



INFLUENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL DETERMINANTS ON INCLUSIVE LEARNING IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MAKADARA SUB-COUNTY, NAIROBI COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive learning involves the reorganization of learning institutions to ensure that all learners receive appropriate education within local primary schools. This study aimed to investigate the teacher determinants influencing inclusive learning in public primary schools in Makadara Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. The objectives were to establish the effect of teacher qualification, experience, workload and perception on inclusive learning. Guided by Rawls' Theory of Vygotsky's Learning Theory (1978), the study utilized a sample size of 351. Reliability of the instruments was judged using Pearson's product-moment correlation with a coefficient of 0.70, and credibility was assessed through peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, and audit trails. Data were processed using SPSS version 23, with quantitative data summarized using frequency tables, percentages, means, and standard deviations, and qualitative data presented through narrative analysis. Findings indicated that average and special needs children mixed well in inclusive classrooms, fostering inclusiveness. Respondents showed a readiness to understand and support children with special needs. Effective inclusive learning was found to require adequate teacher training, manageable class sizes, and balanced workloads. The study emphasized the importance of identifying, assessing, and placing special needs students, with multidisciplinary teams ensuring comprehensive evaluations. The study concluded that inclusive practices are enhanced through collaborative efforts, continuous teacher professional development, and prioritization of resources. Based on these findings, it is recommended that school's continuous professional development for teachers on diverse learning needs and a multidisciplinary approach to the identification and placement of special needs students are essential. Schools should also prioritize resources and infrastructure to ensure equitable and accessible learning for all learners.

Keywords: Inclusive education, professional development, Teacher training, Teacher factors

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education involves reorganizing learning institutions to ensure all students, regardless of their exceptional educational needs, receive appropriate education within their local schools. This

approach requires an inclusive curriculum, policies, and strategies that cater to the diverse needs of all children (UNESCO, 2008). The basis of inclusive education is founded on the entitlement to education, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Many nations across the world are adopting inclusive education as a worldwide trend to ensure that students with special needs are included in mainstream school settings. This approach is being used to uphold human rights laws and prohibit any kind of discrimination. For example, in the United States, almost 96 percent of children with disabilities get education in regular schools, and almost half of them spend the majority of their school days in classes that include students with and without impairments (United States Department of Education, 2005).

The Philippines and China have both adopted inclusive education, which involves the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream educational institutions and, ultimately, the wider society. The Education for All report (2008) states that several nations have implemented comprehensive strategies to diminish obstacles to education and provide universal access for all children. Nevertheless, children with special needs often encounter prejudice as a result of insufficient access, limited resources, and unfavorable views towards inclusive education programs. Every kid has distinct attributes, preferences, capabilities, and educational requirements. Consequently, the educational system should be tailored and executed to cater to these varied qualities (UNESCO, 2008). It is necessary for the educational environment to make adjustments in order to facilitate the inclusion of pupils with special needs.

In Africa, countries such as Ethiopia, Uganda, Burkina Faso, South Africa, and Kenya, have implemented legislation and policies to promote inclusive education (UNESCO, 2008). In South Africa, an inclusive education pilot project significantly enhanced teacher training and increased student enrollment (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). This initiative created a strong foundation for practical, inclusive education by involving all education stakeholders. The effectiveness of inclusive education can be affected by teacher attributes, the organization of the education system, and external factors. Research by Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2019) in the United States and Canada indicates that teachers' professional expertise and subject knowledge are crucial for improving student achievement and retaining learners with special needs. They also emphasize that specialized educators comprehensively understand effective teaching methods for behavior management and personalized instruction to address individual student needs. In the United States, teachers are trained at the master's and doctoral levels to support learners with special needs (Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2019).

The general objective of the education system is to ensure equitable access, participation, retention, achievement, and accomplishment in education by ensuring fairness in service provision. Education Assessment Resource Center (EARC) officials and teachers are mandated to ensure early identification, assessment, intervention, and placement of students with disabilities in appropriate education programs. However, the lack of resources, trained teachers, and a specialized curriculum has greatly affected the inclusion of students with special needs. A report from the Regional SNE office in Nairobi region (2015) indicated that although inclusive education is being

implemented in public primary schools, there are high dropout rates and low graduation rates. This study seeks to investigate the institutional determinants affecting inclusive learning in public primary schools in Makadara Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, regardless of ability, education is considered a basic right for all students. In order to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Kenya has embraced inclusive learning as a method. Nonetheless, a number of inclusive education studies have shown that traditional schools do not adequately meet the educational requirements of students with special needs. According to the regional coordinator for special needs education in Nairobi County, the majority of students with special needs attend special schools rather than conventional ones.

Despite the increasing advocacy for inclusive learning in Kenya, Makadara Sub-County has registered a low enrollment of learners with special needs in public primary schools compared to other sub-counties in Nairobi County. Additionally, the learning outcomes of learners with special needs in Makadara Sub-County have remained low. This situation is likely partly due to institutional determinants that influence inclusive learning in public primary schools. This challenge hinders the achievement of educational goals in Kenya. Consequently, this study seeks to investigate the institutional determinants influencing inclusive learning in public primary schools in Makadara Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

The study utilized Lev Vygotsky's social constructionist theory from the 1930s, as cited by Katarina (2006). This theory posits that knowledge is created socially through language. Vygotsky viewed disability as a social abnormality and differentiated between primary and secondary disabilities. Primary disabilities, such as visual, hearing, language, and speech impairments, lead to a child's exclusion from socio-cultural, traditional, and educational environments, resulting in secondary disabilities, which are socio-cultural exclusions (Katarina, 2006). Vygotsky asserted that humans are inherently social beings and that cognitive development occurs within social contexts. He argued that complete isolation is detrimental and inhibits learning. Vygotsky championed inclusive education, advocating for remedial programs for learners with disabilities within mainstream schools rather than segregating them into special schools or units.

This theory is relevant to the study because it supports the inclusion of students with learning disabilities in mainstream schools and opposes segregation and the elimination of special schools and units. For inclusive education to be effective, teachers' characteristics—such as academic and professional qualifications, experience, teaching styles, and attitudes—must be positive. The theory promotes cooperative learning methods to help students reach their full potential, encourages a change in teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities, and emphasizes the need for teachers to be equipped with skills for inclusion (Katarina, 2006). It also highlights teachers' crucial role in fostering a positive self-concept in students with special needs.

Empirical literature

Teachers' academic and professional qualifications are essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2009). Researchers have explored the link between various teacher characteristics and student achievement to identify what defines a high-quality teacher. Characteristics such as aptitude, coursework, degrees earned, and certification status have been found to positively impact student performance (Sutcher et al., 2019). Campbell (2021) found that teachers with high academic scores demonstrated mastery of subject matter knowledge, enabling them to better support students with disabilities. For instance, special educators with strong mathematical backgrounds provided more effective instruction in algebra than those without such competencies. Research in the United States indicated a direct correlation between teachers' professional qualifications and student achievement in inclusive settings. Teachers with master's and doctoral degrees were particularly enthusiastic and motivated to work with learners with special needs (United States Department of Education, 2008).

Teachers' experience with special needs learners influences their acceptance of inclusive education. Research conducted in the United States by the Center for Personnel Studies in Special Education revealed that experienced teachers demonstrated greater proficiency in identifying and anticipating students' learning difficulties, which helped students with disabilities overcome these challenges (Kiely, Brownell, Lauterbach, & Benedict, 2014). Additionally, other studies showed that the acceptance of children with physical disabilities was highest among educators with less than six years of teaching experience, and this acceptance decreased among those with six to ten years of experience (Avramidis, 2010).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method was a survey for this study's descriptive purpose. The study's design is suitable because it allowed researchers to collect data from a representative sample of primary schools in Makadara Sub County, Nairobi County, Kenya, on the impact of institutional variables on inclusive education there. Since this approach is so useful for learning about the present state of a phenomena and drawing conclusions based on hard data, it was employed (Orodho, 2009).

Research design

A mixed method approach was further employed entailing both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative component of this study was to employ a questionnaire, while the qualitative component was using an interview guide for a descriptive survey. While qualitative studies sought to understand participants' subjective experiences and motives, the quantitative data identified objective institutional factors that affect inclusive education in public elementary schools. Unquantifiable views and opinions were described in form of qualitative data. In this study therefore, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analyzed based on mixed methodology approach.

Target population

The term "target population" refers to the broad group from which a representative sample is drawn (Creswell, 2012). Public school administrators, educators, and students in the Makadara Sub County were the intended participants in this research. The sub-County has 27 public primary schools, 557 teachers and 27 head teachers. The study considered only pupils from class 6, 7 and 8 since they were considered knowledgeable and could not be easily influenced by others, thus the study population for pupils was 4,050. Hence a total study population of 4634 was considered for this study. All schools in the Sub County were targeted. This population was used by the researcher to generalize the study's results (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008).

Table 1: Target Population

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Head Teachers | 27 | 0.6 |
| Teachers | 557 | 12 |
| Pupils | 4,050 | 87.4 |
| Total | 4,634 | 100 |

Source: Researcher (2024)

Sampling procedures and sample size

Purposive sampling was used to choose the sub county for the research. For the educators and students, a stratified simple random selection method was employed. However, since there are so few principals, all of the schools' principals took part in the research. This ensured that all the respondents have equal chances of participation. The sample size for the study was constructed as follows; all the head teachers were considered for the study, 3 class teachers from each school were selected from each school, 9 pupils from each school were then selected from each school i.e. pupils from each of the three classes that were involved in the study. Therefore, the study was encompassed of 27 Headteachers, 81 teachers and 270 students making a total of 351 for the sample size.

Table 2 sample size

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Head Teachers | 27 | 7.14 |
| Teachers | 81 | 21.4 |
| Pupils | 270 | 71.2 |
| Total | 351 | 100 |

Data Collection Research Instruments

The researcher used questionnaires for the learners and teachers, and interview guide for the head teachers to collect information on institutional determinants influencing inclusive learning in public primary schools in Makadara Sub County in Nairobi County', Kenya.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to continuing to the field for information assortment, the specialist presents an exploration proposition to the Graduate School, Mount Kenya University for assessment and endorsement through the Department of Early Youth Education. Upon receiving an endorsement to proceed with data collection, the scientist will apply for a job to lead research at the National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation. After obtaining the study funding and permission letter, the analyst proceeded to the field to collect information. The analyst contacted the sub-County Commissioner of Makadara Sub-County to provide a copy of the research permission letter. Subsequently, the scientist contacted the sub-County Director of Education to request a letter of introduction to the head teachers of the selected public elementary schools. The scientist then proceeded to visit the selected schools, where she sought approval from the institutions' authorities. This was trailed by a proper prologue to the instructors and head-educators. The specialist clarified the motivation behind the visit, guarantee the respondents of privacy and explain the meetings. The examined instructors were given surveys though the head-educators and EARC officials was met by the scientist.

FINDINGS

The number of participants that took part in the research was 217. Following the distribution of 351 questioners, 217 of them were replied, and 134 of them were brought back empty. This demonstrates that 217 (61.82 %) of the participants responded to the questions asked by the researchers, while just 134 (38.17 %) of the individuals did not react. According to Patten (2016), a good questionnaire response rate in the area of research is one that is at least sixty percent (60%) of the total possible responses. On the other hand, in accordance with the findings of the Pew Research Center, a response rate of at least 50% is considered to be very excellent, a response rate of between 60% and 70% is considered to be exceptional, and a response rate of 70% or above is considered to be very good. According to the results of the study, a response rate of 61.82 % is considered to be is considered to be exceptional for the analysis.

Teacher Training, Experience, Workload and Inclusive Learning

From the study's objectives, it was determined that respondents perceived their instructors to emphasize the importance of interacting with students who have unique educational needs, with a mean score of 3.7373 and a standard deviation of 1.28024. Additionally, respondents indicated that teachers at their school assist all students impartially, yielding a mean score of 3.7834 with a standard deviation of 1.25613. The study further revealed that, on average, respondents felt their teachers are highly committed to their academic progress (mean = 3.76227, standard deviation = 1.26655). However, respondents expressed varying levels of confidence in their teachers' preparedness to teach learners with special needs (mean = 3.7097, standard deviation = 1.26694) and considered the class sizes and workload manageable, promoting inclusive learning (mean = 3.7512, standard deviation = 1.23334).

Respondents reported less consistency in preparing individual education programs for learners with special needs (mean = 3.7143, standard deviation = 1.28432) and utilizing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to enhance inclusive learning (mean = 3.6590, standard deviation = 1.24864). The study also found that respondents have attended seminars and workshops on strategies to teach learners with special needs (mean = 3.6636, standard deviation = 1.28460) and generally modify their teaching methods to accommodate these learners (mean = 3.7788, standard deviation = 1.31477).

Table 3: Teacher Training, Experience and Workload on Inclusive Learning

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|----------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Instructors stress importance of interacting with unique student | 217 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.7373 | 1.28024 |
| Teachers help each and every one of us without bias | 217 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.7834 | 1.25613 |
| Teachers are typically very invested in our academic progress | 217 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.7327 | 1.26655 |
| I am trained to teach learners with special in my class | 217 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.7097 | 1.26694 |
| The class size and my work load are manageable | 217 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.7512 | 1.23334 |
| prepare individual program for learners with special needs | 217 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.7143 | 1.28432 |
| ICT is used to enhance inclusive learning in my school | 217 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.6590 | 1.24864 |
| I regularly attended seminar on strategy to teach special need | 217 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.6636 | 1.28460 |

| | | | | | |
|---|-----|------|------|--------|---------|
| I modify my teaching to cater for learners with special needs | 217 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.7788 | 1.31477 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 217 | | | | |

Source: Field Data (2024)

Inferential Analysis

The correlation between of Extent of Inclusive Instruction and Teacher Training, correlation was found to be .923**. This suggests that there is a significant positive association between the degree of teacher training and the amount of inclusive learning that takes place. There is a correlation between increased levels of teacher training and a higher degree of inclusive education for kids who have special needs.

Table 4: Correlations

| | | extent of inclusive of learners with special needs | level of teacher training |
|--|---------------------|--|---------------------------|
| extent of inclusive of learners with special needs | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .923** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 217 | 217 |
| level of teacher training | Pearson Correlation | .923** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 217 | 217 |

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The study found that instructors emphasized the importance of interacting with students who have unique educational requirements. The teachers were reported to be helpful and invested in students' academic progress. Respondents also stated that teachers were adequately trained to teach learners with special needs. Class size and workload were manageable, creating a conducive environment for inclusive learning. Teachers were observed to prepare individual education programs for learners with special needs and incorporate ICT to enhance inclusive learning. Regular attendance at seminars and workshops on teaching strategies for learners with special needs was reported, and teachers were found to modify their teaching methods accordingly.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that instructors play a crucial role in inclusive learning. Teachers were found to stress the importance of interacting with students who have unique educational requirements, demonstrating their commitment to inclusive practices. The study also revealed that teachers were generally supportive and invested in the academic progress of all students, without bias. Adequate

teacher training and manageable class sizes and workloads contribute to effective teaching and inclusive learning environments. Teachers' preparation of individual education programs and utilization of ICT further enhance the inclusion of learners with special needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers play a crucial role in inclusive learning. The study recommended that instructors receive ongoing training and professional development to enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching learners with special needs. Training programs should focus on strategies and best practices for catering to diverse learning styles and addressing the specific needs of students with disabilities. Teachers should be supported and encouraged to provide individual education programs and modify their teaching methods accordingly.

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