

Challenges In The Methods And Practices Of Teaching Pupils With Hearing Impairments In Mombasa County, Kenya

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Abstract- Inclusion is a philosophy that focuses on the process of adjusting the home, school and the larger society to accommodate persons with special needs including disability. The success of provision of inclusive practices is contingent upon the quality of teaching in an inclusive setting and thus the purpose of this study was to investigate the pedagogical challenges teachers encounter in the implementation of special needs inclusive education for pupils with hearing impairments in public primary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study investigated the challenges in the methods and practices of teaching and the availability of teaching/ learning resources for pupils with hearing impairments. This research was conducted in 20 schools in Mombasa County and it involved 210 teachers and 20 head teachers as the target population. It employed descriptive survey involving both qualitative and quantitative data. Descriptive statistics involving percentages and frequency distribution tables were used to present the results. The findings indicated that teachers' lack of sign language skills was a significant barrier to the implementation of inclusive education for pupils with hearing impairments. The study recommended sign language as a part of compulsory inclusive curriculum at both secondary and university education and introduction of sign language refresher courses to equip teachers with effective methods of teaching pupils with hearing impairments.

Index Terms- Inclusive Education, Hearing Impairments, Inclusive Strategies, Pedagogical Challenges.

I. INTRODUCTION

The term inclusive education is derived from the philosophy of inclusion which dates back to the 1950s and focuses on the process of adjusting the home, school and the larger society to accommodate learners with special needs including disability (Alquraini, & Gut, 2012). The philosophy advocates that all individuals regardless of their differences should be accorded with the opportunity to interact, play, learn, work and experience the feeling of belonging. It also means identifying, reducing or removing barriers within and around the school that may hinder learning. For this to happen, teachers, schools, and education systems need to modify the physical and social environment so that they can adequately accommodate learners' diversity (KISE,

2007). Hearing impairment is a hidden disability because it is not clearly identifiable. Hearing Impairment or deafness according to Rosa et al. (2017) is a condition where an individual is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing. The severity of a hearing impairment is measured by the amount of sound that can be heard using one's better ear which is measured using decibels (dB). Hearing loss can be caused by a number of factors including heredity, aging, loud sound exposure, diseases, infections, trauma, or ototoxic drugs (Lelan, 2013).

Statistics from the World Health Organization (2012) reveal that 120 million people globally live with hearing impairment. Sub Saharan Africa has 1.2 million children aged between 5- 14 years old suffering from moderate to severe hearing loss. Unless action is taken, it is likely that the number of people with disabling hearing loss will grow over the coming years. Projections show that the number could rise to 630 million by 2030 and may be over 900 million in 2050. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2010), out of the country's population of 38.7 million, 800,000 live with hearing impairments. The number of primary school children in Kenya living with hearing impairments is considered to be a fifth of the population living with hearing impairments in Kenya and the number is rising due to different array of factors caused by high levels of poverty in some areas.

There has been an international effort to include children with disabilities in the educational mainstream. Jelas & Mohd (2014) suggest that inclusive education or mainstreaming is the key policy objective for the education of children and youth with disabilities. Internationally, inclusive education is supported by policies which include the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child which advocate for the right to education and full participation for all people in the society. The Jomtien Declaration (1990) amplified the need of taking all children to school and provision of the most suitable education. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education paved the way for inclusive education. It upheld the aim of 'education for all' by suggesting fundamental changes in programs and policies of the nations. It standardized rules on equalization of opportunities for persons with special needs including those with disabilities. The Statement (under the aegis of UNESCO) outlined the rights of all children to access education in the regular school environment and

the responsibilities of school systems to accommodate all pupils. The Salamanca Statement has also provided valuable reference points for inclusive education as it provides a framework for thinking about how to move from policy into practice. Recently, The United Nations has developed, The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which reaffirms that all persons irrespective of any impairment must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Kenya is a signatory to most of the policies.

Kenya has taken steps to formulate legislation and policies with a view of attaining nationwide inclusive education. The first commission after independence to address the issue of special needs education was the Kenya Education Commission (1964). It stated that education should be used as an instrument for a conscious change of attitudes and relationships and hence, strive to foster respect for human personality (Oketch, 2009). The Kenya Education Commission (1964) highlighted that children with mild disabilities should be allowed to continue learning in regular schools (Oketch, 2009). Teachers were asked to be sympathetic to learners with disabilities and it further recommended special training to enable teachers to work favourably with them. The Persons with Disabilities Act (2003) Section 18, prohibits discrimination against children with disabilities in accessing education institutions by virtue of their disability and further provides for the establishment of special institutions. (GoK, 2003). The key instrument in achieving nationwide inclusive education in Kenya is the 2009 Special Needs Education Policy Framework (Republic of Kenya 2009). The Ministry of Education in partnership with various stakeholders provided a guiding document that will help pupils with disabilities receive equal access to special education services and further boost the country's goal of achieving Education for All.

Specific Objectives

- To verify how methods and practices of teaching influence the implementation of inclusive education for pupils with hearing impairments.
- To determine the adequacy of teaching / learning resources for pupils with hearing impairments.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey designs are used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret the study for the purpose of clarification (Orodho, 2012). The descriptive design was preferred because it describes key features of an occurrence, people, society or a target population (Maxwell, 2012). The study was conducted under a mixed method design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the data collection and analysis (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). This mixed method design gives opportunity to collect detailed and comprehensive qualitative data in order to support the quantitative data in response to the objectives of the study. The objective of choosing this method was to obtain a deeper understanding from the quantitative data as well as use the qualitative data to support the quantitative findings. Quantitative data aimed at getting statistical data on teacher challenges in

implementing inclusive education and the availability of teaching/ learning resources for pupils with hearing impairments.

The target population comprised of two hundred and ten (210) teachers and twenty (20) head teachers from twenty (20) public primary schools in Mombasa County implementing inclusive education for pupils with hearing impairments. Teachers were selected for this study because they are the major agents in the implementation of inclusive education practices for pupils with hearing impairment. Teachers are also in direct contact with pupils with hearing impairment in public primary schools and hence, their responsibility in implementing special needs education inclusive practices in schools. The sample size for the study comprised 60 teachers and 20 head teachers. To ensure that all teachers had an equal and independent chance of being selected as members of the sample, simple random sampling technique was employed.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sign language as a barrier

When teachers were asked to identify the main challenges they encountered in implementing special needs inclusive education, 48 teachers (80%) identified lack of sign language skills as a major communication barrier. The respondents had not been professionally prepared to teach children with special needs including those with Hearing Impairments during their regular teacher education programmes. The finding was in concordance with the findings of a study by Mpfu and Chimhenga (2013) that attributed the findings to the fact that teachers are unlikely to effectively cater for the pupils with hearing impairments because they are not adequately trained in the art of communicating using sign language. Language is a tool that is used for communication and if the teacher cannot communicate with the pupils, then the pupils' education is likely to be hindered. Pupils with Hearing Impairment are mostly visual learners. This means that if the teacher continues to use word of mouth to communicate, the pupil will be disadvantaged and become distressed (Mpfu & Chimhenga, 2013). Teachers' lack of sign language skills act as a significant barrier which affect the teaching/learning process. In cases where a teacher aide conversant with sign language is employed, teachers must follow the hints for working with a sign interpreter. This proves to be very difficult for a pupil watching a signer to also take notes at the same time from an overhead projector or blackboard.

Adequacy of teaching/ learning resources

Table 1: Adequacy of the Teaching/Resources

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Inadequate	3	5
Inadequate	45	75
Adequate	12	20
Total	60	100

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (75%) indicated inadequacy of teaching and learning resources (75%) in all the schools under study. The study revealed that all the classrooms lacked adequate resources, which hindered effective teaching and learning. This indicates lack of appropriate

instructional resources needed for learners with special needs which affects the access to all inclusive education for pupils with hearing impairment. The high cost of instructional resources for learners within inclusive classroom setting makes access to all inclusive education services to be a pedagogical challenge as they compete unfavourably with those of regular children. The findings of this study are in harmony with a study conducted by Angelides and Aravi, (2007) which revealed that insufficient relevant resources is a major pedagogical challenge to effective implementation of special needs inclusive education in many schools. Armstrong et al. (2016) suggest that teaching or learning materials should be selected according to the specific needs of the learners. When teachers fail to get such materials they resort to using only blackboards which are likely not effective for all pupils in inclusive classes. Pupils without learning aids and support materials have their mobility reduced and they feel inferior to their regular counterparts. They have to continuously play catch up. With the reason of not being able to hear, see and express themselves appropriately and writing slower than other children results in many of them failing in examinations. Kigotho (2016) observes that lack of teaching/ learning facilities in schools is a primary contributory factor to poor performance for learners with HI, which negatively impact on pedagogy. It is true that lack of reading books and other facilities manifest poor continuous teaching and learning especially in inclusive classroom setting. Ostrove, & Olivia (2010) asserts that teaching materials are necessary in promoting learning, maintain interest, add variety to the lesson and linking one subject to other subjects.

In Kenya, lack of school resources affects learning in both primary and secondary schools (Muiruri, 2015). Mutuku (2013) notes that, availability and use of teaching and learning materials as well as using specialized equipment is important in facilitating learning. Mariana (2015), states that variation in quality and quantity of teaching/learning and facilities suggests that pupils receive poorer education. Humphrey, & Alcorn, (2007) posits that hearing aids are a pre-requisite for those with hearing loss of between 40-55 decibels. The hearing aids are necessary in order to increase the loudness of sounds. This implies that the children's right to communicate and attain their potentialities is likely to be denied. Statistics has revealed that, on average educational and instructional materials for a pupil with hearing impairment include bone conductors, FM and DM systems, cochlear implants, hearing aids and sound field systems. Asif (2008) has observed that for an effective inclusion process, a professional relationship should be developed with an audiologist, hearing specialists, sign language interpreters, and speech and language therapists. In addition, communication lines should be kept open. Visual and tactile aids should be used as much as is possible, in the classroom. Language in-group activities should be encouraged by allowing time for pupils to start and finish communication. He further reiterates that Kenyan deaf adults should be involved as sign language instructors in inclusive settings as they are often the best teachers in sign language. Deaf and hearing children should be encouraged to use sign language for social interaction and for academic purposes.

It has been claimed that exclusion in most Kenyan schools comes about from a scarcity of resources. For example, Lelan, (2013) and Oosero, (2015) found that head teachers actively redirected pupils living with disability to special schools to avoid

pressure on their funding. This is consistent with Humphrey, & Alcorn, (2007) who observes that teachers believed that it was a lack of funding that contributed to a discrepancy between what was received and what was required to implement a curriculum package. It would appear that in some cases, resources are seen as a critical factor for successful inclusion, and when head teachers believe adequate resources are not available particularly when it comes to the enrolment of pupils with special needs in regular schools, they feel justified in legitimizing the exclusion of pupils with disabilities. This is contrary to Jelas, & Mohd Ali, (2014) observation that using a lack of resources as an excuse for excluding pupils on the basis of their disability is more of a statement about the values held by the excluder than a justification or explanation. Pupils with hearing impairments being excluded because of lack of resources is a myth, with the main forces of exclusion being attitudes, beliefs and systems that are not designed to meet the needs of pupils with hearing impairments.

IV. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing findings of the study, it is clear that there are various challenges encountered by teachers in implementing inclusive education for learners with HI. The challenges include teachers lacking sign language skills for effective communication with learners with hearing impairments and inadequacy of teaching/ learning resources. For teachers to successfully implement inclusive education for pupils with hearing impairment, it's imperative to embrace the best teaching methods and practices and also provide the supportive teaching and learning resources.

Recommendations

The following recommendations based on the findings of this study have been made:

- The Ministry of Education in collaboration with other stakeholders should ensure that teachers are adequately prepared during their pre-service teacher education programme to enable them to effectively teach pupils with hearing impairments in inclusive classroom settings.
- The Ministry of Education should ensure regular in-service training for all teachers implementing special needs inclusive practices to keep them abreast with strategies and methods on how to teach various categories of disabled pupils within an inclusive classroom setting.
- The government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education should ensure equity of funds allocation to facilitate the purchasing of specialized equipment and resources for effective implementation of inclusive education for pupils with hearing impairment.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article

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