

## EXAMINING TEACHERS' CONCERNS AND ATTITUDES TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN GHANA

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*This paper reports on a study that examined teachers' concerns and attitude toward inclusive education of students with disabilities in Ghana. A 20 item Attitudes Toward Inclusion in Africa Scale (ATIAS) was completed by 100 teachers from five 'Inclusive Project' schools and five Non-Project coeducational basic schools in three different localities; central business, coastal and suburban areas within the Greater Accra metropolis. Analysis of the responses indicated four factors: Behavioural Issues, Student Needs, Resource Issues and Professional Competency. Interviews were also conducted with a small sample of the teachers in order to extend the understanding of their attitude and concerns. The paper draws on the findings to provide recommendations for improving practice in inclusive based classrooms.*

### Introduction

The aim of this study was to compare two different teachers' concerns and attitude toward inclusive education of students with disabilities in Ghana. Inclusive Education is a global agenda (Pijl, Meijer, & Hegarty, 1997), however, it is context specific in terms of meaning and practice. Generally, inclusion in education means, "full inclusion of children with diverse abilities in all aspects of schooling that other children are able to access and enjoy" (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2005, p. 2). All children can learn when teaching is effective and meets individual strengths and learning needs (Ainscow, 1999; Corbett, 2001; Gale, 2001; Lindsay, 2003). Ghana's concept of inclusive education, however, is aligned with her FCUBE policy - increasing access, retention and participation of all students of school going age in education and not the movement and provision of education to children with disabilities in regular schools. The emphasis is on changing school culture and organisation, to providing resources and to building capacity in special and regular schools to offer new opportunities to pupils who may have previously or continue to experience learning difficulties (GES, 2004; Ocloo, Hayford, Agbeke, Gadagbui, Avoke, Boison, 2002).

The government of Ghana since independence regards education as a fundamental human right for all its citizens and it has enshrined this right in the Legal Framework

of Education. The 1961 Education Act is the principal legislation concerning the right to education for all children in Ghana, which states that:

*every child who has attained the school going age as determined by the Minister shall attend a course of instruction as laid down by the Minister in a school recognised for the purpose by the Minister* (Ghana Education Service (GES), 2004, p. 2).

The 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana gives further provision and support for education as a basic human right for all Ghanaians. Article 38 (2) states:

*The Government shall within two years after parliament first meets after coming into force of this constitution draw up a program for the implementation within the following ten years for the provision of a free, compulsory universal basic education.* (Government of Ghana (GOV), 1992, p. 40)

A 10-year Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Programme in 1996, a policy framework that will increase educational access to all children, emerged from the 1992 Constitution. This policy has three main themes:

1. Improving quality of teaching and learning
2. Improving management efficiency
3. Increasing access and participation (GES, 2003).

The most recent policy initiative is the 'Capitation Grant'. This policy, which provides free feeding programme for vulnerable children in deprived settings, is to reinforce the existing FCUBE policy of attracting and retaining children in school (MOE, 2005). A total of 95 billion Cedis, an equivalent of US\$ 10.4 million, was allocated for Capitation Grant in 2006 (GOV, 2006).

Although Ghana is endowed with natural resources such as gold, timber, industrial diamond, bauxite and fish, the country still rely heavily on international donor support and technical assistance from Canada, Japan, Germany jus to mention a few to implement her educational policies. Currently, GDP growth rate continues to increase from 5.8% in 2005 to 6% in 2006 (GOV, 2006). Consequently several education policies were implemented which led to significant achievements. National Primary Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) increased from 86.1% 2003/2004 to 87.5% in 2004/2005 (GES, 2006). At present, the country spends more than 35% of its GDP on education as compared to 0.3 percent on defence (Military) (GOV, 2006; Agbenyega, 2005); however, such funds are still limited to meeting the demands for comprehensive quality education.

The successes chopped, however, mask long-term challenges in access, retention and quality education for all, particularly for students with disabilities due to lack of professional development activities for teachers, ineffective monitoring system and limited resources provided to schools (Sayed, Akyeampong & Ampiah, 2000). Further, architectural barriers, inaccessible curriculum and limited pre-/post-training in special education courses for regular classroom teachers limit access to education for students with disabilities (GES, 2004). The government of Ghana states:

*The challenges facing the government of Ghana for ensuring social and educational inclusion include public prejudiced perception of persons with special needs, architectural barriers, inadequate assessment facilities, inaccessible curriculum, curriculum inflexibility and pre-/post-training in special education needs for regular teachers. (GES, 2004, p. 15)*

The most critical of all the barriers to free universal education for students, particularly those with disabilities is negative attitude and prejudice. Some Ghanaians still attribute the causes of disabilities to curses from the gods (Agbenyega, 2005; Avoke, 2002; Oliver-Commey, 2001). For instance, the women wing of the Ghana Society for the Physically Disabled (GSPD), an advocacy group, when they were asked during their working visit to the Northern Region of Ghana about the situation of disabled persons in the villages, reported the following:

*They will say of the disabled children - especially when they are newly born -- that that one is not a human being. It's a fairy, a spirit, a snake, and they will find a way of doing away with that child! Others, they will not kill their child but they will hide the child. They wouldn't like anybody to know, because the person will say, oh, you are not a good person, that's why God has given you such a child with disabilities. And only later through neglect that child is killed off.*

*A man had his disabled daughter in the room for 27 years, before she was sick and she died. He never took her to a doctor, so it was only then that we heard of her.*

*Sometimes when others get a child with a disability, they consult soothsayers - people who claim that they can see the future of somebody, or foresee things that have happened, or are going to happen. So when they consult these people, sometimes they give them some concoctions to come and give the child. They say if the child is not a fairy, the child will not die. But, if the child is a fairy, the child will die. (Nepveux, D., Mwinibalono, M & Kuomkugri, J., 2004, p. 1)*

This is consistent with what Agbenyega (2005), Avoke (2002), GES (2004) noted that negative attitude, and persistent low regard for students with disabilities poses a serious barrier to social and educational inclusion in Ghana. The challenge is how to remove these barriers to open the way for social and educational inclusion. Some disability organizations in Ghana; Ghana society for the Physically Disabled (GSPD) and Ghana Society for the Blind (GSB) all called for inclusion of students with disabilities in society and regular schools. These requests are important and necessary as it is noted that traditional representations and practices of special education do not offer persons with disabilities opportunities for social and educational inclusion (Johnson, 1994; Kochhar, West, & Taymans, 2000; Koray, 2003; Loreman, 1999). Inclusive schooling offers new hope for school success and social integration for persons with and without disabilities (Bennett, DeLuca, & Bruns, 1997; Cowne, 2003; Gable & Hendrickson, 1997).

*Efforts at embracing the philosophy of inclusion*

The government of Ghana, having realized the barriers to participation of students with disabilities in society and regular schools, and due to the pressure from disability active groups – GSB and GSPD - entered into an agreement in September 2003 with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), a British non-governmental organisation. According to the agreement, the VSO would pilot inclusive education in ten districts within three regions, and upon its success, to extend it to other regions. The pilot project incorporated the following objectives:

1. *Project officials will collaborate with District Social Welfare and Health officials to sensitise the communities involved by October/November, 2003;*
2. *Increase public awareness on disabilities by November/ December 2003;*
3. *Organise training programmes for teachers and selected GES personnel/Stakeholders by February/ March 2004;*
4. *Move towards inclusive education system by September, 2004;*
5. *Improve access to physical facilities by September 2004; and*
6. *Supply appropriate teaching and learning materials by March/April, 2004.* (Ghana Education Service/VSO project document, 2003, p. 2)

The objectives 3, 4, 5 and 6 are of particular concern to this study. The overall aim was to determine the impact of this initiative on the concerns and attitude of teachers in the project schools compared to their non-project counterparts. The study did not include the members of the wider community, social welfare and other health officials who were mentioned in the GES/VSO project.

### **Teachers' attitudes and concerns**

Beliefs about disability, ethnicity, attitude and concerns of teachers can influence the practice of inclusive education, the quality of educational materials and instruction students receive (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Nieto, 1997; Sharma & Desai, 2002; Wilczenski, 1992). Many regular education teachers who feel unprepared and fearful to work with learners with disabilities in regular classes display frustration, anger and negative attitude toward inclusive education because they believe it could lead to lower academic standards (Gary, 1997; Tiegerman-Farber & Radziewicz, 1998). Additionally, access to resources and specialist support affects teacher confidence and attitudes toward inclusive education (Bennett, DeLuca, & Bruns, 1997; Wolery, Anthony, Snyder, Werts, & Katzenmeyer, 1997).

It is argued that when teachers gain extensive professional knowledge needed to implement inclusive programmes they may succumb to it (Avramidis, Buylis, & Burden, 2000). Similarly, LeyRoy and Simpson (1996) reported that as teachers experience with students, particularly those with special needs intensify, their confidence to teach them is likely to grow which invariably alter their negative attitudes.

The majority of studies that investigated educators' concerns and attitude to inclusive education were conducted in Western countries (D'Alonzo, Giordano, & Vanleeuwen, 1997; Harvey, 1998; Heflin & Bullock, 1999). Although they provide significant information and scaffolding for inclusive practice in developing countries, these studies do not adequately address issues that are relevant to the Ghanaian context. This study is therefore important in examining teachers' concerns and attitude toward inclusive education in Ghana.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

A total of 100 basic schoolteachers, made up of 33% males and 67% females from ten schools, participated in the study. The majority of the teachers (65%) were above 35 years of age. These teachers consist of 50 teachers from five schools that are involved in the GES/VSO inclusive project and another 50 from five schools that were not currently involved in the project. Each school consists of grades 7, 8 and 9 with the age range of students from 13 to 16 years. The teachers form 66 % of all the teachers in the ten schools. A large number of teachers (68 %) did not have any training in special education or related courses.

The non-GES/VSO project schools were chosen for comparison because of similar characteristics such as socio-economic status, enrolment levels, resource availability and location. The project and the non-project schools do not differ in terms of enrolment, resources and teacher experience. Twenty-three percent of the students in the project schools were identified as having special education needs compared to 5 % in the non-project schools. Of the 100 teachers surveyed, 85% have taught for more than ten years, 25% have first degrees, 3 % with Diploma and 72% have teachers' Certificate A'. Certificate A is the lowest and initial teaching qualification in Ghana, which is awarded to students who graduated from non-university teacher training colleges.

### *Measure*

This study combines surveys with qualitative approach. The instrument used to examine concern and attitudes of teachers in this study was an anonymous Attitudes Toward Inclusion in Africa Scale (ATIAS), for details on this scale (see Agbenyega, Deppeler & Harvey, 2005). When internal reliability of the responses to the questionnaire was computed the author reported an Alpha coefficient of 0.84 for the total scale. After the survey, teachers who agreed to a personal interview were asked three questions: What are your concerns regarding the practice of inclusive education in your school? What can you say about your current level of professional expertise with regards to inclusive education? What kinds of support services and resources are available in your schools for promoting inclusive education?

### *Procedure*

The participants understood inclusive education to be the provision of education to students with and without disabilities in regular schools before they filled in the questionnaires. The questionnaires were collected at each school on the following day with a 100% response rate.

In order to gain more insight into and to extend the understanding of the issues being investigated, two separate group interviews were conducted with 10 teachers, five representing each category of school. To ensure validity and reliability of the qualitative data, the transcribed interviews were sent back to the interviewees for comment before the final version was included for analysis.

The quantitative data were analysed with SPSS computer software (Coates & Steed, 2003). Factor analysis, group means and standard deviations were computed as appropriate. Framework analysis procedures were followed to analyse the qualitative data. The procedure involved:

- Familiarisation with the data
- Identifying a thematic framework for the data
- Indexing or coding
- Charting by using headings from the thematic framework to create charts of the data which facilitates easy reading across the whole dataset, and
- Mapping and Interpretation of the themes (Ritchie & Spencer, 1993).

Responses from project schoolteachers were coded as *PST* and those from the non-project schools were coded as *NPST*. The interview results supported and extended the understanding of the concerns and attitude of teachers. The quantitative results are presented first followed by the qualitative complements.

## Results and Discussion

Factor analysis of the scale yielded a total score and four factors, *Behavioural issues*, *Student needs*, *Resources issues*, and *Professional competency*. These values are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Factor Loading for Principal Component Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation for 20 ATIAS Scale items**

| <u>Items</u>   | <u>Factors</u> |    |     |    |
|--|----------------|----|-----|----|
|  | I              | II | III | IV |
| Students with difficulty following school rules should be in regular schools (1)                     | .787           |    |     |    |
| Students who are physically aggressive towards their peers in school should be in regular school (2) | .615           |    |     |    |
| Students who need help to move about should be in regular school (3)                                 | .609           |    |     |    |
| Students who are verbally aggressive towards their peers should be in regular school (6)             | .603           |    |     |    |

|  |              |              |              |              |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | 9            |              |              |              |
| Students who persistently experience difficulty in expressing their thoughts should be in regular schools (7)  | .6<br>2<br>3 |              |              |              |
| Students who have difficulty in controlling their behaviour should be in regular schools (11)                  | .6<br>1<br>8 |              |              |              |
| Students who are often absent from school should be in regular schools (12)                                    | .7<br>0<br>8 |              |              |              |
| Students who have difficulty in sustaining attention in class should be in regular schools (13)                | .5<br>8<br>1 |              |              |              |
| Students whose speech is difficult to understand should be in regular school (4)                               | .6<br>1<br>7 |              |              |              |
| Students who cannot read standard print and require Braille should be in regular schools (5)                   | .7<br>6<br>6 |              |              |              |
| Students who lack daily living skills and need training in managing themselves should be in regular school (8) | .5<br>9<br>1 |              |              |              |
| Students with speech problems should be in regular schools (9)   | .7<br>9<br>0 |              |              |              |
| Students who need sign language as a medium of communication should be in regular schools (10)                 | .7<br>6<br>2 |              |              |              |
| Inclusion will lead to stress and anxiety (16)   |              | .5<br>9<br>5 |              |              |
| Lack of adequate resources and special materials will make inclusion difficult (18)                            |              | .6<br>8<br>3 |              |              |
| Inappropriate infrastructure will make inclusion impossible (19)   |              | .6<br>0<br>6 |              |              |
| Class sizes will make inclusion difficult to operate (20)  |              | .7<br>5<br>0 |              |              |
| It will be difficult to give equal attention to all students in inclusive classrooms (14)                      |              |              | .6<br>0<br>9 |              |
| I will not be able to cope with disabled students (15)   |              |              | .7<br>9<br>5 |              |
| I do not have knowledge and skills to teach students with disabilities (17)                                    |              |              | .6<br>3<br>0 |              |
| Factor mean scores   | .6<br>6<br>3 | .7<br>0<br>5 | .6<br>5<br>9 | .6<br>7<br>8 |

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Total variance explained is 54.7%. The number in parenthesis indicates the serial number of each item on the ATIAS scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is .708

The first factor describes behaviours believed to be characteristics of students with disabilities that most teachers would find difficult to work with in inclusive classrooms This factor was labelled 'Behavioural issues' (Items 1, 2,3,6,7,11,12,and 13). The second factor relates to challenges believed to be characteristics of students with sensory disabilities, which teachers believe require extra needs and support that cannot be provided in inclusive based regular classrooms. This factor was called 'Student needs' (Items 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10). The third factor relates to organisational and structural supports needed to assist teachers in the practice of inclusive education. This factor was called 'Resource issues' (Items 16, 18, 19 and 20). The fourth factor describes items in relation to teacher stress, and inability to teach adequately students with disabilities. It appears that teachers, as a result of their level of training and expertise, do not consider themselves ready to take on this task. This factor was labelled 'Professional competency' (Items 14, 15 and 17).

### Comparison between project and non-project schools teachers' attitude

Mean and t-test were also computed to verify if there exist differences between the attitudes and concerns of teachers in the project and non-project schools. The result, as shown in Table 2, did not indicate any statistical difference between the two groups on the four factors. It is therefore difficult to determine the level of impact of the inclusive project on the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion.

**Table 2: Comparison between project and non-project schoolteachers' mean scores on the Four ATIAS Factors**

| ATIAS Factor        | Project Schools |    | Non-Project Schools |      |   |     |
|---------------------|-----------------|----|---------------------|------|---|-----|
|                     | Mean            | SD | Mean                | SD   | T | sig |
| <b>Factor One</b>   | 4.6             | 1  | 4.51                | 1.91 | . | .   |
|                     | 8               | .  |                     |      | 4 | 5   |
|                     |                 | 9  |                     |      | 5 | 9   |
| <b>Factor Two</b>   | 5.7             | 1  | 5.99                | 1.11 | - | .   |
|                     | 7               | .  |                     |      | . | 3   |
|                     |                 | 4  |                     |      | 8 | 0   |
| <b>Factor Three</b> | 3.2             | 2  | 3.05                | 1.99 | . | .   |
|                     | 5               | .  |                     |      | 4 | 6   |
|                     |                 | 1  |                     |      | 1 | 4   |
| <b>Factor Four</b>  | 5.1             | 1  | 5.12                | 1.57 | . | .   |
|                     | 7               | .  |                     |      | 2 | 7   |
|                     |                 | 6  |                     |      | 5 | 0   |
|                     |                 | 2  |                     | 1    | 7 |     |



|              |       |      |       |      |    |   |
|--------------|-------|------|-------|------|----|---|
| <b>Total</b> | 18.87 | 7.14 | 18.67 | 6.58 | .2 | 2 |
|              |       | 1    |       |      | 3  | 2 |
|              |       | 4    |       |      | 1  | 5 |

To investigate whether there were differences between the groups on the individual items that made up the scale, each item was scrutinised. Table 3 provides the means and standard deviations by items broken down between the GES/VSO project and non-GES/VSO project groups which indicated a relatively the same scores from both school sites. Inspection of the item means suggests that large class sizes (item 20) drew the highest concerns and increased negative attitude of both teacher groups toward inclusive education. Similarly, both teacher groups indicated high levels of concerns and negative attitude regarding adequate resources, special materials and inappropriate infrastructure (items 18, 19) and regarding their professional competencies to support students with disabilities in inclusive classes (items 14, 15 & 17).

**Table 3: Means and standard deviations for each survey item**

| Question | Non-project school<br>(N=50) |        | Project school<br>(N=50) |      | <u>M</u><br>Dif |
|----------|------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|------|-----------------|
|          | <u>M</u>                     | S<br>D | <u>M</u>                 | SD   |                 |
| 1        | 4.60                         | 2.00   | 4.42                     | 2.03 | .18             |
| 2        | 4.40                         | 2.00   | 4.70                     | 1.83 | .3              |
| 3        | 4.60                         | 2.04   | 4.66                     | 2.01 | .06             |
| 4        | 3.50                         | 2.19   | 3.52                     | 1.95 | .02             |
| 5        | 2.62                         | 1.98   | 2.30                     | 1.83 | .32             |
| 6        | 4.80                         | 2.03   | 4.52                     | 1.79 | .28             |
| 7        | 4.79                         | 2.02   | 4.42                     | 1.75 | .37             |
| 8        | 3.60                         | 2.08   | 3.58                     | 1.89 | .02             |

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|    |      |   |     |      |     |
|----|------|---|-----|------|-----|
|    |      | 1 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 8 |     |      |     |
| 9  | 3.70 | 2 | 3.1 | 1.99 | .52 |
|    |      | . | 8   |      |     |
|    |      | 0 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 4 |     |      |     |
| 10 | 2.82 | 2 | 2.6 | 2.3  | .16 |
|    |      | . | 6   |      |     |
|    |      | 0 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 8 |     |      |     |
| 11 | 4.20 | 2 | 4.2 | 1.99 | 0   |
|    |      | . | 0   |      |     |
|    |      | 1 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 4 |     |      |     |
| 12 | 5.80 | 1 | 5.6 | 1.15 | .14 |
|    |      | . | 6   |      |     |
|    |      | 3 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 2 |     |      |     |
| 13 | 4.88 | 1 | 4.5 | 1.84 | .36 |
|    |      | . | 2   |      |     |
|    |      | 7 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 7 |     |      |     |
| 14 | 5.24 | 1 | 5.1 | 1.78 | .1  |
|    |      | . | 4   |      |     |
|    |      | 7 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 4 |     |      |     |
| 15 | 4.46 | 1 | 4.5 | 1.98 | .08 |
|    |      | . | 4   |      |     |
|    |      | 9 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 9 |     |      |     |
| 16 | 4.30 | 1 | 4.7 | 1.65 | .42 |
|    |      | . | 2   |      |     |
|    |      | 8 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 9 |     |      |     |
| 17 | 5.82 | 1 | 5.6 | 0.96 | .14 |
|    |      | . | 8   |      |     |
|    |      | 1 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 2 |     |      |     |
| 18 | 6.26 | 1 | 6.1 | 1.45 | .14 |
|    |      | . | 2   |      |     |
|    |      | 3 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 2 |     |      |     |
| 19 | 6.16 | 1 | 6.1 | 0.80 | .01 |
|    |      | . | 5   |      |     |
|    |      | 0 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 8 |     |      |     |
| 20 | 6.22 | 1 | 6.6 | 0.63 | .4  |
|    |      | . | 2   |      |     |
|    |      | 4 |     |      |     |
|    |      | 7 |     |      |     |

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\* Higher mean scores show increased concerns and more negative attitudes toward inclusion.

Qualitative themes

The three key themes that emerged from the group interviews were: ‘beliefs about inclusion’, professional issues’ ‘and resource issues’. Apart from being consistent with the four factors obtained from the factor analysis, the qualitative findings provided a rich description of the teachers’ perception and attitudes towards inclusion. Representative quotes from the group interviews have been reproduced to reflect each of the three themes. Each quotation is identified by its source from either a non-project schoolteachers (NPST) or project school teachers (PST).

### *1. Beliefs about inclusion*

The teachers’ beliefs about inclusion suggest that they do not regard students with disabilities, particularly those with sensory impairments as belonging in regular classes and would rather prefer them being educated in existing special schools:

*With usual students you do not have to waste too much time supporting and guiding them...we haven't yet come to terms with the belief that students who cannot speak or hear can be educated in regular schools ...we do not believe this is going to work. It is better if they remain in the special schools. (NPST)*

Teachers also believed that including students with disabilities limits the amount of teaching work they could do thereby resulting in incompleteness of the syllabuses:

*This inclusive education business is just a waste of teachers' time. We are always far behind in completing our syllabuses for the term...it is also resulting into low output of work and we teachers are always blamed for this. (PST)*

The teachers also believed that if students with disabilities were included in regular classes it would affect the academic performance of their peers without disabilities:

*We must not only be thinking about the placement of students with disabilities into regular schools, we also must think about how their placement is going to disturb the emotions and academic performance of the other students without disabilities. (NPST)*

### *2. Professional issues*

Teachers perceived that their professional knowledge and skills were inadequate to effectively teach students with disabilities in regular schools:

*If those students with visual impairment, intellectual disabilities and those with speech problems are included, we do not think it can work...we do not have the requisite knowledge, skills and experience to do that sort of teaching. You meet some of the students who cannot express themselves... others too can't read normal books because they have low vision and you just don't know what to do to help them because you do not know yourself. (NPST and PST)*

Further, the teachers expressed fear and concern, that because they do not have the required knowledge and expertise to teach students with disabilities who are included in their regular classes; it is contributing to a reduction in the academic success of their schools:

*How do the policy makers expect us to work with students that we have not been trained for? Our inability to meet the needs of those students with specific*

*problems such as visual impairment, intellectual disabilities and those with speech problems is hindering academic progress for us. Teaching all these students at the same time is really a difficult job for us. (PST)*

### 3. Resource issues

Apart from teachers' negative beliefs about inclusion and concern for their professional competency to practice inclusive education, resource issues also drew much concern for both teacher groups. Resource issues addressed physical aspects such as inaccessible classrooms to students in a wheel chair, overcrowded classrooms; materials such as Braille and large prints:

*It is really hard for us to manage with the existing resources...as I speak our schools are not accessible to those students in a wheelchair. Our classrooms are overcrowded with one teacher teaching 50 to 60 students in one class. It is not possible to give individual attention to all these students...including students with disabilities would worsen the learning situation. (PST and NPST)*

Further, teachers expressed concern about the lack of support from professionals with expertise such as peripatetic teachers or those with expertise in sign language and Braille as well as general special education experts:

*What is happening is just a matter of policy; we do not think the officers are serious...with this inclusive project two years ago nothing has changed for the better... we are still at square one, our schools are not supported by any expert who could show us how to do inclusive teaching... we did have one VSO volunteer but that was a long time ago... they always complain they do not have the personnel... we don't know why they introduced the programme in the first place...nobody seems to know where we are heading to now. (PST)*

Further, teachers clearly resented what they perceived to be imposed policy:

*Those who are advocating for inclusive education in this country sit in their offices and forcing the policy on us...they are deliberately ignoring the facts of the problem. (PST)*

Teachers overwhelmingly believe that inclusive education is impossible without addressing their needs for specialist resources. Overall belief is that without sufficient resources and support inclusive education was not possible and doomed:

*You cannot work on your farm without a farming tool...different farming activities require different tools and appropriate expertise. It is better our schools do not start inclusion because these officers will push you and leave you to fall. (PST and NPST)*

This study investigated and compared GES/VSO inclusive project and non-project schools teachers' concerns and attitudes toward inclusive education in Ghana. The qualitative themes were found to be consistent throughout and supported the quantitative findings. The teachers from the GES/VSO inclusive schools and non-project schools were matched against each other in terms of experience, resources, age and socio-economic status and thus these demographic variables were not likely to influence the results. Sex and age has also not been found to determine the outcome of the results. The overall results did not show much difference between the two teacher groups and school sites. In general, GES/VSO projects schools have not

shown to be favourable in instilling favourable attitudes in teachers and reducing their concerns about inclusive practice in Ghana within the two years in operation.

Two issues are of major concern from this study: Teachers believe that regular schools are not places for students with disabilities, particularly those students with sensory impairments, and they perceive that policy makers impose inclusive education. The beliefs, negative attitude and concerns expressed by teachers in this study may be explained due to lack of professional preparedness, available resources, lack of sufficient orientation and specialist assistance. Professional knowledge (initial and further training), material and human resources are found to enhance teachers' positive attitudes and their willingness to embrace and make inclusion work (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2005). It is when teachers' are sufficiently equipped in knowledge and expertise and supported by other professionals that their confident levels to work with *all* students in inclusive classrooms will improve.

Further, the results of this study set us to wonder why the project schools did not differ in terms of attitudes and concerns from their non-project counterparts. One conclusion that can be drawn is, while GES is looking for quick answers and therefore set time frames for achieving good results, they have not been able to pursue their objectives with the same ambition that prompted them to initiate the project or that they have not been able to mobilise sufficient human and materials resources for the project. Another plausible interpretation may be that teachers were not involved in the initial planning and implementation of the programme and thus they resented any efforts by policy makers to implement inclusive education in Ghana. This was evident in their comments when they regarded inclusive education as an imposition from outside. Above all large classes in Ghana, for instance, due to the free feeding program offered through the Capitation Grant, the pupil-teacher ration has doubled to an average of 60 students per teacher. Inclusive education involving persons with disabilities will not be possible under such circumstances.

Researchers have noted that inclusive education is a dynamic process without any quick fix and which requires the endorsement of regular classroom teachers to be successful (Corbett, 2001; Lindsay, 2003). Thus, any intervention programmes to reduce negative attitudes and improve inclusive education in Ghana should adopt a comprehensive grassroots approach and target these issues.

## **Conclusion**

This study has shown that attitudes and concerns of teachers affect their acceptance and commitment to implementing inclusion. It is worth noting that inclusive education, as implemented by Ghana Education Service FCUBE policy and GES/VSO project, is not leading to equal and appropriate educational outcomes, particularly for students with disabilities because of inappropriate school practices, such as rejection of students with disabilities by regular teachers, inappropriate resources, and lack of provision of generic support and training services. It is

important that teacher attitude toward inclusive education are studied in-depth on regular bases. Schools need to, and can effectively communicate diversity, if they are aware of themselves and others and if this awareness transforms traditional teaching cultures. Hargreaves (1992) defined the culture of teaching as consisting of “beliefs, values, habits and assumed ways of doing things among communities of teachers” (p.271). To facilitate effective inclusive education support must be provided that promotes change in attitudes, beliefs, values and habits (Werts, Wolery, Snyder, Caldwell & Salisbury, 1996; Wilkins & Nietfield, 2004). The first step for GES to make inclusive education work would be to develop inclusive policies that are separated from the FCUBE policies. Successful inclusive educational practice cannot be possible without policies to provide clear guidelines and a commitment to the principle of inclusion (Harvey, 1998). Inclusive policy development should address issues specific to Ghana. Issues for example, identified in this study regarding large class sizes, professional competency, student needs, teacher beliefs and resources are, particularly important for inclusive practice to be successful in Ghana. The existing pre-service and in-service teacher programmes need to be re-evaluated to develop specific programmes for training regular classroom teachers so that they can effectively respond to the needs of all students. Further, as multidisciplinary teams are important facilitators of inclusive education, research need to be conducted to evaluate how the GES/VSO project is collaborating with other paraprofessionals who are included in the project, and to find out what is the initiative’s impact on sensitising and reducing negative attitudes among the Ghanaian population toward students with disabilities. Most importantly, GES should involve classroom teachers in all stages of inclusive policy development and decision making that would affect them in their schools. A synchronisation of these support systems and the involvement of teachers would be a catalyst in reducing their negative attitude and concerns about inclusive education in Ghana.

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