

SCHOOL-BASED VARIABLES INFLUENCING EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA: THE CASE OF KIRINYAGA WEST SUB-COUNTY

Atanasia Wambui Maingi¹, Johannes Njagi Njoka², Josiah Murage³

Department of Psychology, Karatina University, Karatina; Department of Psychology, Karatina University, Karatina; Department of Psychology, Karatina University, Karatina; KENYA.

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the school-based factors influencing effective implementation of inclusive education in public primary school in Kirinyaga West Sub-County, Kenya. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design and was guided by the self-efficacy theory propounded by Bandura's. The target population for the study consisted of all public primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County. The sampling procedure included, purposive and simple random sampling. Purposive sampling was used to identify 10 schools that offer inclusive education while simple random sampling using Gay formula (10-20%) was applied to select 10 students in the selected schools yielding a sample size of 100 students. In addition five teachers from each of the sampled schools were randomly selected to produce a sample size of 50 teachers. Data for this study was collected using two sets of questionnaires; one for learners and the other for teachers. The findings of the study revealed that primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County had done very little in terms of structural modifications to facilitate effective implementation of inclusive education. The schools were ill equipped to implement inclusive education programmes in their curriculum, majority of the schools lacked admission guidelines on special needs education (SNE) learners and instructional resources were grossly inadequate in schools. The study further established that the teachers' attitude toward implementation of inclusive education policy in schools was negative. The teachers beliefs about inclusion suggest that they do not regard students with impairments as being able to learn in regular classes and preferred educating them separately in special schools. The study recommended the need to strengthen implementation of inclusive education policies in primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-county.

Keywords: Inclusive education, exclusion, marginalization, special needs education

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education concerns the removal of all barriers to learning. It seeks to enhance participation of all learners who are vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization to all school activities. It is a strategy designed to facilitate the learning success for all children. Inclusive education addresses the common goals of decreasing and overcoming all forms of exclusion to education, at least at the elementary level, and enhancing access, participation and learning success in quality basic education for all. Education for persons with special needs has been in the minds of educators, teachers, philosophers and all types of leaders in the society from time in memorial. Throughout the ages various forms of provision of education for persons with special needs have evolved. Before the 17th century, people with disabilities all over the world were considered socially and physically less capable (Randiki, 2002). In the general

practices involved restricting the children to the home environment and consequently denying them access to education. According to the Government of Kenya (2003), inclusive schools identify and respond to the diverse needs of learners with special needs and accommodates instructional procedures ensures quality education to all learners through; appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and establishing partnerships with communities. Inclusive schools adopt the belief that wherever possible all children should learn together regardless of differences; that all children can learn and achieve their potential; and that the continuum of students' needs should be matched by a continuum of programs, support and services. All students regardless of their ability or disability benefit from schools adopting inclusive practices (GoK, 2003). In Britain, the education system realizes that different children with disabilities have different needs and to meet their goals, one has to look at the strengths and work on the weaknesses. The government enacted an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in order to meet the education needs of all children including children with special needs (Directgov, 2009).

In Africa, inclusive education is still far from keeping pace with rapid world changes in the area of special education. Scanty literature exists pertaining to special education services in developing countries (Kiarie, 2006; Mutua & Dimitrov, 2001). Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, with a population of over 140 million of which 10% are disabled, has only hundred and thirty institutions to cater for learners with special needs (UNESCO, 1991). However, despite this remarkable attempt to address the challenges of children with special needs, numerous school-based factors including poor organization, poor financing and little emphasis on rural education. Students' enrollment is not proportionate with teacher preparation and there is lack of consistent enforcements in policy implementation and a lack of specialized consultants and qualified personnel in certain areas. In Kenya education system, inclusive education curricular provided by the KIE does not cater for all categories of children, but rather focuses mainly on children who are blind or deaf. Consequently, learners in special schools go through the same curriculum and sit for the same examination without any form of individualized educational plan; no attempt is made to focus on the strengths and work on weaknesses. From the above discussion, the Kenya system of special education is far much behind as compared to other parts of the world. In Britain the government has enacted an IEP for special needs learners. This is different from Kenya where the responsibility for the child's education is left to the teacher. Learners with disabilities still go through the same curriculum and sit for the same examination without any form of Individualized Plan.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite many efforts being put forth for the successful implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Kenya there are still numerous challenges facing learners with special needs in schools. Many students with learning disabilities find it difficult to fit into the normal school environment hence making the process of learning even more difficult. Due to this, many students with learning disabilities have dropped out of the school system because of the numerous barriers they encounter. This study sought to assess the school based factors that influence effective implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County, Kenya.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to assess the school-based factors that influence effective implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County, Kenya.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study sought to achieve the following objectives, which were to;

- i. Evaluate the school-based infrastructure put in place to facilitate implementation of inclusive education policy in public primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County.
- ii. Establish the adequacy of instructional resources available in public primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County.
- iii. Examine the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education policies in public primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by the self-efficacy theory propounded by Bandura's (1997). Self-efficacy theory is an off shoot of the Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986). The theory advocated for the appraisal of personal abilities that may impact on the likelihood of completion of future tasks or assignments by an individual. Bandura defines Self-efficacy as a belief about one's capabilities to learn or perform behaviors at designated levels. He describes functioning in human as interdependent on environmental events, cognition of personal factors in one's life and individual behaviour. He further concluded that higher levels of self-efficacy resulted in the setting of and achieving higher goals. This concept was applied to inclusive education setting because individuals with high levels of efficacy set higher goals for both themselves and believe they can achieve those goals. They work harder to achieve them and persevere towards successful completion of them regardless of external forces or setbacks. Inclusive education programs are programmed with concepts, organization, classroom arrangement, classroom management, parent contacts student/teacher/parent relationships, interventions, special education, individual education plans, curriculum development, discipline, legal issues among various pedagogical strategies at different levels. This theory explains that children's behavior is strengthened or adjusted by consequences of their actions and responses of others. In this regard, special needs learners are taught skills through the process of instruction, role play, drama, rehearsal, and feedback rather than just instruction. In an inclusive education situation, self-efficacy theory contends that teachers need to employ methodologies that replicate the natural process by which students learn through participatory methods. Teachers need to use teaching and learning materials which can effectively support the implementation of inclusive education and use methods in which learners learn at their own pace, plan and carry out effective action.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was appropriate for the study because it enabled description of the conditions as they were without being manipulated by the researcher. The study used questionnaires to collect data from selected students, teachers and head-teachers from Kirinyaga County pertaining to school-based factors influencing effective implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools

The target population for the study comprised of all public primary schools in Kirinyaga County. There were 17,685 learners and 1065 teachers in public primary schools in Kirinyaga County (Kirinyaga County Education Office, 2013; see Table 1).

Table 1. Target Population.

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>
Students	17685
Teachers	1065
<i>Total</i>	<i>18751</i>

Sampling is a process of selecting a subsection of population that represents the entire population in order to obtain information regarding the phenomena of interests (Orodho, 2002). In order to determine the respondents to be included in the study, purposive and simple random sampling was used. Purposive sampling was used to identify 10 schools that offer inclusive education; these were schools with a special unit where the special needs learners were integrated to the regular classes. Gay (1992) argues that in descriptive research the sample should constitute of at least 10-30% of the target population. Using this criterion, the researcher applied simple random sampling to select 10 students in every 10 selected schools yielding a sample size of 100 students. The researcher further, randomly selected 5 teachers from each of the 10 selected schools which produced a sample size of 50 teachers (see Table 2).

Data for this study was collected using two sets of questionnaires; one for learners and the other for teachers.

Table 2. Sample Size

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Sample Size</i>
Students	100
Teachers	50
<i>Total</i>	<i>150</i>

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion are presented in accordance with the stated objectives that guided the study. These were:

- A. The first research objective sought to evaluate the school-based variables put in place to facilitate implementation of inclusive education policy in public primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County. The respondents were asked to indicate their opinions in a five point likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5), agree (4), not sure (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). The statements sought to find out the; school modifications required to accommodate learners with special needs (SNE), presence of a learning resource room for inclusive learning and admission guidelines for SNE learners'.
 - i) School modifications to accommodate SNE. The teachers and learners were asked whether their school had been modified to accommodate all learners with special needs. The data analyzed shows that a majority 50.0% of the teachers and 41.0% of the learners strongly disagreed that schools had put in place modifications to accommodate SNE, 32.0% of the teachers and 19.0% of the learners disagreed. Twenty four percent (24.0%) of the learners and 19.0% of the teachers were not sure, 9.0% of the learners and 2.0% of

the teachers agreed, and lastly only 7.0% of the learners strongly agreed (see Figure 1). These findings revealed that the schools have done very little in terms of structural modifications to facilitate effective implementation of inclusive education. The structural modifications required include; widening of the doors, provisional of lumps, adapted toilets, chairs and generally provision of a barrier free learning environment.

The study concludes that the status of implementation of inclusive education policy in public primary schools is low. These findings concurs with Onyango (2012) who noted that educationists were calling for halting of the SNE in public schools to allow the schools to establish necessary infrastructural changes to ease special needs learners' mobility in the public schools. Similarly, Muraya (2013) supported this notion, confirming that there were infrastructural changes that were needed to have public schools ready to accommodate special needs learners as envisaged under the constitution of Kenya (2010). Costa (2003) highlights the importance of structural adjustments and adds that in South Africa during inclusive education training, educators were made aware of the importance of working in partnership with parents and of involving them in the curriculum by creating more welcoming school communities.

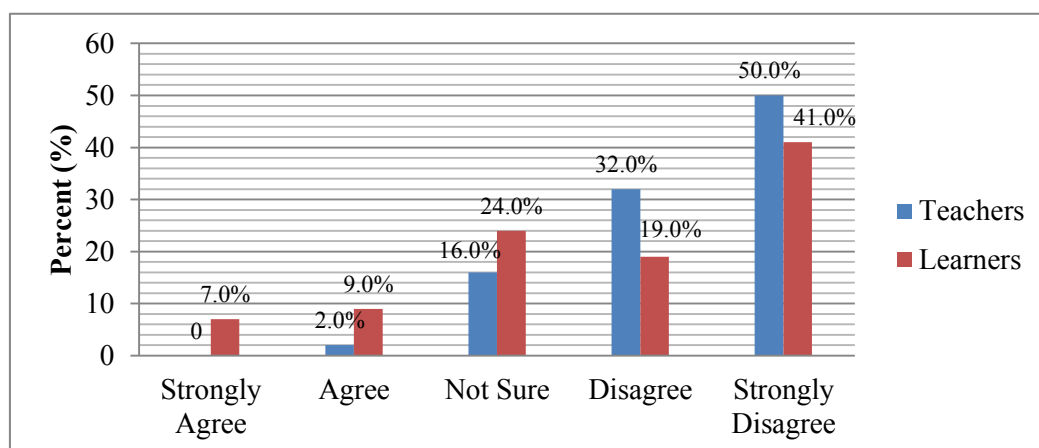


Figure 1. Responses on School modifications to accommodate IEP

- ii) The presence of a learning resource room. The study sought to investigate whether schools had established a learning resource room to support inclusive learning. This was important to inform the study on availability of instructional resources with a view to establish whether they were placed appropriately in the schools. The results of the study revealed that majority (76.0%) of the teachers and 67.0% of the learners strongly disagreed that there was a learning resource centre in their school for inclusive education, 1.0% of the learners and 11.0% of the teachers disagreed, 11.0% of the learners and 1.0% of the teachers were not sure. Lastly, 3.0% of the learners agreed that there were learning resource rooms in their schools (see Figure 2). These findings indicate that schools were ill-equipped to implement inclusive education programmes. The study concludes that the schools lacked learning resources which was at variance with the findings of Kinuthia (2009) that under the Free Primary Education (FPE) majority of the schools had learning resources.

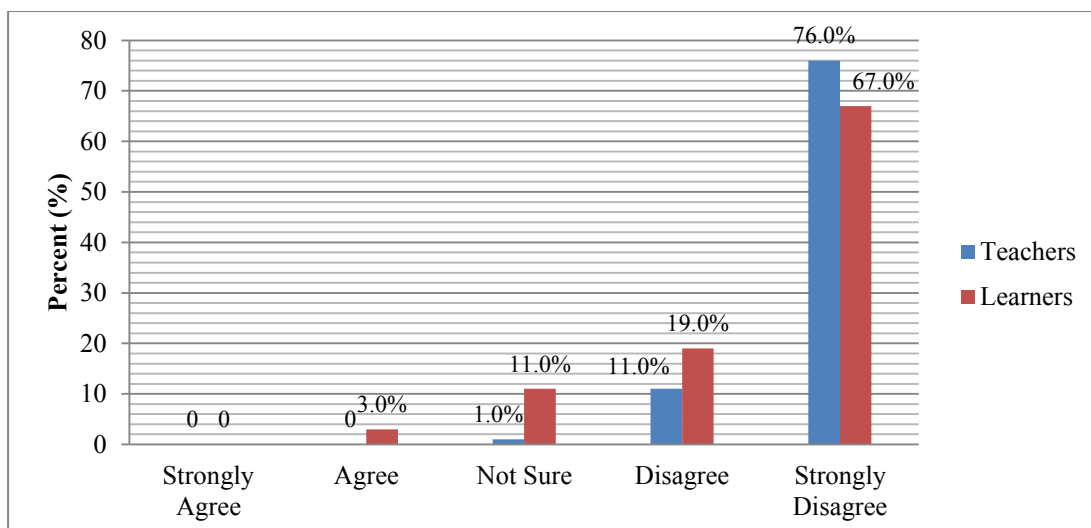


Figure 2. Presence of a learning resource room for inclusive learning

- (iii) Admission guidelines for Special Needs Education (SNE) learners. The study sought to establish the respondents' opinions on whether there were clear admission guidelines for learners with special needs. The findings of the study indicated that there was presence of clear admission guidelines for learners with special needs. Sixty percent (60%) of the learners and 42.0% of the teachers strongly disagreed, 44.0% of the teachers and 25.0% of the learners disagreed while 15.0% of the learners and 14.0% of the teachers were no sure (see Figure 3). The findings show that majority of the schools did not have clear guidelines on how to assess and admit SNE learners. These findings concurs with Oriedo (2000) who reported that among the many factors that hinder the provision of education for special needs learners included vague admission guidelines, insufficient data on children with special needs and inefficient assessment tools.

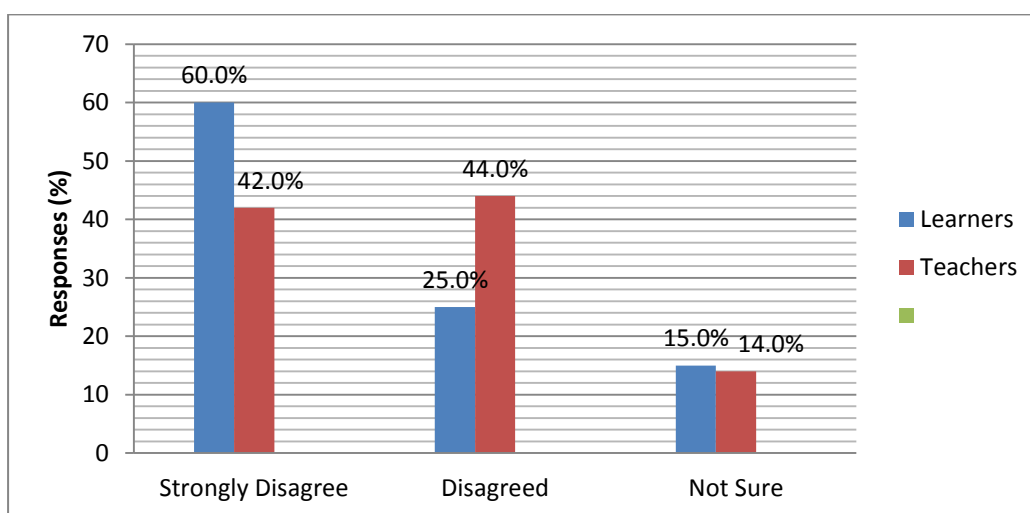


Figure 3. Presence of Admission guidelines for SNE learners

- B. Adequacy of instructional resources. The second research objective sought to establish the adequacy of instructional resources in public primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County. The teachers and learners were required to respond to a five point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (5), disagree (4), not sure (3), agree (2) and strongly agree (1) on the availability of instructional resources necessary for effective

implementation of inclusive learning. Analyzed data reveals that, majority of teachers (90.0%) and students (71.3%) indicated that they strongly disagreed that instructional resources were adequate, 21.3% of learners and 10.0%, 3.2% of the learners were not sure and 4.3% of the learners agreed (see Figure 4). These findings indicate that instructional resources were grossly inadequate in schools. These results concur with the research findings of Kinuthia (2009) who argued that despite the FPE, majority of the schools lacked learning resources. Similarly, Siringi (2009) supported this view and maintains that the trend of parents enrolling their children in private schools was probably precipitated by poor quality of learning in public schools which is characterized by an acute shortage of instructional resources. The apparent shortage of teaching learning resources in public primary schools could be among the variables contributing to poor implementation of IEP.

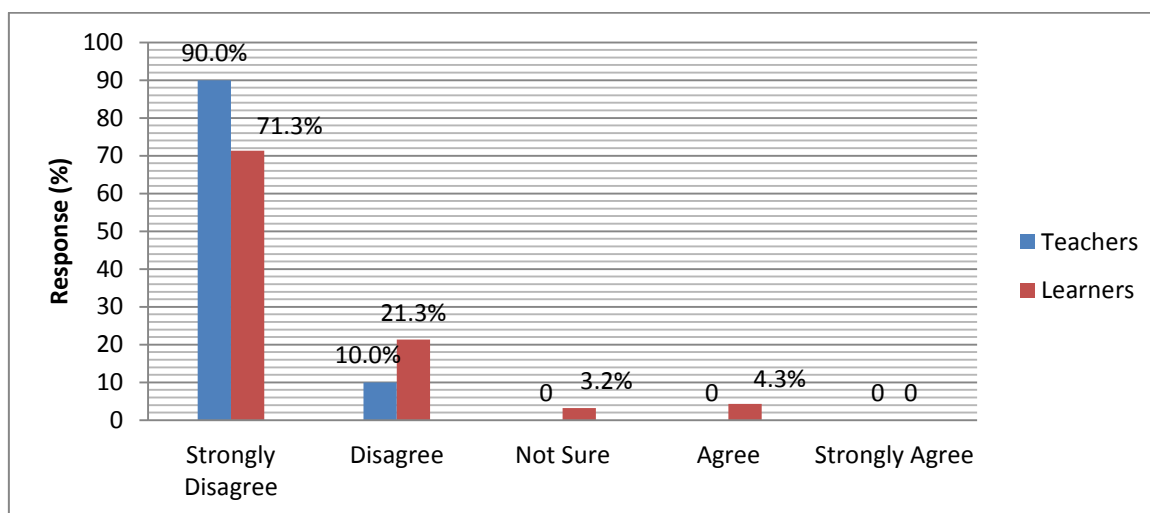


Figure 4. Adequacy of instructional resources

The third research objective sought to examine the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education policies in public primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County. Results of the study showed that majority (46.3%) of the teachers disagreed that inclusive education can be effectively implemented in public primary schools, 17.1% strongly disagreed, 15.0% were not sure, 12.0% agreed and 9.6% strongly agreed (see Figure 5). These findings indicate that the teachers' attitudes toward implementation of inclusive education policy in schools was negative. The teachers beliefs about inclusion suggest that they do not regard students with disabilities particularly those with sensory impairments as being able to learn together in regular classes and would prefer them being educated in special schools. Agbehyega (2006), observed that many regular education teachers feel unprepared to work with learners with special needs in regular classes; they display frustrations, anger and negative attitude towards inclusive education because they believe it could lead to lower academic standards (Sailor & Rodger, 2005). Fink (2004) also noted that teachers believe that including students with disabilities limits the amount of teaching work that they could do thereby resulting in the incompleteness of the syllabus. They also believe that if students with disabilities were included in regular classes. It would affect the academic performance of their peers without disabilities. Additionally, teachers perceive their professional knowledge and skills as inadequate to effectively teach students with special needs within inclusive settings.

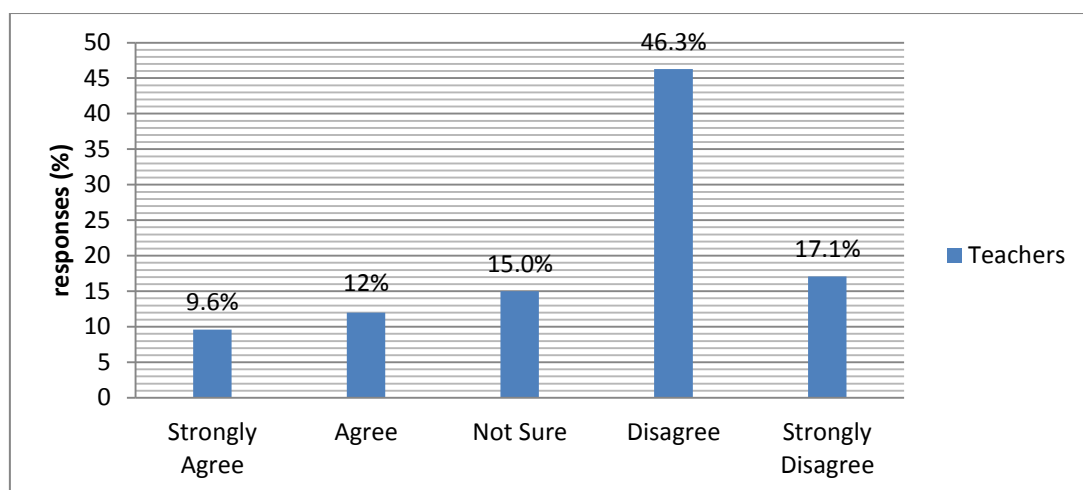


Figure 5. Inclusive Education can be effectively Implemented in Public Primary Schools

CONCLUSION

From the study several school-based factors were found to be negatively influencing implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County, Kenya. The findings showed that primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-County had done very little in terms of structural modifications to facilitate effective implementation of inclusive education. The schools were ill equipped to implement inclusive education programmes in their curriculum, majority of the schools do not have clear guidelines on how to assess and admit SNE learners and instructional resources were grossly inadequate in schools. The study further established that the teachers' attitude toward implementation of inclusive education policy in schools was negative. The teachers beliefs about inclusion suggest that they do not regard students with impairments as being able to learn in regular classes and preferred educating them separately in special schools.

RECOMMENDATION

It was recommended that there was need to strengthen implementation of inclusive education policies in primary schools in Kirinyaga West Sub-county. This implies the need to enforce strict adherence to inclusive education policy with a view to compel schools to actualize the programme as stipulated by the Ministry of Education and Kenyan laws.

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