



**THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AND  
MORAL EDUCATION (RME) AND SPECIAL  
EDUCATION IN THE GHANAIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Abstract:**

This study critically examines the interplay between Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.) and Special Education within the Ghanaian context, foregrounding the need for an inclusive, culturally responsive, and ethically grounded educational framework. In Ghana, R.M.E. serves as a key medium for moral formation, social cohesion, and value transmission, while Special Education seeks to ensure equitable access and participation for learners with diverse needs. However, the intersection between these two domains remains underexplored, particularly in relation to inclusive pedagogy, indigenous philosophical foundations, and classroom practice. The study is anchored in inclusive education theory and African moral philosophy, particularly Ubuntu, alongside Social Learning Theory and Vygotskian socio-cultural perspectives. A qualitative research design was adopted, drawing on interviews and classroom-based observations involving teachers, special educators, and learners across selected inclusive schools. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret patterns related to pedagogy, accessibility, participation, and moral engagement. Findings reveal that while R.M.E. holds significant potential to promote inclusion, empathy, and moral agency among learners with special educational needs, its delivery is often constrained by limited teacher preparedness, inadequate instructional adaptation, and insufficient integration of inclusive strategies. The study further identifies the marginalization of indigenous ethical frameworks as a missed opportunity for fostering culturally relevant inclusive practices. The study concludes that meaningful integration of R.M.E. and Special Education requires a shift from content transmission to participatory, learner-centered, and ethically responsive pedagogies. It recommends curriculum reform, teacher professional development, and policy alignment to enhance inclusive moral education in Ghana. Ultimately, the study contributes to ongoing debates on inclusive education by positioning R.M.E. as a transformative tool for equity, dignity, and holistic human development.

**Keywords:** religious and moral education; special education; inclusive education; Ubuntu; Ghana; moral development

## **1. Introduction**

Education in contemporary Ghana is increasingly shaped by the dual imperatives of inclusivity and moral formation. On one hand, national and global educational

frameworks emphasize the need to provide equitable learning opportunities for all learners, including those with disabilities. On the other hand, there remains a strong cultural and philosophical commitment to nurturing morally responsible individuals who contribute meaningfully to society. Within this context, Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.) and Special Education emerge as two critical, yet often separately treated, domains of the educational system.

R.M.E. occupies a central place in Ghana's curriculum, serving as a vehicle for transmitting ethical values, promoting social harmony, and fostering respect for religious diversity. Rooted in both indigenous African worldviews and global religious traditions, it seeks to cultivate virtues such as respect, responsibility, tolerance, and empathy. These values are not merely abstract ideals but are deeply embedded in Ghanaian communal life, where moral identity is constructed through relationships and social obligations. Scholars such as Gyekye (1995) and Metz (2017) emphasize that African moral thought—particularly the philosophy of Ubuntu—places strong emphasis on interconnectedness, human dignity, and communal well-being, all of which resonate strongly with the aims of R.M.E.

Parallel to this, Special Education in Ghana has evolved in response to both international conventions and national policy commitments aimed at promoting inclusive education. The shift from segregated models of education toward inclusive frameworks reflects broader global movements advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities, as articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and UNESCO's inclusive education agenda (UNESCO, 2020). In Ghana, efforts to implement inclusive education have been marked by both progress and persistent challenges, including inadequate resources, limited teacher training, and socio-cultural perceptions of disability (Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015; Anthony, 2011).

Despite these developments, there remains a noticeable disconnect between R.M.E. and Special Education in both theory and practice. While inclusive education frameworks emphasize participation, equity, and respect for diversity, R.M.E.—which inherently promotes these values—has not been sufficiently leveraged as a tool for inclusion. This gap is particularly significant given that moral education has the potential to shape attitudes toward disability, reduce stigma, and promote empathy among learners. As Dei (2014) argues, indigenous knowledge systems offer powerful resources for rethinking education in ways that are both inclusive and culturally grounded.

Furthermore, pedagogical practices within R.M.E. classrooms often remain largely content-driven and teacher-centered, limiting opportunities for meaningful participation by learners with special educational needs. Florian (2015) and Kuyini and Abosi (2014) highlight the importance of inclusive pedagogy that adapts instruction to diverse learners, yet such approaches are not consistently integrated into R.M.E. teaching. This raises important questions about how moral and religious education can be reimagined to accommodate diverse learning needs while maintaining its ethical and cultural relevance.

The present study is therefore situated at the intersection of these two critical domains. It seeks to explore how R.M.E. can contribute to inclusive education in Ghana, and how Special Education principles can, in turn, enrich the teaching and learning of moral and religious values. By adopting an interdisciplinary perspective that draws on educational theory, African philosophy, and empirical inquiry, the study aims to provide a more holistic understanding of inclusive moral education.

In doing so, it responds to a growing need for educational approaches that are not only inclusive in structure but also transformative in purpose. Education must go beyond access to foster dignity, belonging, and moral agency for all learners. The integration of R.M.E. and Special Education offers a promising pathway toward achieving this goal, particularly within a Ghanaian context where community, morality, and education are deeply intertwined.

## 1.2 Explanation of Key Terminologies

To ensure conceptual clarity and analytical precision, this study defines the key terms that underpin the discourse on the interplay between Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.) and Special Education in Ghana:

- **Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.):** R.M.E. refers to a curriculum subject designed to develop learners' moral consciousness, ethical reasoning, and understanding of religious beliefs and practices. In the Ghanaian context, it integrates teachings from Christianity, Islam, and African Indigenous Religions, with the aim of promoting virtues such as respect, tolerance, honesty, and social responsibility. It functions not only as an academic subject but also as a means of character formation and socialization.
- **Special Education:** Special Education encompasses educational practices, policies, and interventions designed to meet the diverse learning needs of individuals with disabilities or learning difficulties. It includes both specialized support systems and inclusive strategies that enable learners to access, participate in, and benefit from education on an equitable basis.
- **Inclusive Education:** Inclusive Education is an approach that seeks to ensure that all learners, regardless of their physical, cognitive, social, or emotional differences, are educated within mainstream classrooms. It emphasizes participation, equity, and the removal of barriers to learning, advocating for adaptations in curriculum, pedagogy, and school environments.
- **Ubuntu Philosophy:** Ubuntu is an African ethical framework that emphasizes interconnectedness, communal identity, and human dignity. It is often expressed in the idea that *"a person is a person through others."* Within education, Ubuntu promotes empathy, cooperation, and respect for diversity, making it particularly relevant to inclusive and moral education.
- **Moral Development:** Moral development refers to the process through which individuals acquire and internalize ethical values and principles that guide

behaviour and decision-making. It involves the cultivation of virtues such as integrity, empathy, justice, and responsibility.

- **Learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN):** This term refers to students who require additional support due to disabilities, learning difficulties, or other conditions that affect their ability to learn in conventional educational settings. These needs may be physical, intellectual, sensory, or emotional in nature.

### 1.3 Motivation and Gap in Literature

The motivation for this study arises from the growing need to align inclusive education with moral development within Ghana's evolving socio-cultural and educational context. Although progress has been made in inclusive education policies and Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.), limited attention has been given to how these two domains intersect in practice. Existing literature on Special Education in Ghana mainly focuses on access, policy implementation, teacher attitudes, and structural constraints such as inadequate resources and stigma. These studies often treat inclusion as a technical issue, overlooking its ethical and moral dimensions. Similarly, R.M.E. scholarship concentrates on curriculum content and moral formation but rarely addresses how it responds to learners with diverse abilities. This reflects an implicit assumption of learner homogeneity. A key gap is the absence of an integrative framework linking moral education and inclusive pedagogy, particularly through African philosophical perspectives such as Ubuntu. Empirical research on lived classroom experiences remains limited.

### 1.4 Focus and Novelty of the Study

This study examines the relationship between Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.) and Special Education within the Ghanaian educational context, conceptualizing them as interconnected rather than separate domains. It argues that both fields can mutually reinforce inclusive and holistic education when properly integrated. The novelty of the study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, drawing from education, philosophy, and sociology to explore the ethical dimensions of inclusive practice. It foregrounds African philosophical thought, particularly Ubuntu, as a guiding framework, thereby grounding the analysis in indigenous knowledge systems rather than dominant Western models. The study also prioritizes the lived experiences of teachers and learners, using qualitative insights to capture real classroom dynamics and challenges. Furthermore, it redefines R.M.E. beyond a content-based subject, positioning it as a transformative, praxis-oriented discipline capable of fostering inclusion, empathy, and social justice. This approach provides both theoretical depth and practical relevance for policymakers and educators in Ghana.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Despite sustained educational reforms and policy commitments aimed at strengthening inclusive education in Ghana, learners with special educational needs continue to encounter persistent and multifaceted barriers that limit their full participation in mainstream classrooms. These challenges extend beyond issues of physical accessibility, teaching materials, or infrastructural adequacy. They are deeply embedded in social, cultural, pedagogical, and attitudinal structures that shape how difference and disability are understood and accommodated within educational spaces. As a result, inclusion in many Ghanaian schools remains more aspirational than fully realized in practice.

Although the policy framework supporting inclusive education in Ghana is relatively progressive, classroom realities often reflect a gap between policy intent and implementation. Teachers frequently operate under constrained conditions, including large class sizes, limited specialized training, and inadequate instructional resources to support differentiated learning. Consequently, learners with diverse needs are often taught using uniform pedagogical approaches that do not adequately reflect their learning capacities, pace, or support requirements. This situation unintentionally reproduces forms of exclusion within spaces that are officially designated as inclusive.

At the same time, Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.), which is intended to serve as a foundational subject for cultivating ethical awareness, empathy, respect, and social cohesion, has not been sufficiently mobilized to respond to the realities of inclusive education. While the subject explicitly promotes moral virtues such as compassion, tolerance, and respect for human dignity, its classroom delivery often remains abstract and content-driven rather than experiential and context-responsive. In many cases, instructional practices in R.M.E. are standardized and uniform, with limited adaptation to accommodate learners with special educational needs. This disconnect reduces the subject's potential to function as a transformative tool for fostering inclusive values in diverse classrooms.

Furthermore, broader socio-cultural interpretations of disability continue to shape attitudes within educational environments. In some Ghanaian communities, disability is still interpreted through cultural and religious lenses that may associate it with stigma, misfortune, or spiritual causation. Such perceptions, whether explicit or subtle, influence how learners with disabilities are treated by peers, educators, and even institutional structures. While R.M.E. has the potential to challenge these perceptions by promoting dignity, equality, and inclusion, its current pedagogical framing does not consistently engage with these deeply rooted socio-cultural beliefs in a critical or transformative manner.

This situation reveals a significant conceptual and practical disconnect between the moral objectives of R.M.E. and the operational realities of inclusive education. On one hand, R.M.E. advocates values that inherently support inclusion; on the other hand, Special Education practice continues to grapple with exclusionary tendencies shaped by systemic, pedagogical, and cultural limitations. The absence of a clearly articulated

integration between these two domains creates a missed opportunity for leveraging moral education as a tool for advancing inclusive practice.

Therefore, the central problem of this study lies in the limited integration of Religious and Moral Education with Special Education in Ghana's inclusive education framework. There is a critical need to examine how R.M.E. can be reimaged, restructured, and effectively delivered to support learners with diverse needs, while simultaneously addressing the socio-cultural attitudes that continue to influence perceptions of disability and difference within educational settings.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the interplay between Religious and Moral Education and Special Education in the Ghanaian context.

The specific objectives are to:

- 1) Analyze the role of R.M.E. in promoting inclusive values and attitudes toward learners with special educational needs.
- 2) Examine how R.M.E. is currently taught in inclusive classrooms and its responsiveness to diverse learning needs.
- 3) Identify the challenges faced by teachers in integrating inclusive practices within R.M.E. instruction.
- 4) Explore the relevance of African philosophical frameworks, particularly Ubuntu, in enhancing inclusive moral education.
- 5) Propose strategies for improving the integration of R.M.E. and Special Education in Ghana.

### **4. Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How does Religious and Moral Education influence attitudes toward learners with special educational needs in Ghana?
- 2) In what ways is R.M.E. adapted (or not adapted) to support inclusive education in classroom practice?
- 3) What challenges do teachers encounter when implementing inclusive pedagogies in R.M.E.?
- 4) How can Ubuntu philosophy inform and strengthen inclusive practices within R.M.E.?
- 5) What strategies can be adopted to enhance the integration of R.M.E. and Special Education in Ghana?

## **5. Methodology**

### **5.1 Research Design**

This study adopted a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design, selected for its capacity to capture both the depth of lived experiences and the contextual realities of teaching and learning within inclusive educational settings. The qualitative orientation enabled the exploration of teachers' and learners' perceptions of the interplay between Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.) and Special Education, while limited quantitative elements supported descriptive mapping of classroom practices. This design was considered appropriate due to the interpretive nature of moral education and the socially constructed realities of inclusive pedagogy.

### **5.2 Study Area**

The study was conducted in selected inclusive basic and secondary schools in the Bono Region of Ghana, an area characterized by increasing implementation of inclusive education policies alongside persistent infrastructural and pedagogical challenges. The region provides a suitable context for examining disparities between policy intentions and classroom realities in both R.M.E. and Special Education.

### **5.3 Target Population**

The target population comprised R.M.E. teachers, Special Education teachers, school administrators, and learners with and without special educational needs in inclusive schools. These groups were selected due to their direct involvement in curriculum delivery, moral instruction, and inclusive learning processes.

### **5.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants with relevant experience in inclusive education and R.M.E. instruction. Additionally, stratified sampling was used to ensure representation across teacher categories and learner groups. The study involved approximately 60 participants, including 25 R.M.E. teachers, 15 Special Education teachers, 10 administrators, and 10 learners. This sample size was deemed adequate for achieving data saturation in qualitative inquiry.

### **5.5 Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. Interviews allowed participants to articulate their experiences and challenges in integrating R.M.E. with inclusive education. Focus groups facilitated interactive discussions among learners, while observations provided real-time insights into classroom practices, instructional adaptations, and learner engagement.

## 5.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following a systematic process of coding, categorization, and interpretation. Emerging themes were aligned with the study objectives, particularly those relating to inclusion, moral development, pedagogical challenges, and philosophical integration. NVivo-assisted coding (where applicable) supported the organization of qualitative data.

## 5.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from relevant institutional authorities. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all respondents. Confidentiality, anonymity, and data protection were strictly maintained. Special care was taken when engaging learners with special educational needs to ensure dignity, accessibility, and non-exploitation.

## 6. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

### 6.1 Conceptual Foundations of Inclusive Education and R.M.E.

Inclusive education is widely framed in policy and scholarship as a moral and educational imperative that seeks to eliminate exclusion and ensure equitable learning opportunities for all children regardless of ability, background, or socio-economic status (UNESCO, 2020; Miles & Singal, 2010). At the conceptual level, it is presented as a rights-based approach grounded in justice and participation. However, a critical reading of the Ghanaian experience reveals a tension between this normative ideal and the realities of implementation. Although policy reforms have aligned Ghana with global inclusive education agendas, the classroom reality still reflects structural and pedagogical constraints that limit genuine inclusion (Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015; Kuyini & Abosi, 2014). This creates a contradiction: inclusion is affirmed at the policy level but constrained at practice level.

Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.), on the other hand, is conceptually designed to strengthen moral reasoning, ethical formation, and social cohesion among learners. In principle, this positions R.M.E. as a natural ally of inclusive education, since both aim at social harmony and human dignity. Yet, existing pedagogical practice complicates this assumption. While R.M.E. promotes values such as empathy, respect, and responsibility, its delivery remains largely didactic and content-driven rather than participatory and context-sensitive (Bordoh, 2019). This creates an internal contradiction: a subject that advocates empathy is often taught through methods that do not fully accommodate learner diversity.

The conceptual gap, therefore, lies in the disconnect between moral intention and inclusive practice. Inclusive education demands adaptability, while R.M.E. often assumes uniform moral receptivity among learners. This assumption becomes problematic in inclusive classrooms where learners possess different cognitive and communicative

abilities. Thus, rather than functioning as mutually reinforcing systems, inclusive education and R.M.E. often operate in parallel rather than in integration.

## **6.2 Empirical Review**

### **6.2.1 R.M.E. and Inclusive Values: Promise Versus Practice**

Empirical studies suggest that moral education can positively shape inclusive attitudes when it is delivered through participatory and experiential methods (Yeboah & Asare, 2020). However, the Ghanaian evidence complicates this optimistic view. While R.M.E. is theoretically positioned to foster empathy toward persons with disabilities, classroom realities show that learners with special educational needs often remain marginal participants in moral instruction (Owusu & Avoke, 2010). This creates a paradox: the subject that should promote inclusion sometimes reproduces exclusion through its pedagogical structure.

This contradiction is not accidental but structural. Teachers frequently assume that moral understanding is cognitively uniform across learners, which leads to standardized instruction. Yet inclusion theory argues the opposite—that learning is heterogeneous and requires adaptation. Thus, there is a clear tension between R.M.E.’s implicit pedagogical uniformity and inclusive education’s demand for differentiation.

### **6.2.2 Pedagogical Challenges: A Clash of Expectations**

Kuyini and Abosi (2014) highlight that many teachers in Ghana lack the pedagogical skills necessary for differentiated instruction. This becomes particularly problematic in R.M.E., where abstract moral concepts require contextualization, dialogue, and lived examples. The literature suggests that inclusive pedagogy demands flexibility, yet R.M.E. instruction often remains rigid.

Here, an important theoretical contradiction emerges: while inclusive education frameworks (Florian, 2015) emphasize adaptability and learner diversity, R.M.E. pedagogy tends to rely on fixed moral narratives. This mismatch creates what can be described as a *pedagogical dissonance*—a situation where moral education aims for inclusion but employs exclusionary methods. Westbrook et al. (2013) argue that participatory learning enhances engagement, yet such approaches remain underutilized in R.M.E. classrooms in Ghana.

### **6.2.3 African Philosophical Thought: Ubuntu as a Corrective Lens**

Ubuntu philosophy introduces a critical counterpoint to both Western inclusion models and rigid R.M.E. pedagogy. Rooted in relational ontology, Ubuntu asserts that moral identity is formed through interdependence and shared humanity (Ramose, 2002; Metz, 2017). Unlike individualistic pedagogical models, Ubuntu rejects the notion of isolated learning subjects and instead emphasizes communal moral formation.

This creates an important theoretical tension. While Western inclusion frameworks focus on access and accommodation, Ubuntu reframes inclusion as moral belonging. In this sense, inclusion is not merely educational but existential. However,

despite its conceptual strength, Ubuntu remains marginal in formal Ghanaian curriculum discourse. This raises a critical question: why is a locally resonant moral philosophy underutilized in a context that values cultural identity?

The answer lies partly in epistemological dominance. Western educational frameworks continue to shape policy and pedagogy, often overshadowing indigenous ethical systems. Thus, while Ubuntu aligns more closely with R.M.E.'s moral aspirations, it remains under-integrated in practice.

#### **6.2.4 Learner Participation: Inclusion as Practice or Illusion?**

Florian (2015) and Vygotsky-inspired studies argue that inclusion is only meaningful when learners actively participate in knowledge construction. Yet empirical evidence from Ghana suggests a persistent gap between inclusive rhetoric and classroom reality. Learners with disabilities are frequently positioned as observers rather than participants in R.M.E. lessons.

This creates a conceptual contradiction: inclusion is defined as participation, yet practice often reduces it to physical presence. In this sense, inclusion becomes symbolic rather than substantive. Westbrook et al. (2013) emphasize that meaningful engagement requires interaction, yet classroom structures often fail to facilitate this.

### **6.3 Theoretical Framework**

#### **6.3.1 Social Learning Theory: Strength and Limitation**

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986) provides a foundational explanation for how moral behaviour is acquired through observation and reinforcement. In R.M.E. contexts, learners model behaviour demonstrated by teachers and peers. However, this theory assumes equal exposure to modelling opportunities, which is not the case in inclusive classrooms.

Here lies a theoretical limitation: Social Learning Theory does not fully account for unequal participation structures. Learners with disabilities may have reduced access to peer modelling, thereby limiting the effectiveness of observational learning. Thus, while the theory explains moral acquisition, it underestimates structural barriers within inclusive classrooms.

#### **6.3.2 Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory: A Corrective but Incomplete Lens**

Vygotsky's theory (1978) strengthens Social Learning Theory by emphasizing mediation, scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). It directly addresses inequality by arguing that learning is socially supported. In inclusive R.M.E., this suggests that learners with special needs can achieve moral understanding through guided interaction.

However, a critical limitation emerges: while Vygotsky explains *how* support should occur, it does not address the moral content of inclusion itself. It is pedagogically strong but ethically neutral. Thus, it requires supplementation from normative ethical frameworks.

### 6.3.3 Ubuntu Philosophy: Ethical Grounding and Its Challenge

Ubuntu fills this ethical gap by asserting that moral education must be rooted in relational dignity and shared humanity (Metz, 2017). Unlike Vygotsky, Ubuntu does not merely explain learning processes; it defines what moral learning *ought* to achieve.

However, Ubuntu also faces practical limitations. While it offers a strong ethical foundation for inclusion, it lacks detailed pedagogical prescriptions for classroom implementation. This creates a tension: Ubuntu is ethically rich but methodologically underdeveloped, whereas Vygotsky is methodologically strong but ethically limited.

### 6.4 Synthesis: Towards a Dialogical Framework

The interaction among these theories reveals a productive but unresolved tension. Social Learning Theory explains behavioural modelling, Vygotsky provides cognitive scaffolding, and Ubuntu establishes moral legitimacy. Yet none of these frameworks alone is sufficient.

Their integration reveals a deeper insight: inclusive R.M.E. cannot be understood as either purely pedagogical or purely ethical. It is a dialogical space where moral meaning, learning processes, and cultural values continuously interact. However, the literature shows that in Ghana, this integration remains largely theoretical rather than practical.

Thus, the central theoretical gap is not the absence of frameworks, but the absence of integration. Inclusive education and R.M.E. are theoretically compatible but institutionally fragmented. The challenge, therefore, is not conceptual invention but practical synthesis.

## 7. Findings

The findings presented here emerge from interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations conducted among R.M.E. teachers, Special Education teachers, school administrators, and learners in inclusive schools in the Bono Region of Ghana. To preserve authenticity, participant responses are reported with identifiers and dates, and interpreted thematically in line with the study objectives.

### 7.1 R.M.E. as a Carrier of Inclusive Moral Values

Across the data, participants consistently recognized R.M.E. as a subject that promotes moral ideals such as respect, compassion, fairness, and human dignity. However, there was a strong indication that these values remain largely theoretical when applied in inclusive classrooms.

A Special Education teacher (SET1, 14 March 2026) explained:

*“The lessons teach about love and respect for all, but learners with disabilities are not always actively involved when we teach.”*

An R.M.E. teacher (RME3, 18 March 2026) added:

*“We emphasize equality, but in practice, some learners still get left out because of how lessons are structured.”*

This suggests a disconnect between moral content and inclusive pedagogy.

## **7.2 Instructional Practices and Accessibility Gaps**

The findings revealed that R.M.E. instruction is predominantly teacher-centred, with limited adaptation for diverse learning needs. Classroom observations showed minimal use of visual aids, simplified materials, or differentiated questioning.

A learner with visual impairment (LWSN1, 25 March 2026) stated:

*“Sometimes I depend on others because the teacher does not explain everything in a way I can easily understand.”*

An administrator (ADM2, 21 March 2026) noted:

*“Teachers are committed, but most of them lack training in inclusive instructional design.”*

This highlights structural rather than individual limitations.

## **7.3 Teacher Preparedness and Professional Gaps**

A dominant concern was insufficient training in inclusive pedagogy among R.M.E. teachers. Many indicated that their preparation focused on moral content rather than learner diversity.

RME teacher (RME5, 19 March 2026) remarked:

*“We were not specifically trained to teach moral education in classrooms with learners who have special needs.”*

Special Education teacher (SET2, 20 March 2026) further observed:

*“Collaboration between R.M.E. and Special Education teachers is weak, so support is fragmented.”*

This reflects institutional silos within the education system.

## **7.4 Ubuntu Values and Cultural Ethics in Practice**

Participants strongly expressed cultural beliefs aligned with Ubuntu—emphasizing togetherness, care, and shared humanity—but noted weak institutional translation into teaching practice.

An administrator (ADM1, 15 March 2026) stated:

*"In our culture, no child is excluded. But schools don't always reflect that in teaching."*

An R.M.E. teacher (RME2, 18 March 2026) added:

*"If we truly applied Ubuntu, inclusion would not be a challenge in moral education."*

This suggests underutilization of indigenous ethical systems.

### **7.5 Learner Participation and Classroom Dynamics**

Learners with special educational needs reported limited active participation in R.M.E. lessons, often due to communication barriers or teacher pace.

A learner with hearing impairment (LWSN2, 25 March 2026) stated:

*"I try to follow, but sometimes I miss parts because I cannot hear everything clearly."*

A mainstream learner (LMN1, 24 March 2026) noted:

*"We learn together, but some classmates need more time to understand."*

This indicates partial inclusion rather than full participation.

### **7.6 Attitudes Toward Disability and Moral Awareness**

Despite structural challenges, learners demonstrated generally positive attitudes toward peers with disabilities, reflecting moral awareness promoted through R.M.E.

A learner (LMN2, 24 March 2026) explained:

*"We are taught to respect everyone, so we try to help those who need support."*

A teacher (RME1, 17 March 2026) added:

*"Students are usually kind, but kindness alone is not enough without structured support."*

This shows moral goodwill but institutional weakness.

## **8. Discussions**

This section critically interprets the findings of the study on the interplay between Religious and Moral Education (RME) and Special Education in Ghana, situating them within existing literature and the guiding theoretical frameworks. The discussion is structured around the study objectives and emerging empirical themes, with emphasis

on how inclusive education practices reshape moral learning in diverse classroom settings.

### **8.1 Inclusive RME and the Reality of Learner Diversity**

The findings demonstrate that RME classrooms in inclusive schools are characterised by significant learner diversity, yet instructional practices often remain uniform and rigid. This mismatch creates uneven access to moral learning, particularly for learners with sensory, cognitive, and learning disabilities.

This observation aligns with Kuyini and Abosi (2014), who argue that many Ghanaian teachers lack the pedagogical flexibility required to adapt instruction to learner differences. It also supports Ametepée and Anastasiou (2015), who highlight that inclusive education in Ghana is still constrained by limited classroom resources and inadequate teacher training.

From a theoretical standpoint, Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory explains that meaningful learning occurs through guided interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). However, the findings suggest that such scaffolding is inconsistently applied in RME classrooms, limiting the moral development of learners who require additional instructional support.

### **8.2 Moral Development and Cognitive Accessibility**

A key finding is that learners with special needs often struggle to fully engage with abstract moral concepts due to the cognitive demands of traditional RME instruction. Moral ideas such as honesty, responsibility, and respect are frequently delivered through verbal exposition rather than experiential or visual methods.

This supports Florian's (2015) argument that inclusive pedagogy must be designed from the outset to accommodate diverse learning needs rather than retrofitted after exclusion occurs. It also resonates with Twum (2025), who emphasizes Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a critical framework for making curriculum content accessible to all learners.

The implication is that moral development in inclusive settings cannot be assumed; it must be intentionally facilitated through differentiated instructional strategies that consider learners' cognitive and sensory profiles.

### **8.3 Social Learning and Moral Behaviour Formation**

The study found that learners develop moral understanding not only through formal instruction but also through observation of teachers, peers, and school culture. This strongly supports Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that behaviour is learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement.

In inclusive RME classrooms, learners with disabilities particularly rely on non-verbal cues, repetition, and peer modelling to internalize moral values. However, where classroom environments lack positive role models or inclusive interaction, moral learning becomes fragmented.

This finding is consistent with Manago et al. (2012), who argue that social environments play a decisive role in shaping youth identity and behavioural patterns.

#### **8.4 Cultural Context and Moral Education**

The study also reveals that RME is deeply embedded in Ghanaian cultural and religious values, which emphasize respect, communal living, and moral discipline. However, learners with special needs are sometimes excluded from full participation due to assumptions about their cognitive capabilities.

This reflects Anthony (2011), who notes that disability in Ghana is often interpreted through cultural lenses that may unintentionally reinforce exclusion. Similarly, Avoke (2001) highlights that historical perceptions of disability continue to influence educational inclusion practices.

Conversely, African philosophical thought—particularly Ubuntu—offers a corrective framework. Ubuntu emphasizes shared humanity, dignity, and interconnectedness, making it highly compatible with inclusive RME. Metz (2017) and Ramose (2002) argue that Ubuntu provides a moral foundation for education that values every learner regardless of ability, thereby reinforcing inclusive education goals.

#### **8.5 Teacher Preparedness and Instructional Constraints**

A recurring theme in the findings is inadequate teacher preparedness for inclusive RME delivery. Many teachers lack training in differentiated instruction, assistive strategies, and inclusive classroom management.

This supports Kuyini and Mangope (2011), who found that pre-service teachers in Ghana often express uncertainty about teaching learners with disabilities. It also aligns with Asamoah et al. (2018), who highlight gaps in teacher confidence and competence in inclusive settings.

The implication is that teacher education programmes have not fully integrated Special Education principles into RME methodology. As a result, teachers rely heavily on traditional lecture-based approaches that do not accommodate learner diversity.

#### **8.6 Structural and Systemic Barriers**

The findings further reveal that systemic challenges—such as limited instructional resources, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate assistive materials—significantly hinder inclusive RME implementation.

These structural barriers are consistent with Miles and Singal (2010) and UNESCO (2020), who emphasize that inclusive education cannot succeed without adequate investment in infrastructure and learning resources.

In Ghana, these constraints result in a gap between inclusive education policy and classroom reality, where learners with special needs are physically present but not fully participating in learning processes.

### **8.7 Moral Education as a Shared Social Process**

Despite challenges, the findings also highlight positive dimensions of inclusive RME. Learners demonstrate moral learning through peer interaction, group activities, and shared classroom experiences.

This supports the view that moral education is not solely teacher-driven but socially constructed through interaction. Bandura's (1986) theory again becomes relevant here, as learners acquire values through reciprocal engagement within their environment.

The inclusive classroom, therefore, has the potential to function as a micro-society where moral values such as respect, empathy, and cooperation are actively practiced rather than merely taught.

### **8.8 Integration of Theoretical Perspectives**

The study's findings strongly validate the integration of multiple theoretical frameworks:

- Social Constructivism explains how moral understanding is developed through interaction and guided learning.
- Social Cognitive Theory explains behavioural learning through observation and modelling.
- Inclusive Pedagogy Theory highlights the need for teaching approaches that embrace diversity from the outset.
- Ubuntu Philosophy provides a culturally grounded ethical framework that supports inclusion and moral interconnectedness.

Together, these theories illustrate that inclusive RME is not a single-dimensional process but a dynamic interaction between pedagogy, culture, cognition, and social context.

### **8.9 Synthesis and Interpretive Insight**

Overall, the discussion reveals that the integration of RME and Special Education in Ghana is progressing but remains uneven and structurally constrained. While inclusive education policies exist, their translation into classroom practice is limited by pedagogical, institutional, and resource-related challenges.

However, the findings also demonstrate strong potential for transformation. When supported by inclusive pedagogy, culturally responsive frameworks, and adequately trained teachers, RME can become a powerful tool for moral development among all learners, including those with special educational needs.

In essence, inclusive RME in Ghana is best understood not as a fixed system, but as an evolving educational practice shaped by continuous negotiation between policy ideals and classroom realities.

## 9. Implications of the Study

The findings of this study on the interplay between Religious and Moral Education (RME) and Special Education in Ghana carry wide-ranging implications for educational policy, curriculum design, teacher preparation, classroom practice, and theoretical development. Collectively, they highlight that inclusive moral education is not merely a pedagogical adjustment but a systemic reform issue that cuts across multiple levels of the education system.

At the policy level, the study reveals a clear need for stronger alignment between inclusive education frameworks and subject-specific policies governing RME. Although Ghana has made progress in inclusive education policy, implementation within value-based subjects remains weak and inconsistent. The study, therefore, implies that policymakers must move beyond broad inclusion rhetoric and develop targeted guidelines that define how moral and religious instruction should be delivered in diverse classrooms. This includes ensuring that schools are equipped with appropriate assistive resources, inclusive assessment structures, and clear pedagogical standards that accommodate learners with special educational needs.

In terms of curriculum development, the findings suggest that the current RME curriculum lacks sufficient flexibility for inclusive teaching and learning. This creates an urgent need for redesign based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, allowing moral concepts to be taught through multiple modes such as visual, auditory, and experiential approaches. The study further implies that integrating African philosophical traditions, particularly Ubuntu, can strengthen the cultural and ethical relevance of RME while promoting values of empathy, solidarity, and shared humanity that are essential in inclusive classrooms.

Regarding teacher education, the study highlights significant gaps in teachers' preparedness to handle inclusive RME classrooms. Many teachers lack training in differentiated instruction and disability-sensitive pedagogy, which limits the effective participation of learners with special needs. This implies that teacher education programmes must be restructured to include compulsory training in inclusive pedagogy, moral differentiation strategies, and disability awareness. Continuous professional development is also necessary to support in-service teachers in adapting their instructional practices.

At the classroom level, the study implies a shift from traditional teacher-centred instruction to more participatory and learner-centred approaches. Methods such as storytelling, dialogue, role-play, and experiential learning are essential for making moral concepts accessible to all learners. Flexible assessment practices are also required to ensure fairness in evaluating diverse learners' moral understanding.

Socially and theoretically, the study reinforces the idea that inclusive moral education fosters empathy, reduces stigma, and strengthens social cohesion. It also extends Social Learning Theory, Social Constructivism, and Inclusive Pedagogy by demonstrating their relevance in value-based subjects, while affirming Ubuntu as a

powerful, culturally grounded ethical framework. Overall, the study implies that without coordinated reforms across policy, curriculum, teacher training, and pedagogy, inclusive RME will remain more of an ideal than a lived educational reality.

## 10. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the interplay between Religious and Moral Education (RME) and Special Education within the Ghanaian educational context, with particular attention to how inclusive pedagogical practices shape moral learning among diverse learners. The evidence generated through the review of literature, theoretical framing, and qualitative insights reveals that the relationship between RME and Special Education is both significant and complex, requiring deliberate educational, institutional, and cultural alignment.

A key conclusion of the study is that RME, as a value-based subject, holds strong potential for fostering moral development, social cohesion, and ethical awareness among all learners, including those with special educational needs. However, this potential is not fully realised in practice due to persistent structural and pedagogical limitations. These include inadequate teacher preparation, rigid curriculum structures, limited instructional differentiation, and insufficient learning resources tailored to inclusive classrooms.

The study further concludes that learners with special needs are often not fully engaged in RME instruction due to teaching approaches that remain largely traditional and teacher-centred. Such approaches tend to privilege verbal and abstract modes of learning, thereby unintentionally excluding learners who require alternative instructional strategies. This situation highlights a critical gap between inclusive education policy intentions and classroom realities in Ghana.

Importantly, the study also establishes that cultural and philosophical frameworks, particularly African relational ethics such as Ubuntu, provide a strong foundation for reimagining inclusive RME. Ubuntu's emphasis on dignity, interconnectedness, and collective responsibility aligns closely with the moral objectives of RME and offers a culturally relevant pathway for strengthening inclusion in moral education.

Additionally, the study concludes that teacher effectiveness is central to the successful integration of RME and Special Education. Where teachers demonstrate adaptability, inclusive awareness, and pedagogical creativity, learners with diverse needs are more actively engaged in moral learning processes. Conversely, where such competencies are lacking, exclusionary practices tend to persist even within inclusive school settings.

Overall, the study concludes that the effective integration of RME and Special Education is not merely a pedagogical adjustment but a transformative educational imperative. It requires a shift from standardised teaching approaches to flexible, learner-

centred, and culturally responsive practices that recognise diversity as a strength rather than a limitation.

Ultimately, the interplay between RME and Special Education in Ghana reflects a broader challenge within the education system: how to translate inclusive policy ideals into meaningful classroom practice. Addressing this challenge is essential for building an education system that is not only academically effective but also morally inclusive and socially just.

## 11. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study on the interplay between Religious and Moral Education (RME) and Special Education in Ghana, several interrelated recommendations are proposed to strengthen inclusive moral education across policy, curriculum, teacher preparation, classroom practice, and community engagement. These recommendations emphasize that effective inclusion requires coordinated reforms rather than isolated interventions.

At the policy level, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should translate broad, inclusive education policies into clear, subject-specific guidelines for RME. These guidelines should define minimum standards for accessibility, instructional differentiation, and assessment accommodations for learners with special educational needs. In addition, monitoring and accountability systems should be strengthened to ensure that inclusive policies are effectively implemented in schools rather than remaining largely rhetorical.

In terms of curriculum development, it is recommended that the RME curriculum be redesigned using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure accessibility for all learners. Moral concepts should be delivered through multiple formats, including storytelling, visual aids, audio materials, role-play, and experiential learning. Furthermore, African ethical philosophies, particularly Ubuntu, should be systematically integrated into the curriculum to enhance cultural relevance and promote values of empathy, solidarity, and communal responsibility, thereby aligning moral education with Ghanaian socio-cultural realities.

Regarding teacher education, training institutions should incorporate compulsory modules on Special Education, inclusive pedagogy, and differentiated instruction specifically within RME methodology. Pre-service teachers must be equipped with practical strategies for adapting moral content to diverse learning needs. For in-service teachers, continuous professional development programmes should be institutionalized to enhance skills in inclusive classroom management, instructional adaptation, and the use of assistive learning tools.

At the classroom level, teachers should adopt learner-centred and participatory teaching approaches. Strategies such as storytelling, cooperative learning, dialogue, peer-assisted instruction, and experiential activities should be prioritized to make moral concepts accessible to all learners. Assessment practices should also be diversified

beyond written examinations to include oral presentations, practical demonstrations, and portfolio-based assessments that better reflect diverse learner abilities.

School-level support systems also require strengthening. Schools should be equipped with assistive technologies, adapted learning materials, and inclusive teaching resources. In addition, inclusive support teams comprising special educators, counsellors, and RME teachers should be established to collaboratively address learner needs.

Finally, community and cultural engagement should be enhanced. Parents, religious leaders, and community stakeholders should be actively involved in promoting inclusive moral education and reducing stigma associated with disability. Collaboration with cultural institutions can further reinforce indigenous values such as Ubuntu, fostering respect, dignity, and shared humanity.

Overall, these recommendations call for an integrated, multi-level approach to ensure that RME in Ghana becomes genuinely inclusive, culturally responsive, and capable of meeting the moral and educational needs of all learners.

## **12. Future Studies**

Future research on the interplay between Religious and Moral Education (RME) and Special Education in Ghana should move toward more context-sensitive, interdisciplinary, and practice-oriented investigations.

First, longitudinal studies are needed to examine how sustained exposure to inclusive RME influences the moral reasoning, social behaviour, and identity development of learners with diverse educational needs over time. Such studies would provide stronger evidence of causality rather than relying solely on cross-sectional interpretations.

Second, comparative studies across different educational levels (basic, secondary, and special schools) and geographical regions (urban, peri-urban, and rural contexts) are recommended to uncover contextual inequalities in inclusive RME delivery. This will help identify structural disparities that affect implementation.

Third, future research should explore disability-specific pedagogical adaptations in RME, focusing on how learners with visual, hearing, intellectual, and learning impairments engage with moral and religious concepts differently.

Fourth, teacher-focused studies should examine RME educators' competencies, attitudes, and classroom strategies in inclusive settings, particularly how they negotiate curriculum demands and learner diversity.

Finally, emerging research should investigate the role of digital technologies and assistive learning tools in enhancing inclusive moral education, as well as the integration of African indigenous ethical systems into formal curricula.

### **Ethical Pledge**

The researchers affirm that this study was conducted with integrity, honesty, and respect for all participants. All academic standards and ethical research principles were strictly observed throughout the study.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Ethical approval was obtained from relevant institutional authorities. Informed consent was secured from all participants, with assurances of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Special care was taken to protect learners with disabilities through parental and institutional consent.

### **AI Declaration Statement**

The authors declare that artificial intelligence tools were used only to support language refinement, structural organisation, and editorial clarity. All intellectual content, analysis, interpretations, and academic judgments were developed and validated by the authors.

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- **Author 5:** Data analysis and interpretation,
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Data generated and analysed during this study are available within the article and can be provided by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

### **Declaration of Paper's Originality**

The authors affirm that this work is original, has not been published elsewhere, and is not under consideration for publication in any other journal. All sources used have been appropriately acknowledged in accordance with APA 7 standards.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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