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TITLE OF PAPER: Training Teachers for Inclusive Education

I. Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals have placed Education for All (EFA) at the top of the international agenda, promising all children a free and good quality education whatever their gender, ethnicity and educational needs, without discrimination. Despite the progress made in the numbers of children attending schools since 2000, it is reported that there are still nearly 30 millions out-of-school children of primary age in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2013); over one-third of these would be disabled. Moreover, it is believed that in Africa, fewer than 10% of disabled children are in school (Sightsavers, 2011, p.2). Education for All will not be achieved unless all children whether handicapped or not attend their local mainstream school and share the same education (UNICEF, 2013, p.28).

By taking a range of measures on EFA since the World Forum of Education in Dakar (April 2000), Togo government has shown the importance it attaches to quality education for the development of Togo. These measures have led to some inclusion of disabled children in mainstream schools.

How can children be provided for so that Education for All be truly inclusive of all children and young people? What can be learnt from schools where disabled pupils are included? How prepared and equipped are teachers and their trainers to provide for all children, including those with

disabilities? What needs to be done to support and equip them?

A team of trainers from the Directorate of Teacher Trainings (Direction des Formations [DF]) in Togo took part in a research project coordinated by Professor Thérèse M. S. Tchombe, UNESCO Chair for Special Needs Education and Inclusion. "The purpose of this study was to conduct a situational analysis to assess the readiness of teachers in Togo for inclusive education". Among the research specific objectives, we retain: "

1. To find out the nature of inclusive practices in the institutions being studied.
2. To identify the existence of core values and competences used by practicing teachers and university lecturers and develop indicators as measures for training and evaluation.
3. To find out disabled and non-disabled pupils and students' perceptions of inclusion
4. To find out parental perceptions of inclusion education
5. To establish South-South and North-South partnership in inclusive practices." (Komlan, 2013, p6)

The results of the research are published in a summative report *Education inclusive dans les institutions en Afrique: la formation des éducateurs: cas du Togo (Inclusive education in institutions in Africa: the training of teachers: the case of Togo)*

This article uses the research results as a starting point to analyse how pupils with disabilities are catered for in mainstream schools in Togo and what lessons can be learnt from this for building inclusive education strategies in trainer and teacher training courses. It looks at how existing training resources can help support the present trainers' and teachers' practices towards a greater use of inclusive education practices.

II. Definitions

Inclusive Education: an education system that takes into account the special teaching and learning needs of all children and young people who are experiencing marginalization and vulnerability, including children with disabilities. It seeks to empower all of them and improves the conditions for Education for All. (Handicap International/Togo, EU, 2010.)

This encompasses

- **Inclusive classes:** classes where children with disabilities are accepted and where efforts are made to meet their specific educational and social needs. The environment in which these children operate adapts to them and not the other way round, as is the case in **integrated classes**.
- **Inclusive practices** relate to the adequacy of the physical environment of the classroom but also to the creation of an active environment which aims to ensure equal rights and opportunities to education for all children.
- The **inclusive teacher** adopts appropriate teaching methods, active pedagogy and differentiation. He takes into account the children diversity and considers it to be a rewarding part of the teaching-learning process

In the schools visited, the **learners' specific needs** were related to visual

impairment (45%), hearing impairment (26%), physical disability (20%), mental disorders (5%) and language disorders (3%).

III. Research methodology

The study was conducted in the Republic of Togo over 2 weeks by 15 researchers collecting data from five groups:

1. 200 teachers from all educational levels and pedagogical counsellors
2. 50 parents of disabled children
3. 100 disabled pupils and students.
4. 28 head teachers
5. 30 inspectors and senior civil servants from the Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Literacy (MEPSA)

57 schools were visited.

The triangulation methodology used quantitative and qualitative instruments for data collection: questionnaires on inclusive practices for the first three groups, interview guides for groups 4 and 5 and an observation guide to assess the nature of infrastructure and material resources in 18 institutions.

Descriptive statistics was used to analyse quantitative data processed using the *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* software. The qualitative data analysis was carried out by reformulating some answers to generate terms of appropriate responses to variables (Sphinx Plus software).

IV. Research findings

This section is directly and extensively informed by the DF research summative report. (Komlan, 2013)

4.1 Inclusive education practice

4.1.a Awareness of inclusive education but heartfelt lack of training for it

Teachers and head teachers in the research sample are aware of the existence of inclusive education. 63% of teachers think there is an inclusive education policy in Togo, but responses from 47% of primary and secondary schools head teachers show that the commitment to the EFA goals is often equated with the commitment to inclusive education, as summarised by one respondent: *“There is an inclusive education policy in Togo. We have Education for All”*.

Teachers note that the inclusive education policy does not inform the training of teachers and educators at all levels.

Table 1: Areas not informed by the inclusive education policy (Teachers’ responses)

Variables	Percentage
The training of teachers	58.5%
The training of teacher educators/trainers	62%
The teacher training curriculum felt to be inadequate for developing an inclusive teacher profile	67.5%
In-service training	(See below)
Adaptative competences	63.5%

In-service training activities to enhance teachers’ inclusive practices are practically inexistent. 72% of the teachers surveyed say they have never participated in a professional development course for Special Education focusing on inclusive practices. The few teachers who have benefitted from a few days in-service training happen to be in NGOs’ inclusive education experimentation zones.

The survey confirms that training in IE is crucial: 63.5% of teachers admit to lacking the skills needed to restructure the curriculum and examinations to respond to a broader set of educational needs. Neither

do they have strategies to engage in differentiated teaching to address diversity.

The terrain therefore seems is ready: teachers and head teachers are aware of the existence of IE; they clearly identify the lack of training opportunities in this field and are starting to describe their own needs. The time appears to be right for incorporating IE training in teachers and head teachers training programmes. A clearly defined policy on Inclusive Education by the State would serve as a firm background against which to develop such training from initial training to further professional development to support the deployment of IE practices.

4.1.b There are some perceived physical barriers to the implementation of inclusive education

Class size is an important factor hindering inclusive education. The difficulties are real and classroom observations carried out in 18 classrooms show that these go beyond class size: schools lack of adequate infrastructure, material and competent human resources. The characteristics are inherent to the mainstream education system which at the moment is not geared to inclusive education.

In a first stage, it is necessary to help teachers develop strategies that enable to plan ways of circumventing difficulties caused by their physical environment so that they are less constrained when trying to implement IE techniques. It will then be necessary to reflect on the optimum conditions to ease this implementation to discuss the way forward with deciders.

4.1.c Some elements already exist that will facilitate the implementation of inclusive education

Deeper and wider actions can be based on these for optimum impact. They are:

- Knowledge of the concept of inclusion: the majority (64.5%) of educators and teachers interviewed gave a working definition of inclusion although they did not know the core values it encompasses. As there is no policy for inclusive education in Togo, this would indicate the effectiveness of the sensitisation campaigns in inclusive education by NGOs on the educational and human rights of children with disabilities.
- 82% of the teachers acknowledge the necessity for schools to adapt to the needs of learners with disabilities and display supportive attitudes toward them and inclusive education.
- Different education models exist in Togo as demonstrated by The head teachers surveyed

Table 2: Education models used in surveyed head teachers' schools (Head teachers' responses)

Variables	Percentage
Ordinary education	46%
Integrated education	36%
Specialised education	18%
TOTAL	100%

These educational practice models can be shared and drawn upon in developmental work.

- Supportive attitude toward inclusive education exists at top levels. Despite the lack of inclusive practices in the educational system as a whole, the commitment to the EFA goals is an opportunity for the implementation of inclusion as acknowledged by a head teacher and an inspector of education: *"There are opportunities."*
- At the level of the technical services of the educational system, adherence to inclusive education is obvious. Supportive attitude toward inclusive

education has been noted in the answers given.

4.2 The perceptions of learners with disabilities and their parents on inclusive education

4.2.a Present forms of support for children with special educational needs in mainstream schools

The presence of learners with specific needs linked to sensory, physical or mental disabilities in schools is not perceived as a problem. The schools' attitude towards them is mainly positive and supportive (as shown by over 90% of responses). Responses by head teachers indicate some adjustment have been made to provide support for these children.

Table 3: Support afforded to children with disabilities in schools (Head teachers' responses)

Variables	Responses	Percentage
Using appropriate methodology	19	68%
Adapting school environment	5	17%
Using differentiation	1	4%
Nothing	3	11%
TOTAL	28	100%

Some responses reveal that arrangements are in place to take into account the needs of learners, ranging from ensuring optimum position in the classroom to training parents in supporting their children.

4.2.b Perceptions of children with disabilities on their experiences in mainstream schools

Table 4: Experience of attending a mainstream school (Pupils/students' responses)

Variables	Percentage
Have been victims of negative attitude from peers and/or teachers	30%
Receive special attention from their teachers	57%
Are encouraged by their teachers to make friends with pupils without disabilities	70%
Find being in the mainstream schools is profitable	91%
Love their mainstream school	95%
Do not have adequate resources for their studies	71%
Study alone (with the attached difficulties)	48%
Have as friends students with and without disabilities	68%

They feel that attending a mainstream school gives them the opportunity to learn from their friends.

The pupils/students' survey shows work needs to be done amongst pupils and teachers to reduce prejudices and promote living and learning with people who are different, but in the main responses are encouraging and show positive attitudes towards the inclusion in mainstream schools of students with disabilities. This constitutes a positive starting point that can be built upon to improve all students' learning conditions.

4.2.c Perceptions of parents of children with special educational needs

Out of the 50 parents surveyed, 76% state that the mainstream school is good for their children and 80% that their children participate well in the life of the school. They are pleased to send their children in mainstream state schools. This has brought changes in their children: many appear to be less withdrawn and are starting to develop better communication skills. Nonetheless, most parents (78%) think it

necessary to improve teacher training, to build and adapt school infrastructure to accommodate disabled children's needs. These parents are therefore aware that while their child's inclusion in the mainstream school constitute a positive step, much remains to be done for their children improved educational care.

Tableau 5: Suggestions for policies (Parents' responses)

Variables	Responses	Percentage
Train teachers, build and adapt school infrastructures to accommodate the needs of disabled children	39	78 %
The State to provide medical and educative help to children with disabilities	6	12 %
Create specialised schools for children with special educational needs	4	8 %
No idea	1	2 %
TOTAL	50	100 %

As only half of parents collaborate in the slimmest of ways with their child's school, it is necessary to encourage parents to change behaviour by giving them autonomy and empowering them to take a greater part in their disabled child's education.

V. TESSA's contribution to supporting the training of teachers in inclusive classrooms

All the survey respondents agree that the training of trainers and teachers is an important aspect of improving inclusive education in Togo – as it is throughout the world (UNICEF, 2013, p. 32). The DF trainers of trainers highlight the "Four core values relating to teaching and

learning (they want to use) as the basis for the work of all teachers in inclusive education:

1. Valuing learner diversity – learner difference is considered as a resource and an asset to education;
2. Supporting all learners – teachers have high expectations for all learners' achievements;
3. Working with others – collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers;
4. Continuing personal professional development – teaching is a learning activity and teachers take responsibility for their own lifelong learning.” (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education [TE4I], 2012, p.11)

The TESSA OER has a place to support teachers in developing inclusive practices. The objective of TESSA is to support teachers in the ever-changing schools and classrooms so that these are places where all children from the community participate and are treated equally. TESSA's focus is on improving the effectiveness of teachers to teach diverse groups of pupils by helping them develop skills and confidence in using a range of strategies, and most particularly learner-focused activities that enable all pupils to develop their self-esteem and achieve.

TESSA resources are a bank of resources for initial and/or continuing teacher education allowing them to develop teaching strategies that promote active learning and active learning pedagogy. The resources, designed for teachers to train in their own classroom, the place of learning for all, can be selected from and used by trainers to train teachers, but also independently by teachers. They are part of as a toolkit for personal continuing professional development throughout life.

Active learning pedagogy invites teachers to change position from being the sole holder of knowledge in the classroom to becoming the facilitator of learning by learners who work together with her/him to learn. All children, with or without disabilities, can contribute to the work of the group or class, which values the contribution of all.

- TESSA training resources cover the school curriculum five core-subjects in any country. Each core subjects is divided into 3 modules themselves divided into 5 sections written in easily accessible language and “model(ling) an inclusive activity-based pedagogic approach to teacher and pupil learning” (Harley and Barasa, 2012, p.vii). They also enable teachers to update their subject knowledge.
- The TESSA *Key Resources* are pedagogical trans-curricular mini-guides used as is appropriate to the sections. They cover strategies such as *Planning and preparing lessons* or *Assessing learning*. For teachers working with children with special needs, *Working with large classes*, *Working with multi-grade classes* or *Using group work in your classroom* offer solutions to the difficulties mentioned in the DF research. The research has shown that children with special needs enjoy learning with their peers. Developing strategies to allow students to work in groups facilitates learning with peers, but teachers must consider how to group children according to their needs and the lesson objectives. Judicious grouping of learners provides space for teachers to respond to children's needs on a more individual basis.

- Some TESSA resources allow trainers to help teachers develop strategies to value children’s contribution and increase their self-esteem, which is conducive to learning. Module 1 of the *Life Skills* area helps teachers get to know their students and give them confidence in themselves, regardless of their needs and performance.
- TESSA also offers resources to teach children to accept differences caused by disability and develop positive attitudes towards others, thus decreasing prejudices: in the Literacy area, Module 1, section 4 “*Ways of presenting your point of view*” makes students experience a disability and express how this experience made them feel thus helping the development of empathy with others. Section 4 could be used in language, ethics or citizenship lessons.
- Murphy and Wolfenden (2013) demonstrate that when teachers work collaboratively at implementing changes, changes are more likely to succeed. Within a school, or within geographical areas, teachers teaching children with disabilities could share practice and strategies, and form a community of practice for support but also to inform deciders.

The TESSA OER provides a range of ready-made resources that can be integrated in initial and in-service teacher training to support trainers and teachers in developing inclusive education strategies and offer a framework for the creation of more specific resources in this field.

VI. Conclusion

“Attaining the EFA goals requires an adequate profile for the 21st century teacher. In a social system struggling to

create a more inclusive society for all, the teacher must be an inclusive teacher” and contribute to the development of an inclusive society. A teacher who is trained to value learner diversity “considers learner difference as a resource and an asset to education”, “is supportive to all learners, using effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes.” (TE4I, 2012, p11, in Komlan, 2013)

A start has been made in Togo to provide access to free primary education for all and to improve the quality of teaching. The Teacher Training Colleges (ENI) have reopened. This will contribute to the improvement of the quality of teaching in schools, but “inclusive education entails providing meaningful opportunities to all students within the regular school system.” (UNICEF, 2013, p.28). The DF research indicates that where disabled children attend mainstream schools, most teachers and head teachers endeavour to meet their needs in a positive manner, but all categories of respondents express a clear expectation that teacher training must cater for the development of inclusive education strategies and the terrain seems ready for such developments which are key (UNICEF, 2013, p.32) but “will only happen if there is a political will to develop a national policy in inclusive education.” (Komlan, 2013)

The DF research report lists clear recommendations for the implementation of inclusive education in Togo. Until these are enacted, to support teachers in the inclusive classroom, integrating of existing resources such as the appropriate TESSA resources into initial and in-service training courses will provide a way forward.

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