

American Journal of Education and Practice (AJEP)




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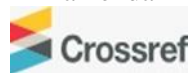
Knowledge Readiness of Head Teachers to Implement Inclusive Education Policies for Learners with Visual Impairments in Primary Schools of the North West Region of Cameroon

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Article history

Submitted 30.01.2024 Revised Version Received 13.02.2024 Accepted 14.02.2024

Abstract

Purpose: This study investigated the Knowledge readiness of head teachers to implement inclusive education policies for learners with visual impairments in primary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon. Given that inclusion, equity and social justice are emerging trends in education, there is need for headteachers and teachers to be ready to change the quality of services they offer in school. The main purpose of this study was: to find out how ready head teachers are in terms of knowledge of inclusive education legislation and its effect on inclusive education practices for learners with visual impairments in primary schools.

Materials and Methods: Methodology adopted was a mixed research approach, a sequential explanatory design was used in the study, both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were employed to sample a population of 374 teachers and head teachers from different primary schools in divisions of the North West Region of Cameroon. The research instruments were questionnaire and interview guide and the data was analysed using SPSS version 20, while qualitative data was

analyzed thematically. Data were presented on tables and charts using frequencies, mean, standard deviation and levels of significance.

Findings: Findings brought to light that, 56.7% of head teachers have knowledge on inclusive education legislation, 45% of teachers have knowledge on inclusive education legislation and knowledge on inclusive education legislation has a significant effect on inclusive education practices for learners with visual impairments in primary schools at the level of significance of 0.000.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: From these findings recommendations were made to the government for teacher training to be made inclusive and provide continuous professional development and capacity building for teacher, also financial and material supported should be provided for implementation of inclusive education as stated in the policies.

Keywords: *Knowledge Readiness, Head Teacher, Implementation Policies, Inclusive Education, Visual Impairments, Primary Schools*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education is a critical driver of the development agenda of any nation. In this era of global sustainable development and the quest for the attainment of Cameroon's development agenda – Vision 2035, it is necessary that the Cameroon's educational system be strategically restructured to provide every citizen with the much-needed quality education for sustainable development (Nguyap, 2016). Given that inclusive education (IE) is an emerging trend in education, there is need for head teachers to get ready for change. Inclusive education is a means to attain Strategic objectives as stated in the sector wide document, and the National Development Strategy 2020-2035. Sector Wide Approach to education aimed to regulate access to education according to demographic trends, improve efficiency and ensure quality education for all. One of the ways of achieving vision 2035 is to ensure that the education sector is effective and primary education is available to all Cameroonians. Some of the strategic objectives pursued in Basic education are to ensure access to education for school children, improve access and equity and gradually attending universal primary education and improving quality (Sector Wide Report, 2006).

Challenged by the observation that current practices on inclusion do not reach set goals, strongly suggest ineffectiveness in the implementation of inclusive education like the sector wide strategy acknowledges the need for regulation of access in relation to demographic trends, the preservation of quality and Equity (Titanji 2017). There is need for head teachers to be ready in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes for the implementation of policies on inclusive education so as to achieve these goals at a national and international level. Inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners. Removing barriers to participation in learning for all learners is at the core of inclusive education systems (UNESCO, 2005).

In 2013, statistics showed that 93 million children under age 14, or 5.1% of the world's children, were living with a 'moderate or severe disability'. Of these, 13 million, or 0.7% of the world's children, experience severe disabilities. (GMR 2013). Around four in five children with disabilities are in developing countries. At all ages, levels of both moderate and severe disability are higher in low- and middle-income countries than in rich countries. They are highest in sub-Saharan Africa. (GMR 2010). WHO estimates that roughly 90% of the world's population live with significant or easily correctable visual impairment. Out of this number, 221 million live in low-income settings in developing countries. Among children under 15 years of age worldwide, WHO reports that an estimated 19 million have a visual impairment while 12 million under the age of 15 years have vision conditions that could be easily diagnosed and corrected. Significant numbers of boys and girls in Sub-Saharan countries with visual impairments are less likely to enroll in primary education and acquire literacy than their non-disabled peers. They are also less likely to complete a full course of primary education (Wodon et al, 2019). This significant number of children with various forms of disabilities with less chances of benefiting from quality basic education is a call for concern.

In addition, it is estimated that 5% of the Cameroonian population has a disability but social stigma is responsible for the under-reporting of the prevalence, especially in rural areas (Annor, 2002). It is also worth noting that in Cameroon about 53% of women with disability are with no education compared with 37.3% of males. Even when Persons with Disabilities (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 the total population. This situation is disturbing 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. This condition was blamed on lack of advocacy and lobbying on the part of organisations and pressure groups, (Ocloo.M, & Dogbe. D.S., Gadabui.G.Y, 2000). Also, lack of facilities, teaching materials, inadequate training, lack of support stakeholders, negative attitude are barriers to an inclusive education.

Problem Statement

The Cameroon government has signed decrees and international conventions in support of an inclusive education for learners with disabilities and those with visual impairments in particular yet little has been done to prepare head teachers/teacher to be effective in the change process, they have no training before appointment and poor in-service training efforts. The Cameroon education sectors, in general and basic education in particular, seem more interested in the adoption of policies than implementing them. Although the country has a solid legal and institutional framework to safeguard inclusive education architectural structures in schools do not sufficiently address the needs of persons with disabilities. The teachers are not adequately equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to teach children with disabilities.

Factors associated with implementation such as capacity building for education personnel, insufficient teaching materials, assistive devices and inflexible and unmodified learning environment compromise efforts towards the implementation of IE. For instance, the Prime Ministerial Decree of July 26, 2018 laying down the procedures for implementing Law No. 2010/02 of April 13, 2010 on the protection of persons with disabilities and other legal provisions, says the state offers protection and support in health, social welfare and educational services to people with different categories of special needs in Cameroon, which is the text of application, is yet to be seen implemented in schools. Good practice of the change process requires that after adopting a policy, more needs to be done to ensure implementation. This is why this paper set out to find the knowledge readiness of head teachers in inclusive education legislation and its effect on inclusive education practices for learners with visual impairments in primary schools.

Owing to this objective, the main question arising is: what is the head teachers' knowledge readiness in inclusive education legislation and its effect on inclusive education practices for learners with visual impairments in primary schools

The hypothesis to be tested in this paper is:

H₀₁: Head teacher's knowledge of inclusive education legislation has no significant effect on inclusive education practices for learners with visual impairments in primary schools

H₀₂: Head teacher's knowledge of inclusive education legislation has a significant effect on inclusive education practices for learners with visual impairments in primary schools

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge of Inclusive Education Legislation

The implementation of government's policies though not yet fully achieved is increasingly creating awareness in the fight against social exclusion and ensures national solidarity (Naiker (2019). For inclusive education practice to be more meaningful, there is need for principles that support its existence. In Cameroon where IE to a greater extent is still at the level of sensitization, there is need to create awareness on the instruments backing this practice in the territory Mbibeh (2013) then implementation can be possible.

An inclusive education policy aims to bring together students with disabilities. Those who have experienced exclusion from education can consider it as their cornerstone to get their support for their educational endeavours (Vlachou, 2004). It is a legitimate document that supports integration and upholds disabled students right to education regardless of where they are (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). It is a vehicle to raise awareness of disabled children's power, and a means to protect their vulnerability in terms of receiving education (Peters 2007), and it closes the gap opened up by perceptions that one person is better than the other by placing all students in one classroom (Furtado, 2005). Khudorenko (2012) argues that, despite an inclusive education policy's clear statement and principles, the perception that people with disabilities ought to be fully equal in receiving education has not yet sunk into public consciousness. This is because the dominant interpretation of an inclusive education policy as a completely a new system of education without clear measures of demarcation between abled and disabled learners in a classroom is still unclear to people (Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2007; Liasidou, 2007). However, it could also be the result of the gap between the stated and enacted policies connected to misunderstanding of the principles of human rights and equal opportunities (Vlachou, 2004).

Liasidou (2007) says that quest for the realisation of inclusive policy and practice is primarily an attempt to alter the education system so as to include and respect students' diversity. Inclusion is fundamentally different from integration in the sense that it requires the education system to be radically restructured so as to provide quality education for all children, irrespective of their variegated developmental trajectories. The rules of the inclusive education policy stress that general educational authorities are responsible for the education of children with disabilities in an integrated setting (Smith-Davis, 2002). Operti and Brady (2011) elaborated that inclusive education policies worldwide usually focus on two concerns. One is the choice between special education and integration or mainstreaming, as well as the strategies and methods for progressively incorporating students with special needs into regular schools: investments in physical facilities and equipment, circular renewal and adjustments, and teachers' roles and practices.

In other words, it can be seen that an inclusive education policy is developed, firstly, to integrate special and regular education together in a unified education system whereby the education of children with special needs is supported with appropriate facilities and resources so that they can learn alongside their able bodied peers. Secondly, an inclusive education policy is developed to integrate a diversity of learners to learn together (Vlachou, 2004).

It is a legitimate document that supports integration and upholds disabled students' right to education regardless of where they are (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). It is a vehicle to raise awareness of disabled children's power, and a means to protect their vulnerability in terms of receiving education (Peters 2007), and it closes the gap opened up by perceptions that one person is better than the other by placing all students in one classroom (Furtado, 2005). The inclusive education policy is a reform in education that sheds new light on old educational practices to promote a new vision in education (Acedo, 2008). Bourke (2010) emphasizes that "government inclusive education policies outlined in the inclusive education statement have an education system in which difference and diversity are respected and valued" (p.184). These views express a universal right to education where all children can participate in the educational system whatever their abilities to claim education as their basic right, corresponding to the concept of inclusive education.

Khudorenko (2012) argues that, despite an inclusive education policy's clear statement and principles, the perception that people with disabilities ought to be fully equal in receiving education has not yet sunk into public consciousness. This is because the dominant interpretation of an inclusive education policy as a completely a new system of education without clear measures of demarcation between abled and disabled learners in a classroom is still unclear to people (Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2007). However, it could also be the result of the gap between the stated and enacted policies connected to misunderstanding of the principles of human rights and equal opportunities (Vlachou, 2004).

So literature has established that education systems around the world face the biggest challenge in inclusive education, that of providing an effective, high quality education for children and young people with disabilities (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Opertti and Belalcáza (2008) says that inclusive education is a growing universal concern that informs and challenges the processes of educational reform in both developing and developed regions.

International Policy

The move towards I E practice is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) in which access to education for all became a basic human right. The UN has taken upon itself to promote such human rights and specifically regarding education, UNESCO has been involved for the past 3 to 4 decades in the fight against educational exclusion. Article 28 of the UN convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) raises the question of those with special needs insisting that it has to "form part of an overall educational strategy and indeed new social and economic policies" and above all calls for major reforms in ordinary schools. Also, Article 23, 28 and 29 of the same convention focusing on CWD stipulates that "a child with physical should enjoy decent life and should have access to education. In order to achieve this, primary education should be made compulsory and free to all".

The United Nations has made influential declarations regarding inclusive education, such as the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) that mandated persons with disability to access education without discrimination. The declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975) guaranteed the respect and dignity of the persons living with disability and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) endorsed the right of every child.

In the 1990s, UNESCO held a number of conferences around the world with insightful outcomes

geared towards the provision of education for all children without exception. Such conferences include; the Education for All (EFA) (1990) and the Salamanca Conference (1994). The World Education Conference in Jomtien Thailand (1990) raised concerns related to education for all. Article 3 of its declaration apart from advocating a breakaway from rigid prescriptive educational systems towards flexible ones, recognised the existence of disparities, and acknowledged the vulnerability of particular groups with the inherent discrimination exerted on them in education. The declaration therefore agreed that active commitment must be made to remove this disparity and every person with disabilities who should not suffer any discrimination in access to learning opportunities (UNESCO, 1990) but should be provided with normal education as an integral part of the educational system. This World Conference of 1990 (Jomtien Declaration) in Thailand, set goals of Education for All (EFA), which was reaffirmed in the Dakar Framework of 2000 in Senegal. Consequently, the Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on learners with disabilities in Spain (UNESCO, 1994) approved the norms of inclusive education and gave a key motivation for inclusion.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights included strong statements about rights and freedoms which have subsequently been used to support inclusive practices. For example: Article 26 (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. Also, they advocated for the rights of children in the Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities (CRC, 1989) reaffirmed rights of persons with disabilities to education. World Declaration on Education For All at Jomtien, Thailand (UNESCO, 1990) stated in Article III (5): steps needed to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system. According to, 'Education for All', the aim of inclusive education is to increase participation and learning of pupils who are vulnerable to marginalization within existing educational arrangements (World Education Forum, 2000).

According to UNESCO (1994), after raising concerns on EFA at the 1990 conference in Thailand, the subsequent conference in Salamanca 1994 outlined practical modalities for the implementation of IE in its conference Statements and Frameworks in what has become known as the Salamanca statement or framework for action. While reiterating previous sessions, the Salamanca statement confirmed that all children and young people of the world with individual strengths and weaknesses, with their hopes and expectations have the right to education. For this objective to be attained, the Salamanca Statement and Framework introduced the principle of inclusion which was to find expression in inclusive schools. Such schools amongst other things should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions (and) schools have to find ways of successfully educating all children including those with serious disabilities (UNESCO1994).

The major recommendation of Salamanca Statement was that every child with special learning needs is entitled to access learning in a regular institution. The governments were required to give priority on their policy, legal and budgetary provision to restructure the education system to cater for learner diversity (UNESCO, 2015). Although several countries' legislations and policies appear to be committed to inclusive education, practices in schools may not meet this rhetoric (Ashwini et al., 2015).

National Policy

According to Mbibeh, (2013) Cameroon is a signatory to all the international conventions and policies. This means in essence that such policies need to be applied in the country. Law No 83/013 of 21st July 1983 and its decree of application Law No 90/156 of 26th November 1990 provides general dispositions and practical modalities for the protection of persons with disabilities. Though not mentioned in clear terms, these laws all reflect inclusive practices that are cherished the world over (SEEPD, 2011).

According to Tchombe, (2012), the only Law in Cameroon, which addresses the needs of persons with disabilities, is law No. 83/13 of July, 1983 relating to the protection of persons with disabilities. The conditions for implementing this law are laid down in decree No.90/1516 of 26 November, 1990. These two documents form a foundation stone for a strong government policy toward the education of persons with disabilities. To ensure the proper digestion of the 1983 law, the Minister of National Education issued circular letter No. 86/1/658/MINEDUC/CTZ of January 13, 1986 calling on all national education authorities to implement the 1983 law by giving priority, easing and facilitating the enrolment of children with disabilities in public and private schools (Tchombe, 2012).

Recently, the Prime Ministerial Decree of July 26, 2018 laying down the procedures for implementing law No 2010/002 of 13 April while reemphasizing the laws discussed previously, insists on the welfare of CWD and psychological support which according to section shall aim at strengthening the psychological capacity, developing self-esteem, strengthening relationships with the living environment in order to reconcile CWD and others". (Mbibeh, 2013) and

The study by Chimhenga (2016), investigated the impact of legislation on the implementation of inclusive Education for learners with learning disabilities in primary schools of Zimbabwe. The study was carried out in Bulawayo Province. There were 250 primary school teachers, 30 university lecturers and 20 education officers who participated in this study and they were selected by means of purposive or convenience sampling. All participants to the study were being involved in the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the participants. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The findings indicated that there was no mandatory policy and legislation on the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities in primary schools of Zimbabwe. The study also revealed that lack of commitment by policymakers towards children with learning disabilities has hampered successful implementation of inclusive education. The study recommended that there is need to establish a clear and concise mandatory policy and legislation, supported by an Act of Parliament that spells out the expectations and roles of the stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education for children with learning disabilities.

A study by Torombe (2013), sought to find out teachers' experiences in implementing inclusive education policy in Papua New Guinea: a study of two primary schools in the national capital district. This study was set out to capture this moment in history in two urban primary schools in PNG and to determine the factors that have influenced the implementation of inclusive education policy. The study found that despite teachers' having positive nurturing instinct to support children's education in view of the Education for All agenda, they are

confronted with numerous challenges and complexities as they work to embrace practices of integration and inclusion within their capacities as teachers. The study found that the challenges imposed on teachers were lack of knowledge and skills in inclusive education, large class size, lack of collaborative support system within the school and the education system along with lack of incentives. The recommendations and the reflections put forth in this thesis offer insight into, roles of primary school teachers, school Principals, school inspectors, teacher educators and educational policy makers in general to look again into how this government innovation can better facilitate the implementation of inclusive education at the primary school level. The study suggest what teachers and policy makers can learn from the current study to look into the future of inclusive education in PNG to create a connectedness between policy and practice is no rhetoric policy proclamation to actual practice.

A study by Bose and Heyman, (2020) says that of the approximately 93 million children with moderate or severe disabilities around the world, large numbers do not have access to quality education. Inclusive education systems have been advocated as a solution to this problem. In this paper, we examine whether legislation to advance inclusive education can increase the likelihood of children with disabilities attending school in a low-income country. Using a difference-in-difference methodology, we find that children with visual, hearing, and physical disabilities, who began school at a time when inclusive education was guaranteed in Uganda, had a significantly higher likelihood of going to school than children with disabilities in comparator countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as children with disabilities in Uganda who became of school age prior to the passage of legislation. However, this was no longer true when considering only the sample of children reported to have no ability to see, hear, or engage in physical activities. While our findings are promising, comparable data on more countries are needed to comprehensively examine the impact of similar legislation across multiple settings.

Theory of Educational Change by Micheal Fullan (1982, 1991)

This work was anchored to Fullan’s theory of change. His model focused on “the human participants taking part in the change process”. He looked at the implications of change for people or organizations promoting or opposing it at particular levels, what can different stakeholders do to promote change that addresses their needs and priorities? Fullan views every stakeholder in the educational change as a change agent and focuses on the roles and strategies of various types of change agents. Fullan (1982, 1991) proposed that there are four broad phases in the change process: initiation, implementation, continuation, and outcome.

Fullan and Stigelbauer (1991) identified three areas of the major factors affecting implementation: characteristics of change, local characteristics and external factors (government and other agencies). They identified different stakeholders in local, and federal and governmental levels. They also identified characterizations of change to each stakeholder and the issues that each stakeholder should consider before committing a change effort or rejecting it.

3.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The mixed research method was used in this study. This method involved a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods or paradigm in the same study. The current study adopted a

sequential explanatory mixed design, which commenced with data collection and analysis from a quantitative phase, followed by data collection and analysis at the qualitative phase. The rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis provide a general understanding of the research problem, while qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in more depth. This study was carried out in primary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon. The population of the study included 374 head teachers and teachers in primary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used in this study given that the researcher adopted a mixed research approach.

Using the above sampling techniques the researcher sampled 374 teachers and head teachers from primary schools in the Public, Mission and Lay private primary schools. A questionnaire and interview guide was used to collect data. The study had two sets of questionnaire directed to the teachers and head teachers and an interview guide for the population. The validity was ensured by calculating the Content Validity Index and to ensure reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient computed using SPSS version 20 to check the internal consistency of the instrument, which was 0.835. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20.0 was used for statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) and linear regression were used to measure the association between the variables.

4.0 FINDINGS

Knowledge readiness of head teachers on inclusive education legislation and its effect on inclusive education practices for pupils with visual impairments

Table 1: Knowledge Readiness of Head Teachers on Inclusive Education Policy/Legislation

S/N	Statement	SA	A	TOTAL	D	SD	TOTAL	Mean	SD
1	I know the policies on the inclusion of learners with visual impairments	8(10.3%)	21(26.9%)	29(37.2%)	34(43.6%)	15(19.2%)	49(62.8%)	2.3	.89
2	I clearly understand policies on the inclusion of learners with visual impairments	13(16.7%)	33(42.3%)	46(59%)	23(29.5%)	9(11.5%)	32(41%)	2.6	.89
3	I have seen copies of the policies on inclusive education of learners with visual impairments	19(24.4%)	40(51.3%)	59(75.7%)	12(15.4%)	7(9.0%)	19(24.4%)	2.9	.87
4	What the policies on inclusion of learners with visual impairments say is very clear for everyone to understand	13(16.7%)	36(46.2%)	49(62.9%)	21(26.9%)	8(10.3%)	29(37.2%)	3.0	.87
5	After these decrees are signed, the inspectors makes sure head teachers and teachers have copies	13(16.7%)	25(32.1%)	38(48.8%)	15(19.2%)	25(32.1%)	40(51.3%)	2.3	1.1
6	I know the objectives of the policies on inclusive education of learners with visual impairments	10(12.8%)	25(32.1%)	35(41.9%)	30(38.5%)	13(16.7%)	43(55.2%)	2.4	.91
7	I have a copy of the 2010 law on the protection and welfare of persons with disabilities	27(34.6%)	29(37.2%)	56(71.8%)	11(14.1%)	11(14.1%)	22(28.2%)	2.9	1.0
8	I know what it says about inclusive education of learners with disabilities	26(33.3%)	27(34.6%)	53(67.9%)	12(15.4%)	13(16.7%)	25(32.1%)	2.8	.91
9	I have seen a copy of the 2018 law on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities	18(23.1%)	24(30.8%)	42(53.9%)	27(34.6%)	9(11.5%)	36(46.1)	2.7	1.0
10	I have read international policy documents on inclusion like Salamanca statement, the UN Convention on the Protection of children with disabilities, EFA goals, the Dakar Framework etc	27(34.6%)	9(11.5%)	36(46.1)	18(23.1%)	24(30.8%)	42(53.9%)	2.5	1.1
AVERAGE		44.3(56.7%)			33.7(43.3%)		2.6	0.95	

Table 1 above shows the responses of the head teachers on their readiness in the area of knowledge on the legislation on inclusive education for learners with visual impairments in primary schools. The first question in this light that was raised inquired if head teachers know the policies on the inclusion of learners with visual impairments in Cameroon. Out of the 78 head teachers surveyed only 29 (37.2%) agreed that they know the policies on inclusive education while 49(62.8%) of the head teachers were without knowledge of the policies on inclusion. In the same light they were asked if they clearly understand policies on the inclusion of learners with visual impairments given that knowledge alone is not enough. Head teachers who understand the policies were 46 (59%) whereas 32(41%) lacked clarity in understanding. The third question investigates if they have seen copies of the policies on inclusive education of learners with visual impairments. Those who had seen were 59 (75.7%) while those who had never seen were 19 (24.4%).

Furthermore, they were asked if what the policies on inclusion of learners with visual impairments say is very clear for everyone to understand. A huge part of the head teachers 49 (62.9%) out of the 78 sampled said the policies were clear for everyone to understand but 29(37.1%) said it was unclear. The head teachers were asked if after these decrees are signed, the

inspectors make sure they have their own copies. Those who agreed were 38(48.8%) while those who disagreed were 40 (51.3%). This means that less than 50% of the school heads own copies of various policy documents. Only 35 (41.9%) agreed that they know the objectives of the policies on inclusive education of learners with visual impairments while 43(55.2%) do not know the objective. Concerning owning a copy of the 2010 law on the protection and welfare of persons with disabilities 56 (71.8%) owned copies while 22 (28.2%) do not own a copy.

With seeing a copy of the 2018 law on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities. 42(53.9%) had seen while 27(34.6%) had not seen this law on the protection of the rights of persons with disability. Other policy documents the researcher wanted to know if they had knowledge of were the sector wide approach to education on education of pupils and the national development strategy, Poverty Reduction strategy paper, the Growth and employment strategy paper. Overall, those who had seen this critical document on inclusion were less than 40% of the 78 head teachers sampled. Concerning knowledge of international text like the Salamanca statement, the UN Convention on the Protection of children with disabilities, EFA goals, the Dakar Framework etc Those who had seen were 36(46.1) which is slightly less than average and those who had not seen at all were 42 (53.9%) of the sample. Generally, 56.7% of the head teachers have knowledge on inclusive education legislation, meaning that the knowledge of legislation among head teacher is not a problem for implementation of inclusive education.

Table 2: Knowledge Readiness of Teachers on Inclusive Education Policy/Legislation

S/N	Statement	SA	A	TOTAL	D	SD	TOTAL	Mean	SDev
1	I know the policies on the inclusion of learners with visual impairments	162(54.7%)	63(21.3%)	225(76%)	28(9.5%)	43(14.5%)	71(24%)	3.2	.85
2	I clearly understand policies on the inclusion of learners with visual impairments	128(43.2%)	48(16.2%)	176(59.4%)	35(11.8%)	85(28.7%)	120(40.5%)	2.7	.89
3	I have seen copies of the policies on inclusive education of learners with visual impairments	47(15.9%)	99(33.4%)	146(49.6%)	105(35.5%)	45(15.2%)	150(51%)	2.5	.93
4	What the policies on inclusion of learners with visual impairments say is very clear for everyone to understand	42(14.2%)	106(35.8%)	148(50%)	100(33.8%)	48(16.2%)	148(50%)	2.5	.92
5	After these decrees are signed, the inspectors makes sure head teachers and teachers have copies	67(22.6%)	100(33.8%)	167(56.4%)	87(29.4%)	42(14.2%)	129(43.6%)	2.6	.98
6	I know the objectives of the policies on inclusive education of learners with visual impairments	37(12.5%)	71(24.0%)	108(36.5%)	139(47.0%)	49(16.6%)	188(63.6%)	2.3	.89
7	I have a copy of the 2010 law on the protection and welfare of persons with disabilities	53(17.9%)	24(8.1%)	77(26%)	112(37.8%)	107(36.1%)	219(73.9%)	2.1	.93
8	I know what it says about inclusive education of learners with disabilities	32(10.8%)	75(25.3%)	107(36.1%)	135(45.6%)	54(18.2%)	189(63.8%)	2.3	.88
9	I have seen a copy of the 2018 law on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities	24(8.1%)	67(22.6%)	91(30.7%)	107(36.1%)	98(33.1%)	205(69.2%)	2.1	.93
10	I have seen and read international policy documents on inclusion like Salamanca statement, the UN Convention on the Protection of children with disabilities, EFA goals, the Dakar Framework etc	26(8.8%)	69(23.3%)	95(32.1%)	93(31.4%)	108(36.5%)	201(69.9%)	2.0	.97
AVERAGE				134(45%)			162(54%)	2.4	0.92

From Table 2 above a series of questions were asked to find out if teachers have knowledge legislation on the inclusive education of learners with visual impairments. Firstly teachers are interrogated if they know the policies on the inclusion of learners with visual impairments to which the majority 225(76%) accepted while 71(24%) had a contrary view. Also when asked if they clearly understand policies on the inclusion of learners with visual impairments the majority 176(59.4%) agreed while 71(24%) disagreed. Also, a minority accepted that they have seen copies of the policies on inclusive education of learners with visual impairments while the majority overwhelmingly denied 150(51%). When further asked if what the policies on inclusion of learners with visual impairments say is very clear for everyone to understand 148(50%) agreed while 148(50%) disagreed to this.

Further, a majority 167(56.4%) said after these decrees are signed, the inspectors makes sure head teachers and teachers have copies 129(43.6%) denied. More, 108(36.5%) said they know the objectives of the policies on inclusive education of learners with visual impairments while the majority 188(63.6%) denied. Also, when asked if they have a copy of the 2010 law on the protection and welfare of persons with disabilities 77(26%) said yes while 219(73.9%) denied. Too were further asked, if they know what it says about inclusive education of learners with disabilities 107(36.1%) a minority accepted while the majority denied. Teacher were also asked if they have seen a copy of the 2018 law on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities 91(30.7%) while the majority 205(69.2%) refused. Further, 142(47.9%) accepted they know what the sector wide approach to education says about education of pupils 154(52.1%) denied. Also, 72(24.3%) accepted have seen the national development strategy, Poverty Reduction strategy paper, the Growth and employment strategy paper while the majority 224(75.7%) have not seen these policy documents. Finally, teachers were asked if have seen and read international policy documents on inclusion like Salamanca statement, the UN Convention on the Protection of children with disabilities, EFA goals, the Dakar Framework 95(32.1%) accepted while the majority 201(69.9%) denied. Generally on 45% of the teacher have knowledge on inclusive education, meaning more education on this policy has to be given to the teachers.

H₀₁: Head teacher's knowledge of inclusive education legislation has no significant effects on inclusive education practices for learners with visual impairments in primary schools.

Table 3: Correlations between ' Knowledge and Implementation of IE

		Knowledge of legislation	Implementation of IE
Knowledge Legislation	Pearson Correlation	1	.373**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	374	374
Implementation of IE	Pearson Correlation	.373**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	374	374

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the correlation results presented in Table 3 above, there is a positive correlation between knowledge legislation on inclusive education and head teachers readiness for inclusive education. In this case, the correlation coefficient is 0.373. This indicates a moderate positive correlation between teachers' knowledge of inclusive education and their readiness for inclusive education. In this case, the p-value is 0.000, which means the correlation is statistically significant at conventional significance levels of $\alpha = 0.01$. A linear regression also showed teachers and head teachers knowledge has a significant effect on their readiness to implement inclusive for learners with visual impairments in primary schools.

Results from Interview on the Head Teachers and Teachers Knowledge of Legislation on Inclusive Education

From the interview, majority of the head teachers said they have clarity about the policies on inclusive education, they have heard about these policies that it involves bringing learners with

visual impairments into mainstream schools and meeting their special needs. They said these legislations have been presented to them in pedagogic seminars by the Ministry and some by the CBC. Their greatest challenge was their lack of knowledge on how to implement this policy practically in classrooms. Most head teachers were of the opinion that they do not admit most of these students because the knowledge and practical skills to implement are lacking. However, most teachers showed a lack of clear understanding about these policies, especially the meaning of inclusive education as majority think it means bringing the learners with disabilities to special schools.

Though they have some knowledge on legislation about inclusive education, most teachers and head teachers showed they did not understand what an inclusive education is, some think it means giving the persons with disabilities access to special school. Most of the teachers and head teachers asked why I came to collect data from mainstream schools when inclusive education has to be practiced in special schools. Many did not understand that these learners have to be placed in mainstream schools. But the teachers and Head teachers in CBC especially Nkwen had a good understanding of the policy and practice.

Most of the head teachers said they do not admit these learners with disabilities because they lack the capacity to meet their special needs so usually send them to the special school. Knowledge alone cannot lead to implementation of inclusive education. There is need for training, provision of resources by the government, transformation of the school environment, professional development.

Majority of the head teachers said it is impossible to practice inclusive education for learners with visual impairments because most of the teachers have not been given an inclusive teacher training or education. If this must be practicable then the government has a responsibility to make teacher training inclusive and provide continuous professional development for the teachers that are already on the field.

A head teacher said “Teachers cannot perform miracles, it is funny that teachers are expected to do what they are not given the knowledge and skills needed to meet the special needs of these learners. We have learners with other disabilities in the schools but for those who have severe blindness we cannot handle, we don’t admit them here but we send them to centers or CBC where they can meet their needs”

Another said “inclusive education in Cameroon is mostly about policy and too much talking but nothing is being done to prepare the ground for implementation. Little or nothing is done to train teachers, also resources to teach like the braille, talking computers, tape recorders and the school environment is not accessible to visually impaired learners. So we do not offer admissions to those with severe visual impairments because we cannot meet their special education needs”.

On the contrary the teacher interviewed in CBC Nkwen gave all evidence of implementation of inclusive education “we give opportunity to all learners who need education here despite their disabilities, we meet all their special needs, every child has access to learning here. They have their braille; we have braille, audio recorders that are used to facilitate their learning. We have ramps everywhere to facilitate their mobility even to the last floor every learner moves with ease. We have educated many of them who have become Doctors, teachers to name a few”. However, majority of teachers in other schools especially public schools did not possess sufficient

knowledge about these policies.

Discussion of Findings

Results from the findings revealed that head teacher's knowledge of legislation have a significant impact on readiness to implement inclusive education for learners with visual impairments. Also results of the interview revealed that head teachers have knowledge about the legislation on inclusive education; they have seen and heard about these policies over and over that it involves bringing learners with visual impairments into mainstream schools and meeting their special needs. They said these legislations have been presented to them on pedagogic seminars by the Ministry and some by the CBC health service. However the teachers did not have sufficient knowledge on inclusive education policies.

To support these findings, Mbibeh (2013) opines that in Cameroon where inclusive education to a greater extent is still at the level of sensitization, there is need to create awareness on the instruments backing this practice in the territory. Teachers and head teacher need to know with clarity what an inclusive education is and how it is practiced. An inclusive education policy aims to bring together students with disabilities.

More, in corroboration with this finding, McMaster (2015) also says that building the knowledge and capacity of head teachers, teachers and other school staff is crucial to developing sustainable inclusion in schools. The evolution of an inclusive school culture depends on aligning the attitudes and behaviour of staff (McMaster, 2015). Teachers must be knowledgeable about how inclusive education has progressed over time, particularly how the meaning of inclusion has changed and what it means in their school context. Understanding the concepts and values behind inclusion can help teachers appreciate its significance, prompting reflection of their own practice and how they see their students (Anderson & Boyle, 2015; Skidmore, 2004). This can allow any unhelpful assumptions or beliefs that may have been unconsciously informing their teaching practice, particularly in relation to students living with disability, to be challenged and revised (Ashby, 2012; Ashton & Arlington, 2019).

Also, to support the findings Khudorenko (2012) argues that, despite an inclusive education policy's clear statement and principles, the perception that people with disabilities ought to be fully equal in receiving education has not yet sunk into public consciousness. This is because the dominant interpretation of an inclusive education policy as completely a new system of education without clear measures of demarcation between abled and disabled learners in a classroom is still unclear to people (Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2007). However, it could also be the result of the gap between the stated and enacted policies connected to misunderstanding of the principles of human rights and equal opportunities (Vlachou, 2004).

furthermore, the challenge of achieving full inclusion lies in a comprehensive understanding of the working of policy and practice by the actors who adopt it and by a government's commitment to empower the process (Hodkinson, 2012). For instance, Brady and Operti (2011) says that reform that moves more inclusive education systems by developing inclusive teachers is an extremely complex, dedicated and contested process and it is essential to recognize that teacher education is simply one set of efforts in this direction.

In addition, Cameroon government Cameroon is a signatory to all the international conventions and policies. This means in essence that such policies need to be applied in the country. However, in addition to this there are still national policies geared towards ensuring access to education for all including learners with challenges like the Law No 83/013 of 21st July 1983 and its decree of application Law No 90/156 of 26th November 1990 provides general dispositions and practical modalities for the protection of persons with disabilities. Law No 90/156 of 26th November 1990 chapters I and II focus specifically on education. Recently, law No 2010/002 of 13 April while reemphasizing dispositions in the laws discussed previously, insists on the welfare of CWD and psychological support (Mbibeh, 2013).

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions

In a nutshell, findings showed knowledge of legislation has a significant effect on head teacher readiness to implement inclusive education. Knowledge of legislation on inclusive education has increased among teachers due to wide sensitization by the government and seminars and the intervention of the Cameroon Baptist convention. This implies that head and teacher need to be given adequate clarity on the subject of inclusion, so they know exactly what it is and be able to practice. This can be done during training in Teacher Training Colleges, pedagogic seminars, Continuous professional development, and staff meetings.

Implication of the Study

Teachers and head teachers play a critical and decisive role in the implementation of inclusive education. The knowledge, attitude, skills and resources have an effect on their self-esteem to implement inclusive education. The policies and efforts of implementing inclusive education will not be successful if teachers and head teachers are not equipped with knowledge skills, attitude and resources. On the contrary the researcher found out that most teachers/head teachers lack the knowledge, skills, attitude and support needed to implement inclusive education for learners with visual impairments. Teachers are increasingly facing the challenges of teaching learners with disabilities, many school exclude, or refuse to include these learners with visual impairments on the grounds that teachers do not have the required skills and knowledge to teach these learners.

This implies that the definition of a teacher have to change to one who is able to attain to the needs of diverse learners. That is teachers training and continuous professional development for mainstream teachers/head teachers have to become inclusive and enhanced capacity building must be ensured. Continuous professional development will help teachers to enhance their professional knowledge, skills and attitude which can help improve the job performance. Once the teacher gains knowledge and skills their attitude towards inclusive education will change.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the researcher recommends that more sensitization and information of teachers on policies on inclusive education, nationally and international. More seminars should be organized quarterly on inclusive education. Also, teacher training programme should be modified to become inclusive teacher training. Teachers should be made professional and specialized skills needed to teach learners with visual impairments in inclusive classrooms be

given them. Inclusive education and related topics should constitute major courses, not only topics in a course. In-service training should be organised to enhance pedagogical skills to care for special needs learners. Teachers should do personal research to improve their knowledge of inclusive practices.

Cameroon government should also keep to the promises made in policy documents that they are going support the education of persons with disabilities by exempting them from payment of fees, train special teachers to teachers to teach learners with disabilities and provide teaching learning resources, infrastructures and classroom environment structures should be reconstructed to suit all learners.

The government should provide enough funds for the purchase of instructional materials for learners with physical impairments for smooth implementation of inclusive education. Schools should construct and purchase necessary physical facilities for learners with impairments. Teachers should apply appropriate teaching methods to cater for learners with visual impairments. Classroom routine practices should cater for all learners including those with physical impairments. There is also need for the creation of resource centers in all schools for the preparatory period and final inclusion into mainstream schools.

Contributions to Theory

Findings showed knowledge of legislation has a significant effect on head teacher readiness to implement inclusive education; the findings of the study are directly implicated to Fullan's theory of change. Who looked at the implications of change for people in the organizations promoting or opposing it at particular levels, Fullan views every stakeholder in the educational change as a change agent. Fullan said to implement this change, change agents must have clarity or knowledge about the change they are supposed to implement. If educational leaders do not understand the policy inclusive education, they cannot practice.

The findings particularly focused on the implementation of inclusive which is one of the stages in the change process as stated by Fullan. Fullan (1982, 1991) proposed that there are four broad phases in the change process: initiation, implementation, continuation, and outcome.

Contributions to Education Policy and practice

This study will help policy makers to advocate more for a Nation-wide inclusive education, for policy changes, more laws and legislation need to be enacted to enhance an inclusive education. This study will help policy makers to ensure that educational policies are inline world-wide best practices for inclusive education, and policies which are in place could be more carefully implemented. One way of changing practice is to provide ongoing support and education for all levels of teachers, school administrators.

This study will help policy makers design inclusive teachers' training colleges where knowledge and skills of inclusive education are impacted. IE should not be seen as something separate from mainstream teaching. This study will help educational leaders to cater for the needs of the educators who are the actual implementers of inclusive education. Policy makers will also ensure that head teachers and teachers are given the knowledge, skills and attitude needed to enhance an inclusive practice This study will help educational leaders acknowledge the fears and anxieties

associated with individual educators implementing inclusive education and to provide individual assistance to the educators so that their individual needs are addressed.

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