access to high quality training in inclusion, strategies, professional development, and training to better prepare them to teach.

Further research should also be conducted to expand the sample size and geographic area of the participants to include not only general but special education teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals. An increase of involvement of administrative support for the inclusion model would be beneficial. Administrative input in a future study would be relevant, because of the decision making and implementation oversight role that school principals play. Widening the scope of a future study to include special education teachers, paraprofessionals would be beneficial because they are usually used as a teacher assistant or co-teacher in the inclusion classroom to provide support and administer accommodations. It would be beneficial to study the attitudes of males and females toward inclusion. In order to collect more data on the lived experiences of general education teachers, follow-up classroom observations are

recommended. Studying the instructional strategies for inclusion as described by the participants using a quantitative approach would also be beneficial.

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**APPENDIXES**

## Appendix

- A Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Practices Survey
- B IRB Approval Letter

## APPENDIX A

### Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Practices

My name is Elie Tcheimegni and I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Fort Hays State University.

I am interested in hearing about your perceptions of mainstream inclusion and its special significance to you. I am conducting a survey to collect information about teacher efficacy in dealing with exceptional needs students in general classroom settings, teachers' instructional strategies, and to find out how inclusion affect self-efficacy. The general aim of hearing about your views is to help improve the success of students with disabilities to attend high school, complete their studies, and graduate or transfer. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your response is greatly appreciated and your answers are confidential.

This is a paper-based survey which takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. I understand that your time is valuable, and your participation is truly appreciated.

Thanks for your participation!

## Survey

1. General Educators' **perceptions of inclusive service and mainstream inclusion**
  - a) What are your views on the education of children with special educational needs, for example, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties, and emotional and behavioral problems in the mainstream setting?
  - b) What is the way forward for inclusive education in Cameroon?
  - c) What are your views about the academic performance of children with special educational needs in the mainstream setting?
2. Educators' perceptions of **overall effectiveness** of their **instructional strategies** in an inclusive environment
  - a) When students do not understand a concept taught for the first time, your instructional strategies effective in helping them learn? Can you describe some of the strategies you may have used to contribute to this achievement?
  - b) How well do you believe you implement alternative teaching strategies in your classroom?
3. General educators' perceptions of their **instructional efficacy** with students with exceptional needs in the inclusion setting
  - a) How confident are you in teaching students with exceptional needs in your inclusive classroom?

b) What current challenges are you facing in teaching exceptional needs students?

4. **Impact of inclusion on self-efficacy** for those teaching exceptional needs students in the general education classroom

a) How has teaching students with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom influenced your teaching skills?

b) How has teaching students with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom influenced your teaching confidence?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INPUT.

## APPENDIX B

### IRB Approval Letter



**FORT HAYS STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

*Forward thinking. World ready.*

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OFFICE OF SCHOLARSHIP AND SPONSORED PROJECTS

DATE: January 4, 2018

TO: Elie Tcheimegni, EDS  
FROM: Fort Hays State University IRB

STUDY TITLE: [1162817-2] INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN A  
MAINSTREAM CLASSROOM: THE CASE OF CAMEROON

IRB REFERENCE #: 18-037  
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: January 4, 2018  
EXPIRATION DATE: January 3, 2019  
REVIEW TYPE: Administrative Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this research study. Fort Hays State University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Administrative Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form unless documentation of consent has been waived by the IRB. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document. The IRB-approved consent document must be used.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

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If you have any questions, please contact Leslie Paige at 785-628-4349 or [lpaige@fhsu.edu](mailto:lpaige@fhsu.edu). Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.