

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CONCEPT IN GHANA

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BACKGROUND:

In Ghana, education of children and youth with disabilities as started in 1936 and led to the establishment of a school for the blind at Akropong-Akwapim in 1946. Other Schools were built for the deaf, and the intellectually disabled in the sixties. These schools were mostly segregated. The children grew up with their peers and developed a common culture.

The schools developed as centres of excellence. There was concentration of expertise on specific impairments and student-teacher ratio enables each child to have more attention. On the other side of those provisions, the schools are usually not available in the child's immediate environment. The expertise is only available for a small group of children

- System of teaching is very expensive. It is therefore not affordable.
- Children find it hard to re-adopt to life with their families, peers and communities.

The cost of special education per child is too high for most countries. Governments are recognising the need to develop a more affordable system which will provide quality education for all children, hence Inclusive Education.

WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

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.

Inclusive education concept focuses on those groups which, in the past, have been excluded from educational opportunities. These groups include children living in poverty, those from ethnic and linguistic minorities, girls (in some societies), children from remote areas, those with disabilities or other special educational needs, the gifted and the talented children. The latter are often the most marginalised, both within education and society in general.

These persons include but not limited to:

1) Persons with Hearing Impairment	13) Persons with other health impairment (asthma, etc)
2) Persons with Visual Impairment	14) Children displaced by natural catastrophes and social conflicts
3) Persons with Intellectual Disability	
4) Persons with physical disability	

5) Persons with Deaf-blindness 6) Persons with Multiple disabilities. 7) Persons with Speech and Communication disorders 8) Persons with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder 9) Gifted and Talented persons 10) Persons with Specific Learning Disability 11) Persons with Autism 12) Persons with Emotional and Behaviour Disorder	15) Nomadic children (shepherd boys, fisher-folks' children and domestic child workers) 16) Children living in extreme social and economic deprivation 17) Children exploited for financial purpose 18) Orphans and children who are not living with their biological parents 19) Children living with HIV/AIDS 20) Street children
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The practice of Inclusion:

Curriculum:

Curriculum-wise, instruction is individualized to each student's needs and specific skills are taught as appropriate. Instruction is child-centred and adapts to the individualized needs of each student, be him a disabled or gifted child.

Teachers:

The regular education teacher is to take primary responsibility (supported by resource teachers and special education officers).

Instruction: Schools are to adapt to the needs of the children, rather than children adapting to the needs of the school.

Location: Students with disabilities or gifted /talented students are included in regular education for the entire day, regardless of their degree of disabilities/abilities.

Whether or not this more broadly defined group of children is in need of additional support, depends on the extent to which schools need to adapt their curriculum, teaching, and organization and/or to provide additional human or material resources so as to stimulate efficient and effective learning for these pupils.

Inclusive education encourages policy-makers and managers to look at the barriers within the educational system, how they arise and how they can be removed.

The inclusive education seeks to clear the Education system of its problems of:

- Teacher's attitudes
- Rigid methods/rigid curriculum
- Inaccessible environments
- Many drop-outs/many repeaters
- Teachers and schools not supported
- Parents not involved
- Lack of Teaching aid and equipment
- Poor quality training

A changed educational system has

- Positive teacher attitudes
- Child centered curriculum
- Flexible teaching methods
- Reduction in drop-outs and repeaters
- Well supported teachers and schools
- Parent and community involvement
- Appropriate teaching aids and equipment
- Alternative methods of teacher education

In inclusive education the system is expected to change, not the child so that they meet the individual needs of all learners – with and without impairments. Inclusion does not however mean assimilation – or making everyone the same. A key ingredient is flexibility – acknowledging that children learn at different rates and that, teachers need skills to support their learning in a flexible way. In the majority of cases, children simply need good, clear and accessible teaching. This includes the use of different methods of respond to children’s needs, capacities and rates of development.

In Ghana, we have had about six initiatives/models of implementation of Inclusive Education. These are: Integrated Education Programme (IEP) for Children with Low Vision and Blindness; Special School as Home for Pupils with Blindness; Units for the Intellectually Disabled; Inclusive Schools with Special Education Resource Teacher Support; Inclusive Schools without Special Education Resource Teacher Support and finally, Hostel Support (Tay, 2007).

Model 1:

Integrated Education Programme (IEP) for Children with Low Vision and Blindness.

Focus on only pupils with low vision and blindness in mainstreams.

- Itinerant teacher supports teachers and pupils.
- 12 basic schools for an itinerant Teacher.
- Pupils are withdrawn for remedial teaching.
- Volunteer teachers appointed for remedial teaching.
- Itinerant Teachers is mobile with motor-bike.
- Itinerant Teacher and Volunteer Teachers are given allowances.
- Pupils live with families at home.
- The head of the mainstream schools assumes responsibility for all children disabled and non-disabled.
- A co-ordinate for the itinerant Teachers monitors activities of the itinerant Teachers.

Model 2:

Special School As Home For Pupils With Blindness

- Pupils with blindness are admitted to a special school for the Deaf.
- Pupils are in separate unit-classrooms-to acquire skills in Braille writing and reading; Orientation and Mobility; acquire basic in literacy and numeracy as transition to formal basic schooling; all for two years in the maximum.
- Special Education teachers are appointed for the unit with a unit head.
- Pupils after mastery of skills are admitted to mainstream basic schools near special school.
- Special Education teachers are attached to the mainstream to support pupils and teachers.
- Pupils go home to join families on vacation.
- The head of the mainstream schools assumes responsibility for all the children-disabled and non-disabled.
- Pupils with disability have full access to curriculum.

Model 3:

Units For The Intellectually Disabled

- Two unit classrooms built within the premises of mainstream school.
- Special education teachers for the intellectually disabled staff the unit.
- Pupils with intellectual disability are admitted to the unit as day students.
- Pupils stay with their families at home and go to and fro the unit for their education
- Pupils with intellectual disability are taught on separate curriculum drawn for them but interact with their counter-parts for social integration during subjects or activities like dancing, games and sports.

Model 4:

Inclusive Schools with Special Education Resource Teacher Support.

- A special education teacher is appointed as a resource Teacher.
- She/he is attached to 2 primary schools (mainstream).
- He/she becomes a member of the staff of the school.
- He/she works to identify all pupils experiencing difficulties in classroom and plan strategies for intervention.
- He/she supports pupils and teachers for quality teaching and learning.
- The head teacher assumes responsibility for all pupils –disabled children with special needs.
- Resource Teacher collaborates with parents, staff of health services and social welfare.
- The District Special Education Officer supervises and monitors activities of resource Teachers.

Model 5:**Inclusive Schools without Special Education Resource Teacher Support.**

- In district a number of primary schools selected for inclusive education (no criteria used).
- SpED built capacity for inclusive education in the district through;
 - Training of trainers (TOT) workshop.
 - Master trainers train classroom teachers (of 70 schools).
 - Master trainer manual and teacher trainer manual are the main training materials for the TOT and training of teachers respectively.
 - UNESCO teacher education resource pack is also used.
- District Special Education Officer co-ordinates activities and monitor implementation of IE.
- Focus is on all children facing difficulties in learning
- Classroom teacher teaches all children
- No Special Education Resource Teacher is attached to school/ classroom

Model 6:**Hostel Support**

- A structure is built to provide hostel facilities for pupils from far.
- Focus is on pupils with low vision and blindness.
- No payment of fees for boarding and lodging.
- Pupils are given admission to hostel.
- Special Education Resource Teachers for the visually impaired are recruited.
- Pupils are taught skills in Braille writing and reading; Orientation and mobility; Basics in literacy and numeracy as transition to formal basic schooling; all for two (2) years at the maximum.
- Pupils are later admitted to a nearby mainstream basic school (s).
- Special education resource teachers are recruited and attached to the basic school to support pupils and teachers.
- Head teacher assumes responsibility for all pupils.
- Classroom teacher teaches all children.

The region has started piloting Inclusive Education in schools in three districts. These are Ketu South (Denu, Chigaco Schools), Ho Municipal (Anglican Primary School) and North Tongu. In Ketu South and Ho Municipality, children with Intellectual Disability are schooling alongside the regular ones. They learn to associate with each other, appreciating each other's strengths and weaknesses. It is the intention of Regional Education Directorate to transform these units into learning centres of excellence, where children with Learning Disabilities from other schools within the vicinity can resort to for adequate help. (Model 3)

The region has its third unit at the Avakpedome Basic School in the North Tongu District where the blind and the low vision children are being educated using this inclusive parameters. (Model 6)

The results are excellent. The sighted among others things are also learning to read and write Braille. Presently, as a result of the excellent performance of the programme in the basic school, the Adidome Senior High School has also adopted it and sixteen (16) blind/low vision students have been admitted to pursue different programmes (model 6). Mawuli Senior High School has embarked on a similar model, despite the non-completion of a library/resource centre for students with blind/low vision.

Benefits of Inclusive Education

The benefits of inclusive education are numerous for both students with and without disabilities.

Benefits of Inclusion for Students with Disabilities

1. Friendships
2. Increased social initiations, relationships and networks
3. Peer role models for academic, social and behavior skills
4. Increased achievement of IEP goals
5. Greater access to general curriculum
6. Enhanced skill acquisition and generalization
7. Increased inclusion in future environments
8. Greater opportunities for interactions
9. Higher expectations
10. Increased school staff collaboration
11. Increased parent participation
12. Families are more integrated into community

Benefits of Inclusion for Students without Disabilities

1. Meaningful friendships
2. Increased appreciation and acceptance of individual differences
3. Increased understanding and acceptance of diversity
4. Respect for all people
5. Prepares all students for adult life in an inclusive society
6. Opportunities to master activities by practicing and teaching others
7. Greater academic outcomes
8. All students needs are better met, greater resources for everyone

Conclusion:

There is **no research** that has yet shown any negative effects from inclusion, if done appropriately with the necessary supports and services for students to actively participate and achieve IEP goals. There is therefore the need for all stakeholders in the region to faithfully come on board so that together, we can all change the system towards school improvement and a better education for all.