

An Examination of Social Status of Pupils with Disabilities in Ghanaian Primary Schools: An Insight into Social Inclusion and Teachers' Self-Efficacy

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Abstract:

This study examined social status of pupils with disabilities and teacher's self-efficacy to support their learning and socialization. Using quantitative research approach questionnaires were used to collect data. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and multiple regression. In the theoretical framework of Allport Inter-group Contact the results show that Ghanaian primary schools teachers recognize inclusive education, however their classroom practices affected the social status of pupils with disabilities. The findings show minimal levels of teachers' self-efficacy in forging intergroup contact. The implication of the findings is that teachers play a crucial role in social inclusion in that inclusion improves both social skills and academic performance of all pupils. Further implications for successful implementation of IE are discussed in the study.

Key words: social status, disabilities, teacher self-efficacy, inclusive education

Introduction

Social status

Social status refers to level of acceptance of the pupils with disabilities by his/her non-disabled classmates. This level of acceptance (or status) is classified into three categories – accepted, average, and rejected – and can be measured using socio-metric techniques (Cillessen & Bukowski, 2000; Farmer & Farmer, 1996; Roberts & Zubrick, 1992; Sale & Carey, 1995).

Wang (2010) views the social status of students as being linked to their interactions with one another. Through social interactions and contact, pupils gain more knowledge and acquire social skills while promoting intercultural understanding (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; LiU, 2010; Magnan & Back, 2007; Wang, 2010; Wilkinson, 1998). Social skills and other competences, which pupils gain, increase their self-confidence in the learning process thanks to collaboration. The researchers listed inclusion in schools within the framework of curriculum change, to reflect the sensitivity of teaching all types of students – including those with disabilities. Thus, by using diverse curricula, instructional practices and material provision, schools and teaching should be structured in such a way that students with disabilities and those without can have positive social contact, and thus promote one another's social status (Roberts & Zubrick, 1992).

Studies by Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004 and 2010) and Philpott, Furey, & Penney (2010) suggest that collaboration is one of many ways of effecting social interaction, due to its significant role of promoting learning and aiding in the acquisition of social competence. According to Philpott, Dooley, O'Reilly & Lupton (2011), collaboration through dialogue allows pupils to discuss their ways of solving problems by explaining how and why they defend their work. Pupils' social status depends on their social inclusion in class activities, which also makes the concept of social inclusion relevant to this study.

Measuring social status: Social status can be measured by using various measuring techniques to define the extent to which a student is liked by his/her peers (Cillessen & Bukowski, 2000).

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The most common of these measurements, according to researchers, is the socio-metric technique, which is used to measure the social status of pupils with disabilities in classes (Cillessen & Bukowski, 2000; Farmer & Farmer, 1996).

The procedure followed in using this technique is to employ the nomination-based approach, in which pupils complete a social acceptance form to indicate who they would least like to play with/do activity with, and which peers they would most like to play with/do an activity with. The 1983 socio-metric classification by Newcomb and Bukowski (cited in Cillessen & Bukowski, 2000), was made up of five socio-metric status groups of those who are popular, those who are not popular and rejected, those who are neglected (Sale & Carey, 1995). The other groups are those who are controversial and average. A most liked score is termed a positive nomination, while a least liked score is termed a negative nomination. As mentioned, for the sake of the present study nominations are categorised according to accepted, ignored or rejected. Positive nomination is thus assigned to 'accepted' and negative to 'rejected'. Studies show that many students with disabilities fall into the rejected category (Favazza & Odom, 1997; Ochoa & Olivarez, 1995; Roberts & Zubrick, 1992; Sale & Carey, 1995). The validity of a socio-metric task in educational research is strong, because it predicts the performance of individual actions (Hoffman, Wilcox, Gomez, & Hollander, 1992).

Social inclusion

Many studies have explored social inclusion in relation to Inclusive Education (IE) and its positive effects on learning of pupils and their social skills (OECD, 2013; Kuitinnen, 2017; Kemple et al., 2002; Klinger & Vaughn, 1999; Pavri & Luftig, 2000).

This concept refers to the successful acceptance of pupils with disabilities by those who have no disabilities in the same class, and pupils with disabilities being able to take part in classroom activities, with rightful membership of the classroom community. This acceptance is evident in the way the pupils interact with one another and the relationships they share. Several studies stated in this proposal relate to a component of social inclusion, which may pertain to peer interaction, membership in the classroom, social status or relationships. These factors are bound to reflect on social inclusion.

One of the main goals of IE is social inclusion (Schorr, 1997; Stainback & Stainback, 1996). Inclusive classroom settings provide opportunities for disabilities to socialise with those without disabilities. Many researchers claim that the first motive for any parents or guardians to send their children to school is the opportunity to form social relationships (Fisher, Sax, Rodifer & Pumpian 1998). It is not always given that children with dysfunctional abilities get an opportunity to socialise at home and are therefore sent to school to encounter their peers or others. Social interactions have been proven to be a good way of learning, as far as children are concerned (Fisher, Roach & Frey, 2002). Many studies in different countries report on the low social status of pupils who have disabilities, and among factors contributing to problems relating to this in schools are attitudes of teachers towards inclusion, teachers' competences or self-efficacy and the teaching practices, which teachers adopt within inclusive classrooms. The study in Ghana is no exception, as these issues affect the social acceptance of pupils with disabilities as regard their non-disabled groups in classes.

Much existing research pays attention to the academic achievement and performance of pupils with disabilities in classes. OECD countries have focused more on factors related to the social inclusion of all pupils in classrooms irrespective of abilities or disabilities (OECD, 2013, 2014b; see also Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995; Kemple et al., 2002; Klinger & Vaughn, 1999; Pavri & Luftig, 2000; Vaughn, Kim, & Sloan, 1990; Vaughn, Elbaum, Schumm & Hughes, 1998; Williams & Downing, 1998; Ochoa and Olivarez 1995).

Most studies in the area of social inclusion show that children who have learning problems due to their disabilities physically and mentally are accepted by those children without such problems. In their studies, Kennedy, Shukla and Fryxell (1997), Favazza and Odom (1997) and Pearl & Farmer (1998) compared the social interactions of pupils with disabilities and those without disabilities within schools practicing inclusion, with schools that were not inclusive. They found that socialisation among pupils with disabilities and those without disabilities was higher in inclusive classrooms than in schools with non-inclusive classrooms. Teachers were also supportive of inclusion in schools operating within IE setting than in non-inclusive classes.

A striking conclusion that can be reached is thus that there tends to be a higher level of acceptance by both teachers and other pupils with respect to the social inclusion of pupils with disabilities. Le Mare and De La Ronde (2000), and Sale & Carey (1995) found that pupils with disabilities were not accepted by pupils without disabilities in non-inclusive schools.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy concept refers to perceived ability to carry out a desired action (Bandura, 1986). In this study, self-efficacy refers to a teacher's perceived ability to meet the demands of an inclusive school, including forging social inclusion through interactions with others. Exploring teachers sense of efficacy in inclusion by many researches using different sense of efficacy have generated different results. Common to many studies on self-efficacy is that training in special education, experience and good class management and control is positively related to high levels of self-efficacy Kuitinnen (2017) and Kuyini, Ishwar, Desai and Sharma (2018).

Jordan, Lindsay and Stanovich (1997) posits that self-efficacy predicts achievement and performances and teachers knowledge increases their confidence level of performing an action (Lumpe, Czerniak and Haney, 1998). A belief in one's own abilities and efforts is reported to be a better predictor of what one does and how one behaves, than knowledge and skills. This concept has been applied in various educational settings (Pijares, 1996). Many studies relate teacher self-efficacy to teacher attitudes towards inclusion. Various studies have found that teachers' perceived competences are good predictors of their attitudes towards IE. and Stanovich and Jordan (1998) identify a positive relationship between a the beliefs of a teacher and how s/he responds to the individual needs of different pupils in classes. These findings are supported by researchers who conclude that there are links and high correlations between teachers' self-efficacy and the level of their interactions with students. Lumpe et al. (1998). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) note a direct relationship between teacher behaviour in the classroom and teacher self-efficacy. They posit that teachers' self-efficacy influences the effort they put into teaching, the goals they set and their level of aspiration.

Theoretical Framework

The Intergroup Contact Theory

This theory posits that direct contact with different opposing groups is socially positive for both and minimises misunderstandings, stereotypes suspicion and discrimination among and between groups (Pettigrew, 2011; Dovidio, Gaertner, &Validzic, 1998). The theory was first proposed by Allport in 1954, and further explains and clarifies that bringing members of opposing groups together should be done on purpose under certain given conditions. This should operate strictly under conditions involving cooperation, equal status and personal acquaintance, to improve attitudes towards the out-group and facilitate intergroup harmony. These conditions are met, to a large extent, through structured intergroup encounters that emphasise commonalities (Cook, 1978) or through contact between friends (Pettigrew, 1997, 1998; Turner, Hewstone, &Voci, 2007).

This theory further states that the nature of contact between two groups determines the social acceptance or rejection of minority group members (Allport, 1954). Over the past half century this theory has been a guiding framework for research on reducing intergroup tensions (Brown &Hewstone, 2005; Dovidio et al., 1998; Pettigrew, 1998) and, indeed, there is impressive evidence that positive contact is associated with more favourable attitudes toward the out-group (Pettigrew &Tropp, 2006).

Supporting this theory is Bandura's Theory of Social Learning, which sees learning as a socialisation process, where learners interact with each other to develop various skills, including social competence (Bandura, 1997). Social competence depends on attitudes towards the individual/group: if attitudes are favourable, socialisation brings harmony and emotional support. Hoem (2000) differentiates between primary and secondary socialisation: in the former, a child interacts with parents who serve as primary contact, passing on the values and ideals of the family in order to effect family integration; the latter is where the teacher/people outside the family take on the task of initiating the child into the ideals and values of the society. An adult/teacher initiating a child into the school requires skills and other qualities which must be passed on to the child to bring about social acceptance by his/her peers. Thus, pupils with diverse needs require contact not only with adults but also their peer group, to be seen as social equals.

Many studies state that not all types of contact between diverse groups lead to acceptance. There is a common belief that merely bringing diverse groups of people together facilitates acceptance, yet Allport (1954) stresses that it is not that simple – there is a formula for successful acceptance under specific conditions of contact.

“Prejudice may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of a common goal. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom or local atmosphere), and provided it is a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups”. (Allport, 1954, p. 281). Thus, the three factors that have a positive influence on intergroup contacts are equal status within the situation, common goals and support from someone in authority. Allport’s formula is supported across a variety of situations, groups and societies (Amir & Sharan, 1984; Favvaza & Odom, 1997; Pettigrew, 1998; Wittig & Grant-Thompson, 1998).

Supporting Allport’s (1954) theory, Amir and Sharan (1984) stress that although direct contact between different groups may be essential for positive interactions, it is not sufficient. They also believe that well-controlled contact between children from different ethnic groups in a single school can positively affect intergroup relations.

Three characteristics of the contact situation encourage rapprochement between the different groups: (1) intimate contact permits the discovery of unique aspects of one’s counterpart in the other group. As a result people relate to each other as individuals, not as representative of groups; (2) a social atmosphere or norms that encourage interpersonal and intergroup contact can facilitate rapprochement and greater understanding between members of different ethnic groups; (3) situations that foster interdependence between participants lead to reciprocal rapprochement. (Amir & Sharan, 1984). In IE, the theory is impactful. “Mere geographical inclusion (i.e., assembling of all learners including those with mental, intellectual and physical challenges in the same classroom) just like that will not fulfil the main goal of IE” (Amir & Sharan, 1984, p. 182).

Various researchers point to the fact that status of pupils with mental and intellectual challenges is low in inclusive classrooms (Le Mare & Ronde, 2000; Ochoa & Olivarez, 1995; Pavri & Luftig, 2000). However, studies on collaborative inclusive classrooms which use peer-tutoring reflect optimistic results regarding the social inclusion of such students (Al-Ramiah & Hewstone, 2011; Crisp & Turner, 2013; Klinger & Vaughn, 1999; Tausch and Hewstone, 2010; Vaughn, Elbaum, Shumm & Hughes, 1998). These results support Allport’s and Amir’s conditions for interdependence and the common goals necessary for contact to have a positive outcome.

There is also evidence of how the other two factors mentioned by Allport (authority and equal group status) influence outcomes academically and socially of pupils with mental and intellectual retardation in a positive way. Favazza and Odom (1997) found that providing information and establishing contact between two different learner groups (those with mental and intellectual retardation and those without) leads to greater social interaction between the two groups. Important here is the role of the teacher in accepting both on fair grounds, thereby establishing an understanding of equal status between the two groups.

At this juncture, it may therefore be concluded that as referred by Intergroup Contact Theory, those teaching practices which facilitate contact between the two groups of learners in an interdependent manner are most appropriate for social inclusion. The conduciveness of teaching practices of the instructor in this case the teacher is because the teacher plays the role of a facilitator and as an authority figure and not authoritative. – provided the teacher acts as facilitator and authority figure. This role is not played in isolation but constitutes an inextricable established link between attitude of the teacher he or she is in contact with (teacher quality in teaching and readiness to forge positive interaction) (Cook et al., 2000; Jordan, Lindsay, & Stanovich, 1997).

Studies by Parvi & Monda-Amaya, (2000), Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, (2001) affirm that effective instruction in inclusive set-ups demands incessant change in the mode and methods of teaching. Not only that, but also a continuous modification of the frequency and quality of interaction between teachers and students, a teacher’s knowledge of, and attitude toward, a certain type of pupils can exert a significant influence on children’s behaviours in inclusive school set-up. The literature and discussions from the theoretical framework of this study therefore brings to the light that there is a relationship between key variables mentioned and learning of multicultural groups including those with disabilities. By properly and meticulously harnessing the interplay between key variables such as those of teachers and principals, many pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities have a higher probability receiving additional instructional attention.

The opposite effect may be the case, where pupils with learning problems with inappropriate practices or behaviours of instructors are unlikely to receive appropriate educational interactions and opportunities. The relevance of Inter-group Contact Theory in the context of this study is that teachers’ classroom practices is likely to influence the social status of students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

Research aims and objectives

The main aim of this study is to examine the social status of pupils with disabilities with relation to teacher self-efficacy to forge social interaction among and between different groups. It also explored teachers' instructional competencies to support pupils with disabilities in regular classrooms in Ghana. Based on these aims the specific ^{research} questions are as follows:

- (1) What are teachers' competencies on the social status of pupils with disabilities?
- (2) What factors affect the learning and social status of pupils with disabilities?

Hypothesis:

Teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy and classroom instructions will predict the social status of pupils with disabilities in the classroom.

Method

To generate data for this study, 118 teachers and principals as well as 200 pupils were involved. Pupils who carried out a socio-metric task hailed from ten schools. Ten of the pupils had severe disabilities (mental retardation and physical disabilities).

Sample sizes from ten to 100, with clustering around 50, are advocated (Rubinstein, 1994, p. 80). Where factor analysis is involved, a minimum sample of 100 is recommended (Hair, Black, Babin&Anderson, 2010). Other researchers even recommend less than 100 when the achievement of a maximum variation is required (Baum, 2002).

Questionnaires

In total, 120 questionnaires were distributed to teachers, and 118 were returned. In addition, as mentioned earlier, ten principals and 200 pupils took part in the research activity.

Out of the many concerns one included key concern pointed to examining the attitudes and knowledge of many teachers and pupils.

Instrumentation

The following questionnaires, consisting of six sets and Classroom Observation Guide for Social Inclusion were employed in the process of data collection.

Students' sociometric task:

This is a Peer Rating measure for student participants, used by researchers. It was first developed in 1978 by Agard, Veldman, Kaufman and Semmel (as cited by Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Martinez, 2002) and used by various researchers including Ruffina and Kuyini (2012). It involved students rating every other student in the class in terms of how much he/she liked each other student and who they play with. Researchers such as Kuyini and Ruffina contended that rating students this way provided the status of each student with disability in the classrooms.

Teachers' sense of self-efficacy scale:

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kind of things that create difficulties for teachers in their activities Ruffina and Kuyini (2012). Self-efficacy shows the extent to which teachers believe they can perform specific behaviours in order to attain certain goals.

Result

The questionnaire on teachers' self-efficacy is designed to make it easy to figure out practice-related issues challenging for teachers to handle. The scale used here, ranged from Nothing (not doing anything) to having great influence in respect of 24 questions. Descriptive statistics were then calculated based on teachers' ability to forge social interaction between student groups. The questionnaire on KIES and teachers' self-efficacy revealed how teachers perceive behavioral control and the influence they have on different types of pupils. Teachers and principals responded to both closed-ended questions and questionnaires, while students responded to a socio-metric task with closed-ended questions. The questions are linked and address both the attitudes of teachers in IE and the social status of pupils with disabilities, which is linked to teachers' self-efficacy.

By way of review, a summary of the respondents' background information is presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3. Of the five female and five male principals, the majority were in the age group 44 years and over, and most of them had more than 15 years' working experience in the education sector (n=6, 60%). Four principals had no experience and were new to their schools. Teachers within the age groups 20–30 and 31–40 numbered 38 (35.2%). Several teachers aged 20–30 (35.2%) had little or no teaching experience.

Table 1: Level of principals' qualifications

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Some training	7	70.0	70.0	70.0
No training	3	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Principals' and teachers' experience

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
0–5 years	38	35.2	35.2	35.2
6–10 years	34	31.5	31.5	72.0
11–15 years	24	22.2	22.2	96.0
15+ years	12	11.1	11.1	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows a balanced gender representation of principals (50%), with many of them having had some training in inclusion (70%), while few (30%) had received no training. However, some of the principals with no training had experience working with pupils with disabilities, due to their long-term service.

Table 3: Teachers' background information

Variable	Number	Percentage
Gender	Female = 60 Male = 48	55.6% 44.4%
Class size	Small classes = 45 Large classes = 53	45.9 % 54.1 %
Students with disabilities in class	Pupils with disabilities in class = 58 No disabled students in class = 50	53.7% 46.3%
Training in inclusion	Some training = 28 No training = 80	25.9% 74.1%
Experience with pupils with disabilities	Some experience = 48 No experience = 60	45.0% 55.0%

In Table 3 female teachers outnumbered male teachers and were over-represented (55.6% vs. 44.4%) (average class size: 49, see Table 3). 50% of the schools were in rural areas, the other 50% in urban areas.

The data show that a few male teachers and many female teachers completed their training over 20 years ago. One of the principals was of the view that teachers who completed their training in the 1990s and prior to that, had greater tolerance for pupils with disabilities.

Table 4: Cross-cultural knowledge of the needs of diverse pupils

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Below-average knowledge	24	22.2	22.2	22.2
Good knowledge	44	40.7	42.7	66.0
Very good knowledge	40	37.1	37.1	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Cross-cultural knowledge to assess and identify the needs of pupils with disabilities

	N	Mean	Std. dev.	Std. error	95% Confidence interval for mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower bound	Upper bound		
20–30 yrs	30	2.73	.458	.118	2.48	2.99	2	3
31–40 yrs	36	1.69	.602	.151	1.37	2.01	1	3
41yrs & over	42	1.95	.780	.179	1.57	2.32	1	3
Total	108	2.10	.763	.108	1.88	2.32	1	3

For more background information on teachers and principals, a One-Way Analysis of Variance was carried out of their cross-cultural knowledge of different categories of pupils. There was a significant difference in the analysis between the different categories. The age groups 20–30, and 30 and over (see Tables 4 and 5). More experienced teachers (30+ years of age) had some knowledge concerning the differences and diverse needs of pupils with disabilities and could better assess and identify their needs than their younger counterparts.

Based on teachers' and principals' background data in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, questionnaires were employed to answer the following research questions:

- 1-What are teachers' competencies on the social status of pupils with disabilities?
- 2-what factors affect the learning and social status of pupils with disabilities?

The results in Table 6 showed that teachers' competencies and their attitudes affected pupils learning more than the school environment.

Table 6: Factors affecting learning and social status

	N	Mean	SD
Teacher's competence affected my learning	200	6.30	6.06
Teacher's attitude affected my learning	200	5.14	1.20
School environment affected my learning	200	4.63	1.65
Total	200		

When the 200 pupils were asked to rate factors that affected their learning and social status, the analysis showed that many considered teacher competence (M=6.3) and attitude issues (M=5.1) as affecting their learning, more so than issues related to the school environment (M=4.6).

Table7: Peer acceptance

	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Not accepted by peers	22	5.7143	.56061	.12234
Accepted by peers	12	3.4545	1.75292	.52853

However, in comparing the mean scores of those who were accepted by their peers and those who were not, the latter had an overall higher mean (M=5.7) on the perceived effect of school factors on their learning, than the former (M=3.5). The mean differences were statistically significant ($p=.00$). However, there were no significant differences between the two groups on their rating of teachers' competence and teachers' attitudes to learning and the social status of pupils (see Table7).

In Table 7, most pupils who scored a mean of 5.7143 on teacher competence as a factor of their learning and school environment had a severe form of disability. Hence, further analysis was done regarding these pupils, especially in terms of the aforementioned two variables. The findings showed that many pupils perceived the school environment and culture as not being friendly. They felt excluded, explaining that they did not have good relations with most of their peers, and did not find teachers helpful in their situation.

Table 8: Raising social status of pupils with disabilities

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Cum.
Help pupils who are lonely to have contact with peers	10	25%	25
Encourages interactive learning in class	5	12.5%	37.5
Intervenes when pupil is being teased	15	37.5%	75
Helps pupils with academic work	10	25%	25
Total	40	100.0	100.0

An overview of the data in Table 8, on the social status of pupils with disabilities, suggests that teachers do little to forge intergroup contact between disabilities and their peers (encourages interactive learning in the class [12.5%]; helps pupils who are lonely [25.5%]). Ten pupils had severe disabilities, and as a result a further analysis was carried out to determine the actual percentage of those who bullied and teased others.

Table 9: Pupils with disabilities who were teased and bullied

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Cum.
No	2	20%	20
Yes	8	80%	80
Total	10	100%	100

Eight of the ten pupils with severe disabilities reported being teased and bullied (see Table 9). Pupils were also asked to respond to what teachers did to stop others from teasing or bullying them. Responses of teachers were therefore analysed as shown in the next table.

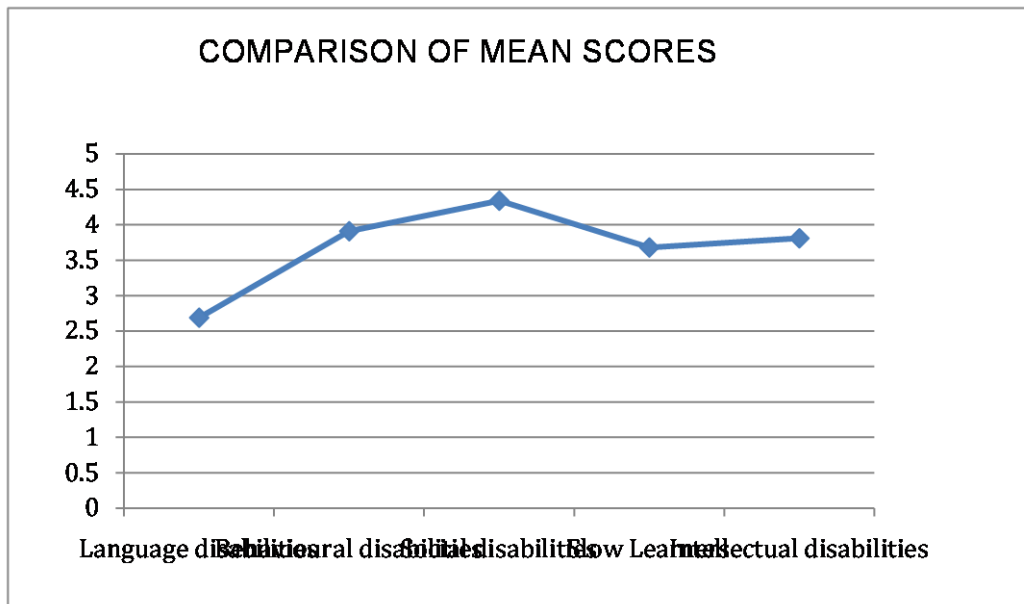
Table 10: Teachers' response to teasing or bullying of pupils with disabilities

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Cum.
Nothing	6	60%	60
Something	4	40%	40
Total	10	100%	100

Table 10 shows that nearly 60 per cent of teachers did nothing to stop pupils with disabilities from being teased or bullied at school. This implies that teachers' attitudes towards including pupils with disabilities, as regards implementing IE, are not that positive. Intergroup Contact Theory suggests that teachers' intervention, both in social and academic settings, is needed to enable learning for all pupils.

There were, however, different types of disabilities, and the findings show that pupils with aggressive behaviour and those with language disorders (such as speech difficulties) were less accepted by their non-disabled peers. On the other hand, pupils who were shy, withdrawn and slow learners were more accepted and less teased by their non-disabled peers. Teachers also related better to pupils whose disabilities fall more under social factors, than those with behavioural and language disorders (see Figure 1) on the ATIES mean scores. The lowest mean score here was the language factor, at 2.69, while the mean score on social factors was highest at 4.34.

Figure 1: Comparison of mean scores



Based on the above, teachers’ mean percentage scores on three items related to teacher self-efficacy, were calculated. The results showed that teachers used more basic teaching practices (30.1%) and were less inclined to facilitate social interaction between students (18.5%) (see Table 11).

Table 11: Mean percentage of items in COGSI sub-scales

Classroom practice (COGSI sub-scales)	Average percentage
Basic teaching strategies	30.1%
Supporting social interactions	18.5%
Supporting instructional strategies	17.6%

Table 11 shows that teachers scored higher in classroom practices on all three items where there was only one pupil with disabilities, but where there were more than three pupils with disabilities, teachers scored lower on effective classroom practices (including social interaction).

Hypothesis: Teachers’ attitudes, self-efficacy and classroom instructions will predict the social status of pupils with disabilities in the classroom.

Teachers’ self-efficacy, attitudes and practices, as exhibited in the classroom, were tested with respect to the social status of pupils with disabilities, by employing a multiple regression analysis which considered all variables to be predictive of the social status of pupils with disabilities. It was found that COGSI (Classroom Observation Guide for Social Inclusion)-basic instruction and COGSI-facilitative instruction predicted the social status of pupils with disabilities significantly. There were significant differences (see Table 12). The remaining teacher variables were shown not to predict the social status of pupils with disabilities.

Table 12: Regression model summary: Teacher variables as predictor of social status of pupils with disabilities

	Coef	SE Coef	p
Constant	0.4830	0.1237	
COGSI Basic Teaching Strategy sub-scale	-0.04859	0.01869	0.029
COGSI Supportive Instruction sub-scale	0.08437	0.01869	0.001
R Square = 69.8%			
Adjusted R Square = 62.0%			

Tables 12 show that not all classroom activities facilitate social interactions for pupils with disabilities. It could therefore be argued that basic instruction (the arrangement of the classroom, presentation clarity and giving pupils a chance to answer) strongly predicted the social status of pupils with disabilities, without facilitating social interaction.

Table 13: Multiple regression of COGSI with social status of pupils with disabilities

Classroom practice (COGSI)	Correlation with social status	p-value
Basic teaching strategies	-0.058	0.9
Supportive interactions	0.593	0.04*
Supportive instruction	0.685	0.01*
Total COGSI score	0.549	0.07

* $p < 0.05$

In terms of teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy and teachers' practices in the classroom being predictive of the social status of disabilities, a correlation was carried out with COGSI, in respect of the social status of disabilities (see Table 13). This multiple regression included ATIES, COGSI and TSES, and omitted teacher background variables, which gave a clear picture of the regression equation.

Table 13 shows that even though the total COGSI score was not significant ($p=0.07$), supportive interaction and instruction were positively correlated ($p=0.04$ and $p=0.01$ respectively) with the social status of disabilities. This is a clear indication that the supportive interactions and instructions of teachers have a significant role in the social status of disabilities. Similarly, the examination of other key themes, the dichotomies between pupils with different categories of disability as regards their contacts or interactions were not significant.

Table 14: Means and standard deviations for social exclusion

Scores	Between groups	With groups
M	14.67	10.90
SD	5.21	4.50

Further analysis of the outcomes was done in another setting where other forms of disability were tested (see Table 14), to determine the differences between these two groups of pupils regarding social isolation or exclusion. The differences showed were significant [$F(1, 54)=4.78, p < .03$]. Pupils with disabilities saw themselves as much more lonely than their counterparts (see Table 30), with mean differences and standard deviation. Pupils with disabilities were either rejected or completely ignored. A One-way ANOVA was further carried out between different categories of student about their social interactions in Table 15.

Table 15: One-way ANOVA of social exclusion

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	1419.892	4	354.723	5.256	.000
Within groups	13024.472	193	67.489		
Total	14444.364	197			

The analyses (ANOVA) (see Table 15) revealed no significant group differences between students with different categories of disability in terms of initiated interactions with classmates [$F(4, 53)=0.84, p=0.50$], received interactions with classmates [$F(4, 53)=0.43, p=0.79$] and interactions with the teacher [$F(4, 53)=1.00, p=0.41$]. The results here mostly reflect the responses of students with mild social disabilities.

The sociometric status variables included accepted, average and rejected. This was explained as popular students, those who were ignored, and those who were difficult to play with. These formed the dependent variables, while the independent variable was whether the student had a diagnosed social problem which contributed to him/her being lonely. What was found was rather a perceived loneliness, because the students with disabilities had social competence, as observed.

Discussion

The overall results show that teachers' classroom practices influenced pupils' learning and their social status. The findings of the study (Table 1) showed that even though the total COGSI score was not significant ($p=0.07$), supportive interaction and instruction were positively correlated ($p=0.04$ and $p=0.01$ respectively) with the social status of disabilities. This is a clear indication that the supportive interactions and instructions of teachers have a significant role in the social status of disabilities.

Findings on teacher self-efficacy and social status of pupils with disabilities showed that in the context of the Inter-group Contact Theory, teachers' behaviours, their knowledge of inclusion and classroom practices influenced the social status of pupils with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Teachers who reported having certain competences in forging intergroup social relations were found to perform instructional activities congruent with IE. Teachers who interacted with pupils had a positive influence on their social interactions, i.e., they created equal status within the groups, with a common goal of establishing an enabling learning environment. Pupils with disabilities, for their part, with the support of authoritarian teachers, claimed to feel safe and confident in their interactions with their peers. Pupils felt that their contact with others, despite being controlled by their teachers, enabled them to see a side of the other that they would not have encountered without being encouraged to establish contact and work together. Non-disabled pupils realised the unique potentials of pupils with disabilities and gave credence to their social competences. This study found that teachers supporting students during group work and other school activities facilitated greater intra-group understanding. Pupils reported learning how to be patient and acquired new skills and ways of doing things. The findings also supported the theoretical framework of this study, namely that when teachers are directly involved in the contact process between different groups of pupils in school it can have positive effects on intergroup relations (see Pettigrew, 1997, 1998, 2011; Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007). These researchers concur that the learning environment of an individual within a group improves, with mutual benefits for everyone, when contact is sanctioned and controlled.

Another important finding was that the one-way between groups ANOVA revealed no significant group differences between pupils with different categories of disability in terms of initiated interactions with classmates especially pupils with mild social disabilities. However, those with severe disabilities. Previous studies by Kuyin et al. (2018) and Kuitinnen. (2017) found that initiated interactions between groups are important and positive in empowering the social status of all pupils including those with disabilities.

If teachers establish contact between groups so that disabilities play and work with those without, it improves interaction and relations. Students become more tolerant of differences – something which might serve to reduce prejudice. It is, however, doubtful whether direct contact can change attitudes, since many share an ideological belief in group inequality. Positive contact with pupils with disabilities might improve affective relations with their non-disabled peers, but cannot change the attitudes of the latter group – or even teachers – to the extent of changing social policy and fighting inequality and injustice outside the school grounds. Similarly, teachers in the studies of Ruffina & Kuyini (2012) and Pettigrew (2011) believe that positive contact between disabilities and those without, thanks to a teacher's intervention, leads disabilities to think and have the belief that the concerns of inequality is being addressed. This implies that the status differentials remain the same, therefore intergroup contact can be misleading. Teachers explained that they not only helped to establish positive relations through contact, but that they had an imagined contact (willingness) and positive presentations of students with disabilities both in class and during recreational activities. Indeed, teachers' indirect contact played a significant role in students' social interactions, contrasting theoretical research with direct/face-to-face contact as a prerequisite for positive intergroup relations between the two opposing groupings.

Not all teachers were engaged in forging intergroup cohesion. As in the case of the current findings of low teachers' competencies in forging social interaction, with 25 per cent of pupils with disabilities ($N=10$) reporting being lonely. This loneliness reflected in one-way ANOVA social exclusion scores, where pupils with disabilities scored higher than their non-disabled peers (14.67 and 10.90 respectively), with a corresponding low score on teachers' self-efficacy in facilitating social interaction (18.5%). Although teachers were engaged in adapting basic strategies of teaching to meet the needs of all pupils, their ability to identify special needs, modify content, perform explicit teaching, do peer tutoring and foster collaboration, was low. It is argued that teachers' perceptions of these different abilities, and their cumulative relevance, can affect educators' self-efficacy beliefs, and how these competencies are actually used in inclusive classrooms.

The one-way ANOVA test indicated some clear differences ($p < .03$) between disabilities and those without. Pupils with disabilities were either rejected or completely ignored, depending on the type of disability. This finding supports previous research by Le Marc and Ronde (2000), Ochoa and Olivarez (1995) and Pavri and Luftig (2000), which highlights the low social status of disabilities with disruptive behaviour.

The findings of the study as regards social status and teacher self-efficacy, show that pupils did not perceive the teachers to be actively involved in including classmates with disabilities in socialisation processes – especially pupils who found it difficult to make friends, and those with learning problems. The common feeling of these pupils was that their teachers did not understand them and were not compassionate enough about their weaknesses. This assertion can be explained by teachers' inability to use diverse teaching methods that could capture the learning needs of those who are slow intellectually and all others, who require extra attention and assistance to learn. Most pupils with disabilities did not perceive schools as inclusive and had developed negative attitudes toward schooling. What came out of the analysis of undergoing study showed little evidence of teachers facilitating intergroup harmony. In terms of their teaching practices, teachers scored a low 17.6 per cent on peer-tutoring and collaboration. Indeed, such dismal scores do not indicate that instructional strategies have been adapted to satisfy all pupils, or particularly those with extra demands. Even though teachers' and principals' knowledge of collaboration was found to be high (based on the mean scores on their responses to KIES), in practice it meant that it had more to do with the entire cohort of pupils, than a certain category of pupils with disabilities.

The severity of their disability tended to influence teachers' attitudes towards, and responses in interacting with, these pupils. In this scenario, teachers' anxieties reflected their feelings or ill-feelings when confronted with the task of attending to disabilities. Teachers' low self-efficacy, as registered in this study, can be explained by their low perceived behavioural control or their lack of knowledge of students' special educational needs, which predicted their negative attitudes towards such individuals. It is no wonder that some pupils with disabilities felt excluded, given the low social competence of the teachers.

Teachers who used collaborative methods of instruction were knowledgeable and utilised diverse instructional activities. They made pupils team up to work on big assignments, in which everyone had to produce a small part of the greater project. The activities, which mainly involved using games and pupil-moderated writing, made disabilities feel included in the class practical event. In the course of this activity, the quality of a teacher's instruction was predicted by his/her beliefs about, and behaviours towards, including all. The level of collaboration in the school formed the subjective norm. Teachers' attitudes were also predicted by their teaching efficacy or their perception of how effectively they employed collaboration in their teaching instruction, to improve intergroup harmony and encourage achievement.

Elbaum and Vaughn (2001), Klinger and Vaughn (1999), McDonnell et al. (2001), Agbenyega and Klibthong (2015), Vaughn et al. (1998), Vaughn and Briggs (2003) suggest that collaborative, inclusive classrooms which use peer-tutoring achieve positive results when it comes to the issue of social inclusion. It is important to note that special needs pupils and those with disabilities are at a multiple identity crossroads. Their different experiences reflect those of marginalised groups, where interaction between conflicting identities results in complex multi-dimensional experiences of power, privilege, oppression, violence and discrimination. A deliberate confrontation of these issues in multi-cultural school settings with openness by teachers and other adult authority members within the schools studied was what this research expected. Sadly, there was no such indication of forging socially inclusive relations.

Teachers' responses showed that many had no adequate knowledge of IE, which highlights their role as facilitators of social interaction. It is argued that teachers' failure to become directly involved in fostering social interaction between pupils with disabilities and non-disabled pupils, likely affected the former's motivation to attend school. This, coupled with insufficient adaptive instruction strategies in class, negatively affected the learning situations of disabilities.

What was rather in findings was that pupils with disabilities who were struggling both socially and to some extent intellectually received less support from their teachers. This confirms research which points out that for a successful implementation of inclusion and for effective learning to take place, teachers and other professionals should be actively involved in establishing positive interactions between different groups of students. Learning is a social process, thus bringing together opposing groups through cooperation, and according them equal status, can improve harmony in the classroom and enhance the implementation of inclusion.

A conscious effort to bring opposing students together may necessitate a positive teacher attitude and enough knowledge of inclusion, in accordance with the Theory of Intergroup Contact. Positive social interaction with pupils with disabilities hinges on both attitudes and knowledge of IE of teachers: the more positive the attitude, the stronger the teachers' inclination and readiness to intervene in pupils' social interaction and learning processes. In exploring teacher efficacy with respect to the social status of disabilities, this study found significant differences in terms of social isolation. Pupils with disabilities scored higher on loneliness than their non-disabled peers, whilst teachers' ability to foster or facilitate interaction between groups scored low. Pupils described loneliness as a feeling of not belonging, which could be explained as a feeling of being rejected or ignored, without there being any justification for such treatment. Social rejection between groups is no different, since it is often baseless and does not mirror reality.

Interestingly, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are strongly correlated to self-efficacy (Briggs, Johnson & Shepherd, 2002). The perceptions teachers have of their own ability to act on behalf of pupils with disabilities were found to be low – this invariably has an effect on their behaviour, perceptions and attitude toward teaching. Thus, the beliefs teachers hold about their own abilities impact the classroom situation they create for pupil social interaction. Teachers' low self-efficacy corresponded with pupils' views that teachers did nothing to support those who were teased or bullied. Thus, teachers' attitudes play a significant role in that they either actively succeed or fail to facilitate social interaction and model recognition of pupils.

As it has been refuted and discussed in the present research, it is not an issue of just putting all different groups together that will facilitate mutual acceptance and respect, but it supports the theoretical framework which argues for a controlled form of togetherness by authority support. Most teachers understood inclusion to imply the lessening of prejudice in schools. However, given the perceived low social status of disabilities, pursuit of a common goal out of common interest is completely lost.

Pupils with behavioural problems were sent out of the class if they were disruptive. The teachers' view was that these pupils were making the class difficult to manage, but many pupils had a different view, arguing that their teachers did not like them. This perception may focus negative attention on so-called disruptive pupils, trapping them in a web of difficulties which will most likely have an adverse effect on their learning. The presence of teachers as both facilitators and authority figures is likely to create a favourable atmosphere which may facilitate positive contact between different groups of pupils. Indeed, an interdependency in all learning situations done in a congenial school environment is likely to be conducive to social inclusion. The quality of a teacher–pupil relationship, where teachers were indifferent in their behaviours to what is demanded to satisfy disability needs, depended on the teachers' knowledge of inclusion, thus proving the link between teachers' self-efficacy and their knowledge of inclusion. Teachers mentioned that they were unwilling to have anything to do with pupils with behavioural difficulties, because they did not feel they were sufficiently competent to deal with those students' problems.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the social status of pupils with disabilities and teacher's self-efficacy and competencies in forging intergroup relations. The low social status of disabilities could be a result of teachers' low competences in adopting appropriate instructional strategies, including facilitating social interactions. Some of the conclusions reached in this study are consistent with those of previous studies, while others are not. Inclusive practices were also found to differ from school to school, while disabilities were treated differently, based on the type of disability and its severity. This finding highlights the need to re-examine teachers' preparedness and competencies in both instructional strategies as well as their supportive social interactions skills in inclusive class settings. In view of this there is the need for an ongoing professional development skills development in a form of frequent workshops both at regional and district levels for teachers. Among the severe disabilities of pupils include serious behavioral problems and intellectual disabilities. Since research shows that teachers prefer on-site training (training at their own schools usually carried out by professionals/experts that are familiar with their challenges, teachers need to support important Life Skills, engage in collaborative planning and teaching and develop a strong behavior management plan (Das, Girchuru, and Singh 2013). Literature indicates that having a successful inclusive classroom depends upon having control of your classroom (Kuyini, Yeboah, Das, Alhassan, and Mangope, 2016).

One major limitation of this study is that the results come from participants from only 2 regions of Ghana out of the 10 regions, so it does not give a true picture of what might have been in the case of the entire teacher and pupils population. This does not however, mar the validity of the findings since a sample of 118 teachers and 200 pupils has a reasonable degree of reliability and must be taken seriously by Ghanaian policy-makers.

The critical findings of 60% of teachers doing nothing to stop bullying in schools is a clear pointer to the Ghana Education Service about attitudes of teachers towards pupils with disabilities and their knowledge of IE. The analysis draws attention on training of teachers both in attitudinal changes and knowledge of inclusion.

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