

Inclusive Education in Ghana:

Practices, challenges and the future implications for all stakeholders

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Brief Definition

Inclusive Education (IE) is an approach or a process which occurs when children with and without disabilities, HIV status, age and children of diverse backgrounds and abilities learn together in the same classroom, interact socially with each other within the regular school setting for the whole day. It aims at social inclusion and implements the child's right as pronounced in the universal declaration in human rights of 1949 (UNESCO, 2003).

Characteristics

IE acknowledges that all children can learn. It respects

differences in children, age, gender, language, disability, HIV and TB status, etc. It enables education structures, systems, and methodologies to meet needs of all children. It promotes inclusive society.

Research shows that children who learn together, live together, play together and share resources together and live happily together. This confirms the Salamanca statement and framework for action (1994) which states that:

"Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating wel-

coming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all."

The Principle of Inclusive Education was adapted at the UNESCO 1994, Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education and was restated at the Dakar World Education Forum (2000) as:

"...schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups."

Genesis of Inclusive Education in Ghana

Inclusive education in Ghana, I can safely say that informally had begun as an

integration into schools since 1951 – Accelerated Educational Plan and the 1961 Educational Act for free education which resulted in increases in basic enrolment. Then the Jomtien World Conference in Education of Education for All (1990) set the goal of Education for All. UNESCO alongside with other UN Agencies and NGOs worked towards the achievement of this goal together with the efforts made at the country level. For example, the 1992 Constitution had emphasized the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE - 1995) which also increased access to basic schools. However, all these educational measures did not provide what it takes to run an effective inclusive education. Rather, access to special schools was possible for some and those integrated had no equal opportunity. Society or educational systems had not changed, the child was rather expected to change – to have hearing aid; the teacher or peer are not expected to learn to sign; the child has to pass the standardized test in class to be promoted or if he fails to s/he repeats or drops out.

Problems with the Pilot Inclusive Schooling

- Teachers deficiencies in knowledge made them to be labeled “tagb-kukut”, “buulu” (a person with dead head/no sense/a fool) although these labels have been in use in our cultural settings.
- Parents of regular children threatened to pick their children away.
- Superstition.

Contributions of UNESCO

UNESCO Teacher Education Resource Pack of 1995/96

started with Education of Teacher of Training Colleges as Trainer of Trainers at Saltpond. Series of workshops were held in many parts of the country to impact quality teaching for All children of diverse abilities in regular schools.

Ministry of Education/GES adapts Inclusive Education

In the light of these global development since Ghana was a participant at the Salamanca and Dakar Conferences, the Ministry of Education pursued those rights hence the Ghana Education Service in its Education Strategic Plan of 2003 – 2015 adapted Inclusive Education.

Strategies

Under Policy Goal 1: Increase access, participants in education and training and the related policy objective EA 7 – provide equitable educational opportunities and has indicative target of integrating all children with non-severe special needs in mainstream by 2015. To achieve this target, the strategies in realizing this goal are to:

- Provide training for all teachers in Special Education Needs.
- Re-design school infrastructure to facilitate the accommodation of pupil/students with special needs.
- Organize sensitization workshop for parents and children with special needs.
- Incorporate training in Special Education Needs into All Teacher Training College Courses.
- Establish special education assessment centres in all districts (document from MOESS/GES – 2003 – 2015, Ministry of Education, Science and Sports).

Practice: Training of Trainers

The inclusion of mild to moderate children with disability into the mainstream started as a pilot project from 2003/04 with three regions: Central Region, Eastern Region, Greater Accra with Ten (10) Districts but now Northern Region and Volta Region are added to create an increase of 4 districts to the 10 regions initially created.

Initially Special Education Division and the Health Sector were part of the pilot implementation of the project again in collaboration with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) initially but the VSO withdrew very early after 11/2 years in 2005 due to lack of funds.

Besides the UNESCO Teacher’s Education Resource Pack on quality teaching and pedagogy, USAID is the main stakeholder of Inclusive Education in Training of Trainers.

USAID is sponsoring 5 districts by Training Trainer of Trainers in training special educators to train teachers from Kindergarten to Primary schools who have no idea about special education or have some concept as Distant Education Students. Teachers were drawn from Akim Oda (536 teachers), New Juaben (527 teachers), Ho (536 teachers), Bole Districts (294 teachers) and Damango (500 teachers). A total of 2393 teachers were trained since October 2007 – March 2008. The rest from the 9 districts are yet to be trained by the Division of Special Education which is faced with financial constraints (Information from USAID/Division of Special Education - Inclusive Education Project, 2007-2008).

WHAT DO WE EXPECT IN AN IDEAL INCLUSIVE SCHOOL SETTING?

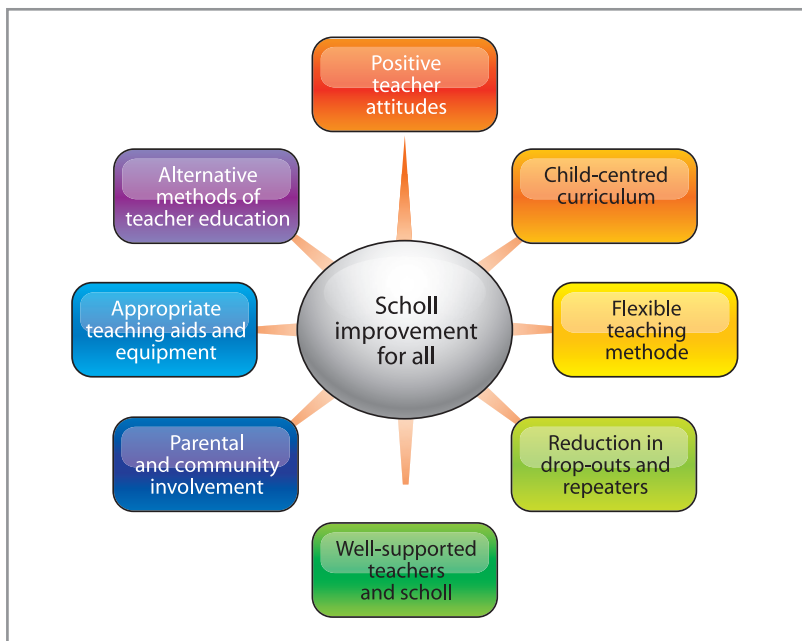
Classroom Practices in an Inclusive Schooling

In inclusive education, the child goes to the school of parents' choice in his community not necessarily the one close to him/her. The child's right is realized and actualized if the school is changed and not the child. As such, the school improvement is for all. Therefore, the change in the educational system is as the following:

- There must be a school improvement for all;
 - *Physical environment accessibility or conduciveness to teaching and learning.*
- The child must be at the centre of the curriculum;
 - *Child's needs and interest must be pursued,*
 - *Least restrictive environment,*
 - *Equal opportunity.*
- There must be flexible teaching methods;
 - *Individual attention,*
 - *Vocabularies to be age appropriate,*
 - *Methods suitable to his intellectual observation.*
- Reduction in the drop-outs and class repetition;
 - *Working at the level of child's learning and interest,*
 - *Retention.*
- Well supported teachers and schools;
 - *Teacher motivation,*
 - *Tailor made TLM and teachers own creativity/innovation,*
 - *Workshop; in service training; team teaching/cooperative learning.*
- Parents and community involvement.
 - Appropriate teaching aids and equipment;
 - *Hearing aids,*
 - *Augmentative communication boards,*

- *Stylus and frame,*
- *Braille machines and papers,*
- *Magnifying glasses.*
- Alternative methods of teacher education;
 - *Project methods,*
 - *Lecture methods,*
 - *Discussion methods,*
 - *Distance education,*
 - *E-learning,*
 - *Open university.*
- Positive teacher attitudes.

children in the learning process. She used a common language understood by all. It was a course in English on comprehension. Everyone had textbooks of which subject "A" had all text books brailled and neatly packaged as a book. Her shelf of books was just by those of the regular classmates. When teacher instructed all of them to take



My Experience with Inclusive Schooling: A Classical example in Norway (2003 June)

A live experience from an inclusive school in Norway provided a classical teaching and learning model. It is a high school of not more than 20 students included a teenage girl who is blind.

On our arrival, the children were on a break; subject "A" was in the company of friends chatting and laughing, not isolated so we could not identify her. In the classroom, subject "A" had her own computer with all the Braille symbols on the keyboard with a class teacher who had control over all the children and was able to include all

the reader from the shelf, each one went for his/hers without any problem. Each worked independently; first, to read the paragraph; listen to the questions and answer the teacher's questions; she typed hers into the computer. Subject "A" answered questions as teacher distributed her questions evenly and recognized each student as a learner. Her attitude was a contributing factor to make subject "A" to actualize her capabilities.

This girl had tremendous support from teachers, mates, parents and the school community. Because the home environment is made to mimic that of the school in terms of having facilities such as the

UNESCO Flyer.

computer provided by the government, parents and siblings, peers and friends have accepted her outside the classroom. Just immediately after class, she remained with the class teacher to be trained in orientation and mobility from campus to the bus station so as to take a bus home. The teacher is paid for extra hours a week for this type of job. She was assigned to a certain number of hours in a week.

From the primary session, this girl had enjoyed support all geared towards independent living until she picks a career to earn a living and be included wholly into the society/community.

Limitation

One limitation found is about the structure of the school building. We climbed stairs but this subject "A" turned this problem to a challenge and overcame by learning about her environment, climbing up and down with ease the stairs through the orientation and mobility training.

There is something else in there which is the Learner's own commitment and readiness to learn and earn a self esteem and this is her worth she proved.

This girl to me was ambitious, intelligent, intervened in what she was doing and has a future for her life. And so Oscar Pistorius set the pace; a South African born from Sandton Gautang, Province of Pretoria, a paralympic runner born on 22 November, 1986, has this to say as his sporting motto: "You're not disabled by disabilities you have, you are able by the

abilities you have" (*The Mirror, Sat, May 24, 2008, pg. 15, Disability is not inability*).

In Ghana, Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah born in 1977 a shoe polisher by earlier profession, 2001 cycled 380 miles for several months in Ghana just to break disability myth once said "I want to prove that just because you have a disability does not mean you can't use your God given gifts" (*The Mirror, Saturday, May 24th, 2008:15*).

How Inclusive Education is run in Ghanaian selected Schools: Winneba in Focus

The University Practice School, Winneba (UNIPRA)

The inclusive schooling at the University Practice School started in February 2003 at the South Campus of the University as a special school with only three children but moved in 2005 with 16 children to UNIPRA. On 28th January 2008, the inclusive schooling began with 34 children with hearing impairment at UNIPRA starting from kindergarten 1 to Basic 4. All teachers are trained special educators.

Staffing

There are five teachers, with one in each class. There is one attendant in the kindergarten who is deaf herself.

Courses

Kindergarten courses are; Mathematics, language activities, environmental studies, creative activities, physical education. For classes 1, 2, 3, 4, besides the above courses, integrated science, ICT and vocational skills are taught. The school enjoys the capitation grant.

Building

The classrooms are like a maze type with a door leading to each other; honeycomb windows are available as a source of ventilation to all the classrooms. There is no electric light in the classrooms.

Donations/Community Involvement

- All the children have been supplied with hearing aids since 2004 by the Lilian Stitch Funds, Netherlands but have not been using them because some children complained the aids make noise in the ears. Besides, parents also keep the hearing aids since 2004 and when it needs repairs they are not willing to pay GH¢2.00 or GH¢3.00 for maintenance. Parents fail to replace batteries when they are weak so children do not use them.
- Centre for School and Community Science and Technology Studies (SACOST) provided toys, pencils and erasers to the inclusive school.
- The State of Virginia Reading Association donated erasers, pencils, crayons and socks for playing football.
- Prof. Andrian Kniel a German and a visiting Professor to the Department of Special Education donated children's books, adults' books for teaching special needs children, pencils, bags, jigsaw puzzles and toys different kinds. Some school uniforms were also donated.
- The Department of Special Education gives out student – made Teaching and Learning materials to the school.

Benefits

Children have morning devotion together and assembly together, learn and play together, then close together and go home.

Communication /social

Children with hearing impairment are imitating speech. When you sign a word and call it you get some of them imitating the oral

Class Size

The class size range is between 7 and 19; this makes work easier, individual attention is given and syllabus is completed.



sounds. The regular children have caught sign language as they learn it with all seriousness but are cautioned to sign and talk in order to help their counterparts. Lessons are taught in the English Language with Sign language concurrently done with it so all children understand the teacher at the same time. Besides, the fluency with which the English Language is used by Basic School 4 children is marvelous. Pupils have friends among themselves and interact with each other.

Behaviour Change

The hearing impaired children at first used to throw stones at cars but have been controlled to put a stop to it; sexual interactions/mating was arranged between co-equals of 15-19 years. However, since the inclusion, the life styles of the regular children have influenced them to some extent.

Academic Performance of Hearing Impaired

Performance of the hearing impaired is challenging to the regular children because they are doing well. Comments made are: “Mumufo nkola eye adie paa” (deaf children are good).

Wo ti kesie sa no, onim adie se – “you see him with that big head, he is very knowledgeable”. Even though they can’t talk, you can’t outwit them; they are learned people. I witnessed an English Comprehension lesson in BS 4 of twenty (20) children (eight hearing impaired; twelve hearing children) on the passage “The Lost Dog” from the class text book. A class test result showed that the performance was brilliant for all the children. Why? Teacher in the inclusive setting speaks English Language all the time, she signs concurrently, pays individual atten-

tion, and uses concrete objects/pictures. Hence, class participation is very lively for all. Academic competition is high.

Problems/Challenges

Initially, regular children overcrowded the windows just to see the hearing impaired when they had the special setting; they were not playing with them; community members came with canes and sticks to complain: “eh, these mumu’s are worrying us”; they have come to beat my son but with the inclusive education, children play together and community members have been educated.

Teachers’ Attitude

Labels teachers assigned to their counterpart teachers are “mumu madam”. Complaints are especially against the hearing impaired and the expression “your deaf children are misbehaving”.

Space, Seating Arrangements, Ventilation and Lighting

Space and furniture are not enough; ventilation is a problem due to the honeycomb windows. One class is partitioned for kindergarten and Basic 1. There is no classroom for the future class 5.

Challenges faced

Some regular children are clever and this is challenging to some of the hearing impaired. Therefore, this is making them pick very fast. There are no ICT books so teachers have to find their own ways of getting them for teaching this subject, and children learn in abstract since there are no computers. Teachers use their own monies to buy exercise books for some of the hearing impaired and regular children because

parents are not ready to do so. Parents do not visit the schools even when invited (Gadagbui, June 3, 2008-Inclusive Education Project).

Questions

How do these practical problems match up with the global problems of inclusion setting?

Problems in an Inclusive Setting

The education system is seen as a problem, why?

- Teachers attitude (intolerance, labeling child and his teacher);
- *Unacceptability,*
- *Undermining child's ability,*
- *Not supportive.*
- Rigid methods and rigid curricular;
- *Subject centred and curriculum inflexible,*
- *Child is to pass standardized test and keep up with the rest of class mates.*
- Environment is inaccessible;
- *Terrain sloppy, classrooms have stair cases,*
- *Toilet facilities are unavailable.*
- Many drop-outs, many repeaters;
- *Child fend for self; vulnerable promiscuity,*
- *No parental support,*
- *Sexual abuse, defilement.*
- Teachers and school not supported.
- Parents are not involved.
- Teaching aids and equipment are lacking.
- Poor quality training of teachers and learners.

Literature has the evidence that critical factors in school improvement hinge heavily on:

- Effective leadership;
- Staff, students and community involvement in decision and policies making;
- Making commitment to collaboration;

- Reflections; and
- Effective policy for staff development.

Future Implications for All Stakeholders



All educators including community members, parents and teachers must support inclusive education by:

- Accepting the children in the regular schools.
- Supplying teaching and learning materials, assistive devices, supportive services etc. are measures to ensure success.
- All stakeholders need to embrace the system since it involves all and not only students and teachers.
- Parents must be supportive.
- All children must see themselves as part and parcel of the entire community and as such embrace inclusive education.

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

Inclusive Education:

The way of the future

25-28 November 2008
Geneva, Switzerland

The 48th Session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) convened by Mr. Koichiro Matsura, the Director General of UNESCO was held at the International Conference Centre in Geneva, Switzerland from 25th to 28th November, 2008. The theme of the conference was “*Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future*”. The conference involved plenary sessions, round tables and exhibitions. In addition, four parallel workshops were organized with the main objective of deliberating on the role of governments in the development and implementation of policies on *inclusive education*, focusing on education systems that provide lifelong learning and emphasizing the role of teachers to meet the learners’ diverse learning needs. The themes of the workshop included; *Inclusive Education: Approach, Scope and Content*, *Inclusive Education: Public Policies*, *Inclusive Education: Systems, Links and Transitions* and *Inclusive Education: Learners and Teachers*. The Workshops were preceded and finalized by the *Introductory Debate (Education and Inclusive Society)* and the *Final Debate (Inclusive Education: from Vision to Practice)* respectively.