Inclusive Education and School Culture: Integration Issues for Mainstream Primary Schools in Kenya

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This study assessed the effectiveness of school administrative support in the implementation of Inclusive Education for Special Needs Learners in mainstream primary schools. Focusing on the organizational effectiveness of the school leadership in meeting the needs of Special needs Learners, research questions explored the following: school administrative support in implementation of inclusive education values, administrative support on creation of inclusive school environment, administration support on staff development and collaboration in inclusive education practices between special and general educators. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Out of 150 schools that had integrated Special Needs Learners in Bungoma County, Kenya, 20% were stratified, proportionately and randomly sampled. Purposive sampling was used to obtain the participants; head teachers, regular, and special teachers. The sample comprised of 30 head teachers, 120 regular teachers and 8 special teachers (total 158). Data were collected using questionnaires for 30 head teachers, 120 regular teachers, and interview schedules for 8 special teachers, observation checklist and document analysis. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study findings revealed that integration of inclusive education has not been accompanied by supportive cultural features and practices that make inclusive education work. The study recommends that school managers can implement inclusive education effectively through a variety of vehicles: adaptation of inclusive values, improving on the school setting, in-service opportunities, mentoring activities, monitoring degree of collaboration between the special and general educators. In addition, school managers should seek for professional support groups in enhancing development of inclusive education cultural features and practices that accommodates learner diversity.
Keywords: Inclusive Education, School Culture, School Administration, Special Needs Learners.

Introduction

Development of inclusive schools remains one of the biggest challenges facing education systems through out the world. Inclusion remains a complex and controversial issue as the development of inclusive practices in schools is not well understood (Ainscow, 2006). In addition, the role of a school in a child's life has also evolved over the past years than before, schools are expected to provide services beyond instruction, including health screenings, assistive technology and community – based instruction (Jimenez and Graf,2008). Globally, education systems were constructed to include some students and not others and in the past the differentiation meant that some children because of individual deficits could not cope within the ordinary educational system (UNESCO, 1993). This notion denied the rights of individuals with disabilities to participate and contribute to society. However, World Education Forum in Dakar Senegal established the new Millenium Development Goals of providing every girl and boy with the primary school education

by 2015 and assessing progress towards Education for All (EFA) since Jomtien. EFA also identified inclusive education as one of the key strategies to address issues of marginalization and exclusion. In this view, the government of Kenya has been implementing measures to improve participation of special needs learners in mainstream schools. Capitation grants are provided under the Free Primary Imitative to begin removing existing barriers that make inclusive environment unfriendly. Despite the efforts made by the government, access to education by those with special needs remains limited as pointed out by Njoka *et al* (2012), in their study of equitable basic education in Kenya, found out that special needs education had not been given adequate attention. Only 39 out of 96 schools sampled were implementing special needs intervention. To this effect, this study sought to explore the effectiveness of school administration in implementing inclusive culture as an intervention to improve the inclusive practices in mainstream schools in Kenya. It has been argued that inclusive schools will not become a reality unless there is leadership for inclusion. Hence proactive school management require the school leaders to assume responsibility for ensuring that inclusive values and practices are well understood and applied on a daily basis (New Brunswick Association for Community, living (2007). Similarly, a study by National Down Syndrome Society, (2008) on what makes inclusive education successful, indicated that the degree of administrative support and vision is the most powerful predictor of the general educator's attitude towards full inclusion. Whilst the study had found out that the initial impetus for inclusive education and visionary leadership could come from many levels and sources. It is imperative however, that a vision for inclusive education must be clearly and broadly articulated and consensus built by all the stakeholders to foster implementation of inclusive education and therefore administrative support service in the implementation of inclusive education.

Classroom teachers felt that such close relationship was not common, and the teachers themselves felt powerless to do anything about it. Another finding of the study was that regular teachers desired their principal to ensure that special education teacher support was available. However, the study emphasized more on examining the differences in perception of administrators and teachers by looking at how both groups understood the role of the school administration in supporting regular classroom teachers in integration of students with challenging needs. In addition, the study was based on formal interviews only and the sample size of the study limits the ability for generalization. Though the study indicated that the discrepancies suggested in the study between principals and regular classroom teachers are a cause for concern and therefore the need for further research.

According to a study by Rombo (2007) on school cultural features and practices that influence inclusive education in Papua New Guinea indicated that leadership is a fundamental condition for school improvement. However, concepts of special and inclusive education were not adequately understood and this had negatively impacted on their roles and practices in the four schools due to lack of proper direction on the implementation of inclusive education. In addition, their duty statements did not make a mention of how they could accommodate the learning needs of children with disabilities in regular schools. Hence the visionary leadership characteristics seemed to be missing in the four schools. Rombo indicated that there was evidence of the non existence of vision, mission, and school based policy statement in the four schools on how to implement inclusive education in the four schools.

The findings of Rombo are in tandem with New Brunswick Association of community living (2011) on creating an inclusive school. The association identifies a proactive school management and leadership as an indicator of success in creating an inclusive school. In this endeavor, they demonstrate the role of a school principal as the key person responsible for ensuring the following: school is focused on the values and process of inclusion , have a sound understanding of what it

means to have an inclusive school, assume responsibility for making sure that all staff have access to opportunities to learn more about inclusion strategies that will develop an inclusive school and be proactive in developing ways for school staff to collaborate and problem solve in ways that are timely and effective. Administrators should always consult with teachers regarding professional workshops and trainings in areas they feel necessitate support (Jimenez and Graf, 2008).

Since inclusion of SNE learners in main stream schools is based on unified general and special education system. Success depends on various abilities of various educators to work together. Roach (1995) observed that providing time for teachers to reflect and plan together is the most effective staff development available. It is notable to say that head teachers play an important role in making this time available in staff schedules.

According to South Africa's Educational White Paper AW.6 on special needs, "Building on inclusive education and training system points out that working together is a realistic approach that acknowledges that all problems and development challenges are complex and requires bringing in different perspectives of the problem and solution." The paper further suggests that members should not have particular expertise but rather engage with full range expertise available to understand and solve the challenges at hand. The implication in practice could be that there should be an understanding of one another; Identify their potential and what they need to do together and identify what each person as an individual need to do to contribute to the whole. Kristine (2010) emphasizes that support providers should be active and collaborative as they learn from one another therefore, working towards a learning school as they provide a range of experiences expertise and interests that make up the membership of a school.

In a study by Milteniene and Meliene (2010) on forms of special Education in the context of inclusive education, found out that support for the SNE Learners in mainstream school is most often provided by peripatetic teachers, specialists of certain spheres, belonging to the expert centre's, situated in special schools. These professional consults teachers, but they do not provide support directly for the learners in the Kingdom of Netherlands. They further explain that when a mainstream school teacher sees that a student needs some specialist help, she/he talks to the parent and together they fill out a document of a certain form. They then go to the service which evaluates if there is a disorder, assesses the student's achievements and decides if extra special support should be provided such as the provision of equipment furniture. Then the specialist explains or shows the teacher how to work with such a student.

In another study by Manisah, Ram lee and zalizan (2006) on Teachers Perception towards inclusive Education in Malaysia found out that collaboration between special education teachers and regular teachers is vital in the implementation of inclusive program. However the findings indicated that the presence of a special education teacher in regular classrooms could raise difficulties in determining who really is responsible for the special students, though majority of the teachers concurred that the role of special education teacher is to assist the students with disability. Manisah, Ram, Lee and Zalizan felt that the success of the inclusive program depends, among other factors, on the attitudes of classroom teachers towards the children with special needs teachers. They pointed out that the aspect of collaboration between mainstream and special education teacher needs to be improved. However, the study was based on teacher attitudes and their perceived knowledge towards inclusive education in Malaysia, while this study seeks to asses the effectiveness of inclusive education for SNE learners in mainstream schools in Kenya.

In another study by Fullerton et al (2011) on evaluation of a merged secondary and special education program, researchers found out that collaboration skills are critical in the implementation of inclusive education for SNE learners in mainstream schools. Collaboration needs to happen in

such a way that it can be perceived as a bridge between special and general education on the behalf of learners.

The findings of the study showed that the special education teachers were actively coaching other content area teachers on how to differentiate and provide accommodation in the classroom. The teachers had the opportunity to learn what they didn't get when they were in college. In addition Fullerton et al points out what the principals observed about collaboration in their schools. Examples were provided in which they reported special education teachers helped content area teams to consider the needs of the challenged students as they make curricular decisions. These specialists provide ideas for supports that could incorporate the revision of a series of courses and changing requirements and assessment of the SNE learners. It was noted in the findings that the collaboration made the regular teacher more proactive in scope and sequence, rather than reactive or passing the buck to the specialist or case manager. This makes a dual-prepared teacher to own the tools that figure out different ways for SNE learners to show mastery of the content (differentiating instruction). Therefore, the teacher becomes an important voice in content area teams in schools.

In a study by Korkmaz (2011) on elementary teacher perceptions about the implementation of inclusive education, researchers found out that the solidarity of teachers was important for professional improvement such that teachers collaborated with each other to solve emerging issues in the school atmosphere as they shared their experiences to enhance students' achievements. However, teachers were reluctant to accept disability students because they felt they were under vigorous competition among classrooms in school. Korkmaz (2011) affirms that the class integration process appears to work well when special education teachers work side by side with regular teachers. Therefore, he emphasizes the value of collaboration among teachers to realize the successful implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools.

Methodology

Research Design
The study was exploratory in nature. This is best when used to discover ideas and insights. The method yields useful information concerning the nature of a phenomenon (Cohen et al, 2000) the study adapted a survey study design that helped to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the current phenomena. This design was considered appropriate to collect information, gather opinions and record attitudes from head teachers and teachers regarding the use of selected teaching/learning resources available in relation to the implementation of inclusive education for Special Needs Learners in Mainstream primary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. The approach of the study was more of qualitative than quantitative as the ultimate concern was to probe into the various unexplored dimensions of a phenomenon rather than establishing specific relationship among the components. The study was carried out in Bungoma County as it seemed to have a record of more special needs programs compared to other Counties in the Western region of Kenya.

Sample Selection
The target population for the study was public primary schools that had integrated learners with special needs in Kenya from (Bungoma County) of Western region, Out of 150 schools, 20% were stratified, randomly and proportionately sampled within the 8 administrative districts of the county basing on Gay (1992) who considers the percentage as minimum for smaller samples. The schools were stratified according to the 8 administrative districts and proportionately randomly selected according to the number of the schools in each district. This procedure brought on board 30 schools for the study. The participants in this study were purposively sampled. Purposive sampling is a

sampling technique that allows a researcher to use respondents that have the required information with respect to the objectives of the study (Cohen et al, 2000). The participants included: Head teachers, as they are in charge of the implementation of inclusive education programme, class teachers of lower primary (standard 1-4). Criterion sampling was used to select 8 special teachers in charge of resource rooms representing 8 administrative districts of the county using the results of the survey. The technique sets forth a criteria before selecting the participants (Creswell, 1998).This method was useful for identifying cases from a standardized questionnaire. The selection of schools depended on the results from the questionnaire data with maximal variations in responses to variables in the study.

Instrument and procedure
The instruments used in the study included questionnaires, observation and interview schedules and document analysis. One questionnaire was developed for regular teachers. The questionnaire was used in part one to generate data on the background of teachers, part two was filled by regular teachers on statements relating to administrative support in the implementation of Inclusive education for Special needs Learners, where rating was to be made indicating the respondents' perceptions of how the school administration support ought to be (desired) on the right hand side. While on the left hand side rating showed respondents' perceptions of what there is (actual practice) on the ground on the school administration support in the implementation of Inclusive education for special needs learners. The participants indicated the degree of actual practice demonstrated on a likert five point scale with the highest point '5'representing frequent demonstrations of specific practice while '1' representing non-demonstration or absence of a specific practice.

An observation checklist was used to determine the availability of inclusive material resources physical structures; accessibility of classrooms fields and toilets.

Face to face interview was held with special teachers. This provided for qualitative and in-depth explanation of the results of the questionnaires. The interview focused on the school administration support in implementing Inclusive education values, improving school environment in terms of availing material resources and physical structures to accommodate special needs learners especially those with physical impairments, the school administration providing support on staff collaboration and development in inclusive education practice.

 Data analysis was done both quantitatively and qualitatively. For quantitative data, descriptive statistics for the questionnaires and observation schedule items were summarized in the text and reported in tabular form. Frequency analysis was conducted to identify valid response percentages for all questions in the survey. The results were tabulated and summarized in tables. For qualitative data, the text obtained through the interview and document analysis was analyzed thematically. The tables and descriptions were for two categories of participants. These were regular teachers and special teachers. The responses were grouped under the following themes:

  i.   Implementation of inclusive education values,
 ii.   Creation of inclusive school environment,
iii.   Staff development and collaboration in inclusive education practices between special and general educators

In each table, the percentages were computed and then used in detail analysis in chapter four alongside the description of the interviewees' responses. The five point likert scale was used to establish the perceptions of regular teachers towards the school administration support in implementation of inclusive education.

Research Findings
Implementation of Inclusive education values and practices
A proactive school management and leadership as an indicator of success in creating an inclusive school ensure that the school is focused on the values and process of inclusion. The study examined the support provided by school administration in implementing inclusive education values for Special needs learners in mainstream primary schools. The results of 120 regular teachers showed only 20 (16.7%) of the teachers strongly agreed that head teachers ensure that school values and practices for inclusive education are observed, while there was an equal number of teachers 39(32.5%) who agreed and 39(32.5%) who disagreed that head teachers ensure that inclusive education values and practices are observed. However, there was a considerable 11 (9.2%) of the teachers who were unable to decide whether the head teachers ensured that values and practices of inclusive education were observed. The inconsistency in the results may imply that teachers lack the knowledge in concepts of inclusion. To clarify this inconsistency, 8 special teachers were interviewed.

The interview results showed that only 1(12.5%) out of 8 special teachers indicated that the school had values of inclusion in their vision, mission and aims. The mission captured was stated as follows: "To currently pursue in partnership with parents, pupils, teachers, workers, management and other stakeholders, professional teaching and teaming in sharpening of pupils' knowledge, skills and behaviour modelling". The concept of teaming in this mission reflects a school that is flexible and organized in such a manner that teachers work together in partnership with other stakeholders in problem solving that develop responses to even the most challenging situations of inclusion. The results are in tandem with a study by Down Syndrome Society (2008), who emphasized that a vision for inclusive education must be clearly and broadly articulated and that consensus building by all stakeholders is essential to foster implementation. The Vision was stated as follows, "To be a leader and a model of academic institution of choice nationally and internationally." This vision stretches this school policies and practices to suit national and international schools of inclusive education models. Their Aims were, 'social responsibility, equal opportunity and fair play for all'. The stated aims articulate the spirit of an inclusive and equitable education for all. However, the responses showing school administration support in ensuring values and practices in inclusive education were minimal, and therefore could imply that the head teachers lacked knowledge on how to make it work. These findings agree with the findings from the demographic data that none of the head teachers under study had special needs training background. The results from document analysis revealed that little was going on in regard to the implementation of inclusive values and practices. This was evidenced by a glimpse of the inadequacy of administrative support shown by school rules regulating the conduct of pupils, excluded the welfare of special needs learners. All the school rules had ordinary regulations such as, 'No fighting on the school compound.' This implied that mentally challenged learners were adversely affected by such policies. Regarding the inclusive values, only 1 out of the 8 schools had vision, mission that embraced inclusive values.

Creation of inclusive school environment

A school environment articulates what is going on in the school and classroom contact. Therefore, provision of instructional materials, assistive equipments and organisation of the school environment is essential for improvement of practical conditions of inclusion. The study examined the availability of selected resources and organisation of the school environment. Only 6 (20%) of the schools had books for Special Needs learners compared to 24 (80%) of the schools that had none. A few of the schools 9 (30%) had spacious classroom while most of the schools 21 (70%) did not have spacious classrooms. Only 6 (20%) of the schools in the study population had special desks for learners with physical impairments compared 24 (80%) of the schools that had none. A paltry of the schools 7 (23.3%) had designed fields that were accessible while most 23 (76.7%) remained unfriendly to the physically impaired learners. A few 5 (16.7%) of the schools had school buildings with ramps while most 25 (83.3%) of the schools buildings had stair cases that remained restrictive to learners with special needs.

In the interview with special teachers confirmed that the available resources were inadequate as the head teachers rarely made considerations in purchasing special needs requirements despite the government's capitation made to these schools. The special teachers observed that head teachers have not taken the integration of special needs learners seriously as most of the requests they make in favour of special needs learners are normally treated as not urgent. This was well articulated by one of the special teachers who remarked, "Whenever there is a staff meeting to budget for resources we are hardly invited to attend. But whenever we attend them, our agendas are always pushed to A.O.B (any other business)". The school architecture and disability conditions dictate the way the school environment should be organized. One of the special teachers interviewed recalled on the sentiments of the head teacher who dismissed the construction of a classroom with ramps just because of the school having three physically challenged learners. On the other occasion, the administration constructed a toilet for physically challenged learners without the technical consultation from the specialist. In the end the toilet has remained unused because it was poorly designed. These findings may imply the negative attitude of head teachers emanating from lack of training in special needs education that was evident in their demographic data.

Staff development and collaboration in inclusive education practices between special and general educators

A proactive school management and leadership as an indicator of success in creating an inclusive school must assume responsibility of making sure that all staff has access to opportunities to learn more about inclusion strategies that develop an inclusive school. The study examined the school administrative support in enhancing staff development and collaboration between special and general educators. The results of 120 regular teachers showed a positive indication that there was administrative support in staff development by 54(45%) of the teachers who agreed and 36 (30%) of the teachers who strongly agreed. However, there was a negative indication that head teachers facilitated collaboration between special and general educators in these schools. This is shown by 54 (45%) of the teachers who disagreed and 6 (5%) who strongly disagreed compared to 36 (30%) who agreed and 11 (9.2%) who strongly agreed that head teachers facilitate collaboration between special teachers and regular teachers. A notable number, 13 (10.8%) of the teachers who could not figure out if there was any collaboration going on in the schools raised the concern of the researcher on whether the teachers understood the concepts of inclusive education in mainstream schools.

On whether head teachers provided time and forum for teachers to reflect and plan together on how to effectively implement inclusive education for special needs learners, majority of the teachers 63 (52.5%) and 12 (10%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed compared to 29 (24.2%) and 6(5%) of

the teachers who either agreed or strongly agreed. This imply that majority of the teachers 75(62.5%) disagreed that head teachers provide time and forum for teachers to reflect and plan together how to effectively implement inclusive education for special needs learners.

On whether the role of special teacher was clearly stipulated in the implementation of inclusive education, majority of the teachers 70 (58.4%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed compared to 41 (34.2%) of the teachers who agreed and 9 (7.5%) were undecided.

On whether the head teacher provides enabling conditions for teachers to implement inclusive education for special needs learners, a majority of the teachers 84(70%) either agreed or strongly agreed compared to 21 (17.5%) who disagreed. However, a notable number 15 (12.5%) who were undecided raised a researchers' concern whether they understood the concepts in inclusive education

On whether the head teacher regularly sourced for expertise's support in implementation of inclusive education, majority of the teachers 79 (65.9%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed compared to 28 (23.3%) of the teachers who either disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, there was 13 (10.8%) of the teachers who were undecided whether head teachers regularly sourced for expertise support or not. To clarify the inconsistency of the responses on effective staff development and collaboration, an interview of special teachers was carried out.

Interview with the special teachers disapproved the regular teachers' sentiments that there was full support by the administration in terms of staff development cited by 6 (75%) of the 8 special teachers who noted very little support from the administration. One of the participants further stated that their head teachers keep information on any workshops or seminars from them and that they only get wind of such workshops from neighbouring schools.

Regarding administration support on time, only 3 (37.5%) of the 8 special teachers admitted that head teachers fully supported them by providing time and forum to reflect and plan together how to implement inclusive education. Two of the participants noted that time tables of their special units sometimes clashed with those for regular school system. They observed that head teachers were usually strict in ensuring adherence to regular time table. These findings concur with results from document analysis which revealed rigid time tables based on the school syllabus and absence of minutes regarding reflections on matters of integration of special needs education.

With regard to collaboration, most of the special teachers interviewed 5 (62.5%) did not fully see collaboration in their schools in relation to inclusive education for special needs learners. These findings confirm with results of regular teachers who observed that head teachers do not facilitate collaboration of special teachers and regular teachers.

Discussions

School administrators have put little effort to ensure that inclusive education values and practices are well understood and applied on daily basis. This is occasioned by lack of school vision or a mission that embraces the values of inclusion, school rules that do not address the needs of SNE learners and timetables that are rigidly made and minutes that revealed nothing much going on in terms of Inclusive education. This reiterates a study by Saskatchewan (2001) who asserts that inclusion exceeds the meagre idea of physical placement and assimilates the basic values of participation and friendship. He champions that schools should define their vision of special education through their mission statement which lends credence and concrete goals to an inclusive philosophy. This implies that may be, the schools administrators under study have no knowledge of what it means to have an inclusive school or are being bogged down by a negative attitude towards inclusion. This concurs with a study by New Brunswick Association for Community living (2007)

who noted that the degree of administrative support and vision is the most powerful predictor of the general educator's attitude towards full inclusion.

The study has revealed that inclusive education is being stalled because the mainstream schools are not fit to include all special needs learners despite the capitations received from the government to improve on the facilities. This is evidenced by inadequate teaching and learning materials, inaccessible buildings and facilities. The results confirms with Mpya, (2007) who points out that accessibility of a school environment is a resource that can enhance enrolment of special needs learners and more so a significant creation of inclusive settings. These results also confirms Jimenez and Graf (2008) perspective that looks at disability as a social construction that is minimized or exacerbated by student's environment, which can be demonstrated by the power of schools and culture to create disability in some settings and eliminate it in others. The findings imply that special needs learners seem not to benefit from placement in mainstream settings as their needs are not adequately and appropriately met. Successful inclusion would require the mainstream schools to show good - faith efforts to provide services in it if they are to be the least restrictive environment for special need learners.

The results have revealed that head teachers rarely give opportunities for staff development or time for collaboration between the special and regular teachers to learn more on inclusion strategies. This revelation negates Jimenez and Graf (2008) view of Inclusive schooling as an attempt to normalize disability by eliminating the divide between special and general education. This would necessitate a positive change in the cultural view of how the school community interpret the meaning of disability. In addition, the results confirm with New Brunswick Association for Community living (2007) who identified lack of knowledge and skills as a systemic barrier to the implementation of inclusive education. This implies that professional development of the teachers facilitate improvement in outcomes for students through continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Gilies and Carrington (2004) also confirms that quality of the teaching workforce being at the heart of the reform enhances a lot of learning activities that address issues of teaching strategies for student diversity. This findings imply that if schools are to become inclusive, teachers Most of the head teachers have no sound understanding of what it means to have an inclusive school as defined by current legislation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Head teachers make all the difference in how inclusive education is implemented and enforced. They require specialized training to develop a sound understanding of what it means to implement an inclusion program in their schools. They need to be proactive in ensuring the following: that inclusive values are observed and practiced, that teaching and learning resources are availed and well utilized, that there is staff development and collaboration that would give more exposure of regular teachers to the demands of special needs. The study recommends that The Ministry of Education should provide capacity building for all head teachers, especially with skills in enhancement of school inclusive cultures. Government and school administrations should work in cooperation with school sponsors, Associations of Challenged People and special schools to assist in acquiring resources and mentoring of teachers. The government should ensure mechanisms of accountability and quality control of school finances meant for special education in mainstream schools.

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