Teachers` implementation of Inclusive Education in Ghanaian Primary Schools: An Insight into Government Policy and Practice.

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ABSTRACT

The study reported in this paper is the examination of teachers' experiences of the implementation of Inclusive Education in two districts in Ghana, Bole in the north and New Juabeng in the south in ten primary and junior secondary schools. Using the framework of Ntombela (2009, 2011) and Torombe (2013) this article replicates their study in new setting - Ghana.   Employing both quantitative and qualitative data analyses procedures, the study found that teachers had limited, varied and often distorted understandings of the inclusive policy and the innovation. These understandings suggested that instead of the paradigm shift warranted by the new policy, most of the teachers still relied heavily on the old deficit, medical model of educating learners with special educational needs. The study concludes that, to be successful, the policy initiation process needs to become clear and more inclusive to enable stakeholders to embrace the agenda and to understand its purpose. Further, a new policy will not be able to challenge and change the culture and practice in schools unless teachers are well trained and the necessity of appropriate allocation and use of resources put in place.

Keywords: Ghana, educational innovation, Inclusive Education, special education needs, policy dissemination.

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the Salamanca Declaration on Inclusive Education, The Ministry of Education (MOE) in collaboration with The Ghana Education Service (GES) has adopted a policy of integration of all children with special needs in the normal schools and sending those with severe disabilities to Special Education as indicated in the Education Strategic Plan (2010-2020). Consequently, children with mild or moderate disabilities are admitted to normal schools. This has enticed parents to send their children with disabilities to school. Screening teams comprising districts special education officers, inclusive education resource teachers, school teachers and staff of the Ghana Health Services have been trained to carry out screening exercises in selected districts (MOE 2008).

Ntombela (2011) and Torombe (2013) have observed the complexities of educational policy dissemination in developing the professional skills of teachers to implement inclusive education. Despite numerous challenges facing GES, MOE has registered some improvement in certain selected schools in the Northern and Eastern regions, and the success story is expected to be spread to other districts in these regions. Enrolment at primary and JHS increased dramatically over the last decade: primary Net Enrolment Rate (NER) increased from 59% to 82.9% between 2001/02 and 2007/08 and JHS NER increased from 30% to 52.9% in the same period. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) improved from 0.90 to 0.96 for primary and 0.84 to 0.92 for JHS between 2001/02 and 2007/08. There has also been tremendous improvement in enrolment for the three northern regions; NER data between 2001/02 and 2007/08 shows that enrolment growth in the

three northern regions was more than the national growth rate. There have also been great strides in enrolment in deprived districts and rural areas over the years (MOE 2009).

Inclusive Education has been on the international agenda for some time such that extensive research has been conducted in first-world countries around the development of inclusive systems of education (UNESCO, 1994; Booth, 1996; Rouse & Florian, 1996; Ainscow, 1999; Ballard, 1999; Armstrong, Armstrong, & Barton, 2000; Dyson & Millward, 2000; Slee, 2000; Tait & Purdie, 2000; Doyle, 2002; Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004). In developing countries such as Ghana, it is still a fairly new concept and, although some research has been done, there are still many areas that have not been explored. Among the few available studies are those documenting the inclusion of learners with disabilities (Jairaj, 1997; Muthukrishna, Farman & Sader, 2000; Engelbrecht, Swart & Eloff, 2001; Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Pettipher & Oswald, 2004), teachers' and learners' experiences of integration (Arbeiter & Hartley, 2002), the ways in which special educational needs are addressed or not addressed (Ntombela, 1993, 1997, 2003, 2011), and the conceptualization of barriers to learning, development, and participation (Department of Education, 1997; Naicker, 1999; Department of Education, 2001a). Other studies focus on the theoretical framework for developing inclusive schools (Engelbrecht, 1999; Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht, 1999; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001), teacher training, and teacher readiness, or lack thereof, to implement inclusive education (Forlin & Engelbrecht, 1998; Engelbrecht et al, 2001; Hay, Smit & Paulsen, 2001).

Prior to the 1990s, very few students with disabilities in Ghana were included in regular education classrooms. However, the needs of many children with disabilities were not being met, as such: the Government launched two programs (The Community-Based Rehabilitation Program and the Inclusive Education Program) to reform the system of educational provision for such students. The implementation of public policy with respect to persons with disabilities in Ghana has been saddled with problems. These findings raise concerns regarding the implementation of the Inclusive Education Program in Ghana and government policies as guidelines, Ofori-Addo (1994) and O'Toole, Hofslett, Bupuru, Ofori-Addo, & Kotoku (1996).

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Inclusive Education policies worldwide are developed to integrate special need and regular education together in a unified education system (Torombe, 2013). Teachers` knowledge, insight and understanding of government policy document in Inclusive Education is necessary for the practice of inclusion in the classroom (Agbenyega & Deku , 2011; Kuyini & Desai, 2009; Torombe , 2013). The successful implementation of Inclusive Education programs is contingent on several key factors including effective school practices, positive teacher attitudes toward and adequate teacher knowledge of inclusion (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Beh-Pajooh, 1992; Bowman, 1986; Center & Ward, 1987; Cornoldi, et al., 1998; Leyser, Kepperman, & Keller, 1994; Sage & Burello, 1994; Shimman, 1990; Soodak, Podell & Lehman, 1998) as well as the use of effective teaching practices (including making instructional adaptations) , collaboration and administrative support to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Friend & Bursuck, 1996, 2002; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000; Torombe, 2013). Inclusive Education was introduced in 1990s in Ghana and for the first time introduced in Ghanaian schools in 2003\2004 under a pilot project. In 2008 there were 129 inclusive schools (Anthony 2009), but lack of teachers` knowledge of Inclusive Education, lack of resources and inappropriate teaching strategies prevent successful implementation (Anthony 2009).

Although the roles of instruction, teacher knowledge and attitudes have been seen as crucial to successful inclusion, many regular-school principals' and teachers' attitudes toward inclusion

were often not positive (Avramidis, et al., 2000; Cook, 2001; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Further, principals and teachers have often demonstrated considerable lack of knowledge about students with disabilities and inclusion (Cline, 1981; Schumm & Vaughn; 1995; Tomlinson, Callahan, Eiss, Imbeau, & Landrum, 1997), and teachers have often used more undifferentiated large-group instruction with few adaptations to meet the needs of included students (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Schumm, et al., 1995). This aside, there are significant contextual realities associated with regular education schools (Shanker, 1995), such as principals' expectations, which shape the school's culture/climate for successful inclusion. Research shows that though teachers support inclusion few are willing to include students with disabilities into their own classrooms.

Agbenyega & Deku (2011) saw teachers`s unwillingness to include students with disabilities as a factor of insufficient knowledge of inclusion and the inability to manage diverse needs, as well as the lack of ability to adapt curriculum and instructional strategies to facilitate learning outcomes (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

These findings reinforce an earlier assertion by Welch (1989) that the reluctance of teachers to include students with special needs must be addressed if a policy of inclusion is to be successful. Highlighting the importance of these elements, Avramidis, et al. (2000) and Moberg, Zumberg, and Reinmaa (1997) stated that educator beliefs, perceptions and training should be viewed as potentially influential antecedents to their commitment toward implementing a successful inclusion policy. These elements (attitudes, knowledge, teaching practices, and principals' expectations) undoubtedly have a potential to significantly impact on the implementation of the inclusive education program in Ghana as has happened in other countries.

A policy (NDP) was put in place in 2000 for the government to seek regulatory measures to promote the enabling environment for the total integration of persons with disabilities into society. The policy seeks to present Government strategies for mobilizing and integrating persons with disabilities into the mainstream of the socioeconomic life of the communities in which they live; and by so doing, ensure that persons with disabilities (PWDs) contribute to achieving the national vision of poverty reduction and improvement of their living conditions.

It is also worth to note that the disability document of June, 2000 acknowledged that about 53% of women with disability are with no education compared with 37.3% of males with disability. Even when PWDs manage to enter the formal education system they hardly manage through primary education. About 17.5% of PWDs had primary education compared to 25% of total population. This situation is appalling indeed because illiteracy and ignorance among the disabled population is too high to countenance as a developing nation which needs acceleration in human resource development.

In a preliminary report on the inclusive education initiative in Ghana, Agbenyega & Deku (2011), Ofori-Addo, Worgbeyi and Tay (1999) identified some key challenges, similar to those reported earlier by O'Toole, et al. (1996). The three studies found challenges in relation to teacher attitudes, knowledge and skills, as well as the schools' organisation of inclusive programs.

Agbenyega & Deku (2011) in particular reported that many children with disabilities did not always benefit from the inclusive education initiative. Further, the admission of children with disabilities into regular community schools was being hampered by a lack of specialised teaching skills, negative teacher attitudes, and the lack of knowledge of inclusion on the part of

the school authorities. Kuyini & Desai (2006, 2009) recognised the lack of regular in-service training sessions for teachers, and rigidity of school programs, which hindered creative initiatives for inclusive programs, including lack of support from school principals. In short, teachers were not providing support for students with special needs.

The lack of support from principals in the schools (Kuyini & Desai, 2006, 2009) draws attention to the type of attitudes these principals had toward the inclusion of students with special needs into regular schools. The general lack of knowledge of inclusion on the part of school authorities (principals) and the lack of regular in-service training sessions for teachers (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011; Ofori-Addo, et al., 1999) put a question mark on the level of educators' knowledge of the inclusion education initiative.

Lastly, the rigid school programs were hindering inclusion initiatives (Ofori-Addo, et al., 1999). The question is whether the necessary school restructuring, re-orientation and re-organisation have been made to create school norms /climates conducive for inclusive education. This picture of Ghana's inclusion program from the forgoing creats a crucial need for broader investigation into inclusive school practices, the nature of school-principals' and teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and their knowledge of inclusive education. It is also essential to acquire an understanding of the impact of these variables on practices of inclusion. In most researches, there is difference between what participants and teachers say and what policy documents state. In Ghana there is the recognition that, inclusion implies infrastructure and teacher quality (MoE 2011A, MoE 2011B). National policies and principles guiding these policies such as the Educational Strategic Plan (ESP) for 2010-2020 and Ministry of Education (MoE), also within the Basic Education Division (BED and the Special Education Division (SED) see Inclusive Education (IE) as offering quality educational access to all irrespective of their abilities and capabilities. The ESP 2010-2020 sees inclusion to include pupils with mental and physical disabilities. SED (2011) focuses on pupils with disabilities and special needs (SEN). Schools, teachers and other participants speak of all children; those with disabilities and SEN, marginalised and disadvantaged children, this is far from being clear (Pekeberg 2012).

Few literature examines the actual experiences of teachers, who are the key levers of policy implementation, regarding the introduction of inclusive education and the diffusion of information about it. For this reason, this study focuses on teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Community Based rehabilitation (CBR) programs for people with disabilities in 1992, upon the recommendation of the UNESCO Consultation on Special Education. As part of the CBR agenda, Inclusive Education was piloted in 10 districts in Ghana. What is worrying is that most are experimental and/or short-lived. The Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan (2003 – 2015) envisions the achievement of an inclusive education system by 2015 (SpED 2005). As a result, both government and NGOs have supported Inclusive Education and Special needs education programs, in the last decade. The NGOs include the VSO, Savers International (SSI), and USAID. Since 2003 the Government has also initiated pilot inclusive education programs in 30 schools in Central, Eastern and Greater Accra regions. The aim being passing on lessons learnt from these schools to other schools for implementation.

The study of four schools in New Juabeng and Bole districts was primarily designed to investigate teachers' experiences and their understanding of this new policy statement as captured in the *Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan*. In addition, it sought to examine ways in which information is being disseminated from the provincial Department of Education to prepare schools and teachers for the pending implementation process. These districts are among the most powerful level of administration in the system, the study also focused on

teachers' experiences of working with districts, particularly the district's role in informing and supporting schools and teachers around inclusive education.

Several studies have concluded that teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education determine their commitment to inclusive practices and influence the outcomes of their practice (Anthony, 2012; UNESCO, 1999; Tait & Purdie, 2000; Rose, 2001; Baguwemu & Nabirye, 2002; Burstein et al, 2004). Such conclusions place a great deal of emphasis on teachers' professional development as their understanding of, and commitment to the task at hand depends on it. To this effect, this study was premised on the belief that teachers' attitudes to this innovation would be greatly influenced by the kind of training they are exposed to. If teachers are well trained (know what is expected of them) and feel supported, they will be willing and confident to adopt and develop an inclusive system of education. As a result, I started the study from the perspective that teachers' professional development is the most important strategy for dealing with inclusive education, or any other systemic educational reform.

As inclusion is still in its infancy in Ghana, there are many areas that still need to be researched, areas that are critical to our understanding of what constitutes effective inclusive education practice. The literature reviewed in this article suggests that some of these unexplored areas include, first, the role of information dissemination in the understanding of policy, and, second, the influence of dissemination of information on adoption and implementation. This article analyses these and attempts to investigate the ways in which they contribute to the preparation of teachers and schools for the implementation of any innovation, including inclusive education.

RATIONALE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The rationale for this study is two- fold: A personal motivation based on the frustrations, doubts and complains about teachers` knowledge and attitudes toward inclusion reported by colleagues and friends with disabled children in primary schools. Parents of these children with disabilities have expressed challenges relating to the schools` organisation of inclusive programmes and other "unprofessional" inclusive teaching practices.   The main concern for teachers was to finish the curriculum as stipulated by policy. Post-colonial theory provides a framework which helps to address questions of why so many curriculum practices appear still so far away from reaching or even recognising the goals of individual differences. The inclusive elements of the education policy thus remain on paper without its real meaning being experience in schools

Two critical research questions in the study:

- o   How do teachers implement Inclusive Education in Ghanaian primary schools?
- o   What are the teachers' understandings of the National Disability Policy and inclusion?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study approach, defined by Robson (2002:178) as a research strategy involving "empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" was chosen as the best method for addressing the question. Accordingly, multiple research instruments in the form of self-completion questionnaires, individual and focus group interviews were used to gather information about individual and collective experiences of this policy. The use of different methods of data collection helped to triangulate the findings of the study.

While acknowledging the limitations of this design in that the findings cannot be generalised to all teachers in all other districts, the approach was useful as it opens up possibilities for understanding the phenomenon under study from the perspective of the participants. From

this understanding, significant contributions to practice and knowledge of education can be inferred (Merriam, 1988).

To select the schools which formed part of the study, purposive sampling (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Robson, 2002) was utilised. Only schools that were not part of the Inclusive Education Provincial Pilot were selected. The aim was to investigate the ways in which the schools and teachers, who would be expected to implement the policy after the pilot period, were being informed and prepared for the task. The four schools that participated were located in different geographical contexts rural (population below 10000) and urban (population of over 10000). Many of the learners come from poor households where one or no adult is employed. There is a serious shortage of resources necessary for optimum teaching and learning at this school. In the rural areas many learners walk long distances to get to school. There is poverty and unemployment in the community serviced by these schools, and the schools also lack many facilities for curricular and extra-curricular activities. Schools located in the urban areas however, are advantaged schools with more than adequate facilities for its needs.

Collection of data and analysis
Data collection began in June 2013 and was completed in August 2013. During this period, in an attempt to triangulate the data collected (Robson, 2002) and to assure the trustworthiness of the findings in this study, different types of data sources were consulted, and different data collection methods employed. To obtain teachers' perspectives, first, they were asked to fill in a questionnaire. Out of 120 questionnaires distributed across the ten schools, 108 were filled (N=108). Then focus group interviews were conducted in all the ten sites with 10 teachers at each school (N=100). In addition, all ten principals were interviewed to collect more information on the organisational structure, procedures, and current stage of implementation of each school. All interviews were recorded (with permission), transcribed, and given back to the respondents for verification or member check.

All the data collected was analysed manually. It was read several times and units of meaning were identified (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004) using different coloured highlighters. It was then compressed using the process of selection and organisation into different categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994), in search of patterns. Questionnaires were coded according to questions and then tallied and converted to percentages. Individual and focus group interviews were coded into categories which were continuously reclassified as connections were identified. The purpose was to find related phrases and patterns (Robson, 2002) until possible sub-themes emerged. Related themes were then grouped until over-arching themes were identified. At this stage summaries of findings per school were submitted to individual schools for scrutiny and corroboration. This process of member checking enabled participants to assess the findings in view of their experiences (Robson, 2002). The two over-arching themes were teachers' understandings of inclusive education and their in-service training and professional development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Implementing Inclusive Education
The research question in this study focused on teachers' understandings and experiences of CBR and MESP for Inclusive Education as well as practices of inclusion. To this effect, the findings suggest that there was a limited understanding of CBR and MESP for Inclusive Education among the teachers who participated in the study, with some showing no understanding at all. Specifically and of particular relevance to this study were the findings which indicated that the medical discourse has greatly influenced education in Ghana. This discourse, which is preoccupied with deficits within learners (Fulcher, 1989) at the exclusion

of contextual factors within the learning context (UNESCO, 1993), dominated the teachers' understandings of what inclusive education is. For example, findings from the questionnaire suggested that many teachers had mistaken beliefs about inclusive education. Sixty-five out of 108 (60.2%) teachers equated inclusive education with teaching disabled learners in regular schools. This study found this to be a misconception. It was expected that teachers` understanding of government policy and practices of inclusion be seen as creating welcoming learning situations or environment for all learners.

Misconceptions about the interpretation of policies and inclusive classroom practices were believed to stem from early teacher training based on medical and social models. Changing these discourses has been difficult due to lack of follow-up sessions of workshops organised by the GES for teachers` professional development. Most teachers tend to teach in the same way they were taught in their own schools (e.g. Lortie, 1975 cited in Hyde, 1992: 172).

Quantitative Data and Teachers` knowledge of Inclusive Education
The responses (N=108) were examined employing a Principal Component Analysis and then a varimax rotation matrix with Kaiser normalisation. The rotation yielded 4 factor components, with initial eigenvalues greater than 1.0. The four factors accounted for 64.9 % of the variance. The factors were named as Theory Factor (Factor 1), Administration Factor (Factor 2), Practice Factor (Factor 3) and Support Factor (Factor 4). In respect of item distribution, the Theory and Administration Factors contained five items each, and accounted for 20.5 % and 18.1% of the variance respectively. The Practice and Support Factors on the other hand, contained three items each, and accounted for 15.2 % and 11.1% of the variance respectively. Table 1 below shows the items comprising the four factors and their factor loadings.

Table 1: Factor structure: Principals` and Teachers` Scores on KIES after Varimax Rotation

ITEMS	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
THEORY				
Forms of Assessment (9)	.795			
I.E.P Development (10)	.743			
Learning Styles (8)	.664			
Problem Behaviour Management (13)	.662			
Peer-tutor & Cooperative learning (12)	.613			
ADMINISTRATION				
Inclusion Regulation and Guidelines (3)		.750		
Teacher roles & Responsibilities (4)		.722		
Other Professional Roles (5)		.702		
Inclusion Philosophy (1)		.697		
Inclusion Characteristics (2)		.604		
PRACTICE				
Individual & Group Activities (14)			.813	
Collaboration (15)			.719	
Instructional Materials (11)			.540	
SUPPORT				
Parent Roles (6)				.811
Support Services (16)				.612
Disability Types (7)				.519
Total Alpha Coefficients	**.86**	**.81**	**.75**	**.64**
Percentage of variances	**41.8**	**9.3**	**7.1**	**6.8**

Asked about teachers` and principals` implementation of school level organisational practices

of inclusion, teachers` and principal` responses were coded into two categories ('No'=1 and 'Yes'=2). These responses ('No' or 'Yes') indicated that an element was not being implemented or was being implemented respectively. Means and standard deviations for the scores on each of the items of the ISP were computed and then rank ordered from the highest to the lowest. The rank ordering provided a global picture of the elements of school level inclusion organisational and routine practices being implemented by principals.

An examination of the mean scores on the various items in descending order (Table 2) revealed that the involvement of student with disabilities in recreational activities, and providing support services with the school were the main elements of inclusive practices implemented by all school principals. The element of principals having the responsibility for all programs in the school (including inclusion activities) and the principal's involvement in all collaborative meetings were also being implemented in most of the schools in the study area. These items had means of above 1.50.

All the other elements of school level organisational and routine practices for inclusion were not being implemented in any of the schools in the study. These included having a school inclusion policy, having an inclusion planning and management team, and providing Individual Educational Plans (I.E.Ps) for students with disabilities. The rest included the issue of age-appropriate placement of students with disabilities, having plans for organising teaching resources for teachers and set standards for assessing the learning and achievement of students with disabilities. There was minimal implementation in some schools of the elements of collaboration between staff and other professionals, parental involvement, in-service training on inclusion for staff and communication with parents of students with disabilities (See Table 2).

Table 2 Inclusive practices and Means and Standard Deviations of Principals` and Teachers`

Item	Rank	Mean	SD
11. SWD Involvement in Recreational Activities.	1	2.00	0.00
5. All Support Services Provided in School	2	2.00	0.00
2. Principal Responsible for All programs	3	1.95	.223
4. Principal Involvement in Collaborative Meetings	4	1.85	.366
6. Collaboration Among Staff and Professionals	5	1.35	.489
8. Parental Involvement	6	1.15	.366
12. In-service training for staff.	7	1.05	.223
9. Frequency of Communication with Parents.	8	1.05	.223
14. Standards for Assessing Learning of SWDs	9	1.00	0.00
13. Plan for Organising Teaching Resources	10	1.00	0.00
10. Age Appropriate Placement	11	1.00	0.00
7. IEPs for Students with Disabilities	12	1.00	0.00
3. Inclusion Planning & Management team	13	1.00	0.00
1. School Inclusion Policy	14	1.00	0.00

Consistent with the literature and conceptual understanding of attitude formation theories and empirical research results (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Beh-Pajooh, 1992; Bowman, 1986; Center & Ward, 1987; Cornoldi, et al., 1998; Leyser, Kepperman, & Keller, 1994; Sage & Burello, 1994; Shimman, 1990; Soodak, Podell & Lehman, 1998), the results were similar to those of Ntombela, (2003, 2009, 20011), Torombe (2013) that dissemination of information about school inclusion policy is significant to effective inclusive practices.

Effective inclusive school practices and dissemination of information
Questions were rephrased to reflect strategies of information dissemination and inclusive school practices. In order to answer this question, teachers' observed scores on the Effective Teaching Practices checklist (ETPC) were examined. The means and standard deviations for the scores on each of the items of the ETPC were computed. These mean scores were then rank ordered from the highest to the lowest. The rank ordering provided a picture of the teachers' performance of the different effective teaching behaviours /practices. As the means came from a 3-point Likert-type scale, the ranked items were arbitrarily divided into three groups of teaching behaviours (See Table 3).

Items with mean scores of between 3.00 – 2.50 were the teaching behaviours/practices that were more shown by teachers. In terms of the scoring procedure of the ETPC measure, these scores fell within the "Fully in Evidence" category. Teaching behaviours in this category included behaviours such as Working on Same Curriculum (item 22), Appropriate Teacher Positioning (item 2), Maintain Student Attention (item 7), Gaining Initial Student Attention (item 3), Providing Feedback (item 17), Response to Rule Non-compliance (item 5), Reinforcement Use (item 8), Presentation Clarity (item 13), Involving Students with Disabilities in Class Activities (item 27), Knowledge Review (item 11), Providing Independent Practice Activities (item 16) and Class Rules and Procedures(item 4).

Items with mean scores of between 2.49 to 2.0 were teaching behaviours demonstrated by teachers less frequently, and in terms of the scoring procedure of measuring ETPC. Items indicating teachers` behaviour here included ensuring Lesson Mastery (item 8), Structuring the Instructional Environment (item1), adjusting the pace of instruction (item 14), Scanning and Circulating Classroom (item 6), Maximising Student Engagement Time (item 9), Providing Guided Practice (item 15), Effective use of Questions (item 19), and Providing clear lesson Overviews (item 12). Teachers were performing these behaviours intermittently.

Item means ranging from1.99 to 1.00 were teaching behaviours seldom shown or used by teachers, and in terms of the scoring procedure of the ETPC measure, these scores fell within the "Not in Evidence" category. The teacher behaviours in this category included behaviours such as Forecast upcoming lesson (item 21), Lesson summary (item 20) Individual and group instruction (item 24) Modify Evaluation Procedures (item 28) Additional instruction(peer-tutoring/ cooperative learning)(item 25) Adapting instructional & curriculum materials for students with disabilities(item 23) Use Multi-level Teaching (item 26) Use of IEPs (item 11). Teachers were virtually not engaging in these behaviours in their classrooms. It is important to note that most of the behaviours belonging to level 3, which were virtually not in use belonged to the Adaptive teaching practices sub-scale of the ETPC measure.

Table 3 Practices and Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers` Scores

Item	Rank	Mean	SD
22. Working on Same Curriculum*.	1	3.00	.000
2. Teacher Position	2	2.94	.229
7. Maintain Student Attention	3	2.89	.314
3. Initial Student Attention	4	2.85	.308
17. Feedback	5	2.83	.354
5. Response to Rule Non-compliance	6	2.82	.411
8. Reinforcement Use	7	2.75	.434
13. Presentation Clarity	8	2.74	.434
27. Involving SWDs in Class Activities	9	2.71	.449
11. Knowledge Review	10	2.59	.469
16. Independent Practice Activities	11	2.56	.554
4. Class Rules and Procedures	12	2.52	.611
18. Lesson Mastery	13	2.47	.485
1. Instructional Environment	14	2.47	.725
14. Pace of Instruction	15	2.44	.770
6. Scans and Circulates Classroom	16	2.43	.488
9. Student Engagement Time	17	2.41	.478
15. Guided Practice	18	2.22	.534
19. Use of Questions	19	2.20	.594
12. Lesson Overview	20	2.20	.362
21. Forecast Upcoming Lesson	21	1.98	.606
20. Lesson Summary	22	1.95	.505
24. Individual and Group Instruction.	23	1.71	.702
28. Modify Evaluation Procedures	24	1.59	.675
25. Peer-tutoring/ Cooperative Learning Strategies	25	1.37	.491
23. Adapt Instr. & Curriculum Materials	26	1.27	.596
26. Use Multi-level Teaching*	27	1.08	.276
10.Use of IEPs *	28	1.00	.000

 * Corrected Item-total correlations = 0.00 and the items deleted from reliability analysis

In respect of the ETPC measure, teachers were using more teaching behaviours associated with class management and lesson presentation more consistently. However, the majority of teaching practices on the adaptive instruction subscale including peer tutoring and cooperative learning strategies were used less consistently.

The lack of teachers` knowledge as shown in table 1 ranking also 14 item 1 in table 2 may be closely related to lack of flexibility in the teaching methods and less adaptive teaching practices (see table 3). Little collaboration and administrative support provided by questionnaire data (Table 1) may explain poor dissemination of information on both government policies and guidelines of Inclusive Education.

In addition, it was realised in focus group interviews that schools relied on each other for the dissemination of information, for example a teacher who attends a seminar on a policy such as MESP passes it on to another school. However, research findings suggest that this strategy is not working (Kuyini & Desai, 2007, 2008). Questionnaires at a school in New Juabeng were completed after a workshop on inclusive education which some teachers attended. A teacher who attended one of the workshops had this to say:

> *Teaching slow and fast learners in the same classroom and giving slow learners the help they need. Disabled pupils play and work with abled or normal pupils.*

It was clear from the above report that teachers` understanding of inclusive education was inadequate. Similarly, data from questionnaire from this study identified limited understanding of inclusive education among other teachers as a consequence of less use of multi-level teaching and adaptive instructional practices.

Similar misunderstandings were reported in other schools as a teacher from another school commented:

> *We are doing our best to implement inclusion... we learn from our experiences and others and put things together.....policy documents on how to implement inclusion are not easily available to us and those we find are vague .....I mean not clear. Policy makers and schools need to speak together*

There were common misconceptions, all based on teachers` limited knowledge, lack of clarity of policies and different views about concepts. Ambiguities in MESP and other government policy leave teachers to respond and practice inclusion differently based on self-interpretations and practice as well as information from colleagues.

These findings are consistent with the literature review (Agbenyega & Deku , 2011; Kuyini & Desai, 2009; Torombe , 2013), which found cascade models ineffective in the implementation of inclusion. In the study area teachers were found to be using guess work and other ad-hoc methods resulting probably, from lack of understanding/use of school inclusive policy (Table 2, item 1ranking 14) not to be supportive of implementing inclusion. Challenges imposed on teachers were lack of knowledge and skills, lack of collaborative support system and incentives (Torombe, 2013).

On the other hand schools from Bole District responded differently though also using the medical discourse of disability. For example, St. Kizito and District Assembly JSS were more receptive to the idea of inclusive education than the other schools in the New Juabeng District. The principals` and teachers' assessments of their schools ability to implement this policy seemed positive despite misconceptions and also complains of lack of government support. The assistant principal had this to say:
> *Disabled are mixed with abled ....(....) we don't separate them and we try to identify students with special needs and give them the help required.....(...) I have not heard of CBR or MESP...We are still using what we learnt from training college many years ago*

> *to implement inclusive education.*

A teacher added:

> *we are all willing to attend courses to learn more about government inclusive policy……as it helps us to practice inclusion in the classroom. But these courses are not forthcoming ….the last time we had in-service training was about five years ago………but we have not had any major problems using the policy in practice.*

During the focus-group interview, one of the teachers from this school said that, they have already tried implementing inclusion and will continue to work on it.

However, the general perception of teachers from the more affluent Apenpoa Islamic JSS was negative, as illustrated by the following comment from a teacher in the focus-group interview:

> *It is difficult teaching children with low IQ……they don't understand and we use a lot of time on one slow learner and this goes against the other pupils. A circuit supervisor visits our school every two weeks to monitor and advice our activities……but one circuit officer is in charge of between 11-15 schools.*

Another respondent from a school in the New Juabeng District was convinced that this school could implement MESP since some schools in the region have *already special education class*, and that teachers in those schools are specially trained. However, most of the specially trained teachers don't stay long in the teaching field, the teacher added.

What is of concern is the fact that teacher attrition is very high in Ghana (Cobbold, 2006) and so much of the in-service training is going to teachers who are unlikely to stay in the system to exert any positive influence on student outcomes. As many other studies show, students with special needs have not been adequately supported in regular classrooms in Ghana as a result of negative teachers` attitude (Avramidis, et al., 2000; Cook, 2001; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). This study on the other hand, found that lack of support by special needs students was a result of distorted understanding of school inclusive policy. In this sense the poor student outcomes despite more in-service training for teachers, means that students with special needs are less likely to receive adequate support and correspondingly achieve significantly lower school outcomes than their peers. Given all these problems of the education system, achieving the goals of inclusive education as envisioned by the Ministry's strategic plan, over ten years after its inception is a challenge.

A principal remarked:

> *In-service training cost a lot of money…the last time we had one was more than two years ago and since then no new inflow of information …and to answer questions about inclusion I have to sometimes go as far back as 80`s when I finished training college….but you see things change and we are always behind …(…)*

The above analysis indicates that three years after adoption of MESP teachers in these schools still thought in terms of separate provision for learners who experience barriers to learning and development – particularly those with disabilities. This lack of shift in thinking is understandable in the light of the ineffective cascade model used to disseminate information, in short the use of poor policy dissemination strategies.

These findings imply that MESP(the policy of inclusive education), and other policies preceding it (eg The Ghana Disability Act of 2006), had no effect on how the schools studied and those

who work in them thought about, and responded to, the diversity of learning needs in their contexts. As a result, the status quo remained as it was. Teachers did not vary their teaching methods, the same curriculum used over years devoid of MESP and CBR existence. Teachers` professional development has been hampered by misconceptions of IE policies. As the policy is completely misunderstood characterised by the nature of in-service training there was no room for innovations for a better implementation of the policy in schools.

CONCLUSION

The assumption in this study was that in-service training and the professional development of teachers delivered by MOE/GES, SpED, NGOs and other donor agencies was one of the main strategies and approaches to promote inclusive education and at the same time the most important innovation diffusion method for the Ghana Education Service. This means that teachers' experiences and understanding of the policy of inclusive education would be influenced by the nature, quantity, and quality of the professional development they are exposed to. This paper found that it is difficult to change the way teachers think if they do not get adequate knowledge of inclusion and policies guiding implementation of Inclusive Education. It is suggested by this study that a network of inclusive education trainers be created for collaboration and effective dissemination of information to teachers. It was found that apart from in-service training as a strategy to dissemination assessed in this study, many other variables including infrastructure, availability of resources and support for teachers in inclusive classroom are known to influence teachers attitude and behaviour. Further research could therefore investigate how these other variables impact on teachers` implementation of inclusion.

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