

OVERVIEW OF POLICY & LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK ON INCLUSIVE & SPECIAL EDUCATION IN GHANA

Compiled by: Nathan Ankutse
Regional SpED Coordinator
GES, Ho

INCLUSION: This is the **type of education that has a focus** on those groups which in the past have been excluded from educational opportunities. These include children living in poverty, those from remote areas, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, girls (in some societies), those with disabilities, the gifted and the talented children. The gifted and the talented are often the most marginalized, both within education and society in general

SPECIAL EDUCATION: It is the **type of education given to a child** with special educational needs. It is special because it has the following characteristics:

- Qualitative in nature and expensive
- Makes use of Specially trained personnel
- Requires the use of special teaching and learning materials/equipment
- Employs special teaching methods
- Emphasises the Individuality of student

LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR INCLUSIVE/SPECIAL EDUCATION- BACKGROUND TO POLICY:

The Education for All (EFA) movement which was launched at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand declared the rights of all children, young people and adults to education in 1990. In 1994, the World Conference on Education on Special Needs Education held at Salamanca adopted the principle of Inclusion as an important means of achieving the Education for All as put forward in Jomtien.

A decade after the Jomtien declaration, its vision and mission were reaffirmed at the World Education Forum meeting in Dakar in 2000. This Forum highlighted the continuing barriers in education experience by disadvantaged groups and called for positive action to overcome them. This, Ghana also ratified.

KEY POLICIES INFLUENCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION THEORY AND PRACTICE

Key International Treaties, Policies Etc. Include:

- i. 1948 United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration on Human Rights,
- ii. 1989 UN Convention on the rights of the child,
- iii. 1994 UNESCO Salamanca Statement and framework on Special Needs Education,
- iv. 2000 World Forum on Special Needs Education in Dakar, Senegal.

National/Local Policies, Legislations, Acts Etc.

- i. 1961 Education Act.
- ii. 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Act 25; sect. 26, 37, 38 and 39
- iii. 1998 Children's Act (Act 560)
- iv. 2006 Persons with Disability Law (Act 715)
- v. 2008 Education Act (Act 778)
- vi. 2003 – 2005 (extended from 2010-2020) Education Strategic Plan (ESP) of the Ministry of Education.
- vii. 2010 Millennium Development Goals.

There are a lot of legal provisions (National and International) that support Inclusive/ Special Education. In some cases, these are blanket/sweeping statements but in some instances, more specific. Let's have a look at a few – National ones.

The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (1992)

Article 25 (1) states that **all persons** shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities, with a view of achieving the full realization of that right: basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all.

DISABILITY ACT 2006; ACT 715.

Education of a Child with Disability

Article 16. (1) A parent, guardian or custodian of a child with disability of school going age shall enroll the child in a school.

2. A parent, guardian or custodian who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding ten penalty units, or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding fourteen days.

Facilities and Equipment in Educational Institutions.

Article 17. The Minister of Education shall by Legislative Instrument designate schools or institutions in each region which shall provide the necessary facilities and equipment that will enable persons with disability to fully benefit from the school or institution.

Free Education and Special Schools

Article 18. The Government shall

1. Provide free education for a person with disability, and
2. Establish special schools for persons with disability who by reason of their disability cannot be enrolled in formal schools.

Appropriate Training for Basic School Graduates

Article 19. Where a person with disability has completed basic education but is unable to pursue further formal education, the Ministry shall provide the person with appropriate training.

Refusal of Admission on Account of Disability

Article 20. (1) A person responsible for admission into a school or other institution of

learning shall not refuse to give admission to a person with disability on account of the disability unless the person with disability has been assessed by the Ministry responsible for Education in collaboration with the Ministries responsible for Health and Social Welfare to be a person who clearly requires to be in a special school for children or persons with disability.

2. A person who contravenes Subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding fifty penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to both.

Special Education in Technical, Vocational and Teacher Training Institutions

Article 21. The Minister of Education shall by Legislative Instrument designate in each region a public technical, vocational and teacher training institutions which shall include in their curricula special education, such as:

1. Sign language, and
2. Braille writing and reading

Library Facilities

Article 22. A public library shall as far as practicable be fitted with facilities that will enable persons with disability to use the library.

3. EDUCATION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

In 2003, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Science (MOESS) developed a strategic plan that was to guide education delivery in the country till 2015. This Education Strategic Plan (ESP) adopted Inclusive Education as its policy and a means of achieving Education for All.

***Policy Objective II:** Promote a child friendly environment ⁴for enhancing the **quality of education** for persons with DENs/SENs through the UDL (Universal Design for Learning).*

Strategies

Among a lot of strategies, we have:

- Ensure that schools, curricula, assessment procedures and teaching and learning materials are **accessible and fair for all**.
- Promote the availability and training of relevant professionals as well as facilities for medical assessment; educational assessment, training in social skills, psychological assessment, occupational therapy, and speech/language assessment. Also, ensure early identification and stimulation of children with disabilities as well as coordinated support services for families of children with disabilities
- Promote a system of flexible examination structure that permits pupils/students to sit for exams in diverse forms (e.g. verbal listening/verbal exams, use of picture exchange communication, written, etc to meet the diverse educational needs).

***Policy objective III:** Increasing participation in educational access for persons with DENs/SENs.*

Invest in **ECE (early childhood educational) programmes that address the diverse educational needs and provide** a foundation for lifelong inclusion of children with disabilities in education and society.

- Ensure that physical infrastructure designs of existing schools are modified to enhance opportunities for persons with SEN.
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- Ensure that **all new school physical infrastructure designs and constructions (for all new schools)** enhance opportunities for persons with SEN.

POLICY DRIVERS

Curriculum

The national curricula for basic and second cycle institutions shall be the same but have provisions for differentiations and adaptations to meet the unique needs of all learners including those with special needs.

In order to make teaching and learning effective and efficient, class size should not exceed 30 for lower primary and 35 for upper primary and Junior High Schools.

The current practice of giving extra time to learners with special needs should be maintained. However, the mode of examination should be made flexible for learners with special needs. For written examinations the range of adaptation should include the following:

- Reading questions or items to candidates who have reading difficulties
- Modifying or substituting questions involving visual material such as diagrams, photographs and maps for the visually impaired.
- Providing braille versions of question papers for the blind.
- Providing large print question papers for learners with low vision.
- Permitting candidates to record their answers on tape recorder, or word processor where the candidate has difficulty in writing.
- Permitting a scribe to write answers for a candidate who has speech difficulty.
- Allowing sign language interpreters to sign for the deaf all instructions during examination, and ensuring interpreters are available to deal with questions from candidates with deafness during examinations (both internal and external).

CONCLUSION: The policies and legislative framework on Inclusive Education are very laudable and far reaching. The implementation of these depends on the availability of funds and logistics. More so, it takes the will-power of those who are supposed to act to bring about the desired attitudinal change to achieve a high measure of success. This is what I believe is the aim of this workshop.

The overview, I hope will give us the strength/backing to implement IE where ever we may find ourselves.