Chapter 33

Disability, Culture, and Technology:
Issues, Challenges, and Applications in the Ghanaian Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Ghana has many interventions or systems to eradicate poverty among vulnerable people, especially those with disabilities. Ghana's Parliament launched the Social Protection Program in conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Right of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as well as the Disability Law of Ghana. One of these programs is the Social Protection Program, under which rehabilitation and RLG ICT training of People with Disabilities (PWDs) have been implemented in the classroom. The main goal of this program is to educate PWDs, granting them employable skills and thereby enabling them to become independent citizens. This chapter, which is related to one of the recommended topics, "Issues and Challenges of Digital Tools and Applications in the Classroom," draws on and employs a phenomenological approach to confirm the lack of culturally responsiveness of technology to the Ghanaian disability community. Participants indicated they were disconnected from the program because the technological devices were foreign and not connected to their indigenous culture.

INTRODUCTION

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) in some part of Africa and especially in Ghana are deprived of many human rights, including education, healthcare, shelter, water, and food. As indicated by Abebrese (2011), "Persons with disabilities and their families also are more likely to experience economic and social disadvantage than those without disabilities" (p. 3). This chapter will describe policies and policy implementation outcomes in Ghana. It will also discuss how to apply the findings to US Pre-K-12 schooling for immigrants from Ghana and similar contexts. Finally, the author will present the research methods

and result from the study. In Ghanaian communities, one can easily see that denial and exclusion are the biggest challenge, leaving persons with disabilities disproportionately affected. Ironically, there are various policies, including the social protection program, being implemented in Ghana to reduce poverty, but it is unclear whether and how PWDs will be fully included. Examples of this program include the RLG Information Communication and Technology (ICT), Assistive Devices, and the Rehabilitation trainings in Ghana. Unfortunately, PWDs are generally absent in many policies and programs that focus on vulnerable populations, and a large number of PWDs are still begging on the streets of Ghana. Examining the experiences of PWDs in these social protection programs will provide insight and understanding of the extent of PWDs inclusion in these programs and illuminate the best ways to advocate for their needs.

This study examines and provides further evidence on the ways Ghanaian cultural values have influenced Ghana's formal education system hence; new technology needs to be culturally oriented and diverse to affect PWDs positively in the classroom and in the community. It also informs educators, especially US PreK-12 educators and practitioners, about culturally responsive practices and how they can be proactive in meeting the needs of new immigrant populations from Ghana and similar contexts.

Fueled by their personal stories, this chapter shifts the focus of systemic structures and policy rhetoric to the realities of PWDs, the majority of who are currently denied their rights to inclusive education. It also uses the findings regarding participants' personal experiences to develop a nationwide education advocacy media campaign that will result in well-structured policy rooted in the Ghanaian culture to help the country's PWDs.

BACKGROUND

World Report on Disability published by the WHO and World Bank in 2011, the first report of its kind, contained a section devoted to disability and development, emphasizing how "disability is a development issue, because of its bidirectional link to poverty" Grech and Soldatic (2016, p.5). In view of this, most developing countries like Ghana are trying to make life comfortable for their PWDs in diverse ways in the classroom and one method is the Social Protection Program. In every country, the core principle behind any Social Protection policy is to provide or reduce the poverty level of the people in the society which are classified as the most vulnerable group. Although there exist many different definitions of Social Protection, Abebrese (2011), defined Social Protection as "having security in the face of vulnerabilities and contingencies, it is having access to health care and it is about working in safety" (p. 3). Social Protection is an important strategy to protect people from chronic poverty, risks, and disasters. In other words, as stated by Corsino (1985), "it involves attempts by government to ameliorate social problems through the provision of basic goods and services" (p. 244). Social protection also provides financial support for people who are not able to work for a limited duration because of maternity or illness, and income security for residents in old age and with disabilities.

Since its independence in 1957, Ghana has regarded formal education as a fundamental human right for all its citizens, and it has enshrined this right in the legal framework of education that was established in the 1961 Education Act. The IE Policy in the Ghanaian context is expected to provide a platform for addressing the varied educational needs of all Ghanaians of school age using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. All these definitions stressed the fact that, Ghana is committed to providing equal and equitable education for its citizens, therefore the Social Protection is about getting rid

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