

Examining the attitudes and concerns of the Kenyan teachers toward the inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education classroom: A Mixed Methods Study

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The philosophy of inclusive education aims at enabling all children to learn in the regular education classrooms. It is widely believed that the successful implementation of any inclusive policy is largely influenced by teachers being positive about the expectations.

Grounded in Positioning Theory, this study was conducted to examine the attitude, perceptions and concerns of Kenyan teachers toward the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular education classrooms. The study participants were 142 Primary School teachers from 10 Primary Schools in a school district in Western Kenya deliberately selected from schools identified as actively implementing inclusive education programs. The overall findings indicate that teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classrooms. Overall, the study showed that attitudes, perceptions, and concerns of the teachers influence their acceptance and commitment to the implementation and success of inclusive education.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of Special Education in Kenya

The inclusion of students with special educational needs was recently adopted as the national educational policy in Kenya (Republic of Kenya: Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 2009). The intention of this policy is to increase the quality of education and equity for all students as outlined in the Salamanca Statement. A key element in the successful implementation of the inclusion policy is the views of the teachers who have the major responsibility of implementing it. (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

There are currently three different placement opportunities for children with disabilities in Kenyan public schools. From most to least restrictive, they are: (a) special schools with and without residential/boardings facilities where only children with disabilities are being educated and there are no opportunities to contact and interact with typically developing peers; (b) special classrooms in regular school (integrated units) where children with disabilities are being educated separately but have opportunities to interact with non-disabled children during arrival in the morning, recess and departure times as well as during teacher planned activities that aim to promote interaction among children with and without disabilities; and (c) inclusive classrooms where children with and without disabilities are being educated in the same classrooms.

Need for Inclusion of students with disabilities in the Kenyan schools

According to the school mapping data set, there are 3,464 special needs institutions in Kenya with 2,713 integrated institutions and 751 special schools (Republic of Kenya, 2012). These figures show that access and participation of children with special needs is relatively low across the country. Significant numbers of children and youth with disabilities are largely excluded from educational opportunities for primary and secondary schooling. Special education has for a long time been provided in special schools and units attached to regular schools. The demand for services for children with special needs has increased at all levels as a result of the government's commitment to universal primary education. Special schools and units in primary schools only cater for children with hearing, visual, mental and physical challenges. This means that not all children with special education needs are included. Children who are gifted and talented, and those with autism spectrum disorder, multiple disabilities, specific learning difficulties and communication disorders are left out.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was twofold. First, the study was designed to inform the relevant stakeholders on some of the factors influencing the successful implementation of the inclusion policy. Second, the study was designed to add to the existing knowledge base regarding the provision of special needs education in Kenyan general education schools.

Research Design

This Concurrent Mixed Methods study was designed to answer the research questions below:

Research Questions for the Study

Q1. What is the nature of the concerns that teachers have towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education classrooms?

Q2. What is the relationship between teachers' concerns and their experience with inclusion of children with disabilities?

Q3. What are the teachers' perceptions of their concerns towards successful inclusion of children with disabilities in their classrooms?

Significance of the Study

This study will serve to create awareness among policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders of the specific challenges that teachers face in the inclusive classrooms in the aftermath of the implementation of inclusive education in Kenyan schools. Secondly, it is expected that the findings and suggestions of this study will be important in designing teacher preparation and development programs. In this sense, it is expected that the findings will address the teachers' needs and concerns regarding the implementation and development of inclusive education in the Kenyan schools. Lastly, the study will be important in adding to the body of knowledge regarding inclusive education.

Theoretical Framework

Positioning Theory

The theoretical framework for the study is positioning theory (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999). The concept of positioning allows researchers to make sense of the dynamics of evolving social interactions: how people position themselves and how they are positioned by others within a specific context. This theoretical framework helped in understanding the attitudes, perceptions and concerns of general and special education teachers regarding the demands of inclusion in Kisumu district in Kenya. Positioning theory is a conceptual framework used to

interpret classroom dynamics. Specifically, the theoretical framework focused on : (a) how the policy “positions” the general education and special education teachers relative to inclusive practices; (b) how general and special education teachers “position” themselves in response to new policies reflective of demands for inclusive policies; and (c) how general education teachers position students in need of special education services.

Two relevant perspectives on positioning were important to the study. One mode of positioning is intentional positioning. Davies and Harre, (1990) refer to this as “reflexive positioning in which one positions himself. Whatever the positions that teachers take, that positioning directs and motivates them in the way they interact with students in the classroom.

The second mode of positioning is interactive positioning “in which what one person says positions another” (Davies & Harre, 1990, p.47).The characteristics of interactive positioning can be used to understand teachers’ positioning of special needs students in their classrooms. Teachers can intentionally or unintentionally position the students in more positive or negative ways through their teaching ways (Yoon, 2008). Teachers might position special needs students without realizing that they may be limiting the student’s opportunities to develop a positive sense of themselves as learners. If there are strong attitudes within a school regarding inclusion, teachers are more likely to re-arrange their beliefs to fall in line with the prevailing attitudes of other teachers (Dupoux, Wolman & Estrada, 2005).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the early 1980’s UNESCO carried out a survey on teacher education in 14 countries involving all world regions (UNESCO, 1994). The findings showed that regular classroom teachers were willing to take on the responsibility for special needs children, but were not confident whether they had the skills to carry out the task. Most teachers felt they needed training in the special needs field. These findings suggested the need for in-service training for regular classroom teachers, through teacher training.

Overview of Studies on Inclusion

Numerous studies and research summarizing the attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular education classrooms have been reported. Most important, a majority of these studies have reported a positive correlation between the type of attitude and the success of the inclusion program implemented by schools. Teachers are more inclined to have a positive attitude regarding inclusion with an increased level of special education training, knowledge and experience in working with children with disabilities. Several

experts have noted that critical components for successful inclusion are teacher attitudes towards the principle of inclusion of students with disabilities (Avramidis et al., 2002; Forlin et al., 1996). A study by Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996) examined general and special education teacher's perceptions of inclusion through the use of focus group interviews. The teachers identified several factors that would affect the success of inclusion, including class size, inadequate resources, the extent to which all students would benefit from inclusion and lack of adequate teacher preparation (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Similar findings were reported by LeRoy and Simpson, (1996) who looked at the impact of inclusion over a three year period of time. Their study showed that as teachers' experience with children with special educational needs increased, their confidence to teach these children also increased. Whereas the above cited studies were carried out in the USA, similar findings have been reported from studies carried out in the United Kingdom (Avramidis et al., 2002). They have provided evidence which seems to indicate that teachers' negative or neutral attitudes at the beginning of an innovation such as inclusive education may change over time as a function of experience and the expertise that develops through the process of implementation.

Teachers' Attitudes

Attitudes guide and influence people's behaviors in their daily lives (Parasuram, 2006). Since it is believed that teachers and their attitudes toward inclusion are very important variables in the implementation of successful inclusive practices (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Larrivee & Cook, 1979; Parasuram, 2006), a lot of research has been conducted on teachers' perceptions of and attitudes towards inclusive education and their beliefs about their ability to teach children with disabilities in regular education classrooms.

Attitudes are important insofar as they predict behavior. According to Berry, (2010), "a teacher who believes that inclusion is unfair to typically achieving students may act in subtle (or not so subtle) ways that negatively affect students with disabilities in that classroom. It may be that the presence or absence of positive attitudes and a sense of commitment to principles of inclusion can tip teachers toward making or avoiding efforts to effectively teach students with disabilities" (p.76). Teachers who have favorable attitudes toward inclusion generally believe that students with disabilities belong in general education classrooms, that they can learn there, and that the teachers have confidence in their abilities to teach students with disabilities (Berry, 2010).

Importance of Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education

The following section presents an overview of the literature regarding the variables that may influence a teachers' attitude and perceptions toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classrooms.

Type and severity of the disability

Several studies have found a strong relationship between teachers' attitudes and pupils' type of disability. Glaubman and Lifshitz, (2001) found that teachers differentiated their attitudes according to type of disability. In their study, the teachers showed greatest willingness to include those students with physical disabilities or sensory impairments. Previous research has found that teacher's attitudes are influenced by the nature and severity of the disability (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996)). Teachers were more accepting of students with physical disabilities than those with cognitive, emotional and behavioral problems.

Ward, Center, and Bochner (1994) assessed teacher attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs whose disabling conditions or educational difficulties were defined behaviorally rather than categorically. Teachers were unanimous in their rejection of the inclusion of children with severe disabilities. This group consisted of those with profound visual and hearing impairments and moderate intellectual disability. Children with profound sensory disabilities and low cognitive ability (mentally retarded) were considered to have a relatively poor chance of being successfully included. In their review of the inclusion literature published from 1984- 2000, Avramidis and Norwich, (2002) found that teachers attitudes towards inclusion were influenced by the type and severity of the child's disability and by the teachers' access to instructional supports. More positive attitudes were related to the inclusion of children who had less severe disabilities or with physical or sensory impairments.

Prior contact with students with disabilities

Positive attitudes and confidence in the ability to teach in an inclusive classroom can be seen as a learned process that is strongly influenced by the amount and kind of contact teachers have with pupils with special needs education. Research also suggests that teacher perceptions may be influenced by student characteristics such as disability label (Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998) and severity of the disability (Cook, 2001). Leyser et al., (1994) found that overall teachers with much experience with disabled persons had significantly positive attitudes toward inclusion than those with little or no experience.

Teachers' experience with inclusive education

Greater experience in inclusive educational contexts favors a more positive attitude toward the education of children with special needs. Possession of previous experience as an inclusive teacher appears to positively predispose teachers towards inclusive education (Avramidis et al., 2000). Avramidis and Kalyva, (2007) found a significant difference between schools that had much experience and those with little or no experience with inclusive education. Direct experiences of including children with disabilities into regular education settings appeared to be an essential factor in shaping teachers' views towards inclusive settings.

Teachers' perceptions of administrative support

Villa et al., (1996) found that administrative support and collaboration were indicators of positive attitude among school staff toward inclusion, thus making inclusion more successful. Guzman (1997) and Praisner, (2003) considered the role of school head teachers to be significant in developing inclusive education because they can promote inclusive practices in schools, foster new meanings about diversity and build relationships between schools and community. Inclusive minded administrators look to educate their entire school communities, promote dialogue, adopt inclusive policy and incorporate whole school approaches and cultures (Ryan, 2006).

Training in special education or inclusive education

Positive attitudes in schools can be fostered both through training in inclusive education and constructive experiences with students with disabilities (Avramidis et al., 2002; Subban & Umesh, 2006). Pre-service training period may be an appropriate time to address teachers' concerns and possibly modify attitudes towards teaching learners with special needs. The results of the studies investigating the influence of special education training on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion indicate that training is an important factor in the formation of more positive teacher attitudes towards inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Research tends to suggest that there is a positive correlation between the amount of disability education a teacher has received and educator's positive attitudes towards inclusion. Avramidis and Kalyva, (2007) found in their study that teachers with long term training in inclusive education were significantly more positive towards statements about the general philosophy compared to those who had no training at all.

Role of on-going/in service teacher training

General education teachers need professional development training on inclusion. Fox and Ysseldyke, (1997) identified training that is "concrete, specific and ongoing" as necessary for promoting successful school

changes regarding inclusion. In a study done by Rakap and Kaczmarek, (2010) regarding teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in Turkey, they found that teachers with in-service education and special education certificates and those who received special education courses while in college had relatively more positive attitudes towards inclusion. These findings are similar to those of Avramidis et al., (2002).

Teacher supports for inclusive practice

Avramidis and Norwich, (2002) in their review of inclusion literature found that teachers' access to instructional supports was an important variable affecting teachers' acceptance of the inclusive principle. More positive attitudes were also related to teachers having greater access to supports, including teaching materials and other educationally relevant resources, and to special service personnel.

Summary

The importance of teacher attitudes toward inclusion is evident from the number of studies conducted in that area. Teachers must believe that their behaviors can affect the education of their students. Bandura ,(1992) stated that even when individuals perceive that specific actions will likely bring about the desired behavior, they will not engage in the behavior or persist after initiating the behavior, if they feel that they do not possess the requisite skills.

METHODS

A survey was used to measure the relationship between teachers' years of experience with inclusion, amount of contact time with children with disabilities (independent variables) and teachers' attitudes, perceptions and concerns towards inclusion of children with disabilities (dependent variables). At the same time, teachers' perceptions of their concerns towards inclusion of children in the regular education classrooms were explored using qualitative focus groups with the teachers at the research sites.

Quantitative Phase

This phase of the study gathered and analyzed quantitative data to answer the quantitative research questions of the study.

Participants and sampling

The data for this study were drawn from a convenience sample of 142 primary school teachers currently teaching in the schools in the district. The participants were general and special education teachers teaching in the public schools. The sample consisted of 100 general education teachers and 42 special education teachers all drawn

from 5 administrative divisions in the district. Two schools were selected from each division for a total of 10 schools.

Measures

To answer the research questions in this study, participants completed 18- item survey called a modified adaptation of The School and the Education of All Students Scale (SEAS). This study adapted a survey designed by Pearman, Huang & Mellblom, (1997). See Appendix 1

Background /Demographic Information Questionnaire

This scale was developed by Horne and Timmons, (2009). Participants completed a Background Information Questionnaire containing a series of questions measuring other variables that have previously been demonstrated to impact attitudes and perceptions towards inclusion. This scale was designed to elicit participant demographic and background information across six areas. These areas included each participant's: (a) years of teaching experience; (b) duration at the current school; (c) duration of involvement with inclusive practices; (d) level of expertise or training in special education, (e) duration of direct contact hours with students receiving special education and (f) disability categories.

Teachers Concerns Scale.

The concerns scale of the SEAS consisted of 20 items addressing the participants' concerns about how inclusion would affect them and their schools. The teachers' concerns scale required the participants to rate the level of concern that the move towards inclusion of all students into the regular classroom may have created. The items on the concerns scale were coded so that a higher score (4-very concerned) indicated greater impediments towards inclusion while a lower score (1-not-at- all concerned) indicated less impediments towards inclusion. The total scores ranged from 20-80 and the scale had a calculated Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.92 indicating a high degree of internal consistency and reliability. Research related to teacher attitudes, perceptions, and concerns regarding inclusionary practices were used as the conceptual underpinning in the choice of the instrument. Using the literature as a basis, some sections of the instrument were modified to make them applicable and relevant to the Kenyan situation.

Data analysis procedures

Quantitative data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations and percentages were calculated.

Qualitative Phase

The purpose of this qualitative focus group study was to identify and examine the nature of concerns that teachers have towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms in Kisumu district, Kenya. Concerns were generally understood as those impediments to successful inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education classrooms. Two focus group sessions were used as the source of data collection. There were 10 general education teachers and 10 special education teachers who participated in this phase of the study on different dates. There were 10 questions for discussion by the focus group. (See Appendix 2)

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What is the nature of the concerns that teachers have towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education classrooms?

To answer this question, descriptive analysis of teachers' concerns was done. Out of the 20 questions in the scale, concern 1 (enough time to meet the educational needs of all students); concern 4 (staff had not been trained to work with increasingly diverse students); concern 6 (maintaining discipline would be difficult) and concern 9 (evaluating work of diverse students) were identified as posing the highest amount of challenge to the teachers. Frequency means and standard deviations were generated to show the named areas of concern. See Table 1 for the distribution of the concerns.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviation for the Teachers' Concerns towards Inclusion

Concerns 1-20	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation
1 (Enough time to meet the education needs of all)	142	3.36	.75
4 (Staff had not been trained for diversity)	142	3.30	.84
9 (Evaluating work of diverse students)	142	3.21	.75
6 (Maintaining discipline would be difficult)	142	2.99	.93
2 (Instructing students with a wide range of needs)	142	2.98	.82
7 (Staff lacked training to manage diverse classes)	142	2.98	.82
12 (Lack of on-going training/in-service)	142	2.96	.93
3 (Class standards would change)	142	2.96	.93
8 (Not able to individualize instruction)	142	2.96	.93
11 (Sufficient planning time)	142	2.87	.98
5 (All students not adequately challenged)	142	2.87	.98
15 (Ability to evaluate effectiveness of program)	142	2.86	.99
17 (Additional meeting times)	142	2.86	.99
19 (Student acceptance of special needs children)	142	2.86	.99
20 (Other teachers do not support inclusion)	142	2.85	1.0
14 (Students' attitude towards inclusion)	142	2.65	1.2
17 (Additional meeting times)	142	2.62	1.3
18 (Parents would not understand reasons for inclusion)	142	2.60	1.4
14 (students acceptance of those with special needs)	142	2.60	1.4
10 (Able to work cooperatively with other staff)	142	2.60	1.4

The table (Table 1) shows that of the four main areas of concern about inclusion of children with disabilities, teachers were most concerned about not having enough time to meet the educational needs of all students in an inclusive classroom ($M=3.36$, $SD=.75$). Discipline is the lowest concern in the top four category ($M=2.9$, $SD=.93$) compared with other major concerns (time, $M=3.36$, $SD=.75$); training, $M=3.30$, $SD=.84$; and

evaluation, $M = 2.99$, $SD = .75$). Responses to individual items in the concerns sub-scale indicate that the participants have concerns about including all students in the general education classrooms. The four main concerns according to the survey responses were:

- (a) Having enough time to meet the needs of students with disabilities: Of the 142 teachers participating, 121 participants (85.1%) were concerned and very concerned about having enough time to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the regular classroom.
- (b) Teachers' concern for training to teach children with disabilities: There was a high concern about training of teachers for inclusion suggesting that training of teachers to include children with disabilities is a major concern. Of the total number of teachers who responded to this item 84% ($n=119$) indicated that they were very concerned and concerned about their training needs to meet the demands of an inclusive classroom.
- (c) Evaluating the work of diverse students: The third identified concern was the participants' concern for evaluation of work of diversified students due to inclusion. Of the total number of teachers who responded to this item 83% ($n=118$) indicated that they were very concerned and concerned about evaluating the work of diverse students.
- (d) Maintaining discipline in a diversified classroom: The last of the four identified major concerns was the teachers' concern for class discipline. The teachers indicated that maintaining class discipline in an inclusion classroom would be difficult. Of the total number of teachers who responded to this item 73% ($n=103$) indicated that they were very concerned and concerned about evaluating the work of diverse students.

The teachers' responses to the items in the concerns sub-scales indicate that they have a higher level of concern for how the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms will affect them personally. There was lower concern in other areas.

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage distribution for the four major concerns identified by the participants.

Table 2
Frequency and Percentage Distribution for the Four Major Concerns

Concerns	Frequency/Percentage				Total
	Not at all concern	Not very concern	Concerned	Very concern	

	ned	ned	ned		
1	1/7.0	20/14.10	48/33.80	73/51.40	142/100
4	6/4.20	17/12.00	47/33.10	72/50.70	142/100
6	2/1.40	22/15.50	62/43.70	56/39.40	142/100
9	11/7.70	28/19.70	54/38.00	49/34.50	142/100

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between teachers' concerns and their experience with inclusion of children with disabilities in the classroom? To answer the research question, bivariate correlation was performed to examine the relationship between the teachers' concerns and their experience with inclusion of children with disabilities. Table 3 shows the relationship between the teachers' experience with inclusion and their concerns.

Table 3

Correlation between the Teachers' Years of Using Inclusive Education and Their Concerns about Successful Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

Mean Concern	Total Concern	Years of using inclusive education
Years of using inclusive education	.17*	-

*The correlation is significant at $p < .05$

Bivariate correlation was used to measure the relationship between the total concerns and the teachers' years of experience with inclusion of children with disabilities. The results of the correlational analysis are presented in Table 3 above. The correlation of the teachers years of experience with inclusion and their concerns about inclusion of children with disabilities as reported in the table above is $r = .17, p < .05$. The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. In general the results suggest that there was no strong relationship between the teachers' years of experience with inclusion of children with disabilities in the classrooms and their concerns.

Research Question 3

What are the teachers' perceptions of their concerns toward successful inclusion of children with disabilities?

Qualitative analysis was used to answer this research question. The special education and general education teachers who participated in this qualitative phase of the study outlined common concerns within their classroom contexts that affected their success in educating children with disabilities in the general classroom setting. Once data

was transcribed, the researchers embarked on reading and looking for things that were pertinent to answering the research question. The researchers engaged in an inductive process of coding data to identify major themes in the data. The researchers carefully read the transcribed data and divided the data into meaningful analytical units/segments. Coding process was done by segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data.

The following categories and themes emerged from the analysis of common areas of concern as they relate to the feelings of the general education teachers (GEN-ED) and special education teachers (SPED), (a) concerns about inclusion, (b) experience of inclusion/training in special needs education, (c) examination culture of ranking classes/schools/divisions and districts according to performance in national examinations, (d) teachers' perceptions of supportive services, (e) inability to complete syllabuses and failure in exams, (f) inadequate physical access/facilities and, (g) teachers' perceptions of the difficulties they encounter. The categories and themes that emerged are discussed separately in this section. The quotations from the teachers' discussions are used to illustrate the themes from the discussion groups.

Table 4
Categories and Themes from the General Education and Special Education Teachers' Focus Group Sessions

Category	Theme	Focus Group Questions
Concerns about inclusion	1. Mutual development in education with benefits	6,7 & 8
	2. Good for both children with and without disabilities	
Experience of inclusion/Training in special education.	1. Role of additional ongoing training.	1,4, & 5
	2. Lack of professional experience (GEN-ED)	
	3. Additional training in methodology of instruction	
	4. Good understanding of disabilities (GEN-ED)	
Examination culture of ranking schools	1. Practice of academic selection in schools not good for inclusive education	8
	2. Fear and concern about academic success of their schools	
Teachers' perceptions of supportive services.	1. Teachers need support from school administration	9 & 10
	2. GEN-ED teachers need support from SPED teachers	
	3. GEN-ED felt not supported.	

Physical access /Facilities in schools	1. Difficulties of access presented by the school buildings and classrooms	2
Inability to complete syllabuses	1. Inclusion would affect academic performance 2. Difficulties in individualizing instruction in large classes	6
Teachers' perceptions of their difficulties	1. Class control in an inclusive environment 2. Time constraints 3. Large class sizes	3

Theme 1: Concerns about inclusion.

Most general education teachers showed positive attitudes towards inclusion. Some considered it to be a mutual development in education and indicated mutual benefits for their students with and without disabilities. The teachers demonstrated a good understanding of the social function of inclusion by indicating that their students without disabilities in the regular education classrooms learned to accept and understand people who were different from them. Inclusion was cited as being good for not only the school, but also to the wider community. *“Inclusion is a good initiative but when there is a problem with its implementation, it is a problem to the learner who has special needs. When the children are together, they learn from each other and also this does away with superstitions about disabilities. Long time ago, people used to fear those who are challenged in one way or another. Without that government support, we cannot achieve our aims of providing inclusive education”* (SPED Teacher 10)

“Inclusive education can work but not in all schools. There are some disabilities like autism and mental handicap, those ones cannot learn in general education, and they should go to special schools. Only those with learning disabilities, hearing impairment and visual impairment can be included in the general education classrooms” (SPED Teacher 1)

Theme 2: Experience of inclusion/ training in special needs education.

Training in special needs was a major issue mentioned by the teachers as a requirement for successful implementation of inclusion. The teachers also talked about the need for additional on-going training and expressed their concern for lack of personal professional experience. The teachers mentioned that they needed additional training in methods of instruction to meet the needs of all students with special needs in their classrooms. A majority of the teachers also pointed out that they needed specialized training in specific cases of disabilities especially in

areas with great challenges. They agreed that further training was necessary for the effective inclusion to be achieved.

The teachers indicated that unless they understood the disability and how to deal with it, they may experience frustration and guilt of not being able to do their best in the inclusive classroom. The regular education teachers reported that they did not feel confident in their abilities to provide for special needs children in terms of adapting the curriculum to meet their needs.

“Most of the teachers have not gone for training in special needs education and most of them have not had a chance to meet students with special needs so they find it difficult to deal with them. Those who have had that training have no problem but those who have not cannot deal with these students” (GEN-ED Teacher 3)

Theme 3: Examination culture of ranking classes/schools/divisions/districts and provinces according to performance.

The teachers expressed fear and concern about the academic success of their schools. They expressed fear that because majority of them do not have the required knowledge and expertise to teach students with disabilities who are included in the regular classrooms, this is contributing to low mean scores in the examinations. The teachers stated that because of the practice of academic selection into the schools right from Standard 1, adopting inclusion in practice will be a major shift for all schools and the teachers. Teachers also pointed out that the schools head teachers base admission of children in schools on academic ability and so children with disabilities will always have difficulty securing admission in some schools because they are believed to be of low academic ability. In the end, the teachers pointed out there will be a distinction between the inclusive schools and those that do not. Teachers also discussed the implications of II inclusion and its effects on the teaching time in the schools.

Theme 4: Teacher's perceptions of supportive services.

The fourth theme that emerged and was supported by the interviews stated that the teachers needed support from the administrators; this was a concern for both special and general education teachers. In addition to this, the general education teachers also requested for support from the few special education teachers in the schools. All the participants reported that support was a contributing factor to the success of inclusion. The teachers specifically singled out the support from the school administration as the most important towards the success of inclusion in their schools. This support includes finding appropriate ways for teachers to be involved in the decision making process in their classrooms, working collaboratively with special needs children and getting the required basic

equipment for teachers to use in the classrooms with special needs children. The teachers pointed out that the head teacher is the most important link between the school and the community.

The teachers talked about the need for stronger collaboration between the school head teacher and the community. A common example cited by teachers was when teachers requested to have a meeting with a parent of a child with special needs. Some parents are very negative and the teachers need the support of the school administration to facilitate such meetings. Some head teachers took long to facilitate such meetings while at the same time some parents do not honor such meetings leading to a lot of frustration by the teacher. Both groups of teachers (regular and special education) supported the position that successful inclusive education, to a large extent is dependent upon the positive attitudes of the teachers and the amount of support they receive towards the implementation of the program.

“When there is a child with a problem, sometimes we ask the school administration to call the parents so that we sensitize. Sometimes the administration provides funds for some teachers to attend workshops or meetings on inclusive education”. (GEN -ED Teacher 8)

Theme 5: Inadequate physical access/facilities in the schools.

Several teachers pointed out the difficulties of access presented by the school buildings and the classrooms. Both special education and general education teachers explained the difficulties of classroom access, the lack of suitable toileting facilities, and the hardships that would be experienced in providing privacy and efforts to maintain the dignity of the child with the disability. The teachers pointed out that the difficulties in educating children with disabilities increases with an increase in the variety of special needs children a teacher has in the classroom.

“I have not taught children on a wheelchair before, and again, wheelchairs physically in our school and classrooms would cause major problems because our classes are not wheelchair structured”. (GEN-ED Teacher 2)

Theme 6: Inability to complete the syllabus and failure in national examinations.

The teachers also believed that if students with disabilities were included in regular classes, it would affect the academic performance of their peers without disabilities. The teachers pointed out that because of the long attachment to academic selection as the model for education in Kenyan schools, adoption of total inclusion in practice will be a radical change for all schools and the teaching staff. The teachers pointed out that with the regular education system requiring schools to follow a common policy implementing a national curriculum, whole class instruction, identical textbooks, similar and strict timetables and a competitive examination culture, it is very

difficult for the regular education teachers to include students with special needs and to individualize instruction especially with big classrooms sizes. The teachers also expressed the fear that total inclusion may hinder the progress of other children and lower the overall performance of the school. In turn, this will affect the allocation of classmates to “good” secondary schools.

“This inclusive education idea is still a big problem in Kenya. We are always far behind in completing our syllabi. It is also resulting in low output of work and we teachers are always blamed when KCPE results (Kenya Certificate of Primary Education) are out at the beginning of the year. The government should make the school system to be disability friendly. The government should stop categorizing schools according to how they perform in the national examinations. Most head teachers will reject the students with special education needs and they will be forced to attend the so called small schools. Inclusive education is a good thing but it cannot be accepted in some schools” (GEN-ED Teacher 2)

Theme 7: Teachers’ perceptions of the difficulties they encounter.

Teachers pointed out several important issues and problems. Several teachers pointed out that it is difficult to control classroom behaviors when several students with disabilities are included, especially those with multiple disabilities and behavior problems. The teachers felt that a factor contributing to this is the teachers’ own lack of special education training. Some teachers also complained about inadequate time, necessary conditions, and material supports in the schools to help them with the successful implementation of inclusive practices. Large class sizes was also mentioned by the teachers and identified as slowing down of other students’ progress. The teachers pointed out that one way of making inclusion work more successfully in their classrooms is by limiting the number of children with special needs in an inclusive classroom.

“We must not only be thinking about the placement of students with disabilities into general education classrooms, we must also think about how their placement is going to disturb the emotions and academic performance of other students without disabilities in the school” (GEN-ED Teacher 1). *“We need to think carefully about placement in the class because of the wheelchair; having a wheelchair in the classroom could cause problems. My class has three steep steps to be climbed, each day I have to request other students to lift the student and the wheelchair into the classroom”* (GEN ED Teacher 3)

Practical Implications and Recommendations

This study provided insight into a range of possible views held by teachers regarding aspects of inclusion. Such information may be useful to teacher educators as they seek to (a) understand what these teachers bring to inclusion contexts and (b) provide course content and educational experiences that will help teachers develop the knowledge and dispositions that will prepare them to be successful teachers for all students. This includes knowledge of how to provide instruction that meets the needs of a wide range of students, how to access and effectively manage resources and a strong commitment to teaching students with disabilities.

The findings of this study have implications on the inclusion agenda and the manner in which the government through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology has responded to it. With government policy and eventually legislation supporting inclusive education in place, it is important that teacher training institutions prepare teachers who are confident in their ability to cater for diversity in their classrooms. Such teachers are in turn likely to have beneficial impact on the attitudes of children without disabilities towards their fellows with disabilities. To facilitate effective inclusive education, support must be provided that promotes change in attitudes, beliefs, values and habits. Issues identified in this study regarding large class sizes, teacher training, student needs and resources are particularly important for inclusive practices to be successful in Kenya. The existing pre-service and in-service teacher programs need to be re-evaluated and strengthened to develop specific programs for training regular teachers so that they can effectively respond to the needs of all students.

Results suggesting that the teachers are particularly concerned about lack of resources have an important implication for the initial teacher education/training in Kenya. There is need to provide grounded information and training to pre-service teachers during their initial teacher training regarding the range of resources available to support children with disabilities. It may also be important to review the Special Needs Education Policy Framework so that its provisions are anchored in the country's legislation.

There is need for urgent policy change because without this change to reflect the teachers' current attitudes, perceptions and concerns, driving the inclusion agenda forward may face serious obstacles. What the current study found is that the dominant culture of the people and the historical contexts mediate the interpretation of inclusion and therefore the policies to guide implementation should be generated rather than transplanted or imposed. In a way, the results of this study emphasize the need for the Kenyan Ministry of Education Science and Technology to interpret the inclusion agenda from local perspectives. The government should involve classroom teachers in all stages of inclusive policy development and decision making that would affect them in their schools. A

synchronization of these support systems and the involvement of teachers would be a catalyst in reducing their negative attitude and concerns about inclusive education in Kenya.

It may be necessary for the government of Kenya to harness and take advantage of the enthusiasm that the teachers have shown towards inclusive education by giving full support to the efforts of the teachers. One aspect towards successful inclusion agenda that the government needs to focus on is the quality of teacher training programs. There is some research that suggests that too much focus on causes and characteristics of different disability types during initial teacher training programs may develop negative attitudes among teacher trainees (Forlin et.al., 2009). Rather, the training focus of teacher education should be on sociological aspects of disability and on the strategies that have been shown to enhance inclusion of all children in the learning process.

The teachers expressed concerns about some aspects of inclusion. One major concern expressed by the teachers was that they believed that they have not been consulted enough as part of the process. It would appear that the regular classroom teachers view inclusive education as a top-down decision, which has subjected them to additional pressure. The teachers also felt that they have not been given adequate guidelines or directives regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classrooms. What the current study shows is that teacher characteristics and school contexts mediate the interpretation of inclusion and therefore policies need to be generated rather than imposed.

The teachers in the study pointed out that because of the long attachment to academic selection as the model for education in Kenya, adoption of total inclusion in practice will be a radical change for all schools and the teaching staff. The teachers expressed fear and concern about the academic success of their schools. They expressed fear that because majority of them do not have the required knowledge and expertise to teach students with disabilities who are included in the regular classrooms, this is contributing to low mean scores in the examinations. While schools tend to be blamed for not being more inclusive, the teacher training college and colleges of education at the universities must acknowledge and embrace their role more fully to ensure that they are producing graduates who have the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to be more proactive in furthering the inclusion agenda. Teachers must be prepared to differentiate their curricular to ensure that they meet the dissimilar needs of children with disabilities.

The results of this study lead towards a few areas of potential intervention; in-service awareness programs and attitude change workshops for teachers is important towards the success of the inclusion agenda. Since research

concerning attitude change towards people with disabilities and towards inclusive education is almost lacking in Kenya, attitude –change workshops are necessary to help focus the inclusion agenda.

In conclusion, the government should address the issue of teacher training and the system of ranking of schools in national examinations. In general, the teachers from Kisumu who took part in the study were positive about including children with disabilities in their classrooms. They did, however, express the belief that they were not adequately prepared to meet the needs of children with disabilities. They also stated that they were not well supported in terms of administrative support, planning time and disability-specific teaching skills and resources.

It has been posited that a process of affirmative and rewarding personnel engagement with people with disabilities is most likely to continue to promote inclusion (Forlin, 2006). This is one good direction that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology through the Teachers' Service Commission can implement in order to make special education attractive. Special education teachers should also be considered for special allowances just like their counterparts in Math, English, and Science.

Future Research

Several international studies have concluded that teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards inclusive education determine their commitment to inclusive practices and influence the outcomes of their practice. Since inclusive education is concerned with the identification and minimization of barriers to learning, then more studies should focus on highlighting the critical role of teachers' professional development as a crucial factor influencing teachers' understandings of, and commitment to the development of inclusive education.

First, this study has indicated that a good understanding of how educators relate to inclusion is crucial since they are the key resource that will make inclusion a reality, more comparative research is therefore required. More research is needed to examine additional factors that influence the development of positive attitudes and perceptions towards inclusion and how these variables interact. There is need for a good understanding of the complexity of factors that shape teacher attitudes and perceptions towards inclusion in order to learn which are the most important. Future research needs to focus on the quality of training opportunities for teachers and should include details such as duration, content, intensity and relevance. Training of teachers should also focus on the quality of their experiences with different categories of disability or special needs. Again, if experience with inclusion promotes positive attitudes, then future research should also focus on ways of supporting teachers (the main agents of the implementation of the policy) as schools become more inclusive so that their experiences become more positive.

Second, this study has shown that contact is an important variable in the attitude of teachers towards children with disabilities and towards inclusive education. Since inclusive education is relatively new to Kenya, this finding would be very valuable in the planning and implementation phase. As part of teacher training programs, potential teachers should have planned contacts such as extended time for teaching practice (practicum). Such measures would increase the success of inclusion. Future research is needed to examine this variable critically and with a larger population of teachers so that if the results continue to show the significance of this variable, then increasing quality contact time should be part of programmed teacher training in Kenya.

Third, one of the challenges in designing this study was a lack of published literature on inclusive education in Kenya. This presents a shortcoming for researchers and call urgently for more studies about attitudes, perceptions and concerns. For example, it would be valuable to compare the attitudes of those teachers with and without experience of teaching inclusively. Further work is also needed to identify the factors that hinder and challenge the effective implementation of inclusion in Kenya. Clearly, the implementation of inclusion is an important area for investigation, not only because of the immediate implications for the children and their families, but also because of the wider issues related to shifting attitudes and increasing acceptance of disability in the society.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Modified adaptation of The School and the Education of All Students Scale (SEAS)

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In this section, please circle the best answer that applies to you

1. How many years
have you been
working in
education?

1) 1 or less 2) 2-3 3) 4-5 4) 6-10

2. How many years
have you been at
your current
school?

1) First year 2) 2-3 3) 4-5 4) 6-10

3. How many years
have you been
using inclusive
educational
practices in which

you have been
formally trained?

- 1) None
- 2) ___(years)
- 3) ___(years)
- 4) ___(years)

4. Please indicate
your present level
of
training/education.

- 1) Primary Education Teacher (PI)
- 2) Diploma in Education
- 3) BEd in Special Education

- 4) MEd in Special Education.
- 5) Support Teacher

5. Approximately
what part of most
days do you work
with students
receiving special
education
services?

- 1) None
- 2) Half time or less
- 3) More than half time

6. This year, will you or are you working with students who have the following disabilities? Please circle the answer that applies to you.

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Doesn't Apply	Rank
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Deaf/Hearing Impairment	1	2	3	4	
Learning Disabilities	1	2	3	4	
Emotional Disturbance	1	2	3	4	
Physical Disability	1	2	3	4	
Speech/Language	1	2	3	4	
Blind/ Visual Impairment	1	2	3	4	
Developmental Delay	1	2	3	4	
Mental Retardation	1	2	3	4	
Traumatic Brain Injury	1	2	3	4	
Autism	1	2	3	4	
Multiple Conditions	1	2	3	4	
Deafblindness	1	2	3	4	

7. Which of the above disability category(-ies) will you find yourself most comfortable working with? Rank the categories from 1 to 12, with 1 being “*the most comfortable*” and 12 being *the least comfortable*.

II. TEACHERS’ ATTITUDES, PERCEPTIONS, AND CONCERNS

In this section, circle your level of agreement or disagreement with the statements below:

Survey Topic **Strongly disagreed** **Disagreed** **Agreed** **Strongly agreed**

Attitude

8	Inclusion is the best way to meet the needs of all students.	1	2	3
9	Inclusion causes more problems than it solves.	1	2	3
10	Diversity in the classroom enriches learning	1	2	3
11	Leadership of the head teacher is necessary for inclusion	1	2	3
12	Head teachers enable regular and special education staff to communicate with each other.	1	2	3
13	Inclusion of students with special needs into regular classrooms creates tension in their schools.	1	2	3
14	Inclusion would work well in your school	1	2	3

15	Inclusion depends solely on staff/teacher involved	1	2	3
16	Inclusion of students with special needs is detrimental to the education of other students.	1	2	3
17	Inclusion creates too much additional work for teachers	1	1	2

Perception

18	Parents are willing to accept a philosophy of full inclusion.	1	2	3
19	School committees support efforts of including all students into the classroom.	1	2	3
20	Colleagues support full inclusion of students with special needs	1	2	3
21	Department of education supports inclusion	1	2	3
22	Staff at school resists inclusion.	1	2	3
23	Special education staff support full inclusion	1	2	3
24	There is adequate head teacher support.	1	2	3
25	Teachers currently need training in inclusive practices	1	2	3
26	School staff members are adequately prepared for inclusion	1	2	3
27	Students in your school accept children with special needs in their classrooms.	1	2	3
28	Parents are more satisfied with their child’s education as a result of inclusion	1	2	3
29	Regular and special education staff are provided time to plan together for instruction.	1	2	3

Survey Topic **Not at all concerned.** **Not very concerned** **Concerned** **Very Concerned**

Concerns

30	Enough time to meet the educational needs of all students	1	2	3
31	Concerned about instructing students with a wide range of needs in one class.	1	2	3
32	Concerned that class standards would change.	1	2	3
33	Staff had not been trained to work with increasingly diverse students	1	2	3
34	All students would not be adequately challenged	1	2	3
35	Maintaining discipline would be difficult	1	2	3
36	Staff lacked training to manage diverse classrooms	1	2	3

37	Not able to individualize instruction.	1	2	3
38	Evaluating work of diverse students	1	2	3
39	Able to work cooperatively with other staff	1	2	3
40	Sufficient planning time	1	2	3
41	Lack of ongoing training/in-service	1	2	3
42	Additional paperwork/documentation.	1	2	3
43	Students' attitude towards inclusion.	1	2	3
44	Teacher's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of inclusion programs	1	2	3
45	Whether all school staff are responsible for all students (staff ownership)	1	2	3
46	Additional meeting times.	1	2	3
47	Parents would not understand the reasons for inclusion.	1	2	3
48	Student acceptance of classmates with special needs	1	2	3
49	Other teachers in this school do not support inclusion	1	2	3

APPENDIX II

Focus Group Questions

1. What training/professional development did you receive prior to and during the time you have been having special needs students in your class?
2. Could you tell me about the needs of the special needs child/children in your class?
3. Which disability/disabilities do you consider more challenging/less challenging to work with in your classroom?
4. In your opinion, do teachers have the resources to implement inclusive education in your school?
5. In your opinion do the teachers have the knowledge and skills to implement inclusive education? Why or why not?
6. Tell me your feelings about inclusive education
7. How much good do you think inclusive education is doing?
8. How much do teachers believe in the ideas of inclusive education?