How to Improve Diversity And Inclusion in The Classroom Among Grade Ten (10) Students in The Gambia

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An Applied Research Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education
University of the People
Dr. Gokhan Serin
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Abstract: This research focuses on the improvement of diversity and inclusion in schools. in recent years, the issue of diversity and inclusion have become increasingly trending in societies all over the world. Communities and schools have also become very diverse due to the existence of different people from different socio-cultural backgrounds who live in communities, and also converge in schools. Basically, today's classrooms all over the world consist of students or children from diverse settings, who by means of being at the same educational levels share the same class, and are found willingly or unwillingly, intentionally or unintentionally interacting among themselves. The presence of such a diverse family within the four corners of the classroom or within a school environment necessitates the need to promote diversity in schools. This will prepare students well and bring them up on the basis of loving and appreciating other people around them, which in the near future shall be replicated across many societies around the world. Similarly, as by nature people are different in terms of their physical, mental, psychological, and financial abilities, it is prudent for schools and teachers to realize these peculiarities among the diverse students in their schools and classrooms, to create an environment that will cater for all the students. This includes ensuring equal access to opportunities and resources for all the students in school, but with a special focus on disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. Inclusion in schools and in the classroom is highly necessary in the aspects of classroom seating arrangements, accessibility of classroom structures and learning facilities, safe environments for all students, and the use of differentiated learning instructions to meet the different learning needs of students. Thus, this study will help educational stakeholders in making decisions or devising policies that will capture the aspect of promoting diversity and inclusion in schools to enhance a peaceful environment of coexistence and tolerance both in schools and society at large.

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the improvement of diversity and inclusion in schools. in recent years, the issue of diversity and inclusion have become increasingly trending in societies all over the world. Communities and schools have also become very diverse due to the existence of different people from different socio-cultural backgrounds who live in communities, and also converge in schools. Basically, today's classrooms all over the world consist of students or children from diverse settings, who by means of being at the same educational levels share the same class, and are found willingly or unwillingly, intentionally or unintentionally interacting among themselves. The presence of such a diverse family within the four corners of the classroom or within a school environment necessitates the need to promote diversity in schools. This will prepare students well and bring them up on the basis of loving and appreciating other people around them, which in the near future shall be replicated across many societies around the world. Similarly, as by nature people are different in terms of their physical, mental, psychological, and financial abilities, it is prudent for schools and teachers to realize these peculiarities among the diverse students in their schools and classrooms, to create an environment that will cater for all the students. This includes ensuring equal access to opportunities and resources for all the students in school, but with a special focus on disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. Inclusion in schools and in the classroom is highly necessary in the aspects of classroom seating arrangements, accessibility of classroom structures and learning facilities, safe environments for all students, and the use of differentiated learning instructions to meet the different learning needs of students.

Thus, this study will help educational stakeholders in making decisions or devising policies that will capture the aspect of promoting diversity and inclusion in schools to enhance a peaceful environment of coexistence and tolerance both in schools and society at large.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

This topic on *How to improve diversity and inclusion among grade ten (10) students* is very important in the growing state of my country's education and development. The issue of diversity and inclusion in schools is a global issue but is yet to get its roots strong in the education system of The Gambia. This topic is important to me, as a young educator, because it will help me discover some useful ways and mechanisms to be used to foster growth in diversity and inclusion for the different students in our schools. This topic will also help my educational authorities to know what is required of them in the promotion of diversity and inclusion for the benefits of school going children. Example, the use of technology to help the different learners in a class is very necessary. Adebisi et al (2015) argues that to meet the need of helping the different types of learners in a diverse classroom, especially capturing students with disabilities, the use of adaptive technology is highly required. Upon successful completion, this topic would also serve as a research base for many interested researchers to explore the facts and findings discussed herein.

Context

The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in The Gambia is responsible for steering the affaires of basic and secondary education in The Gambia. The ministry manages all the staff and resources and ensures that there is an equal distribution of resources across all schools in The Gambia. It is also responsible for the development and implementation of the school curriculum to be used for teaching in schools. The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education thus, looks at issues affecting its progress and realization of goals and carve out alternative and solutions to the possible problems. Thus, according to Marchitello and Trinidad (2019) the incorporation of the voices, experiences, expertise, and perspectives

of the various students is important in a classroom or school is quite important in the development of a curriculum.

Statement of the Problem

One of the main problems affecting schools in The Gambia is the lack of inclusion among students and the difficulties in teaching diverse students. Many students do not learn to understand their differences in terms of needs and abilities, nor do they appreciate one another's cultures as they all individually hold the view that their own cultures are more important. As such, they do not bother to diversify their view of cultural diversity to include others.

Lack of skills to teach diverse students in Gambian schools have seriously contributed to the continuous marginalization of some under privilege students, especially those from minorities or those with physical or mental disabilities. Inclusion among students in Gambian schools is also highly manifested in the behaviors of students and the inability of community members to promote diversity among themselves. Tribal lines are visible everywhere in society because the promotion of diversity and inclusion are dormant in schools.

Rationale

Improving diversity and inclusion among grade ten (10) students in schools is a very fundamental pillar in teaching students on how to become more responsible citizens and promote social cohesion among community members in the long run. As many students who will later form the largest constituent of our communities, pass through our schools, it is important for important issues like diversity and inclusion to be nurtured in them to help in the promotion of socio-cultural diversity in our communities at large. Diversity and inclusion build the spirits of students and prepare them for working together as one, and for the welfare

of all. Diversity and inclusion in schools also helps to minimize the issue of difference and conflict of cultural ideologies and enhance a safe environment for teaching and learning for students from minorities, and those with physical or mental disabilities.

Specific Objectives

This study aims at:

➢ Knowing the significant steps to be taken by educational authorities in promoting diversity and inclusion in schools.

➢ Investigating the role of inclusive and diverse education in the promotion of effective teaching and learning.

Research Questions

Answers shall be provided to the following questions:

➢ What is the responsibility of school authorities in promoting diversity and inclusion in schools?

➢ How does inclusion among students promote effectiveness in teaching and learning?

Significance of the Study

This study is important to the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, regional education authorities, school administrators, teachers, and students in all schools in The Gambia. The study is aimed at discovering ways and mechanism to be used to effectively promote diversity in teaching by using various teaching instructions, and inclusion in Gambian schools. It is important to note the rapidly changing nature of interest in education as per trending issues at a time has highly necessitated the improvement of teaching strategies and instructions to meet the rising needs. Therefore, diversity and inclusion have become

highly necessary and important areas for our students and schools. Brewer et al. (2007), argues that the curriculum is an essential tool in the promotion of inclusion and accommodation for all students in a classroom. Thus, this research will aid the process of curriculum review by providing relevant information.

This study is also important as it seeks to address the long-standing cultural conflicts because of cultural intolerance among communal members, through the promotion of cultural diversity in schools. Students as well as school administrators will also highly benefit from this study as it will prescribe tangible methods and strategies to be used to obtain diversity and inclusion in schools. I strongly agree with Ginsberg and Wlodkowski, (2009, p. 13) that educators have the power to exert influence over classroom norms, therefore it is always important to clarify implicit issues that affect students in our classrooms. I believe diversity and inclusion are issues that profoundly affect students in our classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Diversity and inclusion are basically the right of all learners in a class to be given equal access to learning opportunities to enable them to meet their learning needs, and help learners understand and appreciate the differences in other students and their diverse backgrounds (Opertti, 2009, October).

According to Avcıoğlu (2017), inclusive teaching in diverse classrooms may also stipulate the rightful placement of all the learners in a diverse classroom and giving them the consideration and focus they all deserve based on their needs and interests, especially with a special focus and care to students with special needs.

Furthermore, diversity and inclusion in education mean providing a very conducive environment for all the learners in a classroom. By that, the learning environment is supposed to be made conducive enough for all learners to get on during teaching and learning and achieve their learning goals. Therefore, teachers should be able to create an environment-centered learning such that the needs all the diverse students in a classroom are met. This can be achieved when the teacher is able to know the different learning needs in a class and then s/he works towards creating an ideal learning space (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

Consequently, this research on *How to improve diversity and inclusion among grade ten students,* intends to look at main discussions on how well to better improve inclusive teaching in diverse classrooms. Basically, this study will focus on the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in The Gambia, as the institution responsible for the affaires and management of all schools and educational management.

Educational environments should be designed in different ways based on the requirements of students with special needs. These environments vary between general education classrooms where these children can coexist with their normally developing peers and special boarding educational institutions as based on their needs (Avcıoğlu, 2017).

Organization of Literature

The literature review for this study would be presented in two major topics with subtopics underneath each of the topics. These two main topics are Diversity in the classroom and Inclusion/Inclusive teaching in diverse classrooms.

Diversity in the classroom

According to Bray (2005), when teachers organize classrooms well and facilitate a group activity for the students, they can engage in effective and active learning activities. Similarly, Opertti (2009, October) also stressed that for diversity in teaching and learning to be obtained, the mode of instruction and learning materials to be used should also vary. I believe this would not just help students academically, but also strengthen their social ties and promote diversity among them.

Research has also shown that for diversity in teaching methods to be effectively implemented, the use of differentiated lesson instruction is very paramount. Thus, teachers need to know how to differentiate the content, process, and product of their lessons (Tomlinson, & McTighe, 2006). I believe this is quite important especially in the teaching of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Understanding the content and the process through which teachers teach their different learners to obtain the desired product is essential in diverse classrooms. However, Samuels (2018) discusses the need to incorporate cultural responsiveness in the teaching of diverse students. He stressed that when students' cultural

practices are valued and reflected in the teaching curriculum, they become more interested to learn, as it captures and values their origins and encounters.

According to Devlin and McKay (n.d.), in the wake to promoting diversity in education, it is very necessary to value the different socio-economic status of the diverse students in a class. Students from low economic backgrounds should not be treated at a disadvantage. Like Tomlinson and McTighe (2006), Devlin and McKay (n.d.) argue for the fair treatment of all students in a diverse classroom regardless of their socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds. I quite agree that when the socio-economic discrepancies of students is well addressed at an early age when in school, they will grow in full understanding of how to value and respect the status of other people.

An inclusive education system must organically integrate and link all forms, types and styles of learning as well as different learning objectives, from early childhood education onwards (Opertti, 2009, October).

Inclusion or inclusive teaching in diverse classrooms

Terzi (2014) believes that while the terms 'inclusion' and 'inclusive education' are relatively recent or new in education, with about just 30 years ago, it has been used to qualify the interventions aimed at including individuals and groups of people who are marginalized in society. Therefore, as argued by Opertti (2009, October), the aim of inclusion or inclusive teaching is to integrate and link all forms and styles of teaching and learning from the early childhood education onwards for the purpose of creating conducive learning environments.

Differentiated Instruction can be defined as an ideal teaching and learning mechanism that best fit the different learners in a classroom. As all the students in a class are different in their learning needs and abilities, then one teaching strategy may not be suitable for all the

different students. Stanford and Reeves, (2009) define differentiated instruction as instruction that give teachers many options for presenting learning activities to their students. It also helps teachers to address the different learning needs of students and have a varying mode of assessment.

UNESCO (2005) also quoted in Opertti (2009, October) argued that inclusive teaching is about responding to the diversity needs of all learners in a class by increasing the opportunities of students' participation in learning. Thus, in the process of achieving this, cultures and communities of learners as well as reducing and form of exclusion is highly encouraged in the classroom. This is quite fundamental in the promotion of inclusive education among learners of diverse backgrounds and origins. As the plight for inclusive education continue across the world, it is necessary for educators to know the diversity needs in their schools and carve out mechanisms to effectively promote inclusion for every child in the classroom. In situations where some students are from a minority setting, this should not be a reason for sidelining or exclusion, instead, educators should increase the opportunities of including such learners into the learning community and help them integrate with others effectively.

In the area of teacher effectiveness in addressing inclusive teaching, both Opertti (2009, October) as well as Marchitello and Trinidad (2019) agree that the curricular for teacher education (pre-service and in-service) should reflect the need of inclusive teaching and prepare teachers properly for the tasks of implementing effective teaching in their diverse classrooms. Therefore, I believe the first objective for teacher preparation centers and programs should be to build the capacity of teachers to be able to promote inclusive education. When teachers are enrolling in schools of education to do teaching programs, their scope should not be limited to content learning of certain subjects, but also how to deal with

trending issues in our classrooms, which I believe includes inclusive teaching for diverse students.

Furthermore, it is important for teachers and educators in general to about the rapid changes in education, as the world and the classroom become more and more diverse. Understanding the changes in cultural diversity and the need for cultural integration and responsiveness to other diversity issues is eminent for teachers and educators. While Ebersole et al (2015) stress the need for teacher responsiveness to the changing world and understanding of cultural diversity, Marchitello and Trinidad (2019) is more concern about the need to review teacher education programs and schools of education to reflect the rising needs of inclusive education in our schools. In our today learning communities of great diversity, it is quite important for teachers to notice these changes and orientate their students in that regard. However, I believe the greater role is on the educational administrators, who should consider reviewing the education curricular to capture the most trending issues in our education today.

Challenges to fostering an inclusive curriculum.

Despite the high need and necessity for education curricular to capture inclusion and inclusive teaching, there remain some major challenges hindering the smooth progress of curriculum reviews to include inclusive teaching. Opertti (2009, October) argued that the following are some of the major challenges affecting the fostering of inclusive curriculum:

- Replacing current curricular of highly decontextualized content with a multiplicity of contextualized, interdisciplinary, and significant resources for the students. In order to effectively replace these traditional forms of teaching and modes of instruction really calls for a robust attention, to be revised to suit all the learners with universal cross-cutting issues.

- Secondly, there is no universal model for fostering and implementing an inclusive curriculum, as different education stakeholders and authorities may have different ideologies and thoughts as to what they deem worthy in their curriculum development. Thus, synthesizing the diverse views remains a big challenge.

- Consequently, there is a serious lapse in knowing the clear objectives and definitions worthy of consideration in the plight for inclusive curriculum. Stakeholders in education seem to have deficiencies in understanding the efficiency and effectiveness of inclusion in schools.

Moreover, this research topic is quite important in the commensuration of relevant efforts being made to augment societal interconnectedness among the different settings in a society. It also seeks to advocate for the equal distribution and access to leaning materials and opportunities for the diverse students in a classroom. Cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence of members of society is also highly influenced by what students are made to believe either in schools or at home. Therefore, fostering diversity and inclusion among school going children is important in preparing students for their bigger responsibilities in society.

Conclusion

As our societies and schools become more and more diverse, with students from different socio-cultural, socio-economic, political, race and ethnicity, and gender related backgrounds, it has become very necessary to be discussed in our education programs and teaching. It is obvious that students have different learning needs in a classroom, and there is no one-size-fit-all in teaching instruction. Therefore, stakeholders in education should be thinking along the line of helping students to be great achievers, regardless of their different status in society.

Similarly, the issue of inclusion and inclusive teaching is also very trending in our today schools. inclusion or inclusive teaching is relevantly linked to diversity in education. As a result of the increasing diversity of our schools, it has become very necessary for inclusive teaching to be used as a form or teaching instruction that will be able to cater for all the students in the classroom. As mentioned earlier in this text, there is no-one-size-fit-all teaching strategy in a diverse classroom, therefore, teachers should be trained to be able to handle the rising diversity needs in our schools. Of course, the review of the curricular is also important in a quest to capture important trending issues in education.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

This topic on *How to improve diversity and inclusion among grade ten (10) students* is very important in the growing state of my country's education and development. The issue of diversity and inclusion in schools is a global issue but is yet to get its roots strong in the education system of The Gambia. This topic is important to me, as a young educator, because it will help me discover some useful ways and mechanisms to be used to foster growth in diversity and inclusion for the different students in our schools. This topic will also help my educational authorities to know what is required of them in the promotion of diversity and inclusion for the benefit of school-going children. For example, the use of technology to help the different learners in a class is very necessary. Adebisi, Liman & Longpoe (2015) argues that to meet the need of helping the different types of learners in a diverse classroom, especially capturing students with disabilities, the use of adaptive technology is highly required. Upon successful completion, this topic would also serve as a research base for many interested researchers to explore the facts and findings discussed herein.

Research Questions

Answers shall be provided to the following questions:

➢ What is the responsibility of school authorities in promoting diversity and inclusion in schools?

➢ How does inclusion among students promote effectiveness in teaching and learning?

Study Population

The study population for this research was limited to the staff of MoBSE. This population, therefore, included teachers, cluster monitors, education officers, senior education officers, principal education officers, directors, etc. The total number of employees on MoBSE's payroll, as of August 2022, was 17,882 (Seventeen Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight-Two staff), and the study population was sampled from the teachers in Regional Education Directorate 4 in Mansakonko, who are teaching students in grade 10.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The sampling technique used for this study is the Krejcie and Morgan, (1970) sampling method. Thus, the total number of teachers in the Senior Secondary Schools in Regional Education Directorate 4 (RED 4) is 125 qualified teachers (Directorate of Planning, Policy Analysis, Research & Budgeting, 2022). Therefore, the sample size for this population is 50 teachers, which was randomly selected from the sample size.

Population Justification

The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in The Gambia consists of seven regional education directorates. Region One and region two are the most populated, while the other regions are in the country's provincial part with lesser population. This study concentrated on region four for the fact that it is very diverse and almost in the middle among the seven regions. There are several ethnic groups inhabited in region four, and as such students of great diversity gather in schools every day. Region four is also central due to the nature of senior schools and their diverse catchment areas, combining students from different communities and socio-cultural backgrounds. The difference in socio-economic status among students is also very high in region four, making it a good sample area for this study.

Intervention

Aside from the questionnaire that was distributed among the sampled population respondents, this study also relied on the Internet to gather relevant information regarding diversity and inclusion. The study was also supported by the experience gathered by the researcher through observation in different classroom settings in Gambian schools.

Intervention plan

Though this study is quite relevant, it is not new in academia. A lot of research has been done on similar issues of diversity and inclusion and such information is found and accessible everywhere on the internet. This study obtained a lot of information from websites and some printed materials. Additionally, the researcher also observed the trends of diversity and inclusion in some of the sampled schools, in a bit to generate some useful information for the study.

Source of data

The data for this study was obtained using a questionnaire on the 50 staff sampled for the study, in a qualitative research approach (*Evidence guide for school excellence: Qualitative data.,* n.d.). The data was collected by the researcher from the individual teachers in their schools, accompanied by some observations on how the trends unfolded among students.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection for this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 15 questions in the form of a Likert scale that allowed the respondents to choose from different options. The Likert instrument was very suitable for this study due to its simple nature to understand and administer. It is also easy to interpret and

analyze. This instrument led to obtaining answers to the research questions for the study by getting the required respondents, as it was easy to interpret and analyze the findings.

Research Procedure

The researcher sought permission to collect data for this research from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, through the office of the Permanent Secretary. The researcher wrote a formal letter to the said ministry seeking permission to carry out the research on the targeted population under the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education. The researcher also copied the Personnel Management Office. Also, in all the sampled schools, the researcher first spoke to the head of the school to seek permission from them, before getting to the participants. In some schools, where there were various departments, the researcher reached out to all the heads of departments to seek their permission for the conduct of this research. This was to ensure that the research is not carried out on the said subjects without the awareness of their employers.

Soliciting Participants

First, the researcher wrote to the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, to seek approval to conduct research on the targeted population. The approval letter obtained from the ministry was used by the researcher to convince the participants that the research is authorized by their employer and that there was no risk in taking part in the giving of information. The recruitment of participants for this study was done at the population-sampled schools, where the researcher identified the primary sources of information for this study. (*Data collection strategies II: Qualitative research.,* n.d.). The selection of teachers to participate was done in random selection. The researcher selected teachers from each of the schools regardless of qualification, position, gender, or commitment to duties. The researcher did this in order to obtain the varying views of the teachers.

Informed Consent

The researcher wrote to the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education to seek consent for the conduct of research on its employees. As all the participants in this study were above eighteen and employed by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in The Gambia, the approval obtained from the permanent secretary was the researcher's obtained written consent for the participants. This proved to the participants that their employer was aware of their participation in the research. Additionally, the researcher also sought the verbal consent of all the participants (Human Research Protection Program HRPP, 2023), this was done in the form of engaging in a dialogue with the participants, and explaining to them the neutrality of their responses, and that there was no risk of exposing their confidential information. Essentially, participants only took part in the research after they have given their full consent, after knowing what the research is about.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher collected data for this study by using the following procedures. First, the researcher identified the problems affecting the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in its process to improve diversity and inclusion among students.

The researcher unearthed the internal and external problems affecting the ministry, to know what data to collect. The researcher then identified some of the issues and set objectives on how to collect data regarding such issues.

After having identified the issues hindering the improvement of diversity and inclusion among students, the researcher developed a questionnaire that sought answers regarding the ways forward.

The researcher then identified the participants/respondents to give information in support of the research. Furthermore, the researcher embarked on data collection from the selected participants after obtaining their consents to participate in the research. Finally, the researcher analyzed and interpreted the data or the results of the collected data (The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), 2023).

Ethical Considerations

According to Chetty (2016), ethical consideration refers to the adherence of the researcher to promote the use of authentic knowledge, and truth, and prevent errors. Resnik (2020) also argued that ethical consideration calls for accountability, trust, mutual respect, and fair treatment among all the participants in the research. Ethical consideration further entails the protection of the property rights of all the contributors to the research. Thus, the importance of ethical consideration in research cannot be overemphasized, as it includes among other things, avoiding the falsification of research information, and the respect and protection of individual property rights of all contributors to the research.

Considerations During Intervention Implementation

Basically, the sources reviewed for this study all stressed the dire need for the improvement of diversity in the classroom and inclusive teaching. Opertti (2009, October), argued that there is a high need for the different learners in a diverse classroom to be given equal opportunities and access to opportunities to help them meet their learning goals. Avcıoğlu (2017), also highlighted the necessity of giving inclusive access to all learners in a classroom without any form of segregation. Importantly, in an attempt to improve the situation of learners and learning conditions in the classroom, the teachers should be

equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills to help in this crusade (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

Considerations During Data Collection

According to Belmont Report. (n.d.)., the participant to research should be treated as autonomous agents and be protected for their participation. During this study, the safety of participants was a top priority. First, the researcher sought informed consent from all the participants to the study, which was backed by written approval to conduct the study on the targeted population. Also, to ensure the safety of all participants in this study, the researcher did not collect or publish the names or personal credentials of the participants. The participants were also provided a safe environment while taking part in this study, to ensure no third-party interference or presence while the participants respond to this study.

Considerations Regarding Researcher Bias

To obtain unbiased results for this study, the researcher ensured that the participants receive the same questionnaires, and after the research, the researcher verified the obtained data/information with more data sources. (Campuslab, 2020). The researcher also sought a peer review of the information collected from the participants to ensure that the interpretation given by the researcher was looked at carefully to identify gaps that the researcher did not address.

Summary

The methodology chapter of this research aimed at stating the dimension through which information for this study was obtained. It also highlighted some important aspects of the purpose of the study as indicated in chapter one. This section elaborates on the study population used for the obtainment of data and also how the researchers obtained informed

consent from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, and all the participants who took part in the study. The researcher went further to justify the study population, and the reason for selecting this population and not others.

Additionally, the researcher discussed an effective intervention plan for data collection, which was the use of available information regarding this research topic. Also, the source of data and the use of the right instrumentation were key components in the methodology of this research. Further discussed in the methodology were the procedures applied by the researcher to obtain the data for this research.

Moreover, the methodology of this study captures ethical considerations to be heeded by the researcher throughout this study. The researcher ensured that the rights of participants in this study were respected and protected. The researcher also acknowledged all individual contributors to this study and used a peer review mechanism to avoid being biased during the interpretation of data.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data Analysis Procedure

The presentation of the findings for this is done in various subheadings that define the objectives of the study. The entire sampled population of 50 all responded, leading to the generation of this data. As the instrument used for data collection was a google form, the responses were presented and analyzed with the use of statistical tool like tables, bar charts, and pie charts for all the responses. Findings from the respondents are presented concurrently to facilitate the clarity of the discussion. Moreover, the presentation of findings is done question by question for the entire questionnaire.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of this study, the researcher strived to make sure that the instruments used for the research were highly based on the administration of a questionnaire to various respondents. Additionally, the instruments used in the research were also subjected to tight scrutiny by people who have a good mastery of the topic of research and its implications. This was done under the close supervision of the supervisor, to ensure the smoothness and reliability of the work being done. Moreover, the questions set for the research were developed with a special attention to ensure that all the nitty-gritty of the research topic were meticulously catered for. Thus, to establish the viability of the research questions targeted for respondents, the researcher engaged some experienced educators to review the questions alongside the research questions and objectives, and some of the few recommendations and observations given to the researcher were put into consideration.

Results

In this section, the presentation of results will be done in three categories. Each of the questions on the questionnaire is represented in a table showing the number of responses to each of the options provided per question. This is followed by an explanation of the data

represented on the table for each of the categories. A bar or pie chart figure will also be attached after each explanation, for more visual clarification.

Descriptive Findings question by question.

Table 1

WHAT IS YOUR SEX?

Gender	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
Male	33	66
Female	17	34
Total	**50**	**100**

The sex distribution of the respondents to this study was one of the things considered during the research. The table 1 above shows that out of the total number of respondents 66% representing 33 respondents were male. The table also show that 34% representing 17 respondents were female.
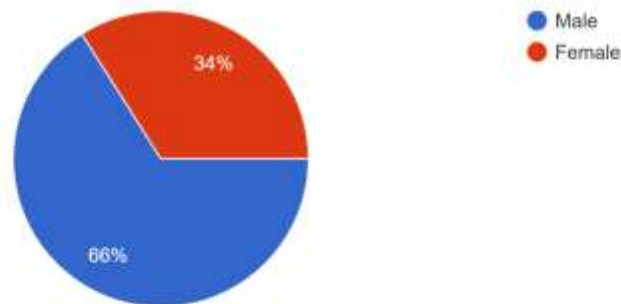
Figure 1. Sex distribution of respondents.

Table 2

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT AGE?

Age	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
20 to 30 years	26	52
31 to 40 years	22	44
41 to 50 years	2	4
51 to 60 years	0	0
Total	**50**	**100**

The table above show the age distribution of respondents to this study. The table shows that out of the total number of respondents 52% representing 26 respondents are between 20-30 years; 44% representing 22 respondents are 31 to 40 years; 4% representing two respondents are 41 to 50 years, and there was no respondent from 51 to 60 years.

Figure 2. Age distribution of respondents.
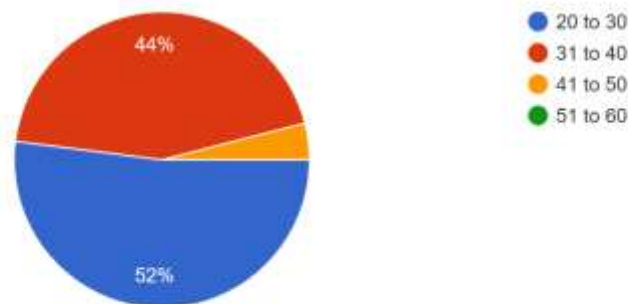
Table 3

WHAT IS YOUR QUALIFICATION?

Qualification	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
Diploma/Primary Teacher's Certificate	10	20
Advance Diploma/Higher Teacher's Certificate	23	46
Bachelor's degree	16	32
Master's degree	1	2
PhD	0	0
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 3 above shows the academic qualification of respondents. Out of the total respondents, 20% representing 10 respondents are Diploma/Primary Teacher's Certificate holders; 46% representing 23 respondents are Advanced Diploma/Higher Teacher's Certificate holders; 32% representing 16 respondents are holders of a bachelor's degree; 2% representing one respondent is a Master's Degree holder, and 0% of the respondents hold PhD.
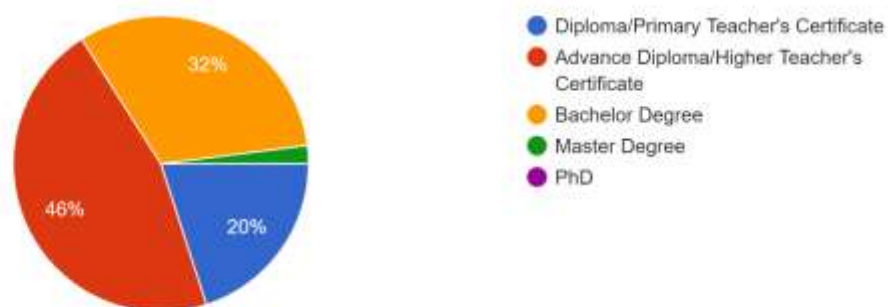

Figure 3. Qualification of respondents.

Table 4

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION?

Current Position	*Frequency*	*Valid Percentage (%)*
Classroom Teacher	44	88
Principal or Headteacher	1	2
Sector manager (administration)	3	6
Cluster Monitor	2	4
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 4 above shows information on the current employment status of the respondents. Out

of the 50 respondents, 88% representing 44 respondents are classroom teachers; 2%

representing one respondent is a Principal or Headteacher; 6% representing three respondents

are Sector Managers (administration), and 4% representing two respondents are Cluster
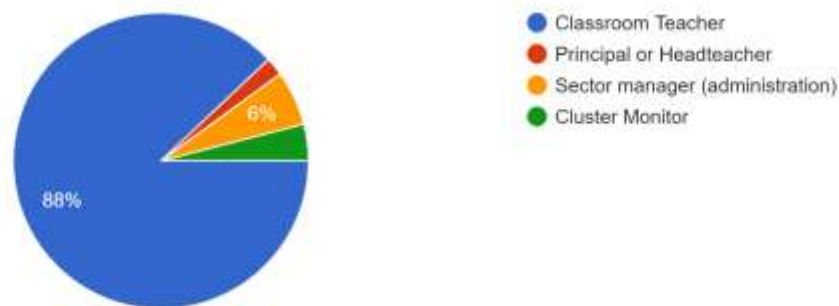
Monitors.

Figure 4. Current employment status of respondents.

Table 5

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASS BEING TAUGHT/TAUGHT.

Number of students in class	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
15 to 25	8	16
26 to 35	12	24
36 to 45	13	26
46 to 55	17	34
Total	**50**	**100**

The table 5 above shows the responses of the respondents in relation to the number of students they have taught or are teaching. Out of the total number of respondents, 16% representing eight respondents have 15 to 25 students in their classrooms; 24% representing 12 respondents have 26 to 35 students in their classrooms; 26% representing 13 respondents have 36 to 45 students in their classrooms; and 34% representing 17 respondents have 46 to 55 students in their classrooms.

Number of students in your class being taught/taught.
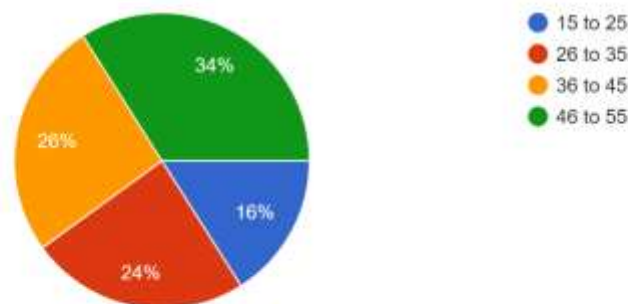50 responses

- 15 to 25 — 16%
- 26 to 35 — 24%
- 36 to 45 — 26%
- 46 to 55 — 34%

Figure 5. Number of students being taught/taught.

SECTION B. Diversity in the classroom

Table 6

THE INCORPORATION OF DIVERSITY ISSUES IN LESSON PLANS IS QUITE

RELEVANT.

Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	23	46
Agree	22	44
Neutral	3	6
Disagree	1	2
Strongly Disagree	1	2
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 6 above shows responses of respondents on the relevance of incorporating diversity

issues in lesson plans. According to the table above, 46% representing 23 respondents

Strongly Agree to the relevance of incorporating diversity issues in lesson plans; 44%

representing 22 respondents Agree; 6% representing three respondents remained neutral on

the issue; while 2% representing one respondent Disagree, and 2% representing one

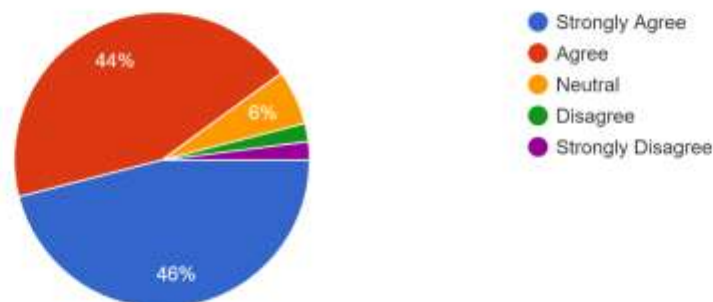respondent Strongly Disagree.

Figure 6. The incorporation of diversity issues in lesson plans.

Table 7

ACKNOWLEDGING AND RESPECTING EVERY STUDENT'S CULTURE IS HIGHLY

NECESSARY IN A DIVERSE CLASSROOM.

Responses	*Frequency*	*Valid Percentage (%)*
Strongly Agree	38	76
Agree	11	22
Neutral	1	2
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	**50**	**100**

The table above shows information on the necessity of acknowledging and respecting every

student's culture in the classroom. According to the table above table, 76% representing 38

respondents Strongly Agree to the necessity of acknowledging and respecting every student's

culture in the classroom; 22% representing 11 respondents Agree; 2% representing one

respondent remained neutral on the issue; while 0% of respondents neither Disagree nor

Strongly Disagree.
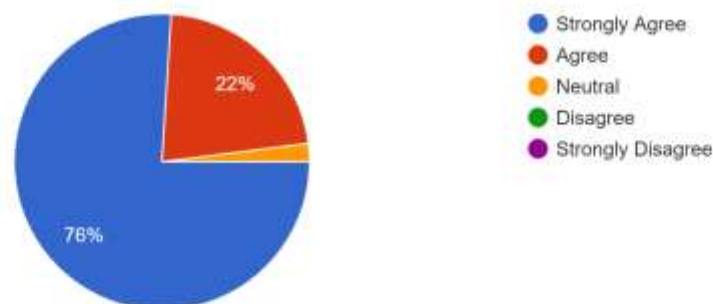
Figure 7. Acknowledging and respecting every student's culture in the classroom.

Table 8

IN THE PROMOTION OF DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM, TEACHERS SHOULD

ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF INEQUALITY.

Gender	*Frequency*	*Valid Percentage (%)*
Strongly Agree	37	74
Agree	11	22
Neutral	0	0
Disagree	1	2
Strongly Disagree	1	2
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 8 above shows the data collected from respondents in response to addressing the issue

of inequality in promoting diversity. The table shows that 74 % representing 37 respondents

Strongly Agree to the need of addressing inequality issues in promoting diversity; 22%

representing 11 respondents Agree; 0% remained neutral; 2% representing one respondent

Disagree, and 2% representing one respondent Strongly Disagree.
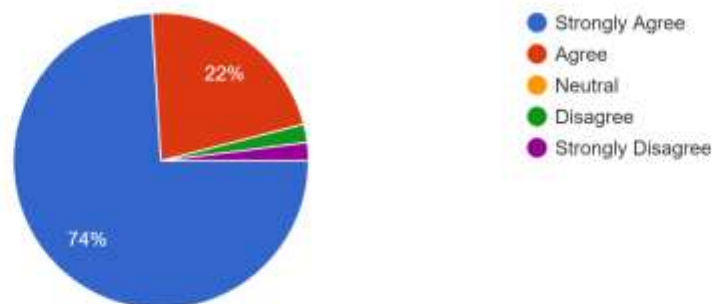
Figure 8. Addressing the issue of inequality in the classroom.

Table 9

IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM, TEACHERS SHOULD CONNECT WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES FROM WHICH THEIR STUDENTS COME FROM.

Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
True	49	98
False	1	2
Total	50	100

The table above shows data collected from the respondents on whether teachers should connect with families and communities from which their students come from in order to improve diversity in the classroom. Out of the 50 respondents, 98% representing 49 respondents answered True, and 2% representing one respondent answered No.

Figure 9. In the improvement of diversity in the classroom, teachers should connect with families and communities from which their students come from.

Table 10

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU RECOMMEND FOR THE PROMOTION OF

DIVERSITY EDUCATION? YOU CAN CHOOSE MORE THAN ONE.

Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
The professional development of teachers who teach diverse students.	39	78
Fulfilling the diverse learning needs of students.	20	40
Use of effective learning materials.	27	54
Getting to know your students well.	33	66
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 10 above shows information on what respondents recommend for the promotion of

diversity education. Respondents had the option to choose more than one, and the table show

the percentage of respondents who responded to each of the options. The table shows that

78% representing 39 respondents recommend *The professional development of teachers who*

teach diverse students; 40% representing 20 respondents recommend *Fulfilling the diverse*

learning needs of students; 54% representing 27 respondents recommend the *Use of effective*

learning materials, and 66% representing 33 respondents recommend *Getting to know your*

students well.
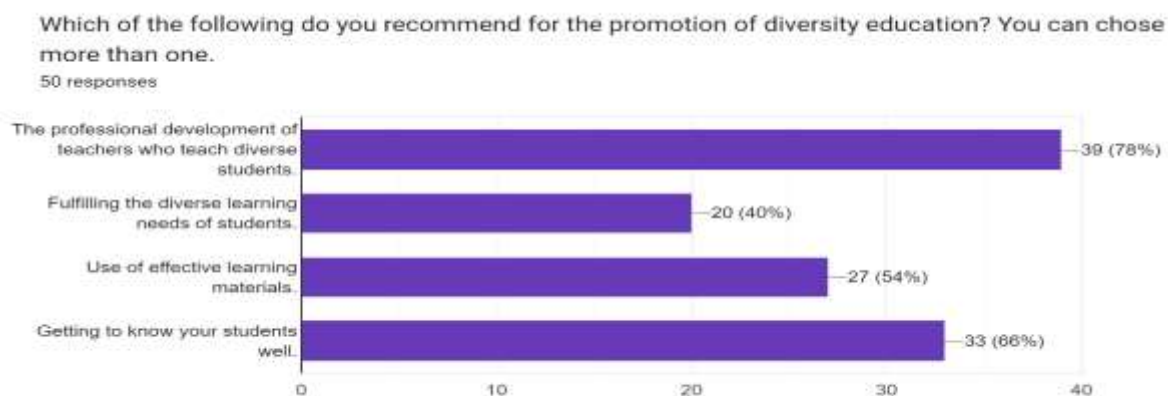
Figure 10. recommendations for the promotion of diversity education.

SECTION C. Inclusion/Inclusive education

Table 11

DOES INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROMOTE SUCCESSFUL LEARNING?

Responses	*Frequency*	*Valid Percentage (%)*
Yes	48	96
No	2	4
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 11 above shows information of responses from respondents on whether inclusive

education promote successful learning. Out of the 50 respondents to this study, 96%

representing 48 respondents answered Yes, indicating that inclusive education promotes

successful learning, while 4% representing two respondents answered No.
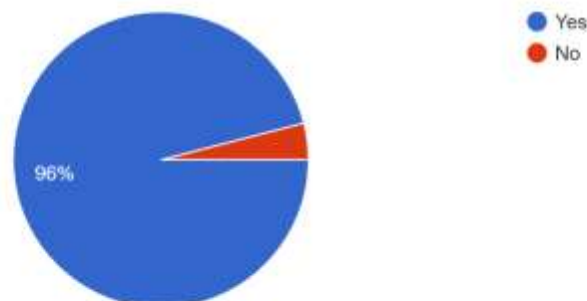
Figure 11. Does inclusive education promote successful learning?

Table 12

STUDENTS WHO NEED SPECIAL ATTENTION SHOULD NOT BE JOINED WITH

OTHER STUDENTS IN THE SAME CLASSROOM.

Responses	*Frequency*	*Valid Percentage (%)*
Strongly Agree	7	14
Agree	8	16
Neutral	3	6
Disagree	22	44
Strongly Disagree	10	20
Total	**50**	**100**

The table above shows the data collected from respondents in response to whether students

who need special attention should not be joined with other students in the same classroom.

The table shows that 14 % representing seven respondents Strongly Agree that students who

need special attention should not be joined with other students in the same classroom; 16%

representing eight respondents Agree; 6% representing three respondents remained neutral;

44% representing 22 respondents Disagree, and 20% representing 10 respondents Strongly

Disagree.
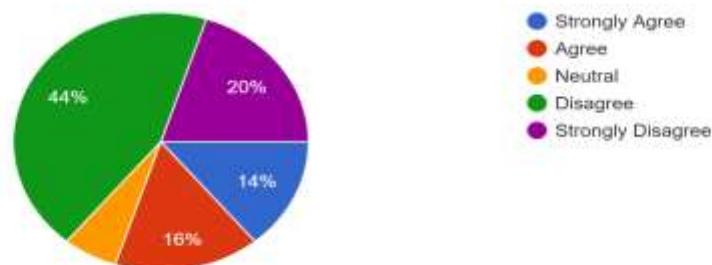
Figure 12. Students who need special attention should not be joined with other students in the

same classroom.

Table 13

IT IS HIGHLY NECESSARY FOR THE EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM TO REFLECT

THE NEED FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION.

Responses	*Frequency*	*Valid Percentage (%)*
Strongly Agree	33	66
Agree	16	32
Neutral	1	2
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 13 above shows the responses from respondents on the necessity of educational

curriculum to reflect the need for inclusive education. The table shows that 66 % representing

33 respondents Strongly Agree to the necessity of educational curriculum to reflect the need

for inclusive education; 32% representing 16 respondents Agree; 2% representing one

respondent remained neutral; 0% Disagree, and 0% Strongly Disagree.
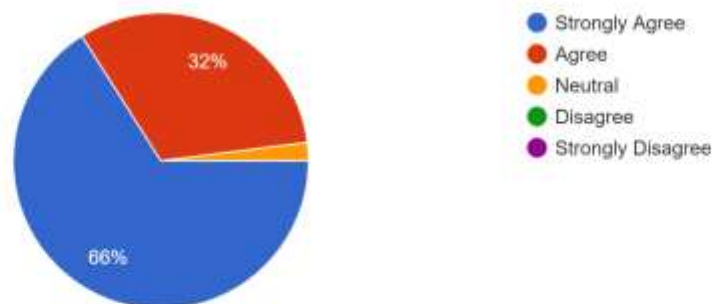
Figure 13. It is highly necessary for the educational curriculum to reflect the need for

inclusive education.

Table 14

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS/ARE IMPORTANT FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
Resources to teach students with diverse needs.	33	66
Capacity building for teachers to be able to handle inclusion needs.	42	84
Involvement of parents in the teaching of special needs students.	19	38
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 14 above shows information on the importance for inclusive education. Respondents had the option to choose more than one, and the table show the percentage of respondents who responded to each of the options. The table shows that 66% representing 33 respondents choose *Resources to teach students with diverse needs* as important; 84% representing 42 respondents choose *Capacity building for teachers to be able to handle*, and 38% representing 19 respondents choose the *Involvement of parents in the teaching of special needs students.*
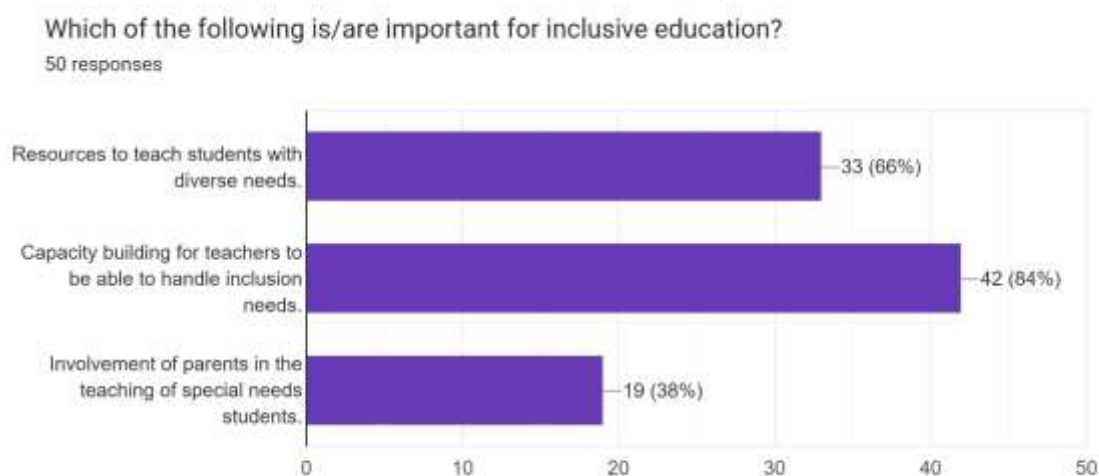
Figure 14. Importance of Inclusive education.

Table 15

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
Inclusive education is more expensive.	14	28
Lack of trained teachers/educators to implement inclusive education.	37	74
Impossibility of inclusive education.	2	4
Lack of government support in providing sufficient inclusive learning classrooms with ideal materials.	32	64
Total	**50**	**100**

The table above shows information on the challenges to promoting inclusive education. Respondents had the option to choose more than one, and the table show the percentage of respondents who responded to each of the options. The table shows that 28% representing 14 respondents identified *Inclusive education is more expensive* as a challenge; 74% representing 37 respondents identified *Lack of trained teachers/educators to implement inclusive education*; 4% representing two respondents identified *Impossibility of inclusive education,* and 64% representing 32 respondents identified *Lack of government support in providing sufficient inclusive learning classrooms with ideal materials.*

Figure 15. What are the challenges to promoting inclusive education?

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This section of this paper is aimed at discussing the findings of this study. It shall give a detail description and discussion of the information presented on the tables and charts above. Essentially, this section will come up with thorough discussion of the data collected for this study to create a general understanding of the rese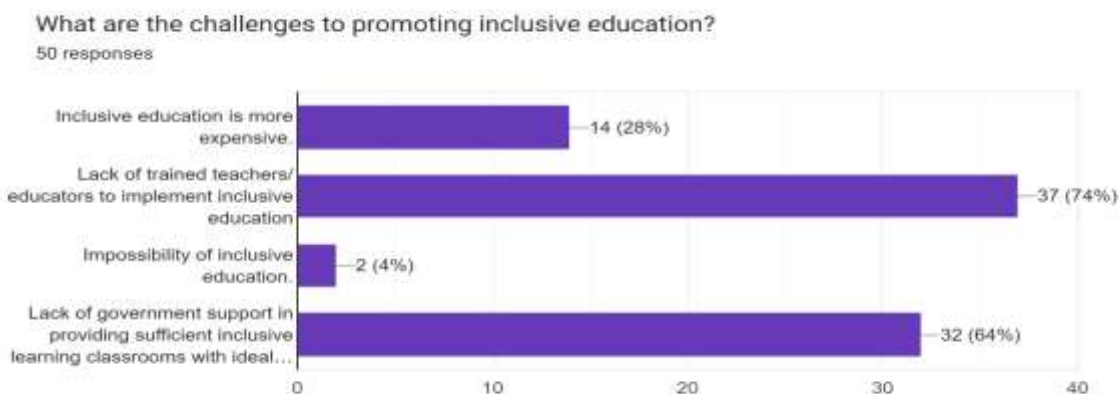arch information to all audience. It shall also provide a comprehensive explanation of the data in relation to the research questions.

Outcome Analysis

Discussion of findings research question by research questions, but before discussing the main research questions and issues, it will be important to discuss the biographical data of respondents that also reflect some importance on the promotion of diversity and inclusive education. From the data collected, 96% of respondents are between the ages of 20 and 40 years old, which means that schools in the Regional Education Directorate Four in The Gambia have a vibrant age work force, that when trained and given the right resources can impart positive change. In terms of qualification, 46% of the respondents are Higher Teacher's Certificate holders, while only 32% have bachelor's degree. These results suggest the need for more training opportunities for teachers, as the majority respondents (88%) to this study and the people responsible for teaching diversity and inclusive education to the students. Furthermore, the promotion of diversity and inclusive education could be very challenging to teachers with large number of students. Majority of the respondents (60%) have a range of 36 to 55 students in their classrooms, and 34% of the total respondents have classrooms of between 46 to 55 students. Large classes are not easily manageable when it comes to knowing all the students and treating them accordingly.

What is the responsibility of school authorities in promoting diversity and inclusion in schools?

As represented on the data presentation above, this study unearthed some important findings that contributed to answering the research questions. One of the research questions listed above attracted the following discussion, on the responsibility of school authorities in the process of promoting diversity and inclusion in schools. based on the information obtained from the respondents, there is a clear indication of the importance of school stakeholders in improving diversity in schools. Out of the total number of respondents to this study, 90% agree to the idea of including diversity issues in schools' lesson plan. Essentially, this will give the teachers good guides as to what they are supposed to teach and how to filter down the lesson in a diverse classroom. Majority of the respondents (98%) support the issue of teachers and educators respecting and acknowledging the different cultures of students in the classroom. When students' cultures are recognized and appreciated by teachers, it gives them a high sense of belonging and confidence in a classroom; their fear of being discriminated upon is eliminated. Furthermore, in the process of promoting diversity among students in schools, the respondents prescribed the addressing of inequality among students. In this regard, 96% of the respondents indicated that solving inequality issues in the classroom would enhance a smooth environment for diversity to be accepted by the different students. Additionally, the role of parents, communities, and family members in the quest for diversity promotion in schools cannot be underestimated. Parents are one of the important stakeholders in education and involving them in matters geared towards promoting education is very crucial. In support of the above, 98% of the respondents agreed to the huge benefits to be obtained in promoting diversity if families, parents, and communities from which students come from are to be involved in the process of diversity promotion in schools. Teachers or educators can effectively do this by knowing the different family background of students to

justify why students behave the way they do in school. Moreover, the study also obtained some invaluable recommendations from the respondents as ways forward to the effective promotion of diversity in the classroom. Sequel to that, the respondents suggest the professional development of teachers who can teach diverse students, fulfilling the diverse learning needs of students, the use of effective learning materials, and getting to know the various students well.

How does inclusion among students promote effectiveness in teaching and learning?

The results of this study show various response from different respondents for all the questions in the questionnaire. The issue of promoting inclusion among students is considered very ideal and necessary by many respondents. This was manifested in the data collected. Out of the total respondents to this study 96% believe that the promotion of inclusive education in the classroom leads to successful learning of the students. Therefore, teachers and educators should always be in to ensure that the learning environment captures issues of inclusive education. On a similar domain, 64% of the respondents agree that the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the same classroom with other normal students is highly necessary for the promotion of inclusive education in the classroom. Importantly, in order to facilitate inclusive education in the classroom, 98% of the respondents believe that the curriculum should reflect the need for inclusive education. Furthermore, almost all the respondents recommended the use of right resources to teach students with diverse needs, building the right capacity for teachers to be able to teach inclusively in the classroom, and also the involvement of parents in the process of teaching students with special needs. However, respondents to the study also identified some of the main challenges to the effective implementation of inclusive education in schools. Thus, issues like inclusive education being expensive, lack of trained teachers/educators on inclusive education, inclusive education seeming impossible to implement, and lack of

government support in creating inclusive learning environments with sufficient learning materials. The above issues are great challenges to the implementation of inclusive education.

Learning Themes

The main themes of this study are diversity and inclusion. The research unearthed the dire need to promote diversity and inclusive education in schools. The different stages of the study went as planned by the researcher, with limited complications. First, the preparation of the research proposal witnessed the thorough guidance by the research instructor, who guided from one stage to the next. The researcher did not encounter difficulties in obtaining an informed consent from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, as the authority responsible for the respondents to this study. However, there were some challenges encountered during data collection, as some of the respondents failed to respond in time. The researcher had to make series of follow ups to get the responses. Getting relevant information from search engines and books was also another difficult task for the researcher. And as the expenditure on this research rested entirely on the researcher, funding became another challenge encountered by during the research. Notwithstanding, the entire process of this study was a great experience.

Implications

As classrooms and schools become more diverse today, making the need for inclusive education and the promotion of diversity very paramount, the conduct of relevant research of this kind is quite important in helping stakeholders to make informed decisions. The results from this study will inform the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education on main considerations to be put in place to ensure that schools and classrooms are provided with the opportunities and environment for the actual realization of improved diversity in schools and a highly inclusive education system.

This data will be very useful in guiding policy makers on how to capture and implement the issue of diversity and inclusive education. Generally, research is very fundamental in decision making, as it guides the decision makers on what to consider in the process and also to know the implications of the decisions they make. Importantly, the issue of diversity and inclusion are becoming more central in education than ever before, due to the rising diverse classrooms and schools. Today's schools are very diverse and need an orientation that will cater for all the diversity issues to boost inclusive education. This research will also help curriculum developers to understand the need to include diversity and inclusive education in the curriculum, to enhance smooth delivery by the teachers. Consequently, this study shall also be used as guide or reference by other researchers to understand the literature related to the issues of how to promote diversity and inclusive education.

Upon completion of this research, a copy of it will be submitted to the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, through the office of the Permanent Secretary. This copy is to serve as an information tool on the topic researched on and is supposed to raise a concern and action by the ministry, to address or respond to the issues highlighted in this report. The report can be used to influence decision making especially in addressing diversity and inclusive education issues in the said ministry.

This study could trigger the interest of educational stakeholders and policy designers to open interest in many researchable areas. Other than the need to promote diversity and inclusive education, stakeholders may need to know the capacity building areas needed for teachers to be able to effectively handle such issues. It may also be important to know the amount and types of resources needed to help in the promotion of diversity and inclusive education.

Conclusion

Basically, this study on *How to improve diversity and inclusion among grade 10 students in The Gambia,* is very crucial as it was able to unearth some useful information regarding diversity and inclusive education. Very useful contributions were obtained from the various respondents that provided answers to the research questions. The research also relied on constructive literature available to support some of the theories and concepts of diversity and inclusion. Additionally, providing equal access to education for students with special need attention by joining them with normal students and giving them access to learning opportunities and resources, is also highly strengthened by the literature of this study. It is thus important for the results of this research to be considered by the ministry of education and other departments responsible for the promotion of education. In the process of considering the issues raised by the respondents, the issue of incorporating diversity and inclusive education in the curriculum is more central. Curricula should reflect the rising need of diversity promotion and boosting inclusive education that will cater for every child.

This study also consulted different literatures related to it in a quest to find out what has been revealed by other researchers and also to identify the gaps in their literatures. These literatures reviewed gave this study a good shape and relevant points of reference by supporting the claims of this study. All the sources used for this study underscored the relevance in promoting diversity education in today's very diverse classrooms. The literature reviewed for this did not contradict the findings discovered by the researcher, as responses obtained from the respondents. In addition, as per the scope of this study, there were no literature gaps discovered from the literatures reviewed. The various sources essentially revealed the importance of promoting diversity in schools and the high necessity of inclusion for the differently able learners found within a school setting or in a classroom setting.

Moreover, despite the numerous challenges and encounters faced during this research, it was a great experience full of learning and professional development. Every challenge faced

was converted into an opportunity of learning and knowing how to get things done in a better way. This is supported by the interest I have in my research topic and its relevance in today's ever-changing world. Diversity is no longer restricted, it spreads fast and wide, making inclusive education a paramount area of interest.

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Appendix

Applied Research Questionnaire

My name is DAWDA CEESAY, currently pursuing a master's degree at the University of the People. This research questionnaire is in relation to my Applied Research Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Education. My research topic is "**HOW TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE CLASSROOM AMONG GRADE TEN (10) STUDENTS IN THE GAMBIA".** Thus, I seek your response and full participation in the process of my data collection. The confidentiality of all respondents to this study is fully guaranteed.

Please note that the sampled population for this study is schools (teachers) in Regional Education Directorate four (4).

SECTION A. BIOGRAPHY INFORMATION

What is your sex? *

- o   Male

- o   Female

What is your current age? *

- o   20 to 30

- o   31 to 40

- o   41 to 50

- o   51 to 60

What is your qualification? *

- o   Diploma/Primary Teacher's Certificate

- o   Advance Diploma/Higher Teacher's Certificate

- o   Bachelor's degree

- o   Master's degree

- o   PhD

What is your current position? *

- o   Classroom Teacher

- o   Principal or Headteacher

- o   Sector manager (administration)

- o   Cluster Monitor

Number of students in your class being taught/taught. *

- o   15 to 25

- o   26 to 35

- o   36 to 45

- o   46 to 55

SECTION B. Diversity in the classroom

The incorporation of diversity issues in lesson plans is quite relevant. *

- o Strongly Agree
- o Agree
- o Neutral
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree

Acknowledging and respecting every student's culture is highly necessary in a diverse classroom. *

- o Strongly Agree
- o Agree
- o Neutral
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree

In the promotion of diversity in the classroom, teachers should address the issue of inequality.*

- o Strongly Agree
- o Agree
- o Neutral
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree

In the improvement of diversity in the classroom, teachers should connect with families and communities from which their students come from.

- o True
- o False

Which of the following do you recommend for the promotion of diversity education? You can choose more than one.

- o The professional development of teachers who teach diverse students.
- o Fulfilling the diverse learning needs of students.
- o Use of effective learning materials.
- o Getting to know your students well.

SECTION C. Inclusion/Inclusive education

Does inclusive education promote successful learning?

- o Yes
- o No

Students who need specialized attention should not be joined with other students in the same classroom. *

- o Strongly Agree
- o Agree
- o Neutral
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree

It is highly necessary for the educational curriculum to reflect the need for inclusive education. *

- o   Strongly Agree

- o   Agree

- o   Neutral

- o   Disagree

- o   Strongly Disagree

Which of the following is/are important for inclusive education? *

- o   Resources to teach students with diverse needs.

- o   Capacity building for teachers to be able to handle inclusion needs.

- o   Involvement of parents in the teaching of special needs students.

What are the challenges to promoting inclusive education? *

- o   Inclusive education is more expensive.

- o   Lack of trained teachers/educators to implement inclusive education.

- o   Impossibility of inclusive education.

- o   Lack of government support in providing sufficient inclusive learning classrooms with ideal materials.