

INCLUSIVE GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION IN GHANAIAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Despite Ghana's commitment to inclusive education through national educational reforms and international frameworks such as Sustainable Development Goal 4, the implementation of inclusive practices in geography classrooms remains inconsistent. Since geography fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, this study examines the readiness of geography teachers in Ghanaian Senior High Schools to implement inclusive classroom practices. Guided by the social model of disability and underpinned by a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the study examined the challenges Senior High School teachers face in conducting inclusive classroom practices and the possible ways to promote inclusive geography classroom practices in four SHS in the South Dayi District. The sample size for the study was 18 participants which comprised 8 geography teachers, 4 headteachers, 3 assistant headteachers and 3 guidance and counselling coordinators. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and participants observation. The analysis was done thematically using Colaizzi's phenomenological framework. The major findings include inadequate professional training, limited instructional resources, lack of assistive technologies, overcrowded classrooms, rigid examination-oriented curricula, and inadequate technology integration which hinders effective inclusive geography education. The study further identified continuous professional development, differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, curriculum reform, and improved access to instructional resources as key strategies for promoting inclusive classroom practices. The study concludes that strengthening teacher preparation and institutional support systems is essential for achieving equitable and quality geography education in Ghanaian Senior High Schools. The study recommends the development of targeted educational policy such as provision of adequate TLRs and assistive technologies, curriculum development, and continuous professional development opportunities.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Senior High Schools, hermeneutical phenomenological, Geography Education

Introduction

Geography education is recognised globally for its contribution to peace, tolerance, global citizenship and sustainable development, leading to international attention and support (Ferretti, 2016; Standish, 2024; Meadows, 2020). In Africa, research have shown that advancement in geographic studies and inclusive educational initiatives can enhance teaching and learning across diverse educational settings by promoting creativity, critical thinking, innovation, and problem-solving skills among learners (Solem & Weiguo, 2018;

Shukanova et al., 2023; Esmailzadeh, 2023; Kenny et al., 2023). The Salamanca Statement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) further emphasize inclusive and equitable quality education as a fundamental right for all learners, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds (Graham et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2025; Meijer & Watkins, 2019). This is particularly important in geography education, where students with diverse learning needs often experience challenges related to spatial concepts, maps, and diagram interpretation (Magnusson & Godhe,

2019). In Ghana, achieving SDG 4 remains essential for improving educational quality and promoting inclusivity, especially within higher education institutions such as colleges of education (Dalkilic, 2017; Pather, 2019).

The introduction of the 2024/2025 Senior High School curriculum in Ghana's educational landscape represents a significant component of broader free SHS, with particular emphasis on promoting comprehensive inclusivity in teaching and learning methodologies (Naami & Mort, 2023). While this innovative curriculum strives to incorporate effective inclusive strategies within teacher education programs to prepare future leaders for addressing diverse student needs, substantial challenges continue to persist in its implementation across Senior High Schools in Ghana. These challenges may include factors such as limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and resistance to change from stakeholders (Amadu et al., 2023).

Even though much work has been done on inclusive education, focus on subject specific like geography has been less. Critical analysis of literature demonstrates that most of the studies concentrate on the social benefits of inclusive education (Anderson & Kim, 2023). As a result such studies produced positive outcomes across diverse educational settings including academic performance, social skills, learner motivation, self-esteem and classroom interaction (Smith et al., 2019; Johnson, 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Anderson & Kim, 2023). Moreover, most of the studies have methodological and contextual weaknesses that limit the depth and applicability of their findings. For instance, Smith et al 2019 and Lee and Jackson (2023) relied heavily on quantitative surveys and self-reported data which do not adequately capture the realities of inclusive classroom practices. These survey-based studies also failed to provide deeper insights into teachers' experiences. Although some studies employed qualitative and mixed-method approaches (Johnson 2020, Martin and Patel 2023), many lacked detailed classroom observations and longitudinal tracking needed to understand how inclusive strategies influence teaching and learning over time.

To ensure adequate understanding of inclusive education in the Senior High Schools in Ghana, there is the need to shift the traditional focus from individual impairment and generalisation of results based on social

importance to the understanding of the real experiences of the implementers of inclusive education. The choice of phenomenological approach therefor is appropriate because it provides valuable insights into the lived experiences of teachers in Senior High School (SHS) settings as they implement inclusive education practices. Through systematic exploration of teachers' readiness levels and challenges, this study effectively connects theoretical frameworks with practical implementation considerations. This research has significant implications for teacher education development in Ghana by identifying key areas where targeted intervention is needed to promote inclusive education. The purpose of the present research is to study the readiness of geography teachers in Ghana's SHS to implement inclusive education, as mandated by the new curriculum reform. According to the purpose of the research the following research questions were formulated: 1) What challenges do Senior High School teachers face in conducting inclusive classroom practices? 2) What are the possible ways to promote inclusive geography classroom practices in SHS of Education in Ghana?

Statement of the Problem

Despite Ghana's commitment to inclusive education through national educational reforms and international frameworks such as Sustainable Development Goal 4, the implementation of inclusive practices in Senior High School classrooms remains inconsistent (Owusu 2025). Although the 2024/2025 SHS curriculum reforms emphasize equitable access and participation for all learners, many schools continue to experience challenges in translating inclusive education policies into effective classroom practices, particularly within subject-specific contexts such as Geography education (Sedegah 2024).

According to Ferretti (2016), geography is a practical and skill-oriented subject involving fieldwork, spatial analysis, map interpretation, and environmental observation. These pedagogical requirements demand adaptive teaching approaches capable of accommodating learners with diverse educational needs, including students with disabilities. However, existing studies on inclusive education in Ghana have largely focused on general classroom inclusion with

limited attention to subject-specific realities in Geography classrooms (Gamberoni 2020, JKAGEE 2021, Dursun and Aykan 2025). Consequently, little is known about the readiness of Geography teachers to implement inclusive teaching practices within the context of the new curriculum reforms.

Furthermore, Geography teachers continue to face multiple barriers, including inadequate professional training, insufficient instructional resources, overcrowded classrooms, and rigid examination-oriented curricula (Gamberoni 2020). These challenges undermine effective participation and learning outcomes among students with diverse needs. It therefore becomes necessary to explore the lived experiences of Geography teachers and school leaders regarding inclusive classroom practices in order to generate context-specific strategies for improving inclusive education in Ghanaian Senior High Schools.

Literature Review

This section situates the study within a scholarly framework by analysing and assessing previous studies and academic publications on inclusive education with specific reference to geography. This critical evaluation enables the researcher to assess the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of existing literature which informs the development of study design and methodology.

Inclusive Education Policy of Ghana

The policy of inclusive education in Ghana is anchored in the 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the Ghana shared Growth and Development Agenda and the Education Strategic Plan (2010-2020), the Disability Act and the Education Act and in the international agreements that Ghana is a signatory to ensure education for all (Anthony & Kwadade, 2006). It is based on the belief that all children can learn and have a right to an education. In order to fulfill the goals of the 1992 constitution, which guarantees education as a fundamental human right, the nation devised and implemented an inclusive education strategy in 2015. Stakeholders in the education sector have worked together to adopt the principles of inclusive education in response to the difficulties that Ghanaian students with disabilities face. The Inclusive Education (IE) policy's main objective is to make sure that schools recognize students with various learning

needs and implement curriculum that will satisfy those needs (Ofori, 2018).

A key concept in the inclusive educational policy of Ghana is Special Educational Needs (SEN) which described "a child with disability, namely, visual, hearing, loco-motor, and intellectual impairments" in the policy (2015, p. 6). However, the policy expands the definition of SEN to include students who are struggling academically for a number of reasons that are recognized as impediments to a child's best possible learning and development.

Theoretical Framework

The social model of disability underpinned the study. In order to connect disabilities with social concepts, social constructionists apply the social construction model for all forms of disabilities (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2013). It is argued that the disability itself is eradicated if social impediments to the reintegration of individuals with physical impairments are addressed. The concept of disability portrayed in the social model is captured by expression "disability is wholly and exclusively social (Oliver, 1996, p.35). It therefore draws attention to societal restrictions rather than the person's disability. This framework is considered relevant due as it explains the reasons why Geography teachers struggle with inclusion in their classrooms not because of students' limitations but due to challenges created in the society.

A key principle of the social model of disability is equal access to education which implies that all learners should have the opportunity to attend school without facing financial, physical or any social barrier (Agyemang, & Zuberu 2025). However, other proponents argue that access alone is insufficient if it does not translate into active engagement. The model therefore contend that schools go further by creating conditions to support full participation. Rather than seeing disability as a medical condition, the social model of disability sees it as a social construct. It is a substitute for the medical paradigm, which has a very limited and clinical perspective on disability. Instead of focusing on an individual's health, the social model presents disability as a community problem brought on by the physical environment, incorrect or inaccessible services and attitudes, and a lack of knowledge (Thomas, 2004). The principle of inclusion and equal

participation is clearly reflected in the call for inclusive geography classrooms. Since Geography uses maps, spatial concepts, fieldwork and critical thinking activities, this study argue that teachers must adopt inclusive strategies such as collaborative learning and the integration of technology to support diverse needs of their learners.

The Concept of Inclusive Education

The 1994 UNESCO Salamanca Statement is one of the most important worldwide frameworks on inclusive education (UNESCO 2000). All children should be accommodated in schools "regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions," according to the statement, and regular schools with inclusive orientations are the best way to fight discrimination and advance just societies. Scholars such as Graham et al (2023) writing on the *Fundamental Concepts of Inclusive Education* make a clear distinction between inclusion and integration and special education, stressing that inclusion is about reorganizing schools to accommodate all students rather than making them adjust to a rigid structure (ibid). Even though the study was heavily grounded in Western educational contexts particularly Australia and also fails to discuss how schools with limited resources can practice inclusive education, it adequately engaged the tenets of social model theory.

Providing a comprehensive review of the history of inclusive education, Alzahran (2020) intimated forcefully that inclusive education extends beyond disability and includes learners marginalized by culture, language, gender, socio-economic background and other forms of exclusion. The author's systematic analysis aligns with global educational reforms and human rights perspectives promoted by UNESCO.

Another significant contribution to the discourse on inclusive education is *Understanding the Value of Inclusive Education and Its Implementation* (Kefallinou 2020). The paper examines the discrepancy between legislative goals and educational practice while critically synthesizing the body of research on the idea, advantages, and application of inclusive education. The paper adequately demonstrates that inclusion education is not only a teaching strategy, but a basic right for every student

by basing the argument on international conventions and educational policies.

However, the study fails to examine the impact of cultural beliefs, customs, and society attitudes on inclusive education. This study therefore argues that cultural views about disabilities have a big impact on implementation in many societies.

Inclusive Geography Education

According to JKAGEE (2021), geography is the ideal subject for discussing migration, inequality, climate change, citizenship, globalization, and cultural diversity. Being grounded in critical geography, the researchers argue that geography as a subject should move beyond assimilation and nationalism toward transformative inclusion. The study criticizes "assimilative inclusion" where those in the minority are expected to conform to dominant norms. Even though the paper advocates for inclusive and democratic geography education, it fails to adequately interrogate whether geography teachers are equipped to implement inclusivity in their classrooms.

Phillips & Cranby (2015) also intimated that methods that acknowledge the potential of every student should replace the conventional "bell-curve thinking" in geography classrooms, which classifies students based on perceived ability. One of the key contributions of the study is the concentration on distributed pedagogical content knowledge. The scholars challenge the traditional perception that teacher knowledge exists only within the teacher but rather argue that knowledge can be co-constructed through collaboration among teachers and learners

Teachers' Knowledge of Inclusive Education

Teachers are seen as individuals who contribute significantly to the process of providing inclusive education (Ferretti 2016). It is further claimed that if teachers are unable to carry out their responsibilities with truly good intentions and sincere commitment towards students with disabilities, particularly those with severe or complex conditions, this process of providing education to "all" children can become challenging and difficult to succeed, even with the most accurate plan (UNESCO, 2000). This is due to the fact that in order to create the learning environment, teachers are often required to be able to understand the diversity of different learning styles as well as the distinct

intellectual and physical development of their students. Mprah et al., (2016) argued that even though teachers form the pivot of inclusive education, most of them do not have adequate knowledge on how to incorporate inclusion in their classrooms. The paper further revealed that inclusive education was omitted in most teachers pre- service training as a result they lack the requisite knowledge on inclusive education.

Mapsea (2006) argues that access to quality and relevant education can reduce the vulnerability of children to exploitation and forced migration. This aligns with the principles of inclusive education which supports equal access, involvement and learning outcomes for all learners, irrespective of their background. Despite its geographical limitation to the Southeast Asia, the study discovered language barriers, discrimination, mobility and lack of documentation as challenges confronting marginalized children in accessing formal education systems. Consistent with the social model, the paper reinforces the need for adaptive, flexible and context- sensitive educational policies that accommodate diverse learners.

Challenges Associated with the Implementation of Inclusive Education

The inclusion of learners with special needs has brought about a genuine upheaval in teachers daily routines as research revealed over loaded curriculum coupled with classroom management difficulties and uncertainty about instructional strategies have often resulted in resistance or negative perceptions toward inclusion (Garrote et., al 2020, DeMathews et.,al 2021 and Lyra et al., 2023). Similar research by Dinath et al., (2022) indicate that teachers' understanding and beliefs of inclusive education vary widely resulting to misinterpretations and uneven practices of inclusion goals. This study therefore contend that professional development and teacher efficacy are critical determinants of successful inclusive education.

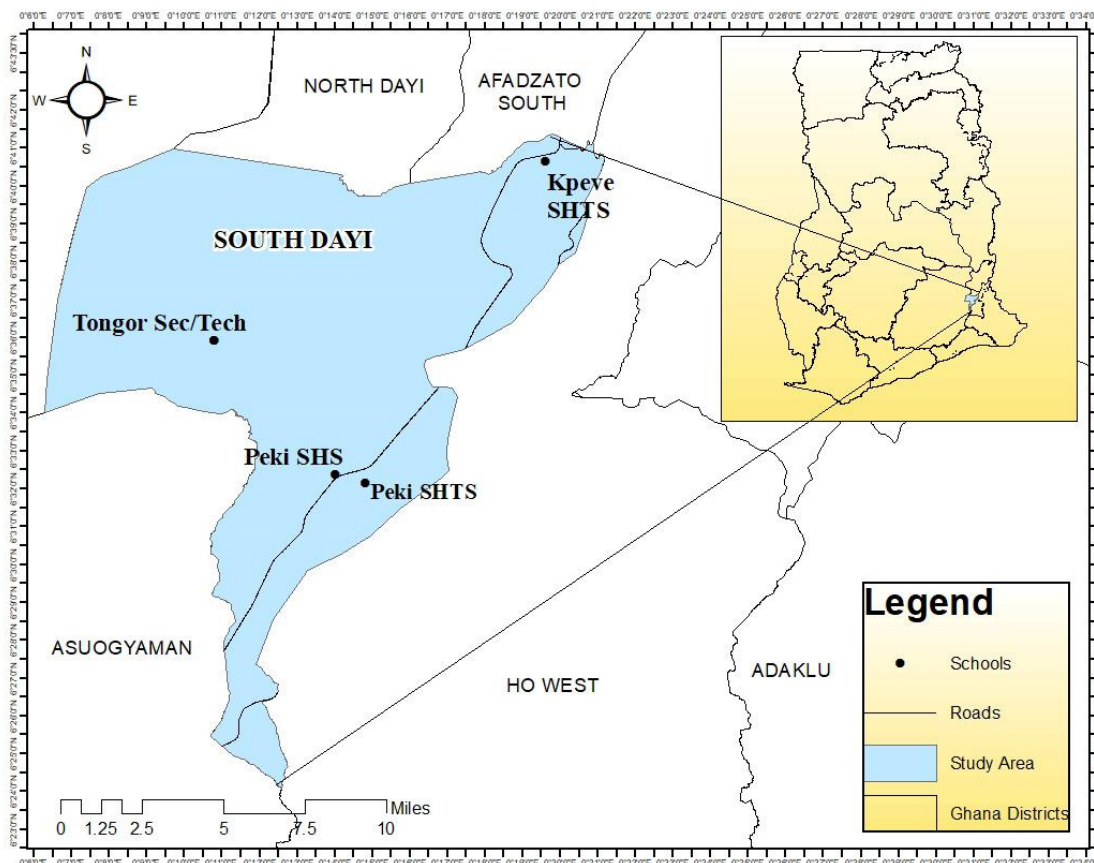
Ackah- Jnr and Danso (2019) revealed that one major challenge facing inclusive education in a developing nation like Ghana is inadequate resources. Further studies indicate that across both developed and developing economies, there is shortages of teaching and learning materials, specialized personnel like

educators and assistive technologies (Bashiru 2026, Garrote et., al 2020). These limitations are compounded by overcrowded classrooms and financial constraints which also restrict schools' ability to modify infrastructure provide supportive learning environments. As a result, inclusive education policies frequently lack the resources and administrative assistance required for successful execution.

According to Chaudhary (2026) standardized evaluation methods and rigid curricula are major obstacles to inclusion. Although many educational systems continue to use curriculum that do not take into account a variety of learning demands, inclusive education necessitates flexible, individualized instruction (Chaudhary 2026 & Sharma 2024). Mitchell (2015) and Ackah- Jnr and (Danso 2019) further revealed that teachers frequently find it difficult to modify lesson plans in a timely manner, particularly when working with mixed-ability students.

Methodology

The study was conducted in four Senior High Schools in the South Dayi District of the Volta region in Ghana. The presence of the four Senior High Schools in the district offers a diverse perspective of inclusivity from different stakeholders such as teachers, school administrators and students across different school environments. The observed increase in enrolment in Peki SHS, Peki SHT and especially Tongor SHST which is a riverine community suggests spatial inclusivity where students are no longer compelled to concentrate in a centrally located institution (Kikabhai2022, Travers & Downes, 2026 and Wong 2024). The study contends that since the four schools differ in terms of enrolment, resources and teaching experiences it makes the district suitable for comparative analysis on inclusive education (Drescher 2022, Hillman 2016, Kenna & Murphy 2021, Millett2022). Figure 1 clearly shows the map of the study area

Figure 1: Map of Ghana showing the Study Areas.

Source: Author's construct, 2026

Given the research's focus, a qualitative methodology was employed. Qualitative research provides a framework for understanding how individuals and groups interpret and attribute meaning to social and human challenges in educational contexts. This approach relies on descriptive words rather than numerical data to analyse observed phenomena (Queirós et al., 2017). The study uses an interpretivist research paradigm and was conducted from September 2025 through November 2025. Furthermore, a phenomenological approach providing a framework for investigating participants' lived experiences and their interpretations of inclusive education practices (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022, Sohn et al., 2017). This design focuses on interpreting the shared experiences of individuals within a common context. The approach was chosen because the study aims to interpret the experiences of geography teachers in SHS as they integrate inclusive education while meeting academic learning standards (Stolz, 2022). The target population consisted of

teachers who had taught in Senior High School before the free SHS policy and new curriculum for 2024/2025. This inclusion criterion was adopted to ensure that participants had extensive experience with the curriculum on inclusive policy.

The study also adopts purposive sampling method to select all the four Senior High Schools (SHS) in the South Dayi District and study participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher aims to strategically select participants in research such that, those selected are relevant to the research questions that the research seeks to answer (Bryman, 2016 and Etikan et al., 2016). In this case, the researcher identified individual teachers who practice inclusive pedagogy in their teaching. This sampling technique ensured that data were obtained from relevant and knowledgeable participants who can provide in-depth information on the research topic (Denscombe, 2010, Lowe et al. 2018). The schools were chosen based on three criteria: their implementation of the SHS curriculum,

participation in inclusive education projects, and diverse student populations, including those with disabilities or learning challenges. This sampling method is particularly effective for studies requiring participants with unique insights into the phenomena being studied (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample size for the study was 18 which comprised 8 geography teachers, 4 headteachers, 3 assistant headteachers and 3 guidance and counselling coordinators based on their willingness and availability. This selection of key stakeholders provided varied perceptions on curriculum implementation and inclusive education practices (Etikan et al., 2016).

In terms of data collection both in- depth interviews and observations were used. In depth interviews are the convenient ways in which researchers' access and narratives through which people describe their world (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The locations for the interviews in this study include offices, classrooms and school compounds depending on where and when it was convenient for the participant. To ensure research rigor and trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba's four criteria of quality in qualitative research was followed. This includes expert review and pilot testing to verify its effectiveness. Furthermore, multiple validation strategies were employed such as participants verification, researcher's reflexivity, documentation of decisions and peer review sessions. The interview process maintained high standards, with the researcher minimizing interruptions and securing quality recordings for accurate transcription.

According to Kearns (2021), observation is using the senses of sight, smell, touch, or hearing to gather information from the surroundings. Although observation is a crucial component of geography, Kearns (2021) observed that it has not received the necessary attention for the creation of data. To ensure adequate participation, the researcher and participant observations during field visits, documenting the data in the field notebook and taking pictures and videos.

The data underwent a rigorous process of manual transcription to ensure accuracy and maintain the nuances of the respondents' answers. This was followed by a comprehensive thematic analysis using NVivo 14. Through NVivo's node structure, which allows for hierarchical organization of themes and

subthemes, the researcher systematically coded and categorized the interview transcripts. The study followed Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological methodology (Abalos et al. 2016). This include: transcribing the interviews, identifying significant statements, deriving meanings from these statements, organizing meanings into thematic clusters (developing codes and grouping similar ones into themes and sub-themes), integrating all extracted meanings, formulating exhaustive descriptions of the phenomena under study and validating findings through member checking with participants. Through this structured analytical framework, a coherent set of main themes and subthemes were developed. This systematic approach ensured a thorough and methodologically sound analysis of the qualitative data.

Research involving human participants is often intrusive and involves questions of rights and responsibilities (Cannella & Lincoln, 2011; Spencer et al., 2021). Construction of the instrument for this study was done with approval from the Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH), University of Ghana with reference number (ECH 217/ 23-24) on 2nd May, 2024. As such all ethical guidelines for human experimentation was strictly adhered to. The purpose and voluntary nature of the study were explained to the participants in advance. The researcher also stated that no sensitive information would be disclosed, ensuring the anonymity of the participants. Written informed consent was obtained from heads of institutions as well as from the teachers before the commencement of data collection.

Results

Challenges Faced by Senior High School Teachers in Conducting Inclusive Classroom Practices

This section presents the detailed results from the study to address research question one, focusing on the challenges identified by geography teachers in conducting inclusive classroom practices in Senior High Schools (SHS). The responses from the participants revealed a range of barriers, categorized into main themes and sub-themes. The results align with existing literature on inclusive education and reflect the systemic and practical hurdles teachers face in promoting inclusive teaching practices. Table 2 gives a summary of the

challenges participants face in conducting inclusive classroom practices.

Table 2: Participants Respond on Challenges Faced by them in Conducting Inclusive Classroom Practices

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Description of Findings
Limited Access to Resources	- Lack of instructional materials - Insufficient technology	Participants reported that they lack access to essential resources such as assistive devices and specialized instructional materials required for inclusive teaching.
Inadequate Training on Inclusive Practices	- Inadequate professional development - Inadequate training on differentiated instruction methods	Many teachers felt unprepared for inclusive practices due to inadequate training, with limited workshops and courses provided on inclusive teaching techniques.
Systemic Barriers	- Large class sizes - Rigid, exam-oriented curricula	Structural challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and a focus on standardized testing impede efforts to adapt to diverse learning needs in the mathematics classroom.
Lack of Technology-Integrated Pedagogy	- Lack of infrastructure - Poor technical skills	There is a significant gap in the use of technology in classrooms, with many tutors not trained to use technology effectively for inclusive teaching.
Imbalance Between Theory and Practice	- Disconnect between curriculum and real-world applications - Lack of practical training opportunities	Teachers found that the current curriculum is highly theoretical and does not provide enough practical opportunities for them to apply inclusive education strategies.
Non-Participatory Teaching Methods	- Lack of collaborative learning strategies - Minimal student engagement	Teaching methods are predominantly lecture-based, with little opportunity for collaborative learning or participatory engagement among students with diverse learning needs.

It is structured with main themes, sub-themes, and detailed descriptions of findings. The major challenges identified include limited access to resources and technology, insufficient professional development and training in inclusive teaching methods, systemic barriers like large class sizes and rigid curriculum requirements, technology integration issues involving both infrastructure and skill gaps, a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application, and traditional non-

interactive teaching methods that limit student engagement. Each challenge is broken down into specific sub-themes and accompanied by detailed explanations of how these issues impact inclusive education practices. The findings suggest multiple interconnected barriers that teachers must overcome to create truly inclusive learning environments.

Limited Access to Resources

One of the most commonly cited challenges was the lack of instructional materials and insufficient assistive technologies. Participants reported that they lacked access to the essential resources required for implementing inclusive education. Teachers expressed frustration at not having tools like specialized instructional materials or assistive devices such as screen readers, braille resources, and other technologies tailored to learners with disabilities. As one geography:

"We need more teaching aids that cater to the needs of all students, especially those with visual or hearing impairments. It's difficult to ensure inclusivity without these tools."

This challenge is consistent with research by Opoku et al. (2020), which highlights the scarcity of teaching resources as a significant barrier to inclusive education in Ghana. Without access to these materials, teachers are limited in their ability to accommodate the diverse needs of learners effectively and successfully.

Systemic Barriers

Large class sizes and rigid, exam-oriented curricula emerged as key structural challenges. Participants shared that their classrooms were often overcrowded, making it nearly impossible to individualize instruction and cater to the diverse needs of learners. Additionally, the pressure to focus on standardized exams left little room for flexible teaching strategies that would benefit learners with disabilities or different learning abilities. An assistant headmaster academic explained:

"Class sizes are too large to accommodate personalized teaching. With over 60 students in a class, inclusive practices are almost impossible to implement."[AHA1]

Similarly, Kusi and Manful (2019) found that large class sizes were a significant obstacle to inclusive education in Ghana. The rigid, exam-oriented nature of the curriculum, focused primarily on academic achievement rather than holistic learning, further compounded this challenge, as tutors were unable to adapt lessons to meet varied learning needs.

Inadequate Training on Inclusive Practices

Another significant barrier identified was the insufficient professional development

opportunities and lack of training on differentiated instruction methods. Most participants felt that they were not adequately prepared to implement inclusive practices due to limited workshops and professional development programs focused on inclusive teaching strategies. Many tutors reported feeling under qualified to engage students with different learning needs effectively. One human geography teacher commented:

"We need more frequent workshops that teach us how to apply inclusive teaching strategies. Right now, there's hardly any support in terms of training."[HGT2]

This finding resonates with studies by Opoku et al. (2020), which emphasize that many teachers in developing countries lack the training needed to handle inclusive classrooms. The lack of professional development hinders the tutors' ability to adopt differentiated instructional strategies and, in turn, compromises inclusivity in the classroom.

Lack of Technology-Integrated Pedagogy

Participants reported a lack of infrastructure and poor technical skills as major barriers to implementing technology in inclusive teaching. Tutors acknowledged that technology could play a crucial role in making education more accessible, but many lacked both the skills and the resources to use technology effectively. Assistant headmaster academic commented:

"We need better infrastructure and training in how to use technology in inclusive teaching. Right now, most of us don't know how to integrate it effectively."[AHA3]

This finding is in line with those of Soma et al. (2021), who assert that technology integration in education in Ghana remains limited due to infrastructural challenges and insufficient teacher training. The lack of technology-integrated pedagogy hinders teachers' ability to address the diverse needs of learners.

Imbalance between Theory and Practice

There was also a reported disconnect between the curriculum and real-world applications, which participants said contributed to the imbalance between theory and practice in inclusive education. Tutors expressed frustration that the curriculum was overly theoretical, with little focus on practical applications that could help them implement

inclusive teaching strategies. A female physical geography teacher narrated:

"Our training is too theoretical. We don't get the chance to apply the inclusive strategies in real classroom settings, which leaves us feeling underprepared."[PGT1]

This echoes findings by Darko et al. (2021), who highlighted that teacher education in Ghana often lacks the practical component necessary to bridge the gap between theory and the realities of the classroom. This limitation hinders student-teachers' ability to effectively implement inclusive practices in real-world settings.

Non-Participatory Teaching Methods

Participants also cited non-participatory teaching methods, with a lack of collaborative learning strategies and minimal student engagement. The predominant use of lecture-based teaching methods left little room for participatory learning approaches that could support the needs of diverse learners. Many tutors acknowledged the need for more student-centered approaches, including group work and collaborative learning activities, to foster inclusivity.

Assistant Headmaster Academic officer noted:

"Our teaching is still very lecture-based. We need to engage students more and encourage collaborative learning to promote inclusivity."[AHA2]

This finding aligns with the work of Ayaya et al. (2020), who emphasize that participatory action research enhances teachers' inclusive teaching practices by fostering collaboration and reflective approaches to meet diverse learner needs in inclusive classroom environments.

Ways to Promote Inclusive Geography Classroom Practices in SHS in Ghana

This section also details the findings related to the second research question, which explored possible strategies to promote inclusive classroom practices in geography education in Ghana's second cycle education. The responses were categorized into five main themes and their corresponding sub-themes. Table 3 outlines key strategies and recommendations for promoting inclusive geography education, based on survey responses from the teachers. The findings are organized into five main themes with corresponding sub-themes and detailed descriptions.

Table 3: Ways to Promote Inclusive Geography Education

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Description of Findings
Enhancing Professional Development	❖ Continuous professional development workshops	Teachers indicated that regular professional development opportunities are necessary to stay updated on inclusive education practices, including effective pedagogy.
	❖ Training on inclusive teaching strategies	
Integration of Inclusive Strategies	❖ Differentiated instruction	Adapting teaching materials and using technology to cater to individual learning needs were seen as crucial strategies to foster inclusivity in the geography classroom.
	❖ Use of assistive technologies	
Collaborative and Dialogical Learning	❖ Group work and collaborative learning	Teachers and quality assurance officers noted that engaging students through group work, collaboration, and dialogue can enhance participation and learning outcomes.
	❖ Dialogical teaching methods	
Curriculum Reform	❖ Linking curriculum to students' daily lives	Linking abstract concepts to students' lived experiences and using a variety of assessment methods (e.g., group projects, presentations) were recommended to support inclusivity.
	❖ Diversified assessment methods	
Improving Resource Access	❖ Providing assistive technologies	Enhancing access to both physical resources (e.g., assistive devices) and teaching resources (e.g., differentiated learning materials) was identified as a priority for inclusive practices.
	❖ Access to differentiated learning materials	

The main strategies include enhancing professional development through regular workshops and training, integrating inclusive

teaching strategies such as differentiated instruction and assistive technologies, promoting collaborative and dialogical learning

approaches, implementing curriculum reforms that connect to students' real-life experiences, and improving access to both physical and teaching resources. The findings emphasize the importance of both changes (like curriculum reform and resource provision) and pedagogical approaches (such as collaborative learning and differentiated instruction). Each theme is supported by specific practical recommendations for implementation.

Enhancing Professional Development

Participants emphasized the need for continuous professional development workshops and training on inclusive teaching strategies. Tutors noted that staying updated on best practices in inclusive education requires regular opportunities for professional growth. The majority of participants called for workshops that would equip them with the necessary skills to implement inclusive teaching methods effectively. A male assistant headmaster academic reported:

"We need ongoing training, not just one-time workshops, to ensure that we can continuously improve our approach to inclusive teaching. The new teachers are not familiar with the new curriculum and that is a big problem"[AHA1]

This finding is supported by previous studies, such as Kume kpata et al. (2023), which highlight the importance of professional development in improving teachers' competency in inclusive education. Regular training in inclusive education policies and practices enables teachers to identify students with special educational needs, collaborate effectively, and foster inclusive classrooms.

Integration of Inclusive Strategies

Participants discussed the importance of integrating differentiated instruction and the use of assistive technologies to cater to students with different learning needs. Based on the principles of social disability model, differentiated teaching involves adapting teaching materials and methods to address students' varying abilities, while assistive technologies can support learners with disabilities, ensuring that they can participate meaningfully in classroom activities (Dursun and Aykan 2025, Mills 2020). A physical geography teacher noted:

"Differentiating instruction is key. We need to adapt our lessons to reach every student, whether through simpler explanations or technology that helps them learn better."[PGT3]

These insights reflect findings from Nyavor and Amaniampong (2020), who emphasize that assistive technologies, such as screen readers and other tools tailored to the needs of students with disabilities, are critical for creating inclusive classrooms. Their study highlights the importance of accessibility to these technologies and the training required for their effective use in Ghana.

Collaborative Learning

Participants highlighted the potential of group work, collaborative learning, and dialogical teaching methods to foster inclusivity. Teachers and assistant headmasters reported that engaging students through dialogue and teamwork encourages participation, especially for students with diverse learning needs. These methods promote peer-to-peer learning and create opportunities for students to collaborate and share their ideas. Assistant Headmaster observed:

"Group work and discussion-based learning foster inclusivity. When students work together in groups, they share ideas, explain concepts to one another, and solve problems collectively. Learners with stronger academic abilities can assist those who face difficulties, while students with different experiences and perspectives contribute unique insights to the discussion"[AHA1]

This is consistent with research by Rawat et al. (2017), who emphasized that collaborative learning is an effective strategy for fostering inclusivity in classrooms. Their study highlights that collaboration promotes both social and academic development, creating an environment where students support and learn from one another.

Curriculum Modification

The need for linking the curriculum to students' daily lives and incorporating diversified assessment methods was a key theme in participants' responses. Teachers suggested that abstract geographical concepts should be related to students' lived experiences to make learning more relevant and engaging. Additionally,

participants recommended using diverse assessment strategies, such as group projects and presentations, to assess students' understanding beyond traditional exams. A map work teacher indicated:

"The curriculum should connect with students' daily lives. If they see how math relates to real-world problems, they'll engage more, and we'll also be able to assess them in different ways, not just through exams."[MWT4]

These insights are consistent with the findings of Pillai and Devamanokari (2023), who argue that curriculum reform is essential for inclusive education. Their research highlights the importance of activity-based and diversified assessment methods, such as project-based learning and oral presentations, to accommodate the varied needs and abilities of students in inclusive classrooms.

Improving Resource Access

Respondents identified the need for providing assistive technologies and access to differentiated learning materials as essential for promoting inclusivity. Teachers in particular expressed that the provision of physical resources, such as assistive devices and the availability of differentiated instructional materials would significantly enhance their ability to implement inclusive practices. Many emphasized that these resources should be readily available and easily accessible. A human geography teacher testified:

"We need access to more assistive technologies and learning materials that cater to all students. This is the only way we can create an inclusive classroom."[HGT2]

This finding is supported by literature, including studies by (Opoku et al., 2020), which argue that the availability of appropriate resources, including assistive technologies and differentiated materials, is a fundamental requirement for effective inclusive education. Without such resources, teachers are limited in their capacity to engage students with diverse learning needs.

Discussion of Findings

This study explored the challenges geography teachers face when implementing inclusive classroom practices in the Ghanaian Senior

High School (SHS) curriculum and identified potential strategies to promote these practices. The findings revealed several basic challenges which include: limited resource access, inadequate training in inclusive teaching methods, systemic barriers (including large class sizes and inflexible curricula), disengaged curriculum design, non-participatory teaching and learning approaches, insufficient technology integration and an imbalance between theoretical and practical instruction. The research also identified strategies to address these challenges, including enhanced professional development opportunities, implementation of inclusive teaching methods, improved access to assistive technologies, promotion of collaborative learning environments, and adoption of diverse assessment techniques.

Challenges in Promoting Inclusive Classroom Practices

Based on the principle of barriers in society create exclusion by social model of disability Anastasiou & Kauffman (2013), the findings reveal several significant challenges faced by geography tutors in promoting inclusive classroom practices in Senior High Schools (SHS) in Ghana. The first major challenge is limited access to resources, including instructional materials and assistive technologies. Most of the respondents indicated that their inability to access these resources hinders their ability to address diverse student learning needs, particularly in practical geography lessons requiring specialized equipment and field study materials. This collaborates with Opoku et al. (2020) who intimated that resource constraints are a major barrier to implementing inclusive education in developing countries, especially in practical-oriented subjects like geography.

Another key challenge is inadequate training in inclusive practices. Participants indicated that limited professional development opportunities and insufficient training in differentiated instruction methods, particularly in adapting geographical concepts and field studies to meet diverse learning needs. This finding aligns with Mills (2020), who noted that insufficient training hinders teachers' readiness to address diverse student needs. Professional development and training in inclusive education are essential for building teachers' confidence

and capability in delivering inclusive instruction, especially in teaching complex geographical concepts and spatial thinking skills to students with varying abilities. This result resonates with the argument of social model that society must remove structural and attitudinal barriers to ensure equal participation.

The systemic barriers identified, including large class sizes and rigid, exam-oriented curricula, further impede inclusive education implementation. As Kusi and Manful (2019) observed, these structural limitations are common in Ghanaian educational settings, where overcrowded classrooms and pressure to meet standardized test requirements limited opportunities for inclusive teaching. The system constrains teachers by not allowing them the flexibility to adapt their teaching to individual student needs, particularly in conducting practical geography activities and field studies that require individualized attention and support.

The study also highlights the persistence of monocultural practices in multicultural classrooms, where cultural insensitivity and lack of equity pedagogy marginalize students from diverse backgrounds. According to Addai and Tatsi (2024), while cultural responsiveness is crucial for inclusive education, many teachers lack the training and support to implement equitable teaching strategies. This is particularly relevant in geography education, where understanding diverse cultural perspectives and local geographical knowledge is essential for meaningful learning experiences.

The absence of technology-integrated pedagogy also came out forcefully as another significant challenge. Participants reported inadequate infrastructure and limited technical skills among teachers, constraining their ability to use technology for inclusive learning. This finding aligns with studies by Soma et al. (2021), which identified similar barriers to technology integration in teaching within low-resource settings. The lack of access to geographical information systems (GIS), digital mapping tools, and other modern geographical technologies particularly affects the quality of inclusive geography education, as these tools could potentially enhance learning experiences for students with diverse needs.

Strategies for Promoting Inclusive Classroom Practices

In response to these challenges, participants proposed several strategies to promote classroom inclusivity. Enhancing professional development was deemed essential, with teachers advocating for continuous workshops on inclusive teaching strategies. Research by Rawat et al. (2017) and more recent studies by Kume kpata et al. (2023) support the notion that ongoing professional development is crucial for fostering inclusive educational practices. Studies have confirmed that when teachers understand the benefits of collaboration both for their professional development and student outcomes, they actively work to overcome barriers and engage in joint activities with colleagues (Jao & McDougall, 2016). Such professional development programs would enable tutors to remain current with the latest methods for addressing diverse learning needs. The integration of inclusive strategies through differentiated instruction and assistive technologies was another key recommendation. This approach would enable tutors to tailor their teaching to students' varying needs, ensuring comprehensive learner support. As Nyavor and Amaniampong (2020) emphasized, differentiated instruction and technology are critical components of inclusive education that help teachers create more accessible learning environments. Participants also stressed the importance of collaborative and dialogical learning, including group work and interactive teaching methods, as effective ways to engage diverse learners. These methods encourage active participation and foster peer support, essential elements for inclusive classrooms. Eun (2010) sociocultural theory of learning reinforces the value of collaborative learning, where students learn through peer and teacher interactions.

Curriculum reform emerged as another crucial strategy. Tutors suggested linking the curriculum to students' daily lives and implementing diverse assessment methods to make learning more relevant and accessible. Pillai and Devamanokari (2023) also advocated for curriculum reforms that reflect students' real-world experiences to promote engagement and understanding. Additionally, participants emphasized the need to improve resource access, including assistive technologies and differentiated learning materials. As Opoku et

al. (2020) noted, access to these resources is vital for successfully implementing inclusive education.

Conclusions

The findings of this study highlight the significant challenges faced by geography teachers in implementing inclusive classroom practices in Senior High Schools (SHS) in Ghana. Limited access to resources, inadequate training, systemic barriers, and the lack of technology-integrated pedagogy emerge as major obstacles requiring attention. However, the study also identifies promising strategies for promoting inclusivity: enhancing professional development, integrating inclusive teaching methods, fostering collaborative learning environments, implementing curriculum reforms, and improving resource accessibility. These evidence-based strategies are fundamental to creating an inclusive learning environment that effectively addresses the diverse needs of all students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations made for policy, teacher education, school- level and further research directions to promote inclusive classroom practices in Senior High Schools (SHS):

Recommendation for Policy

- i. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education, National Council for Curriculum & Assessment (NACCA) and the Ghana Education Service(GES) should revise the SHS curriculum to ensure that abstract concepts are connected to everyday experience and realities of students in the classroom
- ii. The GES in collaboration with the West African Examination Council (WAEC) should incorporate diverse and inclusive assessment approaches beyond the traditional examinations to accommodate learners with varying abilities and learning styles.
- iii. The GES and the Ministry of Education should emphasize equity pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching techniques to ensure equal participation of students from different backgrounds

Recommendation for Teacher Education

- i. University of Cape Coast (UCC), University of Education(UEW) and colleges of education should provide continuous professional development workshops on inclusive teaching strategies and differentiated instruction to teachers in the SHSs.
- ii. Teacher education institutions should include integration of classroom technology to enhance teaching and learning for students with special needs.
- iii. It is further recommended that pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes be regularly organized.

School Level Recommendations

- i. Schools should prioritize professional development by providing continuous workshops focused on inclusive teaching strategies, ensuring teachers are equipped with the skills needed to address diverse learning needs.
- ii. Additionally, teachers should receive comprehensive training in effective classroom technology integration, while schools must invest in the necessary infrastructure to support technology-enhanced pedagogy.
- iii. Furthermore, there is a critical need to promote equity pedagogy through culturally responsive teaching practices. This approach ensures that all students, regardless of their cultural or socioeconomic background, are meaningfully included in the learning process.

Implications of the Research

Theoretically, the study contributes to the existing discourse on inclusive geography education in Ghanaian Senior High Schools by integrating perspectives from the social model of disability. The theory was validated by findings of the study which identified the challenges faced by geography teachers in promoting inclusive classroom practices.

Additionally, the study contributes methodologically by adopting qualitative approach to provide a holistic exploration of inclusive education. This approach allowed for a nuanced analysis of the research questions. Specifically, method offered deep

insights into the lived experiences of the challenges SHS teachers face in conducting inclusive classroom practices and the possible ways to promote inclusive geography classroom practices in SHS of education in Ghana

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