



Inclusive Education and Dignity of Children with Disability in Togo

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Summary

One of the most debated issues in the field of law, ethics and education concerns respect for the dignity and the educational and socio-professional inclusion of people with disabilities. This article presents the results of a study conducted in South Togo among students, parents and teachers. The contribution of inclusive education to the social inclusion of people with disabilities is the subject of this study. Anthropology applied to the field of education provides a relevant framework for capturing a dynamic vision of the human in connection with the principles of inclusive education. The ethnographic method serves as a tool and an approach for this study.

Keywords: Education; Inclusion; Ethics; Dignity; Togo

Introduction

Inclusive education is a universal vision of education. It reflects the mobilization of various resources in the field of education in order to achieve "Education For All" (UNESCO, 2000) and "for everyone", especially the education of students with disabilities and students with special needs. As such, inclusive education has gained prominence and pride of place in international discourse and policy. Several conventions served as the cradle of this model of education. Children with disabilities are part of this human diversity but their participation in education is very low, especially in public education settings. In this way, their care comes up against rigid cultural practices that do not favor their educational inclusion.

It should be noted that there is a confusion of this notion of inclusive education with that of integration which consists in welcoming only children with disabilities in ordinary schools. From this journey, questions of great importance arise: how to establish an ethic that takes care of the dignity of the person with disabilities from inclusive education? With which method to proceed? How can inclusive education contribute to the dignity of children with disabilities?

The main issues of this research are related to the identification of the processes of stigmatization in the traditional Ewe context, to a redefinition of the concept of dignity and to the clarification of the processes of inclusive education [1-3]. They also relate to the mechanisms for transferring these processes into socio-political practices and to the socio-professional inclusion of people with disabilities [4]. The contribution of this research is to contribute to the effective implementation of inclusive education in Togo, and thus promote the social and professional inclusion of people with disabilities. This study will make it possible to adapt inclusive education to the reality of each society and to the needs of the person with a disability.

Methodology

Type of study: ethnographic study among the Ewe of Togo

Our research universe covers the southern zone of Togo which includes the Maritime and Plateaux regions. Our study is part of a broader approach that takes into account the whole

issue of inclusive education in Togo. The fields covered are those of educational sciences, anthropology and theories of social sciences applied to the phenomenon of disability. Quantitative and qualitative methods seem appropriate to us in the study and analysis of the socio-cultural and political dynamics underlying the issues of inclusive education in the Togolese context.

Among these methods, we have chosen the survey by questionnaire. This survey consists of asking subjects, in writing, a series of questions relating to a situation, their opinion, their expectations, their level of knowledge of a problem, or any other point that interests the researcher. And since there is a strong ethical dimension around the theme of inclusion, the questionnaire offers a more anonymous possibility than interviews. Our questionnaire is structured in four main sections, namely: (i) the identification of the respondents, (ii) the perception of the population on inclusive education in Togo, (iii) the heads of associations, structures for people in disability in the face of inclusive development and awareness-raising strategies and (iv) people with disabilities, awareness-raising for dignity.

The research prompted us to consult and analyze the documents. The main ones are the activity reports of associations and NGOs of people with disabilities, the bulletins of institutions and international organizations, in particular Unesco, the reports of the World Bank and the WHO, publications, articles, books related to our theme, sectoral education policy.

Data processing tools

After collection, the data was exported to Excel and SPSS, in order to generate statistical tables and graphs for the analysis of the selected variables. From our target population, we interviewed 975 respondents. Three regional points were affected in the cultural and geographical area of the Ewe community in southern Togo. These are the Autonomous District of Grand Lomé (25.9%), the Maritime region (41.3%) and the Plateaux region (32.8%). Collection involved 40.7% women and 59.3% men.

Principle results

The analysis is based on the type of difficulties or factors that we have identified, namely the influences of socio-cultural representations on the schooling of children with disabilities, the lack of relational dynamism between inclusive education and social integration among the Ewe, the limited effectiveness of inclusive strategies in inclusive development, the weak involvement of religions in raising awareness against discrimination against people with disabilities. Indeed, we can group them into three main parts according to the data. The first concerns the socio-cultural representation and low education of people with disabilities. The second targets the ignorance of disability in development strategies and the third exposes the implications of religions and the persistence of discrimination. In summary, these main results correspond to the objectives of the study.

Sociocultural influences on disability among the Ewe: a difficulty for inclusive education

Among the Ewe of Togo, discrimination against people with

disabilities, unfairly called (Tohɔsu), is part of certain cultural norms reinforced by popular beliefs.

In the Ewe language, (Tohɔsu) means “congenital malformation”. It is a name that expresses the difference represented by the “out of the ordinary” disabled man. It expresses both redundancy and hyperbole to emphasize the undesirability and repulsion of body morphology (ɣutilā). The term (Tohɔsu) is composed in the Ewe language of three words: to = river or river, hɔ = house or dwelling and (su) = species or monster. Literally Tohɔsu would be “a species having the river as its home”. Referring to the Ewe thought according to which the river would be the seat of monsters or unrelated beings, the term Tohɔsu would mean: “monster of the rivers” or “being of dubious origin”. The extension of the term to facts and mythological realities explaining the congenital malformation, has maintained the understanding and meaning of the word in its original context: a bodily difference that evokes fear (ɣutilā gblegble = malformed living body). Thus, to name the bearer of the handicap: “malformed living body” or congenital malformation is to designate a strange being.

The expression “malformed living body” is not an abuse of language but it shows that the reality of exclusion of carriers of congenital malformation is rooted in the interaction of the Ewe people with their living conditions from their origins until to today and has crystallized into a general cultural concept that motivates our reflection here.

People with disabilities are sometimes considered to carry a curse. Disability is often experienced as a “disease of fate”, caused by the action of ancestors, spirits or acts of witchcraft. Children with disabilities are often put aside and deprived of minimum care (less food than other children in the family, no schooling, etc.), because they are considered misfits in the family. This design leads to the elimination of the outcasts, “from another world” who, for the most part, are of no interest to society. Some are considered to carry supernatural (evil) powers. In this logic, eliminating them absolutely means returning them to their place of origin in order to protect society.

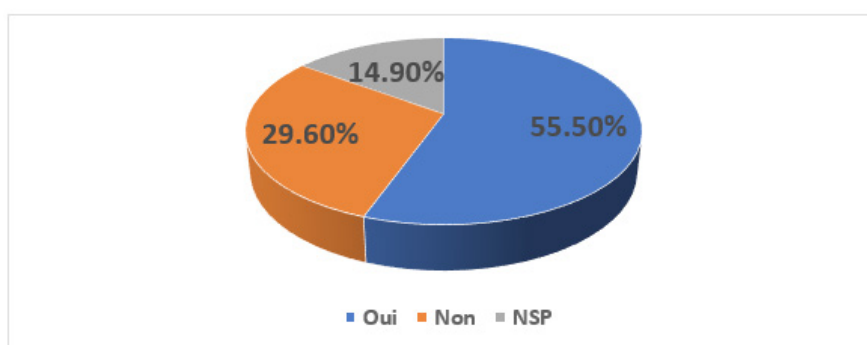
The Ewe believe, through myths, that nature has its own laws and criteria that define the existence of all its elements, including man. Here appears their anthropological and moral representation linked to the “law of nature”. According to this view, human nature (its form and particulars) is fixed and established in accordance with this “law of nature”. All men called into existence conform to this original definition. All those who do not meet these criteria are not worthy of living the human condition. Their death is inevitable under this “law of nature” so that their families can live in harmony with it. The graph below verifies this observation.

In the Ewe cultural era, perceptions of people with disabilities fall into three categories. There are those who positively view people with disabilities as people capable of being responsible; others reject them and represent them as so-called dangerous people, then come those who speak of them as so-called vulnerable people. Thus, 31.1% of respondents living in the target community think that people with disabilities are so-called cursed people.

This negative perception of some respondents rightly or wrongly suggests that people with disabilities are people said to be unable (7.9%) to manage on their own and for 1.2% they are considered to be people who are said to be harmful. or dangerous.

However, 8.7% of respondents say they are capable like all able-bodied people, but 49.4% of respondents consider them to be so-called vulnerable people. In summary, about 40.02% of respondents think that people with disabilities are dangerous and incapable against 8.7% who say they are capable and responsible while 49.4% simply think that they are only vulnerable. Thus, on the question of whether the cultural or traditional conception of disability has an

influence on the management of disability in the Ewe environment, more than half (55.5%) of respondents agree. But such a large segment of the population questioned (29.6%) replied in the negative. Also, when we sought to know what interest the different communities have in the education of people with disabilities, the finding is clear, almost 92.7% have little or no interest in this subject. It should be noted that of the 55.5% of respondents who recognize that the cultural conception of disability influences the management of disability in the Ewe environment, 50.4% are those who think that their community has "little or no interest to this issue of education for people with disabilities (Graph 1).



Graph 1: Distribution of respondents according to interest in schooling and the influence of traditional conception on care.
Source: Field survey, February-March 2022.

Low enrollment of children with disabilities

(Figure 2) Indeed, about two thirds of respondents (63.3%) say that people with disabilities are poorly educated. For 16.9%, they never go to school. If the number of children attending school per family is already very low, then the education of children with

disabilities is banned or relegated to the background, because it is not a priority. It should be noted that there are eight forms of disability in this area, grouped into four types of impairment, namely: motor, visual, auditory and cognitive. Physical disability is the most common with the highest proportion 60%, followed by visual disability 12.4% and mental disability 10.9%.

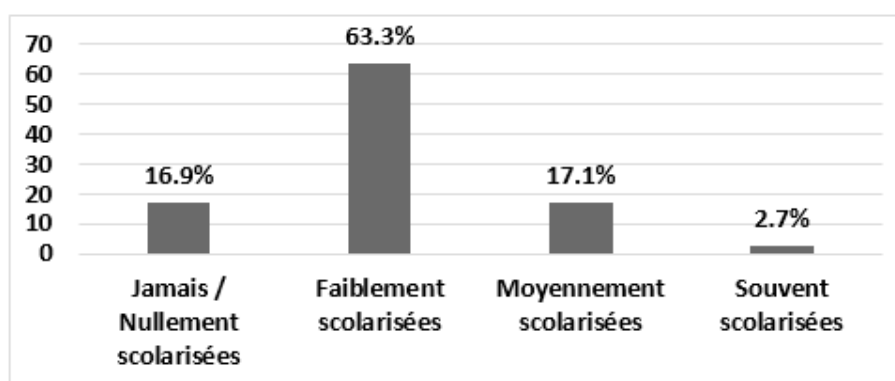


Figure 2: provides an in-depth look at the schooling of children with disabilities.
Source: Field survey, February-March 2022.

In each type of deficiency, the carriers concerned encounter particular difficulties in adapting to their schooling. These difficulties can discourage and disadvantage the schooling of children with disabilities. Faced with this alarming situation, we

seek to explain the reasons for this low school inclusion. It should be noted that efforts to accommodate children with disabilities in mainstream schools (public or non-specialized private) are below average. Thus, nearly 53.5% find the reception efforts insufficient

against 41.9% very insufficient. Taken together, nearly 95.4% of people say that efforts to welcome people with disabilities are largely insufficient. The elements of the reception are the equipment in specialized didactic materials, the accessibility to the school buildings and specific relaxation of the registration formalities.

Given the situation described above, the analysis of the explanatory factors is to assess the perceptions of respondents and their community on children with disabilities in order to assess their feelings with regard to inclusive education. and social of them. Indeed, when Togolese citizens living in the Ewe cultural sphere are asked what they think of the schooling of people with disabilities in terms of aptitude, the majority (62.2%) declare that they can follow a school course, and for (10.8%) they are intellectually as fit and capable as an able-bodied person. But 23.9% of the people questioned say that the person with a disability cannot go to school and for 3.2% they are intellectually disabled.

However, by cross-referencing this variable with the types of people questioned, we see that the reading by line of the research

affected 461 people with disabilities, i.e., 47.3% of the target population. The analysis reveals that of this proportion, about 31.7% say that a person with a disability is suitable for schooling. In the same dynamic, none of the people with disabilities interviewed said that they are intellectually reduced. The more disabled people are, the more favorable they are to the education of people living with a type of disability. The result also shows that 242 parents of people with disabilities are interviewed, i.e., 24.8% of the target population surveyed. The data shows that around 13.5% recognize that people with disabilities are suitable for schooling.

Almost all (100%) of the institutional actors (national or international NGOs) affirm that people with disabilities are amply able to attend school. On the other hand, a relative majority of family members with people with disabilities believe that they are unsuitable for schooling. Family members affected by data collection constitute 12.4% or 121 individuals. Among them, 5.6% say that people with disabilities are unschoolable or intellectually impaired (0.8%) and about 6.4% say they are unschoolable and intellectually impaired (Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to the type of actor and schooling of people with disabilities in the community.

Type of respondent or actor	Person fit to attend	Person unfit to date	intellectually fit person	Intellectually reduced person
Social actors working on disability	5.60%	0.60%	0.60%	0.80%
Parents of people with disabilities	13.50%	6.90%	3.50%	0.90%
Disabled person	31.70%	10.80%	4.80%	0.00%
National or international institutional actor	2.60%	0.00%	0.10%	0.60%
Institutional actor/International NGO	0.80%	0.00%	0.60%	0.00%
Institutional actor/national NGO	1.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Other resident citizen	2.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Members of a family of a person with a disability	4.80%	5.60%	1.10%	0.80%

Source: Field survey, February-March 2022.

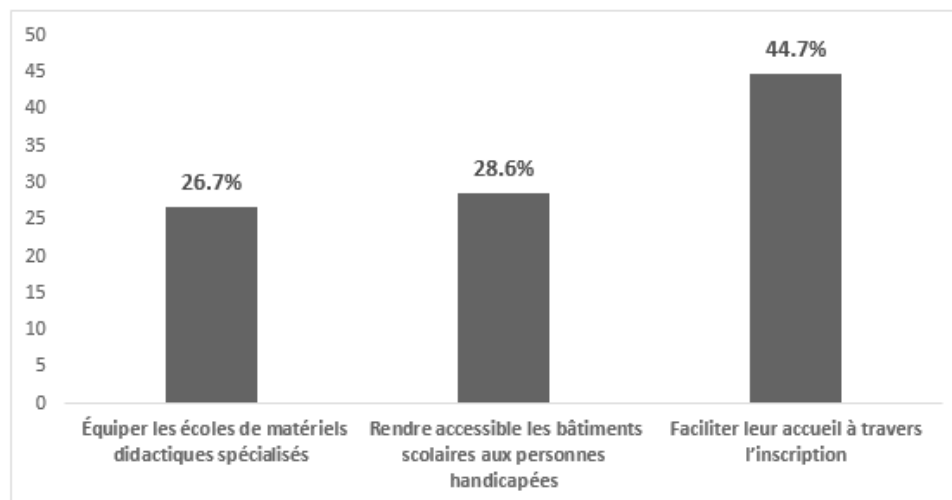
Relational dynamics between inclusive education and social integration among the Ewe: struggle for dignity (Ame nye-nye)

Regarding the role of inclusive education in promoting the dignity of people with disabilities, it should be noted that 58.4% of respondents say that inclusive education promotes the dignity of people with disabilities. Soul nyenye means "a man who deserves respect according to whether he is human or becomes so according to the norms of society". We understand here that school exclusion due to perceptions poses a problem of recognition of the rights of children with disabilities and their dignity.

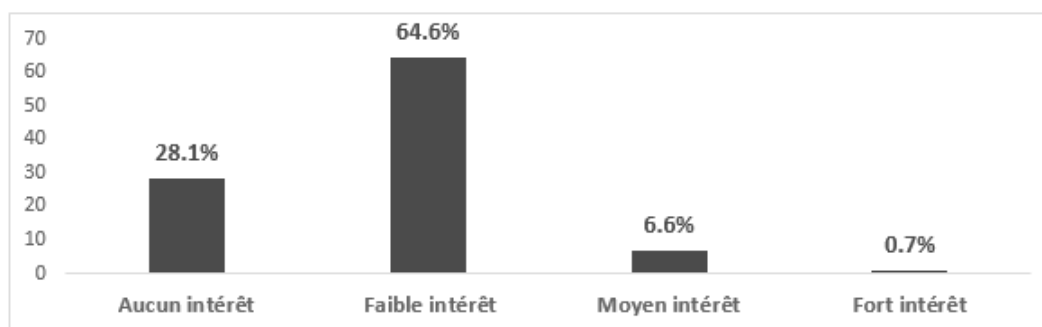
Only 8% say that inclusive education promotes social

integration. This percentage shows that the school inclusion of children can be possible. The analysis shows a relationship between school inclusion and social integration in the Ewe community. But the education system must be adapted to all kinds of learners. Thus, it is necessary to find strategies and means to change the cultural conception of disability. This point deserves another interpretation as shown in graph no 3 (Graph 3).

The inability to accommodate children with disabilities is one of the current limits to inclusive education. Childcare is a major challenge for the dignity of children with disabilities and the achievement of Education for All goals. In this context, consideration of community interest in inclusive education has an impact on the schooling of children with disabilities (Graph 4).



Graph 3: Distribution of respondents according to the measures in which the school can promote the dignity of people with disabilities.
Source: Field survey, February-March 2022.



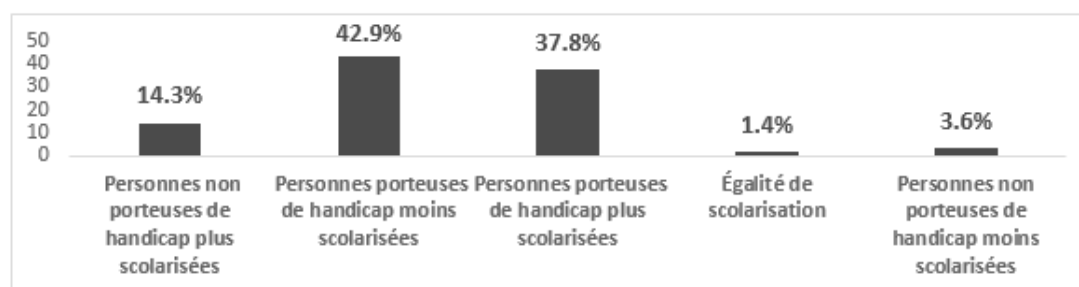
Graph 4: Distribution of respondents according to the interest of the community in the education of people with disabilities.
Source: Field survey, February-March 2022.

The information collected shows that most families in the Ewe community have little interest in the education of people with disabilities (64.6%). This can be justified by the lack of awareness on the one hand and on the other hand by a lack of

relationship between the actors of inclusive education and the parents of students with disabilities for the improvement of school monitoring of these.

Ignorance of disability in development strategies

The lack of consideration for disability



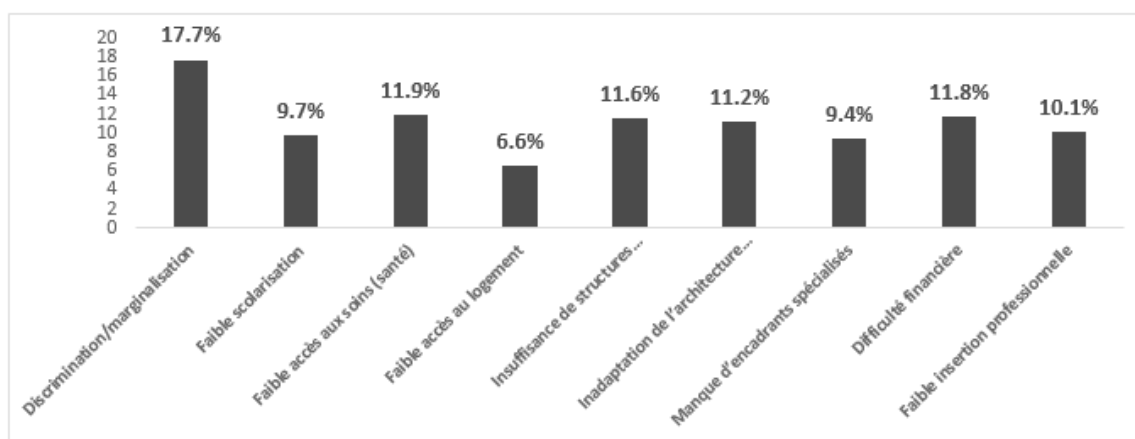
Graph 5: Distribution of respondents according to the access of people with disabilities to schooling in Togo.
Source: Field survey, February-March 2022.

(Graph 5) Graph no 4 shows that children with disabilities are less educated than other children. This point was underlined by the 2014 assessment report of the Inclusive Education project, which includes the system of itinerant teachers implemented in North Togo since 2009. This is one of the limits of the project which still presents itself in the form of challenges and perspectives. It is important to note that the same finding in terms of access to schooling is observable in the case of South Togo.

Limited effectiveness of inclusive strategies in inclusive development

(Graph 6) Respondents were asked about the difficulties

faced by people with disabilities in their schooling in the Ewe community. The results show that nine difficulties are highlighted. Thus, the fundamental difficulties faced by people with disabilities in the Ewe community in southern Togo are (i) discrimination or marginalization (17.7%), (ii) poor access to health care (11.9%), (iii) financial difficulties (11.8%), (iv) insufficient specialized structures (11.6%), (v) unsuitable building architecture (11.2%), (vi) poor professional integration (10.1%), (vii) poor education (9.7%), (viii) lack of specialized supervisors (9.4%) and (ix) poor access housing (6.6%). These nine difficulties constitute the bitter diagnostic points of the educational situation of people with disabilities in the study area.



Graph 6: Distribution of respondents according to the difficulties of people with disabilities
Source: Field survey, February-March 2022.

Discussion

Inclusive education, a real problem in the face of inculturation

Inclusive education is a vision to be understood in the sense of the adjective "inclusive". This ideal briefly recalls that:

Whatever the term used (inclusion, inclusive education, inclusive school, etc.), contemporary discourse on education places the question of inclusion at the heart of educational issues. The notion of inclusion was reaffirmed internationally during the World Conference on Education in Incheon and during the adoption of the 2030 Agenda by the United Nations in September 2015. While originally, the issue of inclusion focused on the school integration of learners with disabilities or with learning disabilities, it has gradually been broadened to encompass the needs of migrant students, ethnic or gender minorities and other socio-cultural categories not benefiting from equitable access to education and training [5].

It reflects the mobilization of various resources in the educational field in order to achieve "Education For All" (UNESCO, 2000) and "for everyone". That is to say the education of students with disabilities and students with special needs [1,3]. Coming from the social model of disability and not from the deficiencies of people [6], this theme calls on the policies and actions of

international organizations, non-governmental associations and people with disabilities who fight for human dignity. However, actions that devalue this human dignity are social representations of disability throughout the world and go so far as to exclude children with disabilities, especially in certain societies. Long considered a curse, disability is often assumed to be a "disease of fate", caused by the action of ancestors, spirits or acts of witchcraft. The conception of disability is cultural because it depends on socio-cultural representations. Thus, disability, in this context, is a matter of barriers and attitudes of society.

Among the Ewe, the main motivations underlying these behaviors are rooted in cultural values or religious beliefs. These are practices that the West has known since the Middle Ages [7]. The question is, why do these practices still continue in some parts of the world? Voices are raised strongly to denounce these dehumanizing practices and to propose measures for the inclusion of these people with disabilities. Internationally, the UN and its member countries are constantly trying to find ways to improve the living conditions of these people [8].

The application of these recent directives concerns a modification of living conditions [1] and suggests a global inculturation of practices, to the benefit of universal values supported by the human sciences, disengaging cultural anthropology and African ethnology in the face of a cultural tradition of a given people. Isn't

this an essential point to take into account without sinking into condemnation in the name of any form of replating? Each culture, with its history, its traditions, but also its own social norm, will induce its interpretation of reality (Diop, 2012). This is where the question of inclusive ethics must be raised.

For example, the Ewe believe that there is a Cosmo-theandric or Theo - anthropo-cosmic harmony:

Man belongs to the world of the living, the living dead and the "not yet born". Between him and the cosmos, there is a vital flow which makes the solidarity of all creation and finally connects to the Supreme Being, source of all life. All the elements of nature are an offshoot of the abundance of life and man is called upon to relate to these elements to ensure victory over death [9].

In this sense, certain types of births considered abnormal are subject to a planned ritual, such as the case of child-monsters or Tohɔsu among the Ewe of the Southwest. Because they are considered Vodou [10] or a family shield. The creation of the Vodou Tohɔsu would have been a means of inserting malformed children into a public cult preventing their death. This cultural value of fraternity and harmony of the Ewe- Ouatchi should serve as a benchmark for the integration of the malformed living body. But it does not manage to modify the social representation of the malformed living body which calls its existence into question. This is a very alarming observation which raises questions about the link between anthropology and the sciences of education with regard to children with disabilities, since some find the registration of these children in schools abnormal.

In the educational field, the analysis of reliable data on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of education actors on inclusive education as well as the number of children with disabilities in schools reflects the poor understanding of disability. Almost all respondents link the notion of disability to the deficiency that the child carries. Most of the obstacles faced by people with disabilities in our field of study relate to access to public infrastructure, education and information.

Inclusive education in globalization: complexity for a global vision

Questioning the value of man and his link with the possible deficiencies of his humanity, draws attention to the dignity of human nature in the management of disability in children for their future. Today, the dynamism in the debates on the subject of the handicap aims at only one goal, that of an assumption of responsibility in the broad sense of the term and especially of an inclusion.

The question of the dignity of the person with a disability leads to a diversity of responses depending on the discipline. The distinction of sociological, philosophical, anthropological, legal, educational and ethical approaches is necessary to bring out a reflection in order to arrive at the single approach which will constitute the prism of all the approaches.

In the sciences of education, efforts are being made by governments and associations for the defense of human rights, in

particular that of children with disabilities in terms of schooling. Taking into account the situation of these children who have the same rights as all other children, the Declaration of Salamanca placed an emphasis on "principles, policies and practices in education and special needs education" [11]. These points are of great importance in the context of inclusion and are legitimized by Goal 4 of the (SDGs): "Access to quality education: ensuring that all have access to education and promote quality learning in fair conditions throughout life".

This education aims to adapt to the needs of each individual and touch the diversity of human nature. It must be confronted with the crises of globalization in the 21st century. Socio-political, health and economic crises characterize increasingly complex societies where the acquisition of general skills is required for social integration. Although the holistic vision of learning is not contrary to the development of general competences, the establishment of inclusive education should face the question of school accessibility [12] and the care of children with disabilities and special needs [13]. At this level, there is a problem that arises. The school care of these children comes up against rigid practices that do not promote their educational inclusion. This is explained by the non-respect of certain principles of inclusive education. A real consideration of the particular needs of each learner requires variation and a modification of strategy on the part of teachers. This requires that the teacher has appropriate training for good pedagogical action. But the latter is limited by the needs of the learners.

In this way, it must be said that we still fall into confusion between this notion of inclusive education and that of integration, which consists of welcoming only children with disabilities in ordinary schools, yet inclusive education is much more than that, it is the adaptation of the school to all learners [14,15].

A question of great importance emerges from this journey: how to establish an ethic that takes care of the dignity of the person with a disability from inclusive education?

Conclusion

To pay particular attention to this issue of international order, countries must express their own objectives to better position themselves in relation to global development objectives. This is the definition of a strategy for a new impetus in favor of education for all. This requires setting educational priorities within a clearly defined vision and strategic framework that emanates from the socio-economic and cultural aspirations of the communities themselves. The emergence of this strategy is necessary to help raise parents' awareness on the one hand of the rights of children with disabilities to access education and employment, and on the other hand to encourage the public authorities on the need to reflect on the dimension of inclusive education in their budgets.

But above all, we must first let the science of education question the human sciences on their relationship. Indeed, the consideration of the dignity of the child in situation of handicap can allow the development of an inclusive quality education in the perspective of the global deployment of the social dynamics of education.

Acknowledgment

None.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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