

Transnational Study on Inclusion in Education Institutions in Africa –

The Preparedness of Educators:

The Cases of Cameroon, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire,

Nigeria & Togo

by

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Introduction

Current trends in education focus on the importance of inclusive practices, characterized by valuing all, respect for differences, and enabling the full participation of all learners including addressing a sense of belonging for all. The transnational study of five African countries sets out to investigate the preparedness of educational institutions for engagement in inclusive education. The countries involved were **Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria and Togo.**

Objectives

- Examine policy, identify gaps and make suggestions for amelioration
- Find out the nature of inclusive practices in the institutions being studied
- Identify the existence of inclusive values and competences used by practicing teachers and university lecturers
- Find out disabled and non disabled pupils' and students' perceptions of inclusion,
- Find out parental perceptions of inclusive education
- Identify the status of research in inclusive education and the need to establish network for collaborative research
- Establish South-South and North-South partnerships in inclusive practices.

Research Method

The study employed a mixed method research design using triangulation of qualitative and quantitative procedures, through questionnaire, observation and interview for data collection. The population consisted of educators, lecturers, teachers, parents and pupils. The sample for each site was selected from primary, secondary and tertiary institutions including education administrators and parents. Site samples were as follows: Cameroon, 327 participants, 36 institutions including 56 classroom observations; Cote d'Ivoire, 363 participants, 4 institutions and 4 classroom observations; Kenya, 450 participants (200 teachers, 110 parents, 100 learners,

40 university and tertiary administrators). Nigeria a sample size of 80 participants and Togo, 394 participants from 37 institutions including 18 classroom observations Parents who participated in the study had children with different categories of disabilities. Students in this study included those in primary grades and those in high schools.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Cameroon

The findings illustrated that in all the regular institutions studied, there were pupils and students with various types of disabilities but the infrastructures and pedagogical practices were not disability friendly or sensitive. Reviewing policy, there was evidence of gaps and limitations in scope. A major policy gap is the absence of orientations towards curriculum reforms, assessments, and practicing teachers' profile for inclusive education practices. Teacher educators and even pedagogic inspectors or advisers were not even aware of the critical issues surrounding teacher quality; in terms of core values that guide inclusive practices and their competences in managing and orchestrating inclusive administrative and pedagogic competences.

Some illustrations from principals of some public secondary schools visited stated clearly that "We do not have any policy on inclusive education but we have policy that protects and meets the needs of persons with disability" Even heads of some primary schools also said "No idea about policies." A school administrator said, "I have not seen a document on that". Some Headmasters of Francophone schools stated, "The policy of inclusive education exists, but who applies it? Policy is not implemented and some issues raised are: «because the law is not applicable; this is why in Cameroon when elaborating a law, the concerns of the educators must be considered.

Though teachers were able to identify some different types of disabilities in their schools the major question was on their pedagogical practices. The issue regarding the attitudes of the school towards persons with special needs was raised; the participants had both positive and negative views; 17 thought "it was good, acceptable and cordial"; One headmistress of a regular school said "The school demonstrates an attitude of acceptance; most teachers demonstrate the attitude of acceptance. But at the level of students, we do not know because their attitude varies." School Administrators in regular schools said "we are very conscious of the seating positions for these

pupils and so give them special consideration”; “They are encouraged to sit in front”. One headmistress, of a Francophone regular school said, “Those with poor sight sit in the front row with their Braille and for most of the time, the teachers ensures that they understand well”. (*La malvoyante par exemple est au premier banc avec sa machine et puis la plus part des enseignants se rassurent qu’elle comprend bien*).

As concerns institutional support for effective teaching; Headmasters and Special Educators in a regular school stated, “In-service seminars are often organized”. This was also supported by the headmaster of a regular school who also said, “We invite special educators to talk to teachers” Further views were obtained from six school administrators who said clearly “there is nothing done and they do not have any initiative”. To affirm this, the headmistress of a regular school said, “We are not really doing anything at the level of the school because any order we implement comes from the delegation of education.” While a principal from a secondary school said, “at individual levels, we give them gifts, but the school cannot do anything as far as pedagogy is concerned because changes can only be done at the level of the delegation”.

As to the question of how aware are the teachers of inclusive education; the general consensus was that it was partial. Headmasters and Special Educators in regular schools highlighted this, “Not all teachers are aware”. Another headmaster said “The majority of teachers are aware”. Most argued that they could not talk about inclusive education in Cameroon because it did not really exist.

One of the difficulties experienced in implementing inclusive education as mentioned by headmasters of eight schools was the lack of resources. In addition, they said, “No specialists, no resources, but we have such children”. “The material and equipment are not there to facilitate learning for both the normal and the disabled”. Ten head teachers confirmed the lack of professionals and adequate knowledge as well as the absence of specialists. A headmaster underscored the inadequacy of infrastructure by saying, “Infrastructure for people with disability is very expensive”. Yet some university administrators said, “I have never been aware of inclusive education in the university, because the amphitheatres and lecture halls are poorly constructed such that those who have tricycles cannot easily get in”. (*Moi je n’est jamais été au courant que l’éducation inclusive existe à l’Université, puisque les salles de classes (amphi) sont*

mal construites de telle sorte que les camarades qui avaient les tricyclettes ne s'en sortaient pas facilement).

Perceptions of administrators and teachers at primary and secondary including university illustrated there were both facilitating and hindering factors. Some of hindering factors mentioned were: poor understanding of the principle of inclusion; roughly 45% of educators and teachers could not give a good definition of inclusion, only 35% of them could attempt defining the model of inclusion practiced in their institution and all of them could not clearly differentiate among the various models of inclusion; Lack of concrete initiative at school level to support learners with special needs; poor awareness of staff as far as the needs of learners with special needs were concerned. Only 30% of them were really aware; Sixty percent of them indicated that the level of inclusive education practices was poor and confirmed the lack of policies on inclusive education at school level. The non-involvement of teachers, parents and learners with special needs in the definition of policies was also highlighted; inadequacy of resources and personnel; inadequacy of educational programmes; the absence of specialist teachers and curriculum developers; marginalization was emphasized by this administrator “We sensitize other children to be conscious of the difficulties of others; we do all this to overcome marginalization” (*Nous sensibilisons les autres enfants à prendre conscience des difficultés des autres, nous faisons tout pour vaincre la marginalization*) [Headmaster, regular school].

From the analysis of the practices on inclusion as perceived by disabled pupils/students themselves and their nondisabled peers the following conclusions were highlighted under seven categories:

1. Appreciation of regular schools
2. Access to facilitating material resources to enhance learning
3. Teacher individual attention towards pupils/students with special education needs
4. School/Parent collaboration
5. Teacher’s encouragement of disabled students to make friends with peers
6. Encouragement of peer collaboration
7. Experience of stigmatization and discrimination

Pupils and students with special needs in their majority were happy being in a regular school. It was realized that the pleasure of being in a regular school increased with school level, as many of them expressed this satisfaction in secondary school.

Classroom observations were carried out in 54 classrooms at all levels of the school system.

These revealed that overall, all the indicators of inclusive practices were scored below average:

- Teachers' inclusive profile (17.3%).
- Differentiated teaching to address diversity (22.3%).
- Adequacy of physical environment of classroom (23.7%).
- Enabling environment (35.7%).
- Appropriate teaching strategy (40.6%).

The scores of these indicators were the least satisfactory in tertiary (university) level. Secondary schools performed best for all the indicators but were generally below average except for appropriate teaching strategy that scored 50%.

Relational analysis indicated significant associations between school levels and implementation of inclusive practices whereby the effective implementation of inclusive practices decreased as we go higher in education. It is however important to notice that the negative sign of this association was more evident at university level. Generally, there were negative correlations between school level and inclusive practices, implying that the performances of these indicators decreased as we moved from basic education to secondary and tertiary levels. It was also observed that teachers' performance was highly associated with classroom environment.

Competences in engaging diversity in the use of inclusive values were found in the provision of equal opportunity in classroom engagements, giving a sense of belonging and ability to contribute. The critical concern was managing classroom space for effective pedagogic activities, particularly in the context of large class size. Of importance was managing space in ways that permitted classroom individual and group contacts in accepting all, giving a chance to all and giving a sense of belonging through establishing interpersonal relationships and respect. The broad range of skills mentioned above has implications for inclusion. The strategies illustrated highlight what teachers do, not only increase participation but also improve and promote self-

esteem and self-efficacy. The significance of the correlations illustrates that each time a learner is encouraged to contribute and for each contribution made learner's perception of self is enhanced positively. Two groups of value oriented pedagogies can be identified: (i) Establishing inclusive values through a holistic pedagogy that is learner centered and (ii) pedagogic strategies focusing on co-operation, solidarity team support, and encouraging learners' contributions.

The issue of inadequate inclusive teacher profile stems from the fact that teacher education faces many challenges towards the development of a teacher's inclusive profile. Out of the twenty-one indicators that constituted this component, twelve had weightings below 50% namely:

- “Teacher educators are not trained on inclusive practices” (67.9%).
- “Teacher educators are equipped with knowledge of SEN and disability” (11.5%).
- “Teacher educators are equipped with knowledge of challenging behaviour” (17.9%).
- ”Teacher educators are equipped with the knowledge of diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religions groups” (28.2%).
- “Teacher educators are equipped with knowledge of more able learners” (19.2%).
- “Teacher educators are equipped with knowledge on other minority groups in class vulnerable to underachievement” (0.0%).
- “Teacher education inculcates in teacher core values and virtues that depicts their profile to be attuned to inclusive principles and practices” (45.5%).
- “Teacher education courses to address issues for inclusion (e.g. specialist content on the needs of learners with Special Education Needs (SEN)/other minority groups, inclusive practice, pedagogy, curriculum and assessment issues, etc.)” (39.7%).
- “Teacher Education or university pedagogy addresses competences for inclusive practices” (37.2%).”Teacher education programmes provide subject specialist teachers with skills relating to inclusive and/or special needs education, equality and diversity” (43.6%). ”
- “Teacher training/university pedagogy provides lecturers/teachers with skills relating to inclusive and/or special needs education, equality and diversity” (42.9%).
- “Teacher development focuses on attitudes and value to support inclusive practices” (43.6%).
- “Content and processes to develop inclusive practice within initial teacher education are quality assured” (39.7%).

As concerns in-service training as an enhancing instrument to improve on teachers' inclusive skill, out of the eleven indicators that made this component, seven had weights below 50% namely:

“The workshop attended was designed to address issues concerning attention difficulties” (16.7%).

“The workshop attended was designed to address issues concerning emotional needs” (13.9%).

“The workshop attended was designed to address issues concerning behavioural needs/difficulties” (19.4%).

“The workshop attended was designed to address issues concerning multiple intelligence” (5.6%).

“The workshop attended was designed to address issues concerning gender” (8.6%).

“The workshop attended was designed to address issues concerning language barriers” (2.8%).

“The workshop attended was designed to address issues concerning nomadic, pygmies etc.” (0.0%).

Generally, only roughly half of the educators sampled at all level of education had attended any in-service training.

Educators' qualification did have implications on their understanding of inclusion and its practices. As observed from the findings 74.4% of sampled educators had both academic and professional qualifications, 69.5% only academic qualification and 66.7% only professional qualifications. Therefore, the assumption is that understanding of inclusive practices would depend largely on educators' academic and professional qualifications. Such knowledge background should also impact teachers' competence. Teachers' skills to restructure their curriculum and assessment arrangement to represent a wider group of students' were the least satisfactory indicators among the 17 indicators that made this component with a weight of 60.3%. Generally, the competence of the educators was perceived as satisfactory with an aggregate score of 72.3%. Evidently, the educators perceived the level of inclusive education

practices as poor with a score of 60%. It is also important to realize that almost 40% of these educators could not really appraise this indicator.

From this study there was evidence of gap in research on inclusive education in all its parameters and even on the adequacy of policy. The findings underscored the need for the establishment of an effective network for collaborative research and capacity building in qualitative research for inclusion. This transnational research, has amply highlighted the increasing need also to establish South-South and North-South partnerships for promoting inclusive practices. This desired partnership is required for sharing literature as experienced with the European Organisation for Inclusive Education (North-South) and in teaching and capacity building as with Nigeria and Kenya in Cameroon.(South-South).

This study demonstrated adequately that Cameroon is not yet prepared to embrace inclusive education even though some efforts are being made to this effect. The nature of inclusive education practices in the institutions studied in Cameroon illustrated variations based on practitioners' opinions. This study was able to identify areas of teachers' competences, skills and held values which provide valuable information for policy reforms, new legislation for practices in schools and for training and educating teachers at both initial and in-service levels. There was enough evidence to illustrate the perceived benefits of inclusion that had psychosocial implications.

Cote d'Ivoire

From the findings, it was observed that knowledge of inclusive education was weak among educational administrators and teachers at all levels. Teachers were aware of the presence of children with disabilities in their institutions such as the visually impaired and hard of hearing. On this account, 64 (2%) teachers in the study stated that the school must be disability sensitive to meet the needs of the pupils and students. In addition, 52 (9%) indicated that teachers must take responsibility for all learners using appropriate resources. Specific problems from the findings were related to the absence of a comprehensive policy and inadequate human and material resources including ill-adapted infrastructure particularly at the university level.

Kenya

The findings indicated that parents understood disability to mean, inability to perform certain tasks or the disfunctioning of some part of the body. Out of 110 parents who participated in the study and had their children with special needs in the mainstream schools, 60% of them were happy with the placement of their children, while 69% of children with disability who participated in the study were happy that their teachers paid attention to them individually. Those with more than one disability reported that teachers never gave them enough attention. Regarding learning and teaching methods used by teachers, out of 61 interviewed, 60% of them reported that teachers mostly used individual and discussion methods in classes.

A majority of the students (90%) reported liking their respective mainstream schools. The finding also showed that the number of students per class varied but the majority 74 (70%) classes had over 41 students in one class. Majority (80%) of students reported that their parents collaborate with their teachers during their learning process.

While 65 % of the teachers acknowledged that policies on inclusion did exist, 34% were not aware there were any policies on inclusion. While only 59% of the school administrators and head teachers who took part in the study were aware of policies on inclusive education, the rest of the school administrators and head teachers (41%) have no information at all regarding the existence of policy on inclusive education.

Concerning implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools, less than a half of the teachers (43%) who took part in the research agreed that all the teachers in a school should take responsibility for all the students learning with appropriate resources and opportunities for professional development. More than half of the teachers from the different institutions involved in the study (55 %) felt that students with special needs and disabilities should not be in their schools. Most of the teachers (87%) felt that the schools have a responsibility to adapt and change in order to accommodate all students. However, 13% of the teachers felt that it was the students who should change in order to be accommodated in the schools.

As regards competency, 78% of the teachers reported that they used management techniques that elicited student's co-operation and sustained their engagement in activities as a way of controlling students in the classroom and to create a positive classroom climate. A majority of

the teachers (71%) believed that they had the ability to establish and maintain collaborative relationships with parents and encourage the active involvement of students in learning. Most teachers also felt confident that they could remove barriers to learning and allow full participation of students in school activities.

Nigeria

Policy on inclusion existed and was also favourable to the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. Respondents indicated that teachers were trained to handle inclusive education.

The respondents however pointed out that:

- Policy in place does not address inclusive pedagogical issues.
- General and special education teachers are available in the institutions
- Clear rules and routines on inclusive education are inadequate.
- Infrastructural facilities are also inadequate.

Togo

Policy in the sector strategy for education in Togo is committed to providing Education for All (EFA). Yet clear policy statement on Inclusive practices is not evident. However, the strategy is clear on the concerns that universal primary education will not be effective if inclusion of excluded groups including girls and disabled children in the education system is not affected. The absence of preparedness is also evident in the manifested attitudes about how to manage persons with disabilities in the school system without guiding principles. On this account the findings highlighted the following:

- Reluctance of teachers in their classrooms to accommodate children with disabilities
- Lack of knowledge on disability of teachers, education authorities and the community in general
- Reluctance of parents of disabled children to enroll their child in mainstream setting;
- Lack of awareness of the potential of children with disabilities
- Fear of the mainstream education system to include within it, disabled children

- Fear of parents to see their children in the same class with children with disabilities
- Non-accessibility of schools for children with certain types of disabilities
- Rigidity of educational programmes that do not allow for adaptation to the pace of development of each child
- Lack of synergies between special and mainstream schools and
- NGOs had taken up the task to implement projects in inclusive education, on the basis of the international texts for the rights of education of children with disability.

As concerns the issue of policy, responses from some headmasters and principals from primary to secondary schools visited are well summarized by one of them: *“il existe une politique d’éducation inclusive au Togo. Nous avons l’éducation pour tous”* (There is a policy of inclusive in Togo. We have Education for All). Many acknowledged that there were opportunities in Togo for implementing inclusive education: *“Les opportunités existent sauf que les moyens manquent”* (There are opportunities but the means are not available). « Il n’y a pas de politique en matière d’EI. C’est maintenant que nous sommes en train d’élaborer des politiques en la matière. » (There is no policy in inclusive education; it is only now that we are trying to elaborate policies to that end). The dominant types of impairments were visual, hearing, physical disabilities, language disorder and mental disability; the least represented handicap is the dwarfism. Among all these types of disabilities, 95% said they loved their school against 5% who said the opposite. Within these 5%, there was motor disability (2%), visual (2%) and mental (1%). Attitudes of the school towards persons with special needs were characterized mainly as positive (more than 90%) and supportive (more than 90%). A headmistress said: *“Nous leur accordons plus d’attention et les encourageons pour les études. Ceux qui sont sourds sont placés devant et auprès d’élèves qui écrivent bien et ne font pas trop de fautes”* (We give them more attention and we encourage them in their studies. The ones with hearing disabilities are seated in front and near students with good handwriting and who do not make many mistakes). Another headmistress said: *“J’invite régulièrement les parents ou tuteurs de mes élèves aveugles pour discuter avec eux de leur travail et comment faire avec eux.”* (I regularly invite the tutors or parents of my pupils with visual impairment to discuss their work and how to manage them”).

The principal of a senior high school said: *« Nous avons accepté de les intégrer et nous sensibilisons les élèves normaux à faire de même »* (We have accepted to integrate them and we

encourage valid pupils to do the same). A principal who is physically impaired said proudly: “Dans mon établissement, j’ai pris des mesures pour que toutes les classes soient accessibles” (In my school, I made sure that all classes are accessible). The difficulties expressed by this teacher are real and are not particular to the university. Problems of inadequate infrastructure, lack of material and competent human resources are inherent to the ordinary system and there is need for a well-planned programme sustained by partners who have competence in the domain to solve some of these problems for the advent of inclusive education in Togo.

The findings reiterated that there is need to train teacher trainers, teachers and curriculum developers; 67% of teachers acknowledged that Teacher Education or university pedagogy did not address competences for inclusive practice; 72% said they had never attended professional development courses in inclusion. Classroom observations were carried out in 18 classrooms at all level of the school system. And the overall assessments, in a country without a policy in inclusion and with teachers generally without any initial training, all the following 5 indicators of inclusive practices are negative.

- Teachers’ inclusive profile
- Differentiated teaching to address diversity
- Adequacy of physical environment of classroom
- Enabling environment
- Appropriate teaching strategy

From this study there was evidence of a gap in research on inclusive education and policy. The findings underscored the need for the establishment of an effective network for collaborative research and capacity building in qualitative research for inclusion.

These actions will require the training of well-qualified and competent teachers, inspectors, pedagogic advisors, support personnel, curriculum specialists to design an inclusive curriculum that addresses specifically inclusive practices. This transnational research, it is hoped, will open up a channel for further research for sharing ideas and conducting collaborative research and also to establish South-South and North-South partnerships for promoting inclusive practices.

Similarities and Differences in Preparedness

Generally in all the five countries, teachers, pupils, students, parents as well as decision makers perceived inclusion in education as being positive for all types of learners. Two countries: Togo, Cote d'Ivoire did not have a policy in Inclusive Education and steps have to be taken to establish such a policy and make it a reality for all involve in education. Though Cameroon claims to have a policy for inclusion the scope is very limited and the strategy for implementation not apparent. Even though Kenya and Nigeria have a policy in inclusive education (IE), steps have to be taken to reinforce the knowledge in inclusion and establish sustainable measures to address the problems still existing. The absence of strong policy explains some of the setbacks in actually practicing inclusion. Common to all the countries are:

- lack of appropriate strategies for implementation
- inadequacy of trained personnel to teach and manage inclusion
- absence of assistive technologies
- absence of strong research network and appropriate baseline data to inform policy, capacity building and practices
- absence of the voices of parent, pupils and teachers in decision making
- the need to address human, technical resources and competences
- absence of strong south-south and north-south partnership

Recommendations

- There is need for a strong political engagement in favour of inclusive education
- Sustain the efforts of the present transnational team and encourage its growth to include other African States for an African organization for inclusive education

- Establish networking to share knowledge and resources about inclusive education through South-south and North-South partnership for strong collaboration in research, teaching and capacity building
- Establish a strong link with the European Union for inclusive education from whom we are gaining rich knowledge in inclusion
- Ensure meetings of stakeholders including technical and other departments to ensure continuity and mobilization of community efforts.
- Redefine policy and put in place a strong strategy for implementation
- Put in place an evaluation and monitoring system to serve as catalyst to stimulate the climate of critical self-reflection to strengthen inclusive practices. Monitoring will stimulate regular programme evaluation and programme adjustment.
- In-service training on inclusive practices for all educators especially teacher educators and pedagogic inspectors
- Reform in teacher training, curriculum reforms, assessment
- Ensure partnership between parents, the community and school
- Build the capacity of teachers, lecturers and administrators in all aspects inclusive education, through institutional initial, in-service training and, workshops and seminars.
- Support the West and Central conference on Inclusive Education in Cameroon 2014.
- A major recommendation is the need for continuing support from the TASKFORCE that is already highly appreciated.

N.B: Detailed individual country reports will be made available that will include all the references.

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