

Influence of Teachers Training on Integration of Special Needs Pupils in an Inclusive Setting: A Survey of Primary Schools in Tinderet Sub-County, Kenya

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 28 February 2018;

Received in revised form:

8 May 2018;

Accepted: 18 May 2018;

Keywords

Inclusive Education,
Education System in Kenya.

ABSTRACT

The debate about inclusive education has been lessened and the society is trying to digest into the education system in Kenya, the integration of pupils with special needs. Despite all these efforts there are still some challenges that affect inclusive education in our society today. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perception on the influence of their training on the integration of pupils with special needs classes in an inclusive setting. The study adopted the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) (2007); this theory has offered educators a comprehensive framework within which fundamentally different solutions could be implemented. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to carry out the study since it involves the study of various entities. To ensure adequate representation, a target population of 240 teachers and 40 PTA representatives were used. A sample of 120 teachers and 20 PTA representatives were selected for the study. The survey instrument was pilot tested to improve its validity and relevance to the objectives of the study. The questionnaires and the interview schedules were scrutinized for errors and omissions, ambiguity, legibility and relevance. Data collection instrument used were questionnaires and interview schedules. The data collected was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The reliability of the instruments was piloted in one of the schools in Tinderet sub-county which was not included in the study. Data analysis was done by use of frequency tables and percentages. The study findings indicated that most of the teachers were not trained in special needs education and most of them were not attending in service courses and workshops on special needs education. Further, hearing aids, visual aids, brails and wheelchairs were not available in most of the schools while demonstrations and crutches were available and suitable in most of the schools. The study further indicated that teachers believed that pupils with special needs could not interact with other pupils. Further most of the school administrations rarely support integration of students with special needs by rarely providing the necessary resources, clarification of ways of handling children, motivating teachers of pupils with special needs in support of integration of learners with special needs in regular classrooms

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Introduction

According to the Salamanca Statement of 1994, every child has a basic right to education; every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs and therefore education services should take into account these diverse characteristics and needs; those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools; regular schools with an inclusive ethos are the most effective way to combat discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming and inclusive communities and achieve education for all; and that such schools provide effective education to the majority of children, improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness (UNESCO, 1994).

Children with special educational needs include those with Learning disability, a condition that affects the academic performance. Such children develop more slowly compared

to other children of the same age. This is due to the difficulty they undergo with the regular basic processes that are applied in understanding or using spoken and written languages, reading and listening, comprehension, basic reading skills and mathematical reasoning/calculation (Luseno, 1993). Another category of those with mental disability, those who have significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during developmental period (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005).

Integration of disability is the complete integration of the student with a special need into the general education classroom. The student receives all special services in the same general education classroom as all other students. This is very common with students whose needs are easily met in a classroom, such as a modification that allows the student

more time to complete written assignments. Here the students classified as disabled remain in general classrooms virtually all the time (Bowe, 2005). Related services are provided via "push in," meaning that professionals enter the classroom and deliver assistance there.

Different professionals sometimes use the terms "integration and mainstreaming" interchangeably. The term integration is mainly used in Europe and Kenya while mainstreaming is commonly used in America. There are three forms of integration; Functional, vocational and social. Functional integration is where a child with special needs is placed in a regular class, the learner with special needs is placed in a special unit located in the regular school and social integration is the situation where the learner with special needs is placed in a special learning purposes, but join the peers in the regular classes for social activities are difficulties including lack of proper policy structures/guidelines, poor implementation, inadequate itinerant teachers for peripatetic services and above all negative attitudes towards the programme by the stakeholders. In a further attempt to bring pupils with special needs the Kenyan education policy is currently advocating for inclusive approach.

Schools that practice full inclusion for all students have no separate special education classes. However, full inclusion of all students, regardless of their particular needs, is a controversial practice, and it is not widely applied (Hastings, 2003). It is more common for local educational agencies to provide a variety of settings, from special classrooms to mainstreaming to inclusion, and to assign students to the system that seems most likely to help the student achieve his or her individual educational goals.

In recent times, there has been a growing realization in Africa that the greatest problems faced by children with disabilities are prejudice, social isolation and discrimination in society. The study *Educating Children in Difficult Circumstances* estimates that only eight per cent of children with disabilities in Bangladesh are currently enrolled in various educational institutions (Directorate of Primary Education, 2002). Of these, 48 per cent were seeking formal education, 23 per cent were in integrated schools, 15 per cent were in special education, and five per cent were in inclusive education. Among the enrolled children with mild and moderate disabilities, 79 per cent were enrolled in formal educational settings. Of those with severe and profound disabilities, 83 per cent were enrolled in special education (ibid).

Access of formal education for the disabled remains an issue with perception about disability varying from community to community. According to World Bank (2004), people with physical or mental limitations are often disabled not because of a diagnosable condition, but because they are denied access to education, labour markets and public services. The World Bank looks at disability not as a medical condition, but interaction between human functioning and an environment that does not account for different levels of functioning. The Children's Act (RoK) also recognizes the presence of the child with disability whom it defines as one who has physical or mental handicap that necessitates special care, including provision of formal education. The parliamentary Act (2003) on persons with disabilities defines disability as a physical, sensory, mental or other impairment including any visual, hearing, learning or physical incapacity that adversely affects a person's social, economic or

environmental participation. Both the children Act (2001) and the persons with disability Act (2003) provided useful legal instruments in formulation of education policies for the disabled child.

In practice the Kenyan government has put in a lot of efforts in addressing inclusive education as per various policy documents through integration and mainstreaming. Kenya officially, launched the national Special Need Education (SNE) policy on 10th March, 2010 at KIE. During the launch, education minister pointed out that his ministry remains committed to providing quality education for all learners in a caring and supportive environment to enable them attain their full potential. Providing quality education that is affordable and relevant to the lives of all children including those with special needs is one of the major aims of the ministry. The policy framework launched addresses some critical issues which determine delivery of quality and relevant education for learners with special needs. Among the issues are equity and improvement of learning environment in all schools that will ensure that inclusive education becomes a reality and consequently improves the participation and involvement of people with special needs in national development in general.

It should be noted that educational opportunities for learners with special needs and disabilities have been a major challenge to the education sector whereby majority of learners with special needs and disabilities in Kenya have not been accessing educational services. However, this scenario has changed especially after the launch of the National SNE policy on 10th March, 2010 at KIE. For instance, in 1999 there were only 22,000 learners with special needs and disabilities enrolled in special schools, units and integrated programs. This number rose to 26,885 in 2003 and 45,000 in 2008, to more than 60,000 in 2011 (MoE, 2011). With an increase in learners with disabilities, various inclusive schools have been struggling to provide quality education. Against this background, the study sought to examine how selected factors influence integration of special needs pupils.

Statement of the Problem

When launching the National SNE policy on 10th March, 2010 at KIE, permanent secretary Magdaline Wambua said that the ministry of education through the directorate of basic education is tasked with addressing issues that impede the education of children with special needs in Kenya. She further argued that the overall goal of the Ministry of Education is to provide equal access to education to all learners irrespective of their physical or mental state in pursuit of the government's commitment to achieving Education for All (EFA) by 2015. As a result, significant gains have been realized in the provision of education to children with special needs over the past six years. However, despite these gains inclusive schools in Tinderet have not been able to provide special needs pupils with the quality education and the attention they require, these has resulted to low quality of inclusion of retention rates. Perhaps these may be due to teachers training, facilities and support provided by school administration perceptions of selected factors on integration of special needs pupils in an inclusive setting: a survey of primary schools in Tinderet Sub-County.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine perceptions of teachers and influence of selected factors on integration of special needs pupils in an inclusive setting: a survey of primary schools in Tinderet sub-county.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to meet the following objectives

- i) To investigate teachers' perception on the influence of their training on the integration of pupils with special needs in classes.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions;

- i) How relevant is the level of training of teachers on special needs education in public primary schools in Tinderet Sub-County?

Methodology

The study utilized the mixed methods approach where both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were used. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The target population comprised of 280 respondents which included 240 teachers and 40 PTA representatives who included the chairman and treasurer. Out of all these, a sample of 9 schools, 90 teachers and 18 PTA representatives were selected from Mbogo Vale zone and 11 schools, 150 teachers and 22 PTA representatives from Tinderet Zone were selected through stratified random sampling. The instruments that were used to collect the data for the study were questionnaires for teachers and interviews were administered to the PTA representatives. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient using Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Questionnaires were analyzed using summary tables for the purpose of data presentation and interpretation. The expected findings will be used to guide policy makers in providing solutions to the problems associated with inclusive education. These findings will also be useful in the schools. Validity and reliability of instruments were ascertained. After the test-retest, the instruments attained a reliability coefficient of 0.70 using the Cronbach alpha coefficient which was considered high enough to continue with data collection.

Study Findings

Teachers Training

The first objective of the study was to determine the level of training of teachers on special needs education in public primary schools in Tinderet Sub-county. This objective has been analyzed extensively from section 4.3.1 to section 4.3.3.

Responses from Teachers on their training on Special Needs Education

The study sought to find out from the teachers whether they were trained in special needs education. Majority 80(67%) of the teachers did not agreed while 40(33%) agreed as shown in figure 4 below.



Figure 1. Responses from Teachers on their Training on Special Needs Education.

This implies that most of the teachers were not trained in special needs education. This was echoed by the PTA

representatives when they were interviewed by stating that though the chances have been offered for teachers to be trained in special needs many of them were not willing to.

Van Reusen, Soho, and Barker (2001), observed that General education teachers' lack of training in working with students with special needs is not only a disadvantage to these students in the sense they are not given the opportunity to demonstrate their full potential, but it is also a disadvantage to them in the sense the amount of training a general education teacher has, has been linked to general education teachers' overall attitudes towards working with students with special needs.

Furthermore, in an interview from PTA representatives over whether their teachers receive training on special needs, majority (67%) said that they do not receive any training. 'Rarely do they go for training because of shortage of teachers. If you let a teacher to go for a training of say three or six months, who will take his/her position?' implying that one of the challenges that teachers especially from inclusive environment is shortage of teachers which is a stumbling block for teachers to receive more training services.

Responses from Teachers on their attendance of In Service Courses and Workshops

The study sought to find out from the teachers whether they attend in service courses and workshops on special needs education. Majority 70(58%) of the teachers did not agree while 50(42%) agreed as shown in Figure 5.

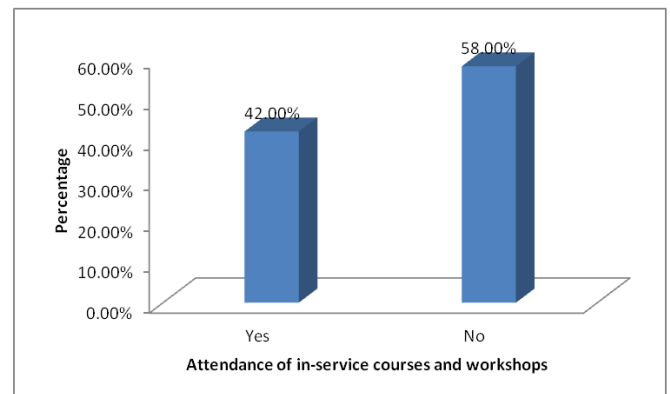


Figure 2. Responses from teacher on their attendance of in service courses and Workshops.

This indicates that most of the teachers did not attend in service courses and workshops on special needs education. A study by Cohen and Hill (2001) found that teachers whose in-service training is focused on the curriculum can teach well when what has been learnt are applied in the classroom.

Number of Times attended in service

The study sought to find the number of time in the year teachers have attended in service courses and workshops on special needs education. Majority 70(58%) of the teachers indicated thrice, 25(21%) indicated four times, 20(17%) indicated twice while 5(4%) indicated once as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Times Attended In Service.

Number of Times	Frequency	Percentage
Once	5	4%
Twice	20	17%
Thrice	70	58%
Four Times	25	21%
More than Four Times	0	0%
Total	120	100

This implies that most of the teachers who attended in service courses and workshops on special needs education do

it thrice in a year. These findings were alarming because Deborah McCutchen (2002), through an experimental study, analyzes the impact of continuing training on teacher effectiveness in the field of early reading. A group of teachers are assigned either to a control group (no particular training) or to a two-week workshop of subject-matter pedagogy (phonology, phonological awareness, among others). She then analyzes the performances of the students. She put into evidence significant differences in their performances between both groups: students taught by the teachers that had followed the workshop performed significantly better than the others (Hill, 2007)

Summary of Findings

The following were the findings of the study:-

Teachers' Level of Training

The study found that that majority 67% of the teachers had not undergone any training on special needs education. This means that most of these teachers did not have the necessary skills to handle learners with special needs. In addition, majority 58% of the teachers had never attended in-service courses and workshops on special needs education. This was found to concur with the study findings of Sharma et al., (2006) who found out that many pre-service teachers in Australia felt that they were insufficiently trained to teach a diverse range of students. Training teachers on SNE allows them to effectively handle learners in inclusive setting. This supports the work of Heward (2003); Kauffman & Hallaham, (2005) and Zigmond (2003) who argued that for effective inclusion, teachers need training in special education to include students with disabilities.

Conclusions

Based on the study findings the following conclusions were made;

- i. It is clear from the study that most of the teachers were not trained in special needs education.
- ii. Most of the school administrations rarely supported integration of students with special needs by rarely providing the necessary resources, clarification of ways of handling children, motivating teachers of pupils with special needs in support of integration of learners with special needs in regular classrooms. Some of those schools often provided opportunities for in-service education and they very often involved parents of children with special needs in decision making, in support of integration of learners with special needs in regular classrooms.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the study findings;

- i. Teachers in most schools should be trained in special needs education for them to effectively implement inclusive education.
- ii. The school administration should come up with effective strategies of integrating learners with special needs through provision of the necessary resources, provision of opportunities to teachers for in-service education for their teachers, clarification of ways of handling children with special needs and motivating teachers of pupils with special needs adequately.

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