

Efua Esaaba Agyire-Tettey

Inclusive Education Policies in Ghana: A Response to Extending Education to Persons with Disability

Background

Disability¹ of various types and degrees has been an excluding factor in preventing many children from accessing educational opportunities. It also makes it quite difficult to serve the educational needs of all people in the same environmental setting. Many children and adults with disabilities have historically been excluded from mainstream education. This exclusion has not ceased completely, with children struggle, sometimes unsuccessfully, to access educational services. Though, this phenomenon of educational exclusion has existed for long, strides have been made and various programs continue to be put in place to enable persons with disabilities to access educational opportunities. These strides have been motivated by national and international legislative instruments that mandate the inclusion of all people in the educational system irrespective of their diverse social, linguistic and cultural background or level of impairment². This requires that persons with disabilities, irrespective of their physical abilities or disabilities must be given the opportunity to have access to education. This is a requirement that is

supposed to be treated with prominence across the world. “Ensuring that children with disabilities receive good quality education in an inclusive environment should be the priority of all countries” (UNICEF 2006, 205). This requirement is also stipulated in other international conventions including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). For instance, the general comment 4 by the CPRD committee notes that States Parties must have regard for the underlying general principles of the Convention in all measures undertaken to implement inclusive education and must ensure that both the process and outcomes of developing an inclusive education system comply with article 3 (see UN OHCHR 2016).

Also Ghana’s policy on inclusive education has been influenced by a number of international laws, treaties, policies and conventions. The country’s commitments to social inclusion are mostly incorporated in the national Constitution and other national legislative instruments that seek to promote the adoption of inclusive edu-

cation policies. As countries put measures in place to provide inclusive education for persons with disabilities, it is hoped that gradual, yet steady progress can be made by states towards the achievements. Statistics on disability and inclusive education across the world gives clear guidance concerning disability, challenges and prospects. Global statistics reveal that about 93 million children under 15 years live with some form of disability (UNESCO 2009). This disability is either moderate or severe but precludes them from accessing education and other social opportunities. In 2004 it was reported that there were 140 million children out of school, the majority being girls and children with disabilities (UNESCO 2009). Globally, it is estimated that about one billion people live with some form of disability of which 150 million are children (WHO & World Bank 2011). Estimates show that 80 percent of the total number of persons with disabilities worldwide live in developing countries (ibid.). In Ghana, more than 5 million people live with some form of disabilities (Human Rights Watch, 2012). The likelihood of children with disabili-

lities being precluded from accessing educational opportunities is prevalent in low and middle income countries such as Ghana. Out of the total number of persons with disabilities in Ghana, about 25 percent have physical disabilities (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). The three most prevalent types of disability are those related to visual impairments, hearing impairments and physical impairments. The rate of disability is the same for males and females while the rate is higher in rural areas than in urban areas (Ghana Federation of the Disabled³, 2008). This suggests the importance of focusing inclusive education in Ghana across the country, especially in rural communities where education in general is inadequately accessible and quality is low due to the unavailability of resources such as teachers and infrastructure, disability-based stigma needs critical attention. Statistics concerning initial enrolment, attendance and retention are unfavourable to persons with disabilities in developing countries of which African countries are prominent. For example, in Burkina Faso, a person with disability stands a double risk of missing educational opportunities entirely (UNESCO 2010). The situation is particular worse for a person with intellectual or sensory impairments. This suggests that persons with severe or profound forms of disability stand an increased risk of completely missing access to education. They might not even get the chance to be in a classroom. It can be deduced from the statistical information that multiple circumstances increase an individual's probability of not receiving education, hence remaining dependent on others for their daily living. This is because they have not acquired any skills and knowledge through training to earn any income. In the instance of persons with disabilities living in a sub-Saharan African country such as Ghana and having a severe disability, he/she is very li-

kely to live in a state of dependence. This phenomenon looks worrying making it important for this article to explore and have a close examination of the drivers of success and challenges of inclusive education in Ghana. Such information will provide glaring clues to extend educational access to persons with disabilities and enhance their opportunity to be self-reliant, independent and responsible contributors to national development.

DRIVERS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Considering the drivers of inclusion, most societies believe that education is a welfare service which should be accessible to everyone: However, there is a need to provide education to school going age children by the government and other responsible stakeholders. A closer look at literature and progress of countries in that field suggests that philosophy, structural and technological reforms, commitment to international conventions, policy formulation and stakeholder collaboration are tested drivers in extending educational opportunities to all citizens.

Philosophy

A major driving force in inclusive education⁴ is a country's philosophy on disability. This philosophy can be considered a state's administrative philosophy toward disability. It can be referred to as the orientation that guides the conception and understanding of disability and the way of dealing with disability-related educational needs. The conceptualization of disability has been modelled after the medical perspective for a long time. The medical model⁵ has dominated the disability circles perhaps due to its traditional and compelling nature. Committing to the traditional medical model affects the progressive fight toward rehabilitation⁶ and inclusion. This could be attributed to the stigma, stereotypic and discriminatory nature of this model.

In Ghana, people living with disabilities have been seen as unproductive and incapable of contributing in a positive way to society and development (Ghana Federation of the Disabled 2008). They are rather seen as constituting an economic burden on the family and the society at large, which leaves them in a vicious cycle of poverty. Though, this notion has not eroded completely, there is a gradual shift induced by the national and international recognition of the potential and talents of persons with disabilities. In modern times, social and corporate ideologies have focused on bringing on board the best talents irrespective of the disability of an individual. In Ghana, for instance, students with disabilities are being included in the mainstream education and this provides them with the opportunity to learn with their peers without disability in natural, stimulating settings, which may also lead to increased acceptance and appreciation of differences in the society. A call for transformation in educational philosophies generates scepticism and resistance in most cases because society does not necessarily consider change in structures necessary. The need to preserve systems in their very nature sounds well in the minds and suits plans and resources. This notion and ideology applies to education as a system as well. This is because "education is a conservative enterprise and change of this nature must surely result in wide scale scepticism" (Charema 2010, 87). The willingness for Ghana to extend education to persons with disabilities suggests acceptances of change in attitude and bringing educational success that can benefit all citizens. Making inclusive education accessible to persons with disabilities successfully will suggest that Ghana must embrace the philosophical challenges and other reasons such as attitudinal that affect educational reforms to include persons with

disabilities. Ghana faces financial and human resources constraints and many other challenges such as large classes, rigid curricula, architectural barriers, and inadequate understanding of inclusive education which impede education inclusive of persons with disability. The argument is that the ability to effectively extend educational opportunities to persons with disabilities depend primarily on the approach used in examining disabilities and the interventions of inclusive education. Using participative and interactional approaches⁷ will ensure that identification, eligibility criteria, monitoring and other administrative procedures are effectively geared towards the goal of ensuring educational access for persons with disabilities in the area of enrolment, retention and skills and knowledge acquisition. The philosophical approach cuts across the whole agenda and processes of the target system of education. States who have resorted to inclusion orientation, for instance, have used the philosophy to permeate the systems. Inclusion has been considered a philosophical vision, an endless road that needs to be travelled, as a means to change, rather than an end in itself with its own barriers and obstacles, some of them invisible, and successes (Mittler 2000). Inclusion involves diversity, change of mind-set, values for schools and for society, social justice, universal human rights and equal opportunity (Charema 2010, 88).

Closely related to philosophical orientations towards disability is the approach to inclusive education. This refers to the approaches adopted to provide education for persons with disabilities. Typical among them are special schools, integrated schools and inclusive schools approaches. Even though, special schools and integrated schools might help provide education for persons with disabilities, they do not help to ensure total inclusiveness. The services offered only

provide education for persons with disabilities without meeting the social and interactional needs of the individual. In such models, the needs for belongingness and humanity still remain unmet. Inclusive schools have the potential to meet the ultimate aim of inclusive education. However, it has been indicated that unique impairment of persons with disabilities makes it difficult to extend inclusive school models to all. This excuse seems to lack merit when deeply scrutinized.

Structural and technological reforms

A society's ability to extend education to all its citizens does not depend on the ability of disability characteristics of the populace. It depends on other structures of society that interact with the individual and the population at large (Mittler 2000; UNESCO 2009). The unavailability of effective inclusive schools could rather be blamed on the poor structures, incomplete technological innovations and poor stakeholder commitment. Since the impairment and needs of persons with disabilities are already established, what is needed to be done is the development of social structures, services, technological facilities and the creation of an enabling environment to help enhance their capacity and opportunities and to build their potential and growth. Technological and structural transformations are powerful drivers in extending inclusive education. It is without doubt that countries who have advanced in technology, structures and ever committed toward changing the educational plight of persons with disabilities have made strides in increasing and expanding inclusive schools. This significant strides draw them closer to the achievement of the ultimate goal of inclusive education. Though, no country has completely obtained inclusive education, many countries, especially those committed disability-responsive to structural and systematic transformation are those

moving closer to extending education to persons with disabilities in an inclusive manner. Hence, the success of countries making tremendous strides toward concrete inclusive education lies not in the nature or dynamics of disability in such countries, rather, it lies in the commitment of the countries toward structural and technological reforms. Societies need to change, not the individual.

Commitment to international conventions

Nations states ratification of international conventions and formulations of domestic laws are crucial to the inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream education. International conventions have been drafted to give member states the direction, guidance and support in making life sustainable for citizens. In relation to education, the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other internationally recognized declarations have been formulated to encourage democratic nations to promote the educational rights of all its citizens. Aside the United Nations' UDHR of 1948, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) have also been successfully developed to define and elaborate the rights of persons to education, especially the rights of persons with disabilities to education.

A major force of inclusive education is nation's commitment to meeting the requirements of these international conventions. Ratifying the conventions and aspiring to meet its demands could be seen as a burden on many states.

Nonetheless, it helps such states to seek and get support and guidance to meet the educational needs of all persons within the country, including the educational needs of persons with disabilities. In Ghana, logistics and financial support are

not in abundant supply, the commitment to inclusive education puts constraints on the country and may need support globally to fully implement these international legal frameworks.

In developed countries there is a swift move towards inclusion, for example in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and in Australia (Mittler 2000). This has been made possible through the ratification of international conventions and the passing of national laws on equality and inclusion. Eventual commitment to international conventions led the global community to pledge to ensure the rights to education for all (Charema 2011). Similarly, the commitment of Ghana to the achievement of the internationally agreed agenda, such as the Education For All goals, and the objectives of the CRPD and the passing of legislative acts (e.g. ACT 715) on disability wins Ghana the pledge and support of the world community to work progressively toward inclusive education. In Ghana, the Persons with Disability Act 715 (2006) provides many opportunities and privileges to the individual. Education, training and economic prospects remain at the core of the Persons with Disability Act. A legislative document of this nature focuses attention on the issue of disability, and is a powerful force to help address disability challenges including their educational needs. It is believed that the Act 715 empowers persons with disabilities to become increasingly aware of their rights and to improve their living conditions. Ghana remains committed to support persons with disabilities in different ways to attain inclusion in the society.

Policy formulation

Policy formulation and implementation can greatly influence the successful inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream education. Education is an issue of policy and cannot be successful

without practising policies. In Ghana, the process of developing a policy on disability has been an issue discussed for long; however, the national disability policy document was published in 2000 and in 2006 the Disability Act was passed in parliament. It is a great achievement for Ghana to have these instruments developed to support persons with disabilities because there are few countries that have disabilities policies especially in Africa. The Disability Act confers a number of legal rights on persons with disabilities. It guarantees persons with disabilities' protection, access to services and entitlements as any other person will enjoy. Basically, it seeks to protect the rights of persons with disabilities in the country. In Ghana, the desire and plan to make education inclusive date back to 1951 under the Accelerated Development Plan, with the introduction of "Free Compulsory Basic Education" for all children of school going age. This plan was later enacted into law under the Education Act of 1961 (Act 87) (Achanso 2010; Thompson 2008). It aimed to expand access to education to all to bridge the gap between the marginalised and non-marginalised people in Ghanaian society. After independence in 1957, a series of concerted efforts by successive Ghanaian governments and its development partners have consistently pursued policies aimed at expanding access to non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged groups to limit educational exclusion in Ghana. Ghana has ratified several international conventions on the right to education, some of which include the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Education For All (EFA) goals, the Millennium Development Goals and many more which have been absorbed into national law. The latest available statistics (2001/2002) show that there are 24 public institutions in Ghana dealing with

special education, which cater for approximately 5000 students. In addition, there exist 6 institutions that basically are mainstream in their administration placement and offer education on a second cycle and post second cycle level (Education strategy policy 2003-2015). These institutions' relevance to persons with disabilities mostly relates to education towards visually impaired students. Apart from these schools, all schools in Ghana are supposed to practice inclusive education as captured in the 1992 constitution. The education strategy lists among others, a number of goals for inclusive education, and the need for equitable education which will be incorporated into mainstream schools by 2015. Overall, however, the budget for implementation of the education strategy policy is showing large funding gaps that might be difficult to bridge. Thus, efforts are being made in Ghana to include persons with disabilities in education services provision but it seems there is little evidence of inclusion. Consequently, the practice of inclusive education in Ghana has suffered many challenges due to lack of policies to regulate its implementation and practice. Therefore, most people and even some teachers have limited or no knowledge of the Disability Act. Even those who said they have heard about it claim they do not know the details of the documents (Mantey 2015). Surprisingly, teachers who are supposed to have a basic knowledge or a firm grip of the law to help them in their professional duties exhibited low knowledge of the law. This could be attributed to the fact that they see the responsibility for pupils/students with disabilities as the duties of the special educator and most mainstream teachers could not be bothered too much about the wellbeing of students with disabilities. Again the low or lack of knowledge of the disability law and policies may also be as a result of non-implementation of these legal

frameworks and low priority placed on disability issues. In addition, as a result of lack of knowledge, persons with disabilities and their parents are mostly not aware of their rights. This situation makes them become vulnerable to maltreatment and violation of their rights as citizens of Ghana. Thus, the prime challenge of inclusive education in Ghana is the issue of policy.

Further, in Ghana, the implementation of education policies is often done through the district or municipal education office to the various schools, heads of school, and finally the classroom teachers. The role of the teacher specifically the Ghanaian teacher in the implementation of educational policy is in line with the views of Ainscow (2007). To him, teachers have a key role in the change process as they have to change their attitudes, ways of thinking, materials used and their cooperation with other professionals in and outside the classroom, among other things. Teachers are to be part of the decision making process to have at least basic background knowledge of these policies to guide their professional duties with regards to having contacts with persons with disabilities.

Inclusive education⁸ is approved and supported by the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD 2006). Many countries signed and supported the Convention, committing themselves to carry out changes. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all signatory nations to help improve the lives of children with disabilities. In addition, one major challenge to the disability law implementation is the transitional period of the Act 715. The Act makes provisions for a 10-year moratorium for compliance because of substantial investment needed to make all existing public schools accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabili-

ties. This transition, persons with disabilities see as a delay in full implementation of the Law which prevents persons with disabilities from having their full right as any other citizen of Ghana. Also the moratorium gives the government the opportunity to drag its feet to come up with programmes and commit itself to implementation. Government commitment to formulation of specific policies for children with special education needs is lacking or limited; as a result, there is absence of policy reforms in the various schools to support inclusive education. Politically, education has become a campaign theme for politicians to win votes after which they alter the existing policies to correspond with their campaign message. This in effect stops the existing policy reforms due to their different priorities in education reform and the absence of clear strategic planning for education, leading to inconsistency in the total education system since they are out of touch with class room realities.

Moreover, there is little evidence of any strong political will from governments to provide the resources needed to make inclusive education feasible. Mostly, the schools are left alone to find solutions to problems that may have arisen as a result of provision of special education needs and practice of inclusive education. Thus, the challenges that the schools encounter, these schools are left to manage it without any support from the government. However, these solutions become a point of discontents and unwillingness to accept and practice inclusive education on the part of the educators who try to find solution to the problem. In fact, there is a big gap between law and practice because though the educational policies and disability law is in its right direction, the implementation leading to the final practice which will reflect the results of the importance of the law to persons with disabilities is absent. This may be as a result

of negative attitudes and discrimination towards children with disabilities in the Ghanaian society since laws and policies reflect the culture, religion and political traditions of Ghana.

Moreover, the education system has to make it possible for every child of school going age, whatever special educational needs they may have, to attend school, and to achieve their full potential. In Ghana, there has been little impact of policies and programs to include disability issues and persons with disabilities. Although efforts are being made to include a disability dimension in national poverty reduction strategies and programs, such as cash transfers, free education and many other programs, there is little evidence of effective and successful inclusion. Again, despite the growing awareness that persons with disabilities have been marginalised in Ghanaian society as a result of negative attitudes which prevent them from benefiting from opportunities, their standard of living has not improved. In addition, the lack of data on persons with disabilities prevents the governments from formulating and developing comprehensive programmes for these groups of persons. Thus, most statistical data exercise undertaken in Ghana usually produced block data without a categorisation of the various types of disabilities. Consequently, there is little relevant data to identify the number of children with disabilities in Ghana. Therefore, developing policies based on one set of categorisation creates challenges in the provision of any effective, efficient and meaningful special education needs provision for children with disabilities in Ghana. For instance, in the Disability Act 715, even though it is highly commendable for changes in the society to improve upon the standard of living of persons with disabilities, the various categories of disability are not clearly stated. The Disability Act 715 is

not categorised into various types of disabilities regarding service delivery. Consequently, the lack of categorisation leads to disregard and denial of services provision and interventions for the various groups of disabilities. Hence there are no effective policies to address their educational needs and to ensure their access to quality education. Decisions about policies, programs and services based on firm evidence of reliable data could lead to positive benefits for children with disabilities in Ghana. However, it remains very important to categorise children with disabilities to develop policies to distinguish those needing more educational support. It is worth noting that, despite that Ghana ratified the CPRD, the national legislation needs to be revised to be in line with the provisions of its prescriptions. Even though the Disability Act of 2006 is in line with most of UN conventions concerning disability issues, there is the need for the Ghanaian government to commit itself by holding stake holders responsible for disability issues. The Disability Act provides the basis upon which children with disabilities are protected from marginalisation and promises to provide services developed to meet their education and related needs. A focus of the law is to help persons with disabilities to access education but there have been difficulties in fulfilling this goal of providing access to education for children with disabilities in Ghana. This is because existing policies which include children with disabilities exist merely on paper without being really translated into practice. In fact, most of the education policies are general rules that regulate the provision of education services to all children of school going age and the education system as a whole. Specifically, there are no effective policies tailored towards the provision of educational needs of persons with disabilities. Indeed, the development of policies on inclusive education or edu-

cation in general should not be viewed and understood as the whole efforts in favour of specific groups but to all pupils with diverse educational needs. This is in line with Tutt's (2007) writing in which he stated that the main challenge is to provide inclusive settings in all schools, through the provision of a diverse continuum of services that are part of a school network linked to other social policies or other services in the community.

It must be acknowledged that the formulation of policies should not only be based on the provision of needs but should be seen as a duty for governments to commit itself to develop consistent, effective and efficient policies in relation to the rights of children with disabilities in Ghana. Thus the general lack of government commitment and political will to implement a rights-based policy for children with disabilities is proved by the unavailability or scanty designated educational budget allocation for children with disabilities in mainstream schools. For instance, the World Report on Disability noted that the success of inclusive education depends largely on a country's commitment to adopting appropriate legislation, developing policies and providing adequate funding for implementation (WHO & World Bank 2011). Most of the budget allocation is designated towards children without disabilities, because the allocation of funds is always short in relation to demand. It is estimated that educating children with disabilities needs extra financial support to meet their basic needs in school, and hence resources allocated and spent within the education system must be reviewed to meet these needs. Thus most government policies and programmes to improve education to some extent are limited to children without disabilities meanwhile these policies are developed to be accessed by all school children. The Government of Ghana (GoG) has made

several attempts to make education inclusive particularly at the basic education levels. The Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan (2003 – 2015) envisioned the achievement of an inclusive education system by 2015 (SpED 2005). As a result, government, donors, and NGOs have supported inclusive education and special needs education programmes in the last decade; however, limited funding remains the key challenge to policy implementation, (Thompson and Casely-Hayford 2008). In line with the key challenges to funding, separate specific funding policies developed for the provision of children with disabilities' needs in mainstream schools will certainly have impact on inclusive education progress in Ghana. On the basis of the definitions of disability, the conceptualisation of disabilities in the Ghanaian society translates into policy formulation and practice. Thus, conceptualisation of disability has effect on policy development for educational policies for children with disabilities and persons with disabilities in general. As a result, the formation of negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities in society, are translated in the formulation of policies by policy makers. Hence, clearly defined policies and programmes for exceptional children in Ghana are limited by this different thinking and attitudes entrenched in Ghanaian cultural beliefs. That notwithstanding, in order to succumb pressures from international community as a result of commitment to adapt to international conventions and laws, most of the policies including inclusive education in Ghana are modelled along inclusive policy programs of the Western countries without considering the local context. Mostly, policies and practices have either been imported or imposed by donors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Although the intentions may have been good, in practice, the result and progress is far

from what was expected because it is not imitated adequately to suit the countries' situation since Ghana has to adhere to the international conditions and pressures. Lastly, most of the evidence from the above policy discussion indicates that the unclear direction of policies in Ghana for successful inclusive education confirms a great concern for the practice of inclusive education. There are limitations within policy provisions which make education impossible for persons with disabilities to benefit from. Thus, the formulation of appropriate legislative instruments is needed for the full implementation of the Disability Act, attached with comprehensive programmes and plans to enhance effective inclusive education practice. Moreover, the low knowledge on disability issues implies deficit in stakeholder's (teachers, social workers etc.) role to create awareness which enables attitudinal transformation in the society. Consequently, educating persons with disabilities has suffered many challenges due to low knowledge and negative attitudes in the Ghanaian society. Also, government political commitment in the area of educating persons with disability has failed to some extent to provide the special education needs of particularly children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Ghana, operating within the current policy environment with key modifications or new development of inclusive policies, cannot accommodate the large education diversity amongst children with disabilities.

Stakeholder collaboration

A good approach toward successful inclusive education is the use of comprehensive stakeholder collaboration to bring about change. Parents, persons with disabilities, civil society, NGOs and the Government that work together to plan and promote change are likely to experience success in a steady manner. Global in-

itiatives and proportionate response by governments, program support from international and national NGOs, advocacy by parents, community groups and associations of persons with disabilities create a strong force to challenge and surmount oppressive societal structures and values that challenge and resist the creation of an inclusive environment for the utilization of educational service. In many developing countries in Africa, including Ghana and Nigeria, there are rarely strong disability movements actively working to improve the living conditions for people living with disabilities (Ajuwon 2008; Ghana Federation of the Disabled 2008). Disabled persons are often only weakly represented in civil society and Ghana is no exception (Ghana Federation of the Disabled 2008). Quite obviously, a proper representation and stakeholder consultation are not effective in Ghana. This, however, does not suggest a complete absence of stakeholder collaboration.

Evidence attests to the fact that parents and civil society have been working in their best capacity to support government efforts to meet the educational needs of persons with disabilities. Parents associations have taken initiatives to mobilize resources to develop infrastructures and provide educational structures and services for persons with disabilities. For instance, the Dzorwulu Special School for the intellectually disadvantaged was one of the institutions that was originally started by parents of children with intellectual impairments.

Conclusion

On the whole, inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream class has been a laudable move in Ghana for the last few years. This could be perhaps due to the global trends in education to meet the contemporary demands of globalisation with respect to improving standard of living. Available information from

the above discussion suggests that even though children with disabilities are included in mainstream education, these groups of children face many barriers to quality education. That is with the free education policy more children are being offered educational opportunities than ever before. However, there are still children with disabilities hidden from public and do not get access. Ghana's commitment and compliance to global agendas for improving and enhancing the welfare needs of children with its various policy frameworks cannot be overemphasized. Thus, laws and policies have been developed and passed but remain failed at the practice level, leaving the situation of children with disabilities unchanged. Moreover, the concept of inclusive education is limited and to some extent is not leading to the appropriate education outcome for children with disabilities. This is due to unavailability of resources, lack of human resource development, limited educators' competencies, stigmatisation and discrimination, limited policies and lack of commitment from government and stakeholders to meet the educational needs of these groups of children.

Quite undoubtedly, the road to inclusion is not an easy one; it involves change of attitudes, change of values, change of teacher training programmes and change of school systems. While change is one of the few permanent aspects in life, not many people are comfortable with it for fear of losing control of the known. But this cannot be the impediment that needs cossetting. It could possibly be fought hard and relentlessly. There should be a change of philosophical orientation such that the society at large and all the stakeholders of inclusive education cultivate attitudes that allow all pupils with special needs to enjoy the benefits of mainstream education without segregation of any kind.

More so, adopting to more modern and empowering orientations such as interactional approaches help taking into consideration environmental circumstances that militate against access to educational opportunities by persons with disabilities. These interactional approaches do not solely hold individuals responsible for their inability to access educational opportunities, instead there is a redirected effort to examine environmental structures and systems that interact with individuals to limit their ability to access educational services and resources. Further, these approaches seek to reform structures to meet the needs of persons with disabilities so they can easily and progressively access societal resources, such as educational opportunities and services.

Annotations

- ¹ It describes long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with other” (Article1,UNCPRD, 2006).
- ² It is any loss or limitation of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function
- ³ GFD is now the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations
- ⁴ Inclusive education is a process of increasing the participation of all students in schools including those with disabilities. It is about restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality.
- ⁵ It focused on the individual with disability, mainly on biological defects. Based on a medical model of disability, these defects lead to limitations in functioning which are seen as the basis of disability.
- ⁶ It is a set of measures that assist individuals who experience, or are likely to experience, disability to achieve and maintain optimal functioning in interaction with their environments” (World Health Organization 2011).
- ⁷ Involving persons with disabilities in the decision making with regard to meeting their needs.
- ⁸ Inclusive education describes a process aiming at increasing participation and reducing exclusion in a way that effectively responds to the diverse needs of individual learners.

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Biographical Note

Dr. Efua Esaaba Agyire-Tettey is a lecturer at the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and masters of philosophy in social work from the University of Ghana (Legon) and a PhD from the University of Siegen, Germany. She has her specialties in disability issues, particularly the welfare of children with disabilities, social protection, family welfare, human rights, violence and conflict management. She also has experience and interest in gender issues and the general discipline of humanities. She is a strong advocate for vulnerable people in the society and she is involved in a variety of community awareness services that provide her the opportunity to help others. She finds space for fostering community awareness campaigns and environmental education in Ghana. Since March 2015, she has been part of the Centre for Environmental Research Policy Analysis (CERPA) as a senior research advisor.

Contact:

Dr. Efua Esaaba Agyire-Tettey
University of Ghana
Department of Social Work
P. O. Box LG 419
University of Ghana
Legon, Accra-Ghana

efuam@yahoo.com