

Teachers' Perception and Promotion of Social Justice for Learners with Special Educational Needs in Inclusive Classrooms

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Abstract The study explored teachers' perceptions about promoting social justice for primary school learners with special education needs and disabilities in the Tamale Metropolis in the Northern Region of Ghana. A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used. The study population comprised all public primary school teachers in the Tamale Metropolis. A total of 324 public primary school teachers from 46 randomly selected schools in the Municipality participated in the study. A close-ended questionnaire was used for data collection and analysed using Mean and Pearson correlation coefficient tests. The results suggested high teachers' knowledge and awareness of social justice dimensions. Also, there was a strong correlation between teachers' awareness and safeguarding and promoting social justice for learners. Though teachers indicated they had the skill to adapt the curriculum to the needs of the special learners, they preferred a different curriculum designed and implemented for them. The study recommends sustaining and intensifying teachers' awareness, skills and capacities to safeguard and promote the educational rights of all learners entrusted to them, regardless of their varying abilities and disabilities.

Keywords Social Justice, Special Needs, Disability, Primary School, Ghana

1. Introduction

Education is a right-based issue; hence, the need to promote equal opportunities for all learners, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This right remains a global goal mandated by international and national laws, agreements and conventions [1-3] with the aim of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all [4-5]. In the same vein, the 1992 constitution of Ghana highlights the equality of all persons before the law regardless of their status in economic, educational, political, health and disability [6,7]. However, several studies and reports indicate gaps between what nations and governments are mandated to provide for their citizens and what is achieved in terms of educational access, opportunities, participation and outcomes [8-10,3]. The discrepancy between the ideal and the reality concerning social justice in education leads to, in some instances, the marginalisation of some sections of the population [11,12,2]. Therefore, any attempts to deal with marginalisation must begin with a discourse on ensuring social justice and opportunities for all despite people's differences in race, social class, gender, immigration status, disability, and sexual orientation [4,2,13].

Social justice is a multidimensional concept used in

several contexts, such as the ethnic majority and minority discourse, disability rights advocacy, social stratification, and equalising educational opportunities for all [14-16]. Social justice in education has been conceptualised as an approach that embodies treating all learners with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity [14,17]. The continual search for the best practices in educating marginalised groups, typically persons with SEND, has attracted several philosophical, political, social and educational considerations [18-20]. The current practice of inclusive education has several promises for children with SEND, but the challenges confronting its implementation make it elusive [1,21,13]. This is due partly to the lack of relevant facilities and materials [22-25], infrastructural and environmental constraints [26,25] and inappropriate diagnosis of learners with SEND [27,28]. Other studies have reported discriminatory attitudes, lack of school policy guidelines, inadequate funding, inadequate public education and lack of political will as challenges confronting inclusive education [30,31,22,23]. In Ghana, the Inclusion Education Policy [1] highlights the need for all stakeholders to uphold the dignity and rights of all learners, including those with Special Education Needs. [32]. Meeting this need is a right and discourse for social justice and teachers' roles are indispensable in promoting social justice in school and in communities generally. This study therefore explored the extent to which teachers perceived social justice promote inclusion of learners with SEND in the Tamale Metropolis of the Northern Region of Ghana. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of social justice for learners with special educational needs and disabilities?
2. To what extent does teachers' knowledge of social justice promote inclusivity in schools?

2. Theoretical Review

Undoubtedly, social justice in education is a complex interactive phenomenon with several dimensions. These dimensions may include teacher awareness, advocacy, curriculum, instructional support, resources and environmental suitability, as studies have reported these as key issues in promoting inclusive education [34-36]. If inclusive education promotes social justice in education and society in general, then a critical consideration of these factors may be a precursor to assessing inclusive practices in schools.

2.1. Teacher Awareness and Advocacy

Dias [36] considered teachers to be the central pillar in implementing inclusive education, and achieving this depends partly on their knowledge and awareness of learners with SEND in the classroom [37,38,35]. Agbenyaga and Deku [39] acknowledged that teachers

know much about children with additional needs. However, other studies have reported limited teachers' awareness and competence in identifying learners with additional needs [40-42]. Similarly, teachers' limited knowledge and awareness of learners with SEND in the classrooms has been reported [27]. This has resulted in poor or negative teacher attitudes towards learners with additional needs [26,37,17], which is detrimental to inclusive education and affects any move towards social justice for learners with SEND [43]. Actors with a sense of responsibility towards social issues are the requirements for social justice and teachers as social actors play a significant role in promoting social justice [45-46]. It has been argued that promoting social justice through education requires teachers to be aware of social inequalities and demonstrate a commitment to eliminating them [48-50]. Further, practitioners of social justice should be aware of inequalities and practically act to promote a more just and equal society [51]. Inasmuch as teachers alone cannot completely eliminate social injustices in society, they are able to contribute significantly to social justice realisation through awareness creation among peers, students and even the community [51,52]. However, Kaur [31] has reported that teachers have mostly acted to perpetuate inequalities and injustices through their negative assessment of students' academic performances. When teachers treat students unequally based on students' attributes such as knowledge, skill, success, intelligence, competence, socioeconomic background or disabilities, they inevitably create cultures that favour some students while creating potential disadvantages for others [53]. Evidence suggests that teachers' beliefs about social justice were predicted by their resistance to personal change, that is, as teachers' resistance to personal change increased, their social justice beliefs decreased [51]. Thus, a lack of self-awareness of social justice may increase teachers' resistance to personal change which in turn will affect their practices towards social justice.

Closely related to teacher awareness is their advocacy. Advocacy is an important way teachers communicate with parents, professionals and other agencies to get the needed services and support for children with SEND [37,19]. Teachers, as advocates, support learners by speaking up about what they want, what they need and what their rights are [34,32]. They educate them and their families and partner with professional groups to provide services and connect learners to the world outside the classroom [53]. For the successful practice of inclusive education, teachers must not only be instructors of the curriculum but more so advocate for the rights of learners with SEND who may be less able to speak for themselves [44,31]. Bradley-Levine [10] reported that teachers who successfully advocate for learners with SEN contribute to building more inclusive schools and communities. Teacher advocates seek partnerships with their colleagues through collaborative efforts for their students rather than themselves [54]. Advocacy has been difficult for many teachers, particularly

if it involves learners who are marginalised in school and society [22]. Bradley-Levine [10] found out that teachers advocated for students by making sure their needs were met in an appropriate way. This involved using case conferences to advocate for the inclusion of learners with moderate disabilities in regular schools. There is therefore no doubt that teacher advocacy is essential in promoting social justice for inclusive education.

2.2. Curriculum and Instructional Support

Tichá et al. [2] and Mitchell [35] noted that inclusive education goes beyond the physical placement of learners with SEND in mainstream schools to include their participation and achievement. Beech [12] indicated that curricular accommodations and adaptations facilitate the academic success of learners with SEND. However, this depends on teachers' awareness of curriculum appropriateness and ability to adapt it for learners when necessary [10,34]. Adapting the curriculum to the needs of learners with SEND satisfies the dual purpose of improving their achievement and promoting social justice in education [10,34]. However, concerns have been levelled against curricular appropriateness for learners with SEND in inclusive classrooms [55]. These include rigid curriculum and assessment policies [51], competition, demands for higher academic standards, and a lack of collaborative practices [21,51]. The curriculum may expect pupils to learn the same things by the same means and methods despite their differences in abilities and needs [32,51]. Some experts contend that preoccupation with academic achievement may be obstructive to achieving social justice in schools because academic achievement is overemphasised to the detriment of other benefits of schooling, such as functional competence and independent living [24,19]. Some prior studies suggest that teacher training programmes have produced many teachers without the necessary skills to teach learners with SEND [16,26,29]. This deficiency compromises social justice for learners with diverse needs in inclusive classrooms [49]. It has been reported that some general education teachers have limited training and experience, hence, doubt their ability to meet the learning, emotional, and behaviour needs of learners with exceptionalities [54]. Consequently, teacher education needs to be infused with content that includes instructional techniques appropriate for diverse learners in inclusive environments [40], since providing practical support has been reported as the most effective way to advocate for the inclusion of learners with special needs in general education. Therefore, instructional and practical support for such learners are the precursors of teacher advocacy for inclusion and social justice in education [54].

2.3. Environmental Suitability and Availability of Resources

The physical environment plays important role in teaching and learning. A conducive classroom and school environment that suits the needs of teachers and students and complements the classroom activities can improve learning outcomes [49]. A study has reported a high positive correlation between the physical environment of the classroom and teaching and learning comfort levels. Thus, the more conducive the physical milieu of the classroom, the more comfortable students are in learning and participating in classroom activities [49]. However, the physical environments sometimes do not support some cases of learners with SEND making it difficult for schools to comply with the framework for inclusive education [31]. Kawser [50] also indicated that school infrastructure may not be disability-friendly due to poor financial support and poor planning [7]. Many special schools benefit from purpose-built accommodations, the absence of which in ordinary schools makes the environment unsuitable and even dangerous for learners with disabilities in mainstream schools [37]. A study by Ackah-Jnr [57] revealed that the physical environment of most Ghanaian basic schools was of poor quality, less accessible for learners with physical disabilities and sensory impairments, particularly for most physical activities. In many schools in Ghana, the physical space has not been restructured to meet the universal design, and this may impede any efforts to ensure social justice in education, particularly for learners with SEND [22]. The need for architectural redesigning, modification of facilities and a restructuring of the physical landscape has been suggested to promote accessibility for learners with SEND [57].

Similar to environmental accessibility as a requirement for promoting social justice in education is the availability of resources for effective teaching and learning. Studies have found that instructional resources make lessons interesting, facilitate learner involvement and enhance students' performance [40,47]. However, the unavailability of resources to support special needs children make inclusion difficult and often impossible [41]. Many schools in developing countries are resource-constrained breeding inequality, posing challenges to inclusion, and perpetuating social injustices in schools [25]. Okongo et al [58] reported that inadequate resources affect the implementation of inclusive education. The lack of instructional resources reduces inclusion to mere physical placement rather than the full involvement of learners with SEND in every aspect of the school for their holistic development [10,50]. The lack of teaching and learning resources due to inadequate financial resources poses a greater challenge to the successful implementation of inclusive education [24,23]. This will consequently deny efforts to promote social justice in education through inclusion.

3. Methodology

This study adopted the cross-sectional descriptive survey design. The population comprised all public primary school teachers in the Tamale Metropolis. The Metro has 15 circuits with a total of 278 primary schools. The Metro has approximately 1,800 primary school teachers. A sample of 317 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's Table. A total of 324 teachers comprising 130 males and 194 females respectively participated in the study. A close-ended questionnaire was used to collect the data. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed through circuit supervisors depending on the number of schools within their circuits. Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, a total of 324 were accurately completed and returned pegging the response rate at 81%. For each of the components of social justice, teachers responded to a five-point Likert scale of Strongly Disagree (SD); Disagree (D); Neural (N); Agree (A); and Strongly Agree (SA). Each of these responses on the scale was assigned a score between 1 to 5. However, the responses were converted into a three-point Likert scale by combining Strongly Disagree and Disagree as Disagree and Agree and Strongly Agree as Agree. The range for interpreting the mean score was given as 1.0-2.4 (Low); 2.5-3.4 (Moderate); and 3.5-5.0 (High) respectively [59]. Descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential (Pearson's correlation coefficient test) statistics were used to analyse the data.

4. Results

The respondents comprised 130(40%) males and 194(60%) females. The data on participants' ages revealed

that 91(28%) were between 21 to 30 years, 142(44%) were within the 31 to 40 age bracket, 75(23%) were in the 41 to 50 years group, and 16(5%) were between 51 to 60 years. Concerning respondents' educational qualification, 139(43%) had a diploma, 179(55%) were first degree holders, and 6(2%) had master's degrees. The majority 227(70%) agreed that they had been trained in teaching learners with SEND, 94(29%) said they had not been trained, and only 3(1%) were uncertain.

4.1. Research Question 1

What are teachers' perceptions of social justice for learners with special educational needs and disabilities?

The results in Table 1 implied that most teachers agreed to be aware of learners with SEND in schools. Teachers had the skill to identify learners with special needs ($X = 4.25$; $SD = .87$), could easily identify learners with special needs ($X = 4.09$; $SD = .89$), and were aware of learners with SEND in their classrooms ($X = 4.14$; $SD = 1.01$). Teachers were aware of the tendency of learners with SEND to drop out of school ($X = 3.91$; $SD = 1.06$) and feel unsafe like their colleagues without special needs ($X = 3.70$; $SD = 1.22$). Finally, teachers were aware of the possible disadvantaged learners with special needs face in classrooms and schools ($X = 4.06$; $SD = .98$). The weighted mean average (WMA) for teacher's awareness ($X = 4.03$) exceeded the average weight of 3, signaling that teachers demonstrated a high awareness of learners with SEND in the schools.

Table 1. Teachers' awareness of learners with SEND

s/no.	Statement	A	N	D	X	SD
1	Teachers have the skill to identify learners with SEND in the school or classroom	298(92%)	7 (2%)	19 (6%)	4.25	.87
2	Teachers can easily identify learners with SEND in the school or classroom	295(91%)	7 (2%)	22 (7%)	4.09	.89
3	There are learners with SEND in the class or school	275 (85%)	16 (5%)	33(10%)	4.14	1.01
4	Some learners with SEND drop out of school	246 (76%)	42 (13%)	36 (11%)	3.91	1.06
5	Learners with SEND do not feel safe much the same way as those without special needs	224 (69%)	29 (9%)	71 (22%)	3.70	1.22
6	There are possible disadvantages to learners with SEND in the classroom or school	262 (81%)	39 (12%)	23 (7%)	4.06	.98

Weighted Mean Average (WMA) $X = 4.03$ Average $SD = 1.01$

The results in Table 2 indicated that teachers agreed that some people advocate for the rights of learners with SEND (X = 3.57; SD = 1.17). There was a moderate belief among the teachers that the education system perpetuates injustices against learners with SEND (X = 3.35; SD = 1.15). It is further revealed that the teachers were willing to challenge discriminatory practices against learners with SEND (X = 3.74; SD = 1.07). However, they were quite uncomfortable challenging discriminatory practices in the school (X = 3.23; SD = 1.24). They also supported advocacies to improve school conditions for learners with SEND (X = 4.14; SD = 1.01). The teachers' responses show that they were willing to educate the public on the needs of learners with SEND (X = 3.86; SD = 1.06) and felt moderately responsible for advocating for the well-being of such learners (X = 3.46; SD = 1.13). The teachers also indicated that they openly challenge unfair school practices against learners with SEND (X = 3.79; SD = 1.09) and speak at school meetings about the needs of learners with SEND (X = 3.85; SD = 1.09). The teachers' responses show that they advocate for learners with SEND in the schools.

The teachers' responses in Table 3 showed that school activities do not discriminate against learners with SEND (X = 3.74; SD = .84). The teachers moderately believed

that the curriculum was suitable for all learners, including those with SEND (X = 3.10; SD = 1.34). The respondents perceived they were competent in adapting the curriculum to suit learners with SEND (X = 3.79; SD = 1.06). However, they moderately considered the curriculum too rigid to be adapted for such learners (X = 3.28; SD = 1.24). Also, the teachers did not entertain any fears in terms of completing the curriculum (X = 3.65; SD = 1.24), nor were they of competing effectively in district-wide and national examinations if they catered for the needs of the learners with SEND (X = 3.62; SD = 1.09). The majority of the teachers agreed that there were alternative assessment procedures for learners with special needs (X = 3.59; SD = 1.12); hence, the teachers moderately felt that students were not required to take a paper and pencil test (X = 3.18; SD = 1.32). However, the teachers agreed that the school curriculum promotes content knowledge more than functional competence (X = 3.53; SD = 1.18), and therefore learners with special needs require a different curriculum from the one currently in use (X = 3.68; SD = 1.27). It can be concluded that the teachers moderately perceived the curriculum appropriate and had the skill to adapt it for learners with SEND with WMA = 3.49; and SD = 1.17.

Table 2. Teachers' responses to their advocacy role for learners with SEND

S/no.	Advocacy	A	N	D	X	SD
1	There are people to advocate for the rights of persons with SEND in the school	214(66%)	36 (11%)	74 (23%)	3.57	1.17
2	The education system often perpetuates injustices for learners with SEND	156(48%)	65 (24%)	103(28%)	3.35	1.15
3	Teachers are willing to challenge practices that do not favour persons with SEND in the school	224(69%)	49 (15%)	51 (16%)	3.74	1.07
4	Teachers are not comfortable challenging discriminatory practices in the school	120 (37%)	29 (9%)	175 (54%)	3.23	1.24
5	Teachers support advocacies to improve conditions for learners with SEND in the school	272 (84%)	29 (9%)	23 (7%)	4.14	1.01
6	Teachers try to increase public awareness of the educational needs of learners with SEND	246 (76%)	29 (9%)	49 (15%)	3.86	1.06
7	Teachers feel they are responsible for advocating for the well-being of learners with SEND	204 (63%)	42 (13%)	78 (24%)	3.46	1.13
8	Teachers openly challenge school practices that are unfair to learners with SEND	227 (70%)	42 (13%)	55 (17%)	3.79	1.09
9	Teachers speak up at school meetings about the needs of learners with SEND	224 (69%)	65 (20%)	35 (11%)	3.85	1.09

WMA = 3.87, Average SD = 1.11

Table 3. Teachers' responses to curriculum appropriateness for learners with SEND

S/no.	Curriculum	A	N	D	X	SD
1	Curricular and non-curricular activities in the school do not discriminate against learners with SEND	224(69%)	71 (22%)	29 (9%)	3.74	.84
2	The curriculum is suitable for all learners, including those with SEND	149(46%)	52 (16%)	123 (38%)	3.10	1.34
3	Teachers have the competence to adapt the curriculum to suit all learners	230(71%)	36 (13%)	58 (16%)	3.79	1.06
4	The curriculum is too rigid to be adapted to suit those with SEND	107(33%)	68 (21%)	149 (46%)	3.28	1.24
5	Teachers fear they might not complete the curriculum if they give extra attention to learners with SEND	65 (24%)	39 (12%)	220 (64%)	3.65	1.24
6	Schools fear they might not compete effectively in the district and national examinations	71(22%)	52(16%)	201(62%)	3.62	1.09
7	There are alternative assessment methods for learners with SEND	191(59%)	68(21%)	65(20%)	3.59	1.12
8	Every student is required to take a paper and pencil test	136(42%)	23 (7%)	165(51%)	3.18	1.32
9	The curriculum promotes content knowledge but not functional competence	75(23%)	65(20%)	184(57%)	3.53	1.18
10	The curriculum promotes both content knowledge and functional competence	172(53%)	65(20%)	87(27%)	3.32	1.18
11	Learners with SEND require a curriculum different from what is currently in use	207(64%)	32(10%)	85(26%)	3.68	1.27

WMA = 3.49; Average SD = 1.17

The responses in Table 4 show that the teachers were willing to adapt their instructional activities to accommodate all learners ($X = 4.24$; $SD = .80$). They also agreed that they had the competence to teach all learners, including those with SEND ($X = 3.67$; $SD = 1.12$), with their instructional activities promoting cooperation rather than competition ($X = 3.74$; $SD = 1.18$). Teachers considered it a responsibility to provide extra support to learners who needed it ($X = 3.89$; $SD = .98$). However, they agreed that their workload prevents them from providing extra support to those who need it ($X = 3.89$; $SD = 1.18$) which may result in their little ability to improve the learning outcomes of learners with special needs ($X = 3.16$; $SD = 1.24$). They further agreed that they cooperate with parents ($X = 3.80$; $SD = 1.04$) in much the same way as they work with other teachers ($X = 3.81$; $SD = .98$) to improve students' learning outcomes. Finally, they agreed that they encourage learners with special needs to learn at their own pace ($X = 3.76$; $SD = .99$). Considering the average mean (3.77), it can be concluded that the teachers

provided high instructional support for the learners with SEND in the classrooms.

The results in Table 5 suggest that the teachers were ready to improvise when the resources were unavailable ($X = 3.85$; $SD = .98$) and when learning materials were rarely supplied to the schools ($X = 3.26$; $SD = 1.33$). Also, they agreed that learning materials discriminate against learners with special needs ($X = 3.31$; $SD = 1.31$). They also agreed that the materials supplied are not equitable to support diverse learners ($X = 3.75$; $SD = .112$), and they do not have adequate knowledge on how to adapt materials to suit learners with special needs ($X = 3.07$; $SD = 1.31$). The teachers, however, disputed that resources to support all learners to achieve are readily available ($X = 2.25$; $SD = 1.23$). Also, they felt that school authorities do not supply learning materials to those with special needs in mind ($X = 2.60$; $SD 1.17$). It can be concluded that teachers had a moderate perception ($X = 3.16$) of the availability of resources for learners with SEND.

Table 4. Teachers’ perception of instructional support for learners with SEND

s/no.	Instructional Support	A	N	D	X	SD
1	Teachers are willing to adapt their instructional activities to promote learning among all learners	272(84%)	16(5%)	36(11%)	4.24	.80
2	Teachers have the competence to teach learners with SEND in their classrooms	227(70%)	13(4%)	84(26%)	3.67	1.12
3	Class activities are designed to promote cooperation rather than competition among learners	214(66%)	52(16%)	58(18%)	3.74	1.18
4	Teachers have the responsibility to support learners who may need extra support	253(78%)	32(10%)	39(12%)	3.89	.98
5	Teachers’ workload prevents them from providing extra support to those who need it	58(18%)	36 (13%)	230(69%)	3.89	1.18
6	Teachers can do little to improve the learning outcomes of learners with SEND	120(37%)	55(17%)	149(46%)	3.16	1.24
7	Teachers work cooperatively with parents to better the learning outcomes of those with SEND	217(67%)	58(18%)	49(15%)	3.80	1.04
8	Teachers work cooperatively with other teachers to better the learning outcomes of those with SEND	237(73%)	49(15%)	38(12%)	3.81	.98
9	Teachers encourage diverse learners to learn at their own pace	243(75%)	29(9%)	52(16%)	3.76	.99

WMA = 3.77; Average SD = 1.06

Table 5. Teachers’ perception of the availability of resources for learners with SEND

S/no.	Resources	A	N	D	X	SD
1	Resources to support all learners to achieve are readily available	68(21%)	36(11%)	220(68%)	2.25	1.23
2	Teachers are ready to improvise to support all learners	233(72%)	52(16%)	39(12%)	3.85	.98
3	School authorities supply learning materials with those with SEND in mind	91(28%)	49(15%)	184(57%)	2.60	1.17
4	Learning materials are rarely supplied to the school	113(35%)	39(12%)	172(53%)	3.26	1.33
5	Learning materials discriminate against those with SEND	104(32%)	49(15%)	171(53%)	3.31	1.31
6	Materials supplied are not equitable to support diverse learner needs	71(22%)	29(9%)	224(69%)	3.75	1.12
7	Teachers do not have adequate knowledge on how to adapt the materials to suit learners with SEND	156(48%)	19(6%)	149(46%)	3.07	1.31

WMA = 3.16, Average SD = 1.21

Table 6. Teachers' perception of environmental appropriateness for learners with SEND

S/no.	Environment	A	N	D	X	SD
1	The physical environment of the school supports diverse learners	110(34%)	78(24%)	136(42%)	2.96	1.27
2	The physical environment of the school favours the non-disabled over those with disabilities	94(29%)	36(11%)	224(60%)	3.51	1.18
3	There are obstacles to persons with disabilities in the physical environment	32(10%)	42(13%)	250(77%)	4.45	4.53
4	Persons with disabilities can move about with little or no support	156(48%)	39(12%)	129(40%)	3.12	1.24
5	School authorities constantly look for ways to improve environmental conditions for the disabled	175(54%)	55(17%)	94(29%)	3.34	1.11
6	The school infrastructures are disability-friendly	94(29%)	32(10%)	198(61%)	2.53	1.25
7	Seating arrangements in the classrooms allow movement for those with disabilities	149(46%)	32(10%)	143(44%)	3.00	1.34
8	Class sizes allow adequate space for movement for a person with a disability	97(30%)	32(10%)	195(60%)	2.65	1.32

WMA = 3.19, Average SD = 1.66

The results in Table 6 show that teachers agreed that the physical environment favoured abled-bodied learners over those with disabilities ($X = 3.51$; $SD = 1.18$) due to obstacles to persons with disabilities in the physical environment ($X = 4.45$; $SD = 4.53$). The teachers agreed that persons with disabilities could move about with little or no support ($X = 3.12$; $SD = 1.24$). It was also agreed that school heads are constantly looking for opportunities to improve the environmental conditions for the disabled ($X = 3.34$; $SD = 1.11$), and seating arrangements in the classroom allow movement for those with disabilities ($X = 3.00$; $SD = 1.34$). The school's physical environment was reported not to support diverse learners ($X = 2.96$; $SD = 1.27$). They also disputed that school infrastructures are disability-friendly ($X = 2.53$; $SD = 1.25$), and class sizes allow adequate space for movement among those with disabilities ($X = 2.65$; $SD = 1.32$). Teachers had a moderate perception ($X = 3.19$) of the environmental appropriateness for learners with SEND.

4.2. Research Question 2

To what extent does teachers' knowledge of social justice promote inclusivity in schools?

Pearson Correlation test was used to explore the relationships among the components, and the results are shown in Table 7. There was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceived awareness of learners with SEND and their perceived advocacy, $r(80) = .45$, $p = .00$; curriculum adaptation, $r(80) = .45$, $p = .00$; and instructional support $r(80) = .31$, $p = .001$, for such learners. This means that the higher the teachers' awareness of learners with SEND, the greater the likelihood that the teachers would advocate, adapt the curriculum and provide instructional support for such learners. It is also evident from the Table that there was a significant relationship between advocacy and curriculum adaptation $r(80) = 1.00$, $p = .000$; advocacy and instructional support, $r(80) = .35$, $p = .000$, as well as curriculum adaptation and instructional support $r(80) = .35$, $p = .000$. However, there was no significant relationship between resources and any other components of social justice likewise environment and the other components of social justice.

Table 7. Influence of Teachers’ awareness on the promotion of social justice

Correlation matrix of components of social justice in education

		Awareness	Advocacy	Curriculum	Instructional support	Resources	Environment
Awareness	Pearson Correlation	1	.450**	.450**	.305**	-.168	.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.005	.131	.835
	N	324	324	324	324	324	324
Advocacy	Pearson Correlation	.450**	1	1.000**	.354**	-.117	.118
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.001	.295	.290
	N	324	324	324	324	324	324
Curriculum	Pearson Correlation	.450**	1.000**	1	.354**	-.117	.118
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.001	.295	.290
	N	324	324	324	324	324	324
Instructional support	Pearson Correlation	.305**	.354**	.354**	1	-.086	.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.001	.001		.441	.601
	N	324	324	324	324	324	324
Resources	Pearson Correlation	-.168	-.117	-.117	-.086	1	.158
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.131	.295	.295	.441		.155
	N	324	324	324	324	324	324
Environment	Pearson Correlation	.023	.118	.118	.059	.158	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.835	.290	.290	.601	.155	
	N	324	324	324	324	324	324

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5. Discussion of Results

The results implied teachers’ high awareness about ensuring social justice for learners with SEND in primary schools in the Metropolis. This is evidenced by the high average score ($\bar{X} = 4.03$) of teachers’ responses to the components of social justice, except for their responses to environmental suitability. The teachers’ perceived high awareness of learners with SEND supports earlier findings that primary school teachers have adequate knowledge of learners with SEND [5]. However, it was inconsistent with other studies that reported a lack of teacher awareness of learners with SEND as a barrier to inclusive education [52,17]. Findings on teachers’ advocacy roles support earlier reports that teachers accept their professional role to advocate for such learners [27].

Interestingly, though the teachers indicated the appropriateness of the existing curriculum to be SEND sensitive, this perception is inconsistent with earlier studies that have reported inappropriate and rigid curricula as a barrier to inclusive education [34,51]. Perhaps contextual and other variables peculiar to the Metropolis in focus may account for this, requiring further investigation, preferably using a qualitative approach. The findings on perceived instructional support did not support earlier reports that teachers lack the necessary skills to teach learners with disabilities [5,23]. Teachers’ perception of instructional materials for learners with SEND was a little above the average (3.16), countering what has been reported in prior

studies from Ghana [41]. However, the teaching and learning environment was deemed unsuitable for promoting social justice in schools, as corroborated by earlier studies [34,41].

The relationship among social justice components revealed a significant relationship between perceived awareness and advocacy. This is not surprising because one cannot give what one does not have. Awareness of the needs and rights of learners with SEND places teachers in better stead to advocate and safeguard equity for learners [3,57], which ultimately improves their learning outcomes and promotes social justice [43,37].

The relationship between awareness and provisions in the curriculum suggested the belief that teachers had the skill to adapt the curriculum to the need of learners with SEND regardless of the notion that a rigid curriculum creates barriers to inclusive practices [51]. Teachers’ ability to adapt the current curriculum may suggest its relevance to promoting social justice, except for a few modifications in their implementation, including teaching and assessment strategies.

6. Conclusion and Implications for Practice

The study explored teachers’ perception of social justice for learners with special educational needs in primary schools and found teachers’ high awareness of learners

with special needs in their schools. Also, it was revealed that teachers' awareness had a positive association with their willingness to advocate for such learners, instructional support and curriculum adaptation. It can therefore be concluded that achieving inclusive education for all and thereby promoting social justice requires awareness creation and advocacy by stakeholders such as teachers. Such awareness creation may have a rippling effect as teachers may advocate for such learners, adapt the curriculum to meet their learning needs, and provide instructional support for such learners. Though the teachers believed that learners with SEND require a curriculum different from what is currently in use, what is important is their ability to adapt it to meet the needs of the diverse learners in their classrooms. Therefore, training and retraining of teachers in inclusive teaching pedagogies such as direct instruction, differentiated instruction, universal design for learning, and response to intervention would equip teachers with the competence to meet the learning needs of the varied learners in their classrooms. Social justice in education can also be promoted if learning environment is disability-friendly and the required teaching and learning resources are provided to support their learning. Actors such as the Ministry of Education through the Ghana Education Service should therefore intensify awareness creation among all stakeholders particularly teachers to enable them to play their roles effectively and ensure social justice for all learners. Again, there is a need for restructuring the physical space to make them disability friendly and accessible to all. Parental organisations, non-governmental organisations and other religious and corporate bodies should support in providing the required teaching and learning resources for all learners and especially for those with SEND who may require such materials to improve their learning. When these measures are put in place and enforced, there is no doubt that inclusive education would move from the ideal state it is now to reality and thereby promote social justice for all learners.

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