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# INFLUENCE OF CREATION OF CONDUCTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ON INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MBOONI EAST AND WEST SUB-COUNTIES, KENYA

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<sup>1</sup>Domitilla Wanza Mwanzia, <sup>2</sup>Jeremiah M. Kalai, <sup>3</sup>Phylisters D. Matula

<sup>1-3</sup>University of Nairobi

Email: <sup>1</sup>[domitillamwanzia@gmail.com](mailto:domitillamwanzia@gmail.com); <sup>2</sup>[jeremykalai@uonbi.ac.ke](mailto:jeremykalai@uonbi.ac.ke); <sup>3</sup>[phylisters.daisy@uonbi.ac.ke](mailto:phylisters.daisy@uonbi.ac.ke)

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## ABSTRACT

*The concept of Inclusion in education is to have every child in a learning institution where the environment should adapt to the learner to facilitate personalized learning. Inclusion of learners with SNE in public primary schools has been a major challenge to stakeholders in education globally and in Kenya. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of creating conducive learning environment on inclusion of learners with special needs in education in public primary schools in Mbooni East and West sub-counties, Kenya. Descriptive research design was used. Educational production theory was applied. Targeted population was (N=1896) who included 204 public primary head teachers, 1632 public primary schools teachers, 60 parents from 6 units, and 2 Education Officers. Data obtained from questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS version 23. Data obtained from interviews were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Null hypothesis,  $H_0$ : There is statistically no significant difference between learning environment and inclusion of learners with special needs in education, was tested using Independent t-*

*test at 0.05 level of significance. Lack of a conducive learning environment negatively affects inclusion. Study recommends that Ministry of Education should provide head teachers with support structures and training in features that make inclusive education work.*

**KEYWORDS:** Inclusion, learners, learning environment, disability, special needs education.

## INTRODUCTION

Inclusion concept expresses determination to have every child in school in the best way possible, where the environment should adapt to the learner to facilitate personalized learning. Inclusion is anchored on Education for All (EFA) policy of the World Conference on Education For All in 1990. The Dakar World Education Forum (2000) (UNESCO, 2015, 2017) is enshrined in the international documents on SNE such as the World Conference on Special Needs Education, the International Conference of Dakar in 2000, Standard rules on Equalization of Opportunities for PWDs 1993, the Salamanca Statement and

Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994), and International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 which adopted the principle of inclusion.

Around the globe, education systems were put in place to cater for some children leaving out some others. Previously, this differentiation meant that a group of children because of individual challenges and deficits could not adopt the ordinary educational system (UNESCO, 1984, 2017). Thereafter, the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal came up with the new Millennium Development Goals of providing for every girl and boy with the primary school education by 2015, and accessing progress towards Education For All (EFA) since Jomtien. It is through EFA that inclusion education was identified as one of the major strategies in addressing issues of marginalization and exclusion. Following this EFA initiative, the Government of Kenya has taken the task of implementing measures to improve the involvement of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream, that is, public primary schools GOK, (2010). With the introduction of the Free Primary Education (FPE) capitation grants are disbursed to the special needs learners' kitty, which helps to eliminate existing barriers making the school friendlier.

The significance of inclusion is defined in its positive outcomes for all children with either

disabilities or other challenges. For instance, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education EASNIE, 2018 UNESCO, 1984, 2017), provided enough evidence that inclusive education increases social and academic opportunities for both children with and without special needs, and significantly enhances the probability that children with special needs enroll in higher education and enjoy better employment and living standards (Florian, Black- Hawkins& Rouse, 2007; Mutisya, 2012, Heir, 2016).

According to UNESCO (2017), the central message from the United Nation' Specialized Agency for education communicates, "Every learner matters and matters equally. "The guide expounds on why there is need to focus on equity and inclusion both at national, sub-counties and local levels. This should be in the formal, non-formal and informal settings. According to the guide (UNESCO, 2017), 263 million children, youth and adolescents, aged between 6 and 17 years are not in school by 2017. Moreover, those in school were not necessary learning, with those from vulnerable groups being more likely to suffer from discrimination and targeted by school violence, inadequate resources, unadapted environment and many more. These findings concur with the researcher's findings in Mbooni East and West sub-counties where there are only six units out of 204 public primary schools as shown in table 1.2.

UNESCO (2017) recommended that policy makers, senior staff, school staff, families and communities to review current policies and practices, decide on action to take, and monitor the progress.

In our country Kenya, the aspect of special education began after the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and has been offered in special schools until the 1970s when the government introduced units and integrated programmes. However, studies by Mwangi (2014) and Ngaruiya (2002) show that although these learners receive education, they are said to be a major challenge to the education sector. So far, majority of learners with special needs in education are yet to be enrolled. For example, in 1999, only 22,000 learners were enrolled in special needs special units and integrated programmes. In 2003, the number rose to 26,885 according the Koech Report (1999). In the 1990s, there were 107 special schools in the country, but over the years, the concept of inclusion has started taking shape. It is being concerned as a way of democratizing opportunities for life-long –learning and making it flexible to allow access to education.

Findings say that 90,000 children identified and assessed, 14,614 are enrolled in educational programmes for learners with special educational needs and as well an equivalent population is either at home or in regular schools with little or no specialized assistance.

The Kenyan government appreciates the value of special needs education as a valuable component for attaining the Education For All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Nevertheless, KENPRO (2010) maintains that with insufficient resources and inappropriate support, inclusion was doomed. The researcher concurs with KENPRO (2010) by the study findings of research objective 5 which using the t-test were; since  $P\text{-value} = 0.4735 > P = 0.005$ , and One-Way ANOVAa Output; since  $P\text{-value} = 0.001 < P = 0.005$ , an implication that head teachers have neglected the administrative practices resulting to negative impact on inclusion programmes. Through the findings, the teachers express that these administrative practices influence positively on the implementation of inclusion programmes. The findings explain the poor situation of inclusion programmes in the area under study.

Three decades down the line, the government of Kenya has invested heavily to address the challenges faced by learners with individual unique needs. The University of Reading, United Kingdom (UK), has carried out a research aimed at assessing the challenges facing the special education needs programmes in some two provinces in Kenya.

In addition, authors of the likes of Ogot (2004) the government is seen to go through the challenge of developing inclusion environments in Kenya (Mwangi, 2014).

Several successful projects were carried out to identify and evaluate effective inclusive programme practiced by teachers. A training toolkit for teachers, head teachers and policy makers, has been developed by UNESCO-IBE( 2016), EASNIE ( 2011),the Commonwealth Rieser, (2012), and Save the Children (2016); Save the Children & EENET (2018). Another tool is the Supporting Effective Teaching [SET] Longitudinal project, which exemplary identifies measures and enhances inclusive teaching- learning practices (Jordan & McGhie- Richmond, 2014). The tool is an observation scale, used by SET project members to identify and evaluate effective classroom activities for inclusion, which include; classroom management, time management, lesson presentation, large group and whole-class instruction, small groups and individual instruction, predominant teaching style, and classroom tone.

According to some scholars who included; Chireshe(2011); Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002); Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013); Simui, Waliuya, Namitwe and Munsaiye (2009) , the Sub-Saharan African countries have enacted policies on inclusion which are in the process of implementation.

But countries including Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Namibia to mention but a few have faced several challenges in the implementation. These challenges include: inadequate resources in form of financial, physical, human, material, infrastructural, curricula and support facilities. Training of teachers in special needs education and administrative practices to implement inclusion is said to be a major challenge (Chireshe, 2011; Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2003; Mitiku, Alemu, & Mengsitu , 2014; Naong & Mateusi ,2014; Simui et al., 2009).

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Mbooni East and Mbooni West have 204 public primary schools and have only six schools where there are efforts of inclusion (SCDE, Mbooni East and Mbooni West, 2019) compared to the seven sub-counties in the county as shown in Table 1. Records in the local Education area resource centre (EARC ) offices in the two sub-counties annual report of 2018, show that out of 640 learners who had been assessed per disability, only 22 got placement in special units and 82 placed in public primary schools.

#### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

To fulfill the stated purpose, the study was guided by the following research objective:-  
Establish the influence of creating conducive learning environment on inclusion of learners with special needs in education.

The study was guided by the following null hypothesis

Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference between head teachers creating a conducive learning environment and inclusion of learners with special needs.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Udeme (2016), Lyons (2012), identifies the parameters appropriate for inclusive education as placing the learner in age appropriate grade place, having no special classes or schools and a cooperative learning practiced where teachers can share ideas for improvement of the educational system. According to Sumane (2012), UNESCO (2017), the learning environment is a purposefully organized physical, social and informative set of circumstances, in which a learner forms and implements his/her experience; knowledge, skills and attitudes towards himself/herself and the surrounding world. In inclusion, Mutisya, (2012) emphasizes that head teachers should advise teachers to use locally available and improvised resources to support learning. The head teacher should use local artisans to make and repair the devices that can help minimize shortage. Noting that these devices are very expensive and others not locally available, the researcher is uncertain if public primary schools in Mbooni East and West sub- counties have the appropriate resources for all the learners in the inclusive programmes.

Atkinson, (2000), Adeogun (2001), Momoh (2010), Lyons (2012) posit that material resources include textbooks, charts, maps, audiovisual and electronic instructional materials like the radio, tape recorder, television, and video tape recorder. More instructional materials include paper supplies, and writing materials, the likes of adapted types of the following; desks, latrines, windows, doors, ramps, playground, play equipment and SNE trained teachers and many more.

Republic of Kenya (1988), and other writers as; DFID (2009), Fonseca and Canboy (2006) and MOEST (2005) observed that development and maintenance of physical facilities in public primary schools by communities, parents and sponsors had to be enhanced in the institutions. The physical facilities included adapted environment, wide doors, spacious classrooms, usable ramps, adapted latrines, and presence of SNE trained teachers amongst others. If all the mentioned are available the authors posit that they facilitate or inhibit construction of a culture of success.

An appropriate learning environment would not be complete without other support services. These may include the services of trained SNE teachers since the success of inclusion of CWDs requires the involvement of professionals who can assist in identification, referral, diagnosis, treatment and provision of other appropriate

educational and related services (Mutisya,2012,UNESCO,1994, 2015, 2017). The head teacher is required to sensitize the other 'normal' learners to provide peer support such as peer-tutoring, pushing wheelchairs and sighted guides. The head teacher should further provide for services like speech therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists according to their needs. Guidance and counselling is major component to assist learners appreciate one another despite their diversity.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research study used mixed research approach which provides an in-depth and clarification of data. Descriptive survey design was used. Creswell and Clark (2011) justify use of mixed research method combination of qualitative and quantitative data, which provides a more complete understanding of the research problem than each individual approach. Best and Kahn (2014) views further justify the adoption of mixed research method approach for this study. According to Creswell and Clark (2011), the researcher utilized purposive sampling within the mixed methods research paradigm. This was useful for the researcher in collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data in the same phase and then merging the two sets of results into an overall interpretation.

The study covers Mbooni East and Mbooni West. Mbooni East has 4 educational

divisions and Mbooni West has 4 educational divisions as well. There are 8 divisions in total, hence the target population for this study constituted of 204 head teachers, 1632 teachers and 2 Education Officers (SDEO). The total population targeted was 1896. The researcher chose head teachers since they play the vital role of administration and management of inclusion in the schools, the teachers are directly involved in the implementation of the curriculum both regular and adapted. The parents are important because of support and attitude towards inclusion that can impede or facilitate success of the inclusion programme. They were sampled from the units. Purposive sampling with proportionate allocation was chosen for the research study since it entails the selection of individual sampling unit of a sample that is proportionate to the size of the unit that increases the probability of sample represented (Singh & Singh, 2012; Orodho, Khatete, & Mugiraneza, 2016). These samples composed of public primary schools (204) and special units (6).

**Table 1: Target and Sample Population for the Study**

	Target Population		Total Sample			
	No. of Head Teachers	No. of Teachers	Head Teachers	Teachers	Parents from Units	Total Sample
Kalawa	24	192	3	19	1	23
Kathulumbi	20	160	2	16	0	18
Waia	20	240	3	24	1	28
Kisau	33	264	4	24	1	29
Tulilmani	22	136	2	12	1	17
Mbooni	38	264	3	20	2	26
Kithungo	17	136	2	12	0	14
Kitundu	15	240	3	20	0	23
Kalawani	15	100	1	14	0	14
Total	204	1632	23	163	6	192
DQASO	-	-	-	-	-	2

The data in Table 1 show the proportionate target population and sample size for head teachers, class teachers and parents (from the units only).

Source: Mbooni East and Mbooni West Education Offices, 2018.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 here summarises the situation on the ground on the availability of inclusive units within the two Mbooni subcounties. About one third of the areas do not have any inclusive education unit. The sub counties have 205 and only 6 special needs units.

**Table 2: Summary of Public Primary Schools, SNE Units in Mbooni East and West**

Division	Number of Public Primary Schools	Number of Units (SNE)
Kalawa	24	1
Kathulumbi	20	0
Waia	30	1
Kisau	33	1
Tulimani	18	1
Mbooni	33	2
Kithungo	17	0
Kitundu	30	0
Total 2	205	6

**Table 3: Inclusion Checklist for Sample Schools**

School	Adapted Environment	Wide Doors	Spacious Classrooms	Usable Ramps	Adapted Lattices	Presence Of SNE Trained Teachers	Score out of 12
A	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
B	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
C	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
E	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
F	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
G	0	1	2	1	0	1	5
H	0	1	0	1	0	2	4
I	1	1	1	0	0	1	4
J	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
K	0	2	2	0	0	2	6
L	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
M	0	1	2	0	0	2	5
N	0	1	2	0	0	2	5
O	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
P	0	0	2	0	0	2	4
Q	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
R	0	0	1	1	0	2	4
S	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
U	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
V	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
W	0	2	2	0	0	2	6
Y	0	0	2	1	0	2	5
Z	0	1	1	0	0	1	3

Table 3 shows the situation on the ground in the public primary schools visited by the researcher for data collection in Mbooni East and West sub counties. The table shows the indicators used to measure the inclusiveness of a school. One notes that only four schools out of the 23 visited were able measure up to inclusiveness. Latrines and ramps would be an easy place to begin in providing an inclusive environment.

In most public primary schools, the head teachers had not made the environment friendly to the learners with disabilities. Environments are adequately adapted in the small homes and special units only. This practice positively influences the placement of learners with SEN in these institutions rather than being included in the mainstream programs. Adapted environment and adapted latrines are poorly done in the institutions in Mbooni East and West sub counties.

The Teacher's Service Commission has staffed most of the schools with SNE trained teachers. Only four out of the twenty three schools did not have SNE trained teachers, but the rate of implementation of inclusion in the area under study is still very low.

This indicates that apart from the training the SNE teacher needs other supporting factors and practices to implement inclusion. Their views are captured in Table 5.

**Table 4: Head teachers' creation of conducive Learning Environment**

	Mean	SDev	SNE Training	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
The head teacher provides adaptations in the school for enabling learning environment.	4.18	1.015	Yes	57.1	28.6	0.0	0.0	14.3
			No	30.0	60.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Head teacher enhances peer support amongst the learners.	4.24	0.970	Yes	57.1	28.6	0.0	0.0	14.3
			No	30.0	60.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

According to Table 4, 57.1 percent of the informants who had been trained in SNE strongly agreed that they provided adaptation in the school for enabling learning environment. Those agreed at 28.6 percent and those who strongly disagreed as represented by 14.3 percent. On the other hand, respondents who had not trained in SNE, 60.0 percent of them agreed that they provided adaptation in the school for enabling learning environment having 30.0 percent strongly agreeing. The item had a mean of 4.180 and a standard deviation of 1.015.



The results indicate also that 57.1 percent of the informants who had been trained in SNE strongly agreed that they enhance peer support amongst the learners. Those agreed at 28.6 percent and those who strongly disagreed as represented by 14.3 percent. Secondly, respondents who had not trained in SNE, 60.0 percent of them agreed that they enhance peer support amongst the learners with 30.0 percent strongly agreeing.

**Table 5: Head teachers' creation of conducive learning environment (Teachers)**

	Mean	S Dev	SNE Trainin g	SA	A	U	D	SD
			No SNE Trainin g	%	%	%	%	%
The head teacher provides adaptation in the school for enabling learning environment.	4.1779	0.90894	Yes	67.1	21.1	0.0	0.0	11.8
			No	33.7	51.0	15.3	0.0	0.0
Head teacher enhances peer support amongst the learners.	4.2761	0.84830	Yes	55.3	32.9	0.0	0.0	11.8
			No	34.7	65.3	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 5 indicates that 67.1 percent of the informants who had been trained in SNE strongly agreed that head teachers provide adaptation in the school for enabling learning environment. Those agreed at 21.1 percent and those who strongly disagreed as represented by 11.8 percent. On the other

hand, respondents who had not trained in SNE 51.0 percent of them agreed that head teachers provide adaptation in the school for enabling learning environment having 33.7 percent strongly agreeing while 15.3 percent were undecided. The item had a mean of 4.1779 and a standard deviation of 0.90894. According to the study findings, the respondents do not support the dependent variable. Hence, failing to reject the Null hypothesis Ho1: There is no significant difference between head teachers' means of creating conducive learning environment and inclusion of learners with special needs in education

The results indicate that 55.3 percent of the informants who had been trained in SNE strongly agreed that head teachers enhance peer support amongst the learners. Those agreed at 32.9 percent and those who strongly disagreed as represented by 11.8 percent. Secondly, respondents who had not trained in SNE 65.3 percent of them agreed that head teachers enhance peer support amongst the learners with 34.7 percent strongly agreeing. The item had a mean of 4.2761 and a standard deviation of 0.84830. Hence the respondents do not support the dependent variable.

The statistical analysis results were supported by the Ministry of Education document (2009) in the literature review where impediments to implementation of inclusion were cited, which included; inappropriate infrastructure, inadequate facilities, inadequate capacity of teachers to manage learners with special educational needs in public primary schools, inadequate and expensive learning and instructional materials, societal negative attitudes, and inadequate supervision and monitoring of curriculum implementation by the Education officers. These findings are further supported by research findings by Gyezaho (2014), who observed that inadequate supply of facilities like piped water, electricity, instructional materials, adapted furniture, spacious classrooms, among others as failure to successful implementation of inclusion of learners with special needs in education.

The independent sample student t-test posted  $p=0.193 > p\text{-value}= 0.05$ , so we did not reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant difference between teachers trained in SNE ( $M= 4.14$ .  $SD = 1.464$ ) and

those untrained in SNE ( $M= 4.20$ ,  $SD =0.632$ ) , $t (15) = -0.111$ ,  $p = 0.193$ ) in their perception of the head's contribution to conducive learning environment for inclusion of all learners.

These findings imply that special needs learners' environment is rather restrictive as evidenced by inadequate and inappropriate resources. The study findings agree with Glasgow and Hicks (2005) who posited that the greatest barrier faced by learners with special needs in education in inclusion set-ups is that which does not accommodate them but excludes them instead. Both the descriptive and qualitative results show that majority of the respondents do not think that the head teachers provide appropriate learning environment which are inclusive.

These results concur with literature reviewed for this study which show that head teacher do not provide appropriate learning environment that can enhance inclusion programs in public primary schools in Mbooni East and West sub-counties, Kenya.

## CONCLUSION

After carrying out a detailed data analysis, this independent variables considered for this study, creation of conducive learning environment has given the relationship with inclusion of learners with special needs in education (dependent variable). The researchers' findings from the head teachers showed that the head teachers had limited resources from the government to create conducive learning environments in their institutions. The results therefore help to conclude that creation of conducive learning environment influences implementation of inclusion of learners with special needs in education in public primary schools in Mbooni East and West sub-counties which is largely caused by insufficient creation of conducive learning environment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Basing on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

The Ministry of Education should disburse sufficient funding and the special supplementary funding to the schools to

enable the head teachers to create conducive learning environment by putting in place physical facilities like adapted environment, wide doors, spacious classrooms and usable ramps. Further the Government needs to train more teachers in SNE and staff the schools appropriately with such teachers.

The scope of the research was public primary schools in Mbooni East and West sub-counties. Further research may also be vital for extent of analysis (whether the observed state, conclusions and recommendations apply to the target sub-counties, surrounding sub-counties or the entirety of the Republic of Kenya). Further research on influence of head teachers' participation in provision of appropriate learning environment on implementation of inclusion of learners with special needs in education and effectiveness of head teachers in the implementation inclusion in public primary schools in Kenya.

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