Inclusive Education Training in Burkina Faso: Teacher Training

**Introduction**  
Access to and support in schools remain problematic issues for disabled children in Burkina Faso, a country that is still under-developed in terms of schooling (56% school enrolment rate in 2005). Specialised education is little developed and inclusive education, as a system whereby children with special needs receive their education at school in mainstream classes, is a new experience.

Teacher training, therefore, is becoming one of the first key challenges for the pilot project Promotion of inclusive education for disabled children in Burkina Faso which Handicap International (HI) is implementing in 36 schools within the Tanghin-Dassouri (TD) district, where the number of disabled children included in schools has gone from 54 in October 2003 to 228 in December 2005.

In partnership with the Department for the Promotion of Inclusive Education (SPEI) of the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy, the inclusive education (IE) project tries to meet the key training needs of teaching staff.



In 2004, the 165 teachers of the TD district and the 49 inspectors and teaching advisors of Kadiogo province took part in 5 introductory sessions on the concept and practices of IE.

During the sessions, the topics of disability, IE - a broad perspective, inclusive teaching strategies, amongst others, were developed. This type of general training was repeated for 60 newly appointed teachers in the district. In addition, 29 trainers of literacy in the national language moore with 75 disabled children between the ages of 13 and 16 received awareness training.

Since these initial sessions, disability awareness and inclusive education training has been carried out in teacher training colleges reaching 2717 trainee teachers and 188 newly qualified teachers.



Another series of training sessions, termed specific training, was also organised to meet the immediate needs of teachers. So, because 18.5% of disabled children in TD display language and stammering problems, the teachers benefited from awareness sessions on this topic.

At the start of the 2005 academic year, in the context of the opening of three Classes for Academic Integration (CLIS) for 32 deaf children, 31 teachers received an introduction to sign language. The three CLIS teachers then received a practical training over six weeks.

Finally, 88 teachers of pupils with a physical disability, an illness or language impairment benefited from training with a lecturer from IUFM in Lyon (a teacher training University).

**The receptiveness of those who have been trained**  
It is pleasing to note, with most of the people who have been trained, a real transition from a state of disbelief to a state of satisfaction. “We learned a lot”, “But it is necessary to listen to such and such other group”, they often say. The completely new concept of IE, the potential of disabled children, little-known teaching strategies (team teaching, differentiated teaching and learning strategies, peer teaching) always generate enthusiasm amongst the training participants who play a strong part in the discussions and suggest increasing the number of such training sessions.

**Strengths of the training programme**  
This enthusiasm comes from, on the one hand, the training content which responds to concerns related to day-to-day classroom practice and, on the other, from the practical work on real cases in schools. The fact that the teachers feel that they are bringing solutions to real issues arouses and maintains their interest.

**Difficulties and inadequacies**  
However, resources are largely insufficient to ensure training helpful to the expansion of IE. SPEI still only have limited financial and material resources. With the exception of certain opportunities, its activities are principally those that have been implemented within the scope of the HI project. On top of this, IE or rehabilitation professionals are very limited in number.

**Lessons learnt from the experience**  
Widening the scope of the project would certainly require increasing the number of competent personnel, in particular for teacher training, and deepening the understanding in terms of academic inclusion. Furthermore, the general training sessions, which only present some ideas on disability, a few principles of IE and some teaching approaches which generally facilitate the academic inclusion of disabled children, will never be sufficient for the education of all disabled children. Specific training, that is more specialised and more targeted to the difficulties encountered, and teaching practices adapted to the reality of the environment would provide the necessary complement.

**Outlook**  
The most significant ideas concern reinforcing the competence of the staff of the Department for the Promotion of Inclusive Education (SPEI) of the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy of Burkina Faso, in order to make them more capable of training the newly qualified teachers who will cascade knowledge and practice of the concept to other teachers. Then, it will be a question of promoting research in the field so that appropriate teaching strategies, suited to the future needs, are developed.

**Conclusion**  
Beyond the training of teachers, the awakening of social conscience with regard to disability and the rights of disabled children to education remains a priority within the IE programme. But only a comprehensive approach, where all members of the society are actively involved, can contribute to the establishment of schools and a society which are truly inclusive for all in Burkina Faso.

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