

Bright Kwame Essel

# **Socio-cultural and religious perspectives about children with disabilities and its effects on education with focus on inclusive education.**

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Norwegian University of  
Science and Technology

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# Abstract

Children with disabilities all over the world face numerous experiences throughout their childhood. People have different perspectives about disabilities in general and these perspectives are influenced by various factors which could either be socio-cultural or religious when narrowed down to a Ghanaian setting. Therefore, this study aims at identifying some of these socio-cultural and religious perspectives that Ghanaians have about children with disabilities and to also examine whether these perspectives influence the access to education by these children with the main focus on inclusive education. Data were retrieved from different secondary sources such as findings from previous research studies and articles, newspaper publications, video documentaries and reports from local and international bodies.

Data from these sources revealed that, children with disabilities in Ghana experience various forms of discrimination and differential treatments because of their disability status. It was further revealed that these socio-cultural and religious perspective have a major influence on access to education by children with disabilities especially in an inclusive education setting. Findings of the study also revealed that, some political and structural decisions and barriers hinder the effective and successful implementation of Ghana's Inclusive Education policy hence, making it exclusive in practice. Disability was found to be an individual's problem despite the Ghanaian society's strong believe in togetherness. The study made some recommendations that may help to eliminate some if not all of these negative socio-cultural and religious perspectives about children with disabilities and also suggested some factors that can help improve inclusive education in Ghana.

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# 3 List of Abbreviations (or Symbols)

UNCRPD	United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
MoE	Ministry of Education
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CA	Children Act
PWDs	Persons With Disabilities
CWDs	Children With Disabilities
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
CDS-Index	Child Disability Survival Index
IE	Inclusive Education
DF	Disability Fund
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Programme
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
DA	Disability Act
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies

UN	United Nation
CF	Common Fund
DCF	District Assembly Common Fund
NCPD	National Council on Persons with Disability
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
OPWD	Organization of Persons With Disabilities
SED	Special Education Division
CDT	Critical Disability Theory
CEPD	Centre for Employment of Persons with Disabilities
BBS	British Broadcasting Corporation
HRW	Human Rights Watch
GES	Ghana Education Service
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MHA	Mental Health America



# 1 Chapter one

## 1.1 An overview

On 13 December 2006, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD 2006) and its Optional Protocol. According to Article one of the convention, (which comprises fifty articles), the UNCRPD was designed to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity (UNCRPD 2006). Article one of the UNCRPD further defines persons with disabilities as people who possess long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which may hinder their participation and/or involvement in the society on equal basis with others due to various barriers (UNCRPD 2006). This means that disability encompasses all different forms of impairments that hinder people's active and total participation in some areas or activities of life unless the needed assistance is given. This study does not only focus on one form of disability but rather considers all various forms of impairments to make its arguments and analysis. This is because the study seeks to analyze how some socio-cultural and traditional perspectives about children with disabilities influence the effective and successful implementation of Ghana's Inclusive education policy. For the purpose of Ghana's Inclusive Education policy, the term 'inclusive' was explained as making education and learning accessible to all children irrespective of their background such as ethnicity, geography, gender, poor financial background, disadvantaged from linguistic, religious minority and all children with special needs which includes those with disabilities (Ghana MoE, 2015). Hence the study does not limit itself to only one form of disability but rather widen its scope to incorporate and highlight the experiences of all children with disabilities.

Nonetheless, disability does not mean inactiveness, thus, people with disabilities still have the capacity to participate fully in the affairs of a country or community if offered the needed education or training and tools to assist them to carry on with their activities. The UNCRPD (2006) emphasizes this by highlighting that, persons with disabilities should no longer be regarded as objects for charity but rather as subjects who are capable of making their own decisions for their lives based on their free consent and also should be regarded as active members of the society. Furthermore, both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACRWC, 1990) states that every child has the right to life, irrespective of their disability status and that state parties shall ensure the survival, protection and development of every child. In addition to these two conventions agreeing that every child has the right to education, they both encourage state parties to ensure the dignity of children with disabilities and to promote their self-reliance and active participation in the community and also to prepare them for employment and recreation opportunities.

Narrowing down to Ghana where this study will be conducted, the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana has established that, all persons with disabilities shall have the right to live and the right to participate in social, creative or recreational activities. It further states that persons with disabilities shall be protected from all forms of exploitation, discrimination, abusive or any degrading act and that as far as possible, ensure equal access to every public place by putting in place appropriate facilities that would ensure

easy movements. Also, the Ghana's Children Act (CA) 1998 (Act 560) and Persons with Disability Act 2006 (Act 715) all share the idea of protecting disabled persons from all forms of discrimination and all other interventions or supports for persons with disabilities that are found in the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana and other international conventions.

As explained above, conscious efforts have been made in Ghana over the years to ease the growth and development of people with all forms of disabilities. This is evident with the establishment of special schools across almost all the regions in Ghana such as Akropong School for the Blind, Wa School for the Blind, Dzworwulu Special School (Accra), Garden City Special School (Kumasi) School for the Deaf EID Unit, Koforidua to mention but a few. Through the establishment of Inclusive Education Policy of 2013 in Ghana, parents and communities are encouraged to enroll their children with special needs into regular community schools. However, children with all forms of disabilities are faced with lots of challenges such as discrimination and being labelled as 'others' or different when trying to fit into both the community and regular schools. In Ghana, children with intellectual impairments are considered as children of rivers and forest and were taken back to the forest or rivers in the past with the notion of helping them return to where they came from (Avoke 2002, in Baffoe 2013). Another study also reveals that giving birth to a disabled child in some parts of Ghana is a sign of the gods being annoyed and that people with mental health conditions are ripped off the opportunities for quality of life and interacting with their family, friends and community in general (Fefoame, 2009, in Baffoe 2013).

Further studies reveal that in some parts of the northern region of Ghana, some disabled children are left by the river side to die as those who were fortunate not to have been killed at birth were rather hidden to prevent people from knowing about their existence, which eventually leads to the demise of most of them due to neglect and absence of medical care (Nepveux 2004, in Kassah et al. 2012). These revelations make it critical for more studies to be done on persons with disabilities as well as introduction and successful implementation policies that would aid in the development and growth of persons with disabilities specifically in relation to education.

The study shares the experiences of both children and adults with disabilities throughout the text as both groups seem to share similar experiences. However, more light is thrown on children with disabilities since they are the main focus of the study. This is a qualitative and highly research-based study and it adopts the case study method. Data is retrieved from secondary sources such as online graphic publications, video documentaries, online documents and reports as well as previous literature from other studies. Both persons with disabilities (PWDs) and children with disabilities (CWDs) are mentioned throughout the study. For clarity, PWDs as mentioned in this study refers to both children and adults with disabilities and CWDs refers to only children with disabilities as they are the main group studied in this research.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Previous studies have been conducted throughout Africa on people with disabilities revealing some of the harsh and inhumane treatments they receive in schools and the community as a whole. Findings of some previous studies reveals that some of these religious perspectives about persons with disabilities may cause societal stigmatization and

total neglect by the family and the community. However, not much focus has been placed on how these socio-cultural and religious perspectives influence the educational development of persons with disabilities and the chance of them attaining future employment opportunities. This study therefore aims at bridging the gap in the literature by critically examining the influence that these perspectives may have on their educational development, thus, their chances of receiving formal education with inclusive education in focus.

### **1.3 Aim of the study**

The main aim of the study is to explore socio-cultural and religious perspectives about children with disabilities and how these perspectives influence their inclusiveness in regular schools.

### **1.4 Research questions**

The main research questions are:

1. What are the socio-cultural and religious perspectives concerning children with disabilities and how do these perspectives shape people's relationship with children with disabilities in schools, workplaces and in the community?
2. How do these socio-cultural and religious perceptions influence children with disabilities' chances of receiving formal education in an inclusive education setting?

### **1.5 Scope of the study**

Previous research reveals that there are diverse perspectives about children with disabilities across the globe. However, this study focuses on Ghana to highlight the socio-cultural and religious perspectives that people share about children with disabilities. Ghana was chosen because not much data has been produced with regards to how these perspectives influence the effective implementation of Ghana's Inclusive education which was introduced in 2013 by the government of Ghana through the Ministry of Education (MoE) with the support of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), STAR Ghana and the Ghana Blind Union.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

This study is expected to provide empirical findings on the socio-cultural and religious perspectives about persons with disabilities in Ghana. It will also reveal how these perspectives influence their right of attaining formal education focusing much on inclusive education. It is expected that the findings of this study will be useful to policy makers, education implementers, Child Disability Survival Index, Ghana (CDS-Index), Department of Social Welfare and other necessary professionals on how to provide the necessary services and interventions for persons with disabilities. The study will also provide recommendations on various ways to sensitize families and communities to provide support



and protection for persons with disabilities. The study will make suggestions about some alternative ways Ghana's inclusive education can be effectively implemented if adopted by authorities. Finally, the study will stimulate further research on inclusive education and how it can be improved in Ghana and other parts of the world.

## 1.7 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of eight chapters

**Chapter one:** This section provides an overview of the research topic, statement of the problem, outlines the main aim of the study as well as the research questions and also the scope and significance of the study.

**Chapter two:** This section provides more information on the scope of the study by providing information on childhood and socialization practices in Ghana, history of Ghana's population, educational statistics, policies and governmental measures for PWDs and provided a brief history of education in Ghana.

**Chapter three:** This chapter outlines and discusses concepts and theories and the methodology used in this study and how data was sourced for analysis and discussions. Limitations and ethical considerations of the study were also discussed under this section.

The analytic part of the study is presented in four chapters:

**Chapter four:** This chapter presents findings on the socio-cultural and religious perspectives on persons with disabilities.

**Chapter five:** Under this section, the findings in chapter four is thoroughly analyzed and discussed.

**Chapter Six:** Recommendations to mitigate the various issues and concerns that were discussed and analyzed in both chapter four and five were recorded under this section. Conclusion for the study was also made under this section.

## **2 Chapter two**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Ghana as the scope of the study was discussed under this section by describing childhood and the socialization practices in Ghana in relation to children's integration into society. This chapter provides a summary of Ghana's Persons with Disability (PWDs) Act, 2006 Act 715, highlighting all the eight sections under the act. This chapter also provides a brief information about some intervention programs and policies implemented by the government of Ghana that supports PWDs such as the Disability Fund (DF) and Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Programme (LEAP). Finally, the chapter also provides a brief overview of Ghana's Educational History as well as some Educational Reforms and policies that have been implemented over the years.

### **2.2 Ghana**

Under this section, the study discusses the demographic structure of Ghana in various forms. Topics discussed under this section is the structure of childhood and socialization practices in Ghana, brief records of Ghana's population and general educational statistics in Ghana.

#### **2.2.1 Childhood and socialization practices in Ghana**

Childhood is a very important stage in the development and transition of children into adulthood. Thus, the socialization processes of children in any given community have a major influence on how children will be integrated into such communities and can also contribute to who they become when they grow up. To a parent, having a child or children is very important as it comes along with gaining respect from society and contributing to the completeness of the nuclear family (Sossou and Yogtiba 2008 in Adu-Gyamfi 2014). Children are therefore highly valued by the nuclear and extended family as well as a given community. This assertion was affirmed by Twumasi-Ankrah (1999 in Sossou and Yogtiba 2008) as referenced by Adu-Gyamfi (2014) that, in the Ghanaian traditional value system, children are regarded as the most treasured subject. As a result, the upbringing and socialization of children does not only rely on the efforts of their biological parents or immediate family (nuclear family) but rather stretches to both the extended family and the community as a whole. As a result, the act of rewarding and disciplining children relies on the efforts of the whole community.

Whether formal or informal, training and educating children is considered as a key element in the upbringing of children. Therefore, childhood is treated as a stage where children need direction, assistance and guidance as affirmed by Adu-Gyamfi (2014). In this regard, children are expected to contribute in keeping the household and to also partake in family business. This was emphasized by Twum-Danso (2009) by stating that, as part of

customary law, children are expected to assist parent in various aspects of life especially in the household, farm or at the sea. By this means, children can be prepared to continue the legacy and traditional structure of the family and community when the older generation fades away. Nonetheless, children are expected to administer high level of respect towards adults whether or not such adults belong to their nuclear or extended family. This in effect means showing respect to every person that the child comes across. This assertion as revealed by Twum-Danso (2009) is reaffirmed by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) which suggests that in addition to contributing to the solidarity of the family, children are expected to assist parents and elders when needed and to also show maximum respect to them. In simple terms, children are not expected to regard themselves as superiors in the society.

One element that contributes to the socialization of children in Ghana is reciprocity (Twum-Danso, 2009). Thus, in as much as parents acknowledge that they have a right to provide care and support to their children, there is also a strong believe that children's entitlement to certain rights come along with duties. In the concept of reciprocity just as explained above earlier in this sub-section, in the household, boys are expected to take care of heavy chores and heavy family businesses whereas girls are expected to take care of relatively light chores such as cooking and washing of bowls as well as taking care of younger siblings and in return, parents are expected to provide children their needs being physical, emotional, spiritual or financial. Still under reciprocity, after being offered all the needed assistance and training by parents, children are also expected to return this favour when they attain a certain level in life where they become independent. This serves as a form of social security for old age since the social welfare system and structures for old people is quite inadequate (Twum-Danso, 2009). In conclusion, childhood is generally regarded as stage where children need love and affection, care and attention, training and education as well as financial support, however, children are also expected to show maximum respect to all elders in the community and to return the help they receive from their parents by taking care of some domestic chores and taking care of their old aged parents.

## **2.2.2 Brief account of Ghana's population history**

From the data below, we can notice the continuous increase in population from 1881 through to 2021. As indicated below, the first population headcount of Ghana in 1891 was recorded to be 746,613 which was a little over a half a million. Before Ghana gained independence from the British on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1957, the population headcount after 1891 was recorded to be 1,549,661 in 1901. There was a reduction in population 10 years later in 1911 where Ghana recorded a total of 1,502,911. However, the number kept increasing from 1,503,911 to 2,296,400 in 1921, from there it increased to 3,160,386 in 2931 and the final population recorded pre-independence was estimated at 4,118,459.

As indicated earlier, there continuous increment in the population has continued since independence till the latest census recorded in 2021. In 1960, Ghana recorded a total population estimate of 6,726,815. It then increased to 8,559,313 in 1970, an estimate of 12, 296,081 was recorded in 1984, then 18,912,079 in the year 2000. In 2010, an estimate of 24,658,823 was recorded and finally in 2021, a total estimate of 30,832, 019 was also recorded. From this continuous growth in the total population, it can be argued that the total number of children with disabilities will keep increasing as long as the country's total population keeps increasing after every census is conducted with the exception of 1911. As a result, policies makers must have this in mind when making decisions for PWDs.

**Figure 1: Ghana’s population history**

Pre-independence		Post-independence	
Year	Count	Year	Count
1891	764,613	1960	6,726,815
1901	1,549,661	1970	8,559,313
1911	1,503,911	1984	12,296,081
1921	2,296,400	2000	18,912,079
1931	3,160,386	2010	24,658,823
1948	4,118,459	2021	30,832,019

**Source: Ghana Statistics Service 2021, Population and Housing Census.**

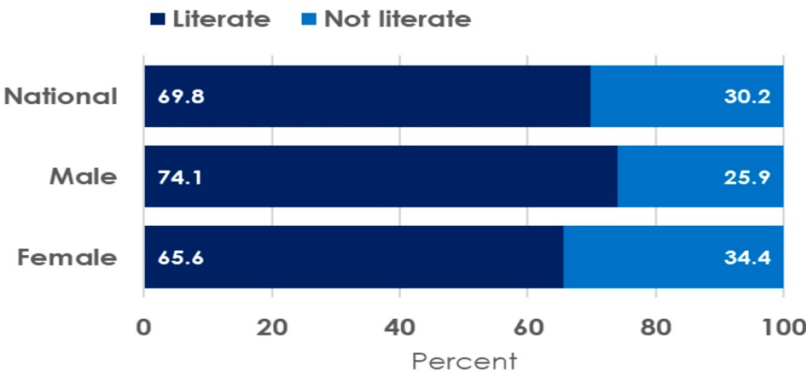
### 2.2.3 General educational statistics

Under this sub-section, the study highlighted educational statistical records of people not older 18 years since the study’s main focus is on children with disabilities. The first statistics considered is the proportion of persons 6 years and older by literacy status and sex. Literacy as explained by the Ghana Statistical Service (2021) simply means the ability of a person to read and write with understanding in any language. It must however be established that, the official language of Ghana is English Language. In figure 2, literacy and not literacy in percentages as marked by deep blue and light blue respectively indicates a total estimate of 69.8 percent literate children nationwide and total of 30.2 percent of children aged 6 and above who are not literate. However, literacy is high among males with an estimated percentage of 74.1 and a female percentage of 65.6. Meaning, illiteracy of children aged 6 years and older is higher among females than males.

In figure 3, proportion of the population 6 years and older who are literate by sex and region as indicated in figure 2.2 shows that the percentage of children 6 years and older in the Greater Accra region through to the Volta region are higher than that of the national average percentage recorded by the Ghana statistics service. Same is true among male and female literacy percentages for all the regions.

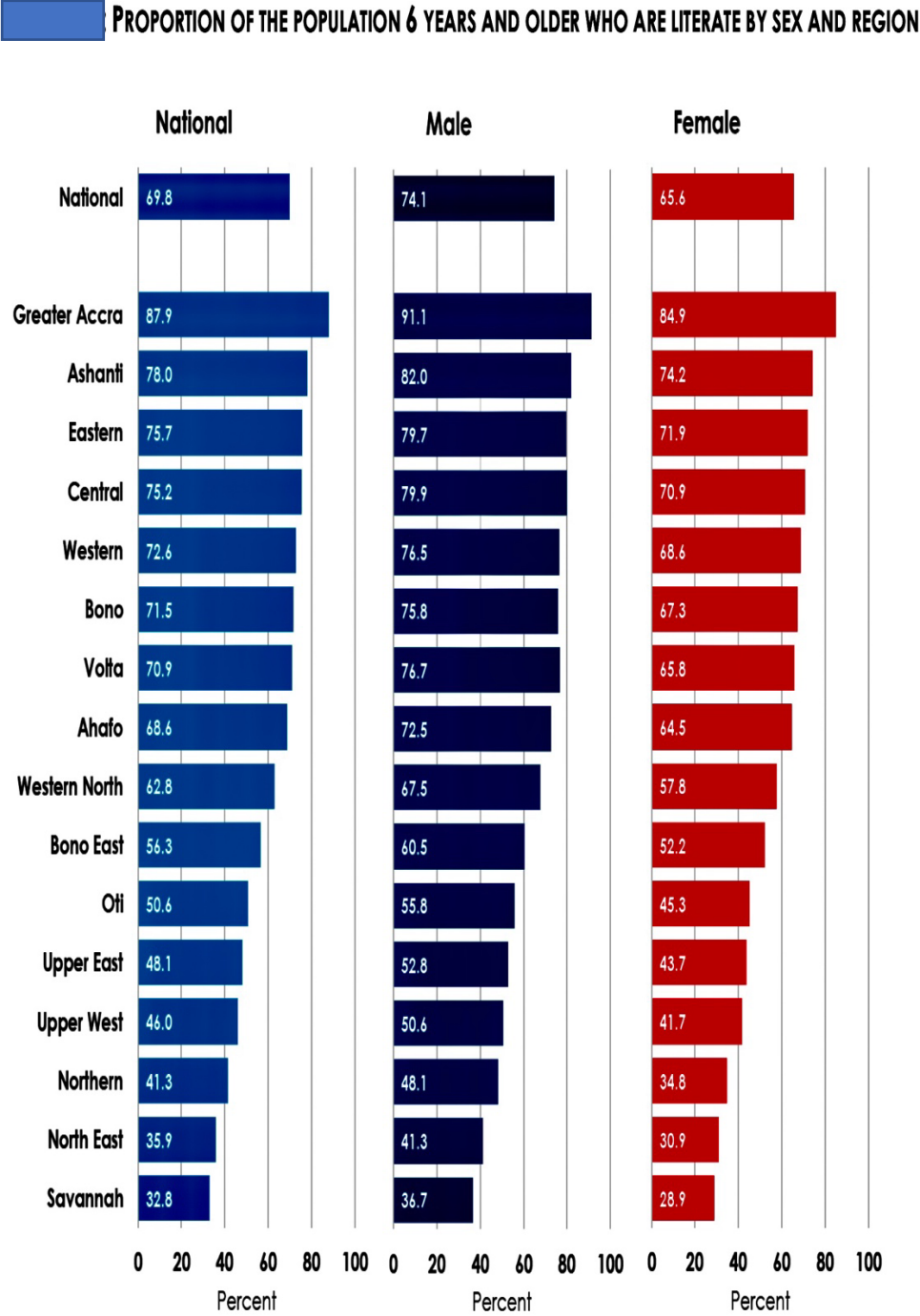
**Figure 2: Proportion of person 6 years and older by literacy status and sex**

**PROPORTION OF PERSONS 6 YEARS AND OLDER BY LITERACY STATUS AND SEX**



**Source: Ghana Statistics Service 2021, Population and Housing Census.**

**Figure 3: Proportion of the population 6 years and older who are literate by sex and region**

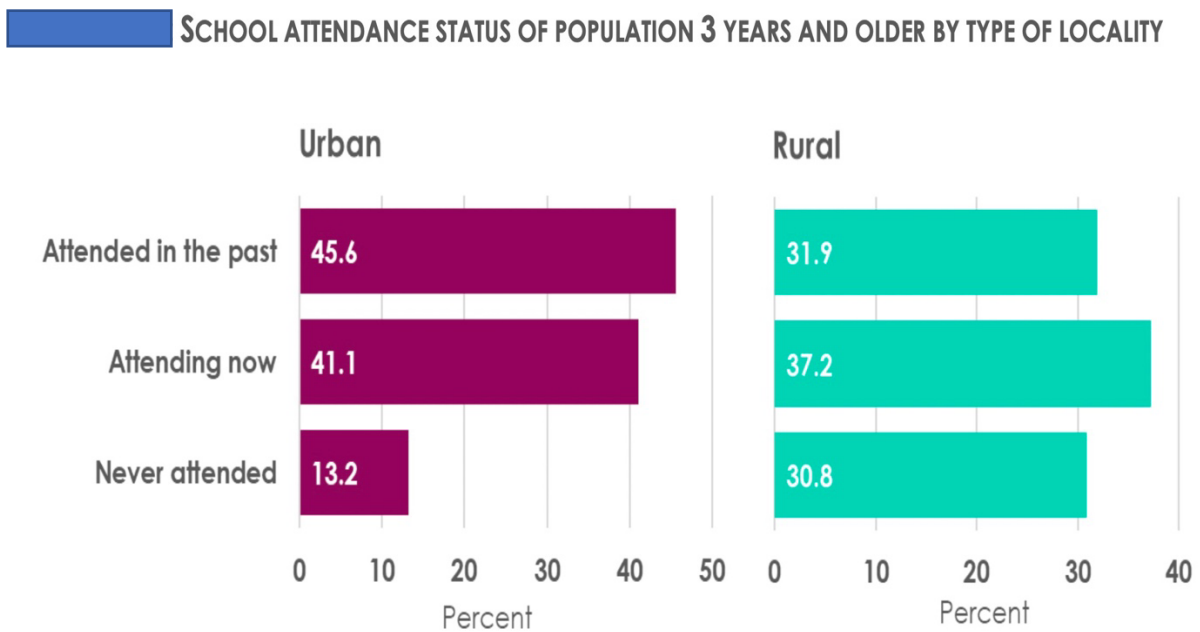


**Source: Ghana Statistics Service 2021, Population and Housing Census.**

## 2.2.4 Statistics on school attendance

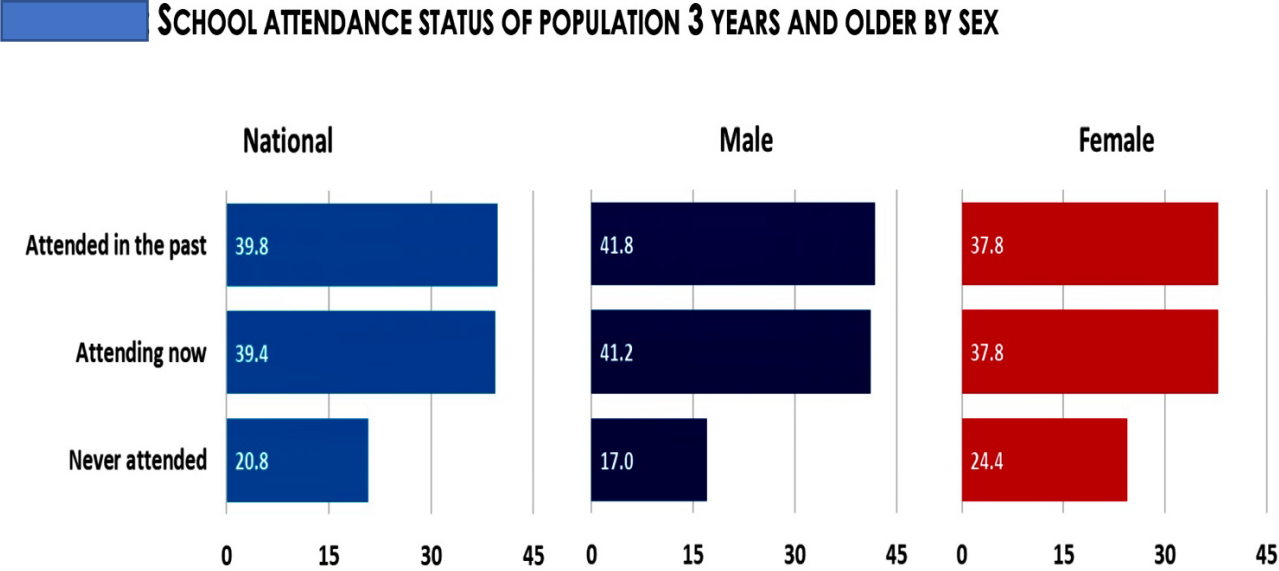
In figure 4, it is established that estimated percentage of children aged 3 and older who have never attended school in rural Ghana is twice higher than that of urban Ghana with a 30.8 and 13.2 percent respectively. Percentage of children in rural Ghana who have dropped out of school is also higher than those who in urban Ghana and same is true for those who are still in school. In figure 5 concerning male and female attendance rates, female children aged 3 and older who have never attended school is higher than that of males with a percentage of 24.8 for females and 17.8 for males. However, percentage of female children still attending school is estimated to be the same as those who have dropped out of school whereas the same analysis among male children is slightly different with 41.2 percent still in school and 41.8 who attended school in the past. Per this data, it can be established that there are more male children aged 3 years and older in school than females.

**Figure 4: School attendance status of population of 3 years and older by type of locality**



**Source: Ghana Statistics Service 2021, Population and Housing Census.**

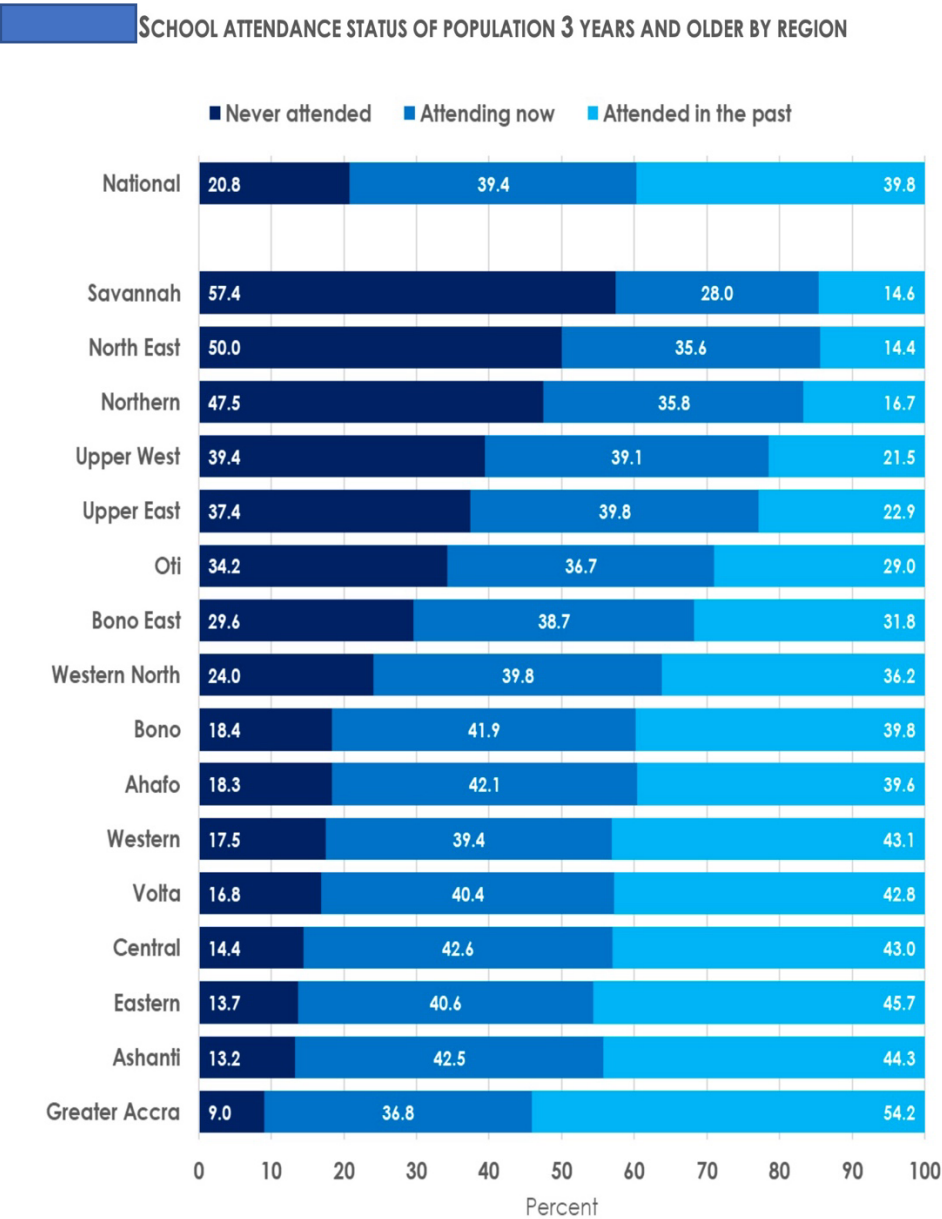
**Figure 5: School attendance status of population 3 years and older by sex**



**Source: Ghana Statistics Service 2021, Population and Housing Census.**

Percentage records of school attendance of population 3 years and older by region is similar to that of proportion of the population 6 years and older who are literate by sex and region. The Savannah region recorded the highest estimate of children who have never attended school as well as recording the lowest figures for both children who are still in school and those that have dropped out of school.

**Figure 6: School attendance status of population 3 years and older by region**



**Source: Ghana Statistics Service 2021, Population and Housing Census.**



## **2.3 Policies and governmental measures for PWDs**

There has been some governmental interventions and policies instituted to protect and enhance the rights and standard of living of PWDs. Some of them discussed in this study are Persons With Disability Act 2006 (Act 715), Disability Fund and Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Programme.

### **2.3.1 Summary of the Persons With Disability Act 2006 (Act 715)**

Parliament implemented the Persons with Disability Act (DA) in Ghana in 2006 with the aim of providing rights for persons with disability, establish a National Council on persons with disability and to also provide for other related matters. Thus, provide a legal framework for persons with disability in Ghana. The Act is grouped under 8 sections which is briefly described as follows;

- *Rights of persons with disabilities; this emphasizes the fact that people with disabilities have the right to family life and engage in social activities. This also prohibits exploitation and discrimination against a person with disability and gives them the right to have access to all public places, public service. Contraventions of any of these may warrant a penalty.*
- *Employment of persons with disabilities; this advocates for the promotion of employment of persons with disabilities, enhancement of public employment centers to accommodate PWDs. PWDs should be provided with the appropriate tools that would enhance their work. The act also advocates for providing training and education for unemployed PWDs to prepare them for future job opportunities. Also, rehabilitation centers (including community-based rehabilitation) should be established across the country to help train and effectively transition PWDs into the community and workplaces.*
- *Education of persons with disabilities; free education of a child with disability should be prioritized and enhanced through the provision of the necessary equipment and tools in educational institution for children with disabilities. Special schools should be provided for children whose level of disability may require special care and attention. There should be no refusal for children with disabilities on account of disability. Technical and vocational training should be provided for PWDs who prefers such training.*
- *Transportation; the act advocates for the importation of non-conventional vehicles for persons with disabilities as well as making room for PWDs at parking places. PWDs should be allowed to own driving license if they are qualified and safe for them to drive. Facilities at port terminals should be designed to accommodate PWDs and also making reservation of seats for PWDs on public transport.*
- *Healthcare and facilities; health professionals should be adequately trained and equipped with necessary tools to provide health service and assistance to PWDs. There should be periodic screening of children to detect any form of disability and also establish assessment centres for PWDs.*

- *Miscellaneous provisions; the act compels the government to provide incentives for manufacturers of technical aids and appliances for PWDs. PWDs should have access to sporting events, festivals and cultural activities as well as participating in national activities.*
- *Establishment and functions of National Council on Persons with Disability; there should be establishment of National Council on Persons with Disabilities. This should be accompanied with clearly stated functions and rules that will govern the council such as the tenure of office of members, how meetings will be conducted for the Board, disclosure of interest by Board Members, appointment of committees, allowances of members and the establishment of regional and district offices.*
- *Administrative and financial provisions; thus, how an Executive Secretary will be appointed, the functions of this Executive Secretary, the appointment of other staff and how delegation of power of appointment should be done. The funds of the Council should also be clearly stated and there should be room for providing annual reports as well as accounting and auditing reports.*

The eight sections of the act provide some special and specific rights and privileges for persons with disabilities in Ghana. Beginning from the right to live irrespective of a person's disability status, participation in all social, political, economic, creative or recreational activities. The act also emphasizes that PWDs should not become victims of differential treatment unless there is a special condition that requires for special treatment. The act also frowns on discriminating against persons with disabilities with regards to being abusively treated, being declined of employment opportunities on grounds of their disability status. The act recommends that, both public and private places should be designed and constructed in ways that may promote easy access for persons with disabilities. With employment, the act compels the government to grant employers an annual tax rebate of taxable income with respect to each PWD employed. Government shall also grant special incentives to all PWDs who are engaged in businesses as well as organization that employs PWDs.

Rehabilitation centers shall be established across all the regions and districts for easy access. These rehabilitation centers will provide guidance and counselling as well as training for PWDs to help initiate them into the mainstream social life. On education, the act compels parents, guardians or custodians of a child with disability to enroll them into schools and could be sanctioned for failure to do so. The act tasks the Ministry of Education (MoE) to designate schools or institutions in all the regions in Ghana which will be supplied or furnished with the needed tools, equipment and facilities that every student with disabilities may benefit from. The act further compels the government of Ghana to provide free education to persons with disabilities and establish special schools for those who cannot be enrolled in regular schools due to the level or type of disabilities.

On no reason should a person with disability be declined admission into any school unless they have been duly accessed by the Ministry of Education and clearly concluded that they may be best suited for enrolment into special schools for children and PWDs. The act advocates for the construction and furnishing of both public and private libraries in ways that may promote easy access for PWDs.

### **2.3.2 Disability fund**

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was born on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016 with its main focus on sustainable development. The SDGs was built on both the successes and failures of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which aimed at ending poverty by the end of 2015. The SDGs therefore erected other goal such as; No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Reduced Inequality (goals 1,2,3, and 10 respectively, UN, 2016). As a result, countries especially those in the global south have introduced various social intervention programs to cater for the vulnerable in society such as persons with disabilities, children, old people and others. Ghana as one of the developing countries with quite a huge number of vulnerable people has introduced various intervention programs over the years and one of these intervention programs is the Disability Fund developed in 2005. Ghana practices a decentralized political system whereby administrative powers are transferred from the central government to 275 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) spread across the nation (Opoku et al. 2019).

The government of Ghana allocates a 7.5% of its annual revenue to these MMDAs quarterly as Common Fund (CF) for their local level development (National Council on Persons with Disability [NCPD], 2010). According to Opoku et al. (2019), 3% of the total CF is allocated to the Disability Fund. However, the Disability Fund is paid quarterly since the District Assembly Common Fund which the DF is generated from is also paid on quarterly bases by the government of Ghana. The Disability Common Fund may also provide free registration and renewal of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) for PWDs and may also be used for payment of school fees for children with disabilities.

The fund aims to minimize poverty among all PWDs especially those not formally employed and to also improve their social image through dignified labour (NCPD, 2010). Beneficiaries may receive more than one payment annually if they can prove without doubts a proper utilization of the money received although the DF is just a one-time payment annually (Opoku et al., 2019). This may help expand the works of the beneficiaries who have properly invested their percentage of the fund and to also encourage other to make good use of the fund. The fund may also be used to support the education of children with disabilities and to elevate the capacity of persons with disabilities as well as their organizations (Sackey, 2009 in Edusei et al., 2017). Additionally, the Disability Fund could be used to procure assistive devices and technical aids that may enhance beneficiaries to undertake other income generating ventures such as trading and farming (NCPD, 2010). Members of Organization of Persons With Disabilities (OPWD) can access the funding through their groups or unions. However, individuals who are not members of any OPWDs may access the funds through the social welfare departments in their respective Metropolitan, Municipal or District Assemblies.

### **2.3.3 Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Programme (LEAP)**

The government of Ghana implemented Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Programme (LEAP) in the year 2008 with the purpose of elevate the extremely poor financially, increase the enrolment in basic schools among children of poor households, minimize infant mortality rate, grow local economies and to also enhance child nutrition (Debrah 2013). According to Davis et al. (2014), LEAP also provides cash transfer to the

very poor in the community specifically in households consisting of orphans or vulnerable children, the elderly people and to people with extreme disabilities. Thus, PWDs not only have the Disability Fund as a source of income but could also obtain some level of revenue for their personal upkeep or economic investment through the LEAP programme. Through LEAP, monthly cash stipends and in-kind transfers in a form of education and health insurance are provided to extremely poor families to reduce their financial burden and promote human capital development (Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment [MMYE], 2007 in Fuseini et al. 2019).

The beneficiaries received monthly cash stipends ranging from GHS 8 to GHS 15 in 2008 but there was a six-fold increment from GHS 48 to GHS 90 in 2015 (Paa-Kwesi & Remoaldo, 2019). Paa-Kwesi and Remoaldo (2019) also mentions that the monthly stipends received by beneficiaries as at 2019 ranges from GHS 64 to GHS 106. The programme has increased its number of beneficiaries from 1,654 in 2008 to 45,000 in 2010; 90,785 by April 2015 and 213,000 as at 2016 (Abebrese, 2011; Anas, 2015; Foli, 2016 in Paa-Kwesi & Remoaldo, 2019). Through LEAP, the enrolment among secondary school aged children has increased by 7 percentage points and has also decreased grade repetition among both primary and secondary aged children as well as helping to reduce absenteeism among primary aged children by 10 percentage points (Handa et al., 2013).

In as much as LEAP has benefitted many poor households in Ghana since its implementation, not much data has been gathered on its direct impact on persons with disabilities as compared to the disability fund. This may be because it does not include all persons with disabilities but considers only those devoid of any productive capacity (Pakmoni et al. 2018).

## **2.4 Brief overview of Ghana's Educational History and Educational Reforms History**

The Portuguese are believed to be one of the first European countries to introduce Western formal education in Ghana (Graham, 2013). It is however, important to note that prior to that, Africans had their system of education that is Traditional education. Traditional education was purposely for teaching good health, knowledge in Industry and production, culture or produce the ideal man or woman. Children received education about the customs and traditions of the community, made aware of the material and the spiritual fundamentals of social life (Graham, 2013). The method of instruction used for traditional education were observation, imitation and participation whereas adults and peer group were regarded as the main agents for this form of education.

European merchants established the Castle schools in the castles along the coast of Ghana and this establishment marked the introduction of formal education in Ghana (Graham, 2013). According to George (1976), the European nations which participated in the castle schools were Portugal (1529); Holland (1644); Denmark (1727); and England (1751). These castle schools initially only offered formal education to mulattoes and children of African traders (George, 1976). As mentioned earlier, first attempt at providing formal education in Ghana was at the Elmina Castle by the Portuguese in 1529 when King John III of Portugal instructed the governor at the Elmina Castle to provide reading, writing and religious teaching for African children (Graham, 2013). The Portuguese language was the medium of instruction with teachers being paid 240 grains of gold a year for each child taught up to a maximum of 15 (Graham, 2013).

However, other missionaries also established schools in Ghana upon their arrival and this greatly contributed to the spread of formal education throughout the country. According to George (1976), some of these missionaries were the Basel Society (1828); Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (1835); Bremen Mission Society (1847) and that the expansion of education was left in the hands of the missionary bodies until 1951 who were allowed to establish schools wherever they wished. The government however offered grants-in-aid to some missionary schools as well as other schools if they met certain requirements. The government itself established few schools especially in areas which were relatively neglected by the missionaries. Schools or institutions such as teacher training, trade schools and secondary schools were later established by the government which enhance the expansion of education in the country.

## **2.5 Present structure**

Currently, the structure of education is a 6-3-3-4 structure representing, 6 years of primary education, 3 years of Junior Secondary School, 3 years of Senior Secondary School and 4 years University course (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016). However, students can also offer courses in Teacher Training Colleges, Polytechnics or other relevant tertiary institutions after complementing secondary education. The basic education (free and compulsory) is instituted to deliberately expose children to a wide variety of ideas and skills and to further install in them values and attitudes that will allow them to cope creatively or interact well with their environment and to also prepare them to become valuable asset to their country. The primary school level is made of subjects such as English, Culture, Ghanaian Language, Integrated Science, Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Information Communication Technology (ICT), Religious and Moral Education, Creative Arts, Dance, Music, Physical Education and others (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016).

The Junior Secondary School level makes a distinction between Agricultural and General science and incorporates subjects such as Pre- vocational Skills and Pre-technical skills. Also, Ghanaian Language (mostly depending on the location of the school), Social Studies, ICT and French as a 3rd language are added. The Senior Secondary School curriculum has Core subjects and Elective subjects where every student takes four core subjects; English language, Mathematics, Integrated Science and Social Studies and also select elective subjects from five available programmes; Agriculture Programme, General Programme (Arts or Science option), Business Programme, Vocational Programme and Technical programme. Basic and Senior Secondary School run a 40-week school year and students are tested using an internal continuous assessment (30% of final score) and an external examination conducted by the West African Examinations Council (70% of final score). Tertiary education also takes a minimum of 2 to 3 years to be completed depending on the type of programme a student chooses to read.

## 2.6 Some educational reforms and policies

There have been various educational reforms in Ghana before and after the country gained independence in 1957 from the British. These reforms were all made in the quest to provide Ghanaians with a good and workable educational system (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016). Some of these notable reforms have been listed below.

- *Accelerated Development Plan of 1951*
- *Education Act 1961*
- *Reforms of the National Liberation Council*
- *The New Structure and Consent of Education in 1974*
- *Dzobo Report of 1975 (first to recommend the Junior Secondary School [JSS] concept)*
- *Education Commission Report on Basic and Secondary Education 1987/88*
- *The 1987 Education Reforms*
- *University Rationalization Committee Report of 1988*
- *Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Program (FCUBE) in 1996 which was based on the 1992 Constitution of Ghana*
- *The FCUBE Policy Document and Program of Operation in 1996*
- *Ghana Education Trust Fund (GET FUND) Act 2000 (Act 581)*
- *Education Reforms of 2007*
- *The 2008 Education Act*

Currently, the President of Ghana Nana Akufo Addo in 2016 launched the free senior high school education policy, making education free for the Senior High Schools to help improve the literacy rate in Ghana.

According to Ametepee and Anastasioiu (2015), the government of Ghana only took responsibility of providing education for children with disabilities in 1957 after Ghana gained independence. However, the Ministry of Education only took control of special education from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare later in the 1960s (Anthony and Kwadade, 2006 in Ametepee and Anastasioiu, 2015). Also, the Special Education Unit which has been renamed as the Special Education Division (SED) took full responsibility for special schools in 1970 (Anston-Yevu, 1988 in Ametepee and Anastasioiu in 2015). Inclusive education was not present until in the 1980s where the government of Ghana introduced a system called the integrated system which aimed at educating students with disability together with students without disabilities within the same school (Vislie, 2003 in Ametepee and Anastasioiu, 2015).

# **3 Chapter three – Theoretical Perspectives, concepts and methodology**

## **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher focused on the theoretical perspectives and concepts that will be used to provide insightful knowledge and understanding of the study being conducted. Based on the aim and the research questions that this study seeks to examine, the researcher adopted these theories and concepts; childhood studies, the critical disability theory which is made up of seven elements namely the social model, voice, language, voice, valuing diversity, rights, transformative policies and multidimensionality. The last theory discussed in this chapter was the labelling theory. The social studies of children and childhood paradigm made up of three (3) approaches namely, social construction, agency and the structuralist approach. The researcher also discussed the methodology and the research design that was adopted by this study as well as how data was sourced and analyzed in this study. Limitations of the research methods and designs adopted were also discussed in this chapter as well as the ethical consideration on the part of the researcher.

## **3.2 Childhood Studies**

Childhood recognizes children as active agents who have the power or abilities to make their own decisions and make a meaning out of their own world. Children in the past years were viewed as objects rather than active participants in research studies. Researchers did not really consider actively involving children in conducting their research projects. Criticisms towards this kind of research approach led to the introduction of a new paradigm called social studies of children and childhood which focused on conducting research with children by viewing children as active agents who have the capacity to influence their own thoughts and actions (Prout & James, 1997). Qvortrup (1994) enhances this by arguing that this new paradigm advocate for giving children a voice and recognizing that children are active beings who have the capacity to exercise their agency in matters concerning their lives and in the creation of their own life worlds. By recognizing children as active agents and giving them a voice in any study or issues concerning them, significant knowledge can be obtained as their views, feeling and perspectives could be a genuine and clear thoughts about the issue being discussed or studied.

Social construction of childhood also advocates for children and childhood to be socially constructed rather than being universally defined and constructed. Thus, children and childhood should be understood differently in different societies and at different times. (Ansell, 2005). In this study, the social construction theory may help in revealing or answering questions such as

- What ideas, images and values are children or childhood and for the purpose of this study, children with disabilities associated with?
- Which kind of material world is created for children with disabilities by adults?

Also in this study, the structuralist approach under the childhood studies paradigm will focus on how political policies and political decisions directly or indirectly affects the lives of children with disabilities especially their chances of accessing to formal education.

### **3.3 Critical disability theory**

According to Hosking (2008), the critical disability theory (CDT) emerged from critical theory which also evolved from the work of a group of Western Marxist social researchers and philosophers in Frankfurt, Germany which is often referred as the Frankfurt School. However, the origin of the term 'critical theory' widely credited to Max Horkheimer in 1937 when he introduced 'critical theory of society' in the essay 'traditional and critical theory' (Hosking, 2008). Unlike the traditional theory which only considered its subjects as objects, the critical theory advocates for both the researcher and the subjects to be engaged in an interactive relationship. Thus, engaging in active dialogue which would create a better knowledge of the social interactions and relations that involves children (Christensen and James, 2000 in Christensen, 2004). Henceforth, critical disability theory challenges liberalism norms and values with their actualization in the lives of persons with disability (Hosking, 2008). Thus, the need to recognize the special needs of every child with disabilities especially in schools to effectively identify the unique assistance they may need for an effective adoption of inclusive education policy in Ghana.

Critical disability theory disputes the assumption of sameness and thus emphasizes that difference is inevitable in relation to children with disabilities, therefore advocates for the material reorganization of our basic social institutions (Devlin & Pothier 2006). This means that, active, special and constant care may be needed for certain forms of disability as its severity may demand it. Understanding, adopting and implementing the elements of the critical disability theory in any jurisdiction practicing an all-inclusive education system would massively benefit from it in the sense that, governments and other institutions would become enlightened on making the necessary provisions in schools that would enhance an active participation of all children with or without disabilities. Critical disability theory according to Hosking (2008) is made of seven (7) elements and they have been elaborated below.

#### **3.3.1 Social model of disability.**

The social model of disability challenges the 'universalist' conception of disability which argues that everyone is disabled at some point in their lives (Hosking, 2008). The universalist concept fails to recognize that some forms of disability may need special attention and assistance, therefore forming policies based on this concept may be of disadvantage to persons with disability. In contrast, the social model of critical disability theory is based on these three (3) principles; (1) disability is a social construct rather than the universalist concept which sees disability as a consequence of impairment, (2) disability is a composite of interrelationship between impairment, individual reactions to impairment and interaction with the social environment and lastly (3) advocates that the social



disadvantage that children with disability experience is as a result of the failure of the physical, institutional and attitudinal environment to meet their needs (Hosking, 2008).

Thus, children with disabilities may find it extremely challenging in an all-inclusive education setting which fails to make provisions for them through the building of disability friendly school compounds, supplying them with disability assistive devices and others. Also, the social model of disability makes it possible for special care such as therapy to be administered to children with special needs and thus complements the universalist concept which may neglect such special care and assistance. Hence, the social model mainly focus on the social and environmental barriers that persons with disabilities encounter and also how cultural and policy frameworks elevate or deny inclusion (Watson, 2012). This has liberated PWDs in the sense that, they are no longer considered as the problem but rather the society as the problem (Crow, 1996 in Watson, 2012). Thus the society usually considered PWDs as a problem that needed to be solved or dealt with, however, the social model rather encourages the society, environmental structures and policies to be built in ways that will be more friendly and accommodating for persons with disabilities.

It must be established that there have been other school of thought that challenges the social model. They argue that the impact of impairment on individual children's lives are neglected by the social model that the social model fails to recognize the individual experiences of impairment (Watson, 2012). Thus, irrespective of the provisions and structures put in place by the society or political policies to aid person with disabilities, some children's level of disability may still render them impaired in the society; or technologies are still not available for some forms of disabilities; also, some children with disability may choose not to join other children in the playgrounds or attend regular schools because they psychologically think they do not fit in. This called for a critical evaluation to be done and that is where the critical disability theory came in. As stated by Hosking (2008), the CDT is a combination of the medical and social models which is termed by the World Health Organization as the 'biopsychosocial model'. Thus, it combines the causes and contributions of impairment with individual personal responses to impairment as well as the hindrances caused their social environment. Biomedical procedures such as prevention, diagnosing, treatment and rehabilitation are all good measures for solving or reducing the barriers if impairment. However, critical social policies should be implemented to assist children with disabilities who continue to face social marginalization despite receiving biomedical attention. Apparently, the CDT recommends for both the biomedical and social aspects of disability to be prioritized by any government or institution responsible for making policies that have consequences on children with disabilities.

### **3.3.2 Voice**

This explains the magnitude of the voices of persons with disabilities. Thus, how people interpret the voices of persons with disabilities (Hosking 2008). Over the years, the voices of disabled people all over the world especially those in the global south has been hugely suppressed and marginalized. Thus, persons with disabilities are often expected by people without disabilities to share views which are in favour of the latter (Hosking, 2008). Thus, the voices of PWDs could easily be misinterpreted as symptoms of an unhealthy person ones their disabilities are seen as inability or viewed by others as the unchosen and despised group (Hosking). Children with disabilities in the global south are usually the most affected by this practice considering the fact that even the voices of able-bodies children are hardly heard or magnified. Baldwin & Carlisle (1994) further revealed in Watson (2012)

that, the voices of children with disabilities has not only been marginalized by the society but also previous research studies about children with disabilities frequently concentrated on the perspectives of their parents, professionals and other adults, neglecting what these children had to say about themselves. This practice is criticized by the social studies of children and childhood paradigm which argues that children's voices should be heard in all matters concerning them because they are considered by this paradigm as active agents capable of making their own choices (Prout & James, 1997). The social studies of children and childhood paradigm will further be explained later in this chapter. Contrary to how abled people view the voices of persons with disabilities, the critical disability theory privileges the stories of PWDs. It urges people without disabilities to listen and value the voices of persons with disabilities to properly understand them for smooth integration into the society and successful implementation of an all-inclusive educational system.

### **3.3.3 Language**

Hosking (2008) indicates that, the status of persons with disabilities as well as the concept of disability are highly impacted by the language which is used to describe them as understood under the critical disability concept. Thus, it includes both the how PWDs are labelled or described through words and the images used to portray disability. Although language is generally considered to be a general, transparent and neutral means of communication, language under the critical disability theory is highly considered as political. Thus, the type of names or languages used to describe persons with disabilities may influence people's perceptions and interactions with PWDs. Language although regarded as a neutral and clearer means of communication, it is interpreted by the critical theory as essentially political which may or may not influence how society perceives and relate with a particular group of people. Bernburg (2019) emphasizes this by arguing that, once an individual or a social group is labelled and defined by a particular word or perception, they often encounter new problems that stem from the negative stereotypes that are attached to the labels.

It must be noted that, the words and images used to represent PWDS have a direct impact on how people relate with them. PWDs are often described both in written and visual media as well as traditionally in the global south as people who are deficient, pitiable, wicked, dangerous or valueless (Hosking 2008). Henceforth, making people regard them as inferior and worthless in the society. Apparently, such negative labelling of PWDs may lead to social withdrawal resulting from anticipated rejection or devaluation (Bernburg, 2019). This often makes the social interaction of 'normal' people and the stigmatized individuals (in this cases PWDs) very uneasy, tensed and could lead to embarrassment in the quest of these two groups trying to please each other (Goffman 1963 in Bernburg 2019). However, the critical disability theory will help to examine how these negative attitudes are revealed via a discourse of personal tragedy that renders PWDs powerless, worthless, vulnerable among others.

### **3.3.4 Valuing diversity**

Critical disability theory argues that to effectively and successfully integrate PWDs into the society, there is the need to recognize the diversity existing between PWDs and those without disabilities. In as much as the world preaches for equality in every context, with disability in most cases, difference should not just be regarded as irrelevant or utterly

dismissed as doing so may lead to totally neglecting or marginalizing the person. Henceforth, the CDT advocates that, by recognizing and taking into consideration the difference that may exist, adjustments could be made to get rid of the obstacles that exist and therefore enhance the smooth integration and participation of PWS as equal as everyone in the society. Thus, CDT conceives equality within a framework of diversity by acknowledging and appreciating the inevitability of differences that exist. Hosking (2008) agrees with this by arguing that any systematic actions or decisions towards disability which are taken without recognizing the varying needs of PWDs is bound to fail as it is incapable effectively protecting the rights of PWDs to be full participants in their respective communities.

### **3.3.5 Rights**

Critical disability theory acknowledges the need to initiate and implement disability rights to protect and enforce the integration of PWDs into the society. However, it further exposes how the liberal rights theory fails to thoroughly respond to the individual and collective needs or interests of PWDs as they do not effectively incorporate the diversity of the disabled community within the scope of its definition and interpretation of equality.

### **3.3.5 Transformative policies**

Under this element, critical disability theory focuses on empowerment of persons with disabilities. Thus, making policies which empowers PWDs to promote inclusion and equity. Although CDT does not dispute the medical model interventions for disability, which focuses on the prevention and cure of disability as well as providing other medical assistance to those that may not respond to medical interventions, the CDT highlights how the social construction of disability could be affected because of how disabilities are portrayed in print and visual media, thereby, providing the theoretical basis for the development and implementation of effective policy responses to disability and to also empower other social institutions which deals with disability related issues.

### **3.3.7 Multidimensionality**

Critical disability theory disputes policies which are solely structured around identity politics, thus, policies structured around a particular social identity (Hosking 2008). This in the context of this study means putting all forms of disability under one category without considering the varying forms and needs of each person. This is because identity-based policies may force members to conform to a certain defined group ideology, neglecting the diversity of some members within the same group. The needs and attention that a PWD who was born with any form of disability may be different from that of the one who was not disabled from birth.

### **3.4 Prospective new paradigm (correlation between childhood studies and critical disability theory)**

Childhood studies and critical disability theory can be introduced as a new paradigm for disability related studies. This is because both childhood studies and CDT share certain common elements and can therefore be combined for future research. Childhood is advocated to be socially constructed with focus on the background or society of every child thereby doing away with generalization of the definition of childhood. In agreement with the constructionist approach, social model and language elements under CDT also talks about the social events that prevents PWDs to adequately interact with their immediate environment. Thus, as every child is considered to be unique with regards to their immediate surroundings, the experiences of every child with disabilities is also unique with regards to the various experience they face in their immediate surroundings. For instance, how disability is viewed by every society and the physical or political factors that hinders or promotes the lives of children with disabilities.

Agency model under childhood studies emphasizes the fact that children have the agency and capacity to influence their own lives in matters that concerns them as discussed in this study. On the other hand, the voice element under CDT also highlights how the voices of PWDs are considered, thus the magnitude of their concerns which have been discussed in this study. Just as agency under childhood studies, CDT advocates for the voices and concerns of children with disabilities to be highly considered in every decision that concerns. Right as an element under CDT also preaches for the concerns of children with disabilities to be highly considered.

Finally, other elements of the CDT such as value diversity, transformative policies, and multidimensionality also shares in the structuralist approach. Thus, how structures and policies affect the lives of children with disabilities. This also concerns the factors that authorities and policy makers consider when making decisions or introducing policies that affect children with disabilities. When the wrong disability structures and policies are introduced, children with disabilities may end up suffering the consequences as this assertion is true for the opposite.

### **3.5 Labelling theory**

This theory mainly highlights how certain groups in the society are labelled as 'others' through images and stereotypical names and descriptions given to them. Persons with disabilities experience a lot of stigmatization and numerous forms of stereotyping as a result of negative labelling that people associate with them (Barton 1995, in Avoke 2002).

### 3.6 Brief literature review

Various articles, publications, literatures or studies have been conducted across the globe about children with disabilities. Some of these studies provided similar findings as to the treatments given to children with disabilities as some also gave varying findings. Examples of such studies and their findings are stated in the table below.

Date and origin	Author(s)	Topic	Findings
2012 (Ghana)	Alexander Kwesi Kassah , Bente Lilljan Lind Kassah & Tete Kobla Agbota	Abuse of disabled children in Ghana	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Forms of abuse were categorized into four; social, capital, physical and capital</li> <li>2. Social abuse in the form of isolation, neglect, restriction of movement and not been allowed to participate in social life. Capital abuse by killing of children with disabilities. Physical abuse through the incursion if physical assaults to children with disabilities and lastly emotional abuse as a result of psychological pain and trauma that children with disabilities experience because of the various forms of abuses they suffer.</li> <li>3. These abuses were persistent mainly because children with disabilities are categorized as 'other' and therefore subjected to differential treatment as these children were mainly referred as non-humans by separating them from 'we' the humans.</li> </ol>
2016 (Swaziland)	Hebron L. Ndlovu	African Beliefs Concerning People with Disabilities: Implications for Theological Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mental impairment is depicted by indigenous African religions as victims of witchcraft or ancestral anger due to their moral indiscretion and therefore has to be morally, physically and ritually cleansed before they can be reintegrated into the society.</li> <li>2. A person with albinism in Swaziland was traditionally viewed as sub-human and mysterious as some were called 'inkawu' or a monkey. As a result, a person with albinism were not offered a proper burial in the past as it was believed that such people do not die but simply vanishes into thin air.</li> <li>3. This perception was in existence because people with albinism were sometimes killed for witchcraft purposes as reported by many writers such as Aquaron, Djatou, &amp; Kam-dem, 2009; Igwe, 2015 all in Ndlovu (2016).</li> <li>4. However, certain traditional beliefs and proverbs in Swaziland frowns upon such</li> </ol>

			inhumane acts by stating that; you should not laugh at a person with albinism or any form of disability else you will also have a disability or albinism in future, you should never make fun of a person's wound.
2011 (Ghana)	Jane Anthony	Conceptualizing disability in Ghana: implications for EFA (Education For All) and inclusive education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Local culture, traditions and authority may be ignored as a result of the implementation of universalist international development policies by failing to recognize traditional beliefs that surrounds a socially constructed phenomenon such as disability.</li> <li>2. The discrepancies between national policy based on international influences and declarations seems to result in the implementation of an Inclusive Education policy in forms which are more consistent with international notions of integration.</li> </ol>
2002 (Ghana)	Mawutor Avoke	Models of Disability in the Labelling and Attitudinal Discourse in Ghana	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attitudes towards PWDs both in the past and present are influenced by various superstitious beliefs which lead to stereotyping and labelling.</li> <li>2. Sensitizing people's attitudes towards PWDs cannot only depend on government policies.</li> <li>3. Institutions such as churches and community elders can contribute immensely in the sensitization of attitudes towards PWDs as they should be involved in both the development and practical implementation of policies.</li> </ol>
2016 (Ghana)	Florence Boadi	Parents' perception on the education of the deaf-The perspective of parents of children with deafness at Ashanti school for the deaf	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Most parents agree that education for deaf children is as important as education for hearing children. However, most parents believe that the academic performance for their deaf children are lower than that of hearing children.</li> <li>2. A greater percentage of the community did not give a positive response concerning the education of deaf children.</li> <li>3. In as much as most parents with deaf children enroll their children in schools, they do not show much interest in other important activities such as attending PTA (Parents and Teachers Association) which play an essential role in the educational development of children.</li> </ol>

2010 (Ghana)	Stacey Reynolds	Disability Culture in West Africa: Qualitative Research Indicating Barriers and Progress in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are varying views about the meaning of disability, what causes it as well as the capabilities of PWDs.</li> <li>2. Though they may not be on the same level, PWDs also have rights just as abled people.</li> <li>3. People’s experiences with PWDs can shape their perceptions of disability.</li> <li>4. Disability culture should be considered with regard to other societal issues in Africa</li> </ol>
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**Table 1: Literature Review**

### **3.7 Methodology and Research Design**

The main research method employed by this study is the qualitative research design. The findings of research work conducted using the qualitative methods tend to be more descriptive and the inferences can be drawn easily from the data that is gathered. This is because the qualitative research methods are designed in ways which generate results that helps to reveal the behaviour and perception of a target group or audience with reference to a particular topic (Bhat 2019). This study’s main aim as mentioned earlier in this study is to establish how socio-cultural and religious perspectives about people with disabilities can play a role in their chances of accessing education with focus on inclusive education. Qualitative research design which was adopted by this study helped to provide an in-depth and appropriate information required to achieve the aim of the study.

### **3.8 Data Sources and Analysis**

One-on-one interview, focus groups, ethnography, case study research, records keeping and observation are all examples of methods under qualitative research design. However, this study only adopted the case study and other secondary sources for its analysis as these two best suits the study. The sources of data for this study includes graphic publications, video documentary on disability in Ghana, online documents, findings from previous literature as well as report from statistical services and institutions in Ghana.

Reports from both international bodies and domestic agencies or institutions were reviewed. These included the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the 1992 constitution of Ghana, Persons with Disability Act in Ghana among others and reports from the Ghana Ministry of Education (MoE).

Data was obtained from the sources mentioned earlier generate information on some of the socio-cultural and religious perspectives about persons with disabilities. This further helps to make revelations about how these perspectives affects people’s daily relations with persons with disabilities. Lastly, reports from both the national and international

bodies helped in obtaining data on how access to formal education for children with disabilities are affected by socio-cultural and religious perspectives in Ghana.

To find relevant publications and reports for review, keywords such as 'disability', 'disability in Ghana', 'education', 'inclusive education', 'cultural beliefs on disability in Ghana and Africa', 'theoretical perspectives on disability', 'educational statistics' were searched through academic publication databases such as Google Scholar, Ask.com, JSTOR. Findings from the various publications were then recorded and linked to generate enough data for theoretical analysis and interpretation.

### **3.9 Limitations**

In as much as sourcing information from only secondary data may help generate a good pool of data for this study, it may not be as authentic as the data that would have been generated if the researcher directly interacted with participants to obtain a first-hand information from them. The overall length of the study was somewhat affected due to changes that researcher was forced to make due to covid-19. This study was initially planned to be an ethnographic type of research where data would have been collected by adopting participatory research designs such as focus group discussion, observation, participant-observation, recall, interviews among others. In effect, changes had to be made with regards to the introductory chapter, context chapter whereas some sections such as methodology had to entirely rewritten. The use of the theories adopted was also reconsidered especially childhood theory. Hence, one can identify that analysis and discussions of data was mainly influenced by the critical disability theory even though both childhood and labeling theories were not entirely neglected.

With methodology, the study adopted mainly secondary data from different sources online. Therefore, findings and analysis can be affected by these sources since the researcher of this study did not have absolute control or direct influence in the determination of methodology and shaping of research questions and other questionnaires that authors of these secondary data adopted.

### **3.10 Ethical Consideration**

Institutional ethical approval was not obtained for the data collection of this study as it solely relied on publicly accessible documents to generate data. However, reviews of the works of other authors and researchers as used in this study was properly and ethically done. Quality and credible data was obtained as the researcher thoroughly reviewed all other relevant documents. All articles, reports, documents and publications used in this study were properly cited in-text and further added to the reference list to provide easy access for readers and users of this study. Although secondary data was the main source of information and analysis, conscious efforts were put in place to prevent the recording of secondary data that were not deemed very relevant for the progress of this study.



### **3.11 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the concepts and theories that the study adopted. The theories and concepts discussed were the childhood studies theory, the critical disability theory and the labelling theory. The researcher also listed some previous literatures that have been written similarly about the topic being examined with which all but one was used extensively in the analysis and discussions section. The researcher further discussed the research design adopted in this study as well as the methods and the types of data that was used and analyzed in this study. The chapter was concluded by discussing the limitations that this study faced and also the ethical consideration of the study.

## **4 Chapter Four – Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The theories, concepts, research methods and designs that aided in the findings and analysis of the secondary data retrieved for this study have already been discussed in chapter three. Henceforth, this chapter presents the findings and analysis of the secondary data retrieved. First off, this chapter presents some socio-cultural and religious perspectives that people have about PWDs and specifically children with disabilities from the various sources mentioned in the previous chapter. The researcher then captures in this chapter, how these socio-cultural and religious perspectives about PWDs influence how people generally relate with them both in schools and the community.

This chapter further discusses briefly discusses the educational structure of Ghana as well as a brief history of education for children with disabilities. The chapter also discusses Ghana's Inclusive Education Policy and presented some statistics of educational enrollment in Ghana including that of disability inclusive education. Finally presented in this chapter is the possible reasons behind the data presented on disability education in Ghana.

### **4.2 Socio-cultural beliefs and perspectives about children with disabilities**

In 2012, Kassah et al. revealed in their research work titled 'abuse of disabled children in Ghana' that, the abuse of children with disabilities in Ghana can be categorized into four; social, capital, physical and emotional abuse. Social abuse in the form of isolation, neglect, restriction of movement and not been allowed to participate in social life. Capital abuse by killing of children with disabilities. Physical abuse through the incursion of physical assaults to children with disabilities and lastly emotional abuse as a result of psychological pain and trauma that children with disabilities experience because of the various forms of abuses they suffer. Mawutor Avoke (2002) in his study 'Models of Disability in the Labelling and Attitudinal Discourse in Ghana' revealed that, attitudes towards PWDs both in the past and present are influenced by various superstitious beliefs which fuels stereotypes and labels such as 'witches, children of the sea or any river' among others.

Reynolds' study in 2010 titled 'Disability culture in West Africa: Qualitative Research Indicating Barriers and Progress in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana' also revealed some interesting findings. According to this study, the most discussed form of disability was physical and sensory disabilities with only one informant mentioning mental disorder as a form of disability. Also, according to Reynolds (2010), in some families, children with disabilities are considered to be extra burdens as children are generally expected to grow up to become responsible beings who would have the capacity to take care of themselves and other members of the family but unfortunately, children with disabilities are not considered to be capable by some families.

A video reportage posted on youtube on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2018 by CityTV, a Ghanaian television media, made some profounding revelations about some of the experiences of

PWDs in Ghana. In this video, the president of Centre for Employment of Persons with Disabilities, Ghana (CEPDGhana) discloses that some parents who gives birth to children with cerebral palsy resort to poisoning their children after birth. Nevertheless, traditional views about children with disabilities being born purposely for the atonement of sins are gradually fading away amongst Ghanaians as a result of urbanization and also due to the introduction of Christianity and western influence (Avoke, 2002). However, children born with learning difficult are still being labelled among various communities in Ghana. For instance, the Akan (the most dominant tribal group) label people with learning difficulties as 'Nea wanyin agya n'adwen' which translates as 'the one who has outgrown his/her other brain'; Ewes also refer to them as 'Asovi' which means a fool or an idiot, with the Ga people also simply labelling them as 'buluu' which translates as 'fool' (Aovke, 2002).

### **4.3 Religious beliefs and perspectives about children with disabilities**

Children with disabilities all over the world encounter a lot of challenges growing up and trying to fit into society. This is not different from children with disabilities in Ghana as Priestley (2001) revealed in Kassah et al. (2012) that children with disabilities particularly in developing countries encounter various abusive practices that threaten their existence. Attafuah (2000) in Kassah et al. (2012) revealed that in some communities in Ghana, children with disabilities are often killed or ritualistically taken back to the world of their ancestors as others are also left by the river side or left at the foot of anthills and under big tress with the belief that deities from which they came from will come and take them back to the ancestral world. Avoke (2001) in Opoku-Boadi (2015) highlighted this by revealing that, most traditionalist in the past believed that children who are born with disabilities have only one purpose, thus, to atone for the sins of their lives. As a result, many parents and community members place no value in educating such children which renders them unskilled or unqualified for employment.

On 28<sup>th</sup> July 2015, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news reported some of the cruel and inhumane acts that people with disabilities in Ghana both children and adults go through as a result of their disability status. This was a report made by a BBC presenter by name Sophie Morgan with the headline 'The country where disabled people are beaten and chained'. This report was done based on ethnographic research principles after the said reporter travelled to Ghana to witness what PWDs in Ghana go through and also interact with some of them. Sophie reported that, for some people in Ghana, disability was not considered to be a physical or mental impairment but rather a spiritual sickness or curse that could only be cured through prayer, confinement or by physical violence. Sophie further reported that, being a person with disability who is also uneducated makes it more challenging to survive. This was evident when Beatrice, a Ghanaian woman who has polio but sits beside the road to sell oranges daily in order to make a living is often neglected by buyers who prefer to buy from other vendors that has no disability. According to the report, Beatrice suffers this discriminatory attitude because the people perceive that they might be infected by polio if they establish contacts with Beatrice. Sophie also reports that in a Muslim spiritual camp, 'medicine' was put on the eyes of a girl child who suffers from epilepsy with the idea that, she is cursed and therefore needs to be healed spiritually. Lastly, from the same spiritual camp, Sophie reported that, people with mental or physical disabilities were put in shackles accompanied with beating, starvation and other forms of abuses which were all believed to be part of their treatment.

Similar to the report by Sophie Morgan, Human Rights Watch (HRW), an international non-governmental organization that conducts research and provides advocacy for human rights which has its headquarters in New York City made some revelations in 2012 about some of the treatments people with mental disabilities in Ghana experience in a headlined report 'Ghana: People With Mental Disabilities Face Serious Abuse'. In the report, HWR reveals that thousands of people who has mental disabilities are forced against their will to be admitted into psychiatric hospitals either government or private including religious camps. These camps are often termed as 'prayer camps' and that some PWDs are chained to trees in the various prayers camps across the country with attempts by self-proclaimed men and women of God who claims to have the power to cure mental disabilities through prayers and consulting angels.

According to this report by the HWR (2012), Ghana's 2012 Mental Health Act permits people with mental disabilities to challenge their detention in psychiatric hospitals but fails to include centers such as prayer camps. Hence, families can easily force and detain any member of the family who has a mental disability at a prayer camp against the person's will and ends up facing lots of inhumane acts all in the name of spiritual healing.

According to Reynolds (2010) as revealed by some of her informants, a section of people associate disability with some form of superstition with the believe that disability may be caused by a spiritual problem and should therefore be immediately cured spiritually by a 'medicine man' which ironically is always never the case. Further, negative views about PWDs especially those relating to spiritual beliefs and taboos tend to affect the family as a whole both in productivity and social stigma as they there are always fears of giving birth to similar children in the future. This pressure from some family members and community forces some parents to regret having children with disabilities and therefore end up not showing the same level of care and love they show to their abled children.

## **4.4 How people relate with PWDs**

Socio-cultural and religious perspectives and beliefs about PWDs as revealed earlier in this chapter have tend to influence how people relate with PWDs in their daily activities. Nonetheless, this study only focuses on people's relations with PWDs in schools, community and their access to public buildings as well as their chances of getting employment opportunities.

### **4.4.1 Community and public places**

Baffoe (2013) made some revelations regarding how people interact with PWDs in his study titled 'Stigma, Discrimination & Marginalization: Gateways to Oppression of Persons with Disabilities in Ghana, West Africa'. Some participants in Baffoe's study especially those with disabilities revealed that, they are often disturbed by the constant labels and stigmas that are attached with disabilities in some Ghanaian communities. Thus, people refer to some PWDs as imbeciles, sick people, dumb among others. These labels end up creating invisible barriers for PWDs as they pursue community involvement and community resources for a better life (Goreczny et. Al 2011 in Baffoe 2013). Another participant in Baffoe (2013) emphasized how PWDs feel oppressed as a result of some existing societal barriers such as getting access to commercial transport because there are no proper means to get them on the busses.

Some participants in Reynolds (2010) also revealed that, a section of people wrongly consider disability as a contagious disease which can be contracted either physically or spiritually and that a person might end up giving birth to a child with disability if they come into contact with a PWD. Henceforth, people with this mindset may decide not to mingle with PWDs in any form so they do not contract disabilities as they claim.

Also, in the reportage by CityTv (2018), a lady revealed her encounter with some workers of a local Ghanaian airline because of her disability status. She said as quoted below

*"when it was time for me to board the plane, a lady told me I can't send my crutches inside the plane because the aircraft was too small. I told her I am a person with disability so I can't leave my crutches behind. My other colleagues joined in and told them they should allow me so that they will aid me to my seat. They will take my crutches and put it wherever they want so after landing they will give it to me. But they said that there is no way they can get me onboard"*

In as much the flight attendants or employees might have been working according to the company's rules, the existence of some systematic discriminations against PWDs cannot be overlooked as the lady in this case was clearly denied boarding the flight because of her disability status which in every sense is very disturbing.

What is even more troubling according to this same report by CityTV is that the parliament of Ghana who is tasked to pass laws that may aid in protecting the rights of all was recently accused of also discriminating against some PWDs in parliament. Thus, according to the president of Centre for Employment of Persons with Disabilities, Ghana (CEPDGhana) who has a mobility impairment, was denied entry into the parliament house. He states that, him together with another person whose form of disability wasn't disclosed wanted to go to the public gallery in the parliament house, which is often open for the general public to observe the proceedings. However, they were sadly denied entry by two security men who were not in their uniform, on account that they may not be able to rise because of their mobility impairment when the speaker of parliament enters the house, which is a ritual that is performed when the speaker enters the house. The president of CEPDGhana further lamented as quoted below

*"so if parliament pass a law that, nobody should discriminate against anybody on the grounds of a disability and they themselves are discriminating against us on the grounds of our disability, then it is a huge matter. It means that the laws we pass don't hold water...don't work, because even look at the moratorium, 10 years has passed and parliament has not made a statement, no enforcement, no monitoring to check whether..., okay we said 10 years all buildings should be made accessible. You know why?...because parliament itself is not accessible"*

However, this concerns raised by the president of CEPDGhana reaffirms a very important point made by Baffoe (2013) that, accessing both government and private offices in Ghana by PWDs is almost impossible because, most of these buildings are not well equipped with elevators or designed in a disability-friendly manner that could aid the movements of PWDs especially the physically challenged.

The president CEPDGhana also disclosed to the CityTv reporter that, just 10 percent of their members are employed and that a larger percentage of them are in the informal sector, while the rest are left to fend for themselves as street beggars.

## **4.5 Education in Ghana**

The main institution assigned by the Government of Ghana for the inception of educational policies is the Ministry of Education (MoE). However, the Ghana Education Service (GES) is the institution that takes charge of the implementation of approved national pre-tertiary educational policies and programs. This includes pre-primary, primary, junior high school and senior high school education. Education is very important in the general development and growth of every individual as emphasized by UNICEF (2018) that every child has the right to learn. To not leave any child behind, the government of Ghana introduced the free secondary education policy in 2017. It must be noted that pre-primary education up to junior high school was already free in Ghana, henceforth, the inception of the free secondary education in 2017 meant that, education has been made free for every child up to senior high school. Thus, only tertiary education is yet to be made free in Ghana.

With the inception of the free secondary education policy, World Education News + Reviews (WENR, 2019), reports that, Ghana's Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) in secondary education elevated from 57 percent in 2012 to 73 percent in 2017. This shows that a greater percentage of children in Ghana receive at least both elementary and secondary education.

## **4.6 Brief history of education for children with disabilities in Ghana**

The early christian missionaries that went to Ghana were the first to establish special education for children with disabilities in Ghana between 1936 and 1956, as they only focused on providing education for children with blindness and deafness (Ametepee & Anastasiou 2015). Nonetheless, the establishment of the school system for children with learning difficulties was not associated with the missionaries as it was in the case of special schools for the blind and deaf (Avoke 2001). Partial responsibility of education for children with disabilities by the government of Ghana only happened after Ghana gained independence 1957. Thus, the government of Ghana took full responsibility of providing education for children with disabilities after the passage of the Educational Act of 1961 (Ametepee and Anastasiou 2015). With the establishment of the special schools, children with disabilities were put in separate schools that were mainly made to provide education for only children with disabilities. Thus, there was no interaction between children in regular schools and children in special schools.

This practice continued until a change occurred in the 1980s after constant criticisms towards establishment of separate schools for children with disabilities and those without disabilities (Ametepee and Anastasiou 2015). Arguments were raised in the sense that, putting children with disabilities in separate isolated schools would end up making it very difficult to integrate them into the society after completing their education in the special schools. This led to the inception of a new system called the integrated system (Ametepee and Anastasiou 2015). This meant that, children with and without disabilities were both educated within the same establishment. The integrated system as at that time focused on the establishment of two-unit schools specifically for children with intellectual disabilities. Operating a unit school means establishing two or three classrooms attached to regular schools to provide special education for small groups of children with disabilities (Anson-Yevu, 1988; Ghana Education Service, 2008 in Ametepee and Anastasiou 2015).

Furthermore, there has been much emphasis on the successful implementation and practice of inclusive education system up from the 1990s to the present-day Ghana. This led to the development of an Inclusive education policy in 2013 which lays out a proper structure for an effective implementation of inclusive education in Ghana. The inclusive education policy was further elaborated later in this chapter.

## 4.7 Inclusive Education Policy in Ghana

The Ghana Inclusive Education Policy was developed by the country's Ministry of Education supported by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), STAR Ghana and the Ghana Blind Union in 2013 and is considered as a legally binding policy. In agreement with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACRWC, 1990), the Inclusive Education Policy is based on the belief that every child has the right to education and that learners have varied learning needs and therefore requires all the stakeholders in the educational sector to address these varying needs of learners. Education as stated by the 1992 Constitution of Ghana highlighted the need to make basic education free and compulsory for every Ghanaian of school going age by the year 2005. This goal was not totally achieved by the end of 2005 as learners with disabilities were not dully catered for although they formed a high proportion of out-of-school population (Ghana MoE, 2015). To ensure that this goal of full enrolment into schools were achieved with reference to inclusive and special education, one goal of the Ghana Government's Education Strategic Plan 2010-20 is to "Provide education for excluded children (including those who are physically and/or mentally impaired or disabled, slow/fast learners, orphans, young mothers, street children, those from deprived areas, slum children, poverty victims) by including them, wherever possible, within the mainstream formal system or, only when considered necessary, within special units or schools" ( MoE, 2012 ESP, pp 26).

The main goal of the Inclusive Education policy is to reshape the delivery and management of the educational service to adequately deal with the varying needs of all learners within the framework of Universal Design for Learning and Child Friendly School Concept (MoE, 2015). Henceforth, the policy does not only focus on the inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream formal school system but also includes others learners with special needs such as street children, children exploited for financial purposes, talented persons, nomadic children and others. There are four major objectives of the Inclusive Education Policy which are;

- *Improve and adapt education and related systems and structures to ensure the inclusion of all learners particularly learners with special educational needs.*
- *Promote a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) or learner friendly school environment for enhancing the quality of education for all learners.*
- *Promote the development of a well-informed and trained human resource cadre for the quality delivery of IE throughout Ghana.*
- *Ensure sustainability of Inclusive Education Implementation.*

The main institution tasked to ensure an effective implementation of IE Policy is the Ministry of Education (MoE). However, the MoE will collaborate with other relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies including the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) to ensure a thorough implementation and monitoring of the policy.

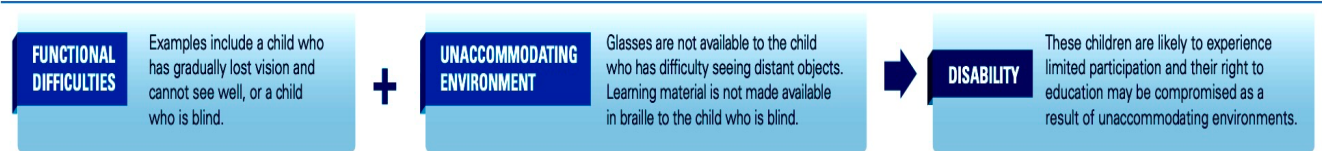
One of the key things to consider for a successful implementation is to design the curriculum in a way that embodies and take into account the diverse needs of learners including those with special needs. Teachers will be trained in ways that will enhance their teaching skills and to modify their teaching methodologies in ways that promotes inclusive education in the classroom without leaving any student behind.

For effective assessment, the IE policy advocates for the adoption for both the formative and summative types of assessment. Henceforth, the policy compels every child in primary school to be assessed twice a year with assessment results being made available to parents who will be given the chance to review the results. Periodic screening will be conducted to refer students who may need extra help. Lastly, different forms of examination procedures shall be adopted to suit every student’s needs; for example, adding extra examination time, offering special assistance in a form of sign language, scribes, readers and others.

### 4.8 Brief statistics of educational enrollment in Ghana for children with disabilities

For the purpose of this study, it was very important for the researcher to lay bare some statistical findings with regards to the total school enrollment of children with and without disabilities in Ghana. The data below was retrieved from the 2020 MICS-EAGLE Ghana Education Fact Sheets. MICS means Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and was established by UNICEF in 1995 with the mission of monitoring the status of children around the world. Disability is defined by 2020 MICS-EAGLE Ghana Education Fact Sheets as;

**Figure 7: Definition of Disability**



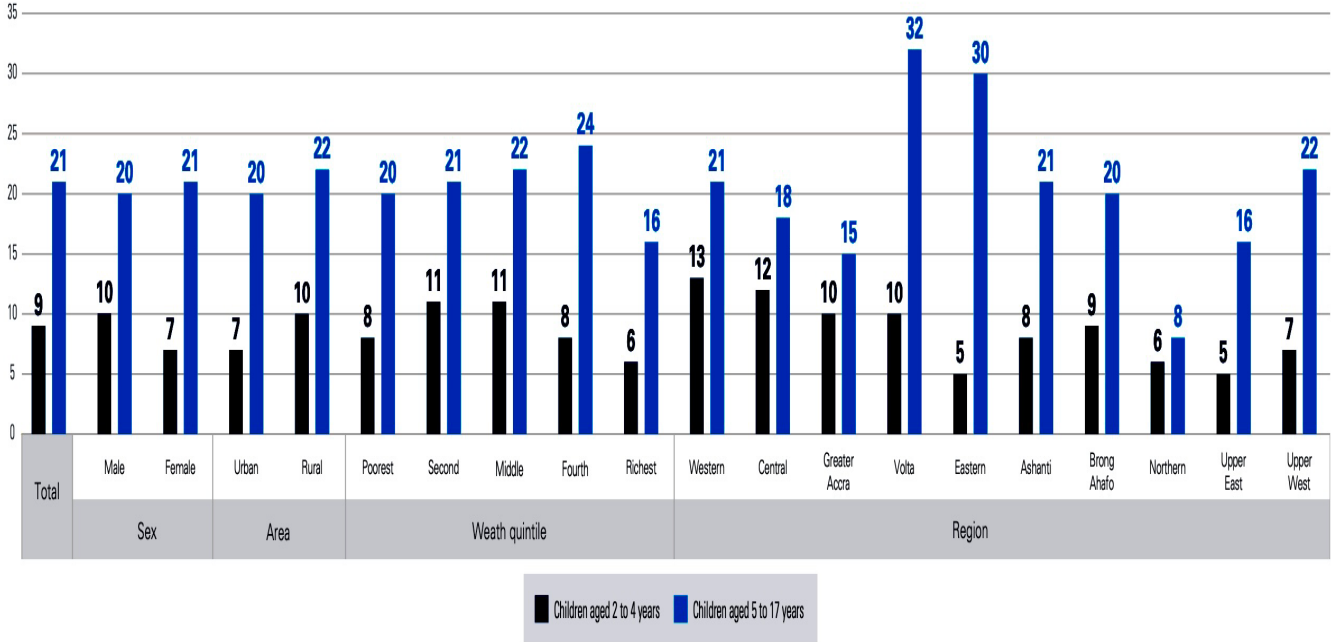
**Source: Ghana Education fact sheets 2020**

Functional difficulty in fig 2.0 embodies various forms of disability associated with a person and that may include vision, hearing, cognitive, self-care, communication mobility and others.



### 4.8.1 Disability-inclusive education

Figure 8: Prevalence of functional difficulties among children aged 2 to 17 years

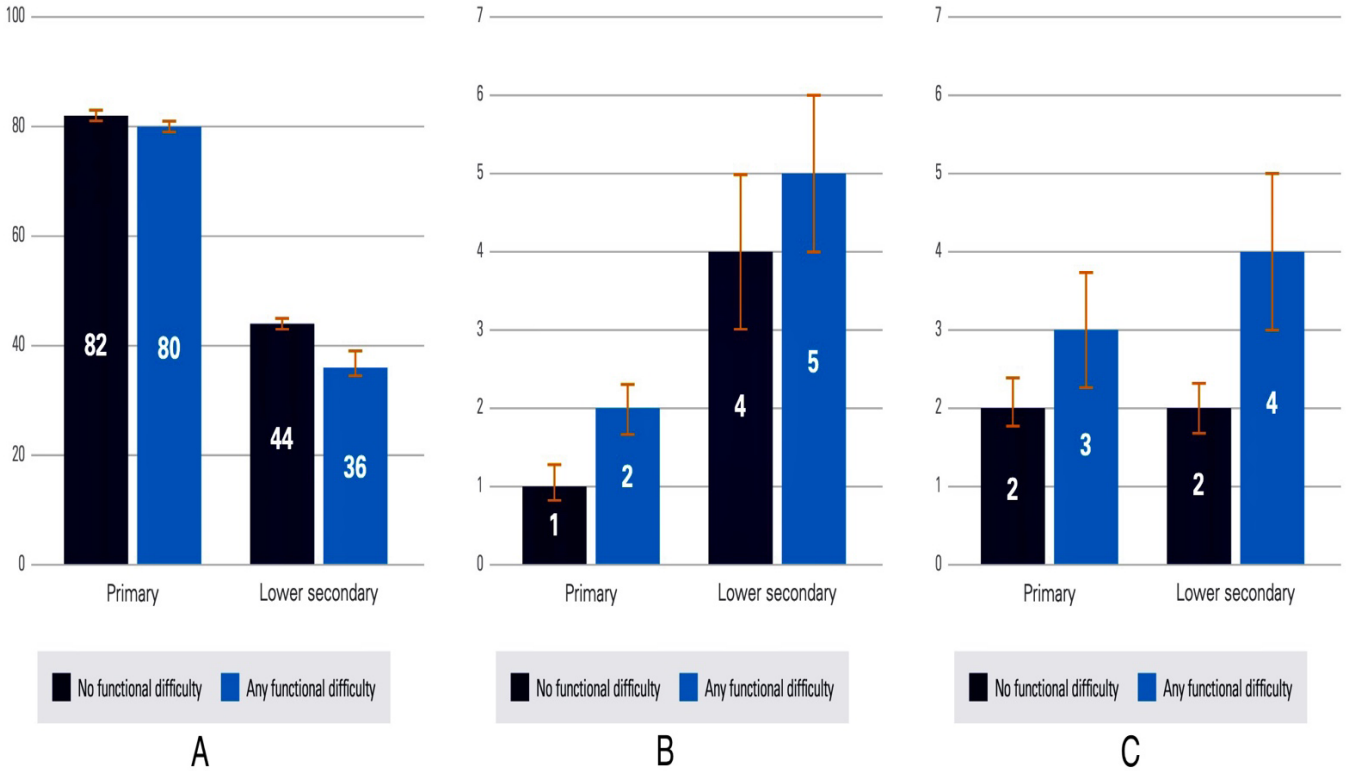


Source: Ghana Education fact sheets 2020

From the fig. 3.0, it can clearly be seen that children aged of 5 to 17 have a higher percentage of functional disability with a percentage of 21 as compared to that of children with ages between 2 and 4 who has a percentage of 9. This suggests that the total number of disabilities in a particular community increases with time. Thus, the more people grow, the more they become prone to acquiring a certain form of disability through various forms such as accidents, sickness and even through extensive medical checkup. Also, the functional disability among males aged 2 to 4 is 3 percent higher than that of female children with the same age bracket. However, functional disability of female children aged 5 to 17 is just 1 percent higher than that of male children with 21 percent and 20 percent respectively. It can therefore be argued that in as much as the total number of disabilities among male children increases as they grow, disabilities among female children increase at a very high increasing rate and must therefore looked at

One of key areas to focus on is the differences between the poor and the rich. The functional difficulties among children from poor households is higher than children from rich households. With children from poor households aged 2 to 4 having a percentage of 8 as against 6 percent of those from rich households. Same is evident among children from poor households aged 5 to 17 having a percentage of 20 as against that 16 percent for those from rich households. Unfortunately, the sheet did not provide extensive reasons as to why these differences were reported. Lastly, the Volta and the Eastern has the highest percentages of children with functional disability as to compared to that of the other eight regions. This should be a major concern for authorities who are tasked by government to look into such matters for solutions to found.

**Figure 9: Attendance Rate**



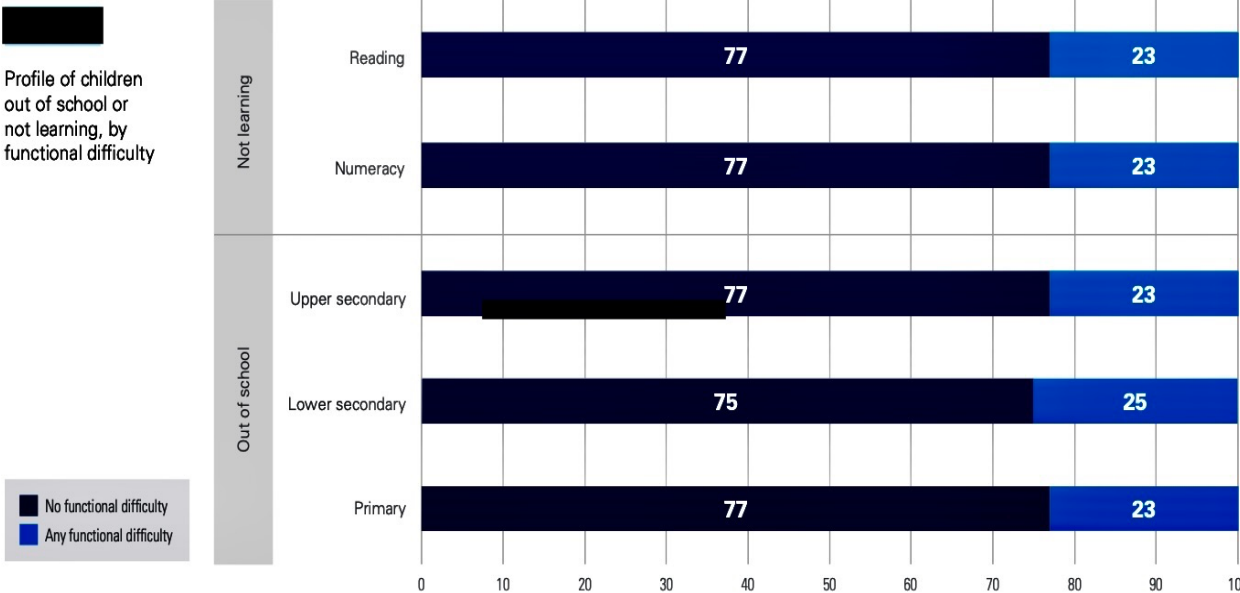
**Source: Ghana Education fact sheets 2020**

- A – the adjusted net attendance rates by functional difficulty status
- B – Dropout rate by functional difficulty status
- C – Repetition rates by functional difficulty status

From A, it can be noticed that the adjusted net attendance rate among children with no functional difficulty is higher than that of children who have any form of functional difficulty. Thus, children who does not have any form of disability attend classes more often than children who has any form of disability both in the primary school level and the junior high school level. This may be due to some socio-cultural and religious perspectives about children with disabilities which is extensively analyzed and discussed both in the findings as well as the discussions chapter. Further, the number of school children who drop out of school (B) both at the primary and junior high school level is higher among children with any form of disability as compared to children without any form of disability, same is true for the repetition rates between these two groups of children as recorded by C.

### 4.8.2 Profile of children who are out of school or not learning, by functional difficulty

Figure 10: Dropout Rate



Source: Ghana Education fact sheets 2020

Fig 4.0 discloses that, among children who are out of school or in other words not enrolled in schools being primary, junior high school and senior high, those with any form of functional disability represents 23, 25 and 23 percent respectively. This representation is quite alarming considering the fact that the remaining percentage of other children who are not enrolled in schools consist of all other reasons excluding disabilities. Thus, children with functional difficulties have the relatively highest representation among children who are out of school. According to the 2020 MICS-EAGLE Ghana Education Fact Sheets, approximately 21 percent of Ghanaian children have a functional difficulty which includes any form of disability that has been discussed in this study. As a result, children who are deprived of reading and numeracy education due to non-enrollment in schools is represented by 23 percent of children with functional difficulties.

### 4.9 Possible reasons for the alarming educational data among children with disabilities

All the data above provided a clear representation of how children with disabilities fare in an inclusive education setting. However, there is the need to find out what could be the actual reasons why children with disabilities seem to find it difficult to strive successfully in an inclusive education setting in Ghana.

Some participants in Reynolds (2010) revealed that, they think it is very difficult to add children with disabilities, especially those with intellectual disabilities, to a regular class because they would scare the other children who do not have any form of a disability.

Hence, these participants suggested that they should educate them in separate schools for a period of time before they gradually integrate them into the society. This act deters some parents from enrolling their children especially those with intellectual disabilities into regular schools because they would want their children to be ridiculed in schools and in the community as well.

Further, some parents of children without disabilities threaten to remove their children from schools that allow children with disabilities to be added to regular classrooms and that some students even deliberately decide not to associate with students with disabilities because of they are believe spirits are the causes of disabilities (Gadagbui 2010 in Ametepee and Anastasiou 2015). According to Ametepee and Anastasiou (2015), Ghana's Ministry of Education emphasized this in 2008 by stating that, even some teachers in mainstream schools do not pay much attention to children with disabilities because of the fear of being hunted by spirits they believe cause disabilities.

Whereas there are special schools in Ghana to cater for children with disabilities, their enrolment number is relatively too small to admit every student with disabilities, hence, the need for an effective inclusive education (Anthony, 2011; Opoku, 2016 in Opoku et al., 2017). As a result, the rights to education for children with disabilities end up being systematically violated if they are unable to access immediate regular schools in their communities due to other factors that have been discussed under this section. One major concern that was pointed out by Opoku et al. (2017) is the lack of proper teaching and learning materials for teachers and students with disabilities. This makes it extremely difficult for teachers to administer proper care and training to students with disabilities because of the lack of proper materials. Opoku et al. (2017) further raised that, there is very limited number of resource teachers who are trained to provide professional support to classroom teachers in regular to and so are unable to reach out many schools.

The physical environment of most regular basic, junior high and senior high school in Ghana are very unfriendly and conducive for students with disabilities (Gregorius, 2016; Ocloo & Subbey, 2008; Opoku et al., 2015, 2016 in Opoku et al. 2017). This makes it very difficult for students with disabilities especially those with physical disabilities to access regular schools because they would have to be assisted by someone. Thus, without a consistent financial assistance from the government, it is almost impossible for regular schools to provide proper training for students with disabilities.

It is extremely difficult for educated persons with disabilities to find jobs in Ghana because their job applications are often turned by employers because of their disability status. This was also revealed by some participants in Reynolds (2010) as they complained that their mates they graduated with but have a disability find it extremely difficult to getting employed after school although they were very good students. They added that this happens because people do not see their worth and that all they are best suited for it to beg for alms on the streets. In the reportage by CityTv (2018), a former blind student who graduated from the University of Ghana and works as a radio presenter as at the time of the reportage shared his story of job hunting after graduating school. He recounted that he was turned by a radio station on the claim that he would be unable to operate the studio equipment because he is blind, even though he assured them that he was very capable for the work if given the opportunity. Lastly, some employers also consider employing persons with disabilities as inviting bad luck into the business and therefore opt against offering them employment opportunities (Oliver & Barnes 1998 in Opoku-Boadi 2015).

These and many other socio-cultural and religious perspectives about people with disabilities in general often impede the successful integration of children with disabilities

into regular schools especially in smaller communities. Integration of children with disabilities into regular schools may be the most challenging when people within the community and to an extent their peers in school consider them as fools and good for nothing.

## **4.10 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter sought to answer the two research questions of this study by exploring some socio-cultural perspectives about people with disabilities in Ghana. The perspectives were grouped under two separate sections as 'socio-cultural beliefs and perspective' and 'religious beliefs and perspectives'. Findings of these perspectives provided some insightful reasons why some choose have a certain of relationship with children with disabilities. Statistics of the educational enrollment of children with disabilities into regular schools also helped to reveal data that gives a clear picture about in success and effectiveness of the inclusive education policy for further analysis. Information was gathered from various sources such as online and television reportages, previous literatures as well reports from various websites of internal organizations. The chapter concluded by exploring some of the reasons that could deny educational development of children with disabilities in Ghana.

## **5 Chapter five – Discussions**

### **5.1 Introduction**

A lot of data were recorded in chapter four through various sources. Socio-cultural and religious perspectives about children with disabilities in Ghana have been captured in chapter four. Information as to how people's relationship with children and adults with disabilities can be influenced by these perspectives have also been recorded in chapter four. Some educational statistics of children with disabilities were further capture in chapter four. This prepares the researcher to extensively discuss the various findings that were provided. The first topic discussed in this chapter is of disability has been consciously and unconsciously been made to become an individual's problem. Followed by that was a discussion on the media's role in the shaping and construction of disability in Ghana.

The exclusivity nature of Ghana's Inclusive Education policy was further discussed in this chapter. This was accompanied by a discussion of some factors that are regarded to be some of the major barriers that hinder the effective and successful implementation of the policy which includes attitudinal barriers, physical barriers, untrained teachers and lack of proper teaching and learning materials, policies barriers, inappropriate curriculum and lastly inadequate funding.

### **5.2 Individualistic nature of disability**

In as much there seem to be a strong inter-personal relations and togetherness among people in various communities in Ghana, especially in terms of children upbringing where almost everyone in the community has a traditional responsibility to ensure the safety and development of children, there seem to be disconnection and disparity when children with disabilities are involved. This in many cases is due to how children with disabilities are given negative labels that makes some people uncomfortable to encounter children with disabilities. This is evident in the revelations that were made by researchers that have earlier been recorded in this study where children with disabilities were reported to have been tagged with labels such as children of the sea, spiritual children or witches as revealed by Avoke (2002). Further, disability among children is sometimes wrongly constructed as a burden to the family since in the Ghanaian setting especially in rural Ghanaian households, children are expected to contribute to the to the daily domestic activities of the family. This may include chores such as fetching of water, assisting in the kitchen, taking care of younger siblings and to an extent, contributing in the family's business. Henceforth, if children are born with a physical disability, they may end up being considered as burden to the family which could lead a total neglect or isolation from their parents as they may shift their focus to the other children they do not have a disability as termed by Kassah et al. (2012) as social abuse.

This neglection or isolation of children with disabilities by any parent may also be as a result of lack of trust in the growth and development of children that have a disability. As revealed by Reynolds (2010) earlier in this chapter, in most families in Ghana, high hopes are placed on children and are therefore expected to grow up to become responsible

citizens and members of the family. However, the negative connotations that often said about children with disabilities means that, they may end up not been considered to have the capacity or agency to positively influence their lives and that of their families. Agency and voice under the childhood studies theory and critical disability theory respectively both advocates for children's voices to be heard and valued as children are believed to have the capacity to influence and be involved in decisions that affects them.

Mental Health America (MHA, 2022) elaborated on the necessary actions that can contribute immensely to the mental development of children. Some of these actions include showing children unconditional love, boosting their self-esteem and confidence, giving children the opportunity to play with other children and by providing children the appropriate guidance and discipline. However, socially abusing children with disabilities through isolation and neglect in some communities and families may lead to another form of abuse that Kassah et al. (2012) termed as emotional abuse. Emotionally abusing children with disabilities can be very threatening to their mental health or psychological development and may go a long way to influence how they interact with the world.

### **5.3 Media**

Often times, the kind of image the media portrays about people with disabilities in general ends up victimizing them or undermining their value as people. The languages and labels that portrays disability in the media has direct or indirect influence on both children with disabilities and children without disabilities. This may include how disability roles or characters are portrayed in movies. Images, videos, movies, written news articles or stories and all other forms of media that portray disability as pity, inability, unable to be cared for, unable to adjust, lack of agency among others can adversely affect the self-esteem of children with disabilities as emphasized by Worrel (2018). How disability is portrayed in the media especially in movie and videos can shape how children without disabilities may react towards children with disabilities in regular schools as children are generally influenced by what they see.

Generally, one of the major problems faced by PWDs in the media space is the magnitude of their voice as discussed under CDT as the second element in chapter three. Voice in this sense can be expanded to be how PWDs are represented in the media. In other words, are they well represented in the critical spaces in media where they can duly have their voices and concerns amplified enough for it to be considered by policy makers?

To check and properly monitor how the media portrays children with disabilities, these additional questions below are needed to be asked by the right authorities;

- Are they being portrayed as beggars?
- victims, uneducated, uncivilized, incapable, helpless among others in movies, television reportages and documentaries and also on social media?
- Are news agencies reporting enough stories about children disabilities or they do not focus on children with disabilities at all?
- Even if the media reports about children with disabilities, do their reportages or documentaries throw more positive lights on children with disabilities or they often focus on the negatives?

## **5.4 Exclusive nature of the Inclusive Education Policy**

Ghana's Inclusive Education Policy as discussed earlier in chapter four aims at initiating all children of relatively every background into the mainstream formal school system. For the purpose of this study, the inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream formal school system or regular schools will be considered. In as much as the government of Ghana's quest to make education easily accessible to every child, irrespective of their background is very commendable, it is also evident that its effective and successful implementation has been quite challenging. The policy is highly based on the spirit of inclusiveness, however several barriers that exist in regular schools end up making the policy rely more on exclusiveness. Some of these barriers are further elaborated in this chapter.

### **5.4.1 Attitudinal barriers**

Attitudes and reactions towards students with disabilities have adverse effect on their educational development and successes. As reported in chapter four, attitudes towards students with disabilities by students and teachers should be taken in account. This is because, often times students with disabilities are unfairly met with ridicules and ostracism in schools (Cachero, 2015). What is more worrying is the fact that some teachers even deliberately decide not to pay much attention to students with disabilities due to some primitive ideas and beliefs they have about disabilities as revealed by Reynolds later in chapter four of this study (2010).

Are other students being cringey towards them basically because of the negative orientation they have been given from home or those they have picked from the society concerning people with disability? Is the type of images and labels or languages the media describes children with disability influencing the behavior of the other school children? Why are even some teachers refusing to adequately involve students with disabilities in their activities? These are all notable questions that needed to be considered to aid the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy as well as other disability related policies.

It must however be established that, negatively constructing disability as inability and also portraying and labeling them with several inhumane stereotypical names may go a long way to influence how successful or unsuccessful their inclusion into regular schools may be.

### **5.4.2 Physical barriers**

It must be acknowledged that, the quest to enroll children with disabilities into regular schools may come at a higher cost for the government. This is because every regular school that agrees to implement this policy would have to be reconstructed or renovated to become more disability-friendly for easy integration. The second, principle of social model of disability under the critical disability theory discussed earlier in this study emphasizes that disability is a composite of interrelationship between impairment, an individual's reaction to impairment and their interaction with the social environment. The third principle of CDT also explains that children with disabilities face social disadvantages due to the failure of the physical, institutional and attitudinal environment. This means that, school



life would be very uncomfortable and unpleasant for children with disabilities who are admitted into regular schools that do not have proper physical structures that can duly accommodate them.

Accordingly, Hosking (2008) argued through the fourth element of critical disability theory (valuing diversity) that, there is the need to recognize the differences that exist between PWDs and people without disabilities. Failure to recognize and admit differences that exist could lead to introducing policies that may not achieve its primary objective. This problem was highlighted by Opoku et al. (2017), as discussed earlier in chapter four, where participants raised concerns that the physical environment of schools are literally inaccessible to students with disabilities because they were initially not built with children with disabilities in focus.

### **5.4.3 Untrained teachers and lack of teaching and learning materials**

Teachers play a very important role in the implementation of inclusive education. Therefore, their knowledge and insight about the policy and its objectives should always be prioritized. However, their main role as teachers in the classroom seem to be the most sensitive aspect when a country or community decides to practice inclusive education involving children with disabilities. Value diversity as argued by the critical disability theory proposes that, to practice an effective inclusive education system, policy makers should not neglect the fact that there are some differences between children with disabilities and those without disabilities especially in relation to their academic needs and assistance. Thus, recognizing the difference existing and providing the needed teaching and learning materials to assist both the teacher and the learner.

Multidimensionality under CDT further expands these teaching and learning materials. It argues that, putting all children with disabilities into one group and treating their needs as equal may be a major barrier for an effective implementation of inclusive education. Thus, considering the individual needs of children with disabilities and providing them what they at the appropriate time. In contrast, Opoku et al. (2017) revealed the worries of some classroom teachers and headmasters in relation to the supply of disability related teaching and learning materials. Some participants complained that they have received absolutely no materials that are designed purposely for the teaching of students with disabilities. This will delay the academic progress of students with disabilities as compared to those without disabilities in relation to academic progress, total enrolment and school dropout statistics as reported in chapter four.

Also, the training and preparation of teachers is very key in the implementation of inclusive educational system. Classroom teachers who have continues direct contact with students in the classroom should never be overlooked. As revealed earlier in chapter four, some teachers pay less attention to students with disabilities as some opt to neglect them mostly due to certain socio-cultural and religious misconceptions. Opoku et al. (2017) again reveals that, a greater percentage of teachers in regular schools find it extremely difficult to educate and train students with disabilities because they have not received the required training to do so. An example of this is admitting deaf students into a regular class with a teacher who has not received any training on sign language. Notwithstanding, there aren't enough resource teachers to support and train classroom teachers to effectively educate and respond to the needs of students with disabilities (Opoku et al. 2017).

Cachero (2015) also argues that the high overreliance on standardized testing as well as other academic standards can deny teachers their ability to design more flexible and creative ways that can aid the teaching and learning of students with disabilities. Example of this in Ghana is both Junior High Schools (JHS) and Senior High Schools (SHS) teachers finding the shortest or fastest possible means to cover the curriculum so that their students can pass the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) which qualifies them into SHS and the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) which certifies their entry into tertiary institutions. In the haste to prepare students for these exams, teachers may be forced to neglect or pay less attention to students who need special attention and assistance which might end up affecting the educational development of such students may including those with disabilities.

### **5.3.4 Policies barriers**

How policies are initiated and implemented plays a major role in its effectiveness. The developing stage of any policy can also not be overlooked. Refusing to contact and seek information from major stakeholders in a particular sector or field before rolling out a policy can be a huge barrier to its successful implementation. Also, refusing to put deliberate effort to ensure the effective practice of existing laws particularly those concerning disabilities is also a major setback.

Multidimensionality element of CDT says that the different needs of children with disabilities should be highly considered when taking decisions or making policies that affects them. Thus, every child may require a unique equipment to aid their participation in a general classroom. However, revelations recorded earlier in this chapter clearly indicates, there are not even enough equipment provided by the government or authorities who oversees the implementation of the Inclusive education policy. Cachero (2015) argues that one of the major setbacks for the implementation of inclusive education is the presence of policy makers who do not possess deep knowledge of children with disabilities and the list of factors that affect students with disabilities. Thus, these policy makers end up rolling out policies without putting in place the right measures that would propel its effective implementation as it is in the case of Ghana where both teachers and students with disabilities lack the relevant teaching and learning materials in general schools.

### **5.3.5 Inappropriate curriculum**

For inclusive education to be effectively implemented, there is the need to structure the curriculum in various ways that may be able to accommodate the varying needs of every child. In contrast, curriculum for basic and senior high schools in Ghana are basically structured towards passing entrance exams into Senior High Schools and Junior High Schools and therefore does not meet the needs of broad range of diverse students. This indirectly deprives teachers the ability to be flexible to design creative ways that can benefit every student.

### **5.3.6 Inadequate funding**

Issues with funding is also a major setback in the effective implementation of inclusive education. After the introduction of free basic and secondary education policies in Ghana, government schools heavily rely on funds provided the government of Ghana. However, in Opoku et al. (2017) school administrators complained about the lack of funding especially in schools which includes those that have admitted some students with disabilities. It is important to note that, participants raised concerns about the delay in the releases of capitation grant (money released by government to all public schools to support administrative expenses).

As revealed earlier in this chapter, general schools that admits students with disabilities have to be designed in ways that can accommodate them as well as making available teaching and learning materials that enhances inclusive education practice. All these can highly be affected when there are persistent breaks in the provision of funds to general schools practicing inclusive education.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

After data have been retrieved concerning socio-cultural and religious perspectives about children with disabilities, extensive discussion of these findings was expected to be made and therefore, the need for a discussion chapter. Under this chapter, more highlights were thrown on the findings as to why such findings came about. Therefore, the individualistic nature of disabilities in Ghana were discussed where it was argued that children with disabilities are sometimes left to face the world alone by any means due to some socio-cultural and religious factors that influence the general community's relations with them.

The role the media play in the construction of disabilities as well as the socialization of children with disabilities in the society was also discussed. Lastly, some additional factors that hinder the progress of the inclusive education policy was discussed in this chapter. These factors or barriers discussed were attitudinal barriers, physical barriers, untrained teachers and lack of proper teaching and learning materials, policies barriers, inappropriate curriculum and lastly inadequate funding.

# **6 Chapter six – Recommendation and conclusion**

## **6.1 Recommendations**

In this sub-section, the study discusses some recommendations that is essential towards promoting the wellbeing, training and education of children with disabilities. The recommendations discussed include promoting public education and sensitization, improving infrastructure, provision of teaching and learning materials and training teachers, recognizing multidimensionality and value diversity, encouraging education for children with disabilities, introduction of transformative policies, promoting the rights of PWDs, giving relevant positions to deserving PWDs and giving them a voice.

### **6.1.1 Education and sensitization**

Several cases have been reported in this study concerning how children with disabilities are treated by their families, communities and in schools. Findings reported reveals that children with disabilities endure several negative treatments due to some socio-cultural and traditional beliefs that are attached to disabilities especially those that are acquired through birth. Some people also decide not to get too close to people with disabilities basically due to ignorance. Hence, it is very important to sensitize and educate people about disability in general and things that cause it. Education can be done in schools by training a good number of resource persons and deploying or assigning them to various regions to train both school administrators and classroom teachers on the various ways to assist and integrate children with disabilities into general schools and classrooms.

The department of social welfare and other relevant bodies can sensitize the general public through its sub-departments in the various Municipal, Metropolitan and District Assemblies (MMDAs). With about 216 MMDAs in Ghana (ghadmissionform, 2022), a greater percentage of people can be reached if general public education and sensitization is conducted. Churches and Mosques can also be an important target for this exercise. Targeting churches and mosques is very important because a greater percentage of Ghana are either Christians or Muslims as it was confirmed by the breakdown provided by Religious Freedom In The World's report (2021). This report reveals that about 72.6% of people in Ghana are Christians and about 18.1% are Muslims. Therefore, a greater percentage of people can be reached if pastors and Islamic heads are encouraged to teach and positively change people's negative perspectives towards children with disabilities.

Parent of children born with any form of disability should be encouraged to enroll their children into regular schools. This can be done convincing parents about benefits of educating all their children irrespective of their disability status. Parents should further be educated on some effective ways of providing care, love and assistance to their children. Parents should be educated about some medical causes of disability, so they don't desist from labelling with demeaning labels such as children of the river, spirit children among others as revealed earlier in this study.

Topics that can be highlighted to enlighten peoples perspectives about disabilities are the causes medical cause of disabilities, the need to educate children with disabilities, the effects of neglecting children with disabilities, communities and families role in integrating children with into the society among others. Lastly, one of the major topics that needs to be highlighted when educating and sensitizing the general public is the negative labels that people give to children with disabilities ignorantly without considering its psychological and emotional impacts on them.

### **6.1.2 Improving infrastructure, provision of teaching and learning materials and training teachers**

To effectively practice an inclusive education policy, the government of Ghana must acknowledge the fact that it may come with high cost and huge investment into the education sector. As reported earlier in this study, almost all regular basic and secondary schools were built years back without the focus of accommodating all students irrespective of their disability status. As a result, students with disabilities especially those with physical challenges find it difficult to access regular schools in their communities. Both teachers and students lack the requisite teaching and learning materials as reported earlier in this study probably due to the structure of the curriculum and examination targets set for teachers and students.

Government of Ghana through its designated institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service and other relevant bodies should consider the improvement of schools infrastructure an urgent course if objectives set out by the Inclusive Education policy is to be achieved. Proper teaching and learning materials should also be adequately and timely provided to both teachers and students. Lastly, the education and training of teachers on how to teach and assist students with disabilities should be prioritized by the various teacher training institution. This will help prepare teachers to provide the proper care and assistance to every student irrespective of their disability status. Nonetheless, improvement of infrastructure does not only refer to schools but also other public facilities that are routinely accessed by all kinds of people.

### **6.1.3 Recognizing multidimensionality and value diversity**

Critical Disability theory advocates for the need to recognize value diversity among people and the multidimensionality that exist among children with disabilities. In as much as the world preaches for equality in all aspects, this element of CDT advocates for policy makers to recognize the inevitable differences that exist among people particularly relation to the needs of persons with disabilities and those without disabilities. By recognizing this difference, the government of Ghana will be able to initiate policies that take every citizen into consideration and therefore not end up overlooking or neglecting the needs of children with disabilities. It has already been made clear that schools infrastructure should be improved to accommodate students with disabilities and that there should be adequate supply of teaching and learning materials. However, the individual needs of each student should be taken into consideration when supplying teaching and materials. In agreement

with multidimensionality, each student with disability may require a special or unique equipment to aid their participation in schoolwork. For example, the materials and equipment that a visually challenged student need may totally differ from that of a physically challenged student.

### **6.1.4 Employment and funding of persons with disabilities**

Education is generally considered to be the transfer of knowledge into the next generation. However, it must be admitted that education is also the gateway to gaining employment into most sectors in Ghana. Thus, students with disabilities who have attained a certain form of former education would expect to be employed in the former sector. In contrast, it was revealed in chapter four that PWDs struggle to find jobs even after completion of school. This can be a major deterrent for other children with disabilities to willingly accept to be enrolled in schools because there seem to no hope for majority of them to be employed after school. This was evident in the data presented in chapter four that describes the percentage of students with disabilities that dropout of school.

It is therefore very important for government to consider creating employment avenues for students with disabilities after graduating from various schools. There are various strategies that government can adopt to ensure massive employment for PWDs. This can be done through the introduction of tax exemptions or reliefs for private companies that employ PWDs. It was recorded in the context chapter that the disability fund is a 3% allocation of the total district assembly common fund. It was also further revealed that PWDs are paid only ones annually out of the disability fund with exception of a few. To improve the quality of lives of PWDs, government should consider increasing the disability fund in order to adequately cover the increasing population of PWDs in Ghana. With the increment of the fund, PWDs can improve can at least receive financial assistance from the fund twice a year which can ultimately improve their standard of living. Lastly, PWDs who are self-employed and doing well in their respective businesses should be prioritized by government and provide them the needed assistance to elevate their businesses as this can move can motivate other PWDs.

### **6.1.5 Rights of PWDs and forming transformative policies**

Children with disabilities are considered vulnerable and experience various forms of inhumane treatments from a section of people as revealed in this study. Hence, protecting the rights of children with disability should be an urgent course for government through institutions such as the department of social welfare and other private. The eight sections of Ghana's Persons with Disability (PWDs) Act, 2006 Act 715 clearly explains the rights and privileges that PWDs must benefit. Hence, government must ensure that all these eight sections are put into effective practice to protect the lives of PWDs. People who abuse children with disabilities' right to live should be allowed to face sections that come with it. The Act clearly indicates that education and training of children with disabilities should be prioritized by the government and other relevant bodies. Establishment of rehabilitation

centers across the various MMDAs as stated by the act should be enforced as this can ensure the easy integration of children with disabilities into the society.

Another way of protecting the rights of children disabilities as proposed by critical disability theory is the introduction of transformative policies. Thus, policies that aims at transforming the lives of children with disabilities. Nonetheless, some of the recommendations already suggested in this study can effectively transform the live of a greater percentage of children with disabilities. On the other hand, the standard of living of many children with disabilities can positively be affected if government improves or vehemently ensure the implementation of the already existing disability related policies. CDT also proposes that government empower public authorities and other private institutions that are established with the primary aim of promoting and protecting the rights of PWDs.

Further, deserving PWDs should be giving positions in various sectors where their contribution and influence can help promote the interest of PWDs. Some of these may be having a lot of PWDs in media where they would have a voice on issues that concerns PWDs or giving government positions to deserving PWDs. The media should also be urged to portray a good image of PWDs and desist from making demeaning remarks and publications about PWDs. Any member of the media who partake in making demeaning publications about PWDs should be taken on by the laws of the country.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Ghana has come a long way with providing education for all children irrespective of their background or disability status. Inclusive education as introduced in 2013 has and still going through a lot of changes with regards its implementation and barriers that hinders it.

Beginning from chapter one, the study presented the rights of persons with disabilities as introduced by international bodies such as the United Nations, United Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, Ghana's Children Act 1998 (Act 560) and Ghana's Disability Act 2006 (Act 715). Some of the rights highlighted by the study was children's right to life, protection from discrimination and rights to education. Some special schools that have been established in Ghana for children with disabilities were also mentioned in chapter one. A brief revelation of some socio-cultural and religious perspectives about children with disabilities were also presented in chapter. Statement of the problem was then drawn out the information that were gathered prior to this point out of which the aim research questions were also written by the researcher. The researcher chose Ghana as the scope of the study and hence demonstrated how the findings of the study can be relevant and contribute to the effective implementation of the inclusive education policy.

In the context chapter, the study presented Ghana's Persons with Disability Act 2006 (Act 715) outlining the eight sections of the Act which included rights of persons with disability, employment of persons with disabilities, education of persons with disabilities, transportation, healthcare and facilities, miscellaneous provisions, establishment and functions of National Council of Persons with Disabilities, and lastly administrative and financial provisions. The study further presented some social intervention policies that have been introduced to enhance the standard of living of PWDs in Ghana highlighting the Disability Fund which is a 3% of the total fund (Common Fund) that are released to MMDAs,

the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Programme introduced in 2008. A brief history of education in Ghana was also presented to highlight how education has been structured over the years from centuries ago to the present century. To get a clearer view of the transformations that education has gone through in Ghana, the researcher presented some educational reforms and policies that have been introduced by the government of Ghana from time to time that seeks to improve education. With Ghana in focus, the chapter finally highlighted some socio-cultural and religious perspective that people have about children with disabilities.

In the third chapter, theoretical perspectives and concepts that helped the researcher to analyze findings were presented in this chapter. Theories discussed were the childhood studies which is made of three approaches namely, constructionist approach, agency and the structuralist approach. Another theory adopted was the Critical Disability theory which is broken down into seven elements namely the social model, voice, language valuing diversity, rights, transformative policies and multidimensionality. The last theory presented was the labeling theory which talk about tagging a group of people with several names and labeling them as 'others'. A brief literature of previous research studies that have been similarly conducted on children with disabilities both in Ghana and other African countries were presented in a tabular form. Methodology and the research design adopted by this study was further presented which in regard was qualitative research design. How data was going to be retrieved and analyzed was also presented in chapter being the case study and other secondary sources such as online graphic publications, video documentaries, findings from previous studies among others.

In the findings chapter, the researcher presented in detail some socio-cultural and traditional perspectives and beliefs that people have about children with disabilities. How people relate with PWDs in the community and other public places such as work as a result of these perspectives were further discussed. This revealed lots of alarming experiences that some PWDs go through in being at the workplace, transport access or schools. To keep potential readers in focus, the researcher briefly described the current nature of education in Ghana and presented a brief history of how formal education for children with disabilities was instituted. This paved way for the researcher to describe the inclusive education policy in Ghana and how it is being implemented. Statistics of educational enrollment in Ghana was further presented in chapter with focus on inclusive education which revealed some unencouraging figures about the enrollment and educational progress of students with disabilities.

Some of the possible reasons of these unencouraging figures were discussed as it was revealed to be mainly as a result of some socio-cultural and traditional perspective that people have about children with disabilities as well as the challenges that even adults with disabilities who have completed a certain level of formal education face.

In the last chapter, the researcher discussed and analyzed the findings in chapter four by revealing that, even though society generally show love and care among themselves, people with disabilities seems to face the challenges of life all by themselves. It was also revealed that the media also plays a major role in the protection of the right of children with disabilities through their publications and editorials. Thus, the type of image that the media portrays about children with disabilities can influenced people's perspectives whether positively or negatively. Furthermore, the exclusive behaviour of Ghana's inclusive education policy was discussed in chapter five. This exclusivity nature of the inclusive education policy was as a result of certain barriers that hinder the effective implementation of the policy such as attitudinal barriers, physical barriers, untrained teachers and lack of



teaching and learning materials, policy barriers, inappropriate curriculum and inadequate funding. Finally, the study made some suggestions and recommendations that can help to promote and enhance the standard of living of children with disabilities as well as elevate the effective implementation of the inclusive education in Ghana. These recommendations includes, education and sensitization of people, improving the infrastructure of regular schools to a level that can be more accessible for students with disabilities, timely provision of teaching and learning material to both teachers and students, training of teachers to thoroughly prepare them to assist children with disabilities, recognizing multidimensionality and value diversity where policy makers are advocated to recognize the differences in needs of PWDs and people without disabilities as well as recognizing the differences in needs among children with disabilities, provided employment avenues for PWDs and lastly protecting the rights of children with disabilities and forming transformative policies and empowering institutions that are designated to protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in general.

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