Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disability: The Role of Basic School Teachers in the Nabdam District of Upper East Region of Ghana

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Abstract

The focus of the paper is on teachers’ role towards Inclusive Education policy for children with disability in basic schools in the Nabdam District in the Upper East Region of Ghana. Qualitative approach was used and triangulated with descriptive statistics. Two hundred and three respondents were selected using stratified sampling technique. In addition, eight Senior Officers in the Nabdam Education Office were purposively selected and interviewed using interview guide. Statistical Product for Service Solutions was used to analyse the semi-structured questionnaire and presented in the form of charts and tables. The study found that majority of teachers in Nabdam had been trained on Inclusive Education (IE) but they do not have the skills to teach children with Disability in Inclusive classroom because the training they had were basic and inadequate for the Inclusive education policy. It was also found that teachers’ do not encourage inclusive seating arrangement in the classrooms and this was due to lack of adequate training which affected the Inclusive education policy. The paper recommends that a review of
government policy on inclusive education that takes into account the views of all the
stakeholders in basic education (parents, teachers, pupils” and NGOs), provision of teaching and
learning materials and training of teachers as well as compilation of a comprehensive data on
children with disability else the target of the MDGs and SDGs on Inclusive Education will remain
an illusion.

**Keywords**: education, disability, policy, children, teachers

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**INTRODUCTION**

According to UNESCO (2010), there are more than one billion people living with
disability around the world of which nearly 93 million are children. This figure is still
increasing and constitutes about 15% of the world’s population (WHO 2015). Disability
rates are significantly higher among groups with lower educational attainment in the
countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and
an average of 19 per cent of the less educated people have disabilities as compared to 11
per cent among the better educated ones (UNESCO 2010).

The UNO (1998) comparative studies on disability legislation shows that only 45
countries world-wide have anti-discrimination and other disability-specific laws. UNESCO (2010) Confirms that ninety per cent (90%) of children with disabilities in
developing countries do not have access to education. The World Bank in 2011 further
explains that many children that are excluded from educational opportunities and do
not complete primary education as a result of their disability difficulty. The Special
Education Division of the Ghana Education Service cited in "The Ghanaian Chronicle",
14th August 2014 Edition, states that there are over 470,000 Ghanaian children that are
out of school due to learning disabilities and challenges that are not addressed by the
current educational system.

In Ghana, the UNICEF Multi Indicator Cluster Survey (2006) results found that 16% of
Ghanaian children between the ages of 2-9 years of age had at least one form of
disability. Available statistics shows that there are about 24 public educational
institutions in Ghana that are dealing with education for persons with disability and
these institutions cater for about five thousand students. In addition, there exist just six
educational institutions that offer education at second-cycle and post second-cycle to
Persons with disabilities (MoE, 2013).
The United Nations policies on children affirm the right of all children to equal education without discrimination within the mainstream of education system and raise concerns globally for the Inclusive Education Policy to ensure that every child including children with disabilities participate in education without unnecessary restrictions (Florien, 1998). Through rights-based approach, UNESCO has promoted Inclusive Education Policy programs and practices to ensure equal educational opportunities for persons with disabilities (UNESCO, 2015). These approaches include various International Human Rights Treaties and Conventions that uphold the right to education of all persons with disability. It also include Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1946), the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) cited in Rieser (2012).

The inclusive education policy has become the outcome of series of discussions and consultations between numerous stakeholders in the education sector in Ghana, particularly the Ghana Education Service, the Girls Education Unit and the early childhood Education Unit of the Basic Education Division. Other institutions that participate include the Ministry of Health, the National Council for Persons with Disability and the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection as posited by MoE (2013). The focus of the inclusive education policy is to address the diverse learning needs of all pupils and students including those with disability under a universal approach and within a learner friendly environment as noted by United Nations (MoE, 2013).

Apart from the Inclusive Education policy itself, the Government of Ghana through the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service (GES) has adopted and implemented policies geared towards the achievement of universal primary education for all over the years. These policies were intended to enable the country achieve the Millennium Development Goals on education and international policies in education (MoE, 2013). Such policies include, the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), Girl-Child Education, capitation grant, the school feeding programme and free school uniforms as part of efforts aimed at encouraging school enrolment, retention and completion rates of all learners (MoE, 2013).

One of the objectives of the Inclusive Education policy is that teachers are responsible for teaching both children with disability and children without disability in the same classroom whiles Special Educators provide others services to the teachers. Yekple Mama & Hayford, (2010). The Ghanaian education system has however made some strides in the Inclusive Education (IE) programme with an expanded pilot coverage from 29 Districts in seven regions in 2011 to 46 Districts in all the ten regions.
The Inclusive Education programme has included training in the usage of appropriate pedagogy for District Education staff, head teachers and teachers working with children with special educational needs (MoE, 2013). The disability Act (Act 715) was passed to provide explicit guidelines that should respond to the needs of Persons with disability. The Act recognizes among others, the right of Persons with disability to participate in information, education and skills training, healthcare and employment (Nana et.al, 2007).

The Special Education Division of the Ghana Education Service indicated that Ghana was ready to fully implement the Inclusive Education policy in September, 2015 and that pre-training and in-service training in special needs and Inclusive Education had been offered to teachers to manage children with disability in the Inclusive Education programme in the 2015/2016 academic year (GNA, 16/12/14). In the Nabdam district one thousand two hundred and eleven (1,211) persons with disability aged around 15 years and above live in the various communities and many do not attend school.

In the district, NGOs such as Voluntary Services Overseas, UNICEF, Afrikids Ghana including and the Global Partnership for Education Grant (GPEG) have all supported the Education Service with funds to prepare towards the implementation the Inclusive Education Policy. In spite of all these, children with disability are still locked at homes and do not go to school. The few children with disability (CWDs) that are admitted in schools are dropping out of school. Teachers still refer children with disabilities to special schools for enrolment. It seems basic school teachers in the Nabdam District are ignorant about the Inclusive Education policy. What has accounted for all these? Are teachers in good position to fully implement the Inclusive Education policy of the government in the Nabdam District? How long have the teachers’ been teaching in the district? What kind of inclusive strategies are they using? What types of disabilities are the teachers’ handling and how are the teachers’ motivated to handle children with disability? These are the questions the paper attempts to answer.

THEORETICAL BASES

Inclusive education and disability issues are multifaceted and multi-dimensional and so no single theory of behavior and learning is sufficient to explain the phenomena. The study therefore utilized socio-cultural and socio-constructivist theories of learning as theoretical bases for the study by Bruner, Piaget and Vygostsky cited in Perkeberg (2012). These theories highlight the processes through which children gain knowledge in an inclusive classroom. It also highlights the roles of teachers in the inclusive classroom.
Vygotsky believes that children construct their knowledge through social interaction within culturally determined realities. His theories on learning are thus based on the notion that cognition and development are socially and culturally inclusive rather than individually situated or otherwise segregated. Through this notion, educationists are introduced to a way of viewing the individual child; a view that brings the child and his or her perception closer to the social and cultural reality (Perkeberg 2012). Teachers as role models are seen as bringing each individual child irrespective of the disability into the classroom for learning to take place.

Vygotsky’s theory cited in Perkeberg (2012) has four main components, the components of psychological tools, internalization, mediation and the zone of proximal development. With psychological tools, Vygotsky refers to the human constructed symbols that are used to better master one’s own thoughts, perceptions, memories etc. These symbols consist of, among others, signs, texts and formulas that serve as prerequisites of individual cognition. The development of psychological tools can thus be seen as paramount for learning, and additionally, learning can be seen as paramount for the further development of such tools. Such development leads to the development of higher mental functions or skills. In this regard, Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of the social and cultural contexts in which the psychological tools are constructed and used.

Individual cognitive development, assisted by the use of psychological tools is dependent on the social and cultural context in which they take place. In other words, learning and development are not separated from context but guided by context (Kozulin (1998) & Wertsch (1985). It implies that the individual learning or an experience is not socially and culturally exclusive but mutually inclusive. Thus, inclusive education is important for learning to take place. Vygotsky further argues that the learning of these tools and thus the development of higher mental skills, takes place through the process of internalization. This is the process in which the knowledge or skill moves from the external to the internal; it is the process in which the child develops its own personal experience of the knowledge or skill and makes its own meaning of it (Lantolf, 2003).

It can be inferred from the theory that inclusive education enables the individual child to develop knowledge mediation from his/her peers and also promotes learning by imitation and which is closely linked to the development of psychological tools. Vygotsky himself referred to mediation primarily in terms of symbolic tools-mediators appropriated by the child within a context specific activity. However, his idea of mediation has been further elaborated and developed by others to include the notion of human mediation. In order to fully develop a useful set of psychological tools, the child has to be assisted by a human mediator.
This human mediator which is the teacher in this case is to help and guide children within their learning activities. Without the teacher performing his/her roles, a child’s independent exploration especially the one with disability may lead to insufficient and immature concepts and skills, and may hinder the development of higher mental skills. With this, the role of the teacher as a mediator is highly important in a child’s acquisition of knowledge and skills (Kozulin 1998, Kozulin 2003 and Wertsch 1985). The forth component of Vygotskian theory is the idea of children’s individual learning potential - it refers to the stage in children’s development that is situated between what they manage to do independently and what they do not manage independently. Hence, it is closely linked to the notion of mediation, and emphasizes the use of teachers to mediator in the guidance of children’s path towards further independent exploration (Kozulin, 2003 & Wertsch 1985). This further implies that teachers need to play effective roles towards guiding all children in the inclusive education class to bring about the needed change.

Bruner’s scaffolding theory emphasizes the importance of cultural influence on a child’s learning behaviour: the constructed knowledge and reality is culturally situated (Bruner, 1996). Scaffolding refers to the use of external cognitive support in children’s performance or understanding of specific tasks – in children’s learning. With this, scaffolding is closely related to Vygotsky’s idea of mediation. This implies that the teacher should have the ability to give the appropriate support and guidance to pupils in class such that all learners participate and learn in inclusive education in the classroom.

Another supporter of the constructivism theory is Piaget. According to his theory of assimilation and accommodation, the knowledge people receive is constructed through the notions of assimilation and accommodation of daily life experiences (Glaserfeld, 1989). Assimilation and accommodation in the context of Piagetian theory on learning, refers to people’s abilities to transfer experiences from one situation to another similar situation. This transfer of experiences is helped by a set of mental schemes categories people have constructed. According to Piaget, assimilation occurs when children are trying to fit new learning or information into already existing categories in their mental schemes.

According to Piaget, learning and cognitive development is not passive; it takes place in children’s active interaction with the environment and other individuals (Inclusive Education). This imply that before inclusive learning can take place teachers must make sure the environment is friendly and without discrimination. However, the failure of teachers however, to create an environment without discrimination would stifle inclusion inclusive in this regards. It can be said that Bruner, Piaget and Vygotsky
theories of learning are jointly applied to the study since they are all relevant to inclusive education.

METHODOLOGY

The Nabdam District Assembly was established by the Local Government (Nabdam District Assembly) (Establishment) Instrument, 2012 (L.I. 2105). It is one of the newly created districts (carved out from the then Talensi-Nabdam District) in 2012. It has Nangodi as its District capital (Nabdam District Assembly, 2015). The District is located in the Upper East Region of Ghana. It lies between latitudes 10° 47’ and 10° 57’ north of the Equator; and longitudes 0° 31’ and 1° 15’ west of the Greenwich Meridian. It is bordered to the North, South and East by the Bongo, Talensi and Bawku West Districts respectively and to the West by Bolgatanga Municipality.

The District occupies a land area of 353 km² the population in the District is 100 percent rural since there are no localities with 5,000 or more populations. The District has a population density of 138.1 persons per kilometer square which was higher than the regional figure of 118.4 persons per kilometer square. A high population density implies more pressure on the existing social amenities, infrastructure and other resources in the district. It also provides market for goods and services. People above 64 years constitutes only 6.7% of the population. The predominance of the active age group offers a potential for economic development. However, limited capacities, unfavorable conditions for agriculture and lack of other employment opportunities have rendered majority of this group unemployed or underemployed. Out of the population of people eleven years and older in the District 13,431 are not literate and 9,586 are literate.

From the total of 9,586 literates in the District, males constitute 5,245 (54.7%) and females constitute 4,341 (45.3%). This shows that in terms of literacy the males are ahead of their female counterparts in the District. This makes information dissemination, public education, skills training and entrepreneurship training difficult in the District. The District therefore needs to take steps to improve on literacy through formal and adult/non-formal education

The Nabdam District currently has a total of 61 basic schools distributed across four educational circuits. These comprise 23 crèche/nursery/kindergartens, 23 primary schools and 15 Junior High Schools. As a requirement of the implementation of the Early Childhood Care Development policy since 2007, Kindergartens were incorporated into the formal basic education system and each primary school is expected to have a KG attached to it. The District has therefore ensured the establishment of a KG in each Primary School. Due to the scattered nature of settlements in the District, access to basic institutions is very challenging in some communities. Also, all the basic schools in the
District are without auxiliary facilities such as workshops, libraries, laboratories, staff accommodation, offices, kitchens and sanitation facilities. There is therefore the urgent need to improve on the general educational infrastructure in the District.

There are varying categories of vulnerable and excluded people and households in the District. They include People living With Disabilities (PWD), people and households in extreme poverty, People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA), women, children, minority groups, and the aged. According to the Department of Social Welfare, there exist about 552 people living with disabilities in the District as composited in the table below.

Table 1: Disability Groups in the Nabdam District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghana society of the Blind (GSB)</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana society for the physically Challenged (GSPD)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana national association for the deaf &amp; dumb (GNAD)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>552</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey (2016)

Study Design

The researcher employed the qualitative research design approach and triangulated with descriptive statistics. The reason for adopting the triangulation approach is based on the fact that the problems addressed by social and health science research are complex and the use of either quantitative or qualitative approaches by themselves is inadequate to address this complexity as explained by Creswell (2009).

The population of teachers on government payroll in the District was four hundred and twenty-nine (429). The breakdown includes; Eighty-two (82) K.G Teachers, Two hundred and one Primary teachers (201) and one hundred and forty-six (146) JHS teachers respectively. The sample size for the study was selected from the four hundred and twenty – nine (429) teachers in the public schools and on government payroll in the Nabdam District as at September, 2015 and the desired sample size was 203, the breakdown are as follows:

Table 2: Desire Sample Size Allocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATA</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>SAMPLE (47%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KINDERGARTEN</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select the respondents more specifically, stratified and purposive sampling techniques. For the stratified sampling, participants were grouped into three (3) strata or levels namely, Kindergarten teachers, Primary1-6 teachers, and Junior High teachers, and with a calculation of 47 percent on each strata using simple random sampling technique, the sample size was selected. Therefore, (39) respondents were selected from Kindergarten, ninety-nine (95) from respondents were selected primary1-6 level and sixty-nine (69) respondents were selected from Junior High school level respectively. This was done to ensure representativeness of respondents.

Through purposive sampling, nine (8) senior staff from the Nabdam District Education Office were selected. The reason for using purposive sampling for the GES office staffs is that, these staffs have rich information regarding training and equipment provided for the inclusive education implementation. The senior staff members were purposively selected and they include the Assistant Directors in-charge of Human Resource Management and Development, Finance and Administration, The Deputy Director in charge of Supervision and teaching, The Statistics Officer and four circuit supervisors.

The data were obtained from primary and secondary sources. The secondary data were gathered through the Internet, journals, published theses, dissertations and relevant textbooks while the primary data were gathered through key informant interview guides and through questionnaires. Interview guide was used for the key informants such as the eight (8) Senior Officers in the Nabdam Education office and the semi-structured questionnaire was administered to the 203 respondents. It is the hope of the researcher that by using these two methods the results obtained were corroborative.

The completed questionnaires were then edited, coded and fed in the computer with descriptive statistical techniques used in the analysis. With regards to the structured questionnaires, the IBM Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS version 20) was used, and then data analyzed descriptively and underlined momentous characteristics associated with the subject matter under investigation. Tables, charts, frequencies, and percentages were used to describe some of the characteristics of the study. The open-ended questionnaires and in-depth Interviews were also explained using qualitative interpretations.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results showed that males constituted the majority of the respondents thus, 70.9 percent whilst the females were in the minority 29.1 percent. The sex distribution of the respondents is in conformity with the 2010 population and housing census report on employment in the public service sector where 68.3 percent of employees were males and 31.7 percent were women. Even though this has no direct link to the study, it confirms the gender gap between male and female teachers in the District and therefore explains why male teachers dominated.

The demographic characteristic of respondents showed that majority of the respondents were between 26 and 30 years and the minority were aged between 40 years and above. The findings in Nabdam indicates that majority of the teachers were their within the youthful age. This implies that majority of the have the youthful exuberance and would be effective in the implementation of the Inclusive Education. It was found that 78.8 percent of the respondents were professional teachers, whiles non-professional teachers constituted 21.2 percent. This means that the majority of teachers in the Nabdam District were trained as teachers. This implies that the quality assurance in Nabdam was assured towards basic education promotion and improvement. Thus, the study revealed that Nabdam, unlike other districts had enough of teachers for the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy.

Out of these teachers, the Kindergarten teachers constituted 19.2 percent, Primary schools teachers were 46.8 percent and Junior High school teachers were 34.0 percent respectively. It was again found that Kindergarten teachers were least represented and could imply that K.G teachers in the Nabdam District are not up to the required number which was attributed to lack of teachers interest to teach at the kindergarten level or inability of most of the teachers to use the local language at Kindergarten. The inadequacy of teachers at the Kindergarten level affected the full implementation of the inclusive education policy because Kindergarten education is a key component of the inclusive education policy because that level is the foundation of learning and inclusive education and requires more attention towards the full implementation of the inclusive education policy.

In terms of teacher qualification of the teachers’ it was found that WASSCE/SSCE holders constituted 15.8 percent, Teachers with Certificate ‘A’ constituted 14.8 percent and 21percent constituted Degree holders. About 1 percent of the respondents had education up to the level of postgraduate while 47.3 percent had Diploma in education. The teaching Experience of the teachers varied as shown in the table 4 below:
Table 4: Years of Service of Teachers’ in the Nabdam District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eleven-15 years</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixteen-20 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 20 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey (2016)

It can be explained that majority of the teachers in the Nabdam District did not have much experience and that might affect the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy because “experience is said to be the best teacher” and inclusive education thrives when there exists experienced teacher. This could be attributed to the fact that most of the teachers enter into the service at ages above twenty-five (25) years and spend less than forty (35) years of teaching before retirement or leave the GES at early stages to seek for other employment in other organizations.

As to whether teachers have been trained or not trained towards the Inclusive Education policy, it was found that 77.3 percent of the teachers’ had been trained on Inclusive Education, while 21.7 percent had not been trained. This confirms the fact that majority of the teachers were trained towards the inclusive Education Policy in the Nabdam District in collaboration with the Global Partnership for Education Grant (GPEG), Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) and Afrikids. The study further revealed that 20 percent of the teachers had training on inclusion and special needs in the Colleges of Education, 18 percent had training on inclusion and special needs in the Universities. It found that 32 percent of the teachers received training on inclusive related course at in-service training organized by Nabdam GES. This was supported and confirmed by a respondent who said in an interview:

“I took part in a training workshop organized by VSO and Afrikids last year. In Tongo, then we were under Talensi District, I was trained. Both workshops were on inclusive methodology where we learnt how to teach children with diverse needs in the classroom. Besides, I learnt something concerning inclusion and special needs for one term in my former College but I can identify the visible disabilities like visual impairment, speech impairment, hearing impairment and the cripple” (Fieldwork, 2016).
This was also collaborated by the Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast (2005) which noted that teacher who goes through special training had been taught how to teach children with learning difficulties and are given special attention under the topics pupil-centered methods of teaching, categories of special needs children and children with learning disabilities. Within these topics, teacher students are taught what methods of teaching and supportive materials should be used in class, how to characterize and identify a learning disability, what categories of impairments or disabilities underlie a child’s learning difficulty, and the use of Inclusive Education methodology in teaching.

In addition the Ghana Education Service (2014) reported in the “Daily Graphic” that Ghana was ready to implement the Inclusive Education Policy in the 2015/2016 academic year because teachers had been trained on inclusive education.

Many academics in the field of inclusive education point to teacher education and school leadership as essential for the implementation of inclusive education in the classroom, yet the standard of teacher training courses across Africa varies hugely and they usually approach the inclusion of children with disabilities from a deficit perspective (GES, 2014) This situation was not found in Ghana because there is an optional ‘special needs’ paper to train and ‘prepare’ teachers to identify and diagnose disability. However, it is not an integral part of the training and it does not train teachers to deal with diversity or challenge negative attitudes.

School Based In-service (SBI) and Cluster Based In-service (CBI) training are the trainings teachers receive on the job and these training were organized in school based or in a circuit or cluster of school. Sixty four (64) percent of the teachers indicated that they do not receive in-service trainings. It therefore meant that school based and cluster based in-service were poorly organised in the District and also the in-service training on inclusive education were poorly organised in the schools because there were no funds for the schools to buy training materials. The Nabdam District Training team which was supposed to help organise Cluster Base In-service and School Base In-service training on Inclusive Education for schools was not up to the task. Also, the Capitation Grant which had a component for organizing SBIs and CBIs was inadequate and sometimes come in late and disorganized school action plans which affected in-service trainings. It was noted that grants allotted for educational needs and inclusion was diverted for training teachers in English Language, Maths and Science at the expense of inclusion education with following a directive form the GES headquarters. This implied that inclusive education is not a priority to GES but rather English Language, mathematics and science. It also meant that GES does not know much about the inclusive education and that had no interest in the policy. Confirming the assertion, one of the Assistant Directors in the Nabdam Education office said in the interview:

“School Base In-services are supposed to be organised six (6) times in a year, thus two (2) times per one term and Circuit Base In-service are supposed to be organised three(3) times in a year,
thus one for every term. So in such trainings we could have incorporated inclusive education but many teachers don’t comply due to funding and we can’t force them when there is funding. So I can say we do not organise these in-service training on inclusive education” (Fieldwork, 2016)

Table 5: Classroom Strategies for Inclusive Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have Inclusive Education Skills</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have no Inclusive Education skills</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Response</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, (2016)

The study found that majority (56.7 percent) of teachers had no skills to teach children with disability in the inclusive classroom. They had been trained but had no skills or strategy to teach children with disability. As to the reason why some of the teachers do not have the skills one of the teachers said:

“I am not trained: I only learnt something in psychology and special education in UEW. Though I was taught something, it was basics for me to say I have skills to teach in inclusive education classroom. I do not have the skills at all to handle children with disability in an inclusive classroom” (Fieldwork, 2016).

Identifying children with disability was not an easy task for most of the teachers, in this regard, 45 percent of the teachers constituting the minority identified CWDs in the classroom. 52.2 percent of the respondents constituting the majority identified CWDs in their classroom. It was clear that majority of the teachers had no skills to identify children with disability in the classrooms which negatively affected the implementation of the inclusive education policy in the Nabdam District of the Upper East Region of Ghana. Many type of disabilities were identify by the teachers and these are indicated in the diagram below:
Figure 1: Types of disabilities teachers can identify

Source: Field Survey (2016)

An analysis of the figure above indicates that majority of the teachers only identified the traditional categories of disabilities” such as hearing and visual impairments, intellectual or mental disability, physically challenged and emotional and behavioral disorders and this was attributed to the early missionaries focus on disability in Ghana.

In the schools it was found that 91.1 percent of the teachers were specifically responsible for Children with Disability in their respective schools whiles 7.9 percent did not have teachers who were responsible for Children with Disabilities. Teachers refer children with disability to other professionals for support. It was observed that only the selected teachers trained in the identification and management of Children With Disabilities called School Based Special Educational Needs teachers were the only ones mainly in-charge of all related issues on CWDs and so classroom teachers use them as mentors for educating children with disability.

It was found that teachers use collaborative teaching or (team teaching) in their respective schools towards the inclusive education policy. 121 teachers out of the 203 representing 59.6 percent use collaborative teaching to help manage CWDs in classroom. 38 teachers representing 18.7 percent do not use collaborative teaching with various
reason which include being new in school, not being aware and team teaching not being important.

It was clear that about 7 percent of teachers do not know what collaborative or team teaching was and these were the teachers who are untrained or unprofessional and have no knowledge in teaching strategies and special needs and care less for children with disability. Teachers use collaborative teaching or team teaching mainly because of Inclusive Education for children with disability as the study unravelled and this was supported by Elliot and McKinney (1998) who noted that one of the support services needed by teachers is team teaching because team teaching in the classroom reduces the higher level of stress brought on by full inclusive system since most special education services are provided on a pull-out basis. The teachers in the district made sure that there was enough ventilation in the classrooms and the reasons they gave are explained by the figure 2 below:

![Figure 2: Reasons for Ventilation in the Classroom](source: Field Survey (2016))
It can therefore be said that majority of the teachers were probably taught “traditionally” to always ventilate their classrooms but were not taught the main reason for ventilation in the classroom which is meant to promote inclusive learning for especially, those with visual impairment. The new classrooms had honey comb windows and disability rumps which promoted inclusive learning, however, the old classroom structures were not having disability rumps and honey comb windows. The implication is that children with disability attending schools in the old structures were denied access and quality education; hence they were educationally excluded in the District. One of the frontline Deputy Directors of Education in the Nabdam District remarked in the interview and said:

Oh.....yes, on my routine monitoring and supervision of teachers, schools that have windows they open them but those old structures with honey comb windows, what will they do......?. When it is warm, they only have to open their windows and allow fresh air to enter! Because all the old structures do not have windows but they have the honey comb windows” (Fieldwork, 2016).

Teachers did not encourage inclusive seating arrangement because of lack of classroom management and there was inadequate training of teachers on inclusive education and this support the findings of Atay (2005) who found that teachers who have not received in-service training on special needs do not have more positive attitudes and information about special needs towards inclusive education. In general, the teachers in inclusive education motivate the children with disability to learn and this was found as a strategy used by many teachers to boost and enhance effective learning especially for underachievers. The effective motivational strategies adopted by teachers in the district are shown on the table below:
Table 6: Effective Motivation Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective motivation strategy</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kind words/word of encouragement/praises</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand clap/Thumbs up</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of learning materials</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of sweats/gifts</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-response</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey (2016)

One of the circuit supervisors confirmed this in the interview. He said: "Look at Bob Little who is a mental retarded; teachers give him money including me to motivate him to come to school and because of that he always comes to school all the time. So I can say we do all our best to help at least the neediest child in the school." (Fieldwork, 2016)

Table 7: Teaching and Learning Materials for Children with Disability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability of TLMs for CWDs</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Available</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarcely</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not provided</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey (2016)

It was clear that teachers in the various schools do not have teaching and learning materials for children with disability. The only teaching and learning materials available for children with disability were forty-six (46) Basic Education Screening Tool-
kits (BEST) which were for identification of basic hearing and visual disabilities. These screening toolkits were provided by Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) and Afrikids Ghana, Non–Governmental Organisations operating in the Nabdam District. It was again found that teachers’ inclusive education accept children with disability. One of the teachers said:

"During staff meetings I encourage my teachers to accept children with disability. I tell my teachers not to be stern on children with disability and that even the cripple and Blind all go to University and the cripple o, the Blind o, and those without disability are all the same. So my teachers admit them and show good attitudes to them to show the general impression that CWDS are human beings and no discrimination their normal colleagues and the public” (Fieldwork, 2016).

There were a lot of measures put in place by teachers in the district to avoid discrimination against children with disability and these measures are illustrated in the table below:

Table 7: Measures to Avoid Discrimination against CWD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advise normal pupils not to discriminate</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow them to participate in all activities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate children on the need not to discriminate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I warn them not to even try to discriminate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always show them love</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed-sitting</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey (2016)

It can be interpreted that acceptability and admission of CWDs by teachers in the Nabdam District are largely positive therefore teachers are more concerned about the plight of children with disability in the inclusive education system in the Nabdam District.
The study revealed that 97 percent of the teachers do not collaborate with parents to discuss CWDs issues. This indicates that Parents and Teachers collaboration towards managing Children with Disability which is a key foundation for a successful implementation of the inclusive education for persons with disability in Nabdam District is overlooked or is not adhered to and may likely affect the full implementation of the inclusive education in the Nabdam District. The reasons given for non-collaboration were

Refusal of parents but the parents after invitation, irresponsibility on the part of parents to always meet the school authorities and some parents thinking that it is not their responsibility always to collaborated retards the progress of inclusive education policy in the district. One of the Circuit Supervisors said during the interview:

"My Brother, there are still some look-warm attitude between parent and teachers towards helping the cause of CWDS. There is this girl called in Zanlerigu K.G who is a cripple. Sometimes she does not come to school but teachers will not go and find out why she is absent. In PTA meetings the mother will never attend, and if I even invite her she won’t come"(Fieldwork, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Achieving Education for All and for that matter Inclusive Education in the Nabdam District of the Upper East Region is an important step towards equal opportunity for children with disability in the society. Therefore, access to Basic Education for children with disability in the Nabdam District is a right that is guaranteed by the government of Ghana and the international bodies. In the absence of a productive, objective and progressive legislative reform, laying more emphasis on inclusive education which is mutually not articulated and consistent, all the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals to meet equality in education remain a pipe dream and unattainable. Inclusive education will not be achieved until all stakeholders in basic education including teachers, pupils and parents are all involved in discussing issues relevant to learners with disability as emphasized by Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner’s socio-cultural and socio-constructivist theories of learning, which propound that, learning must be socially and culturally oriented with teachers plying critical roles as facilitators.

Many governments, including the government of Ghana are now aware of the benefits of inclusive education but the realisation of these benefits without the necessary action measures put in place such as; teachers skills and knowledge acquisition on inclusive education, acquisition of teaching and learning materials, financial commitment and friendly classroom environment coupled with positive attitudes towards children with disability will be an illusion. These if put in place will changed the trend towards
inclusive education completely in the Nabdam District of the Upper East Region of Ghana. Apart from training on inclusive methodology which has some few bearing on children with disability where some few teachers have trained in Nabdam District, The focus on English, mathematics and science education is used as a substitute for the inclusive education policy. Therefore, if care is not taken the whole country will soon lose the crusade on the full implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy before its “germination” The following recommendations are made for effective inclusive education in the Nabdam District of Upper East Region of Ghana.

- Special Education Unit within the Ghana Education Service should embark on vigorous In-Service trainings exercises which are aimed at equipping teachers with the relevant skills for the Inclusive Education Policy. This will help teachers to successfully implement the policy in the classrooms. Moreover, Universities and Colleges pursuing educational programs should prioritise IE ensure and that their curriculums include Special Educational Needs as key and compulsory course which should be studied all year round till completion than being studied in just one semester. This will help produce and equip teachers with skills to teach inclusive education.

- Teaching and learning material for children with disability are key components for implementing the Inclusive Education Policy. Governments in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organisations should commit funds towards the provision of all the necessary teaching and materials suitable for children with disability to enhance these children to participate in learning processes. Government should include an increase in funding; especially the Capitation Grant so that teachers could use that to buy inexpensive TLMs for CWDs. This will motivate the parents to enrol their children with disability and allow them to attend, and to motivate teachers to teach.

- Embarking on a vigorous campaign to sensitize parents of children with disability and opinion leaders on Inclusive Education (not much realized in the District). GES should sensitize parents on the negative effects of some of these cultural practices like spiritual child and killings of Children with Disability (CWDs). The sensitization must ensure that parents accept their CWDs and enrol them into school. The will increase the awareness about the Inclusive Education (IE).The NGOs, with the support of the GES, should initiate quarterly program whereby many activities concerning inclusion of children with disability will be embarked (Yet to see in the District) When this is done successfully parents and the general community members will appreciate the fact that disability is not inability, which will reduce the stigmatisation attached to Children with Disability (CWDs).
• An improved school environment by government is crucial for addressing the inequality in enrolment and attendance in basic schools in the region as well as quality delivering characterized by learning outcomes by children with disability. Government should ensure that all school infrastructure including toilets and furniture are disability friendly to motivate to accommodate and motivate Children with Disability for a successful Inclusive Education (IE) policy.

• Large class sizes affect the quality of teaching and classroom control. This normally reduces teacher attention and support for Children with Disability in inclusive classrooms. Government as part of its educational policy should reduce the acceptable teacher ratio (1:45) to 1:20 to ensure effective class control, class management and effective support for CWDs, towards a successful inclusive education implementation.

• A comprehensive statistics or data on children with disability should be seriously looked and compiled by GES and government so as to get an accurate and valid data for persons with disability in Ghana and the world at large. This data should include all the various categories of disability classified by UNESCO.

REFERENCES


