



Special and inclusive education in Ghana: Status and progress, challenges and implications[☆]



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ABSTRACT

This case study investigates the special and inclusive education in Ghana. The authors first delineate the wider human well-being and historical contexts. Applying a descriptive design based on measurable pre-established indicators, drawn from Anastasiou and Keller's (2011) typological framework, the authors provide a systematic description of the 2008 status of special and inclusive education in Ghana. Furthermore, the produced outcomes compared to pre-established observable goals set in the Education Strategic Plan 2003–2015 were recorded to evaluate the progress in Ghana's special and inclusive education. The main challenges for special and inclusive education in Sub-Saharan African countries are discussed.

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1. Introduction

To study systematically the case of status of and progress in a country's special and inclusive education, it is important to set measurable or/and observable criteria, and delineate the “big picture” of the context in which a special needs education (SNE) system is situated (Yin, 2012). In this section, we address the requirement of the “big picture” using a human development framework. Specifically, we describe the human well-being development of Ghana, compared to that of macro-geographical regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and North America, and the world (Table 1).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2013) has developed the Human Development Index (HDI), which is a composite measure of indicators along three dimensions: (a) life expectancy, (b) education attainment, and (c) income indices, to indicate human development across the vast majority of countries (as of 2012, 187 countries). The HDI provides a balanced index of a

nation's human well-being beyond narrow economic indicators (Haq, 2003). Comparisons of a country's HDI with macro-geographical regional HDIs can give its comparative status of human capabilities.

Between 1990 and 2012, of 132 countries with a complete data series, Ghana was among the rapidest HDI improvers. Still, as of 2012, the Sub-Saharan Africa region had the lowest HDI value, 0.475 (UNDP, 2013). Ghana, a country on the west coast of Africa, with a HDI of 0.558 (see Table 1, Fig. 1), outperformed the average Sub-Saharan countries due to remarkable progress in human well-being over the last two decades (UNDP, 2013). Despite this progress, Ghana is still a typical developing Sub-Saharan country with a low-medium HDI, and far below the average value of 0.694 of the global HDI (UNDP, 2013).

Ghana has a population of about 24.4 million, according to the 2010 census of Ghana. Public investment, not just in economic infrastructure (mainly cocoa and gold), but also in health and education, has been key to achieving human development (UNDP, 2013). The fact that Ghana is a typical Sub-Saharan country, but also an example of heartening progress in terms of human well-being among developing countries, can make the study of its special and inclusive education a revelatory or *heuristic case* for Sub-Saharan Africa (Eckstein, 2000; Merriam, 1988). Specifically, it poses the question of whether the status of special and inclusive education in Ghana is at comparable level to that of HDI and that of general education development in particular.

[☆] The actual work was done in Ghana and the United States.

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Table 1
HDI and its components for Ghana and UNESCO's macro-geographical region (2012).

Region/country	HDI	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Mean years of schooling	Expected years of schooling	GNI per capita
Ghana	.558	64.6	7.0	11.4	1684
Sub-Saharan Africa	.475	54.9	4.7	9.3	2010
South Asia	.558	66.2	4.7	10.2	3343
Arab states	.652	71.0	6.0	10.6	8317
East Asia & the Pacific	.683	72.7	7.2	11.8	6874
Latin America & the Caribbean	.741	74.7	7.8	13.7	10,300
Europe, North America, and Central Asia	.771	71.5	10.4	13.7	12,243
World	.694	70.1	7.5	11.6	10,184

Source: UNDP (2013, pp. 146–147).
GNI: gross national income.

Additionally, like most other developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana struggles to achieve goals of the Education for All (EFA) program. In accordance with generic EFA goals, Ghana has worked to come up with the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2003–2015 (Ministry of Education, 2003). The ESP has made projections concerning the services to learners with disabilities by 2015. Today, there is the question of how close the country is to achieving the goals set in the ESP. Moreover, there is the question of whether the progress in educating children with disabilities is comparable to that of HDI or general education. Before addressing these questions, we delineate the historical development of special and inclusive education in Ghana.

2. Historical development of special and inclusive education in Ghana

The historical development of special and inclusive education in Ghana followed the same pattern as in many other developing and Sub-Saharan countries (Anson-Yevu, 1988). We could distinguish three main stages (see also Table 2).

2.1. Early Special Education Efforts before Ghana's Independence (1936–1956)

Traditionally, children with mild to moderate disabilities in Ghana were trained in trades just like their peers without

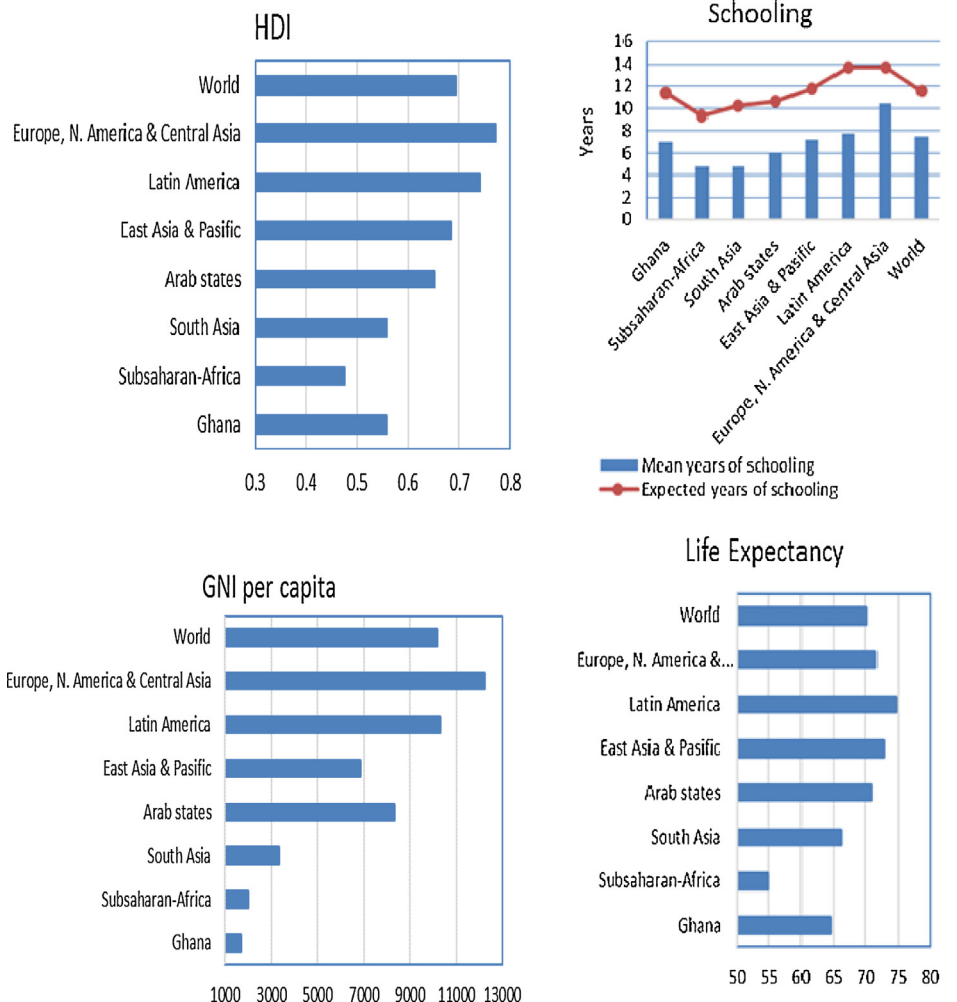


Fig. 1. HDI and its components for Ghana and UNESCO's macro-geographical region (2012).

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