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AN EVALUATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AT KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY FROM 2009 TO 2018.

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Abstract

This paper is a research carried out at Kwame Nkrumah University in order to establish if the theory of inclusive education matches with the practice with a view of realizing the quality of education for students with disabilities. Inclusive education theory is based on the idea of changing the school environment rather than asking disabled students to adapt to existing environment such as classrooms and facilities. For example, to change schools' physical environments, such as provision of ramps, better lighting and accessible toilets. It also aimed at promoting the use of special education personnel or teachers to teach learners with disabilities and non-disabled students. It needs the curriculum to be adapted to meet the needs of both disabled and non-disabled students. It needs all students to have the same educational opportunities. For instance, studying the same subjects, take the same examinations and obtain the same educational qualifications. The objectives of the study were; to determine the aspects of inclusive education theory, to assess if the theory of inclusive education matches with the practice, to establish the challenges of implementing inclusive education theory, to establish the quality of education resulting from the theory and practice of inclusive education. The study was carried out at Kwame Nkrumah University because it was offering education to students with disabilities. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used when collecting data. A questionnaire and interview schedule were used for collecting data. The population comprised of all students with

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disabilities with a sample of thirty students.

Analysis was done manually and with the use of SPSS soft-ware.

The findings were that, some aspects of the theory of inclusive education were implemented such as positive discrimination in the areas such as having the same educational opportunities. For instance, they were studying the same subjects, take the same examinations and obtain the same educational qualifications with those without disabilities. However, variations were in the area of changing the school physical environment, curriculum modification and being taught by specialist teachers. In conclusion quality was partially achieved.

Keywords Inclusive Education, Students with Disabilities, Curriculum modification, Physical environment and Specialists Educators

INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of inclusive education fall under an umbrella term called Special Education which is the type of education that is offered to learners with disabilities in different continuum of services which includes special schools, an inclusive school, ordinary school, special education unit, special school, resource room, specialized facilities which includes hospital unit, home based care and Cheshire homes.

Under inclusive schooling learners with disabilities learn together with other learners without special needs in ordinary classes where they learn from the same teacher, learning using the same curriculum, teaching and learning material, lesson content, teaching and learning methods and are assessed and certified in the same way. Under ordinary school, pupils receive instruction under the regular teacher or untrained teacher in special education. Under special education unit learners receive education from special education classes that are found usually attached to regular high schools, basic or primary schools. Under special school learners receive prescribed program under the direction of specialist teachers in specifically designed facilities within the public school system. Under resource room which is a special class or resource center on the general educational school premises, here learners are given extra support especially those who require additional skills and educational

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training such as braille reading, writing and mobility or psychological backing. It is the most appropriate if learners need; intensive instruction in basic academic skills, explicit instruction in controlling behavior or interacting with peers and adults, or to learn anything that is not customarily taught to everyone else [7]. Some pupils are placed under specialized facilities especially those that require protection that cannot be provided in public schools. Education have been delivered to them where they are in order to meet their special needs by providing the necessary educational back-up and making available necessary support instructional and special resources depending on the level of disability of the learner.

There has been no documentation to indicate that Inclusive Education was implemented and to which extent as intended by the founders of it at Kwame Nkrumah University. It is of great importance for Inclusive Education to be implemented because it offers education of good quality which in return increases the individuals with disabilities' autonomy over their own lives, self-determination and self-confidence.

Significance of the study

The study is significant in the sense that implementation of inclusive education promotes quality education for students with disabilities and enable them increase autonomy over their own lives, self-determination and self-confidence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature mainly focused on Inclusive Education concerning the aspects of resources, infrastructure, trained personnel, curriculum and opportunities towards students with disabilities.

[2] define inclusive education as a pairing of philosophy and teaching practices that allow each student to feel respected, confident and safe to learn and develop to his or her potential because it is based on the values and beliefs centered on the best interest of the student that which promotes social cohesion, belonging and active participation in learning and positive interaction with peers in the school community. The definition highlight the issues of good social sense of inclusive education which aim at overcoming segregation which teaches students with special needs to be fearful, ignorant and breeds prejudice. In this case inclusive education promotes that, all students need an education that helps them develop relationships and prepare them for life in the mainstream society. It is believed that, only inclusion has the potential to reduce fear and to build friendship, respect and understanding among learners with special needs. The other aspect being heighted by the definition is the issue of inclusive education as good education

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because students with disabilities benefit and do better academically, in inclusive or integrated settings.

The study was conducted by [7] on the teachers view of inclusive practice in Kasama.' The findings were that, there were inadequate resources used by teachers while handling students with special needs in their classroom. The students also fail to access knowledge due to the shortage of these resources.

Another study was conducted by [10] on challenges faced by students in accessing education in inclusive schools. The findings were that, most schools did not have facilities conducive for accessing their education under inclusive education. In other words infrastructure was a barrier to students with special needs in accessing education under inclusive education. Similarly. conducted a study on the challenges faced with in order to prepare pre-service teachers for inclusive education in Bangladesh. The discovery of the study was that, access to school buildings by students with disabilities was a huge issue because most of the schools visited were highly inaccessible because they had no ramps and accessible toilets to be used by these learners.

[4] conducted a study on integration of learners with visual impairment into ordinary secondary schools. The findings were that, most students with

disabilities in Zambian schools did not have human support due to lack of adequate number of trained teachers in special education. Similarly. [5] carried out a research on moving towards inclusive schooling in North-Western Province of Zambia. The finding was that, most teachers in schools hardly have basic skills for handling students with special needs which in turn affected academic performance of learners. Further- more, [12] conducted a study on the challenges faced with in order to prepare pre-service teachers for inclusive education in Bangladesh. The study finding was that, many teachers were never taught how to teach learners with disabilities.

Curriculum stipulates how learning is assessed, learning materials to be used, attitude and beliefs of teachers, parents and learners, with the goal of offering every individual relevant education [13]. In order to meet the needs of students with special needs there is need to come up with a modified curriculum with modified instructional methods, medium of instructions such as signed English for the deaf or total communication for both the deaf and hard of hearing, use of braille for the blind and large print for those who are partially sighted, mobility skills for easy, efficient and independent movement for the blind and physically challenged students, activity for daily living for all students with special needs such as the skills of toileting,

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cooking, sweeping, bathing, brushing the teeth, social and economic skills.

The study was conducted by [3] on making inclusion work. The study finding was that, curriculum affected students with disabilities because of the way it was designed and students were failing to cop up with it because it did not cater for their needs. In other words, the curriculum was not modified to suit their needs or variations. Similarly, [11] conducted a study on inclusive education. He pointed out that inclusive education may risk becoming a rhetorical proposal rather than reality because minor changes are done to school curriculum and pedagogy relevant to students with special needs. Furthermore, [9] conducted a study on the adoption of inclusive for children with disabilities in Zambia. The finding was that, the curriculum offered did not develop some skills to help students with disabilities in their life time due to lack of skills such as braille and sign language in the curriculum.

Optimal opportunity for development is required to be given to students with special needs. The Zambian Education system faces the challenge of giving optimal opportunity to students with special needs because of having rigid and non-responsive curriculum that expect all students to learn same things, at the same time and using same means and instructional methods, be examined and certified in the similar manner but learners are different and have different abilities and needs [13]. For example, it is very difficult for students who are mentally challenged or who are slow in learning to move at the same pace with peers because they tend to be slow in understanding the curriculum content as compared to their peers as a result they are likely to be left behind.

METHODOLOGY

Target population

The target population comprised all student with special needs and students in fourth year majoring special education at Kwame Nkrumah University. According to [1] a target population is a set of elements that the researcher focuses upon. It is further defined by [14] as a specific, complete group relevant to the research project. The researcher choice of this population was based on the belief that it could provide to some extent the necessary data for the study. The study comprised of thirty study sample of which twenty were fourth year students majoring in special education while ten were students with special needs who were at study site at the time of the research. The fourth year students were picked because they have been taught concerning the philosophy of inclusive education while ten students with special needs were picked because they were the direct beneficiaries of the study.

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Research Instrument

Semi-structured interview schedule and a questionnaire were utilized as the research instruments during the collection of data for this study. Data was obtained from students with disabilities through the face-to-face interview whereas questionnaire was used to collect data from fourth year students. Interviews were used in this study to get more information that could have not through obtained questionnaire. been Furthermore, the interview allowed flexibility and gave chance to the researchers to modify the line of inquiry in some cases and follow-up responses and investigations underlying motives in a way that selfadministered questionnaire may not. [8] states that interviews yield rich insights into people's experiences, opinions, aspirations, attitude and feelings. This was considered important in this study because it sort to explore the perceptions of students with disabilities if the theory of inclusive education matches with the practice. respondents filled in the questionnaire and had 100% return rate. The use of interviews and a questionnaire helped the researchers to collect data that was valid and reliable and a gap in one of the research instrument was supplemented by the other research instrument

Ethical consideration

The researchers assured respondents the aspect of confidentiality concerning their responses and that information was going to be used for this study only. Anonymity was enhanced by the fact that the questionnaire for the fourth-year students did not require them to write their names they had only to fill in the names of the university and their year of study. [6] stated that people could respond to questions truthfully if they are assured that their responses will be anonymous. The respondents were left free to take-part or not because the participation was voluntary.

FINDINGS

1. Changing school environment –responses from students with disabilities

One respondent reported that infrastructure at Kwame Nkrumah University is not conducive to me as a special student with disabilities. The other response from one student was voiced that, the classrooms were not designed to cater for me as a learner with the disabilities. It was also reported by one respondent that in classrooms there were no suitable chairs, desks for physically disabled learners. The response advanced from respondent was that, infrastructure is partially conducive because some needs for us special learners were not taken into account. respondent expressed that, some classes had double doors and made it easy for learners with disabilities to pass through while others did not have double doors which made it difficult for learners on wheel chairs to pass through when attending lectures. Another respondent indicated that, "there are some

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classes which has ramps though very few" Then one student with hard of hearing narrated that. classrooms are not acoustically treated to help me access academic information during lectures. The other response from one student who was blind was that, some steps have no rails to help me move safely. Sitting arrangement in some classes such as laboratories for science and mathematics makes it hard for us learners with disabilities to attend lectures in them as responded by one student. Then another respondent narrated that, the two-systole building for lectures and for all the systole buildings for hostels has no accelerators for easy mobility for us learners with disabilities especially the visually physically disabled impaired and Although some hostels are modified to suit the needs of learners with special needs while others are not.

Table 1: Infrastructure modification- responses from fourth year students majoring in special education

Infrastructure	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	percentage
modification	yes		no	
Ramps in front of	4	20	16	80
classrooms				
Ramps in front of	7	35	13	65
hostels				
Rails fixed	6	30	14	70
Acoustically	-	-	20	100
treated				
classrooms				
Conducive	5	25	15	75
classrooms				
Hostel space	10	50	10	50
Hostel toilets	15	75	5	25

2. Curriculum modification

One respondent indicated that, curriculum for students with disabilities was not modified because not all students with disabilities receive education according to their needs due to the fact that, some lecturers who teaches them are not trained in the field of special education. One respondent stated that, students with hearing impairment do not access the academic information as others do who are not hearing impaired during the lectures due to lack of sign language skill by the lecturers. One to one attention at times was not given to student with disabilities by lecturers during lectures due to large numbers as stipulated by one respondent. Another student pointed out that, there is a step forward in terms of the curriculum development at the university because a course is being offered to all students called introduction to special education in order to promote inclusive education to all student teachers. The other respondent said that, the other aspect of curriculum development was that, two lecturers one from special education department and another one lecturer who was blind worked in liason with other course lecturers from the rest of the departments to transcribe all work such as exam question papers, modules, tests, assignment for other courses to help students with visual impairment. Then one student with disability acknowledged that, other the development at the university was that, extra 30 minutes was always given to us when writing examinations and tests. According respondent it was said that, all the courses are designed in such a way that they are not modified to cater for our needs such as blind and deaf, for instance we receive no braille modules for our studies though other times in some courses lecturers give us additional notes concerning the lectures we attend. One of the responses was that, modification of the curriculum at times is done at individual

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lecturer's level. In the curriculum there is lack of braille and sign language skills to be used when lecturing to students with visual and hearing impairment respectively because it not mandatory as narrated by one student.

Another respondent stated that, lack of enough special teaching materials to be used contribute in hindering the university from practicing effective inclusive education. For instance, lack of software to access the computer based assistive technology for students with special needs such as large print and screen reading compact disk and lack of enough teaching and learning materials such as hand-frames for learners with visual impairment although the government provide materials for students with special needs to be used in the inclusive classrooms such as thermoform and hand-frames.

3. Specialized lecturers to lecture in the courses taken by students with disabilities

One respondent indicated that, majority of the lecturers who teach these students with disabilities are not specialized in special education but in other fields of their specialties resulting in lack of modification of teaching and learning methods. Another respondent confirmed that, all lecturers offering courses taken by students with disabilities worked in liason with other specialized lecturers because on their own they faced difficulties addressing the identified needs of students with disabilities in this way lecturers showed the attitude of being committed towards inclusive education. Lecture rooms are overclouded and it hindered students with disabilities to get the needed help from lecturers as reported by one student.". This was also echoed by one student with disabilities that, "It is rarely that we receive one to one attention during lecture hours".

4. Same opportunities

The student with disability expressed that, "I do the same courses which other students without disabilities do and assessed and certified in the similar way". One explanation from one student was that, the government provide some materials for students with special needs for teaching purposes such as hand-frames, stylus, brail paper, braillion paper, perkins brailler, wheel-chairs and we are accommodated in the same hostels with students without disabilities and we feed from the same dining-room and in this way we feel included"

5. Challenges faced with the university when implementing inclusive theory

The response from one student was that, it was due to lack of finances to be used for purchasing the needed equipment for us special students. Another student stated that, it is because of not having enough finances for the purchase of special material. The other response was that, lack of finances leads to having some infrastructure not renovated to suit our needs as special students.

6. Data obtained through questionnaire

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics from fourth year Students majoring in special education

Inclusive Education		Minim	Maximu	Mea	Std.	
	2	um	m	n	Deviation	
same opportunity of choosing courses they need	20	1	2	1.15	.366	
same assessment	20	1	2	1.15	.366	
same education opportunity	20	1	2	1.20	.410	
same qualification	20	1	2	1.15	.366	
same certification	20	1	2	1.15	.366	
brailed exams	20	1	2	1.15	.366	
brailed tests	20	1	2	1.15	.366	

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brailed modules	20	1	2	1.15	.366
using sign language in courses for hearing impaired students	20	1	2	1.75	.444
lecturer for braille	20	1	2	1.05	.224
lecturer for sign language		1	2	1.10	.308
materials for students with special needs		1	2	1.45	.510

Table 2 shows the average responses from students concerning the practice of inclusive education.

The areas of practice of inclusive education—are a) same opportunity of choosing courses they need b) same assessment c) same education opportunity d) same qualification e) same certification f) brailed exams g) brailed tests h) brailed modules i) using sign language in courses for hearing impaired students j) lecturer for braille k) lecturer for sign language l) materials for students with special needs.

The mean score in all categories were between 1.05 and 1.75. The lowest mean score was the lecturer for braille (1.05) and the highest was using of sign language in courses for hearing impaired students (1.175). It is worth noting that high score was also under materials for students with special needs

(1.45)

One-Sample Statistics-t Test

Table 3: One-Sample t-Test for fourth year Students majoring in special education

	Test Value = 0							
Inclusive Education					95%			
				Mea	Confi	dence		
			Sig.	n	Interva	al of the		
			(2-	Diffe	Difference			
			taile	renc	Lowe			
	t	df	d)	е	r	Upper		

				_		
same opportunity of choosing courses they need	14.038	19	.000	1.15 0	.98	1.32
same assessment	14.038	19	.000	1.15 0	.98	1.32
same education opportunity	13.077	19	.000	1.20 0	1.01	1.39
same qualification	14.038	19	.000	1.15 0	.98	1.32
same certification	14.038	19	.000	1.15 0	.98	1.32
brailed exams	14.038	19	.000	1.15 0	.98	1.32
brailed tests	14.038	19	.000	1.15 0	.98	1.32
brailed modules	14.038	19	.000	1.15 0	.98	1.32
using sign language in courses for hearing impaired students	17.616	19	.000	1.75 0	1.54	1.96
lecturer for braille	15.983	19	.000	1.10 0	.96	1.24
lecturer for sign language	15.983	19	.000	1.10 0	.96	1.24
materials for students with special needs	12.704	19	.000	1.45 0	1.21	1.69

Note: denotes significant value (<.05)

The one-sample statistics-t-test was run to compare the mean difference in the twelve inclusive education practice. The statistics were significant in all situations, for instance the difference between the two mean was less than 0.05. using sign language in courses for hearing impaired students (t=17.616; DF = 19; sig. (2-tailed) = .000 a=0.05

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and materials for students with special needs (t=12.704; DF = 19; sig. (2-tailed) = .000 a=0.05

Discussion

The findings at the time of this study were that, some aspects of the theory of inclusive education were implemented such as positive discrimination in the areas such as having the same educational For instance, the responses from opportunities. both the questionnaire and interviews conducted indicated that, students with disabilities were positively discriminated because they were given the chance of choosing subjects they wanted for their academic study programs, they took the same examinations and obtain the same educational qualifications or certification with those without disabilities. This finding was in agreement with the theory and practice of inclusive education as indicated by [2] who define inclusive education as a pairing of philosophy and teaching practices that allow each student to feel respected, confident and safe to learn and develop to his or her potential because it is based on the values and beliefs centered on the best interest of the student that which promotes social cohesion, belonging and active participation in learning and positive interaction with peers in the school community.

However, variations were in the three areas and one of them is the area of changing the school physical environment, secondly, the area of being taught by specialist teachers and lastly, the area of curriculum modification. In other words inclusive education and quality was partially achieved in these areas as discussed below.

The finding revealed that, infrastructure was partially a barrier to students with special needs in accessing education at Kwame Nkrumah University. For instance it was reported that, there were no rails in most of the rooms, accelerators in systole buildings for easy and safe movement of students who were blind in the process of accessing academic information while other buildings had rails. Another example concerning the physically disabled students was that, there were no suitable chairs, desks, no double doors, no ramps for easy and safe movement. However, some classrooms had double doors, ramps for their easy and safe movement in accessing academic information. The other example is for students who are hearing impaired it was revealed that the university had no single room which was acoustically treated for them to access academic information accurately. The finding of this study in terms of having no access to some infrastructure is in line with a study which was conducted by [10] on challenges faced by students in accessing education in inclusive schools where most schools had no facilities conducive for accessing their education. Similarly. [12] conducted a study on the challenges faced with in order to prepare pre-service teachers for inclusive education

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in Bangladesh. The discovery of the study was that, access to school buildings by students with disabilities was a huge issue because most of the schools visited were highly inaccessible because they had no ramps and accessible toilets to be used by these learners. However, [10] and [12] did not discover what the current study has reviewed that of having some infrastructure accessible to students with disabilities in an inclusive setting.

Secondly, concerning the area of students with disabilities being taught by specialist teachers, it has been found that, students with disabilities were at times taught by specialists lecturers in some of the courses they had chosen and other times they were taught in some courses by unspecialized lecturers in the field of special education who however received help from the specialized lecturers. For instance, all the work such as tests, assignments, examinations and modules were embossed by specialists' lecturers in braille. The needs of students with hearing impairment were handled by specialist lecturer in sign language. The finding of this study concerning the issue of not having a good number of specialist lecturers to teach students with special needs in some of the courses they had chosen is similar to what was discovered by [4] who conducted a study on integration of learners with visual impairment into ordinary secondary schools. The findings were that, most students with disabilities in Zambian schools did not have human support due to lack of adequate number of trained teachers in special education. Similarly. [5] carried out a research on moving towards inclusive schooling in North-Western Province of Zambia. The finding was that, most teachers in schools hardly had basic skills for handling students with special needs which in turn affected academic performance of learners. However, the current study have discovered what was not discovered by [4] and [5] that of having specialists working hand in hand with lecturers who were not specialized in the field of special education in an inclusive setting as well as students with special needs being taught by specialized lecturers in some of the courses.

Concerning curriculum modification [11] conducted a study on inclusive education. He pointed out that inclusive education may risk becoming a rhetorical proposal rather than reality because minor changes are done to school curriculum and pedagogy relevant students with special needs. Furthermore, [9] conducted a study on the adoption of inclusive for children with disabilities in Zambia. The finding was that, the curriculum offered did not develop some skills to help students with disabilities in their life time due to lack of skills such as braille and sign language in the curriculum. This is in agreement with the current findings at Kwame Nkrumah University which noted lack of curriculum development in terms of provision of enough special materials, modification of most of

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the teaching content at lecturers' individual level, not being mandatory in the use of sign language and braille skills in some courses which were taken by students with special needs. However, the current study has revealed major curriculum development for students with disabilities in terms of brailed examinations, tests, modules, provision of some special materials, giving of extra time during assessment time, the introduction of a course for special education for all the students in the university and having specialized lecturers for sign language and braille which greatly were in support of the aspect of inclusive education.

Conclusion

The study has revealed that, inclusive education at Kwame Nkrumah University in Zambia had some aspects of the theory of inclusive education being implemented such as positive discrimination in the areas such as having the same educational opportunities. For instance, the responses from both the questionnaire and interviews conducted indicated that, students with disabilities were positively discriminated because they were given the chance of choosing subjects they wanted for their academic study programs, taking the same examinations and obtain the same educational qualifications or certification with those without disabilities. However, inclusive education was as well partially achieved because to start with, it has

been found that, students with disabilities were at times taught by specialists lecturers in some of the courses they had chosen and other times they were taught in some courses by unspecialized lecturers in the field of special education who however received help from the specialized lecturers. Secondly, the finding revealed that, some infrastructures were partially a barrier to students with special needs in accessing education while other infrastructures were accessible to students with disabilities in an inclusive setting. Thirdly, the curriculum to cutter for the needs of students with special needs was not fully developed though there were advanced steps showing its development in terms of brailed examinations, tests, modules, provision of some materials, giving of extra time during assessment time, the introduction of a course for special education for all the students in the university and having specialized lecturers for sign language and braille which greatly were in support of the aspect inclusive education.

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