

**A Case Study of Preschool Teachers' Pedagogical Behaviors and Attitudes
Toward Children with Disabilities**

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Abstract

Drawing on the Whole Schooling principles and Pierre Bourdieu's sociological concepts of habitus, capital and field, this qualitative case study explored and analysed preschool teachers' pedagogical behaviors and attitudes toward children with disabilities in three rural kindergartens in the Kpando district of Ghana. The study focused specifically on the teachers' verbal and non-verbal behaviors enacted through their pedagogical practices and the environment in which they work. A Bourdieuan analysis of data generated through observation and interviews demonstrated that the teachers worked in a constrained education field with limited resources to support children's learning. While the teachers claimed that they value children with disabilities, their verbal and non-verbal behaviors enacted through their pedagogical practices were inconsistent with their claim of valuing children with disabilities. The findings further pointed to cultural beliefs as contributing to the ways the teachers conceptualized and delivered pedagogy as normalized practices. The discussion of the results raised implications for improved resources and the need to urgently support teachers to transform entrenched social and cultural conceptions of disability and pedagogy to enhance inclusive practice in Ghanaian preschools that include children with disabilities.

Keywords: Bourdieu, Disability, Ghana, Inclusive pedagogy, Preschool teachers.

A Case Study of Preschool Teachers' Pedagogical Behaviors and Attitudes Toward Children with Disabilities

Introduction

This study utilised the principles of Whole Schooling (Loreman, 2007) and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field to explore and critically analyze six kindergarten teachers' pedagogical behaviors and attitudes towards children with disabilities. According to the eight principles of Whole Schooling, schools at all levels must create learning spaces for all children, empower every student for democracy, include all in learning together, build a caring community, support learning, partner with families and the community, teach all using authentic, multi-level instruction and use positive assessment practices to promote learning (Loreman, 2007, 2013). The effective implementation of these principles have been found to enhance participation and learning outcomes for all students (Loreman, 2013). The use of Whole Schooling principles in educating young children helps them to build strong foundations for further learning (Goswami, 2006; Heckman, 2006b; Koizumi, 2004).

According to Loughran (2010), pedagogy is the relationship between teaching and learning which emerges from teachers' beliefs and knowledge. Bourdieu (1998) refers to teachers' beliefs and dispositions as *habitus* which they combine with their knowledge (capital) within fields to produce practice. Inclusive education constitutes a unique field of practice because it advocates support for all students to have quality education (Loreman, 2011; Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2010). According to Bourdieu (1992), fields exemplify social relations that characterise dispositional and capital variations (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2008; Webb et al., 2002). Capital is "things worth being sought" in different fields (Webb et al., 2002, p. 21), which Bourdieu (1998) described in various forms as institutional, social, cultural, symbolic and economic.

Inclusive education fields require teachers to implement inclusive pedagogy in order to counter dispositional and capital variation that produces inequality and includes all students (Loreman, 2013; Yeo, Neihart, Tang, Chong, & Huan, 2011). Alexander (2004, cited in Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011) refers to inclusive pedagogy as "the art of teaching and its attendant discourse" (p. 11). Since inclusive fields are dynamically complex, research findings have shown that teacher commitment and continuous learning is key to successful practice (Florian, 2009; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Similar to the Whole Schooling

principles, inclusive pedagogy involves teaching activities and educational programs that acknowledge, support, “respect as well as respond to ... differences in ways that include learning in, rather than exclude them from what is ordinarily available” (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, p. 814).

Key obstacles to the effective implementation of the Whole Schooling principles are teachers’ attitudes toward children with disability and their pedagogical behaviors in their classrooms (Klibthong & Agbenyega, 2018). Bourdieu and his colleagues argue that teachers’ attitudes demonstrated through practice can lead to *symbolic violations*. They explained further:

To fully understand how students from different social backgrounds relate to the world of culture, and more precisely, to the institution of schooling, we need to recapture the logic through which the conversion of social heritage into scholastic heritage operates in different class situations (Bourdieu, Passeron, & de saint Martin, 1994, p. 53)

Teachers’ attitude toward children with a disability which are discourses produced through the habitus has been found to influence teacher’s classroom practice (Agbenyega, 2007; Alexander, 2004; Klibthong & Agbenyega, 2018). Habitus is described as a set of internalized embodied social structures, internal habits that is structured by past and present institutional, social and cultural practices (Bourdieu, 1998; Webb et al., 2002). Wood’s (2010) analysis showed that teachers’ beliefs, feelings, perceptions, values, and norms that generate practices constitute the formation of their habitus. Despite habitus not physically visible, practices generated by it are observable (Bourdieu, 1998). Thus a teacher’s construction of a child with a disability can be assessed by observing the teacher’s pedagogical relationships (Forlin, Sharma, Loreman, & Sprunt, 2015; Loreman et al., 2016). Studies analysing teachers’ disposition towards students with a disability in some inclusive education classrooms found that teachers often utilised their habitus (beliefs, values) when implementing pedagogy (Loreman, 2013). This means the nature of the teachers’ habitus drove the type of practices they enacted in their educational *fields* (Agbenyega, 2017; Clark, Zukas, & Lent, 2011; Mills & Gale, 2007; Wacquant, 2008; Webb et al., 2002). A closer look at how teachers enact their practices in view of habitus, capital and field is necessary for determining the effectiveness of implementing Whole Schooling principles in inclusive early childhood settings.

The inclusive policy contexts in Ghana

This study took place in one town in the Kpando district of Ghana. Several education policies provided the impetus for inclusive education in Ghana. Prominent among them are Article (38) of the Republican Constitution of Ghana which mandated the provision of a free compulsory universal basic education for all children of school going age (Government of Ghana 1992). All children with disabilities are also covered by this article. In addition, Free Compulsory Basic Education was introduced in 1996 to increase access and participation, management efficiency and improve the quality of teaching and learning for all children (Agbenyega, 2007; Ghana Education Service, 2003). This was followed by Early Childhood Care and Development policy in 2004 to provide free kindergarten education for all children including those with disabilities (Agbenyega, 2008).

In spite of the growing recognition within inclusive education research and pedagogy, and local context policy making as to the benefits of inclusive pedagogy, some research conducted in Ghana (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011) suggest limited attention being given to young children with disability in preschools. This is an area that needs further investigation and improvement.

Methodology

Bourdieu's methodology, which considers the interplay of habitus, capital and field in researching complex educational concepts was utilized for this study. This methodology enabled a critical observation of teacher's practices and the ways they constructed disability in their classrooms (Björnsdóttir & Jóhannesson 2009). Bourdieu (1988) argues that in order to make sense of educational issues researchers must analyze the interplay of habitus, capital and the field in which the education takes place. It is through field interrogation that researchers are more likely to identify the network of objective relations between positions in inclusive schools (Sharma, Loreman, & Macanawai, 2015).

The following questions led this study:

- What are the attitudes of the preschool teachers towards children with a disability?
- What kinds of pedagogical behaviours do the teachers enact with children with disabilities?

This study was part of a larger study which examined the impact of teacher knowledge and inquiry on inclusive practice in two different cultural contexts, Thailand and Ghana. All the teachers who were purposively invited to participate in this study received

explanatory statements and signed informed consent forms before they participated in the study. Three kindergartens which described their schools as inclusive were selected. Kindergarten 3 in each school of the three schools was selected. Table 1 below provides details of the class and teachers who were involved in the study.

Table 1.

Participant information

Kindergartens	Enrolment in KG3/Teachers	Number of children with an official diagnosis
KG3 A	33 (13 boys; 20 girls) + 2 female teachers; Average age of children=5.6 years	2 boys with autism, 1 boy with epilepsy, 1 girl with physical disability, 1 girl with Down syndrome
KG3B	36 (21 boys; 15 girls) +2 female teachers; Average age of children=5.5 years	1 boy with autism, 2 boys with a physical disability, 1 girl with developmental delay
KG3C	37 (17 boys; 20 girls) + 2 female teachers; Average age of children=5.6 years	3 boys with autism, 1 girl with autism, 2 girls with challenging behaviors

The preschools were located in one remote town in the Volta Region of Ghana. Prior to data collection, the researcher visited each school site for two times to familiarize herself with the teachers and the children. These preliminary visits offered a great opportunity for establishing rapport and building trust prior to the observations. The researcher conducted a total of 18 hours (3 hours x 2 repeated =6 in each classroom) of guided non-obtrusive observations across three classrooms using the observation protocol in Table 2. The observations were followed with 25-30 minutes in-depth interviews with the six teachers whose classrooms were observed to gain their perspectives about children with disabilities and the meanings they assign to their pedagogical behaviors. All the six teachers held a Diploma in early childhood education but with no specialization in special education. The repeated observation ensured that data collected fairly represented what was happening in each classroom. The researcher reviewed the data collected with all the participants for agreement before analysis began.

Table 2.

Observation Protocol

Observation criteria	Indicators
Classroom environment and physical resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is physically accessible to teachers and students • The school accommodates students’ sensory and health care needs. • Students are provided with adequate resources all the time. • Students are provided with adequate support to fully participate.
Inclusive pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons presented in a variety of accessible formats with multiple options for representation, presentation, and engagement (e.g., video, pictures/symbols, actual objects, demonstrations, orally etc. • Provision of a variety of routines such as individual, pairs, small groups, and whole class activities that involve all children. • Pedagogy that challenges and dismantles discrimination based disability. • Teachers seek to extend what is ordinarily available to everybody. • Teachers respond to individual differences, using different pedagogical choices and specialist knowledge.
Teacher-student and student-student relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers engage actively with all students. • Treat all students with respect. • Student have an opportunity to work with others in respectful and cooperative groups. • Interdependence of teachers and students to create new knowledge. • Use of language which expresses the value of all students. • Safe, supportive learning community with respectful relationships

Data Analyses

Data analysis was performed using Bourdieu's three level of analyses (Mills & Gale 2007). The first level analysis focused on the *position of the field in relation to the field power*. This entailed a critical examination of the positions teachers occupied in relation to the children they taught. Consideration was given to teacher's values for children and the elements that influenced the teachers' instructional behavior. The positions of the teachers were examined through observations and interviews. Observations were recorded using a video camera which captured teacher pedagogical practices and attitudes towards children with disabilities. The second level analysis involved mapping out the objective structure of relations between the positions occupied by the children and teachers. At this level, the analysis focused on whether all children were considered as legitimate participants in their inclusive classrooms. Finally, the analysis focused on the habitus of (teachers) and the ways they utilised this in their pedagogy. This enabled gaining insight into the supporting, privileging or exclusionary practices that occurred within the field of practice (Grenfell & James, 1998; Mills & Gale, 2007).

Findings

The questions informing this study were:

- What are the attitudes of the preschool teachers towards children with a disability?
- What kinds of pedagogical behaviors do the teachers enact with children with disabilities?

Two major findings emerged from the analysis of data in response to these questions. Firstly, as the teachers strove to provide all children the opportunity to fully participate and learn, their efforts were constrained by the school's physical environment and lack of appropriate resources for children particularly those with disabilities. The second finding was that cultural beliefs and teacher behaviors towards children with disabilities did not mirror Whole Schooling principles. For example, teachers demonstrated negative attitudes through their verbal utterances. For example, there were frequent use of pejorative comments and verbal threats such as: *'I will beat you if you do that again', 'sit down! You naughty boy', 'you are just too dull*. Non-verbal behaviors included forcibly removing some children from groups and subtle smacking when children did not follow teacher directions as required. These findings are consistent with studies conducted by Agbenyega and Klibthong (2014), and Klibthong and Agbenyega (2018) in Thailand.

Cultural beliefs and attitudes

The results from the teacher interviews revealed that four out of the six teachers still held on to personal, cultural and religious beliefs that influenced their attitudes towards children with a disability in mainstream preschool programs. For example, Sophia's view suggested that disability is a child's destiny: *Children who are born with disability ... eem...it is their destiny...why is it that not everybody has it?* Felicia who held a strong belief in traditional religion opined that traditional gods have a role in making someone disabled:

I strongly believe that if you commit an offense against someone and he made juju (African charm) on your unborn children, they can become disabled...it happened in this town, this thing people say is medical, is not always the case...in Africa, you must be careful. Even you can be born ok but if you are not spiritually strong, someone can cast a spell on you and you can paralyze or get epilepsy, anything is possible like that in Africa.

Anna, another participant expressed that although disability may be the result of biological abnormalities she believed that there are "wicked people in Africa who can use their witchcraft or juju (African charm) to destroy babies with a disability before the child is born.

The participants based their views on what they have heard from other people within their socio-cultural setting, even more so, on their personal experiences. Mary, for example, described a situation she witnessed in a previous village. She thought that parents with children with disabilities consulted a fetish shrine to inquire about the sources of their children's disability and were told that their children's disabilities were caused by spiritual forces. In Mary's own words, "somebody had cast a spell on them. This happened in a village where I was a teacher last year. You have to try not to wrong people severely because you don't know what the person has in mind against you"

Four of the six teachers interviewed, Felicia, Anna, Terri, and Sophia attributed demonic causes to epilepsy:

Children who get epilepsy, it is the work of the devil and demons ... see the way it destroys the child ... this thing is not an ordinary illness, it is spiritual attack....children who experience epilepsy must seek spiritual intervention from powerful Pastors or Traditional Medicine experts.

Earlier studies in Ghana found evidence of similar attributions of disability and epilepsy to demons, hence "a child's school attendance can be terminated by a headmaster who fails to recognize that convulsions are neither contagious nor are the visitations from the

gods or one's long departed, evil ancestors" (Oliver-Commey 2001, p. 9). As a result of these cultural and religion-based beliefs, some of the teachers were not in favor of including children with disability in their classroom. Clara, one of the participants felt that children with disability will be better off in special preschools, and including them in mainstream schools would rather increase negative attitudes from teachers who teach them. Mary, on the other hand, believed that teaching young children with disabilities in inclusive education "*is too difficult and takes a lot of time and effort*" but if the children were older, it would have been "*easier to manage*" in inclusive classrooms. Two teachers, Sophia and Clara indicated that they were not comfortable teaching children who have epilepsy and those with chronic behavior problems because these children often "*disrupt the class...and it is too much of a stress and time commitment to teach them*". The results suggest that while culture and context can be linked to these perspectives it is also clear that the limited training in inclusive and disability studies might be a factor.

Physical environment, teacher behaviors and practices

The findings from this study showed that the schools physical environments were not accessible to students with physical disabilities. For example, the absence of ramps led teachers to carry the children with physical disability to their classrooms. Adequate resources were lacking, therefore, the teachers resorted to "chalk and talk" pedagogy. The teachers presented their lessons in ways that were not accessible to all children, particularly those with disabilities. Options for children to represent, present, and engage in the learning were limited to the teacher talk, replicating a focus on what children cannot do rather than building on their strengths. Peer supports were absent as the teachers considered the children with disability as a burden to the other children. The practices across the three kindergartens indicated that the preschool teachers were not fully prepared to teach children with disability labels enrolled in their preschool classrooms.

Although they described their schools as inclusive, the teachers' pedagogical behaviors and practices did not reflect this inclusive orientation because they did not appear to be committed to supporting all learners in their classrooms. For the most part of the classroom observations, children with disabilities were ignored, shouted at and forcibly removed from peers' in-group activities. Children with disabilities, who did not receive adequate support to communicate for a variety of needs, resorted to disruptive behaviors. Teacher engagement was limited to few children that answered questions. While

inclusive practice advocates respect for all children, teachers' verbal comments about children with disability as naughty, bad, troublesome, devalued the children.

Some of these kids are naughty, it is sort of they are mad or something at their friends...Some of these children are not suitable to be with these other kids, they do not know how to play with the other kids, they grab and harm other children (Clara).

These comments suggest that the teachers appeared to focus more on what the children were not doing right according to their expectations instead of attempting to identify and support their potentials and strengths. Threats of physical punishment and unfriendly attitudes towards the children with disabilities were frequently noted in the observation documentations when children with disabilities did not comply with the structured classroom rules or refused to participate in the mandatory activities planned for all the children.

Look at his naughty face! I will beat you if you don't stop that! You can't stay in this group... you are too destructive ... aaaah, you're just too troublesome ... look at what you've done! I am tired of you!

In most learning situations, the children with disability were often excluded from the rest of the group to do activities on their own. Some of the teachers noted that including children with disabilities in their classrooms without adequate support is over-asking.

According to Mary,

the headteacher and parents agreed to bring the children here...they don't know what we feel as teachers every day....it is like they expect you to do magic for these children and it is like trying to climb a steep mountain everyday...how can anybody do that?

Although the teachers were passionate about teaching, their pedagogical behaviors did not show evidence of responsive learning relationship. Teachers often transmitted knowledge to children by asking them to copy things from the blackboard into their books. Anna one of the teachers said:

These children have not reached a stage where they develop the knowledge...if you don't tell them, they just sit there looking into your face. You have to tell them what to do. Parents expect their children to know many things before they go to primary school so you cannot waste time with the other children who are not ready.

Terri, in a desperate language, added:

The children with disabilities waste our time a lot, sometimes you have to ignore them and keep teaching and teaching others because I don't want to be told I did not teach the other children well. For the children with disabilities, everybody knows they have disability... you cannot do much if you want to spend your time looking after them.

These findings showed that while the teachers have goodwill to teach the children, their lack of understanding of inclusive practices and cultural beliefs limited their practice (Sharma, 2012).

Discussion

The findings of this study indicated a link between habitus (beliefs, values, dispositions) and practice enacted by teachers in the inclusive classrooms. However, resource issues and class sizes also have contributed to teachers' behaviors towards children. Given the evidence from teacher interviews that corroborated observational data, the claim that teachers whose habitus is structured by religious and cultural beliefs usually implement pedagogies that exclude some children from equal and meaningful participation in education (Klibthong & Agbenyega, 2018; Sharma, Forlin, Deppeler, & Guang-xue, 2013; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008; Sharma & Deppeler, 2005) is convincing.

This convincing claim is reported in previous studies that certain cultural and religious beliefs can hinder the effective education of children with disabilities. For example, a Buddhist religious belief in reincarnation was found to have contributed to teachers' negative attitudes that disability is a result of reincarnation for the depraved things people have done in their previous lives (Klibthong & Agbenyega, 2018; Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2012). On the other hand, studies exploring Judeo-Christian perspectives also found that some people believe disability is a test of faith or punishment from the supreme God (Agbenyega, 2005; Avoke, 2002) and from a traditional religious point of view, disability is the result of witchcraft, and evil spirits (Agbenyega, 2003, 2007; Avoke, 2002).

The results of this study suggest that although the teachers may have good intentions to teach all children to be successful, their current habitus has a powerful effect on their attitudes and pedagogical behaviors. Research evidence suggests that beliefs and perceptions are associated with different cultural, social and institutional practices (Cardona, Florian, Rouse, & Stough, 2010; Fulk, Swerlik, & Kosuwan, 2002; Haikin, 2009; Sharma, Forlin

Deppeler, & Guang-xue, 2013; Sukbunpant, Arthur-Kelly, & Dempsey, 2013; Vorapanya, 2008).

Teachers who hold on to traditional beliefs that associate disability with wrong-doing tend to perceive intervention or support for children with disability as unacceptable interference (Fulk, Swerlik, & Kosuwan, 2002; Sukbunpant, Arthur-Kelly & Dempsey, 2013). The findings also showed that pedagogy was hierarchical and tailored to what and whom the teachers regard as worth paying attention to in their classrooms (Grenfell & James, 2004). This resonates with studies conducted elsewhere which found that teachers who construct children with disabilities as ‘problem children’ implemented pedagogical practices that exclude them from full participation (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2013; Loreman et al, 2010). The findings reinforce the idea of how conceptions of disability are formed through the habitus in multiple and varied cultural and historical practices (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2013; Loreman et al., 2016). This is ironical as Smith and Long (2014) explain that disability discourses can act on pedagogic practice and disrupt inclusive teaching, leading to exclusion of children who are constructed as deficient.

If the practices uncovered in this study are measured against Whole Schooling principles, it can be argued that the lack of positive image of children with disabilities, compounded by the lack of resources, led these teachers to implement practices that limited children’s full participation (Jones & Gillies, 2010; Reed-Danahay, 2005). Negative perceptions of children with disabilities originating from the habitus, often lead to lower expectation, poor teaching practices and the lack of love for children (Gupta & Singhal, 2004; Loreman, 2011). Where cultural beliefs about disability are negative the acceptance of educational intervention services to help all children achieve acceptable levels of functioning in schools and society becomes deficient (Forlin et al., 2015; Sukbunpant, Arthur-Kelly, & Dempsey, 2013).

The findings resonate with Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital in three different states, including embodied, institutional and objectified (Bourdieu, 1992; Hart, 2013). The religious beliefs and spiritual dispositions can be recognized as the form of embodied state, “the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body”, indeed, they are enduring cultural production (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). It is argued that if religious beliefs developed into cultural and religious capital they can remain the basis for which teachers enact their personal interactions and professional practice (Iannaccone, Stark & Finke, 1998). Cultural belief issues can increase and act against an inclusive approach to perceiving children with

disabilities as inferior and worthy of inferior education. Teachers with this view may find it difficult to have high expectation for children with disabilities.

This study identified that the teachers often excluded children with disabilities from the main curriculum because they perceived these children as problems when the children did not act according to the teachers' preconceived notions of 'good children'. Studies reinforced the finding that expecting all children to behave in the same way in school can increase the pressure on teachers leading to rejection and exclusion of some who are perceived as different from the norm (Forlin, 2013; Sharma, Loreman, & Macanawai, 2015). As the traditional cultural and negative religious beliefs influenced the teachers' practice, they had no choice than to yield to its mechanisms by defining some children, particularly those with disabilities as unwanted children. Education can transform social relations by providing opportunities for everyone but when schools maintain the status-quo based on their institutional, cultural and religious habitus, they tend to reproduce social inequalities (Forlin, Sharma, Loreman, & Sprunt, 2015; Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002).

The implication of this study is that children with disabilities in preschools, who are constructed as deficient, may be denied opportunities for developing various forms of capital and habitus highly valued for further education (Bourdieu, 1990). According to Mills (2013), capital cannot be transmitted instantaneously; its accumulation requires an investment. On the one hand, the responsibility of all teachers to ensure they provide an opportunity for all children and support them acquire a quality education that prepares them for successful future education. On the other hand, the use of cultural and religious discourses habitus create barriers would lead to rendering some children 'undesirable' and failures (Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz, 1996). Therefore, an important implication that can be gleaned from this study is professional learning for teachers should target dismantling existing negative cultural and social values and habitus that mitigate against inclusion and Whole Schooling principles (Loreman, 2007, 2013).

Failure to address this through effective professional learning, teachers' beliefs will continue to manifest themselves in ways that exclude rather include (Gorder, 1980; Harker, Mahar, & Wilkes, 1990; King, 2005). Teachers work every moment involves dealing "with a set of social position which is bound by a set of relations of homology to a set of activities" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 5). If teachers and children with disabilities are to work together as a community "to occupy a point or to be an individual in a sound space, is to differ, to be different" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 9). This is consistent with the Whole Schooling principles that the value of difference giving meaning to disability as a human diversity. The difference only

becomes a sign of distinction or vulgarity if a negative view and division are applied to it (Bourdieu, 1998).

Transforming entrenched and enduring belief systems such as the habitus is not easy, but according to Bourdieu (1998), habitus is a flexible cognitive tool which can be gradually reformed through education. Preschool teachers in this study can be supported to understand and reconceptualize the value of every child and to erase the fixed and obvious stigmatizing conceptions of disabilities. Persaud (2000) argues that the practice of constructing children as deficient imposes normative assumptions, dismantles inclusive school communities and eliminates some children from benefiting equally from quality teaching.

Limitations

This study is methodologically limited. Only one observer conducted the observations and it is possible that her personal judgements influence the process. If an inter-observer had been used, the results may be different. Also, the small number of interviews conducted means that the findings cannot be generalized because beyond the participants. Despite these shortcomings the key findings points to important repressive elements of certain cultural and religious beliefs that serve as critical barriers to inclusion and Whole Schooling principle implementation the research context.

Conclusion

This study draws our attention to existing challenges in some Ghanaian preschool settings regarding the ways traditional conceptions of disability can impact pedagogy and teacher behaviors towards children. This study revealed that exclusionary practices that are exhibited by the teachers in these Ghanaian preschools are partly the result of religious and cultural practices. In addition, the lack of resources such as wheel chair for children with physical disabilities coupled with inadequate pedagogical resources such as books and play materials hindered the teachers' attempt to implement inclusive practices. Although Ghana has been advocating for inclusive practices in all sectors of its educational system and supported this with policies more than two decades now, there is the need for greater efforts into the kinds of teacher education that will help Ghanaian teachers of preschools to build deeper understandings and capabilities in implementing inclusive pedagogies. Resource allocation to preschools also need to match policies to support teachers to work with all children. We might also learn from this study that we need to keep early childhood education

in step with inclusive beliefs and Whole Schooling principles. This requires establishing a collaborative approach to teacher professional learning where critical issues regarding belief systems on disability and tradition are openly and honestly discussed. When teachers own their professional development, there is potential for rapid transformation in their habitus and knowledge (capital) which they can deploy to benefit all children in inclusive education fields.

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