

IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NYAMIRA COUNTY, KENYA: ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to find out the attitudes of teachers towards implementation of inclusive education in Nyamira County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study targeted 4000 and 5 education officers in Nyamira County. They are involved in the implementation and delivery of the curriculum. The study used simple random sampling. The study observed that the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education was negative. The negativity of teachers was due to variables such as the teacher's lack of knowledge and skill of disabilities; the need for special curriculum for learners in inclusive education; low achievement of SNE children and increased indiscipline cases. The study recommended that: Teachers should recommend severe cases of disability to special schools; teachers to recommend to the ministry of education areas of the curriculum that require change to meet needs of all learners in inclusive settings; all teachers be trained.

Key words: Curriculum, implementation, inclusive, disability, attitude and variable.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching involves sharing of knowledge between a teacher and a learner. The teacher co-ordinates the teaching and learning process through appropriate teaching and learning activities. To be able to co-ordinate the learning process, the teacher must have the right skills and mastery of the content for the correct level of learners and at the stipulated time as outlined in the curriculum, that is, the school syllabus. The content, knowledge and skills, delivered to learners by the teacher must meet the needs of the learners and all pupils should participate in the learning experiences despite their disabilities. This is because all learners have an equal right to educational opportunities. EFA represents an

international commitment to ensure that every child and adult receives basic education of good quality. The commitment is based both on a human rights perspective, and on the generally held belief that education is central to individual well-being and national development. The UK Department for International Development (DFID, 2006) advances that education benefits not just children, but families and communities, and whole countries. It improves job chances and prosperity; promotes health and prevents disease. These values of education should encourage teachers to assist the learners to be more focused on matters pertaining to education and aim at achieving higher outcomes.

In studying teacher training and development in Kenya, there's need for a relationship between teacher education and professional practices. A trained teacher may have a good foundation of the subject matter as well as being grounded in innovative child-friendly, child-centred methods in order to exercise good practice in the classroom in their teaching career. There is need for student teachers to be taken through learning experiences that in themselves entail good teaching and learning experiences. Just like any other student, learn more and even have better mastery when they are actively involved in the learning of skills they need to use later in their teaching and learning processes. They should be taken through practical experiences during this crucial period of preparation to be successful teachers. A well trained teacher will likely form positive attitudes towards the teaching profession.

In addition to the role that teacher attitudes play in the success of inclusive classrooms, it is widely acknowledged that an inclusive school culture begins with the committed leadership of heads of educational institutions such as school principals. Praisner (2003) examined principals' attitudes toward inclusion including their placement perceptions. Out of 408 principals surveyed, only one in five held positive attitudes toward inclusion. Factors that were associated with positive attitudes included experiences with students with disabilities and exposure to special education concepts. Furthermore, principals who had positive attitudes were more likely to place students in less restrictive settings. Clearly, teacher and administrator attitudes are critical factors that shape the experiences of students with disabilities. These findings hold particular implications for personnel supporting and providing technical assistance to teachers and staff. Efforts aimed at providing teachers and administrators with meaningful contact with people with disabilities as well as information on special education concepts makes a difference in the quality of students' educational programming.

On the other hand, Oppenheim (1966) defines attitude as a state of readiness to react in a certain manner when confronted with certain stimuli and it is present but dormant most of the time and they become expressed in speech or other behavior only when the object of attitude is perceived. Oppenheim further maintains that attitudes are reinforced by beliefs which form part of cognitive component and often attract strong feelings. It is an emotional component that leads to a particular form of action which is a behaviour or action tendency component. This is said to be a result of the impact of the environment, past and present, acting upon the personality of a person. Gomez (1994) notes that a lot depends on the attitudes and understandings and the existing moral commitments the prospective teachers bring into their teacher education programs.

Teachers who are committed to inclusion often refer to pupils with severe educational needs as

positive assets to the classroom rather than problems to overcome. However, positive attitudes are not enough for dealing with differences in classrooms. Teachers also need adequate methods and materials but also the time available for instruction and knowledge and skills acquired through training and experience. All these are relevant when handling differences in classrooms. Teaching pupils with special needs in the mainstream classroom no doubt implies adaptation of the standard curriculum. Teachers are confronted with the question of how to instruct these pupils. Pupils with special needs may require more instruction time or other learning methods and professional knowledge. In that case, teachers will feel the need for more time, materials and knowledge. A final important issue at the teacher and classroom level is a teacher's sensitivity and skills in order to enhance significant social relations between pupils. Particularly for pupils with SEN (and their parents), meaningful interactions with non-disabled peers are of utmost importance (Meijer, 2003). Meijer adds that the relationships might not be simple or in the expected direction. Thus while contact with pupils with special needs tends to make teacher attitudes more positive, there is some evidence that teachers with more years of teaching experience tend to express more negative attitudes to inclusion. The decision to take some form of action regarding children with special needs is reached on the basis of a prior diagnosis and is the responsibility of the services deployed by each Autonomous Community. This means that the measures designed to foster inclusion at school vary from one region to another.

Giffard-Lindsay (2007) points out that the measures to foster inclusion include curricular adaptations or modifications. One adaptation is for accessing the curriculum through the creation and edition of contextualized teaching materials suited to the reality of these disadvantaged groups. A highlight for gifted children is the possibility of adjusting the levels and stages in the education system, although it should be noted that such a measure has to be authorized by the school inspectors in each Autonomous Community, following the procedure that each one has laid down and in all cases after the corresponding psychological assessment of the child. Giffard-Lindsay, further says that a large number of Autonomous Communities provide help services through interdisciplinary teams in Educational and Psycho-pedagogical Guidance and from Guidance Departments, to facilitate the diagnosis of special needs children. As supplementary measures, the education authorities provide schools with specialist staff (teachers skilled in Therapeutic Pedagogy and in other necessary fields in accordance with each school's requirements), so that they can join the teams responsible for diagnosing those pupils that so require. They also provide the necessary resources (materials and adapted furniture and fittings, etc.) so as to guarantee the schooling of these same pupils.

Pupils may have serious disorders in different areas of development or family circumstances impede them from attending school on a regular basis, or when they are in hospital or for medical reasons have to miss school for long periods of time. In such cases, coordinating all administrative and institutional spheres is once again a measure that is widely used. Decisions on special needs education may affect teachers directly. Teachers must see the need for implementing inclusive education for it to be successful in all schools as advocated by the government. Teaching is an emotional activity hence a teacher must have positive attitudes. This explains why this study's core objective was to determine the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was: To find out the attitudes of teachers towards implementation of inclusive education.

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). This provided a basis for analyzing the present situation and aid in making recommendations for future decision making, concerning inclusive education in Kenyan public primary schools.

The study was carried out in Nyamira County. The main economic occupation of the residents of the County was peasant farming with tea being the major cash crop and maize being the main food crop. The farming activities were limited by the small fragments of land whose productivity was low and hence low income.

The study targeted all teachers 4000 and 5 education officers in Nyamira County. Teachers were targeted because they were implementers of inclusive curriculum and therefore better positioned to share experiences they undergo. They are also involved in the implementation and delivery of the curriculum. The head teachers were targeted because, apart from being classroom teachers, had administrative role of coordinating and supervising teaching and learning activities in the schools.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study used simple random sampling which gives an equal chance to every item in the population to be selected as a sample for a research study. Head teachers and education were purposively selected for study. Sampling of 1240 teachers who were involved in the study was carried out as in table 1.

Table 1: Population Sample frame

Name of Sub-count	No. of Schools	No. of Teachers	Total
Borabu	25	8	200
Nyamira North	45	8	360
Nyamira South	35	8	280
Masaba	25	8	200
Manga	25	8	200
Total	155	8	1240

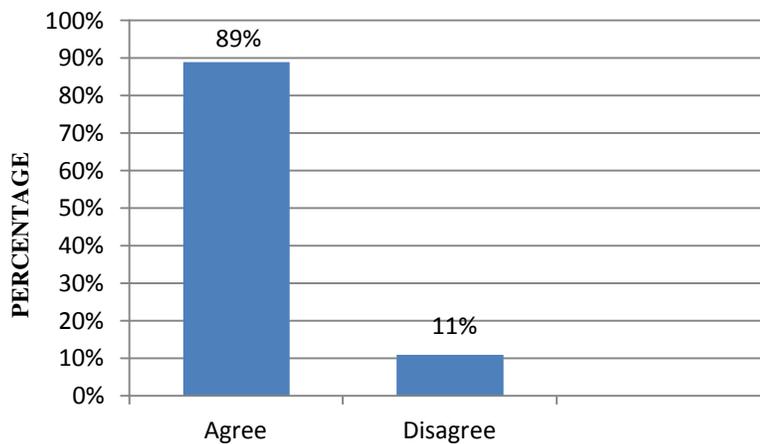
Head teachers of sampled schools were purposively sampled because of their position and deemed to have important information pertaining to their position required by the study. The study sampled

randomly schools in every Sub-County in Nyamira County as shown in the above table. This was appropriately done using lottery technique or wrote names of schools in pieces of paper which were folded then shaken properly and the required number of schools picked. Hence the schools in those papers were involved in the study. Upon reaching a sampled school, the researcher employed stratified sampling to select eight teachers among whom two teachers were those teaching lower primary. This gave a fair representation from both lower and upper primary, and also the head teachers as administrators and classroom teachers were purposively selected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In establishing the attitudes of teachers, the respondents (teachers) were requested to answer some questions. Figure 1 shows responses of respondents concerning the right to educational opportunities.

Figure 1: Special needs children's right to education



On whether children with special needs had a right to education, 89% of the respondents strongly agreed that children with special needs have the right to education while only 11% indicated that there was no need to provide children with special needs education. Although 11% appear to be a small number of respondents than that of 89%, more measures need to be taken to ensure that no child is denied an opportunity to education. It was surprising that 11% of the teachers hold that there's no need to educate disabled children. In fact, for teachers that is a big percentage because they are educators who are thought to be in the fore front to enlighten members of their communities to take their disabled children to school where they will be trained by experts to manage themselves. To emphasize further concerning the right of children to education, one teacher commented:

“Our children have suffered for a long time under our hands as educationists when we have little to do without the government’s support, that is, providing resources to implement inclusive education, a programme which when fully implemented will help all the learners to acquire abilities that will enable them to solve their needs in their daily encounters”. (T1)

The teacher’s concern is a clear revelation that teachers are aware of the rights of children to educational opportunities even though a few teachers held a contrary opinion. It was disappointing when teachers hold the attitude that those children who had disabilities or some challenges should not be educated. Parents who had such children felt justified when they could find teachers who should enlighten them from holding a misleading belief. They lose their dignity, honour and respect from the members of society who hold the opposite thought and belief. Parents and any other members of the society who had not realized the importance of educating their children should be sensitized and stern steps are taken against anyone who does not adhere to this demand. Teachers have both the professional role and a social role of enlightening the members of the society from which children come to school. The study observed that there was a general realization of the need for learners with special needs and or disabilities to access an appropriate form of education.

On responding to whether children with special needs require a special curriculum, 93% of the teachers involved in the study agreed that there was no need to have a special curriculum for both less challenged and special needs children. Only 7% of the respondents disagreed that there was need for special curriculum. This implies that inclusive education may be possible if there was no need for any special curriculum. The study concluded that there was need for a curriculum that would meet the needs of both the special needs children and the normal children. In an inclusive setting both the “normal” and SNE children are taught in the same class, which means that the curriculum that would be used should be able to meet the general needs of both groups. Commenting on the appropriateness of the curriculum one teacher noted:

“Since inclusive education is a new programme it requires the current curriculum to be revised to encompass all needs of learners”.

(A teacher respondent)

Specific needs should be attended to by teachers trained in special education for challenged children while those who are less challenged were attended to by other teachers in the school.

The fact that SNE children acquired knowledge in inclusive settings was evidenced in the responses of those involved in the study when responding to a question that required them to say whether children with special needs learned more in inclusive settings. This item indirectly required teachers to give a response in regard to the attitude they held about learners’ achievement and specifically the children with special needs in an inclusive education programme. 49% of all the respondents were positive that there was some learning while 51% said that learners never learned much as illustrated in table 2.

Table 2: Learners' achievement in inclusive education

Item	Agree	Disagree
Learn more in inclusive education	41%	59%
Learn less in inclusive education	47%	53%

When the respondents were asked to state whether both the less challenged and special needs children learned less in inclusive education, 53% of the respondents said that there was low achievement for those children with disabilities, while 47% of the respondents stated that the learners achieved more in inclusive education (table 2). This was a mere maintenance of the fact that children with special needs learn in inclusive settings but not as much as in other settings. Table 2 shows the teachers responses to two items which inquired of learners' achievement in inclusive education, specifically the children with special needs. In response to the two items, teachers were optimistic, learners with special needs achieved slightly less in inclusive settings than "normal" children. This might be attributed to teachers' lacking training in special needs education (SNE). This study found out that most the teachers had not taught special needs education settings. The other reason might be due to teachers' negativity towards inclusive education. During this study teachers had indicated that there was no need of implementing inclusive education which implied that they might not be assisting the children with special needs well. The study found that teachers needed to adopt positive attitudes towards inclusive education so that they might be of assistance to learners with special needs. In suggesting the way forward in terms of inclusive education, one teacher said:

"There is no need to include these children with special needs in the regular classes, they can lower the mean score of the class and teach the normal students their bad manners"

On responding to whether including special needs children in a regular classroom enhanced sharing of knowledge between the children, 73% of the respondents agreed that the learners shared knowledge amongst themselves, while 27% of respondents disagreed that special needs children being in the same classroom with the "normal" enhanced sharing of knowledge. The percentage of teachers who indicated that inclusive education enhanced the sharing of knowledge by learners was high enough to imply that learners, both the less challenged and the challenged were interacting well amongst themselves. In an interview, one of the respondents, a head teacher said:

"These children have no discrimination amongst themselves because they laugh, play and do group assignments together assisting each other".
(A head teacher respondent)

It also implied that the learners were possibly assisting each other in learning and even beyond the classroom situation. This was the essence of inclusive education that learners interact with each other and learn to co-operate, patience and appreciate differences that exist amongst themselves. This was in recognition that of the fact that disability is not inability (Republic of Kenya Budget speech (2009/10) article 68).

When the respondents were asked whether children with special needs were an additional burden, 42% indicated that they were a burden while 58% said they were not an additional burden to teachers. This was so probably because of the small number of children with special needs in classes. Commenting on whether SNE children were a burden or, not an education officer said:

“Teachers feel burdened because they were not trained and were challenged on how to deal with various disabilities among the learners. However, teachers who had attended SNE training have little challenge when dealing with the children.” (A teacher respondent noted)

This may mean that trained teachers had no or very minor challenges which they may effectively deal with.

This was supported by the fact that 47% of the teachers involved in the study agreed that including special needs children in a regular classroom increased indiscipline cases, while the larger population of those who were involved in the study, 53%, disagreed that children with special needs increased indiscipline cases in regular classes.

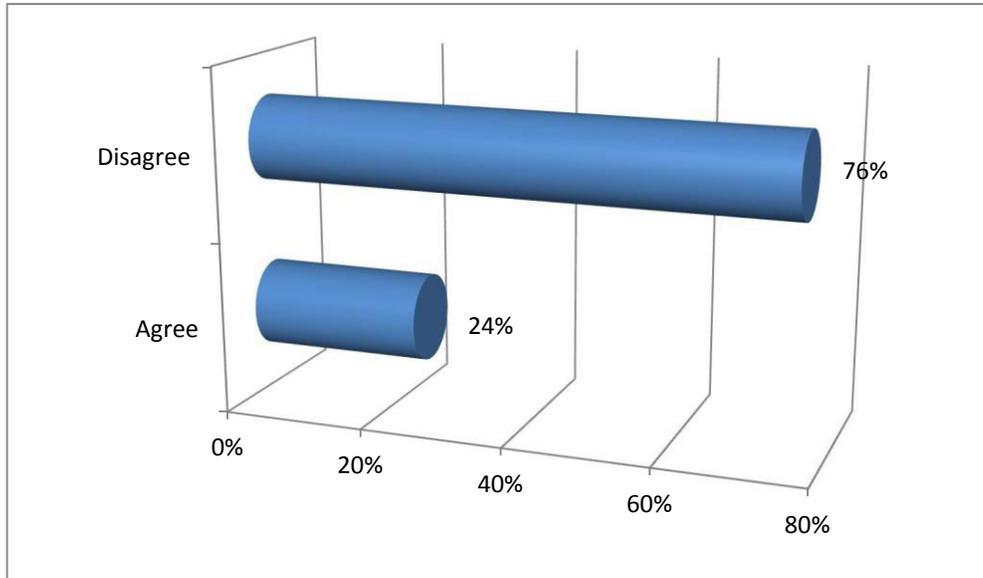
Table 3: Teachers’ responses on special needs children

Item	Agree	Disagree	Total
SNE additional burden to inclusion	42 %	58%	100%
SNE children increase indiscipline in inclusion	47%	53%	100%

In both cases the respondents had a similar response that special needs’ children had challenges that would also be felt by other learners and noticed by the teachers.

Depending on the intensity of the special needs, those who interact with them need to be patient and to the disabled. Children with special needs can benefit from being accepted and appreciated and by the willingness of those around them to assist them. This is the process of developing the right attitudes towards children with special needs.

In establishing whether teachers had knowledge to handle various categories of special needs education learners in inclusive education, table 4 shows responses of respondents.

Figure 2: Teachers ability to teach learners with disabilities of learners

24% of the respondents agreed that teachers had knowledge to handle all categories of children with special needs. 76% of the respondents involved in the study generally disagreed that teachers had the knowledge and ability to handle children with special needs in inclusive settings. The percentage of respondents (24%) who stated that teachers that had knowledge and ability to handle various needs of learners with special needs were quite a small number compared to those who said that teachers did not have knowledge and ability to handle the needs of the children with special needs. A lack of knowledge and the ability of teachers to teach special needs education in a regular class impacts heavily on the teachers' willingness to implement inclusive education in public schools. A teacher who does not have knowledge on any field such as in inclusive education would normally have little to do with children with special needs. As Miles (2002) recommends a whole school approach to the inclusion of children with special needs should be employed; in that all teachers are consulted and trained, not a select few 'specialists'. Teachers should be trained before they are engaged to handle learners in inclusive classes as this establishes their confidence in carrying out teaching and learning activities in inclusive education. The study observed that the teachers' training for acquisition of knowledge and skills was crucial for implementing inclusive education. Teachers who are to be assigned to teach inclusive classes should be those who have received training and masterly in matters pertaining to inclusive education. Ainscow (2005) agrees with many academics in the field of inclusive education who point to teacher education and school leadership as essential for the implementation of inclusive education in the classroom.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In establishing the attitudes of teachers, the study observed that generally the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education was negative. The study further found that the negativity of teachers was due to a number of variables such as the teacher's lack of knowledge and skill of disabilities of the learner since no training was provided to them in regard to inclusive education. Other variables that influenced the teacher's attitude were: the need for special curriculum that would meet needs of learners in inclusive education, low achievement of most of the SNE children and increased indiscipline cases which may be as a result of inadequate involvement of special needs children in the educational process.

Recommendations

The study recommended that: Teachers should recommend severe cases of disability to special schools for specialized attention; teachers should recommend to the ministry of education areas of the curriculum that require revision or change to meet needs of all learners in inclusive settings; all teachers should be trained through in-service and pre-service to be handle children with disabilities in inclusive classes and through seminars and workshops teachers should be encouraged to develop positive attitude towards children with disabilities.

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