



SCHOOL-BASED FACTORS INFLUENCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NYAMIRA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Inclusion is a philosophy that is based on values aiming at maximizing participation of all in society and education by minimizing exclusionary and discriminatory practices. Educational institutions are to provide learning opportunities to all learners indiscriminately and whether one has a disability or not. However, the great task of implementing inclusive education in public primary schools has not been going on without any challenge. The purpose of the study was to find out school-based factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools. The objective of the study was to determine school-based factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya. The study used descriptive survey design and targeted 4000 teachers. The study sampled 1040 teachers using simple random sampling and 5 Education Officers using purposive sampling. The study used Questionnaires to collect data from teachers, interview schedules to obtain data from the head teachers and education officers and checklist guide for recording observations made in each school visited. Quantitative data from questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics and summarized into percentages using frequency units. Qualitative data from interview and observation schedules were analyzed thematically. The findings of the study were presented in tables, figures, pie charts and narratives. The study found that some teachers and even the learners had a negative attitude towards inclusive education. It also found out that teaching and resources were not properly utilized in the implementation of inclusive education. The study recommended that severe cases of special needs and/or disabilities to special settings for more specialized services. It also recommended that the government should train teachers and provide adequate resources to enable them implement inclusive education appropriately.

Introduction

Implementation of inclusive education for children with special needs has not been without challenges. The uniqueness of inclusive education is in the composition of learners, disabled children learning with the less challenged (commonly referred to as “normal”) children in the same class. This poses challenges of their own kind. One of the most likely challenge learners may encounter is to change from the previous setting, where learners have been for a long time placed in special schools designated for certain specific disabilities, for instance special schools for the deaf, blind or mentally challenged.

UNESCO (2005) states that Inclusive Education is the diversity of needs of all learners through increased curriculum content, approaches, structures and strategies with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system. Of course no single curriculum would meet all student needs and specifically the needs of every learner, but rather that which may meet the needs of average children and those of the society in which he / she lives.

Instructional Resources and Inclusive Education

In a study Sharif and Naz (2002) found that print media had not changed public attitudes to people with hearing difficulties. For instance, Hannu, Marja & Heikki (2006) found that a simplified text can enable poor readers comprehend the information presented while large print can facilitate reading for persons with low vision or reading difficulties. Instructional resources are teaching and learning facilities and aids which include stimulating places like tourist sites from which some knowledge can be obtained. Teaching and learning resources help the learners to comprehend the content with ease and it helps them to store the information learned in their memory for a long time because more senses are involved in the learning process. KIE (2008) advanced that resources are valuable possessions that are used to enhance the teaching / learning processes. They may be tangible or intangible, human or inanimate. In inclusive education tangible resources include: material equipment, media and books among others. Intangible resources include time, human skills, energy and knowledge. Resources help in increasing learner’s attention span thus making teaching / learning more effective. They make it easy for the students to acquire concepts and skills which enable them to relate what they learn and experience to the world around them.



According to Chhabra, et al, (2009), teachers in Botswana showed concern about inadequate equipment and availability of paraprofessionals, additionally they raised concerns about provision of resources and funding to support the learners with SENs in regular classrooms. Given the fact that, there is a dearth of resources required for successful implementation of inclusive education in developing countries, teachers should be trained to be creative and innovative so that they can produce their own instructional material and adapt them to suit the needs of learners with SENs. This can be achieved through in-service training, possibly in conjunction with teacher training institutions. These findings have been corroborated by other studies in developing countries (Alur, 2001; Singal, 2005, 2006; Johnstone & Chapman, 2009; Kuyini & Desai, 2008) which expressed concern about the dearth of resources as one of the challenges of successful implementation of inclusive education.

According to KIE (1999), a wide variety of materials are necessary for effective teaching of any subject. These must be suitable, relevant, interesting and durable to benefit the learning process. Educational facilities and instructional materials are essential because they make teaching more effective and meaningful, increase the learners' motivation, concentration span and simplify skills being taught. Lack of instructional materials could negatively affect the learning process. This could be detrimental especially for children in pre-schools who are supposed to get involved in activities like sorting objects, drawing, and colouring among others in order to develop writing and reading skills.

The quality and adequacy of resources such as physical facilities, equipment, teaching and learning materials have a direct bearing on quality of education, as they determine the effectiveness of curriculum implementation, (Republic of Kenya, 1999). There has been a major backlog of infrastructure provision and a shortage of permanent classrooms, particularly in poor communities. At the same time, existing infrastructure is generally in poor condition due to lack of investment capital, poor construction standards and inadequate maintenance. The result of the sharp rise in numbers is poor conditions and overcrowding that are not conducive to good learning environment, (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

Teachers must take that responsibility to ensure that they possess knowledge and skills desirable of inclusive education. A teacher who is adequately knowledgeable is himself or herself a resource. This is so because it's the teachers who guide learners in the learning process. Particular skills are needed to facilitate successful interaction. Effective inclusion requires specific planning and implementation by teachers whose responsibilities include structuring a learning environment in which children with and without disabilities is helped to participate together in a variety of activities related to all areas of development, (Allen & Schwartz, 2001). The study was to find out teaching and learning resources that influence implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Nyamira County.

Government involvement in inclusive Education

According to a report by American Psychiatric Association (2000), of children enrolled in public schools it is believed that 5% have specific learning disabilities. These trends have increased the complexity of inclusive education in early childhood classrooms. The right to education for all children is enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights and more recently in the millennium development goals (MDGs). However, in developing countries, the proportion of disabled children attending school is estimated between less than 1% and 5%. The UN convention on the rights of people with disabilities which came into force in May, 2008 requires the development of an Inclusive education system for all. Inclusion in education is a process of enabling all children to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems without segregation. Governments have a bigger role in ensuring that inclusive education policies are implemented in conducive environments.

Allocation of finance for enhancing inclusion education has over the globe has been an issue of concern. A study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) by the Audit Commission (1992) found that inclusion was being held back by the financial systems operating in local government. The commission found that local authorities were reluctant to delegate more money to schools to enable inclusion because, the authorities said, they could not be confident that the delegated money would be used wisely or correctly. However, the local authorities at that time had no way of monitoring how well schools were performing with special pupils, so they would not know whether this assertion was true or not. There was also a problem, the commission found, in that an authority knowing that an inclusive placement would be expensive - would have 'an incentive not to specify what is to be provided because they thereby avoid a long term financial commitment' (Audit Commission/HMI, 1992). Of the four underlying causes for a slower-than-acceptable move to inclusion identified by the commission, three concerned financial matters surrounding the organization of the school system by the local authority.

One of the issues was that the Local Education Authority (LEA) is legally in the position of the person representing the child's educational interests. However, it is also the provider of education through special schools. There is no separation of



the role of the client, who purchases services, and the contractor, who delivers them. Hence the LEA is in the position of monitoring itself (1992). In this situation, decisions about possible school transfer would usually be left to the special school head teacher, who would rarely advise on a transfer; there is a 'financial disincentive' for authorities to move pupils from special schools to the mainstream as they then have to fund the ordinary school place as well as an empty special school place and there is no incentive for special school heads to pursue programmes of transfer of pupils to mainstream schools, since the consequence could be a loss of viability for their own schools. This becomes as impediment to the success of inclusive education because the managers of special education institutions want to maintain the status quo. The argument may also be that the continuation of special education essentially keeps them relevant, gives them a job, one may say.

Many African countries have shown theoretical interest in SNE by formulating policies such as mainstreaming, family, community or social rehabilitation and showing the desire to give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing education opportunities for all children irrespective of their physical or mental conditions. Dissatisfaction with the progress towards SNE has caused demands for more radical changes in many African countries according to Ainscow (1991) and Ballard (1996). Kenya is not exceptional from challenges that are facing Sub-Saharan Africa, being a developing nation. Inclusive education in Kenya faces similar challenges such as inadequate allocation of funds to ensure education policies are properly implemented. Services must be more precise about the different types of support they can give to children with different kinds of special educational needs, (Allen and Schwartz, 2000).

This study sought to find out pressures facing the government in its efforts to implement inclusive education in public primary schools to offer educational opportunities to all learners.

Research Objective

To determine school-based factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Nyamira County.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This design was the most appropriate since it allowed the researcher to study a relatively large population for accuracy of findings and was concerned with describing, recording, analyzing and reporting conditions that existed (Orodho, 2008). The study was carried out in public primary schools Nyamira County, Kenya.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study used both stratified random sampling and purposive sampling which gave an equal chance to every individual in the population to be selected for a research study.

Assistant teachers were randomly sampled for the study because they were taught to be in possession of information that would be important for the study since they were the implementers of inclusive education in classrooms. Head teachers of sampled schools were purposively sampled because they were administrators of the schools where implementation occurred. They also served as immediate agents of governments to implement inclusive education in their schools.

Tables 1.1 show how the respondents were sampled for the study.

Table 1.1 Population sample frame for respondents (N=1015)

Category	Sample size
Assistant teachers	1040
Head teachers	145
Education officers	5

Results and Discussions

Instructional Resources used in Inclusive Education

In establishing whether teaching and learning resources were used in inclusive education programme, respondents were asked to identify teaching and learning resources they were using in implementing inclusive education. Table 1.2 present the responses of the respondents.



Table 1.2: Teaching and learning resources used in inclusion (N = 1015)

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Text book	897	88%
Real objects	604	60%
Charts	575	57%
Human resources	532	52%
Media	448	44%
Time	427	42%
Class room	413	41%
Eye glass	363	36%
Braille materials	346	34%
Ear devices	279	27%

The study observed that the most used resource was text books which rated 88% followed by real objects 60%, charts 57%, human resources 52%, media 44%, time 42%, classroom 41%, eye glasses 36%, Braille materials 34% and ear devices 27%. These result indicated that teachers used a variety of teaching and learning resources in conducting teaching and learning activities in the implementation of inclusive education even though the resources were not adequately used.

Textbooks scored highly (88%) because they were used in the classrooms in day to day teaching and learning activities more especially course books. This implies that the teachers and learners used textbooks well. Other resources which were used well included real objects, charts, and human resources. Hannu, Marja & Heikki (2006) found that a simplified text can enable poor readers comprehend the information presented while a large print can facilitate reading for persons with low vision or reading difficulties. Instructional resources are teaching and learning facilities and aids which include stimulating places like tourist sites from which some knowledge can be obtained.

Kirisikoi, Wachira and Malusu (2008) assert that teaching and learning resources are all materials and equipment used to enhance effective learning. A teacher selects, develops and reorganizes teaching and learning resources for effective teaching. A teacher is, therefore, the most important teaching and learning resource. It is the role of the teachers to ensure that teaching and learning takes place in an enabling environment, the most immediate one being the classroom where most learning occurs.

The study concluded that teaching and learning resources were inadequately used and may have contributed to improper implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Nyamira County.

Government Involvement in Inclusive Education

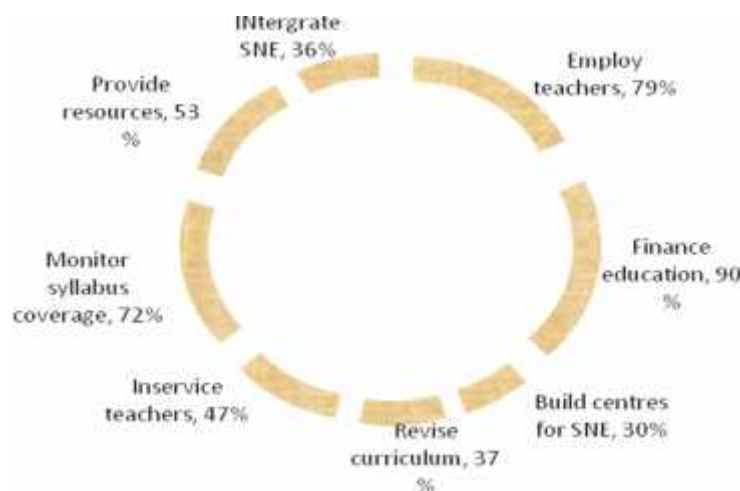


Figure 1.0 Government involvement in inclusive education (N=1015)



The study investigated the role of the government in inclusive education and to achieve these teachers were asked to state how the government was involved in the implementation of the inclusive education. Figure 1.0 present the role of the government in inclusive education.

The responses were that the government supported inclusive education as follows: finance education 90%, employ of teachers 79%, monitor syllabus coverage 72%, provide resources 53%, in-service teachers 47%, revise curriculum 37%, integrate special needs education to regular classes 36%, build special needs education centres 30%. Since the respondents were teachers who were implementers of educational programmes in educational institutions and at a position of knowing the role of the government in inclusive education, it implies that the government, to some degree, tried to carry out roles assigned to it. Children who were unable to cope with others were placed in special schools.

The study observed that the respondents were aware of the services the government provided and that this was beneficial to both the government and the teachers as they provide services to the learners. The results also revealed that in-servicing teachers were among the roles that had low scores while the same teachers were expected to implement the curriculum. This was in agreement with a study conducted by Gwala (2006) which revealed that teachers need quality comprehensive pre-service and in-service training. Training and retraining of teachers whether it was through pre-service or in-service, it improved the performance in his or her teaching duties and more particularly the implementation of inclusive education. On the other hand, UNESCO, Education for All global monitoring Report (2007) emphasizes the importance of the intensive early childhood educational intervention as the most effective vehicle for securing sustainable educational success and for eroding the disadvantages of poverty, marginalization and the impact on parents with poor educational backgrounds.

The study concluded that the government had a crucial role to perform to achieve effective curriculum implementation in public primary schools in Nyamira County. This study noted that the government had not fully supported the implementation of inclusive education. However, the extent to which the government performed the anticipated roles needed to be established from time to time to enhance children's achievement and ensure inclusive education was adequately implemented in all primary schools.

Recommendations

The study recommended that teachers should be trained to acquire the skills and knowledge to be able to handle learners in inclusive education and this would motivate them to implement inclusive education programme. Just as studies had observed that teachers may develop negative attitudes towards inclusive education because they lack the mastery of the content and this led to indiscipline and lack of control of pupils in class.

The study also recommended that the government should continue to provide teaching and learning resources to make it possible for teachers to implement inclusive education appropriately in public primary schools.

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