

Inclusive Education and It's Impact on Children with Disabilities in the North West Region of Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the concept of inclusive education, international approach towards inclusive education, the state of inclusive education in the North West Region of Cameroon, category of people who need inclusive education, and the benefits of inclusive education. The author reflects on the impact of inclusive education in Cameroon in relation to the laws of 1983, 1990 and 2010. To achieve quality Inclusive Education (IE) for all, strategies should aim to foster inclusive and safe school environments for all children, Children with Disabilities (CWDs) to pursue education, and challenge societal attitudes that hinder educational opportunities. The article concludes that, it is high time all stakeholders in Cameroon should come to the drawing board to design a model for IE in Cameroon. This cannot be undertaken on its own by only one stakeholder.

KEYWORDS: *Inclusive Education, and Children with Disabilities*

INTRODUCTION

Education is an enterprise that sets out to instill values, attitudes, and skills in members of the society. It is a process of personal development, a veritable means of developing human resources. According to Abosi and Koay (2008), as quoted by Abosi (1996), education has three main roles: it is developmental because it develops the unique qualities of a child; it differentiates between learners because it treats every child as an individual, appreciating individual differences; and it is integrative because it accommodates people of varying backgrounds (culture, beliefs and values) thereby allowing for a cooperative approach in problem solving.

Education is a fundamental human right, yet many children with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries remain deprived of educational opportunities (Christensen, 2005). It is therefore not an exaggeration to posit that denying someone the right to education in whatever way is tantamount to terminating such a person's existence (Mbibeh, 2013). Children who have disabilities are less likely to attend or remain in school, have a lower transition and completion rates and most of them do not achieve

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the level of results of their peers. Inclusive education was conceived as a way to ensure that the needs of all children were being properly accommodated... (Kiuppis, 2014). Many factors compound to make the situation difficult for children with disabilities to succeed in formal education (Wapling, 2016).

Inclusive education emerged by insisting that all children with special needs be included in the traditional classroom (Abosi and Koay, 2008). Before the coming of the inclusive system into the, it was the concept of integration or mainstreaming, that was practiced. The main concept of integration is based on placing children with disabilities according to their needs and the severity of their conditions in the society. Some children with disabilities could benefit from total integration, while others benefit from units/special classes or resource rooms.

Across the globe, students with disabilities are increasingly educated alongside their nondisabled peers in a practice known as inclusion (Hehir et al, 2006). Special education provides opportunities in the world for everyone to have an opportunity for

education. Special education is part of general education which treats everyone involved in it as individual (Abosi and Koay, 2008). Inclusion is prominently featured in a number of international declarations such as the United Nations declarations, national laws, and education policies. According to Abosi and Koay (2008), as quoted by (Alur, 2001; Potts, 2000; Villa, 2003), the state of education for persons with disabilities in developing countries has been a source of concern for professionals. It has been noted that, the provision for children with disabilities across developing countries has often been regarded as a privilege rather than a right (Alur, 2001).

The issue of inclusion has to be framed within the context of the wider international discussions around the United Nations Organisations agenda of Education for All (EFA) stimulated by 1990 Jomtien Declaration. The movement towards quality inclusive education (IE) aims to support all children at school (Engelbrecht et al, 2006). Students with disabilities who have been included in education are more likely to be enrolled and living independently, especially in the higher education sector. Gender and disability are key factors that influence inclusive education; despite this, limited research explores their combined influence.

Over the past 20 years, within the international development sector, education has become a significant issue and inclusive education has grown to become a familiar term... (Urwick and Elliott, 2010). Proper attention has not been given to special needs education in terms of planning and organization (Abosi, 2006). Nevertheless, many students with disabilities still struggle to access effective inclusive programs (Hehir et al, 2006). The effectiveness of inclusive education provides insights into how educators and policymakers can improve the availability of inclusive options for children with disabilities and their families. According to Hehir et al (2006), long-standing misconceptions regarding the capacities of children with intellectual, physical, sensory, and learning disabilities lead some educators to continue to segregate disabled and non-disabled students.

The concept of inclusive education

Educational environments for students with disabilities range from a complete denial of formal educational services to equal participation in all aspects of the education system (Hehir et al, 2006). The ultimate aim of education of children with disabilities in any society is to enable them live independent life. This means that they are expected to live the life of give and take just like persons without disabilities. The current trend in education of children

with disabilities is integration or inclusive education, which will enable children with disabilities to be included in all social activities (Abosi and Koay, 2008).

Inclusive education has been defined from different perspectives. The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) defines education as all children and young people with and without disabilities or difficulties learning together in ordinary pre-primary schools, colleges and universities with appropriate networks of support. According to Zalizan Jelas (2000), the term inclusive education is an integration issue whereby participation of students with special needs is provided for in mainstream education...

Inclusive education is a special type of education that gives all children with special needs the opportunity to learn together with their normal peers without discrimination. This means that schools where inclusive education is taking place must be sensitive to the differences in the needs of various children with disabilities (Abosi and Koay, 2008). Inclusive education provides opportunity and gives priority to children with disabilities to be taught in a regular classroom with their normal counterparts. In the words of Mbibeh (2013, as quoted by Hooker (2007), inclusive education (later IE) would offer strategies for reaching disabled children and adults, and other marginalised or at risk groups which permits children into and through school by developing schools that are responsive to the actual diverse needs of the community.

In practical terms, inclusion would mean building a school for everyone; a school that accepts, respects, and cherishes diversity while at the same time considering the individual background of every member of the school community... (Windyz, 2005). Inclusive education also offers both academic and social advantages to all. Many experts are of the opinion that inclusive schooling is the most effective means for students (children with special needs and their peers) to build solidarity amongst themselves. A study in Malaysia by Zalizan Jelas (2000), found out that teachers and parents have a greater impact on the development of social skills gained by children with disabilities in an inclusive educational system and were willing to trade off special education benefits such as specialized curriculum, access to specialized services and individualized instruction.

An international movement towards inclusion

The term inclusion has been preponderant in the literature on education from the latter part of the 20th to the 21st century (Mbibeh, 2013). The term 'inclusion' is derived from the verb *to include*, which means "to have as a component part, to enclose

within, to place in a general category aggregate"... (Websters, 2010). According to research by the United Nations, around 10 percent of the world's population has some type of a disability. This makes people with disabilities the largest minority population in the world. Students with disabilities are increasingly educated alongside their non-disabled peers throughout the world (World Health Organization, 2011).

The move towards inclusive education practice is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) in which access to education for all became a fundamental and inalienable human right (Mbibe, 2013). The growth of inclusive educational practices stems from increased recognition of students with disability, either visual impairment, hearing impairment, learning impairment, down syndrome, to name but these, thrive when they are, to the greatest extent possible in the same educational and social opportunities as those without disabilities. There was therefore the development of international and national efforts especially in Cameroon to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Despite this, no concrete actions are taken by the state to implement such conventions. Though policy is of primordial importance, IE is not just about policy but more about practice (Mbibe, 2013). The impact to the community is felt more when policy becomes visible through practice by its inhabitants.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) article 23 of the convention states, '... disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.' (UN, 1989).

In the 1990s, UNESCO held a number of conferences around the world with insightful outcomes geared towards the provision of education for all children without exception (Mbibe, 2013). Such conferences include; the Education for All (EFA) (1990) and the Salamanca Conference (1994). The 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All with its Declaration and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs was a turning point in global education. It drew emphases on the fact that education is a fundamental right for everybody, irrespective of their physical, social, economic and psychological conditions (UNESCO, 1990). This conference specifically stated that the learning needs of children with disability require special attention and that steps should be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons, as an integral

part of national education endeavors... (Abosi and Koay, 2008).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Conference on Special Needs Education (Salamanca, Spain 7-10 June, 1994) reaffirmed the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All. This conference specifically recognized the necessity and urgency of providing special educational needs for children, youth and adults within the regular educational system (UNESCO, 1994). The 1994 UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education issued a consensus report on the education of students with disabilities. The resulting Salamanca Statement 1, signed by representatives of 92 countries and 25 organizations, states that "those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools." The statement affirms that educational inclusiveness is the most effective means to contact discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.

The Salamanca Statement was part of a global movement towards the inclusive education of students with disabilities and it offered guidelines for actions at the local, national, regional, and international levels. The Statement called for governments to promote, plan, finance, and monitor inclusive education programs within their education systems (UNESCO, 2009). The Salamanca Statement and Framework introduced the principle of inclusion which was to find expression in inclusive schools (Mbibe, 2013). Since the Salamanca statement, the world has continued to promote the inclusion of PWDs in society. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which was drafted in 2006 with 161 signatory states.

Many countries such as America, Thailand, Nigeria, Cameroon, Brazil to name but these have developed national policies to support inclusion.

In the United States of America for example, since 1974 students with disabilities have enjoyed a nationally-protected right. This right includes free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Subsequent updates to the laws governing the education of students with and without disabilities have demonstrated a preference for inclusive settings by mandating that children with disabilities be educated in the "least restrictive environment" that is appropriate for their individual needs (Hehir et al, 2006). These policies have spurred an increase in the degree to which children with disabilities attend class alongside their non-disabled peers. For example, since 1989, the percentage of

United States students with intellectual disabilities who spend 40 percent or more of their school day in classrooms with non-disabled peers has grown from 27 percent to 44 percent.

In 2003, inclusive education became part of the educational programme in Brazil (Hehir et al, 2006). Before then, the system practiced a segregated approach with special schools created only for persons with disabilities. In 2008 through the National Policy for Special Education from the Inclusive Perspective, a more robust inclusive approach was formalized. In the municipality of Sao Paulo in Brazil the model adopted here focuses rather on teacher training as a prerequisite to the implementation of inclusive education (Windyz, 2005).

In Singapore for example, special education services are organized along a continuum ranging from total segregation to partial integration to total integration. (Lim & Tan, 1999)

In Thailand, legislation such as the National Special Education Plan of 1995 and the National Education Act of 1999 protect the rights of students with disabilities and guarantee access to 12 years of free basic education. As a result of this legislation and nationwide media campaigns, a majority of Thai students with disabilities now attend integrated schools (UNICEF, 2003).

The African Union (AU) reaffirms the need for quality data collection disaggregated by gender on persons with disabilities. (African Union Commission - Department of Social Affairs, 2010:15) AU member state therefore shall *improve gaps in data regarding disability in rural areas and facilitate information sharing to all stakeholders.* (African Union Commission - Department of Social Affairs, 2010: 29)

South Africa for example developed a long-term plan to promote inclusive education by transitioning students from segregated placements into an integrated system of neighborhood, full-service, and specialized schools (Department of Education, 2001).

Nigeria adopted a formal special education policy in 1988, and has since created additional legislation requiring that schools provide inclusive education services to children with disabilities (Ajuwon, 2008; Tesemma, 2011). Nigeria also involved the curriculum of inclusive education in its higher education and train special educators to train and teach children with special needs. This encompasses pedagogic guidelines, teacher training, dissemination of assistive technologies and investments in

accessibility, thereby allowing and providing incentives for public schools to enroll students with disabilities.

In brief, countries around the world have pledged to support educational inclusion for people with disabilities. There has been a substantial expansion in the degree to which students with disabilities attend school alongside their non-disabled peers, but this progress has been uneven (Hehir et al, 2006). Many countries have enacted policies to promote inclusion, while others have been slow to shift from a segregated education model. Even in countries that have high rates of students with disabilities in the general education classroom, education that is truly inclusive may not be the norm.

The practice of Inclusive Education in Cameroon is backed by both national and international legal instruments. It is disheartening that despite the fact that Cameroon is signatory to these international conventions, there are no structures in place for the practical implementation of these conventions ratified.

Nationally, the country has three important legislative and policy documents that deal with the right to inclusive education of persons with disabilities and internationally, the country has ratified the UNCRPD and it is also working on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG4. To ensure that “PWDs can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live.” Article 24 of the convention requires states to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels for people with disabilities as well as opportunities for life-long learning. Article 24 also stipulates that students with disabilities must not be excluded from general education, that reasonable accommodations and individualized supports must be provided for them, and that people with disabilities should have access to tertiary education, vocational training, and adult education on an equal basis with non-disabled students.

Cameroon Law No 83/013 of 21st July 1983 and its decree of application Law No 90/156 of 26th November 1990 provides general dispositions and practical modalities for the protection of persons with disabilities (Mbibeh, 2013). Though not mentioned in clear terms, these laws all reflect inclusive practices that are cherished the world over. For example, article 30, 5, 6 and 9 of this law states that “Families should provide their children with disabilities access to regular schools”. Article 9 of this law emphasises that building plans should comprise necessary facilities

that could ease access to public buildings by persons with impairments.

Moreover, with regards to practical modalities, Law No 90/156 of 26th of November 1990 chapters I and II, focus specifically on education. Articles 7 and 35 state that, pupils/students with disabilities should be allowed to repeat a class two times when failure is a result of their handicap. Article 6 insists on government's complete cover up or partial school fee requirements. While giving subventions to schools engaged in the educations of CWD, Article 4 states that qualified personnel could be posted to these schools by the state (Mbibeh, 2013). This has become practical in most schools having children with special needs, especially visual impairment.

Recently, Cameroon law No 2010/002 of 13 April insists on the welfare of Children With Disabilities (CWD) and psychological support which according to section 17 "Shall aim at strengthening the psychological capacity, developing self-esteem, strengthening relationships with the living environment in order to reconcile CWD and others". The importance of inclusive education in practical terms could be observed in the provision of leisure activities like sports and physical education programs in schools and university systems as postulated by section 37 of this law. Exempting children with disabilities from the payment of school fees, article 29 facilitates access to education for them. Any law without sanctions for defaulters renders reinforcement and application challenging (Mbibeh, 2013). Section 45 of this law insists that punishment be levied for school officials guilty of discrimination in admitting students/pupils with impairments. According to the above law, punishment for such cases could range from 3 to 6 months imprisonment and a fine of 100.000CFAFr to 1000.000CFAFr.

Despite the enormity of literature and implementation policy developed so far the world over; Cameroon seems to have been exempted from this wind of change (Mbibeh, 2013). Though efforts such as the 2003 laws making basic education free and compulsory for all Cameroonians have been made, there are more theoretical than practical and there is no pause to think about learners with disabilities. In the views of Mbibeh (2013), the concluding remark to be made here is that in as much as these laws may sound so good, their application is still daunting. Laws are only theory, rather than practice and their practice render them visible. Every dream of all stakeholders in the inclusive set up is the application of laws, rather than simply on paper.

Efforts towards educating children with special needs in Cameroon have been made solely by Non-

Governmental Organisations (NGOs). According to Mbibeh (2013), such education has been in purely specialised schools; such as, schools for the deaf and schools for the blind are found in many regions in the country.

The Cameroon Baptist Convention (later CBC), which owns many special needs schools in North West Region of Cameroon became pioneers in advocating for the implementation of inclusive education. The Ministries of basic, secondary and higher education are charged with the responsibility of implementing inclusive education in Cameroon. The Ministry of Social Affairs for example assesses learners with disabilities through its regional delegations, and issues disability cards so that these learners can benefit from education free of tuition fees.

What is the state of Inclusive Education in North West Region?

Perhaps as stakeholders, special educators, parents, we need to ask ourselves the state in which Inclusive Education is in the North West Region of Cameroon. The answer perhaps would be that we are doing our best, or that we are not yet near the implementation.

Our response is; North West Region has gone far though with many challenges as far as inclusion of persons with disabilities is concerned. Before we started the start of inclusive education in the NW Region, many persons with disabilities were recognized by their families. In the North West Region we have many organizations of persons with disabilities to empower themselves and work towards social, and educational inclusion.

The word inclusive education became visible in North West region in the educational family in Cameroon through the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board (CBCHB) program SEEPD (Socio-Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities). The CBCHB had been running programs in special education following especially the medical model with a number of special schools here and there such as; The Integrated School for the Blind in Kumbo and The School for the Deaf in Mbingo. The congregation of the Tertiary sisters of Saint Francis created a center Saint Joseph's Children and Adult Home (SAJOCAH), which has a classroom resource center for children with visual impairments.

Teachers in these schools had acquired knowledge through special seminars in and out of Cameroon and could equally train other home based teachers (Mbibeh, 2013). A glimpse of change started lingering when children from these schools were integrated into mainstream schools and allowed to

cope with mainstream teachers who had little or no knowledge about handling learners with impairments

In Cameroon, the Liliane Foundation collaborates with its Strategic Partner Organization Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services (CBCHS). CBCHS has implemented a programme on Socio Economic Empowerment of People with Disabilities (SEEPD) in the North West region since 2009. The programme aims to encourage children who need special education in the North West region by increasing their attendance in mainstream government schools and convincing the government to make inclusive education standard practice in Cameroon.

Advocacy has been an important strategy of SEEPD, targeting diverse governmental decision makers at national, regional and local levels. These were mile steps toward the birth of inclusion in Cameroon. This was relatively new to a number of stakeholders in the educational family. The SEEPD program started up with sensitization geared towards changing attitudes, conceptions and perceptions about persons living with impairments from the local communities to the school milieu (Mbibeh, 2013). This SEEPD program extended its services to some villages in Cameroon, such as, the Baptist Comprehensive High School (BCHS) Njinikejim Belo in 2006/2007 academic year, which is an inclusive secondary setting. In the 2013/2014 academic year Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Bamenda opened her doors to children with hearing impairments and GBHS Kumbo followed suite in the 2016/2017 academic year.

Organizations, individuals, and churches have played a great role in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in North West Region. For example, special centres like the Treasure Centre Akum, Morning Star Akum, SENTTI Bamenda, and CEFED Santa, trained teachers who graduate with Teachers' Grade 1 Certificate and a Diploma in Special Needs Education to teachers, as Inclusive Teachers in the country.

Inclusive education became on the rails with the SEEPD program selection of 14 schools (both primary and secondary) in the North West Region of Cameroon to serve as pilot schools for the setting up of a model for IE in Cameroon. Through advocacy and sensitization, principals and head teachers of the 14 schools have come to a consensus to admit CWD in their schools (Mbibeh, 2013). Teachers from these schools are called upon to implement IE strategies in the classroom and to ensure the implementation of these strategies, a number of persons are involved.

The Brazilian model in the municipality of Sao Paulo (Windyz, 2005), the Ghanaian model (Hooker, 2007)

and the Nigerian model (Fakolalde et al 2009) all have some level of similarity with the pioneer model being developed in Cameroon by the CBC.

Categories of people who need inclusion

Children with special educational needs are those who experience (manifest more than the usual difficulties and problems in learning and training as normally offered in regular schools). The following are categories of special needs as postulated by Abosi and Koay (2008); visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental retardation, learning disabilities, physical and health impairment, speech and language difficulties, behaviour disorders, gifted and talented. These special needs pose major challenges to teachers in the classroom.

According to Obani (2006), these categories include: Sensory cases, those with physical impairment, Specific learning difficulties in specific subjects, the gifted and the talented, The delicate or health-impaired.

UNESCO (1994), went further to consider the following: Those not currently enrolled in schools but who could be enrolled, those living in severe poverty, those living in remote places far from schooling facilities, those that for one reason or the other lack interest and motivation in learning and street children and urchins. Furthermore, in a UNESCO (1999) workshop held in Dakar, Senegal, an African expert group broadened the concept of special education to include marginalized group. The marginalized group included children with HIV/AIDS, abused children, children from poor homes, gifted children, abandoned children and children on the street.

Benefits of Inclusive Education

According to Eni-Olorunde (2010) some benefits of inclusive education are:

- Preservation of human rights of children with disabilities.
- Children with disabilities benefit socially and academically as they relate with those without disabilities.
- Children without disabilities develop a better understanding of disability and how to live with those with disabilities.
- Inclusive education enhances professionalism.
- It leads to better planning, better organization and programme of learning for the whole school
- It helps children with disabilities develop a better and balanced self-image and self-worth.
- It offers children with disabilities greater opportunities to develop his or her full potential.

Factors that might militate against the implementation of Inclusive Education in the North West Region of Cameroon

Despite the fact that Cameroon has a solid legal and institutional framework to safeguard inclusive education, children with disabilities still experience a number of challenges when it comes to access to mainstream education. Most of the children lack self-esteem and have doubt in their own abilities, because of the stigma and the discrimination that they have experienced since their birth. Their parents, relatives and neighbours may not accept them as equal members of the community. These factors are varied.

- Negative attitudes influenced by traditional beliefs, values and cultures: The traditional African approach to inclusion of children with special needs for example is influenced by African belief, culture and attitude. Mba (1987) observed that among the factors contributing to the general apathy and neglect of children with disabilities in emergent African countries are superstitions that regard disability as a curse from the gods. Disability is often seen by many as a stain in their social status and families that have disabled children tend to hide them. Many Africans associate disability with bad luck and therefore would not like to visit special schools, or have them learn alongside with their children in the same classroom (Abosi and Koay, 2008). This type of situation has implication for inclusive education. In Vietnam, children with disabilities are kept at home and considered unteachable or children who cannot be taught in schools. (Villa et al, 2003). Nigerians in particular, and of course Africans in general, associate causes of disabilities to witchcraft, juju, sex-linked factors, God-mediated and supersensible forces (Abosi and Ozoji, 1985). In Botswana for example, albinos are being seen as spirited people.
- Lack or inadequate government policy: Abosi (2006) noted that proper attention has not been given to special needs education in terms of planning and organization. Its planning, organization and management have been characterized by lack of vision and commitment, inadequate funding, lack of cooperation among experts, negative attitudes influenced by traditional values, and culture. It is evident that Cameroon is signatory to a number of international and even has national conventions that protect CWD and by extension back the implementation of IE in the country (Mbibe, 2013). The challenge is that these conventions

have not been made policy as in other African countries like Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa. The application of law n° 2010/002 of 13 April 2010 on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities in Cameroon is more theoretical than practical.

- The curriculum: In all countries where IE has been implemented, the challenges of the curriculum remain a daunting task. This is because most curricula were developed without any consideration for learners with impairments. Thus, it becomes difficult to change habits of teachers who were initially trained within the backdrop of this curriculum. This difficulty is even more visible in a country like Cameroon where IE is not yet policy (Mbibe, 2013). The argument is that IE though not bad in itself is regarded as counter the official programs. One of the difficulties is that the curriculum in Cameroon is examination oriented and success in examinations especially official examinations is a tantamount to good teaching.
- Statistics on children with special learning needs: One major problem facing education of children with disabilities in developing countries is the lack of statistics on the number of children with disabilities. The exact number of children with disabilities in the third world is unknown. Figures given by researchers in various countries are usually based on estimate. The United Nations also maintains that where there is no definite figure of children with disabilities, the 10% figure of school-age children should be used as estimate. A study carried out in the North West region of Cameroon found out that the population prevalence to disability is 6.2% (Cockburn et al, 2014).
- Special educators are not part of policy making: Resource specialist who assists with the development of the individualized educational programme are not included in the educational policy making. Their involvement in the policy making process will for example, enable the modification of the physical environment of the physically and health impaired and the provision of mobility aids such as wheelchairs. It is also advisable that close and proper assessment be carried out before admission of children with special needs into the schools. This can only be done by having special educators in the policy making.
- Lack of infrastructures and research: In as much as humanity keeps progressing, there is always need for amelioration in infrastructure (Mbibe,

2013). Here we could add all material developments like assistive technology and any other structural accommodation for CWD in the educational milieu. In Cameroon, administrative offices not to mention personal houses are constructed without the least consideration for persons with impairments. The major problem confronting education and welfare of person with disabilities in the developing world is ignorance of the society about who the disabled are and the kind of provision that could be made to ensure equal opportunities (Abosi and Koay, 2008). According to a study by Shey (2018), students with disabilities seemed to be very concerned about the state of infrastructure at the University of Buea.

- **Inadequate financial provision:** Special education is expensive to run despite the fact that it is part of general education. Its budgetary allocation is derived from whatever is given to general education. Parents, teachers and administrators are of the opinion that low budgetary allocations are impediments to the implementation of IE. According to Mbibeh, (2013) in relation with the different learners' needs, budgets do not cater for the purchase of materials for say learners with visual and hearing impairments like tape cassettes, headphones, Braille machines, tactile maps, large print books, sign language books etc. The reliability of basic school infrastructure to support technology is questionable.
- **Lack of motivation:** PWDs often stay at home, isolated and hidden, and not being considered important enough to enroll in school and get a proper education. This is due to the fact that disability is often considered as an inability and ignorance about the impacts of inclusive education, make children with disabilities not to be considered in the educational milieu. The dreams of most people with disabilities in areas of adequate educational provisions, employment, and support services are yet to be realized.
- **Lack of trained personnel:** The training of special educators in Cameroon is very limited. Despite the efforts made by the government to have inclusive education in all the levels of education in Cameroon, the pedagogues are limited and don't have special training. One of the challenges of the application of these laws remains the lack of qualified personnel given that the schools of education engaged in teacher training do not provide student teachers with skills/courses in inclusive education (Mbibeh, 2013). Despite this, higher education has included the training of

special educators in some of its institutions. The teachers lack acceptance and are also not equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to teach children with disabilities. There are not enough teachers, and insufficient teaching materials and assistive devices.

- **Inadequate supportive services:** Education of children with special needs requires a lot of services. For example, different provisions should be made for different inclusive situations. For example, a class that has hearing impaired children must have such support services such as an interpreter fluent in sign language, speech trainers, speech therapist, school audiologist, and the child should be given a hearing aid. In case of visually impaired children, they would need braille equipment and brailists, mobility aids, tape recorders, and optical devices, such as magnifiers for those with residual vision (Abosi and Koay, 2008). They will in addition require the services of mobility instructor and resource teacher of the blind. All these services are limited in the promotion of inclusive education in Cameroon. The mentally retarded perhaps is the most difficult to deal with. Their inclusion must be carefully planned. The class size must be drastically reduced; level of inclusion will depend on the severity of the disability. Moreover, the schools also lack ramps and appropriate toilets, classrooms and recreational spaces to accommodate these children.

Recommendations

For inclusive education to be a reality or to be fully implemented, the following should be put in place. To achieve quality IE for all, strategies should aim to foster inclusive and safe school environments for all children, PWDs to pursue education, and challenge societal attitudes that hinder educational opportunities.

- **Develop positive attitudes towards disability:** Public enlightenment work in schools must begin the process of educating the school and the general community in order to eradicate superstitions about causation of disabilities, and to modify the fears and myths about children with disabilities that create misunderstanding and inhibit normal interaction (Ajuwon, 2008).
- **An increase in adequate material and human resources:** Human resource plays a great part in the education of children with disabilities. Having competent trained professionals will enable the children have proper education. This will provide a positive attitude towards PWDS.

- **Accessibility of school environment:** Educational infrastructures should be made accessible to students with special needs. The construction of educational infrastructures often neglects the condition of students with disabilities. According to them, the poor state of infrastructure prevented many students with special needs in participating in various school activities (Shey, 2018).
- **Implementation of policies or laws concerning PWDS in general and IE:** To improve the education systems, there is need for policy and budgetary priority to enable all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties. This will enable them to adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools. The Ministries of Education, Social Affairs and Vocational Training should develop a national policy on special needs and inclusive education in Cameroon. This will enable the students to know the goals and objectives of inclusive education in Cameroon as there is no policy document in the country to guide them... (Shey, 2018).
- **Organisation of refresher courses, workshops and seminars on inclusive education for educators:** School authorities in collaboration with the ministries in charge of education should organise seminars and workshops to equip teachers with issues of inclusive education... (Shey, 2018). The issues should centre on curriculum adaptation, behavioral management, collaborative teaching techniques, problem-solving strategies, and preparing meaningful IEPs which can be used in the regular classroom.

Conclusion

The educational inclusion of children with disabilities is the best option if its benefits are considered. Inclusive education has social advantage and parents have expressed satisfaction with the progress of their children in this direction. The implementation of inclusive education has mildly improved although lack of resources is painted as a significant barrier (Shey, 2018). Inadequate resources can be perceived by lack of a specific policy on inclusive education and the perception of negative attitudes towards students experiencing disability. In the view of Mbibeh (2013), the challenges of IE are surmountable, it is worth nothing that it takes commitment, time and effort to make IE successful and sustainable. Wapling (2016) is of the opinion that, despite the challenges of inclusive education, there is an increase in general understanding and acceptance of education as a right for children with

disabilities. It is high time all stakeholders in Cameroon come to the drawing board to design a model for IE in Cameroon. This cannot be undertaken on its own by only one stakeholder. Contributions from various stakeholders such as government, non-state actors are essential to combat exclusion. The partnership needs to be fostered at various levels. Inclusive education has its challenges, but this can be achieved through the provision of supporting policy framework. Simply placing children with disabilities in a regular classroom is not enough. These children need the support of teachers who understand their needs, access to appropriate learning materials and a carefully conceived and executed inclusion plans. To achieve this, the article recommends an aggressive inclusive education policy, where all the needs of all learners are being taken care of in the various classrooms.

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