

GeSCI and the Inclusive Education Agenda in Ghana

A Question of 'Diversification' or 'Leverage'?

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A Question of ‘Diversification’ or ‘Leverage’?

Background

At a discussion between GeSCI and members of the Ghana Education Service (GES) Special Education Division (SpED) in July 2007, it was agreed that GeSCI would explore Assistive Technologies for Special Educational Needs within the framework of Inclusive Education, in order to support the National Education Review Implementation Committee (NERIC) process of transforming schooling/teaching and learning to afford **all students**, irrespective of ability, with the opportunities and means to learn. GeSCI has since provided the SpED with technical support for an internal and cross divisional workshop process to encourage thinking on and to develop a model for Inclusive Education supported by Assistive Technologies within the overarching framework of Education For All (EFA) as defined in the Education Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education Science and Sports (MOESS).

This paper sets out to analyse whether the IE agenda in Ghana represents a question of ‘diversification’ or ‘leverage’ with regard to GeSCI’s role specifically in the Inclusive Education story of Ghana and/ or GeSCI’s role generally as a learning organization. The paper will analyse the challenges and dilemmas for IE implementation in Ghana using a systems analysis approach in order to:

- identify the underlying patterns or structures lurking beneath the challenges;
- reveal places within these structures where there is high *leverage* for addressing the challenges;
- explain four opportunities for leverage that can enable inclusive educational environments within a development context such as Ghana;
- draw conclusions on whether the IE agenda in Ghana represents a question of diversification or leverage for GeSCI in its dual role:
 - as a **strategic advisor** to the MoESS in general and the SpED in particular;
 - as a **learning organization** focused on documenting evolving good practice in Ghana specifically and the development of appropriate tools, frameworks and strategies to effectively integrate and use ICT/AT based solutions for IE in a developing country context generally.

The Thrust towards Inclusive Education in Ghana

The vision of the MOESS as articulated in the Education Strategic Plan (2003 – 2015) is the achievement of an inclusive education system by 2015 (SpED 2005). The IE strategy (see box below) articulated in the SpED's policy framework focuses on the adoption of a social model for provision, which will gradually replace the current medical model.

Inclusion as a new strategy¹

Educational provision within the special education sector has been built around the **medical model** of segregation where the blind, deaf or mentally handicapped were educated in special boarding schools located in the outskirts of towns, separated from society. This medical model contrasts with the **social model**, which encourages learners with disabilities to be included in mainstream schools to become active members of their society.

(ibid:2)

Challenges and Dilemmas for IE Implementation

The challenges facing SpED with regard to implementation of IE are two-fold:

- An understanding of the shift in thinking IE represents – from the ‘medical model’ focus on *small groups* of children with difficulties who need ‘fixing’ via special schooling, to the envisaged ‘social model’ focus on everything that happens in mainstream classrooms and school environments, which can create barriers to learning for *all* children;
- Lack of capacity in terms of material, financial and human resources – a situation which has led to dependency on outside agencies and partners for initiating change and in consequence a dependency on a plethora of provision models (currently standing at six).

The principle difficulty with organizations in Senge's (2006:66) view “is the way they are designed to keep people from seeing important interactions”. The SpED is no exception being one of ten internal divisions of the MoESS, having eight sub-divisions of specialist units, each unit engaging with a labyrinth of national, regional, district and school cluster offices and their respective personnel. There is also SpED's engagement with other agencies, partners, NGOs and communities each with their own organizational structures and systems. There are currently six models of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision in operation in Ghana managed by SpED in collaboration with a multiplicity of partners, of which the four principles are Sight

¹ See also Annex 1- *A Global Perspective on Inclusive Education* and Annex 2: *An Overview of Special Educational Needs (SEN), the Special Education Division (SpED) and Inclusive Education (IE) in Ghana*

Savers International (SSI), GTZ, EQUALL (USAID), and UNESCO. The inevitable disconnects that accumulate in organizational functioning can result in a tendency in Senge’s view “to focus on snapshots of events in isolated parts of the system”, never quite fully engaging with or seeing the “whole pattern of change”, nor the “invisible fabrics of interrelated actions” (ibid: 7).

The Systems Thinking Approach

Systems thinking Senge (ibid:69) says is “a discipline for seeing the ‘structures’ that underlie complex situations, and for discerning high from low leverage.” The essence of systems thinking lies in:

- seeing interrelationships rather than linear cause-effect chains, and
- seeing processes of change rather than snapshots (ibid:73)

He believes that by learning to identify a relatively small number of “structure archetypes” that are common to a large number of management situations, we can begin to see more and more where there is leverage for facing the difficult challenges ahead and to explain these opportunities to others (ibid:94).

To understand the management challenges inherent in moving towards IE implementation in Ghana, requires first and foremost an examination of the structures lurking behind the ‘medical model’ of provision from which the Division wishes to distance itself. The medical model is a view, which avows “to look at the complete child, but the outcome has been merely to label him” (Dunn 1968 cited in Thomas and Vaughan 2004: 36), which “validates the child as being the cause of failure – not the teacher, not the curriculum, nor the teaching methods” (Dissent 1987 cited in Thomas and Vaughan ibid: 77) and which condemns children to being special needs “lifers” in perpetual cycles of special, compensatory and/or remedial educational programmes (Anderson and Pellicer 1990 in Thomas and Vaughan ibid: 89).

The “Reinforcing ‘child as problem’ loop” in Fig.1 describes the system archetype underlying the medical view, in essence a ‘vicious circle’ of labelling, failure and never-ending special education programmes designed to ‘fix’ the problem child.

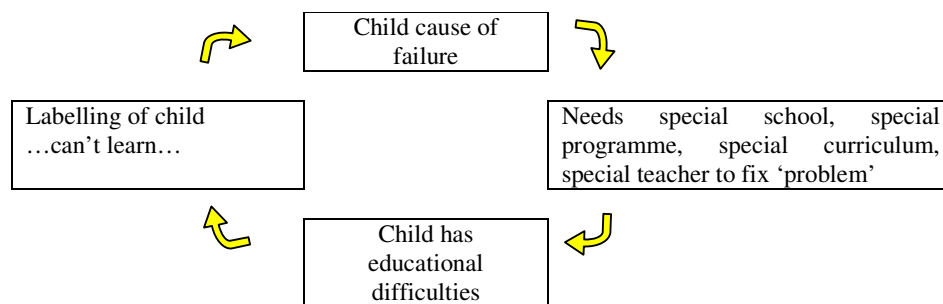


Fig. 1: Medical Model View - Reinforcing ‘Child as Problem’ Loop

In Ghana the ‘growth’ of the ‘medical model view’ of provision epitomized by the special school movement, has been ‘balanced’ by the gradual move towards the ‘social model view’ of provision with the introduction from the late 60s of integration and inclusion pilot programmes and projects. National and International Rights Frameworks (see Annex 1) as well as a growing body of empirical evidence from both OECD and non-OECD countries indicating that “students with disabilities achieve better school results in inclusive settings” (UNESCO 2005) have also been influential in curbing the growth of the ‘medical view’ and accelerating the upsurge throughout the 90s of the pilot initiatives representative of the ‘social view’.

The ‘social view’ according to Ainscow (2004) recognizes that *any* child can experience difficulty in school, but that these difficulties can be a stimulus for improvement of the school learning environment. Peters (2004:12) points to evidence which suggests that IE provision can improve the performance of non-SEN students, in part because the increased attention on classroom practices with regard to “pedagogy and curriculum adaptation (for SEN students) generalizes teaching skills to *all* students” The “Limits to Growth Archetype” (Senge 2006:94) represented in Fig. 2 characterizes the ‘growth’ and ‘balancing’ interactive tensions between the ‘medical’ and ‘social’ views, which are influenced by national and international trends towards more inclusive educational settings.

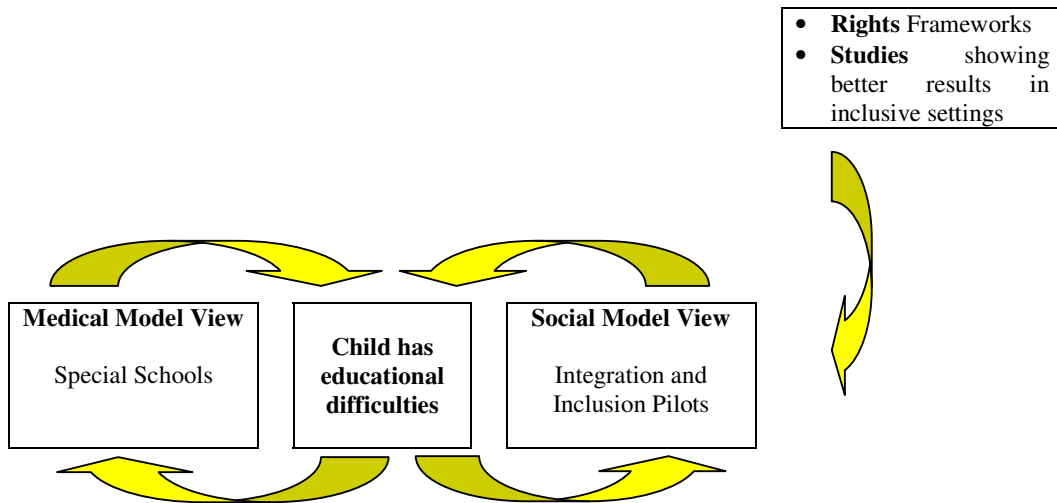


Fig. 2: The Social Model View ‘Limits the Growth’ of the Medical Model View

Nevertheless the apparent limit to the growth of the ‘medical model view’ should be interpreted with caution as Martin (1989 cited in Avoke 2002:775) notes:

The impression created from official government circles is that there is a tendency towards inclusive educational policies, but the irony (from a

practical viewpoint) is an apparent increase in residential schools and the continuing placement of children with learning difficulties in segregated settings; a situation indicating that medical influences remain pervasive.

The irony of the contradictory forces at play can be explained by a third generic pattern known as the ‘shifting the burden’ archetype (Senge 2006:103). This structure is composed of two balancing processes “both trying to adjust or correct the same problem symptom” One process represents a “fundamental solution” and the other a “symptomatic” or “quick fix” solution (ibid:104-105).

The ‘Shifting the Burden’ Story of IE in Ghana

The story of the MoESS policy thrust towards the ‘social model’ view of IE implementation contains all the markers of the ‘shifting the burden structure’ as illustrated in Fig. 3. There is the ‘problem’ of children with educational difficulties. There is a ‘fundamental solution’ to the problem inherent in the MoESS policy thrust towards the ‘social view’ of IE aimed at improving school settings for the benefit of *all* learners. There is the ‘symptomatic solution’ to the problem which has more in common with the ‘medical view’ of creating separate programmes and initiatives for the benefit of *small groups* of learners labeled as having difficulties.

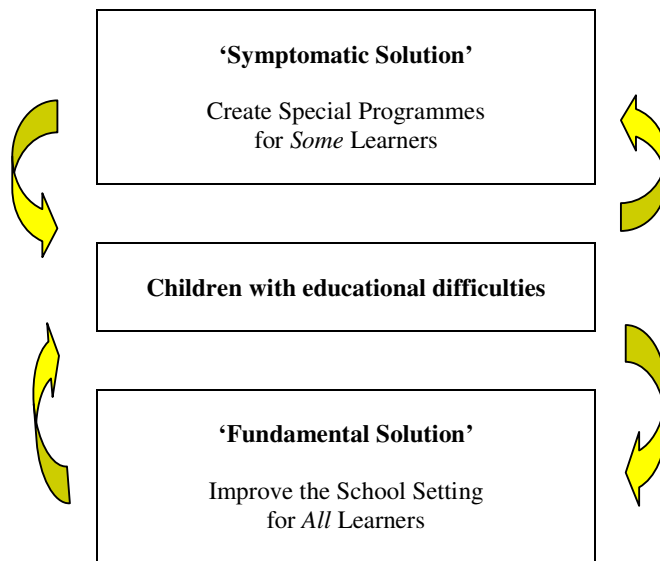


Fig. 3: ‘Shifting the Burden’- from the ‘Fundamental Solution’ to the ‘Symptomatic Solution’

The ‘Fundamental Solution’

Ainscow (2004) describes the fundamental solution inherent in the ‘social view’ of IE as representing a ‘radical shift’ in thinking on educational difficulties. Rather than focusing on the learning problems of a child or a particular group of children, the ‘social’ or ‘curricular’ view focuses on everything in the teaching and learning environment, which can create barriers to learning.. In essence the ‘fundamental solution’ that lies at the heart of the IE approach and illustrated in the balancing process of Fig. 4 “looks into how to transform the education system so that it will respond to the diversity of *all* learners” (Ainscow 1998:375).

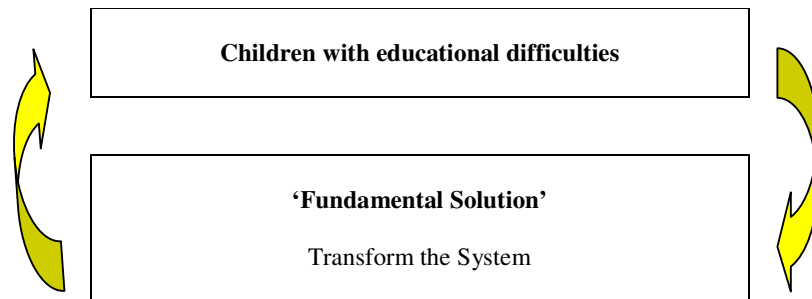


Fig. 4: ‘Fundamental Solution’ - Transform the education system to respond to the diverse needs of *all* learners

Transforming the Ghanaian Education System in Kadingdi’s (2003:13) view represents “an extremely complex task”. He points out that:

...even in 2003, it may be considered that primary education in Ghana is in the midst of a drastic decline in standards, in terms of quantity and quality (USAID/MOE 1996; Avotri, et al. 1999; Dramani 2003; Gyasi 2003; Karikari-Ababio 2003; Nsowah 2003). The pedagogical changes facing teachers, particularly those in rural areas, are complicated by difficulties related to the medium of instruction to be used for minority language groups, shortage of appropriate learning materials (Karikari-Ababio 2003) and lack of professional training among teachers (Scadding 1989; Nsowah 2003

A transformative approach to inclusion according to Ainscow (1998) requires attention to all policies and processes within an education system through a principle of *permeation*. In any educational environment a process of transformation which seeks to permeate all policies will require considerable time to filter through the system. In the complex environment of education in a development context it may involve a ‘delay’ factor of months if not years before the effects of the transformation process become evident (Fig. 5).

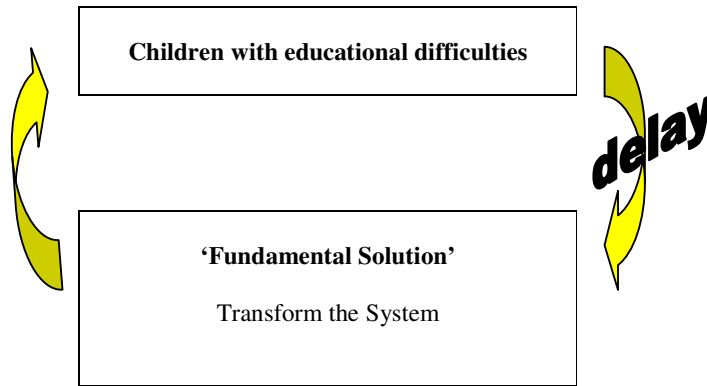


Fig. 5: Delay Factor - Seeing the effects of transformation throughout the system

The 'Symptomatic Solution'

The delay factor in seeing results derived from the 'fundamental solution' sets the scene for the 'symptomatic intervention' or the 'quick fix' solution, represented by the second balancing process of the 'shifting the burden' duo in Fig.6. 'Quick fix' or 'symptomatic' solutions in Ghana manifest themselves in what Kandingi (2003:13-14) describes as the tendency for "both government and donors to seek change at the margins rather than the core of established practice".

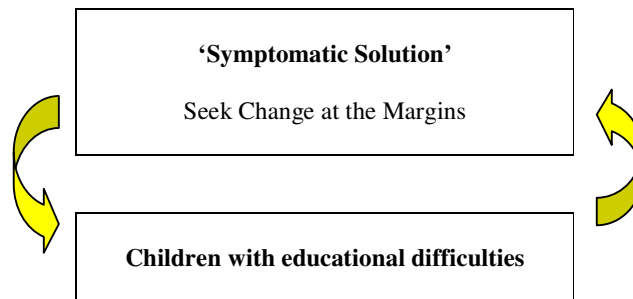


Fig. 6: Symptomatic Solution – Seek change at the margins

The "well intended" symptomatic solutions according to Senge (2006:108) "can actually make matters worse in the long term". In the case of the IE story in Ghana the apparent improvement in provision demonstrated in marginal pilot programmes for special groups of children reduces the need to address the more fundamental problem of the lack of capacity in the education system to reach out and respond to the diverse educational needs of *all* children and in particular the needs of the growing numbers of marginalized and at risk groups. A debilitating side effect is the dependency created in the system on "a plethora of small projects and demonstrations rather than on more coherent and substantial redesign" (op.cit.) as illustrated in Fig. 7.

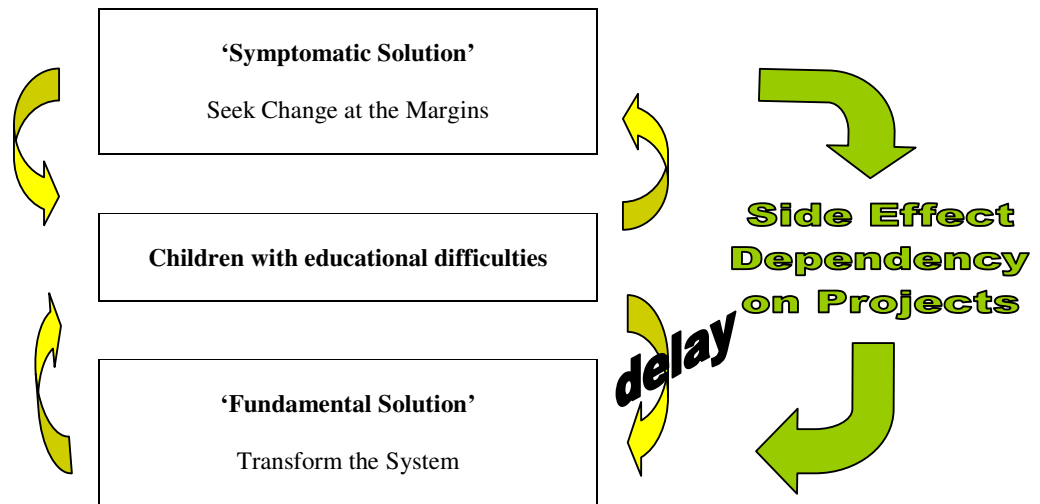


Fig. 7: Side Effect of 'Shifting the Burden'-
Dependency on projects and demonstrations

What makes the 'shifting the burden' structure so insidious is the subtle reinforcing cycle it fosters in the "figure eight" created by the two interacting responses to the problem (Senge 2006:108). The IE figure eight reinforcing cycle recites a story of pressure building up to find provision solutions that are responsive to learner educational difficulties, which leads to the emergence of marginal projects and demonstrations, which relieves the pressure, which leads to a less perceived need to address fundamental problems of quality provision, which leads to weaker quality of provision system side, which leads to more pressure building up, which leads to new marginal projects. Finding leverage in shifting-the-burden structures Senge (ibid:109) explains requires a combination of "strengthening the fundamental response and weakening the symptomatic response".

Finding Leverage - 4 Changes 4 Inclusion

Both the system and its management need fundamental changes and Government has decided not to tinker with marginal adjustments to it but to carry out a radical reform of it.

Education Reform Review Committee Ghana Education Services (2004:7)

To break the insidious hold of the 'symptomatic response', as in the 'marginal adjustments' inherent in the pilot inclusion programmes and strengthen the 'fundamental response' as in the 'radical reform' inherent in whole school improvement, there is a need to adopt a pragmatic and realistic approach, and concentrate on *leveraging* the provision base which exists to achieve the next steps. Ainscow (2004) considers that much of the work should focus on how to bring about

change in the classroom, in the school environment and in the community in relation to what goes on in the school. Fullan (2007:152) agrees that “transforming the *culture* of the school and the systems within which they operate is the main point”. Ainscow (op.cit.) points to the 4 high impact levers of Education Services, Evaluation, Community and IE Principles 4 enabling Inclusive and Effective Learning Environments in school settings (Fig. 8).

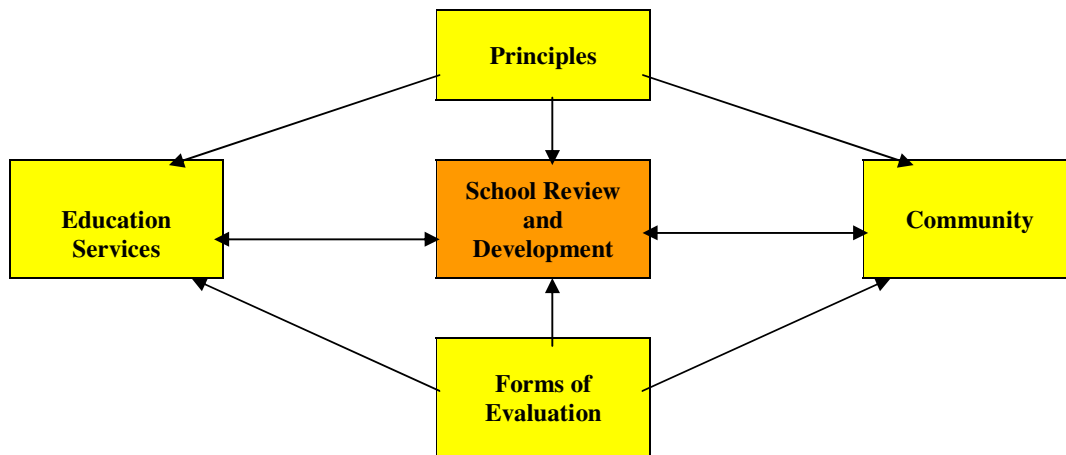


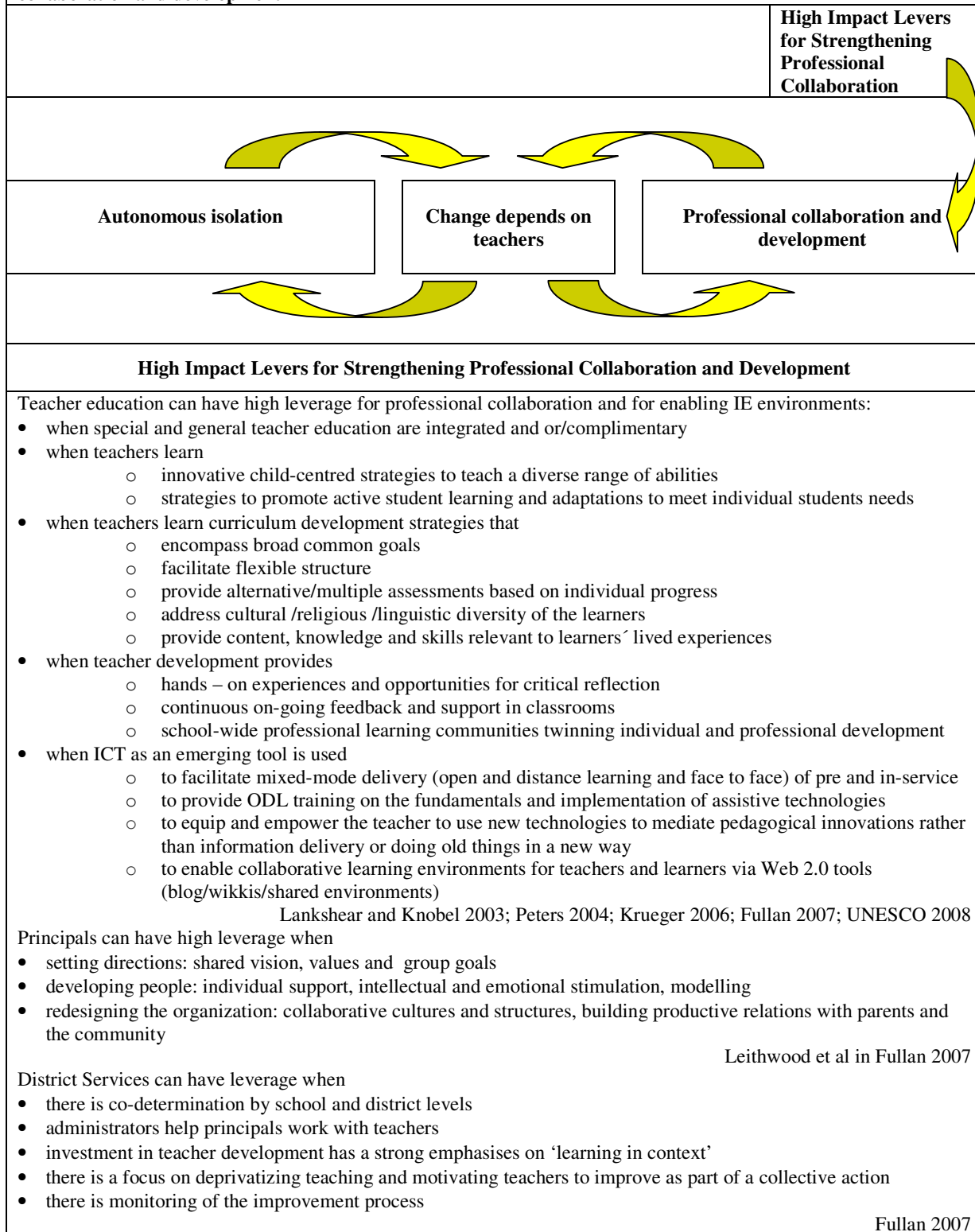
Fig. 8: High Impact Levers for Developing Inclusive and Effective Learning Environments (Ainscow 2004)

Each of the high impact levers is examined in detail for opportunities for leverage in the following 4 sections.

1. Finding Leverage in Education Services

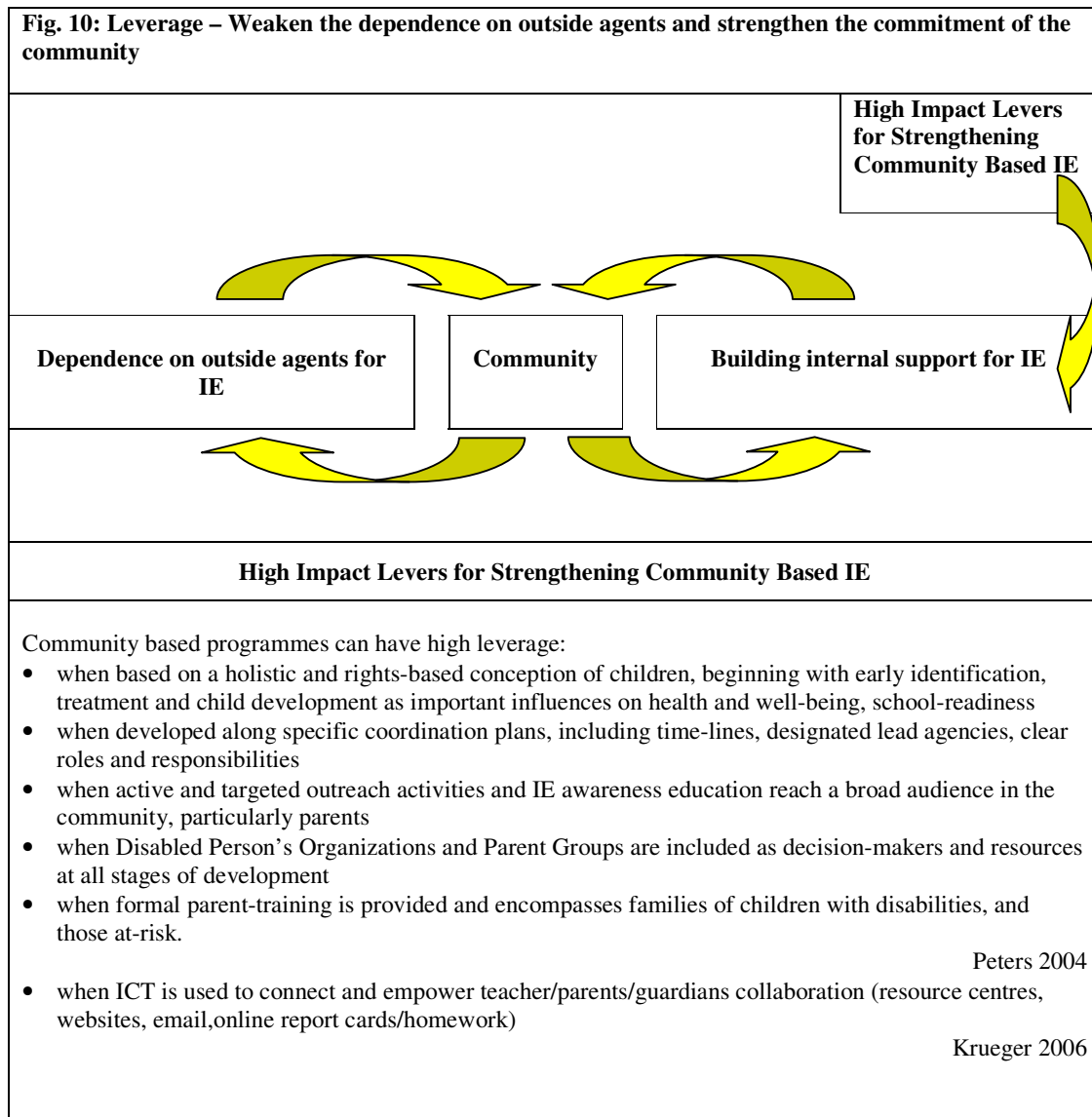
Educational change according to Fullan (2007: 129) depends on what teachers do and think – “it’s as simple and complex as that”. A fundamental issue is the “autonomous isolation” (ibid:136) of teachers behind the closed doors of their classrooms, which can have debilitating effects on teaching and learning. There is a need to “deprivatize” practice through professional collaboration (ibid: 149). The leverage is to create conditions for powerful teacher development which can weaken the autonomous isolation of teachers and strengthen their professional collaboration and development. The high impact change factors for strengthening professional collaboration and development illustrated in Fig. 9 summarize tri-level and cross divisional teacher development initiatives involving key stakeholders in interactive processes of professional development, collaboration and support.

Fig. 9: Leverage - Weaken the autonomous isolation of the teacher in the classroom and strengthen professional collaboration and development



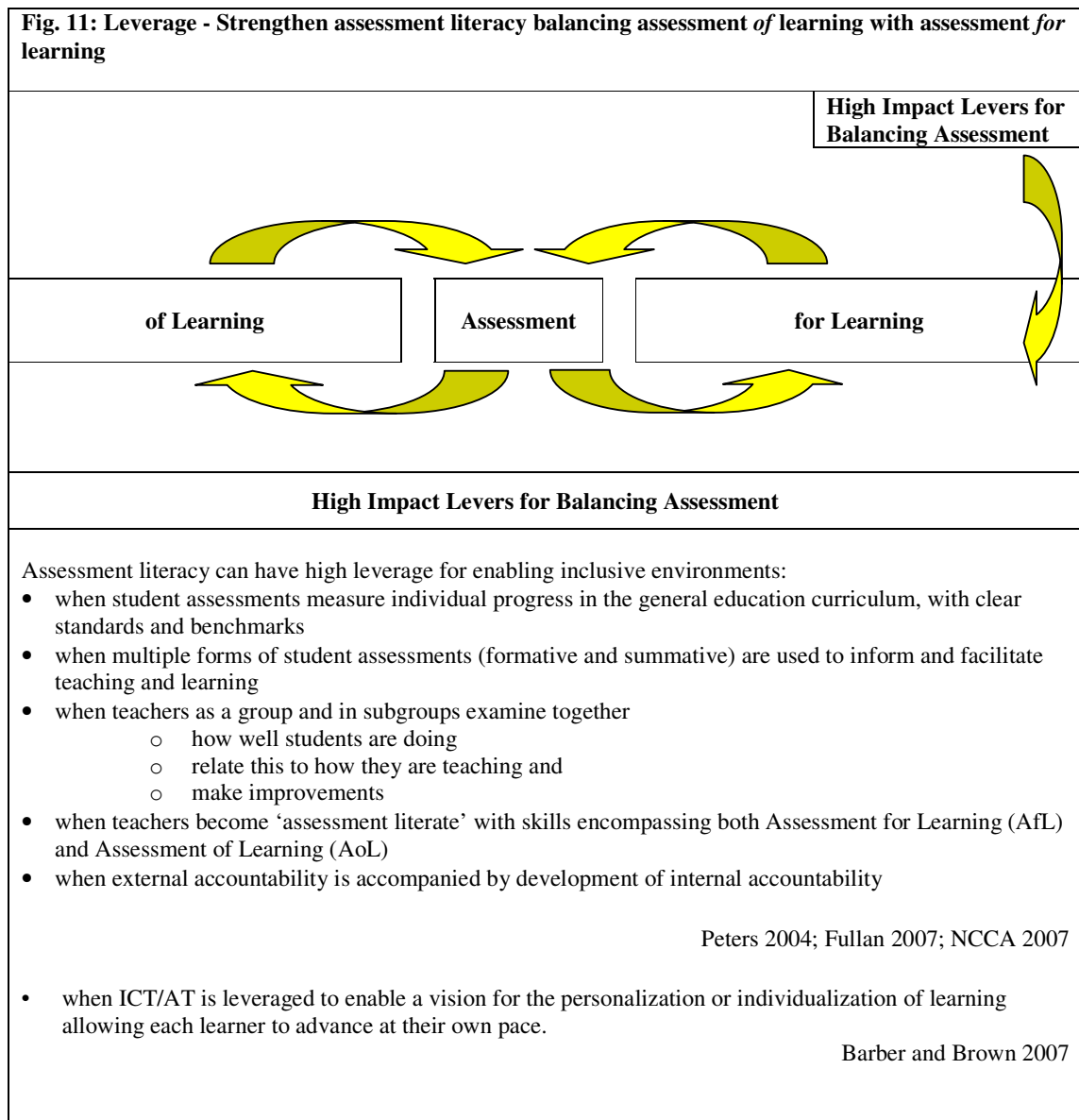
2. Finding Leverage in Community Involvement

Community involvement increases the likelihood of the sustainability of the IE initiatives after they have passed the project phase. The leverage lies in building commitment for supporting IE within the community and weakening dependence on external agents (Fig. 10). As Ghana suffers from severe resource constraints, strengthening community commitment is a key strategy to reducing costs, increasing benefits, and reaching greater numbers of marginalized and at risk children and youth.



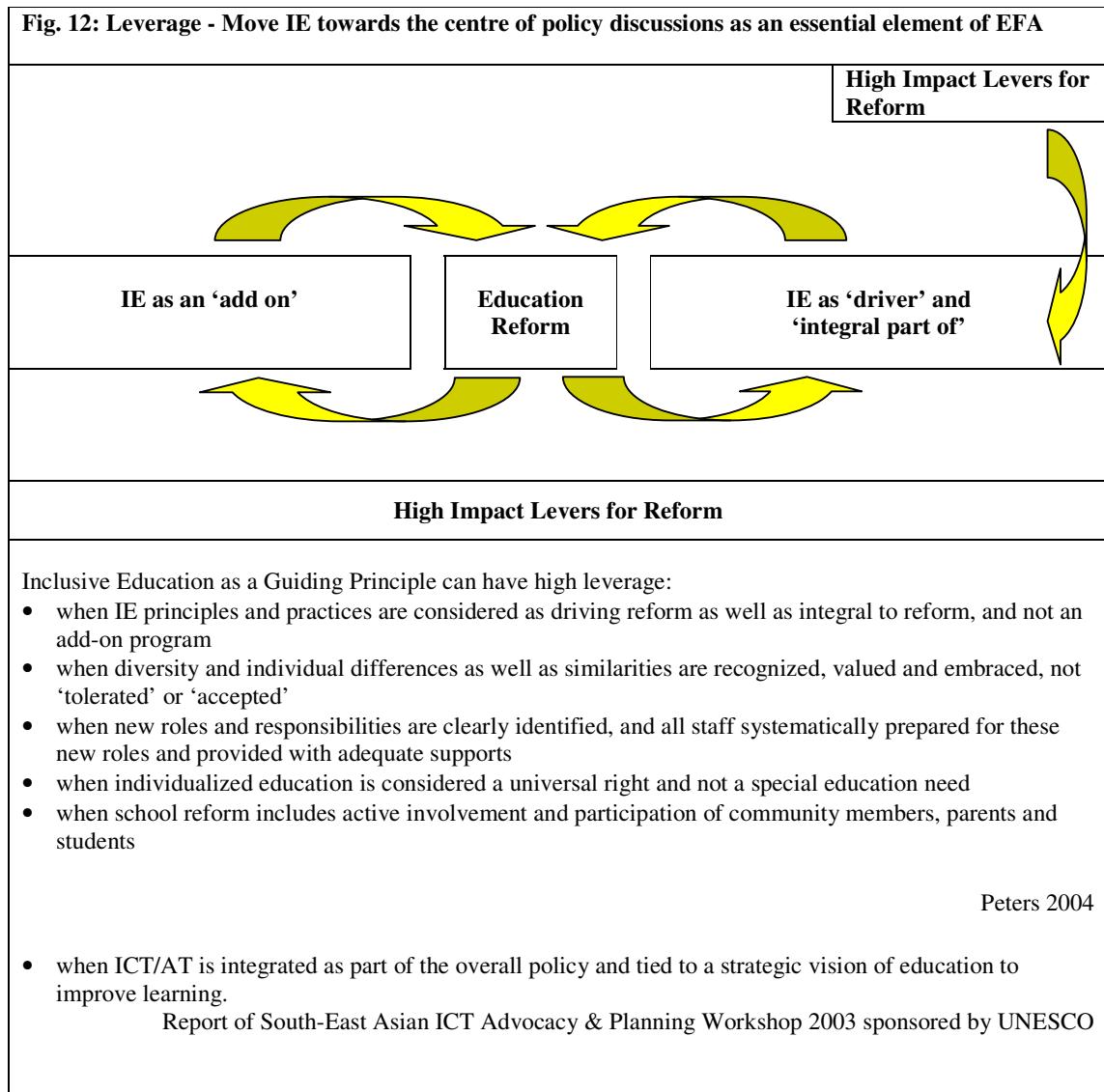
3. Finding Leverage in Evaluation Processes

Assessment issues constitute one of the most significant challenges for Inclusive Education and Education for All according to Peters (2004). The leverage according to Fullan (2007:253) is in strengthening teachers' capacity for "assessment literacy" to encompass both assessment for learning (AfL) and assessment of learning (AoL). This fundamental area requires development of tri-level and cross divisional dialogue and capacity building to address the paradigm shift pertaining to the new literacies for AfL and AoL as outlined in the summary in Fig. 11.



4. Finding Leverage in IE Principles

The literature stresses according to Peters (2004) that IE as a guiding philosophy enacted through policy /practice will require comprehensive school restructuring. This restructuring should be supported by changes in attitudes, beliefs, values, methods and resource allocations at all levels of educational systems and governance. The leverage according to Ainscow (1998) is in bringing the principle of inclusion to the centre of policy discussions as an essential element of EFA and integrating top-down and bottom-up forces in an on-going dynamic of *permeable connectivity* (Fig. 12).



Conclusions

Give me a place to stand and with a lever I will move the world.

Archimedes (cited in Tzetzes 12th Century AD)

To consider the Inclusive Education agenda in Ghana as a diversification of the GeSCI programme there is perhaps to associate the conceptual structure underpinning Inclusive Education with that of its predecessor Special Education. In examining the Special Education movement in Ghana and its associated systems and structures for labelling, categorizing and focusing on the child as the source of learning difficulties, this paper concludes that such an agenda would indeed constitute a diversification for any organization, inclusive of the Special Education Division of the MoESS, which has formally distanced its policy thrust away from the Special Education model of provision.

The systems analysis of the structures underpinning Inclusive Education however point to IE as a transformative approach for improving the education system for the benefit of *all* learners. The IE approach is integral to the agenda of Education Reform in Ghana. The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2003-2015 of the MOESS has adopted Inclusive Education as the underlying philosophy which will inform the future direction for special educational provision in the country and which will constitute a way of achieving Education For All (SpED 2005).

From the systems analysis of the IE agenda it was possible to discern 4 key areas of high leverage 4 enabling inclusive educational environments. These areas of leverage will constitute the basis for dialogue and analysis in the current workshop series of the SpED. In this respect it is important to recognise the leverage the IE agenda has provided GeSCI in its role as a strategic advisor to the MoESS on ICT4E in general and technical support to the SpED in the IE/AT workshop endeavour in particular.²

The second phase of the workshop process will shortly enable GeSCI to engage simultaneously with key divisions (SpED, Curriculum-CRDD, Teacher Education-TED) and stakeholders, to reflect on the 'conceptual framework' underpinning the MoESS vision for inclusive education, and to jointly discern the potential of high leverage change factors which reach across divisional boundaries, in the areas of teacher education, curriculum revision, community participation, and of ICT/AT based solutions (areas in which GeSCI has targeted its strategic support to the MoESS), for enabling inclusive educational environments and ultimately quality education for all. In summary IE has presented GeSCI with a *means* to engage with a

² See also annex 3: *GeSCI's Strategic Vision*

partner country in an agenda which permeates all policy and strategy development inclusive of ICT in education and which provides a context for finding leverage across divisional boundaries of the education system to **improve teaching and learning** for the benefit all learners.

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Annex 1: A Global Perspective of Inclusive Education

There are currently seventy two million children not attending school according to the latest figures from the Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO 2008). Between thirty to forty percent represent children with disabilities and eighty percent live in developing countries (Van der Brule 2007). More alarming are the countless others within school systems being excluded from quality education, or being caught in spiral of grade repetition or dropping out before completion of primary education.

Children drop out of school for a variety of reasons including the costs of schooling, the need to supplement family income or take care of siblings, unfriendly school environments and poor education quality (op.cit.). Peters (2004) refers to reports emerging from the South profiling growing numbers and categories of children excluded from school systems, including:

- street children (many of whom have impairments)
- orphans of HIV/AIDS parents
- children who suffer from various forms of abuse and neglect
- children disadvantaged in terms of ethnic, linguistic, and gender barriers

Where does Inclusive Education fit in? Inclusive Education as a Human Right

Inclusive Education is presented as a framework to address and respond to the spectrum of needs of all learners inclusive of those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. In one of the most widely quoted paragraphs of the groundbreaking 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs, there is the assertion of the beneficial potential of Inclusion for building an inclusive society in general and for promoting the efficiency and cost effectiveness of education systems in particular:

Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

UNESCO 2004

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949), the United Nations General Assembly Charter (1959) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) all acknowledged education as a human right. The World Conference on Education for All (1990) and the United Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) re-stated that education is a basic

right for *all* people and recognized that particular groups were excluded. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) questioned where special education should be placed in relation to Education for All (EFA), and called for “inclusion” in mainstream education to be the norm so that all children have the opportunity to learn - together.³ The Dakar World Education Forum (2000) placed a great emphasis on promoting girl’s access to schools. However there was no specific mention of disabled children although the term “inclusive” does appear in the framework for action in which governments and other agencies pledged to: “Create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning with clearly defined levels of achievement for all”.(Article 8)⁴

The Millennium Development Goals endorsed at the UN Millennium Development Summit (September 2000) targeted the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger and the achievement of universal primary education as its first two goals. Inclusive Education (IE) offers a strategy for reaching disabled children and adults and other marginalized or at risk groups, who normally constitute the poorest of the poor in developing countries. IE is about both getting children *into* and *through* school by developing schools that are responsive to the actual, diverse needs of children and communities. IE is therefore about both access and quality and is a means for achieving these fundamental aspirations as highlighted in the EFA and MDG action frameworks.⁵

These international treaties and others have been ratified by Ghana and have informed the Government’s direction on special educational provision as entrenched in the country’s 1992 Constitution and also declared in the Children’s Act of 1998 which stipulates under Article 560, section 10 that “a disabled child has a right to special care, education and training wherever possible to develop his maximum potential and be self-reliant”.⁶

Definition of Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education (IE) is defined as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities and of reducing exclusion within education.⁷

³ Peters, 2004

⁴ Dakar Framework for Action: quoted in Stubbs, 2002:13

⁵ Stubbs, 2002

⁶ Children’s Act, 1998: quoted in Ghana Education Service: Special Education Division, 2005:4

⁷ UNESCO, 2004b

Inclusion in this definition is about much more than the location in which the education takes place. The emphasis is on a process view of inclusion which “facilitates flexibility of response with the priority focus on what is in the best interest of the child/ young person involved”.⁸

Definition of Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology (AT) has been around for hundreds of years and is used to describe both the products and the services for people with special needs. Casely-Hayward and Lynch (2003) consider the most commonly quoted definition to be derived from American Legislation:

“The Assistive Technology Act (1998) and the IDEA (Amended 1997) define an AT device as any item, piece of equipment, or product system (whether acquired off the shelf, modified, or customized) that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capability of an individual with disability. AT devices may be categorized as no technology, low technology, or high technology (LD Online, 2001).”⁹

While AT can help overcome some of the functional barriers created by disability, it can also create new barriers if not matched carefully with individual needs. In an inclusive education context the effective integration of AT devices to enable learning would require an assessment process with two objectives: (1) to assess the needs of the learner and (2) to access resources in order to meet those needs.¹⁰

⁸ NCSE, 2006:23

⁹ Casely-Hayward and Lynch, 2003b:7

¹⁰ Winter, Fletcher-Campbell, Connolly and Lynch, 2006: quoted in NCSE, 2006

Annex 2: An Overview of Special Educational Needs (SEN), the Special Education Division (SpED) and Inclusive Education (IE) in Ghana

Special Education in Ghana can be traced back to the 1930s when the first special education services were set up to cater for students with visual impairment. Special schools for visually and hearing impaired students were gradually established throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Services for students with general learning difficulties developed from the 1960s as a result of lobbying from parents' groups. From 1968 the first attempts were made at integration of visually impaired students in mainstream schools at secondary and tertiary levels. By the 1970s and 1980s Special Education Needs (SEN) provision had entered a phase of rapid growth with the establishment of special schools in every region.

In 1976 a Special Education Unit was established to facilitate the administration of the special schools. This unit would later gain divisional status and become the Special Education Division (SpED) that functions today, one of ten divisions of the Ghana Education Services (GES). Currently the division has a staff of twenty-two comprised of directorate, administration and technical personnel affiliated to divisional offices and specialized units as indicated in the organizational organogram in Fig. 1.

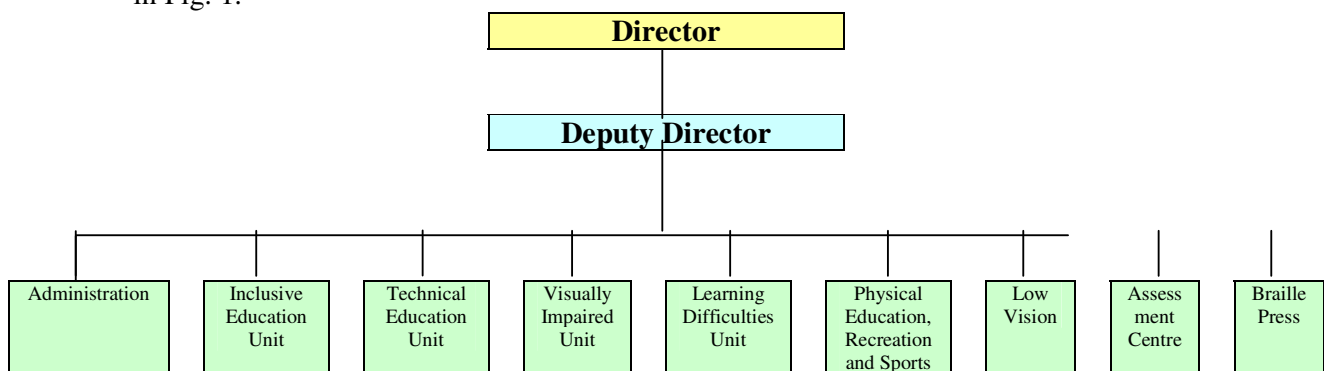


Fig. 1: Organogram of the Special Education Division

The 1990s saw a continuous growth of new projects and pilot strategies for provision including community based rehabilitation programmes (CBR). These programmes “were initiated by NGOs such as Sight Savers International (SSI), the Norwegian Association of the Disabled, SHIA, UNESCO, UNDP etc.” (SpED 2005:3). However considerable work is still needed to ensure that the majority of children with SEN in Ghana have access to education. Estimates from the Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment (2000 cited in Casely-Hayward and Lynch 2003b:11) suggest that “less than 2% of children with SEN and/or a disability are serviced through special schools”. Those who gain access “are primarily residing in urban

areas” (ibid). The inclusive education programmes for the visually impaired “reach out to less than 1% of the primary school age population” (Oxfam Education Report 2002 cited in Casely-Hayward and Lynch, 2003a:19). Integration through the CBR concept “faded out when the pilot projects came to an end” (GES/SPED 2005:3).

One cost effective approach in reaching larger numbers of children with SEN would be the systematic expansion of the inclusive programmes where students are enrolled into mainstream classes with additional support. The Ministry of Education Science and Sports (MOESS) is committed to the introduction of an inclusive education policy, which gradually mainstreams children with SEN and limits access to special schools only to the severely disabled. The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2003-2015 of the MOESS has adopted inclusive education as the main policy which will inform the future direction for special educational provision in the country and which will constitute a way of achieving Education For All (SpED 2005).

The MOESS is also currently in the process of developing a comprehensive policy for the integration of ICT across the education sector. In their review of good practice in ICT and Special Education Needs for Africa, Dr. Leslie Casely-Hayward and Paul Lynch (2003a) considered that the use of ICT and Assistive Technology could help “reduce the burden special education places on educational departments and should build workable sustainable solutions that can enhance student’s ability to perform at his or her highest potential”. In their follow-up study on ICT solutions for SEN in Ghana (2003b), the authors indicated that Ghana had the opportunity to become the “leading country in Africa in terms of its delivery of an enhanced learning environment for children and adults who require special educational support”. The challenge is how to convert this potential into reality on the ground.

Annex 3: GeSCI's Strategic Vision

GeSCI's **mission** worldwide is to “*provide strategic advice to Ministries of Education in developing countries on the effective use of ICTs for education and community development. Adopting a demand driven, collaborative and comprehensive approach, we aim to improve the quality of teaching and learning through the strategic and effective use of ICTs, thereby transforming education, empowering communities and promoting development*”.

Objectives of the Education Knowledge Work

GeSCI's Education Knowledge Work is geared towards accumulating research on best practice regarding how ICTs in schools are impacting the education sector, especially drawing upon the experiences of partner countries/ regions as they implement their e-school strategies. The Education Knowledge work focuses on identification and analysis of promising practice, dissemination of lessons learned, documenting evolving good practice and the development of appropriate programmes, tools and strategies to effectively integrate and use ICTs in the developing country context. This work will be linked to the AKE and will aim to create a strategic knowledge building community that will develop, identify, test and share emerging practices on the integration of ICTs in education and assist in building long term capacity within Ministries of Education to achieve their Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This knowledge will be actionable rather than theoretical, and will be exchanged at a peer to peer level between countries. The purpose is to develop strategic and holistic e-learning approaches for **strengthening teaching and learning**, with and for partner countries.

ICTs in Teaching and Learning Work Stream

GeSCI launched a multi-country workshop in September 2006 on Teacher Professional Development (TPD) which was held in Namibia.¹¹ The strategic objective of the workshop was to identify and define GeSCI's role in supporting **knowledge sharing, networking and collaboration** in the strategic area of ICT and TPD in Sub Saharan Africa. A key recommendation from the workshop was that GeSCI should include a work stream on ICTs in Teaching and Learning amongst its other work streams (also called “thematic areas”) to respond to the needs of its partner countries while addressing the key gaps.¹² A further development during this period was the establishment of the African Knowledge Exchange (AKE) for ICTs in Education to facilitate knowledge exchange on ICTs in education amongst countries in SSA.

¹¹ Countries represented at the workshop: Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

¹² The other work streams are Policy Development, Strategic Implementation Planning, Infrastructure and Connectivity, and Monitoring and Evaluation.

GeSCI believes that the over-arching goal in investing in and deploying ICTs in education should be to **improve teaching and learning**. This goal is manifested in GeSCI's 'mission', which is to "collaborate with local partners to **improve education, empower communities and accelerate socio-economic development**, through the widespread deployment of ICTs in school".

It is embodied in GeSCI's 'vision', which is to "catalyse, support and partner with national/regional e-schools initiatives that bring ICTs to large numbers of schools and use ICTs to **effectively support education and community goals.**" Both GeSCI's mission and vision are tied directly to the pursuit of the EFA and the MDGs. Both associate with the conception of ICT as tools for improving the teaching and learning processes, tools or levers which must "be applied purposefully to the task to be of value".(GeSCI 2004)

The objectives of GeSCI's work in partner countries with regard to ICTs in Teaching and Learning are to:

- Raise awareness about what ICTs can or cannot do in education
- Ensure comprehensive policy frameworks are in place to guide the integration of ICTs into the education system
- Bring together stakeholders and partners (national and international) to deliberate and collaborate on finding the best solutions
- Leverage support from global partners to support partner country ICT in education initiatives
- Assist with the conceptualization of appropriate structures, procedures and processes to assist with the deployment and optimal use of ICTs in the education system
- Develop appropriate tools to support planning and implementation of ICTs

A number of broad categories to be examined within the work stream of ICTs in teaching and learning have been identified. These are:

- Pedagogy
- Curriculum
- Content
- Assessment
- Special Needs
- Teacher Professional Development
- School leadership and support