
HEADTEACHERS' COLLABORATION WITH PARENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INTEGRATED PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH RIFT REGION, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of head teachers' collaboration with parents on the implementation of inclusive education in integrated primary schools in the South Rift Valley region in Kenya. The study focused on determining the relationship between adequacy of inclusive education resources and head teachers' collaboration with parents. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Social interdependence theory (SIT) was employed in the study. The target population consisted of 25 head teachers, 121 special needs teachers, 308 representatives of school management committees, and 450 parents' association's representatives from the 25 integrated schools in the South Rift Region. Data was collected using questionnaires for head teachers and special needs teachers. Reliability was determined through the test-retest method and calculated using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression statistics. The findings showed a positive relationship between head teachers' collaboration with parents and implementation of inclusive

education ($r=0.912$; $p<0.05$). Most (63%) of the head teachers indicate that psycho-social sensitization is to a scale of little extent. Again, a third of the head teachers, agreed that although parents' meetings have resulted in collaboration with parents on the implementation of inclusive education, the participation is not optimal enough. The study recommends that the community and parents should be made aware of their responsibility for ensuring that inclusive education is effectively implemented and the head teachers should mobilise a reliable structured collaborations that may lead to consistent progressive implementation of inclusive education.

Key words: Head Teachers' Collaboration with Parents, Inclusive Education, Integrated Public Primary Schools.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental right for every child regardless of their status. Consequently, the concept of Inclusive education strives at realising equity, access, relevance, affordability, and effectiveness of education in the community (Cahyadi, Widyastuti, & Mufidah 2021).

The mechanism of achieving education for the learners with disabilities is through mobilising the necessary resources for transforming regular institutions including human expertise, the physical environment, and materials. Wals and Benavot (2017) report a campaign for an inclusive educational approach for nations that are inclined to delivering education to all its citizens, this includes Kenya. Inclusivity in education as a concept is premised on the principle that all children that are abled differently, irrespective of their cultural, social, or religious differences deserve equal learning opportunities. In this respect, since 1960s; non-state actors, faith based organisations, state agencies among others have clamoured for adjustment of educational environments and facilities to ensure education for all young people (UNESCO, 2013). Ultimately, this has led to several declarations by the United Nations towards inclusivity in education (Namanyane, 2021).

In many parts of the world, students with disabilities are educated in segregated schools that do not allow opportunities to interact with peers without disabilities (National Association of Special Education Teachers, 2004; World Health Organization, 2011; Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training, 2019).

Because the stated specialised schooling options may not be available in all communities; children with disabilities must leave their homes and families to attend such specialised schools. As a result, many students with disabilities and their families are forced to choose between receiving an education and engaging with their local community. Hence, the parents and communities should work on a framework and infrastructure in their local school to allow integration of all the learners. Dreyer (2017) explored the barriers and promoters in delivering inclusive education and found that uncoordinated policy, inadequate government funding and inadequate facilities.

Gross et al (2015) cite Willems and Gonzalez-DeHass (2012) who described school–community partnerships as meaningful relationships with community members, organizations, and businesses that are committed to working cooperatively with a shared responsibility to advance the development of students’ intellectual, social, and emotional well-being. School–community partnerships can impact student success and post-school outcomes as well as positively influence and benefit the community in return. In the Kenyan setting, important as outcomes are; the first concern is that of access to relevant and affordable inclusive education.

Through research in Kenya, Pather (2019) focused on factors for directly attributing to articulating inclusivity policy in education and found that there are challenges attributable to inadequate resources and unadaptable learning resources for the special needs in Isinya Sub-County in Kajiado. Budget allocation to support activities such as seminars and trainers for the teachers proved to be inadequate and thus training has not been undertaken. This also limits the support and willingness of the head of the school to provide such opportunities for the teachers handling students with disabilities. It is therefore imperative that parents and other stakeholders need to collaborate to provide resources in kinds that can aid in successful implementation of inclusive education

Similarly, Keitany, Moses and Kiprop (2020) examined the success level of inclusion for special needs for pre-schools for Kericho County and found inadequacy and inappropriateness of materials as limiting program success. Similar findings were arrived at by Omamo (2017), for public schools. Further, Maina, Akala, Nyagah, Kalai, Kibui and Golden (2015) audited how the development of leadership skills for school heads impacts inclusivity leading to conclusions that development plans lacked comprehensiveness for effective implementation of inclusive education.

The budget allocation aspect, most schools do not enjoy the financial allocations to support getting resources for the special education (Mwangi, 2015). According to this study, the findings depicted that the financial position of the schools was not sufficient to enable allocation of resources for the inclusion education. It is for this reason that most of the schools with inclusive education ended up seeking help assistance from Sponsors, Donors, NGOs and other Well-wishers in view of enhancing the implementation of comprehensive education special need education The study further realized that the necessary instructional resources that are required to support the inclusive learning program were massively inadequate. The most crucial and important resource for this inclusive education program were unavailable and thus proved a hindrance to the full implementation of inclusive education.

According to Dayanandan (2018), the majority of the special needs and OVCs are in public schools both at primary (96.6%) and secondary level (90.0%). Comparatively, for out-of-school children, the majority are differently gifted (Dayanandan, 2018). This survey sampled 21 counties through purposive sampling.

However, the three counties of South Rift were left out through the designed sampling technique thus no information on disability prevalence and schooling was obtained for Kericho, Bomet, and Narok Counties. Given that overwhelmingly, children in rural areas depicted greater disability rates (60%) compared to children in urban areas (40%), the South Rift Counties of Bomet, Narok and Kericho could equally have higher prevalence rates of disability due to being largely rural (VSO Jitolee, 2017). Moreover, the cumulative prevalence of persons with disability in the three counties is 4.8 % among the top 5 disability prevalence Nationally (KNBS, 2019). The aspect of finance is always never enough, this study thus sought to explore the options of collaboration with parents to supplement government efforts to implement inclusive education.

OBJECTIVES

This study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- i) To determine the extent to which head teachers' collaboration with parents influences implementation inclusive education in integrated primary schools in the South Rift Valley region in Kenya.
- ii) To analyse the influence of head teachers' collaboration with external funding agencies on the implementation of inclusive

education in integrated primary schools in the South Rift Valley region in Kenya.

Literature Review

Collaboration is an essential factor for organisational success. Collaboration in inclusive practice can ensure equal and quality education for every learner. The collaboration of parent and teacher can play a significant role in the development of an individual child in inclusive practice (McLeskey, et al, Hossain, 2021). Parent-teacher collaboration is one of the most vital issues that can develop inclusive practice in Bangladesh. Not only the teacher but also parents have a significant role in the development of inclusive practice. Parental involvement in education has been recognized as a critical factor in children's outcomes (Wilder, 2014, Gross, et al, 2015).

An inclusive education system provides all students with the most appropriate learning environments and opportunities to realise their potential. This goes beyond the classroom and into the home. Recognizing parents as an integral part of their child's education and welcoming their involvement in the learning community can lead to innovative solutions and open communication between parents and teachers.

Yulianti, Denessen and Dropp (2018) define parental engagement as a consolidation of the commitment as well as the active participation on the parents' sides to not only the school but also the child. Also, the engagement of the parents involves their participation and support at school and at home. This was found to directly influence the children's academic performance. The reason behind this was deduced to be the facilitation of both curricular as well as co-curricular support to ensure effective learning for their children in school (Hossain, 2021). Male and Palaiogou (2017) observed that head teachers and other school administrators are critical establishing the necessary condition for inclusion in education. Thus, it is their unique responsibility to guarantee that all learners in their schools receive an appropriate education. Male and Palaiogou (2017) acknowledge that inclusion dictates the use of a strong commitment as well as the support from the whole academic community.

Jelas and Ali (2014) observe that Malaysia's move towards inclusion was given impetus by its participation in workshops and conferences set up under the auspices of the United Nations (UNESCO 1990; UN 1993; UNESCO 1994). Inclusive education was introduced in the Education Act 1996 as part of the continuum of services available for children with special needs. Laskar (2017) in

Malaysia noted that all persons with duties shaping the life of a child must collaborate to ensure optimum success in education. Ahmad (1998) explored the trends of education in Malaysia and underscored the importance of partnerships among the key stakeholders in the country. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2021) advocate for programs including parents to take part in learning as being beneficial as the environment becomes welcoming while tapping into diversity inability among parents.

According to Goodhall (2017), parents' complete participation is necessary for children to achieve their academic potential. The study also established that parental involvement in children's learning has a good impact on the children's performance at school and emphasises the significance of parental involvement further. Shiwani, Akala, Kalai and Gatumu (2021) investigated the effect of head teachers' collaborative partnerships with parents, government agencies and NGOs, on the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Nairobi City County in Kenya. Descriptive survey was applied. Questionnaires were administered to 71 head teachers and 297 teachers, supplemented by document analysis. Interview was used on eight Quality Assurance Standards Officers (QASOs) and four Education Assessment Resource Centre Officers (EARCs). The study established the

relationship between head teachers' collaborative partnerships with implementation of inclusive education. Nevertheless, majority of schools lacked well-structured coordinated partnerships resulting in low participation in school's programmes as referenced by head teachers and teachers on provision for specialised teaching and learning resources, 63.4% and 63.3%; assessment of learners, 64.8% and 70.4%; outsourcing of funds, 69% and 69.7%.

Adapting a general classroom to achieve inclusive status necessitates additional staff beyond the regular number to aid general classroom teachers (Bryant *et al.*, 2019). The number of paraprofessionals for special needs is near 290,000, who take part in aiding learning for inclusivity. Consequently, schools encounter difficulties in retaining paraprofessionals leading to rapid turnover associated with low wages, lack of advancement in career, and low levels of support from administration (Naghavi, 2019). Funds are never enough. There is need therefore for the headteachers to initiate efficient collaborations external agencies to provide support services and educational resources for the effective implementation of inclusive education, within the framework of national, sub-regional, regional, and global imperatives, there is a need for a comprehensive,

integrated, long-term, collective approach to education.

Social interdependence theory (SIT) has become one of the most widespread applications of educational psychology (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Social interdependence exists when the outcomes of individuals are affected by their own and others' actions (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). There are two types of social interdependence: positive (i.e., the actions to promote the achievement of joint goals) and negative (i.e., the actions to obstruct the achievement of each other's goals). The psychological processes based on positive interdependence include substitutability (the degree to which actions of one person substitute for the actions of others), inducibility (i.e. openness to being influenced and to influencing others), and positive cathexis (i.e. investment of positive psychological energy in objects outside of oneself) (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

These processes demonstrate how self-interest is expanded to joint interest, and how new goals and motives are created in cooperative and competitive situations. The transformation from self-interest to mutual interest is one of the most important aspects of social interdependence. The successful implementation of inclusive education is, to a large degree, dependent on the development of effective collaborative

support structures. Hay (2003) emphasises that inclusive education primarily depends on adequate and effective support, as inclusive education without adequate support is inclusion by default. To achieve the aims of an inclusive education system, it becomes imperative that Head teachers establish various collaborations with parents and funding agencies, support teacher exposure on inclusive education, and avail resources that facilitate the implementation of mainstreaming the differently abled learners.

Through collaboration, all role-players need to ensure that the school becomes an inviting, inclusive, health-promoting arena where all learners are fully supported in order to maximise their individual potential as Kenyan citizens. It is against this background that the researcher undertook to establish the critical areas of collaboration and support required to facilitate effective implementation of inclusive education in public integrated primary schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The target population consisted of 25 head teachers, 121 special needs teachers, 308 representatives of school management committees, and 450 parents' association's representatives from the 25 integrated schools in the South Rift Region.

For this study, a descriptive research survey design is deemed appropriate as it facilitates collecting and analysing detailed data. Coolican (2017) justify the use of descriptive research design because of combined data and analysis techniques to complete each technique in understanding the problem by eliminating skewness and biases.

Purposive sampling was applied in selecting all 25 heads from the Integrated Public Primary Schools, CQSO and SD. The heads as school administrators have valuable information regarding collaboration in the implementation of inclusivity in education hence automatically required for this study.

The representatives of parents were randomly selected per school and a total of 308 were selected. The study used primary data, which was largely quantitative in nature, data was collected from students, head teachers and special needs teachers by use of questionnaires with structured questions and use of interview guide for the SQSO and SD. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics that included mean and standard deviation while inferential statistics included correlation and regression analysis assisted by SPSS and presented in tables and graphs.

FINDINGS

The objective of the study sought to determine the influence of head teachers' collaboration with parents on the implementation of inclusive education in integrated primary schools in the South Rift Valley region in Kenya. Teachers' collaboration with parents included financial support,

Psycho-social sensitization and care and physical support. The study sought to establish the views of head teachers on the impact of head teachers' collaboration with parents on the implementation of mainstream academics in integrated primary schools in the South Rift Valley region in Kenya. Head teachers' responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Head teachers' Response on Collaboration with Parents and Implementation of Inclusive Education

Statements	VGE		GE		SE		LE		NE		Mean	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Financial support	-	-	2	13	2	13	10	63	2	13	2.25	0.85
Psycho-social sensitization	-	-	3	19	2	13	10	63	6	38	2.62	.95
Care and physical support	1	6	3	19	-	-	8	50	4	25	3.06	1.14
Parents meetings	2	13	4	25	5	31	4	25	1	6	3.12	1.35
Recruitment of support staff	2	13	1	6	5	31	6	38	5	31	2.12	0.71
Provision of learning resources	-	-	-	-	5	31	8	50	4	31	2.50	1.21

(n=16, Average Mean=2.61)

Note: VGE- Very great extent, GE- Great extent, SE- Some Extent, LE-Little extent, NE- No extent

Table 1 indicates that 10(63%) of the head teachers agreed that there is little collaboration with parents on financial support (M=2.25, SD=0.85). This may also be an indication that collaboration with parents on the implementation of inclusive education has not solicited financial support. Further 10(63%) of the head teachers indicate that psycho-social sensitization is to a scale of little extent. This may be inferred that there is minimal psycho-social sensitization in collaboration with parents on the implementation of inclusive education (M=2.62, SD=0.65). Moreover, 8(50%) of the head teachers affirmed that care and physical support is in a scale of little extent (M=3.06, SD=1.14). Again, 5(31%) of the head teachers, agreed that to some extent parents' meetings have resulted in collaboration with parents on the implementation of inclusive education (M=3.12, SD=1.35).

The study findings therefore indicate that the teaching / learning resources, support aids and other facilities necessary for inclusive education were inadequate in the schools. The school environment was not modified hence the environment remained restrictive to inclusive education. Furthermore, parents were not involved in the procurement of teaching and learning

resources of their children and there was no transparency on the usage of school funds. This therefore, means that head teachers did not undertake their role of procurement as guided by the Ministry of Education. Buhere, Kindiki and Ndiku (2014) reported that resources were inadequate as the head teachers rarely made considerations in purchasing inclusive education requirements despite the government's capitation made to these schools. According to the Ministry of Education (2011) school head teachers are supposed to approve the procurement plan and procure the instructional materials needed with full involvement of the parents thus, they must understand the legal framework and application of public procurement principles.

The study sought to establish the relationship between the collaboration with parents and enforcement of inclusive education using Pearson correlation. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis between Head teachers` Collaboration with Parents and implementation of Inclusive Education

		INCL	COLLA
INCL	Pearson		
	Correlation	1.000	.030
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.912
	N	16	16
COLLA	Pearson		
	Correlation	.030	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.912	
	N	16	16
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficient $r(16) = 0.912$, $p(0.000) < 0.5$. This implies that there is a weak positive relationship between collaboration with parents and enforcement of inclusive education. This conclusion implies that collaboration with parents is important in enforcement of inclusive education. The findings agree with, Male and Palaiogou (2017) observes that head teachers and other school administrators are key in establishing the necessary conditions for inclusion in education. Thus, it is their unique responsibility to guarantee that all learners in their schools receive an appropriate education.

Male and Palaiogou (2017) acknowledges that inclusion dictates the use of a strong commitment as well as the support from the whole academic community.

The study sought to establish the views of teachers on the influence of collaboration with parents on enforcement of inclusive education projects. Teachers’ responses are presented in Table 6. From Table 6 it can be confirmed that a convincing percentage of teachers 32(27%) agreed that to some extent there is financial support as a result of collaboration with parents (M=2.29, SD=1.05).

Table 3: Teachers’ Response on Collaboration with Parents and implementation of Inclusive Education Projects

Statements	VG E		G E		SE		L E		N E		Me an	St dv
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Financial support	3	4	6	7	23	27	27	31	27	31	2.29	1.05
Psycho-social sensitization	-	-	17	20	10	12	35	41	13	15	2.48	0.97
Care and physical support	3	4	17	20	10	12	28	33	28	33	2.71	1.02
Parents meetings	12	14	12	14	23	27	19	22	20	23	2.66	1.37
Recruitment of support	3	4	3	4	20	23	35	41	12	14	3.01	3.79

staff													
Provision of learning resources	9	10	7	8	25	29	17	20	28	33	2.51	1.28	
(n=86, Average Mean=2.61)													

Note: VGE- Very great extent, GE- Great extent, SE- Some Extent, LE-Little extent, NE- No extent

This implies that the teachers are conversant with the strategic objectives involved in collaboration with parents in the enforcement of inclusive education projects. Moreover, 35 (41%) of teachers indicated that to little extent recruitment of support staff has ensured enforcement of inclusive education projects (M=3.01, SD=3.79). However, 28(33%) of the teachers suggested that, to a scale of little extent, provision of learning resources ensures enforcement of inclusive education projects (M=2.51, SD=1.28). Therefore, this is a gap that needs to be addressed in resource mobilisation towards enforcement of inclusive education projects.

Interviewed parents representatives indicated that it is clear that the curriculum used in schools implementing inclusive education is not modified to cater for inclusive education, teachers did not prepare or submit professional records in time, schemes of work and lesson plans did not cater for inclusive education learners and teaching and learning aids were not child-friendly.

This was further supported by board members who were interviewed and argued that this situation is worsened by head teachers who do not supervise their teachers to ensure that curriculum, schemes of work, lesson plans, teaching and learning aids are adapted to suit all including inclusive education learners. This finding collaborates Mwangi (2015) who established that the teaching and learning materials such as relevant curriculum, equipment and other facilities were inadequate. However, the findings contrast with the observations by UNESCO (2004) that for inclusion to succeed, changes must take place at all levels of society, including differences becoming positively valued, schools becoming welcoming environments, teachers becoming committed to working with all children, and curricula becoming child friendly.

Teachers' collaboration with parents included special needs learning resources, infrastructural facilities, capacity building, spiritual needs and psychosocial support (availability, adequacy levels), while enforcement of inclusive education was operationalized as relevant skills acquisition, self-esteem, community participation and equal job opportunity. Moreover, the study sought to establish the level at which introduction of collaboration with parents' influences enforcement of inclusive education projects. The results are shown in Table 4.

Parental involvement also includes parents participating actively in the development and education of their own children. This suggests that by actively participating and working together, they make sure they are knowledgeable about issues relevant to their children's lives in school and, as a result, ensure that they are not prevented from learning by any circumstance. This creates a connection between the parents and the school to guarantee that children receive a top-notch education. Male and Palaiogou (2017) report that head teachers and other school administrators play a crucial role in creating the prerequisites for inclusion in education. This report is consistent with the findings in some of the schools that were surveyed in Bomet, Narok and Kericho County.

From the interviews County Officials suggested that implementation of inclusive education in schools is being stalled owing to lack of resources, lack of supervision of curriculum by head teachers who either are overloaded with numerous duties to perform in the school or lack appropriate knowledge and skills to supervise in inclusive schools in Kenya. This finding depicts the extent to which parents have collaboration with the Head teachers at the schools and the impact this has on the implementation of inclusive education.

The study sought to analyse the influence of head teachers' collaboration with external

funding agencies on the achievement of inclusive education in integrated primary schools in the South Rift Valley region in Kenya. Head teachers’ responses are presented in Table 4. Table 4 indicates that 12(76%) of the head teachers agreed that the Government of Kenya funds implementation of inclusive education projects (M=4.00, SD=1.09). Further 10(63%) of the head teachers indicate that Ministry of Education funds enforcement of inclusive education projects (M=3.75, SD=1.39). Moreover, 7(44%) of the head teachers affirmed that foreign donors to no extent funds enforcement of inclusive education projects (M=2.25, SD=1.29). According to the National Association of Schools Psychologists (2005), well-coordinated collaborative partnerships in schools are significant for learners, teachers and the families in terms of higher academic achievements, improved behavior, higher participation in school programs, and improved school attendance with fewer referrals to special education.

Table 4: Head teachers’ Responses on Collaboration with External Funding Agencies and

Enforcement of Inclusive Education Projects

Statements	VGE		GE		SEL		LE		NE		Mean	Stdv	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
The Government of Kenya	6	38	6	38	3	19	1	-	-	1	6	4.00	1.09
Foreign Donors	-	-	4	25	2	39	1	2	1	3	4	2.25	1.29
National Disability Organizations	1	6	-	-	3	19	1	5	3	7	4	1.93	1.12
International Disability Organizations	1	6	-	-	4	25	2	5	3	6	3	2.06	1.12
Ministry of Education	7	44	3	19	1	23	1	3	1	9	6	3.75	1.39
International Disability Organizations	-	-	-	-	4	25	2	1	6	1	6	1.56	0.89

(n=16, Average Mean=2.59)

During interviews a County official asserted that in sporadic cases or not all do schools collaborate with stakeholders or partners. Some NGOs visit schools when they have an interest, but lack of coordination limits collaboration. Some well-established schools have a number of their programs sponsored by donors, in areas such as textbooks,

assistive devices, hiring aides, and infrastructure.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an urgent continuous need to sensitise all stakeholders in the execution of inclusive education. All persons involved in the inclusive education community are supposed to understand the nature of this system being implemented and commit to getting involved fully. Moreover, it is significant for inclusive culture to be successful in each institution to accommodate everyone. With good administrative influence and support, all heads are likely to have a huge impact in the full implementation of inclusive education.

The head teachers need to create maximum awareness to the parents on their role in participation in the implementation of inclusive education. The head teachers should establish well-structured collaborations with parents which may likely increase the level of involvement. Parents must be educated to understand that having a disabled child is not a curse and that they should expose these kids to all of the educational options the nation has to offer in order to fully realise their potential.

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