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Influence of policy on inclusive education in implementing inclusive education in lower grades primary schools in Awendo Migoriy County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study focused on the Influence of policy on inclusive education in implementing inclusive education in lower grades primary schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey design to gather data. The study was located in Awendo, Migori County, Kenya. The study targeted lower grades primary school teachers in mainstream schools, which have special units. Respondents were 37 and included one education officer, nine school heads, and twenty-seven lower grades primary school teachers. The researcher employed descriptive statistics to analyze quantitative data and thematic analysis to analyze qualitative data. The researcher tested the hypothesis using Pearson's correlation analysis at a significant level of alpha .05. Findings revealed that the MOE policies guide on inclusive education is not practiced in the primary schools with special units. Many teachers in regular schools with special units have inadequate training in special needs education. There is no clear policy concerning the training and deployment of teachers in schools with special units. The classes are made of a mixture of learners with different categories of disabilities In addition to learners without special needs in education, making it difficult for teachers to manage the learners in the classroom. The main recommendation is that the ministry of education needs to introduce a system whereby an individual school with special units specializes in including only one category of disability. Teachers' service commission should consider the various categories of learners with

teachers trained in special needs education.

disabilities and schools' specialization in including learners with disabilities before posting

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Introduction

Inclusive education is a process of educating pupils with and without disabilities in classes in their neighborhood schools together. Inclusive education provides learners with high-quality instruction, intervention, support, collaboration, and respectful school culture that facilitates learners' competency through the social relationship with their peers. Further, IE allows learners to enjoy full participation in community developments (Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE), 2012; National Dissemination Center for Children with Disability (NDCCWD), 2016; UNESCO, 2016; Kirk and Gallagher, 2005)

All school-going children have a predominant right to attain basic education. This right to education as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 (UN, 1948). Further, all children irrespective of their condition need to access an equal and integral education (UNESCO, 1990). Jomtien Declaration holds an accessible basic education for all (EFA, 2000). UNESCO (2000) reveals that nations should ensure education for all.

UNESCO (2015) reiterated that education for all involves inclusivity, equitability, and quality education geared towards 2030 lifelong learning targets for all nations.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) echoed education for all to reinforce the effort to ensure The Universal Declaration of Human Rights to education. Millennium development goal 2 proposes that by 2015, member nations should have guaranteed Universal Primary Education (UPE) to every child. All children with disabilities, from difficult circumstances or belonging to ethnic minorities, like any other child have a right to complete a full course of primary schooling without any form of discrimination or prejudice (UNESCO, 2000). In the target year (2015). Member nations failed to attain UPE, which lead to aspirations carried forward to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 4. SDGs-Goal 4 recommits member nations to offer inclusive and equitable quality education as well as promote lifelong learning opportunities to all children (UN, 2015).

UNESCO (2006) revealed that many learners with disabilities fail to attain basic education due to dropouts from schools during the early years leading to life handicapped after failing to access quality education. Rouse-hill (2009) argued that modified curriculum content, competent teachers in SNE and designed Individualized Educational Program (IEP), and simple content that does not scare learners should form the environment of an inclusive school. A researcher argued that a competent teacher could modify the content and use strategies like poems, songs, stories, and mnemonic devices to effect teaching (Sailor, 1991).

New Zealand government (2014) points out that inclusive schools are necessary because SNEL attend schools of their choice together with their siblings and friends; are involved in class and out-of-class activities together with their peers and learn and achieve through participation. Further, learners experience success, and challenge while working together with their non-disabled peers; get the opportunity to learn within the curriculum and enjoy its activities; feel a sense of belonging hence enjoy school and have the urge to go to school and make new friends.

Additionally, the New Zealand government (2014) maintains that concerning policy; schools are obliged to foster the identity of language and culture of all learners, expected to have high expectations of all their learners, and teachers are obliged to be strongly values-driven. Further, innovativeness, strong leadership, good systems and processes for enrolling and welcoming learners with special education needs, and self-review processes to ensure ongoing improvement of policies and practices that support the learning and professional development of teachers are a priority.

State of Victoria (2016) outlined the SPECIAL NEEDS PLAN FOR Victorian SCHOOLS as part of the Education program about millennium development and EFA Goals in education. The Government made commitments to inclusive education by putting in place the Special Needs Plan for Victorian Schools. The plan included nine initiatives to give every child and young person a safe, positive, and supportive environment in which to learn and which suited their individual needs.

According to the State of Victoria (2016), some initiatives under the government annual plan towards IE included a new \$10 million Inclusive Schools Fund for funding schools to build inclusive facilities for students with disabilities as well as strengthening the capability of teachers through in-service training to help students with disabilities. Secondly, the 2017 policy holds that teachers should undertake relevant professional development in special needs education only, are competent in SNE BE, and are allowed to renew contracts.

Further, the policy holds that from 2016, all initial teacher education programs would include specific learning activities. Teachers of students with disabilities should get accreditation from the Victorian Institute of Teaching. In addition, a new principal practitioner which is special needs Leader education has been appointed to work exclusively with schools overseeing the use of restraint and seclusion and building best practices in the management of challenging behaviors of the SNEL (State of Victoria, 2016).

More categorically, Sailor (1991) revealed that the use of oral questions, teaching from known to unknown, coding the text, retesting the vocabularies, taping and use of audio-visual aids as well as tactile aids, appreciating the children's attempts and augmenting writing abilities are qualities of a prepared teacher. Other methods include the learner can cycle or underline the responses, type or record answers, give time to organize his thoughts, and avoid textbook or board coping as much as possible as additional qualities of a good teacher competent in their area of specialization.

Knokey (2006) points out that the courses learners with disabilities pursue in academic and social adjustment should influence their contribution to society. This assertion requires competent teachers who advise on the courses that they choose in schools where they get encouragement from what their equals do.

African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, article 17(1) pledges the right to education for all. Similarly, Article 2 demands that children enjoy the right to education without favoritism. OAU (1981, Article 18 section 4) maintains that persons with disabilities should be accorded special education and protection for their physical and moral needs.

Additionally, article 3a of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child holds that every individual child has an alienable right to education. Section 3e of the same chatter further urges state parties to take special measures concerning female, gifted, and talented as well as disadvantaged children by safeguarding equal access to education (OAU, 1990).

A study, conducted in Tanzania by Krohn-Nydal (2008) claimed that a great deal of responsibility regarding the development of inclusive education in Tanzania rested on the shoulders of the government. The researcher contends that even though the policy is a key to inclusion education, until then no policy on inclusive education existed. Anyhow, the researcher advised that the Government should give the document priority as well as show more commitment to the task of finalizing the document. In addition, other existing relevant policy documents should be re-addressed to declare inclusive education as a government obligation for achieving Education for All added the researcher. The research, therefore, concluded that Tanzanian teachers are unaware of the policy on inclusive education and the latter is not operational. The government has not shown commitment toward millennium development and EFA goals in education.

Kamuga (2016) in Uganda pointed out a restructuring of the national curriculum system and school policy on inclusive education, support, collaboration with the relevant stakeholders, and teacher competency in special needs education. These aspects alleviate teachers' work and yield good teachers' work performance. Competent teachers by way of team spirit facilitate inexperienced teachers and carry a research on the school-related factors about inclusion. Lack of trained teachers in special needs, lack of community health personnel and educational psychologists to help identify SNE children are major challenges to teaching added the researcher. Large class sizes, wider inaccessibility issues, funding of special schools at the expense of mainstream schools, and lack of assistive devices impeded the implementation of UPE (Ndyabawe, 2016).

Kamuga (2016) conducted a study in Uganda focusing on the competency needs of primary teachers in inclusive education. The study revealed that teachers maintained that inclusive education reduced stigmatization and promoted equality. On the same note, Ndyabawe, (2016) advised the government of Uganda to address critical issues affecting PWDs including the following: improve the inclusion environment, train teachers in special needs, put in place

policies that safeguard the needs of PWDs placed in the mainstream schools and both the teachers and the community to get educated on inclusion.

The government of Kenya adopted the protocols on child rights to education. The Kenya Constitution, therefore, emphasizes that all learners irrespective of their disabilities and or ability have the right to access basic education from any institution of their choice (the Republic of Kenya, 2009; GOK, 2013).

The constitution of Kenya chapter four, Article fifty-four section b entitles all persons with disabilities to have equal access to any school of their choice (the Republic of Kenya, 2010). The government of Kenya enshrined a disability policy guided by international protocols (Republic of Kenya, 2001, 2009: 2010; Government of Kenya, 2013). However, County governments have not prioritized supporting Educational Assessment Resource Service centers; only 6 percent of schools with special units have received support in terms of personnel, space, and equipment from their counties (MOE and KISE, 2018).

In Kenya, the policy requires the Adoption and implementation of inclusive education and the Integration of special educational institutions in all public learning and training institutions. Further, institutions should be responsive to the education of learners with special needs and disabilities, initiate intervention Strategies at the National Level, and roll it down to schools (the Republic of Kenya, 2009; Government of Kenya, 2013).

Various policy documents on special education have revealed the strategies for the implementation of inclusive education. The strategies include Design programs to enhance the implementation of affirmative action to enable gifted and talented learners to access secondary, tertiary and university education as a special category. In addition, restructure the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) by enhancing its capacity to train teachers and other personnel working with learners with disabilities. Further, KISE has developed tailored courses for the head teachers and educational managers (the Republic of Kenya, 2009; Government of Kenya, 2013). Other strategies include establishing pilot special schools and integrated programs and inclusive education as centers of excellence at the county level to counter challenges Facing Inclusive Education in the country (Eunice & Ordo, 2014).

Onywany et al. (2014) conducted a study on challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education in Homabay and pointed out that implementation of inclusive education faced challenges including lack of teaching resources, teachers' lack of training on special needs education, negative attitude by teachers toward inclusive education was quite high and parents could not cooperate with the teachers. However, according to MOE and KISE (2018), there is no policy on inclusive education in Kenyan primary schools and the education system is still ill-equipped to support learners with disabilities and special needs. According to the report, the country lacks a policy framework to guide the implementation of inclusive education, the curriculum does not favor the SNEL in regular school as well as capitation for children with disabilities is not disaggregated according to type and severity of disabilities.

Mutton (2013) carried out a study in the Mathioya district. The study focused on primary school readiness to provide inclusive education. The teachers in primary schools considered persons with disabilities as lesser beings and not role models. The researcher insisted that teachers' should identify, recognize and collaborate with those successful PWDs in life to motivate them and become their role models. Further, it should be the school's obligation to sensitize both the teachers and the community on disability issues pointed out by the researcher. Similarly, Eunice and Ordo (2014) conducted a study on the Effective Provision of Inclusive Education in Rongo, Migori County Kenya. The study revealed that secondary schools that had embraced inclusive education and implemented the policy were experiencing untold interrelated constraints. The constraints range from lack of qualified teachers to handle inclusive education, lack of physical and instructional facilities suitable for inclusive education, and negative attitudes by parents regarding learners living with disabilities. The researchers further maintain that successful inclusive education requires practical copying strategies introduced forthwith.

Statement of the Problem

This article provides an analytical synthesis of the implementation of the policy of inclusive education based on research that focused on the implementation of inclusive education in lower grades primary schools. The global community has emphasized the need for inclusive education through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26. In response to this call, many nations have introduced inclusive education by the way of constitution change and acts of parliament. To implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26, Kenya has made several strides through the various acts of parliaments. These acts include the children's Act of 2001, the persons with disability policy framework in 2009, and the basic education act of 2013. The nation also emphasized the right to education for all in the 2010 constitution. Globally, education is a predominant right, and all children regardless of their disability, gender, ethnic background, or any other circumstance should receive quality and equitable education. In this article, we have explained the gaps and challenges facing inclusive education in lower grades primary schools. Finally, we have also given our recommendation based on the findings of the study.

Kenya has one of the best constitutions in the world. The constitution has clearly outlined the right to free basic education for all school-going children. The Kenya Constitution (2010) has also informed the formulation of the basic education act of 2013. Basic education maintains that all children regardless of their disability, gender, ethnic background, or any other circumstance not specified have the right to basic education. Further, all children with disabilities have the right to be admitted to any school of their choice and get quality and equitable education together with their peers without any form of discrimination (GOK, 2013). However, research conducted by the Ministry of Education and Kenya Institute of Special Education in collaboration indicates that there is no policy on inclusive education in Kenyan primary schools. Further, findings reveal that the education system is still ill-equipped to support learners with disabilities and special needs () MOE & KISE, 2018. According to the report, the country lacks a policy

framework to guide the implementation of inclusive education, the curriculum does not favor the learners with special needs in regular school as well as capitation for children with disabilities is not disaggregated according to type and severity of disabilities. The Kenya children's Act of 2001, Sessional paper number one of 2005, the disability policy of 2009, the Kenya Constitution of 2010, and the basic education Act of 2013 all emphasize the need for inclusive education. However, MOE and KISE (2018) still reveal, that there is no policy guide in primary schools and that the schools are ill-equipped to conduct inclusive education. Hence the problem of the study. As a result, this study intended to examine the status of a policy of inclusive education toward the implementation of inclusive education in the lower grades of primary schools.

Research Objective:

To establish the influence of Existence of policy towards implementation of inclusive education in lower grades primary schools

Research methodology

The study used a descriptive survey design to collect data. It was located in Awendo, Migori County, Kenya. The study targeted all lower-grade primary teachers in the mainstream schools with special units. A multi-case sampling technique was used to come up with nine (30%) of 30 targeted schools. The study had 37 respondents comprising an education officer, school heads, and lower grades primary teachers. The study employed stratified, simple random sampling and Purposive sampling techniques to sample the respondents.

Primary data was collected using questionnaires for teachers and head teachers; interview schedules for head teachers and educational officers; and observation checklists. The instruments attained validity after test re-test. The researcher conducted a pilot study in two primary schools and later they did not comprise the actual study size. The data was prepared and organized for analysis by use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to analyze data.

Quantitative data was collected using closed-ended questionnaires on a four-point Likert scale. The researcher collected qualitative data using interview guides, observation checklists, and open-ended questionnaires. The researcher cleaned the data, tallied the responses first as subthemes, and used a coding frame to code the data. The researcher presented qualitative data in form of narratives and direct quotes linking them to the objective. The researcher tested the hypothesis using Pearson's correlation Coefficient at a significant level of alpha 0.05.

Findings and Conclusion

The government of Kenya has emphasized the need for inclusion in education through various policy documents. However, impediments to inclusive education are inaccessibility and lack of equity in the provision of special needs education to learners with special needs, Lack of goodwill to implement children's arts in education, and negative attitudes towards inclusivity in

education. Other barriers are unclear data on the number of children with special needs both in schools and out of schools and resources for assessing and identifying learners with special needs missing. These findings conform to findings by MOE and KISE (2018) which maintained that there are limited policies in Kenya on the implementation of inclusive education. The result further reveals that due to a lack of policy, schools are ill-equipped to support learners with disabilities.

Figure 1.1 presents findings on the status of national policy on IE. The figure sought to establish teachers' knowledge about special needs policy in mainstream schools.

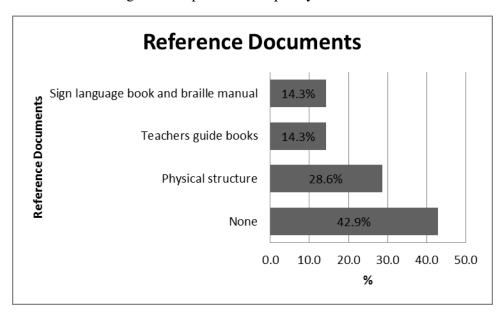


Figure 1.1: Knowledge of Policy on Inclusive Education

According to figure 1.1, (28.6%) have a rough idea of Physical structure policy, (14.3%) would cite sign language and braille manual as a policy reference, (14.3%) cited teacher's guide book as a policy reference, and About (42.9%) of the teachers did not cite in oblivion. These findings imply that up to (71.4%) lack knowledge in special needs education. The findings imply that the teachers in the mainstream schools do not practice the MOE policy on inclusive education. The finding further implies that schools have special units for government funding, but the units are not functional. These findings are inconsistent with (the Republic of Kenya, 2008 a; the Republic of Kenya, 2009; Government of Kenya, 2013) which point to policy references that guide the implementation of IE. However, the findings conform to findings by (MOE & KISE, 2018). The reason for conformity is that both findings reveal that there is no policy guidance on the implementation of special education in mainstream primary schools.

Data from the interview revealed that teachers had the idea of inclusive education even though most of the teachers who were interviewed (65.2%) do not have training in SNE. One of the teachers described inclusive education as an 'education system where SNEL learn with other 'normal' pupils in the same environment'. Another teacher had the following to say 'It should

be a policy that all head-teachers get trained in SNE as part of the qualification for the promotion to headship in inclusive schools as well as more teachers to get training in SNE.' Still, another said, 'let the government be responsible and implement the program she started'. These findings are consistent with findings by Phinias, Jerishanos & Kudakwashe (2013). The reason for consistency would be their findings similarly revealed that out of Thirty-five teachers who were randomly selected from the three schools, it was established that most schools lack specialist teachers and school administrators which has greatly exacerbated the plight of the pupils with special needs in education placed in regular schools. These findings on the other hand contradict the State of Victoria, (2016) policy guideline on inclusive education, which presents the government's commitment to inclusive education by putting in place plans that would improve the student's long-term life achievements. The finding confirms to findings by Krohn-Nydal (2008) and Calderbank (2009) who maintained that no clear policy guideline on the implementation of inclusive education in schools.

Teachers are not aware of the existence of any policy that guides the services in inclusive schools. Only 6.7% of the schools carried out a continuous assessment and the information they relied upon was from the family, which does not suffice. No policy guide on the qualification of administrators of primary schools conducting IE. Further, the school administrators did not involve multi-disciplinary assessment teams like psychologists, counselors, and social workers.

Conclusion

The study found a disjuncture between the policy on inclusive education and its practice: Teachers are not aware of the policies on inclusive education and do not practice them in mainstream lower grades primary schools. There are no clear strategies for implementing the policy of inclusive education in regular schools with special units. Teachers find it difficult to control classes comprising a mixture of learners with different categories of disabilities. This is because the training of teachers was in one area of specialization. The majority of regular schools with special units have none of the teachers trained in SNE. Teachers find it challenging to address the individual needs of learners with disabilities in regular schools and classes. The ministry of education and teachers service commission has failed to identify the teachers who advance their training in SNE for posting in regular schools with special units. The ministry of education has no clear data on the number of children with disabilities in schools and out of schools for planning. It is therefore clear that most schools with special units are not operational due to a lack of clear guidelines.

Recommendation

There is a need to come up with a policy that will ensure a program denoted as 'Inclusion disability type specialization (IDTS)' where an individual primary school with the special unit includes only learners with one category of disability such as 'intellectually challenged' and another school 'visually impaired and so on....

The ministry should ensure that colleges train enough teachers in the various areas of disabilities for posting in the individual mainstream school special unit specializing in a particular category of disability.

Ministry of education and TSC to consider employing a resource person/teacher in every school with a special unit to support learners, trained teachers in SNE, AND untrained teachers in SNE.

The ministry of education in liaison with TSC should come up with a model where trained teachers are involved in the induction of the other teachers who are untrained in SNE and are in the mainstream schools with special units. This way, all the teachers in the mainstream schools will have basic knowledge of special needs education.

The Ministry of education and teachers' service commission should come up with a means of identifying the teachers who have advanced in training in the various areas of special needs and place them appropriately in schools with special units according to a category of specialization.

The ministry of education is in liaison with TSC to research the number of children in schools and those who have dropped from school and plan for their return to school.

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Conflict of Interest

All the information given in this article is primarily the opinion and the views of the authors and does not reflect the view of Kenyatta University.

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