

# Realizing the educational rights of children with disabilities: An overview of inclusive education in Cameroon

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## Abstract:

All children deserve access to education, including those in low income countries. Educators and teachers share a desire to promote inclusive education, and can come together, such as the current group of authors did, to educate themselves about current developments. This paper examines published research relevant to inclusive education in Cameroon to contribute to understandings of inclusive education in Africa. An extensive review of published and grey scholarly literature since 2002 yielded 22 documents. Analysis, framed around a human rights perspective, focused on three areas: the legal context for inclusive education; the situation of children with disabilities in inclusive education settings; and the organizations providing inclusive education. Findings indicate that there is emerging attention to inclusive education for children with disabilities in Cameroon yet many children are still not able to realize their educational and social rights. It appears that most children with disabilities are not included in schools, and points to a need to address teacher attitudes and pedagogy. This paper initiates a discourse into the strategies to increase awareness and promote change among teachers, principals, school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders in Cameroon, and concludes with cautious optimism that inclusion in schools in Cameroon is beginning to take place.

## 1. Introduction

Childhood education contributes to well-being and human development (Vygotsky 1978; WHO & World Bank 2011). The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Articles 7 and 24 (UN Enable, 2006), and on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Articles 2 and 23 (United Nations 1990) state that all children have the right to develop their potential and access education. African children living with impairments and disabilities are less likely to start and attend school, and to transition to higher levels of education (Filmer 2008; Hashemi et al 2014; Uchem, Ngwa and Asongwa 2014; UNESCO 2005; UNICEF 2004), and may experience violence (Boersma 2013). Strategies to improve the development of inclusive education (IE) are needed. To contribute to development, this paper examines scholarly work relevant to IE in Cameroon, using a human rights perspective as an analytic framework (UN Enable, 2006; United Nations, 1990). The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the knowledge base about IE in Cameroon. The paper examines scholarly work to address three areas: 1) the legal and governmental context for IE; 2) the current educational status for children with disabilities, from the perspectives of IE; 3) research about organizations providing IE. The paper uses a human rights perspective for analysis, in light of key aspects of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1990) the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), and the Sustainable Development Goals, known as the SDGs (UN, 2015). SDG goals #4, quality education, and #10, reduced inequalities, are particularly relevant to this discussion. The paper may assist researchers, educators, governments, parents, stakeholders, and non-governmental organizations surrounding action planning about IE in Cameroon and elsewhere.

### 1.1 Background

#### 1.1.1 Cameroon & Overview of the Cameroonian education system

Cameroon ranks below the world average on human development indicators according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2015). The country has a life expectancy of 55.5 years at birth (UNDP), with 43% of the population aged 14 and under (World Bank, 2014). In 2012, the overall literacy rate was 71.3% with the youth (15-24 years old) literacy rate at 87% (UNICEF, 2013). In rankings of the Child-friendliness Index, Cameroon ranks as one of the least child friendly states in Africa (ACPF, 2013).

Language of educational instruction represents power structures, worldviews, and political systems (Benson & Kosonen 2013; Echu 2004) so it is necessary to reflect on the languages used in Cameroon's education system. Due to Cameroon's historical legacy as both French and British colonies, the country has two official languages, French and English. There are about 286 local languages, and many of them are not written (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig 2014; Echu 2004). In Cameroon, unlike in some other African countries, there have been very few instances of formal schooling based on indigenous languages (Anchimbe 2006, Chiatoh 2014). Arabic is used in Islamic schools. West African Pidgin English is widely spoken, especially in the Anglophone areas (Lewis, Simons and Fennig).

In Cameroon the two separate, parallel public education systems, Francophone and Anglophone, reflect the colonial legacy (e.g. Boyle, 1996; Eloundou-Enyegue, & Shapiro, 2005; Jum, 2011; Moore, 2006; Ngalim 2014; Njong, 2010; Nyamnjoh, 2012; Tatangang, 2011). Each of these systems has its institutions, structures, curricula, and examinations requirements. The government has created a number of bilingual high schools, and is introducing bilingual primary schools. In most instances, the bilingual schools have been a juxtaposition of two monolingual schools in one institution under a single school principal, instead of one co-educational school teaching students in both languages (Tatangang, p. 95).

There is a legal framework for a compulsory free primary education through the public system, but it is rarely enforced (Fonkeng, 2005, Tchombe, 2014). Four ministries are in charge of education: 1) Basic Education, 2) Secondary Education, 3) Higher Education, and 4) Employment and Vocational Education. The budget allocated to ministries responsible for education from kindergarten to postsecondary education has been among the highest of the public budgets (NIS, 2010). The first three ministries are responsible for both public and private schools. Parents pay a variety of administrative and other fees such books, school supplies, and parent-teacher association dues; many students are required to leave school for periods of time when fees or other costs are not paid.

Private education is common and provided by faith-based missionary organizations and secular private organizations. Mission schools received strong governmental support before and after national independence in 1961 and during the transition to a unified republic in 1972 (Jum, 2011). In 1951, the first private schools were established for the children of plantation workers (Ihims as cited by Jum, 2011). Since that time, there has been a significant increase in private, for profit schools at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.

#### 1.1.2 Definitions

To conceptualize disability we use the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), a biopsychosocial model (WHO 2002; Shey 2014). The ICF views disability as the intersection of impairment of body structure or function, limitations in engagement in activities, and/or participation in social life. From this perspective, "disability" in children is the result of an interactive process: children live with impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions which affect them in different ways, and which lead to unique experiences of disability. For example, a child who has a visual impairment may require different adaptations in the classroom than a child who has a cognitive or learning impairment. The ICF provides a framework for understanding the complexity of disability as not being solely located within an individual and emphasizes that disability is not the same as impairment. A child whose impairment is accommodated by his or her environment may have a full and active life with very few or no limitations and not have the experience of disability, for example, visual impairment accommodated by glasses. The ICF framework provides ways of understanding interventions as being located beyond the person, for example in services, school policies, and accessible structures.

The terms inclusive education, special education, and integrated education are not synonymous. Inclusive education is:

"a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children." (UNESCO 2005, p. 13).

Internationally, as more emphasis was placed on mainstreaming, including all children, and valuing their diversities, inclusive education became the preferred term to signify not just accommodations for some but to recognize the benefits and opportunities for all students that arise with diverse classrooms (Nwazkouke, 2008; Shey 2014; UNESCO 2005).

Special needs education is the precursor to inclusive education, which emphasizes providing separate educational settings and schools for children with disabilities. Special needs education places the focus on the individual student and is intended to tailor the teaching to student needs. Special education has often come to signify the exclusion of students from regular or mainstream classes. In recognition of these concerns, efforts have been made to incorporate special education into mainstream schools.

Integrated education signifies placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms, sometimes without adequate attention to their specific learning needs and accommodations. For example, Benuh and Fobuzie (2009) report that some students with disabilities are integrated into mainstream schools in the North West Region of Cameroon, although there are few supports in the schools for students or teachers to accommodate their specific learning needs.

Words reflect underlying theosophical stances and real life experiences which continue to evolve and develop. While the overarching goal may be to ensure that all learners, including children living with impairments and disabilities, have access to quality education that meets basic learning needs, the pathways to providing that access can be controversial (e.g. Miles and Singal 2010). For example, some school systems, families, and educators support instances when separate learning may be the preferred option because it can mean that the student feels included and is more able to participate due to receiving

greater level of attention from the teachers, rather than being socially excluded as can happen in mainstream classrooms where the teacher to student ratios are much greater, resulting in limited personal attention received by each student. Examples include children who are learning braille, and children with significant impairments and complex medical needs. While the general emphasis is moving to IE, educational systems and schools need to be able to provide a range of options for students to meet individual goals and needs at various times during educational careers. It is important to be aware that the words used to develop and describe these options carry historical, political, and practical meanings, and to keep in mind that overall goals of education are to develop interpersonal connections, social inclusion, and active community participation; one approach does not fit all students. While recognizing these perspectives, this paper focuses on IE.

### 1.2 Children with disabilities in Cameroon

Information about the prevalence of children living with impairments and disabilities, and their daily lives, is now emerging. We are aware of some studies which provide information about the prevalence of disabilities in children: a prevalence of impairments and disability study in the North West Region (Cockburn, Wango, Benuh and Cleaver, 2011; Cockburn, Cleaver and Benuh, 2014; ICED, 2014), and national census information which included the Cameroon Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), (Loaiza & Cappa, 2005; CNIS, 2010; CNIS 2012).

Cameroon was one of the West African countries that was included in UNICEF's MICS studies rounds 2 (2000-2001) and 3 (2005-2008). The module on child disability provided some insight into the state of children with disabilities in the country. The data from MICS-2 indicate that 23% of children between the ages of 2 and 9 in Cameroon are living with at least one type of impairment (Loaiza & Cappa 2005). Common impairments are difficulties with spoken communication (7%) and mental impairment (6%).

A 2009 study in the North West region used the ICF framework to identify the prevalence of impairments and disabilities in the general population (Cockburn, Cleaver and Benuh, 2014). This study found that 11.9% of the people identified as living with a disability were children (0 – 14 years). Common impairments were seeing impairments, hearing impairments and mobility impairments. Based on these reports, it is estimated that there are significant number of children with disabilities living in Cameroon. There are limitations of these two studies: for example household surveys often do not include children who are living in institutions or orphanages and those hidden away from the community.

## 2. Methods

This paper is a narrative review of English language, published and grey literature related to inclusive education in formal schooling at the primary and secondary levels for children with disabilities in Cameroon. Grey literature is information produced by government, academics, business, and industry in print and electronic formats, but is not controlled by commercial publishers (GreyNet, 2014). It includes official documents (national policies, laws and decrees), and non-peer-reviewed literature (policies of international organizations and organizational program reports).<sup>1</sup> We did not include informal community based education, or vocational training and education. Literature was obtained by searches of databases through the University of Toronto library and Google Scholar. Reference lists of papers were reviewed to identify additional papers. Grey literature was obtained through internet searches and through personal contact with authors and organizations. The first three authors have experience working in Cameroon and drew from this expertise to construct the paper.

To develop the framework for the analysis, we identified key points about human rights and IE for people living with disabilities from three documents: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN 1990), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (UN Enable, 2006) and the Cameroon law N.2010/002. Based on these points we developed specific questions, and grouped them into three categories (Table 1): legal and governmental policies, access to inclusive education for children with disabilities, and the organizations providing inclusive education. We used the identified documents to answer the questions in each category.

## 3. Findings

We identified and screened over 150 documents that potentially met our inclusion criteria. From these, we included 22 relevant papers and documents, listed chronologically in Table 2.

Table 1: Topic areas and related questions

Topic	CRC	CRPD	Cameroon Law	Our questions
<b>Current Situation within the Cameroonian Context</b>	Signed: 27 October 1990 Ratified: 11 January 1993	Cameroon is a signatory and has committed itself towards ratifying the CRPD.		
<b>1. The legal context</b>	Article 23 (4): States Parties shall	Article 24(1): States...shall ensure an inclusive education system at all	Education should be	Which government bodies are responsible for

<sup>1</sup> The idea for the current paper grew from a previous study – “Access to education and protection of children with disability in West Africa - A review of the literature”, Hashemi, G. and ICDR (2013), submitted to Plan International West Africa Regional Office. The current paper is significantly different from the previous report.

	<p>promote...access to information concerning methods of rehabilitation, education and vocational services...particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.</p>	<p>levels...directed to:                  The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;                  Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.</p>	<p>accessible to all people with disabilities                  Education for children with disabilities should be provided by the national government.                  Children with disabilities, or those with parents with disabilities, should receive free education from the government.</p>	<p>education and disability in Cameroon? What are the legal requirements regarding education of children with disabilities and inclusive education in Cameroon, and what is known about how these requirements are implemented? What type of government legislation and policy exists to ensure the right of children with disabilities to formal and informal quality education and to protect them from harm and discrimination?</p>
<p><b>2. School attendance of Children with disabilities</b></p>	<p>Article 24(e): To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education...</p>	<p>Article 24(2): Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education ... children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education...                  Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education...Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;                  Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system...measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development</p> <p>Article 24(5): ...ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education ...reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities</p>		<p>What is known about the prevalence and profiles of different types of impairments and disabilities of children with disabilities attending schools in Cameroon?                  What has been written about their educational needs?                  What specificities related to gender, area of residency (rural/urban), ethnic groups and different social classes exist and need to be taken into account through educational programs?</p>
<p><b>3. Schools and organizations providing inclusive education</b></p>	<p>Article 28(b): Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need.</p>	<p>Article 8(b): Fostering at all levels of the education system...respect for the rights of persons with disabilities</p> <p>Article 24(3): ...enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education...the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring... the learning of sign language...the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community...education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages...in environments which maximize academic and social development</p> <p>Article 24(4): ...take appropriate measures to employ teachers...qualified in sign language and/or Braille...train professionals and staff who work at all levels of</p>		<p>In Cameroon, who are the local and international institutions working with children with disabilities in the domain of inclusive education, and what are their programmatic responses and strategies?</p> <p>How do child focused organizations support inclusive education and education for children with disabilities?</p> <p>How do disability focused organizations support inclusive education and education for children with disabilities?</p> <p>What evaluation has been carried out about these programs?</p>

		education... incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials...		
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**Table 2: Included documents, chronological order**

This is the list of documents that directly address inclusive education in Cameroon, both research and non-research

Date of publication	Document	Type of document	Purpose of document	What aspect(s) of human rights and IE in Cameroon does it address? What does this study tell us about the current situation in Cameroon?
2002	Quinn, G., Degener, T., & Bruce, A. (2002). Human rights and disability: The current use and future potential of United Nations human rights instruments in the context of disability. United Nations Publications.	Report, not research	To examine the use of United Nations human rights instruments in the field of disability, specifically to clarify relevance of six United Nations human rights treaties relative to disability, to review how the system actually works in practice, and to provide options for the future.	Large document, focused on use and potential of United Nations human rights instruments in the field of disability. Describes Cameroon's 2000 report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and implications for inclusive education
2007	Mayer, E. J. E. (2007). Study on the rights of persons with disabilities in Cameroon. Report for the African Union of the Blind (AFUB) and the Cameroon National Association for the Blind (CNAB) in partnership with Disability Rights Promotion International (DRPI) and Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired (SRF). Available from <a href="http://www.yorku.ca/drpi/files/DRPICameroonRepEn.pdf">http://www.yorku.ca/drpi/files/DRPICameroonRepEn.pdf</a>	Research report; not a peer-reviewed journal	Examination of the rights of persons with disabilities in Cameroon. three sites Bafoussam, Bamenda, and Yaoundé	School and education are addressed throughout the report; no detailed discussion of inclusive education
2007	World Vision (2007). Education's Missing Millions - Including Disabled Children in Education through EFA FTI Processes and National Sector Plans - Main Report of Study Findings. World Vision, UK.	Combination of research and analysis	Focused on the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Partnership. Purpose was to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assess disability responsiveness of FTI processes and education sector plans</li> <li>• formulate recommendation</li> </ul>	The study focused on how countries are addressing inclusive education and education for children with disabilities in the context of human rights. Although Cameroon was included in the

Date of publication	Document	Type of document	Purpose of document	What aspect(s) of human rights and IE in Cameroon does it address? What does this study tell us about the current situation in Cameroon?
			<p>s to strengthen current processes, tools and partnership mechanisms; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify new opportunities through which the FTI could better address the issue of disability and education. Cameroon was one of 28 countries included in analysis.</li> </ul>	<p>study, the country education report (2006) did not address inclusive education or human rights</p>
2008	Nwazuoke, I. A. (2008). Special needs education and inclusion. African Journal of Special Education, 1(1), 13-21.	Non-systematic review	To provide basic principles to make inclusive education work in Cameroon.	Provides background about inclusive education globally to advocate for improvements in Cameroon. Outlines specific strategies, and calls for adequate compensation to teachers, management, monitoring and evaluation.
2008	Titanji, P. (2008). Education for all in Cameroon: What principals need to know and do. African Journal of Special Education, 1(1), 105-115.	Non-systematic review and expert opinion	Outlines what principals can do to provide inclusive education for all Cameroonians as part of systemic change.	Need to see principals as part of the system of IE. Principals are expected to: Create and nurture a shared vision; support staff development; build school culture, know legislation; work with community; respect ethics. Encourages advocacy for



Date of publication	Document	Type of document	Purpose of document	What aspect(s) of human rights and IE in Cameroon does it address? What does this study tell us about the current situation in Cameroon?
				rights of all children in Cameroon.
2008	Tukov, M. F. (2008). The Education of Children with Special Needs in Cameroon: The Role of Teachers and parents towards Inclusive Education.	Research	To investigate and explore the roles of teachers and parents in education of children with disabilities in regular secondary schools	Detailed discussion of IE and HR included in background and literature review; mentioned in the body of the research
2008	UNICEF & University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (2008). Monitoring Child Disability in Developing Countries-Results from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. UNICEF, New York.	Research report	Reports on the Disability Module in MICS3 (Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys)	Reports on several factors related to children with disability, including educational opportunities; children who screened positive for disability appear to attend school less than all children
2009	Benuh, E. and Fobuzie, B. L. (2009). Report of workshop on inclusive education in the North West Region of Cameroon. Unpublished report.	Report of a workshop (non-research)	Report of a one day workshop on inclusive education organized by SEEPD Program. Purpose was to use existing teacher training institutions to encourage teaching environments to increase success rate of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Sought to introduce special education courses in teacher training curriculum.	Workshop involved 32 participants from education training institutions and government departments working in education and social wellbeing. Rights and inclusive education were focus of the workshop.
2011	De Clerck, G. A. (2011). Fostering Deaf People's Empowerment: the Cameroonian deaf community and epistemological equity. Third World Quarterly, 32(8),	Research (includes education	Case study of emancipation processes in deaf	Upholding Cameroonian legal

Date of publication	Document	Type of document	Purpose of document	What aspect(s) of human rights and IE in Cameroon does it address? What does this study tell us about the current situation in Cameroon?
	1419-1435.	but not specific to IE)	communities in Cameroon	framework, which include laws against discrimination In alignment with United Nations Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities
2011	Nsamenang, B., and Tchombe, T. M.S. Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices. Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC), Bamenda, 2011.	Text book; 36 chapters with authors from many countries in Africa	Africa-centric educational knowledge and basic teacher education text	Disability, special needs, and inclusion are woven into some chapters; References to Cameroon but no chapter specifically about inclusive education in Cameroon
2012	Ndame, T. (2012). Whole School Inclusion: A Case Study of Two Secondary Schools in Cameroon. (Doctoral dissertation, School of Education, University of Exeter).	Research, doctoral thesis; qualitative research	Studies systematic organisation and management of whole school inclusive processes in two mainstream secondary schools in Cameroon and implementation of Education for all (EFA) between 1998 and 2010	Emphasizes Cameroon's contributions to whole school inclusion; uses a social/human rights model throughout study; provides insight and model regarding complexity of the issues. Inclusion is more than impairment or disability.
2012	Fobuzie, B. A. L. (2012). Starting the journey towards inclusive education in Cameroon. Enabling Education Review, 1, 8-9.	Descriptive paper; (non-research)	To describes the impact of the journey towards inclusive education from perspective of a leader teacher, and on teacher development in Cameroon.	Focuses on how educational rights can be provided to students by changing educational systems and classroom practices.
2012	ITCIG-SENTTI (2012). The challenges of developing	Organizatio	From the	Provides



Date of publication	Document	Type of document	Purpose of document	What aspect(s) of human rights and IE in Cameroon does it address? What does this study tell us about the current situation in Cameroon?
	and implementing an inclusive special education concept for the training of inclusive special education teachers / social educators in Cameroon as a pioneer through ITCIG – Special Educational Needs Teachers’ Training Institute -SENTTI, Bamenda. Report. Available from the authors.	n report (non-research)	perspective of a teacher training institute, to evaluate current challenges in special and inclusive education and identify strategies for change.	information on the importance of adequately trained teachers to support an inclusive education system. Provides details of situation in 2011-2012.
2013	Ngwokabuenui, Y. P. (2013). Principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting - The case of public, secondary and high schools in the North West region of Cameroon . The International Journal's Research Journal of Social Science and Management, 2(10), 7-23-	Research	Study of principals’ attitudes and perceptions of inclusion of integrating students with disabilities into general education programmes	Provides background information and details of principals perspectives  E.g. Cameroon implementation of Congress laws – Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EFAHC, 1975) Public Law (94-102)  Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) → (Public Law, 101-147)
2013	Coe, S (2013). Outside the circle: A research initiative by Plan International into the rights of children with disabilities to education and protection in West Africa. Dakar: Plan West Africa	Research	To examine how children with disabilities in West Africa are denied educational rights, and subjected to profound levels of poverty, exclusion, and discrimination	Advocates for governments, NGOs, community groups and leaders to end discrimination. Cameroon is one of the 12 countries included in this report but specific information about Inclusive education in

Date of publication	Document	Type of document	Purpose of document	What aspect(s) of human rights and IE in Cameroon does it address? What does this study tell us about the current situation in Cameroon?
				Cameroon is not included
2013	Arrah, R. O. (2013). Teachers' perceptions of students with special education needs in Cameroon secondary schools (Order No. 1535874). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1351175151).	Mixed methods; Masters thesis	To examine teachers' perceptions of including students with special education needs in Cameroon secondary schools	Provides evidence about the importance of adequately trained teachers to support an inclusive education system.
2013	UNICEF (2013). The state of the world's children 2013: Children with disabilities. UNICEF, New York <a href="http://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/">http://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/</a>	Research	Annual UNICEF report; focuses on disability issues in an effort to create awareness and change.	Presents extensive data; Cameroon is one of several countries addressed; Discusses inclusive education but not specific about Cameroon
2013	Mbibeh, L. (2013). Implementing Inclusive Education in Cameroon: Evidence from the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board. <i>International Journal of Education</i> , 5(1), 52-68.	Descriptive paper (non-research)	Provides description of history of inclusive education in Cameroon, and work of the SEEPD program of CBC Health Board; proposes a model of inclusive education for Cameroon	Rights are addressed throughout the paper. Calls for a model of inclusive education includes principles of education for all and addresses the realities of the country.
2014	Tchombe, T. M. et al. (2014) Transnational research on inclusive education in institutions in Africa: the preparedness of educators: The case of Cameroon.	Research study	To investigate the preparedness of educational institutions in Cameroon. Seven research objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify gaps in policy and improvement for best practices in Cameroon</li> <li>• To find out the nature of</li> </ul>	Extensive study that provides recent evidence about the progress and challenges of inclusive education in Cameroon. Examines policy and curriculum process in terms of pedagogical

Date of publication	Document	Type of document	Purpose of document	What aspect(s) of human rights and IE in Cameroon does it address? What does this study tell us about the current situation in Cameroon?
			inclusive practices in the institutions studied • To identify core values, competences, and indicators • To identify perceived challenges • To identify the status of research in inclusive education and establish networks for collaborative research	practices, assessment, infrastructure and the training of teachers and lecturers (the South West, the Littoral and the Centre regions with data collected in Buea, Kumba, Yaoundé and Kribi).
2014	Shey, P. (2014). Inclusive Education as a Response to Learners' Diversity in School. <i>Epasa Moto: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Arts, Letters and the Humanities of the University of Buea</i> . 1 (2), 24-37.	Descriptive paper (non research)	Presents key issues related to inclusive education, international legal frameworks,	Provides detailed history of legal issues related to IE in Cameroon.
2015	Endeley, M. N. (2015) Teachers' Academic Disciplines and Attitudes towards Inclusive Education. <i>Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research (JEPER)</i> 2, (10), 89-97	Descriptive, Quantitative survey	To find out if public secondary school teachers in Cameroon differ in their attitudes towards inclusive education as a result of their academic disciplines	Survey of teacher attitudes; 430 teachers in 15 "regular" secondary school in Littoral, Southwest, East and Far North regions. Survey or sample questions not provided. Results indicate that teachers appear to have an openness to inclusive education with some variations by discipline.
2016	Bamu, B. N., Van de Putte, I., & Van Hove, G. (2016). <i>The Vitality of the Braille in Enabling Inclusion for the</i>	Qualitative Research	To examine the braille	Makes explicit link between

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	Visually Impaired in Regular Secondary Schools in the North West Region of Cameroon. <i>International Journal of Information and Education Technology</i> , 6 (8), 622 – 625. doi: 10.7763/IJET.2016.V6.762	study	provisioning in regular secondary schools, the approaches used in the provision of this resource and the appropriate measures to fully include students with visually impairments.	several human rights documents and the provision of braille resources to students. Examines the links between religious schools and the provision of braille resources in secondary schools in North West Region. The 2 schools have braille resource people who come to the school and this connection facilitates students to be part of school. However, some errors noted in translations.

### 3.1 Legal and governmental structures

In Cameroon, issues of access to education for children with disabilities fall under various ministries: the four education ministries (listed above) and the Ministry of Social Affairs. The 1983 Law on the Protection of People with Disabilities defined the rights of persons with disabilities and instituted an identity card, known as the disability card, which entitles its holder to social assistance and other benefits. The decree No.90/1516 of November 26, 1990 laid down modalities for the implementation of the 1983 Law, and provided additional rights to persons with disabilities, including the right to education and professional training, preferential treatment in public transportation, taxes, and access to public buildings. Article 1 of this decree stated that the education of children with disabilities should be provided by the national government (Technical Committee 1990; Tukov, 2008).

The Preamble of the Constitution (Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, Preamble<sup>2</sup>) 1996 made primary education compulsory and guaranteed all children's right to education, which implicitly includes children with disabilities. The Constitution assigned the state responsibility for the organization and supervision of education at all levels. The 1998 Education Framework Act, No 98/004, guarantees equal access to education without discrimination. Following a 2000 presidential decree, public primary education is tuition-free.

In addition to the above legislation, Law 004/022, passed in 2004, regulates the provision of private education. This legislation is relevant to the current review because there are many private education schools that cater to children with disabilities. In 2004, the Cameroonian government elaborated a sector wide approach document on education as a road map to achieve universal primary education by 2015 (Ministries of Education and Finance 2004). This roadmap did address

<sup>2</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, Preamble. Law No. 96-06 of 18 January 1996

access to education for children with disabilities, as the country signed the Salamanca Declaration of 1994, which encourages governments to stipulate that children of all abilities be enrolled in regular school (Ndame, 2012; Tukov, 2008; World Vision 2007).

The Ministry of Social Affairs has the mandate to provide prevention, assistance and protection to socially vulnerable persons, including persons with disabilities (Cameroon, 2011). In that respect, it collaborates with the Ministries of Basic Education and Secondary Education (Ngwokabuenui, 2013; Shey, 2014). In 1996, a Prime Ministerial decree created the National Committee for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Persons with Disabilities (Decree No 96 / 379, 1996), with the mission of coordinating governmental and civil society action to improve the wellbeing of people with disabilities (Pougam, 2000). In 2010, Law No 2010/002 on the protection and advancement of people with disabilities was passed. Section 3 of Chapter 3 addresses special education for people with disabilities. This law states that children and adolescents with disabilities shall have access to education and states that children with disabilities and children of parents with disabilities should be exempted from school fees for government-run school programs (Law N.2010/002 Chapter 4.I). As of January 2015, this law lacked an implementation decree by the president. The implementation decree would allow the measures in the law to be put into practice and funded under the national government's budget.

Due to family and cultural values, discrimination, lack of resources and other factors, many children with disabilities have not had access to education in the past (Hashemi, 2006). There appears to be no system to enforce law No 2010/002, and few resources to support inclusive education although there are signs of improvement in awareness and implementation of the current laws (Mbibeh, 2013; Ngwokabuenui, 2013). For example, legal and educational avenues are opening to allow increased emphasis on training teachers in IE (ITCIG-SENTTI, 2012; Tchombe et al, 2014).

In summary, there are laws that aim to guarantee education for children with disabilities in Cameroon. However, these laws are not implemented, in part due to the delay in the implementation decree, and lack of monitoring and evaluation systems that hold organizations accountable.

### *3.2 Current educational status for children with disabilities*

To address what is known about school attendance, this section summarizes the research studies from Cameroon focused on education for children with disabilities. We looked for studies focusing on numbers of children with disabilities in inclusive schools, and the perspectives or experiences of these students on IE.

There is a lack of information in estimates of numbers of children with disabilities attending school. One way to estimate school attendance of children with disabilities is to examine prevalence studies for relevant information. The MICS (Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys) study conducted by UNICEF (2008) made reference to school attendance but without detail. Parents were asked about the presence of one or more impairments in their children; however, it is important to note that these were screening questions and the children were not interviewed or assessed for the actual impairment or the experience of disability. Inclusive education was not specifically addressed in this study. Data obtained from MICS3 indicated that 36.2% of children who screened positive for disability, between the ages of 2 and 4 participated in early education activities (such as reading books, telling stories, singing songs), and respondents tended to report lower levels of learners with identified disabilities among those participating in more early learning activities (UNICEF, 2008).

Benuh and Fobuzie estimated that at least 30,000 children with disabilities of school age (age range not specified) live in the North West Region, and that less than 8,000 of these children, or less than 30%, are integrated (their term) into mainstream schools, not necessarily with inclusive programming. They estimated that fewer than 1,000 students, with predominantly hearing, visual, and mental impairments, attended special education schools in the Region (Benuh and Fobuzie, 2009). In contrast, UNICEF (2008) reported that overall 73.4% of Cameroon children who screened positive in the TQ Disability Module - a component of the MICS3 survey, attend school.

Most studies we identified focused on teachers and principals, rather than children or their families. For example, many principals interviewed in the Ngwokabuenui study (2013) had a mixed view to inclusion in schools. Although they believed learners with disabilities could profit with interactions with students without disabilities and with general education teachers, and vice versa, they supported separate education for many students with disabilities. The data indicated a negative correlation between having a child with a disability and the involvement of the parents with the schools. While this data does not infer causality, educators have reiterated the need to have collaborations with the families of children with disabilities (Tchombe, 2014).

The experience of children with disabilities in inclusive or integrated classrooms is not well studied in Cameroon. There is some limited evidence that students with disabilities have difficulty progressing to secondary school, although we found little recent information. For example, Cockburn, Wango, Benuh and Cleaver (2011) found that many people with disabilities reported no or little secondary and tertiary education, with over 70% of disabled adults reporting that they did not go past primary school. In another study of over 70 principals in public secondary and high (A level) schools in the North West Region, Ngwokabuenui (2013) found that most schools (80.8%) had very low percentages (0.0% to 5%) of students with disabilities. This study included a report that four visually impaired students who, although educated in mainstream inclusive classrooms, were not given Ordinary level braille exams (a culminating exam in secondary school) due to poor preparation by the examining body (Cameroon Ministry of Social Affairs 2012 as cited in Ngwokabuenui). Bamu (2016) also reports on the challenges of braille translation for GCE exams, and provides examples of students who feel they were disadvantaged because of possible incorrect translation.

Authors noted the lack of treatment and rehabilitation options, intervention resources, assistive devices, and trained teachers (e.g. Arrah, 2013; de Clerk, 2011). Few studies examine how contexts and systems support children with mobility, mental health, or visual impairments in getting to and participating in school. For example, in most parts of Cameroon, wheelchairs

are manual and rudimentary. They tend not to be useful as the roads and transportation systems are often inaccessible. Public transportation systems do not provide accommodations for people with disabilities, and few schools have dedicated school buses to transport students to school. The cost of private transportation is beyond the reach of the majority of students and their families. As such, getting to schools can be a significant problem (Nsamenang and Tchombe, 2011). These authors report that in class, students are expected to sit on benches that are not designed to accommodate impairments, and there are few to no assistive technologies for children who are unable to write.

### 3.3 The organizations providing inclusive education

We looked for research about IE provided by local, national, and international organizations in Cameroon. While it is not the intention of this paper to discuss all of the schools and initiatives in the country, here we provide a brief overview of the types of schools and organizations, based on the included papers.

According to Tukov (2008) the first educational centres for children with disabilities were created by non-governmental organizations in the early to mid-1970's. These schools included the ESEDA, the Ecole Specialisee pour les enfants Deficients Auditif (a school for children with hearing impairments), L'externat Medico Pedagogique, La Colombe (a school for "mentally handicapped" children), and PROMHANDICAM, (a school that accommodates visually impaired, physically impaired, and mentally impaired children and integrates them with non-disabled children in the same learning environment).

Currently, there appears to be a number of small, locally based, special education schools in the country, where education is provided to boys and girls with disabilities based on diagnostic groupings (Benuh and Fobuzie, 2012; Tukov, 2008). Most of these schools are run by non-profit, non-governmental organizations, with a few for-profit, private institutions emerging. Some private schools have accepted students with disabilities on the condition that their parents purchase all the resources required for their accommodation, e.g. additional facilitators, books, and assistive devices, although the number of parents who can afford such accommodations is small (ITCIG-SENTT, 2012). Examples of privately run programs are the SAJOCAH Resource Centre for visually impaired and blind students, run by a Catholic community, which prepares students to attend the local integrated primary and secondary schools (SAJOCAH, 2010) and the Buea School for the Deaf (de Clerk, 2011).

The Bulu Blind Centre, also known as the Rehabilitation Institute for the Blind, in Buea was the first institution created under the control of the Ministry of Social Affairs, emphasizing the goal of training young people with visual impairments in arts and crafts, rather than broad education (MINAS, 1990; Ngwokabuenui, 2013, Tukov, 2008). This centre is similar to private organizations that focus on vocational training, in trades such as crafts and sewing. These centres are less educationally oriented and do not support students to move to higher education.

The roles of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), including faith-based organizations, in providing special education in Cameroon reflect an extensive and complex history that began in colonial times, and IE is emerging as part of the work of these organizations. For example, CBM, a major funder with a long history of supporting disability and rehabilitation programs in the country, is developing a number of excellent resources related to IE for international use (CBM Cameroon no date; CBM no date). The Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC, 2007), a prominent national organization addressing disability and inclusion, receives funding from several sources including CBM and the North American Baptist Convention. The CBC Health Board (CBCHB) has both special education and IE programs. It runs two special education schools: The Integrated School for the Blind in Bansa, established in 1983, and the Integrated School for the Deaf, established in 2000 in Mbingo (CBCHB, 2014). The CBCHB's SEEPD (Socio-Economic Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities) program has an initiative to build inclusion in government schools in the North West Region (Fobuzie, 2012; Mbibeh 2013). This program focuses on developing materials and curriculum to support teachers to identify, accommodate, and address the learning needs of students and to broaden the use of classroom strategies. The program's focus is on visual, hearing, mild orthopaedic, and speech impairments, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, attention deficit disorder, and dyslexia (Fobuzie, 2012). Bamu (2016) also reports on the impact of Christian organizations in providing mainstream education for children with visual impairments but does not name the organizations in her study.

We did not find any research which specifically evaluated IE programs in Cameroon. Mbibeh (2014) stated that the CBC program provides a model, however does not compare it to other initiatives or evaluate it against any criteria. Descriptions of this model are provided by Benuh and Fobuzie (2009) and Fobuzie, (2012).

The identification of organizational barriers to IE within schools is emerging in the research literature. Several studies indicate that there are still many attitudinal barriers towards inclusion of children with disabilities in schools (Arrah, 2013; Endeley, 2015; Mayer, 2007; Mbibeh, 2013; Ngowkabuenie 2013). Endeley's study examined teacher attitudes categorized by teaching discipline, and found that science teachers had the least positive attitudes towards inclusion (Endeley, 2014). Ngowkabuenie's study with principals found that most principals "perceived that students with mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance, blindness/visual impairment, deafness/hearing impairment, speech and language impairment, multi-disability and autism/pervasive developmental disorder should have special education services outside regular school as their most appropriate placement" (p. 17). Although he did not explore the behaviours of principals towards these students, this finding would suggest that many principals would not be supportive of full inclusion in their schools. Mayer and colleagues (2007) identified that many students experienced negative and discriminatory attitudes.

Teacher development is proposed as a key strategy to reduce these barriers (Nwazuoke, 2008; ITCIG-SENTT, 2012). Tchombe et al. (2014) reported low levels of policy awareness or practical strategies, and recommend additional teacher education. Those that were aware stated that there is very little implementation of the policies in schools due to lack of specialists, funding, and resources. Fobuzie (2012), Benuh and Fobuzie (2009) and Mbibeh (2013) described the SEEPD



program, which aims to support teachers through teacher education, and they report some success. Bamu (2016) calls for improved teacher education.

Administrators have a significant role to play in promoting IE. For example, Ngwokabuenui (2013) reported that principals who had special education teaching experience and in-service training reported having more positive attitudes toward inclusion. It is not clear from this study what kind of training these principals received. This finding suggests that more information is needed about what kinds of training are most effective with principals and administrators.

We did not identify any research study surveying the impact of formative teacher education for IE. There are now a small number of schools offering training in IE. For example, the Special Education Needs Teacher Training Institute, known as SENTTI, was first established in 2007 to train teachers and others on working with children with special learning needs (ITCIG-SENTTI, 2012). The training programmes offered through SENTTI are recognized by the Ministries of Education. This training is available to professionals from other backgrounds who are interested in learning about special education, rehabilitation, and social inclusion (ITCIG-SENTTI, 2012). Universities, for example, the University of Buea and the University of Bamenda, are now offering courses in special needs education and IE in their teacher education programs (Tchombe et al 2014; Mbibeh, 2013).

It is clear that IE programs and schools are emerging in Cameroon, perhaps more so in the two Anglophone regions as many of the articles we identified reported on these regions. Some of these initiatives are part of more established special education schools and centres. In the research literature, attention has been given to attitudes and awareness of teachers and principals in educational environments, in recognition that the social and environmental settings can present significant barriers to the development of IE.

#### 4. Discussion

In reviewing the Cameroonian legislation and policies related to access to education and IE, it is apparent that the Cameroonian government has made an effort to establish laws that are in line with international agreements and recommendations focusing on the rights of adults and children with disabilities. However, there continues to be a gap between these policies and the realities in education systems. For example, it appears that the government has not taken steps to assess students' needs or to provide funding for education related to students with disabilities. Factors that limit the implementation of the law include delays between the development of the laws and their decree into action, and the lack of teachers with IE education, resources, strategies, and finances needed to make changes happen.

The review of the literature paints a picture of large numbers of students who are not receiving the education that they have a right to receive. Individual student needs and the collective needs of all students in inclusive or integrated schools, especially public schools, are still not well understood. Teachers and principals are often not aware of strategies to meet the needs of these students. There were no studies that included perspectives and experiences of children both with and without disabilities related to IE.

Similar to a previous study (Coe, 2012), we found that a primary challenge is obtaining clear and accurate information about IE for children with disabilities in Cameroon. There is a need for improved awareness and understanding of the educational needs of children with disabilities, the prevalence and types of impairments and disabilities, approaches to working with these children, the provision of teacher training, and attitudes related to value of education for people and children with disabilities.

The literature identified several organizations to provide education for children with disabilities, and there is an emerging body of research and evaluation about it (Tchome et al., 2014). Little research was identified related to systemic, publicly funded IE initiatives. While there are an increasing number of INGOs theorizing about inclusive development and providing IE on the ground in Cameroon, it appears that little is available in the research literature about them. There appears to be an increase in the number of private inclusive schools. Very little research or documentation is available about these initiatives and their impact. It is important to note that the lack of published evaluation or research does not mean that the programs are not viable; more likely it is a reflection of the shortage of human and financial resources to carry out research and evaluation, and to write reports.

Community based rehabilitation (CBR) and disability inclusive development appear to be gaining increasing attention in Cameroon. One of the areas that CBR addresses is education for children living with impairments and disabilities. Research and evaluation examining the impact of CBR programs on these children, their families, schools, and communities could lead to additional insights about how CBR programs can facilitate and improve IE initiatives in Cameroon.

Given the close relationship between disability and poverty (UNICEF, 2008), research questions could also address access and equality: for example, given the growth in private schools using an inclusion model, are youth with disabilities from more privileged families more able to benefit from inclusive schools? IE can add costs, and perhaps one of the implicit recommendations from these reports is that those most involved in IE, such as teachers, administrators, principals and parent-teacher associations, need to develop knowledge of funding opportunities to progress the IE agenda. For example, when building infrastructures are not accommodating (Tchombe 2014) or in-service training is needed to improve attitudes toward inclusion (Endeley, 2015; Ngwokabuenui 2013), perhaps it is up to the IE collaborators to find ways to evaluate and document the needs of students and the benefits of inclusion. Analysis of households in Cameroon indicates that there can be economic benefits to moving toward more equitable exposure to health, education, and professional training, and that actions to mitigate against disadvantages appear to be worthwhile (Baye and Epo, 2013). This kind of analysis could be done to further elucidate the impact of inclusive education.



Six research studies were identified that looked specifically at IE in Cameroon (Bamu, 2016; Endeley, 2015; Ndame, 2013; Ngwokabuenui, 2013; Tchombe et al., 2014, Tukov, 2008). These studies indicate that there is an emerging body of focused literature, and they provide some insight into attitudes of school administrators and teachers as well as the potential for ongoing growth and development of IE in the country. Ensuring that principals are aware of the laws and possible services, and the knowledge about how to enact IE appears to be a key part of the change process (Foubuzie, 2012; Ngwokabuenui, 2013). Although we identified a relatively small number of research documents, they represented a range of approaches and topics. Recent documents, such as the studies by Ndame (2012) and Tchombe et al (2014) provided an overview of how IE is enacted in education systems in Cameroon, and provide excellent starting points to obtain a picture of what is currently in place. Some studies focused on teachers and principals, such as the studies by Endeley (2015), Ngwokabuenui (2013) and Tukov (2008); it is clear that principals and administrators have key roles to play in the education system (Besong, 2014).

Although it has been well established that there can be gender differences in schools (for students, teachers and administrators), we found that very few of the studies included a significant gender component. Research in other locations often focuses on gender related to students but using a gender lens to understand teachers and administrator issues is also crucial. We did not find a substantial body of research examining students' experiences from a gender perspective. In Arrah's (2013) study of secondary school teachers, no differences were found between male and female teachers relative to general beliefs about special education needs of students. The research literature included the work being done by the Tchombe et al. (2004) of the University of Buea, which identifies several important areas for further research. We found very few studies examining the social context and debates about segregated, integrated, and IE in Cameroon. Examples of studies that do explore the social context include Ngwokabuenui's (2013) study of principals, which indicated the importance of examining social contexts and how IE can be supported or inhibited by the attitudes of administrators, and Ndame's (2012) study which indicated that schools are moving away from charity to human rights perspectives, while fighting against discrimination. Gender, social context, and current debates related to the philosophical foundations of IE are all areas for further research.

While this review focuses on Cameroon, readers in other locations can benefit from these findings as it adds to contextual understandings of how inclusive education is developing in Africa (see for example, Anthony 2011; Johansson 2014). First, the process of assessing research and documentation about IE is crucial as the field emerges and dialogues and debates continue to develop. Secondly, the reader may agree or critique the methods used to present this review, and that reflection in itself can lead to improved reviews in other locations. Finally, regardless of location, this study emphasizes the need for ongoing attention to understanding the impacts of social policy and awareness on the education of children with disabilities. Several of the research studies identified in this report presented ideas and recommendations that could be applied in other settings. For example, because of the uncertain environment (e.g. disability law has not been decreed; program funding is not available), several studies promoted a pragmatic approach to making progress by focusing on practice and what can be done in local school communities.

#### *4.1 Implications and Recommendations*

Reflecting what is seen as the current reality, some papers included in this review call for emphasis to be placed on efforts to change practice in Cameroon, rather than emphasizing advocacy for policy changes (Mbibe, p. 63; Shey, 2014; Tchombe, 2014). While recognizing that it takes time for laws to be enacted, there are also limitations to this approach. Without a law in place, government responsibility and funding will not be forthcoming. Combining practical approaches with sustained advocacy may lead to more sustained change (Titanji, 2008). It is clear that national and organizational policies need to be in line with international best practices for IE, and that policies which are in place could be more carefully implemented. One way of changing practice is to provide ongoing support and education for all levels of teachers, school administrators, and teaching assistants in schools (Endeley, 2015; Foubuzie, 2012; Ngwokabuenui, 2013; Titanji, 2008). Drawing from experience in other places, Titanji cautions that without well planned support, the Cameroon education systems risk losing principals.

Other specific strategies that can be used include involving international donors in the move to IE by developing cross-group and interprofessional partnerships and sensitization campaigns, and more explicitly involving CBR programs and practitioners in IE efforts. Researchers and specialists have a role to play in developing research on curriculum modifications, strategies and adaptations that are appropriate to the local context (Mbibe, 2013; Tukov, 2008). Faculty members at teachers' training colleges need to be mindful of IE practices and goals, and have knowledge of IE evaluations and research. IE should not be seen as something separate from mainstream teaching. As suggested by Mbibe (2013), student teachers in all teacher training schools can go through a module of IE training, and principles and strategies for teaching in inclusive ways should be included in all aspects of teacher education. It is important that research symposia and conferences continue to be held to promote the sharing of current research and allow for the uptake and implementation of evidence based IE strategies.

There are several areas for future research. Research could include conducting comparative international research between professional groups in the various regions of Cameroon, could explore and evaluate ways in which IE is being implemented, and to identify areas for further development of IE strategies. An important approach to research is the inclusion of those most impacted by the area of study, and we therefore recommend that more attention be given to research that includes children, youth, and adult students, teachers, administrators, and other key stakeholders as key members of research teams.

#### **5. Conclusion**

This paper has summarized the development of inclusive education in Cameroon, and raised a number of questions for further study. We can conclude with optimism that change is occurring and innovative, inclusive practices and research studies are continuing to develop. A new body of research and scholarship is emerging in Cameroon, leading the way to improve inclusive education throughout the country. These efforts are particularly salient in light of efforts to address and attain the Sustainable Development Goals.

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