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Barriers to Access and Enrollment for Children with Disabilities in Pilot Inclusive Schools in Bole District in the Savanna Region of Ghana

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Abstract: This study focused on barriers that are there to the success of inclusion of children with disabilities in education in Ghana ‘from the teachers’ perspective’. The targeted population in this study involved all teachers teaching in the selected inclusive schools. Purposively sampling used to select the schools. The random sampling was used to select the teachers for the study. The study used questionnaire to collect data. Data collected was analysed by means of statistical methods into numbers, percentages tables and diagrammatical representation. The results revealed that majority of the respondents agreed teachers show negative attitudes towards children with special needs, schools environments are physically not accessible to children with disabilities, teachers are not trained towards teaching children with disabilities. It was suggested that, Government should encourage that architectural structures should be modified and also by making more physical adaptations to the existing buildings to have effective inclusive education. Encourage school authorities to made school environments more disability friendly and make other schools facilities more accessible and more disability friendly for children with special needs to access.

Keywords: barriers, inherent, sensory impairment, mainstream

1. Introduction

The policy on inclusion of pupils with special educational needs has become a primary educational goal, since it is a means of creating suitable educational environment that takes into consideration students with special educational needs. The basis for inclusion of pupils with disabilities came with the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain in 1994. The basic plan for inclusion schooling is that, both able and disable pupils will study together, wherever necessary, also schools should identify and adheres to the various needs of pupils, while putting a number of support services in place to match their needs. But it is not so in the Bole District because most of the heads are not willing to accept children with special needs in their schools but where children with special needs are accepted there are no support services for them. In Ghana, children with disabilities face several challenges in getting access and enrollment into public schools of which Bole district is inclusive. According to UNESCO^[23] stated that children with disabilities experience marginalization within the educational system and also traditionally experience varying forms of discrimination from mainstream society. Children with disabilities have remained relatively invisible in most governments’ efforts to achieve universal access to primary education UNESCO^[23]. In line with the assertion of UNESCO^[23] state that, many children with disabilities in Ghana seem not to fully benefit from the education in the inclusive schools. In spite of measures put in place to educate children with disabilities in Ghana, there exist some challenges as far as educating children with disabilities in the inclusive schools is concern. It seems there are lack of instructional materials to help those admitted in the inclusive schools, particularly, teaching and learning materials in braille for the blind and sign language experts to assist children with hearing impairment among others.

Besides this, the current National Curriculum does not favour children with disabilities to have education. According to Hayford^[14], stated that, the curriculum planners in Ghana has not made any provision for students with special needs in the curriculum. This is because there is no guide to assist teachers to adapt the curriculum to suit or address the diverse needs of children with special needs during teaching and learning in the classroom. This has affected enrolment, retention and completion for children with special needs in the Ghana. Teachers also do not take into consideration the presence of

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children with special needs in the classroom and take them through the same national curriculum at same pace which lead to poor performance or dropout from school in Ghana.

In addition most of the schools are not disability friendly to children with disabilities in Ghana. More so designs for most schools buildings are not having rails and ramps to enable children with special needs. Other facilities such as toilets, urinals, portable water and playing fields are not disability friendly to children with special needs. In Ghana most schools buildings are not accessible for children with special needs. This has affected children with special needs enrolment, retention and completion in the district. Also most of the schools compounds are not conducive or safe for both the physically challenge and visually impaired to walk through. Furthermore the social structures such as, school building, ramps and toilet facilities for physically disabled are not friendly accessible to them. Again classrooms are too small and poorly ventilated and no light in honeycomb classrooms which affect their retention in school.

Moreover, students with disabilities have not gained according to the objectives of inclusive education in Ghana. According Najjingo ^[18], it is anticipated that, students with disabilities can have access to education through inclusion practice. This has not been achieved as planned as clearly manifested by school related challenges, namely; teaching styles, limited or lack of teacher preparedness to accommodate pupils in regular classroom activities, discriminatory attitudes from teachers and fellow peers, which prevent children with disabilities from obtaining an adequate education, and opportunities for full social life. Their participation rate in schools is negligible. Classroom and the general school environment are not disability friendly despite the diverse educational needs that children with special needs present ^[18].

Inaccessibility to inclusive schools for students with disabilities was due to lack of teachers' competencies and lack of instructional materials and equipment. It appears attitudes of teachers and peers are the main obstacles to access and enrolment. Also in Ghana it appears that the teaching strategies and school environment at the basic schools continue to prevent children and including students with disabilities from participating in education. Again, the teaching strategies seem not to promote access of the pilot inclusive schools for children with disabilities in Ghana. Also environment seems to be disability unfriendly to children with disabilities to gain equal access to inclusive education and to take part in other school related activities. It also appears the pilot inclusive schools in Bole district do not have resources that could enhance access to education for students with special needs thereby maximizing their potentials.

There are many barriers for education of children with disabilities in regular classrooms. The author(s) had conducted a relatively good review about the barriers of inclusive education, which include issues associated with attitude, teacher training and school infrastructures. These barriers could emanate from scarcity of resources, negative attitudes of teachers, non-disabled peers and lack of adequate facilities. These barriers prevent a lot of children, including children with disabilities to access education. A research conducted by Agbenyega, on [2] teacher's views to inclusion education. The responses from teachers indicate that children with sensory impairment should be placed in the special schools since placing them in the mainstream increase their (the teachers') workload which leads to their inability to complete syllables during the school term. Most significantly, it may affect the academic performance in their classroom.

Additionally, Gyimah ^[13], views teachers' not being willing to include students with disabilities as a factor of lack of knowledge of inclusion and the inability to manage diverse needs, as well as the lack of ability to adapt curriculum and instructional strategies to facilitate learning outcomes.

Similarly, children saw the attitudes of regular teachers towards children with disabilities in school as a barrier to enrollment. More recent studies, have ^[3, 13] echoed these earlier findings, including fact that many children with disabilities do not always benefit from the inclusive education; there is lack of specialized teaching skills, negative teacher's attitudes, and lack of knowledge of inclusion by the school authorities. Also according to Van Reusen, Shoho, Barker ^[25], noted that, inadequate training relating to inclusive education may result in lowered teachers' confidence as they plan for inclusive education. Teachers who have not undertaken training regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities, may exhibit negative attitudes toward such inclusion ^[25]. In a case study by Cain ^[9] states that negative attitudes towards disabilities are the biggest barrier disabled children to accessibility and benefiting from regular education. Negative attitudes can be seen at all levels: parents, community members, schools and teachers, government officials and even disabled children themselves ^[9]. Also, Yalo, Indoshi and Agak ^[27] conducted a study concerning the difficulties and working strategies of children with visual impairment. The findings of the study opined that the major difficulties faced by teachers are lack of appropriate equipment for students and inadequate training for teachers. This would affect the performance of children with low vision leading to dropout from school.

In addition, the aspect of special education course in the teacher training colleges is not presented in details in comparison to the special education programme run for teachers studying specialized programmed in degree. More so, regular teachers feel that lack adequate training and feel reluctant to assist pupils with special needs in schools. For

instance Ackah^[1], argue that generally, regular classroom teachers do not accept inclusive education as a result of teachers lacking the necessary materials and training to handle disabilities matters they encounter in the classroom. In Ghana most special education needs training are moved towards education in special schools. Therefore regular teachers have inadequate training in special education and inadequate resources to help special needs pupils in their classrooms. For that, teachers in the regular schools do not have the adequate training or knowledge in handling and teaching children with disabilities. That is, regular teachers do not have adequate skills of alternative teaching strategies and support system in inclusion schools and this may be lead to the construction of the specific attitudes.

In Ghana many schools buildings are inaccessible for children with special needs. Many obstacles within one's environment can limit a child with physical disability and the use of assistive devices. Physical obstacles may make it difficult or impossible to use assistive devices effectively^[26]. However, most of the schools for children with disabilities are not disability friendly. The compound for the blind is sloppy and not safe for blind to walk through^[11]. She further explained that social structures such as, school building, ramps and toilet facilities for physically disabled people are not friendly accessible to them. Also rooms are too small and poorly ventilated; no light in honeycomb classrooms. Similarly, inaccessibility to physical environments, including toilet facilities prevent access, enrollment and learning for children with physical disabilities. Environments with inadequate light or noisy environments prevent children with visual or hearing impairments from learning. Children with disabilities are less likely to enroll in school, attend school, and complete. UNESCO also stated^[23] that most schools, especially in rural and slum areas, are physically inaccessible to children with physical disabilities. Lack of sufficient funding relates to the lack of sufficient resources^[20].

However, large class size and overcrowding can also pose obstacle to create a safe and inclusion environment that assist learning. Also research have shown that students in overcrowded schools perform significantly lower in both larger classes have been of problem to many education practitioners and researchers in education in Ghana. In a research conducted by Tamakloe, E. K, Amedahe, et al^[22], cited by Asamoah-Gyimah^[6], observed that most Ghanaian schools generally have larger classes. In fact Gadagbui^[12], has a challenge with how larger classes, such as '80 pupils in a class' can help transform the country's educational system.

Additionally, a study conducted by Gadagbui^[12], shows that larger classes affect the quality of education that children receive. Also, Cain^[9], argues that large class sizes are also seen as an obstacle to the inclusion of children with disabilities in all countries. In the developed countries, class sizes of 30 are considered to be too large, yet in under resourced countries like Ghana, class sizes of 60 to 100 are the practice. Inability of schools to do away with these obstacles excludes children with disabilities from accessing schools.

Furthermore, lack of resources in terms of physical and material resources, lack of training for teachers, lack of appropriate policies and full implementation policies and laws affect access and enrolment for children with special needs. For instance, Ocloo, Subbey^[19], stated that the major concerns about lack of resources for supporting students with special educational needs were particularly common in resource under developed countries such as Ghana. Also lack of adaptation of teaching and assessment materials such as Braille is seen as an obstacles to access the curriculum for students with visual impairments in Ghana lack of education on the causes of disabilities lead to stigmatization and discriminatory treatment which involves general misinformation on the causes of disabilities and many beliefs that, disabilities are caused by witchcraft or curses from the gods. Mostly children with disabilities are always discriminated against by the society including teachers and peers. Therefore most of those discriminations are based on stereotypes about physical and mental impairments and disabilities^[16, 21]. Discrimination can lead to societal discrimination, bullying, aggression, ridicule and devaluation of the self-worth of people and these would bring about oppression against such persons in all areas of life including the ability to obtain housing, maintain regular employment, access education, engage in meaningful relationships and enjoy quality of life^[7].

1.1 The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the access and enrollment of the pilot inclusive schools to students with special needs in the Bole District of Ghana.

1.2 Objective(s)

The study investigates what barriers are there to access and enrollment of children with special needs in pilot inclusive schools in the Bole District of Ghana.

1.3 The significance of the study

The research would help finding out inherent barriers to the access and enrollment for students with special needs in pilot inclusive schools in the Bole district. This would enable the District Assembly, District Education Directorate, Heads,

Teachers and Parent Teachers Association to find measures of addressing the barriers to accessibility and enrolment for children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Bole District of the Savanna Region.

In addition, the findings of the study would help find out how inclusive schools system pose challenges to children with disabilities. This would help the District Directorate and head-teachers to find ways to eliminate challenges the schools face in trying to ensure accessibility to students with disabilities in the inclusive schools in Bole District in the Savanna Region.

2. Methodology

This section presents the research methodological issues.

2.1 Research design

The design for this study was descriptive survey. This design was appropriate since the researcher aimed at collecting data on conditions that already existed or ongoing. This involved collecting opinions held by different respondents on inclusion of students with special needs as well as collecting data on the situation of other variables affecting inclusion. Descriptive research studies are designed to seek to obtain information that describes the existing phenomena by asking individuals about their perceptions, attitudes or values. It is therefore useful in describing the conditions or relation that exist between variables ^[10].

2.2 Population

The targeted population in this study involved all teachers in the ten (10) schools serving as pilot inclusive in the Bole district. The total estimated population of teachers teaching in ten (10) schools is 80. In broad terms, all of these formed the assessable population for the study.

2.3 Sample size

The sample size for the study included 80 professional teachers. These comprised 45 male teachers and 35 female teachers. Out of 45 male teachers 30 were first degree holders in Basic Education and 15 hold diploma in Basic Education. Also out of 35 female teachers 25 had first degrees in Basic Education and 10 teachers are holding diploma in the same area.

Table 1. Sample size for the study

S / N	Schools	No. of Teachers	No. of Teachers involved
1	St Kizito's "A" Primary	13	8
2	Mankuma R / C Primary	13	8
3	Kurabaso D / A Cluster of schools	22	12
4	Mandare E / A Primary	13	8
5	Dakuripe E / A Primary	6	4
6	Sumpoyiri R / C Cluster of schools	21	12
7	Tinga D / A Primary	6	4
8	Seripe R / C Cluster of schools	12	8
9	St Kizito's "A" R / C JHS	12	8
10	Bole Methodist Primary	12	8
Total	10	130	80

Table 1 above shows the number of participants that formed the sample size for the study.

2.4 Sampling techniques

The random sample samplings technique was used to select the teachers for information. The random sampling was used to give equal opportunity for the participants to be selected. The teachers were selected through the lottery method. This is because they are the only teachers teaching in inclusive school. The purposeful sampling technique was used to select the schools. This is because it gave me the opportunity to choose school that was more inclusive. Because purposively there were only 10 schools that were practicing pilot inclusive education in the district because these schools were the focus of the study because their teachers were the key informants of the research. Purposive sampling was used to select the schools because the teachers were trained in special needs education through in-service training by USAID

in 2008.

2.5 Research instruments

A self-developed questionnaire designed for teachers. The questionnaire was a closed-ended type in the form of a Likert scale type which contained 7 items designed for teachers and the items were built on one major variable forming the key theme raised in the research question. This involves barriers to access and enrollment of students with disabilities in pilot inclusive schools. Response level were anchored on a four point consecutive integers from Strongly Agreed (SA) =1, Agreed (A) = 2, Disagreed (D) = 3 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 4. In total, 80 copies of questionnaire sent out to respondents, 74 were retrieved, which was 89.1%. According to Johnson and Christenson ^[15], a high response rate of the identified population is important to the accuracy of the study, as well as proper representation of the group.

2.6 Reliability

To ensure reliability of the questionnaire a pilot testing was conducted in Bole E / A cluster of schools. After the pre-test, the instrument was further given for experts for judgment and comments on suitability. A pre-test of the items was done on the second group of teachers of 20 from Sumpouyiri R / C cluster of schools. The test re-test method was finally done on 30 teachers from Bamboi D / A cluster of schools to determine and to compare the results of the first and second groups and was used to improve on items format and reduce inadequacies and ambiguities in the items. Tamakloe, Amedahe, Atta ^[22], suggest that any useful and good measuring instrument should possess the characteristics of stability and relevance.

2.7 Data analysis

The descriptive approach was used for data analysis. This approach involved frequencies and percentages. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0) computer package was used to facilitate analysis of data into frequency distribution table and results further were converted into percentages for easy discussion.

3. Results

The findings are presented according to the research question posed to guide the study. Table shows responses from respondents to the questionnaire items

Table 2. Responses from respondents to the questionnaire items

Item	SA %	A %	D %	SD %	Total %
1. Too large class size affect effective inclusive education	11 (14.9)	42 (56.7)	10 (13.5)	11 (14.9)	74 (100)
2. Schools facilities are not physically accessible to children with disabilities	40 (54.1)	27 (36.4)	5 (6.8)	2 (2.7)	74 (100)
3. National Curriculum does not favour or support children with special needs to access education	34 (44.9)	42 (56.7)	10 (13.5)	11 (14.9)	74 (100)
4. School environment is not accessible for children with disabilities	62 (83.8)	21 (28.3)	11 (14.9)	1 (1.4)	74 (100)
5. Lack of teaching and learning materials in inclusive schools	19 (25.7)	38 (51.3)	9 (12.2)	8 (10.8)	74 (100)
6. Teachers are not trained towards teaching children with disabilities	11 (14.9)	42 (56.7)	10 (13.5)	11 (14.9)	74 (100)
7. Teachers show negative attitudes towards children with disabilities	12 (16.2)	40 (54.7)	13 (17.6)	9 (12.2)	74 (100)

Table above shows the frequency distributions of respondents' responses regarding inherent barriers to access and enrollment for students with disabilities in pilot inclusive schools in the Bole District.

In relation to item 1, that was to explore whether too large class size affect effective inclusive education, 67 respondents representing (90.5%) agreed with the statement while 7 respondents representing (9.5%) disagreed.

Concerning item 2, which was directed to explore whether schools facilities are not physically accessible to children with disabilities, 67 respondents representing (90.0%) the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement while 7 (24.4%) disagreed with the statement.

In relation to item 3, that was to explore whether National Curriculum does not favour or support children with special needs to access education, 63 respondents representing (85.1%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while

11 respondents representing (14.9%) disagreed with the statement.

Concerning item 4, that seek to find out whether school environment is not accessible for children with disabilities, 62 (83.7%) representing majority of the respondents agreed with the statement while 12 (17.3%) disagreed with the statement.

In view of item number 5, that focused on whether there is lack of teaching and learning materials in inclusive schools, 57 respondents representing (77.0%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 17 respondents representing (23.0%) disagreed with the statement.

Regarding item 6, that was directed to explore whether teachers are not trained towards teaching children with disabilities, 53 respondents representing (71.6%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 21 respondents representing (28.4%) disagreed with the statement.

In relation to item number 7, that was to explore whether teachers show negative attitudes towards children with disabilities, 62 respondents representing (70.2%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 22 respondents representing (29.8%) disagreed with the statement.

4. Discussion

The findings revealed that too large class size affect effective inclusive education. This indicates that, though currently primary education targets children with disabilities as one of their top most agenda, there are not enough facilities to include children with disabilities in schools. Moreover, the class sizes are too big. Overcrowding can also pose barriers to creating a safe and inclusive environment that supports learning. This in line with Cain^[9], opined that large class sizes are also seen as an obstacle to the inclusion of children with disabilities in the world. In the developed countries, class sizes of 30 are considered to be too large, yet in under developed countries like Ghana, class sizes of 60 to 100 are the practice. Inability of schools to do away with these obstacles excludes children with disabilities from accessing schools^[12]. This shows that large class size affects the quality of education that children receive.

The findings revealed that schools facilities are physically not accessible to students with special needs. The indication is that physical infrastructure is a barrier which is faced by the children with disabilities to have access to education. These physical barriers includes classrooms, toilets, urinals, offices and others, due to their poor architectural design. Again almost all the buildings in the schools are not disability friendly to accommodate students with special needs, denied them the access to education. This finding is in line with UNESCO^[23] stated most schools, especially in rural and slum areas, are physically not accessible to students with physical disabilities. However, many students with disabilities were out from taking up this opportunity due to the poor state of the physical infrastructure of the schools. For example, physical accessibility was limited Ahsan, Burnip^[4], argue that children with disabilities may not be able to have access to education due to the poor architectural design to the classroom blocks.

The findings revealed that the National Curriculum does not facilitate students with disabilities to access education. The indication is that students with disabilities are not taken into consideration when planning the curriculum. That is no room was made for adaptation of curriculum for teachers to address their needs. This finding is in line with Hayford, stated^[14] that the current National Curriculum does not favour students with disabilities to access education. The curriculum division unit has not made any provision for students with disabilities. This is because there are no guidelines to assist teachers to adapt the curriculum to suit the diverse needs of children with special needs during teaching and learning in the classroom^[14]. This has affected access to education for children with special needs in Bole district. Regular teachers also do not recognised the presence of students with disabilities in the classroom and take them through the same national curriculum at same pace which lead to poor performance or dropout from school in the Bole district.

The findings revealed that school environment is not accessible for students with special needs. This means that environment of the schools are not accessible for children with disabilities such as visually impaired and the physically challenged. This finding is in line with Gadagbui^[11], stated that in Ghana, and most of the schools for children with disabilities are not disability friendly. The compound for the blind is sloppy and not safe for blind to walk through^[11].

The findings revealed that lack of teaching and learning materials in inclusive schools denied access and enrollment to education for students with special needs. This indicates that most of the schools lack the resources that are used to assist in teaching students with special needs in the ordinary classroom. Inadequate resources or equipment have not made it possible for students with special needs to have access to curriculum. The finding is in line with Ocloo, ubbey, stated^[19] that the major concerns about lack of resources for supporting students with special educational needs were particularly common in resource under developed countries such as Ghana. Also lack of adaptation of teaching and assessment materials such as Braille is seen as an obstacles to access the curriculum for students with visual impairments.

The findings revealed that teachers are not trained towards teaching students with special needs. This indicated

that teachers' are not trained on the types of disabilities they are asked to handle in their classroom. This may mean that teachers were lacking knowledge and training on inclusion of children disabilities in the classrooms. This in line with a study conducted by Agbenyega, Deku [3], views teachers' not willing to accept students with disabilities as a matter of lack of knowledge of inclusion and the inability to manage diverse needs, as well as the lack of ability to adapt curriculum and instructional strategies to facilitate learning outcomes.

The findings revealed that teacher's showed negative attitudes towards children with disabilities. The findings of this study indicated that teachers attitude towards including children with disabilities was completely negative as found by the respondents. The negative attitudes towards children with disabilities of teachers have affected the enrolment and retention of children with disabilities in schools. The indication is that teachers' attitudes are been convinced by the degree of disabilities they are being asked to accept within their classroom. This means that teachers are only ready to receive the inclusion of students with mild disabilities. They are also not willing to handle students with severe hearing disabilities, or students with intellectual challenges. This finding is in line with by Van Reusen, Shoho, Barker, state [25] that Inadequate training relating to inclusive education may result in lowered teacher confidence as they plan for inclusive education. Teachers who have not undertaken training regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities, may exhibit negative attitudes toward such inclusion [25].

5. Study concluded that inclusive schools:

Lack of disability friendly school environments and schools facilities are not accessible has affected children with special needs their enrolment, retention and completion of education. Also teachers feel inadequate to teach all children with disabilities in inclusive classroom, peers have negative attitudes towards children with disabilities, inadequate infrastructure in inclusive schools and inappropriate ramps and rails for children with disabilities to access which has affected their enrolment, retention and completion of education. The study finally concluded that the issue of inclusive education must be looked at critically and improved upon what is pertaining so far as access to inclusion education for students with disabilities is concerned.

6. Recommendations

Government and District Assemblies should encourage that architectural structures should be modified and also by making more physical adaptations to the existing buildings to have effective inclusive education. Also encourage school authorities to made school environments more disability friendly and make other schools facilities more accessible and more disability friendly for children with special needs to access.

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