

Implementation of Inclusive Education for Learners with Disabilities in Primary Schools in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

Children with disabilities encounter different forms of exclusion and are affected by them to varying degrees. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) condemn this. They instead demand inclusion which will recognise the full potential of the learner. Based on this therefore, teachers who are involved in the task of helping these learners achieve their goals in life are faced with some setbacks in this duty. This study explored the challenges of implementing inclusive education curriculum that caters for learners living with autism in a primary school in Nairobi County, Kenya. It adopted a qualitative research paradigm and specifically the phenomenological design. The study targeted teachers and pupils. The sample size of the study consisted of 12 teachers and 8 pupils. Interview and observation guides were used for data collection. The researchers transcribed the interviews, coded the data, categorised the data, derived themes from the categories, interrelated themes and interpreted the meaning of themes. The findings of the study revealed that teachers are faced with the challenges of broad curriculum, and lack of some educational resources to support the inclusive education curriculum. The study concluded that learners with autism in inclusive education need maximum attention. The study therefore recommended to the government to review the curriculum in order to meet the needs of these learners. Further, to provide the necessary educational resources needed to fully implement the curriculum.

Keywords: Implementation, inclusive education, curriculum, disability, autism, Nairobi, Kenya

1. Introduction

Inclusive education for learners with disabilities is an emergent phenomenon in the Kenyan education sector today. Teaching learners with disabilities can be fun, however, challenging. Education is the gateway to full participation in society. It is particularly important for children with disabilities who are often excluded. Following article 28 of the UN convention on the rights of the child, every child has the right to an education. Article 29 further states that education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures and the environment (UNICEF, 1989).

Many of the benefits of going to school accrue over the long run; securing a livelihood in adult life. Taking part at school is an important way for children with disabilities to correct misconceptions that prevent inclusion and when these children are able to attend school, parents and caregivers are able to find time for other activities including earning a living and resting. In principle, all children have the same right to education, but in practice, children with disabilities are disproportionately denied this right. In consequence, their ability to enjoy the full rights of citizenship and take up valued roles in society chiefly through gainful employment is undermined.

In order to achieve Education for All (EFA), learners with disabilities need to be included in schools because exclusion denies them the lifelong benefits of education which are; a better job, social and economic security, and opportunities for full participation in society. In contrast, investment in the education of children with disabilities can contribute to their future effectiveness as members of the labour force. Furthermore, in inclusive education, the families' vision of a typical life for their children is effected, learners with disabilities develop a positive understanding of themselves and others, make more friends, learn important academic skills and also learn at their own pace and style within a nurturing learning environment.

General education curriculum, which is inclusive in nature happens when children with and without disabilities participate and learn together in the same classes. For a long time, children with disabilities were educated in separate classes or in separate schools and people got the idea that special education meant separate education. Recently, it has been noted that when children are educated together, positive academic and social outcomes occur for all the children involved (UNICEF, 2013).

We can simply state that inclusion in education refers to educating learners with varying needs within the same context. In the inclusion model, learners with additional support needs; for example, learning difficulties or social, emotional or behavioural needs, spend most or all of their time with nondisabled learners (Cairns & McClatchey, 2013). They reiterate that this inclusion is different from integration where learners with disabilities may be in the same school with other learners but are educated in a separate unit or classroom, only interacting with other learners at social times.

The journey towards inclusive education has been problematic and slow in Africa. This is in contrary to the

Education for All (EFA) policy, which looks at education as an essential right that permits each person to receive instruction and to blossom socially. The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) recognized the plight of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and calls for inclusive practices. This is to ensure that these children are included in the education process and have access to school. This is because the right to an education is vital for the economic, social and cultural development of all societies.

According to UNICEF (2013), inclusive education entails: “providing meaningful learning opportunities to all students within the regular school system” (p. 29). Inclusive education requires a flexible approach to school organisation, curriculum development, and pupil assessment. Such flexibility would allow for the development of a more inclusive pedagogy, shifting the focus from teacher-centred to child-centred to embrace diverse learning styles. In support of this idea, Maguire (2013) states that to develop a greater sense of worth, children with disabilities need the opportunity to participate and contribute in all aspects of their lives. This is true because underestimation of the abilities of people with disabilities is a major obstacle to their inclusion.

UNESCO (1994) in its Salamanca statement believes and proclaims that: “children with special educational needs must have access to regular schools, which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs” (p. ix). Drawing from this premise, it is worth to note that the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) bear witness to a growing global movement dedicated to the inclusion of children with disabilities in community life. Kenya signed the Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education and re-affirmed its commitment to education for all (EFA). As a nation, Kenya has recognised the necessity and urgency of providing education for children, youth and adults within the regular education system (Mwangi, 2013). This calls for a need for access to inclusive education curriculum for learners living with autism.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a group of diverse development disorders that have a wide range of behavioural and communication difficulties with varying severity (Rapin, 1997). Landa (2007) looks at autism as “a neurodevelopmental disorder defined by impairments in social and communication development, accompanied by stereotyped patterns of behaviour and interest” (p. 16). Virginia Department of Education (2010) also views autism spectrum disorders as a group of complex neurological developmental disabilities with core features that include significant social and communication challenges and restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviour.

Symptoms of autism specifically language impairment are usually noticed between the ages of 18 and 30 months in the United States of America (USA) and other countries with quality autism programmes (Riccio, 2011). It is worth to mention that the actual cause of autism has not been certified by researchers. In trying to ascertain a dimension about the cause of autism, Walker et al. (2007) assert that the cycle of poverty, poor maternal health and poor child nutrition is believed to stunt cognitive development and lead to developmental disorders such as autism. Can they be right in their assertion? We may not wholly accept their assumption due to the fact that many autism learners in Kenya for example are not only from poor families. What about the USA with improved maternal health and child nutrition, why do they have autistic children?

Autism spectrum disorder, a complex lifelong neurological disorder knows no boundaries with regard to race, ethnicity, educational, religious, political and socio-economical background (Autism Society of America, 2009). An autistic learner has difficulty in the areas of social relationships, social communication and social understanding. This is due to a combination of factors such as genetic, prenatal and postnatal components of the child. Therefore, teaching an autistic learner in an inclusive classroom poses a lot of challenges to the teacher. The purpose of this study therefore was to explore the challenges teachers encounter in implementing inclusive education curriculum for learners living with autism in a primary school in Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Learners living with autism have difficulties in communication, social skills, repetitive behaviour, sensory integration and effective ways of learning (Mbaya & Omollo, 2014). As a result, it interferes with their normal life. For a long time, learners with disabilities were educated in separate classes or in separate schools. Recently, it has been noted that when children are educated together, positive academic and social outcomes occur for all the children involved (UNICEF, 2013).

The focus of inclusion for learners living with autism has shifted grounds. It has moved from concern with issues related to placement and resourcing to concern with access to general education curriculum. Unless challenged learners are provided with appropriate accommodations and adaptations to the curriculum, they cannot benefit from access (Wehmeyer, 2006).

Many studies have been done on autistic learners and their education. For instance, Riccio (2011) researched on autism in Kenya x-raying its social, educational and political perspective. The study revealed that there is lack of attention and importance placed on those living with autism. Accordingly, Matasio, Wanjiru, Entende and Mukhwana (2014) studied the challenges teachers were faced with in the academic assessment of autistic learners in a primary school in Nairobi, Kenya. Their study found that there were no assessment

guidelines for these learners. Despite these findings, none of the studies reviewed looked at the general implementation of inclusive education curriculum. It was against this backdrop that this study explored the challenges faced by teachers in implementing inclusive education curriculum with emphasis on learners living with autism in a primary school in Nairobi, County, Kenya.

1.2 Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are some of the challenges teachers experience in implementing inclusive education curriculum for learners living with autism in primary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya?
2. What are the practical solutions to these challenges?

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is beneficial to the Ministry of Education, school administration, teachers, pupils, parents, and other researchers. The findings will be an eye-opener to the Ministry of Education, especially, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD); the curriculum developers and policy makers. It will enable them to see the need of reviewing and improving the existing special needs and general education curricula and focus more attention to the challenged learners especially learners living with autism. It will also help them to consider allocating more funds on human and material resources for the effective implementation of general education curriculum. The study is significant to the school administration because it will help them to appreciate the work of teachers in teaching the autistic learners and provide the necessary educational resources for these teachers in order to help these learners achieve their potentials.

For the teachers, the study will help them to devise better ways of handling the autistic learners and create awareness to them on more commitment to their duties. The study is also beneficial to the autistic learners and all the pupils that study with the autistic learners. It will help them to understand that despite their differences academically, they are complementary. The study will therefore help them to appreciate each other's potentials and God's given gifts and relate freely with each other.

For the parents and caregivers of these learners with autism, the study is of great benefit to them because they will be free to go about their business with the hope that their wards are fully taken care of; socially and academically. Lastly, for the other researchers, they will see the need to research more on some aspects of the lacuna that this study may create. The study will complement existing studies and also contribute positively to knowledge and theory in the field of study.

1.4 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study covered the challenges that teachers encounter in the process of educating learners living with autism in an inclusive education curriculum. It was delimited to a primary school in Nairobi County, Kenya. It specifically delimited itself to teachers and what they do in the classroom. The justification for delimiting this study to teachers was due to the fact that this phenomenon of inclusive education is an emergent phenomenon in the education sector in Kenya. Therefore, the study explored the teachers' skills in implementing this curriculum.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

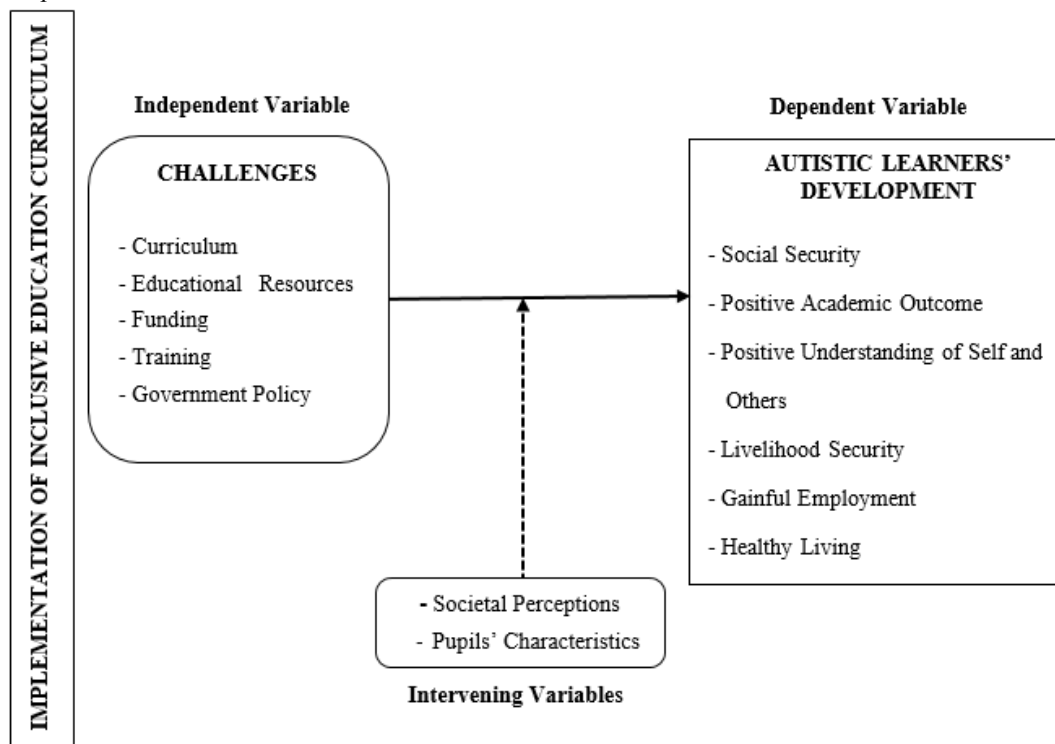


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Implementation of Inclusive Education Curriculum For Learners Living with Autism

2. Review of Related Literature

Education been the gateway to full participation in society is particularly important for children with disabilities, who are often excluded. Many of the benefits of going to school accrue over the long run; securing a livelihood in adult life, for example; but some are almost immediately evident. Taking part at school is an important way for children with disabilities to correct misconceptions that prevent inclusion. More so, when these children are able to attend school, parents and caregivers are able to find time for other activities including earning a living and resting.

Families of children with autism always pass through stress on daily basis especially here in Kenya where there are a lot of myths that surround the disability. Gona, Odera, Newton and Hartley (2010) studied the need to care for children with disabilities in Kilifi, Kenya. Their study disclosed that caregivers of children with autism are forced to face emotional stress, guilt, financial hardships, and disrupted family relationships. This is as a result of social isolation given to these families in the sense that one with autism is perceived to be possessed or cursed in the African context.

It will be naïve to conclude that their finding is an emergent phenomenon; reason being that in the Bible, disability is viewed as a disease and a curse. The commonest disabilities are deafness, dumbness, leprosy, paralysis and demonic possession and the New Testament links sin and disability (John 9:1-3 African Bible). Can God be the cause of disability? We may not delve into this now for there is need for inclusive education in a public school for the autistic child in order to relieve the burden of social seclusion.

While it is important to have a place for learners with autism to receive public education, the provision of productive and therapeutic environment conducive for teaching and learning cannot be over-stressed. According to Wendelborg and Tossebro (2011), integration into mainstream classrooms is beneficial to these learners with autism because it helps them to have access to heightened social environments. It also helps them to elevate their potential to learn on grade-level with their peers.

Their finding supports Brantlinger (1997) who posits that when children with autism are exposed to environments with children without disabilities, they are more likely to acquire social skills and participate in activities. This presently brings a big challenge to teachers who work with these learners living with autism because teachers are key elements in a child's learning environment. Therefore, it is important that they have a clear understanding of inclusive education and a strong commitment to teaching all children implementing the general education curriculum.

On the global level, Razali, Toran, Kamarazaman, Salleh and Yasin (2013) studied teachers' perceptions of

including children with autism in a preschool in Selangor, Malaysia. The study used structured interview to collect data from three pre-school teachers. The study revealed that the teachers were not prepared to teach children with autism in their classes. This is because they did not know the characteristics of autistic learners. The main challenge here is that the teachers had no proper training on inclusive education. The teachers focused more on self-injurious behaviour and relegated the ability to perform well academically to the background. Therefore, the current envisaged this obstacle and suggested in-service training for teachers so as to cater for the needs of the autistic learners.

On the regional level, in Ethiopia, Mitiku, Alemu and Mengsitu (2014) studied challenges and opportunities in implementing inclusive education. The study delimited itself to primary schools of North Gondar Zone. It was a quantitative study and descriptive survey was used in the design. Seventy one participants; teachers and students were involved in the study. Questionnaire, structured interview and observation schedule were used for data collection. The study found that lack of awareness of learners' disability, lack of commitment, and lack of collaboration of parents were the chief challenges teachers encounter in the implementation of inclusive education.

In Tanzania, Kilimo (2014) studied teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy towards inclusion of pupils with disabilities in primary schools in Dar es Salaam. The study adopted a quantitative paradigm. One hundred teachers from ten inclusive schools were participants of the study. Questionnaire was used to collect data. According to the study, among the challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive education was: difficulty in managing pupils with different disabilities in class. Others were: shortage of teaching and learning materials, lack of training, and poor working environment. The study therefore recommended that teachers in inclusive schools need preparation and workshops. This will make them become more used to working with children with disabilities in the classroom. The current study disclosed similar results despite making use of qualitative paradigm.

In Kenya, Eunice and Orodho (2014) examined the constraints hindering effective provision of inclusive education in public secondary schools in Rongo, Migori County. The study adopted a quantitative approach and 170 participants; teachers and students were involved in the study. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data. The study revealed that lack of physical and instructional facilities suitable for inclusive education, and lack of qualified teachers were some challenges in implementing the curriculum. The study recommends that the Government needs to fund schools properly and cater for the educational resources necessary for the full implementation of the inclusive education curriculum. Further, they should expose teachers to consistent staff development programmes in order to meet the needs of inclusive education curriculum. Despite focusing on secondary schools and delimiting itself on special needs learners in general, the findings were consistent with the current study.

On the other hand, Mutungi and Nderitu (2014) studied the perceptions of teachers on the effectiveness of inclusive education in primary schools in Yatta Division, Machakos County. The study employed a quantitative paradigm and specifically used the descriptive survey design. Ninety- six (96) head teachers and teachers were participants of the study. Questionnaires and interview schedule were used for data collection. The study disclosed some of the challenges that teachers are faced with in the implementation of inclusive education. Among the key challenges were: lack of knowledge of teachers, lack of teaching and learning materials, lack of adequate government funding, and high teacher to student ratio. The study therefore recommended in-service training of teachers, increase government funding of the schools, and development of a suitable curriculum as practical solutions to these challenges.

Deducing from the reviewed literature, the key challenges focused on the curriculum, educational resources, funding, and training. Adequate staff development, environment conducive for teaching and learning, and review of the general curriculum were the proposed practical solutions to these challenges. Most of the studies reviewed also adopted quantitative paradigm. This is why the current study cannot be downplayed because of its qualitative nature.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach. It specifically adopted a phenomenological design. Phenomenological studies examine human experiences through the descriptions provided by the people involved (Creswell, 2014). These experiences are called lived experiences. The goal of phenomenological studies is to describe the meaning that experiences hold for each subject and this type of research is used to study areas in which there is little knowledge (Donalek, 2004).

In phenomenological research, participants of the study are asked to describe their experiences as they perceive them. They may write about their experiences, but information is generally obtained through interviews. The researchers chose this design because they were trying to ascertain the conscious lived experiences of the participants of the study.

One primary school in Nairobi County was purposively sampled using criterion sampling technique. The

justification for this is that the school implements inclusive education curriculum. The target population of the study comprised all the teachers and autistic learners in the selected primary school. These individuals were relevant to the study because they are the ones that implement and consume the inclusive education curriculum. The study through snowball sampling technique sampled 12 teachers. The study also automatically included 8 autistic learners who had special needs in the selected school.

The instruments for data collection were interview guide and an observation guide consisting of two major questions. The reason for these instruments was to elicit a vivid picture of the participants' perspective on challenges of the implementation of inclusive education curriculum for learners with autism. Another reason was to satisfy the researchers' curiosity with regard to the problem under study.

The researchers had a face-face interview with the participants. They also keenly observed the activities of the autistic learners in the classroom. The questions of the interview were put in a neutral manner. The researchers were able to listen attentively to the participants' responses and asked follow-up questions and probes based on the responses. In analysing the data, the interviews were transcribed and manually coded. Codes were developed into categories, and then themes were identified from the categories based on the research questions of the study. The analyses were presented in diagrammatical and narrative forms.

The researchers ascertained trustworthiness in the entire research; that is, from the problem identification to the final report. The researchers had an in-depth observation of the phenomenon under study and had a rigorous literature search on the same. They adhered to academic honesty in the literature review and identified the gaps that the current study filled. For the interview guide, the researchers sought the assistance of experts in measurement and evaluation, and curriculum studies. They made constructive comments about items on the instrument and the researchers effected the changes. Later, the researchers subjected the instruments for pilot testing to participants similar to the sampled group.

During data collection, the researchers established a rapport with the participants. They told them that they needed to be frank and open in their contributions. Also, that anyone was free to refuse to participate in the study. After the data transcriptions, the researchers did inter coder reliability and this enabled the study to come up with significant and robust themes during the analysis. The researchers later sent the themes back to the participants for member checking; that is, to determine their accuracy.

The study was ethically considerate. The researchers got permission from the administration of the school in order to conduct the research. The researchers prepared informed consent forms, which the participants signed in order to freely and voluntarily accept to be part of the study. They also fully explained to the participants the nature of the research and assured them confidentiality. They used pseudonyms in the report and maintained maximum confidentiality of the participants.

4. Findings

The findings of the study were presented in accordance with the research questions. The study had two research questions. The study focused on the challenges that teachers encounter in the implementation of the inclusive education curriculum for learners living with autism. It also suggested some plausible solutions to the challenges in order to help the learners living with autism achieve their full potentials in life.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The study disclosed that there were 8 female teachers and 4 male teachers that participated in the study. Among the pupil participants, the study only focused on their gender. There were 6 female and 2 male pupils. With regard to age of the participants, 6 teachers were in the age bracket of forty to forty-nine years. Also, 4 teachers were above fifty years. However, two teachers fell in the age group of twenty to twenty-nine years old. This could probably imply that young people detest teaching as a profession or that young teachers are not being employed by the TSC for primary schools.

Examining the academic qualifications of the teachers, the teachers were trained and their qualifications ranged from Diploma, Bachelors' and Masters Degrees. This shows that teachers in this school were academically suitable to teach the pupils. The teachers also have varied areas of specialization such as early childhood education, special needs education, regular classroom teaching. This shows that the school has teachers in the area of inclusive education curriculum. The findings of the study also revealed that, most of the teachers have teaching experience of twenty to twenty nine years. This can be probably attributed to the fact that most of them (10) were forty years of age and above.

4.2 Challenges Teachers Experience in Implementing the Inclusive Education Curriculum for Learners Living with Autism

Some of the identified challenges that teachers encounter in implementing inclusive education curriculum for learners living with autism are diagrammatically represented in figure 2 as follows:

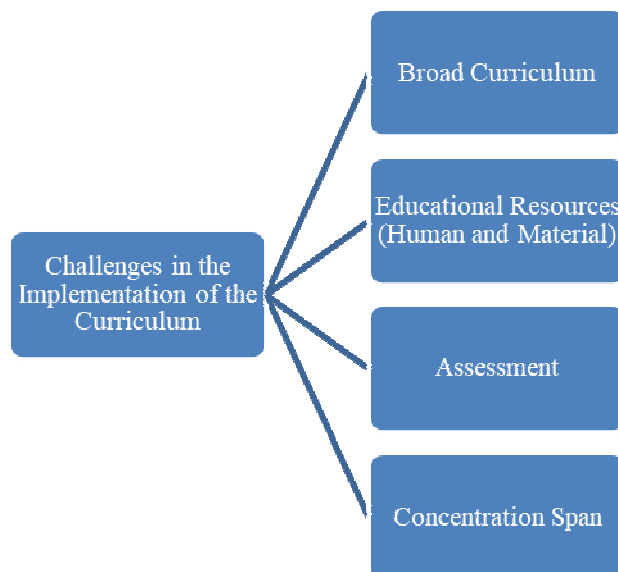


Figure 2. Challenges in the Implementation of the Curriculum for Learners living with Autism

Figure 2 presents the challenges teachers encounter in implementing inclusive education curriculum for learners living with autism in the selected primary school. It was found that the content of the curriculum is so wide and that the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) did not consider learners living with autism in developing the general education curriculum. Based on this assertion, a participant narrated:

You know that autistic learners have communication problems. Therefore, they need to be given maximum attention. However, the curriculum is too wide that if you are committed in helping these learners to learn at the same pace, you might not cover the syllabus. (Teacher 3, Interview, September 4, 2017)

Educational resources; human and material, was another challenge teachers encounter in the implementation of this curriculum. The study revealed that there were few teachers compared to the workload and the effectiveness of the work. Furthermore, that most teachers find it difficult participate in in-service training in order to be fully equipped in paying proper attention to these learners with autism. More so, there were inadequate educational facilities such as classrooms, libraries, textbooks, writing materials, just to mention a few. Drawing from this, a participant expressed:

Many of us find it difficult to participate in in-service training due to lack of opportunities, and due to the fact that we are very busy here. Availability of basic instructional materials is another challenge that we encounter in effectively doing our work. (Teacher 7, Interview, September 6, 2017)

With regard to concentration span, it was found that learners living with autism had short concentration span due to their cognitive, communication and behavioural difficulties. This makes them to get bored in class easily and interrupt the class. The researchers keenly observed these learners in their classes. They discovered that it was so difficult for these learners to stay up to 10 minutes without distraction.

It was also found that another main challenge the teachers are faced with in implementing the inclusive education curriculum was the rigidity of the assessment procedures. Learners living with autism were subjected to sit for the same examinations with learners living without autism. A participant exclaimed: “For an autistic child to do up to thirty examination questions in social studies for example is not good for him or her. I believe there should be a certain curriculum for these learners because the regular curriculum is too hard for them” (Teacher 12, Interview, September 7, 2017).

4.3 Practical Solutions to the Challenges

Figure 3 shows the practical solutions to the challenges. These solutions according to the study are so relevant that they cannot be downplayed. Therefore, for the Government of Kenya to meet the needs of learners living with autism, it should pay attention to these plausible solutions.

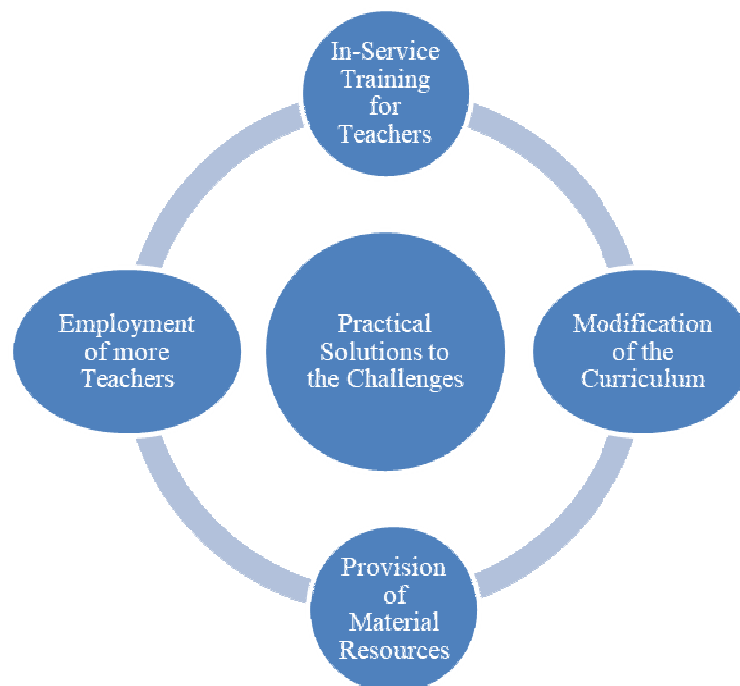


Figure 3. Practical Solutions to the Challenges in the Implementation of the Curriculum for Learners living with Autism

With regard to in-service training for teachers, the study revealed that teachers need to avail themselves for seminars and workshops so as to be fully equipped with inclusive education skills. This skill comprised skill of individualized attention to learners who have special needs. The study also found that there was a need to employ more teachers so as to reduce the workload and maintain an effective teacher-learner ratio. In buttressing this point, a participant expressed:

We need more specialised teachers in special needs to cater for these learners. Therefore, the government can either give us opportunity for staff development through workshops and conferences, or employ more teachers to boost the workforce in the school. (Teacher 1, Interview, September 4, 2017)

It was also disclosed that the need for the provision of adequate material resources should not be over-emphasised. This is because learners living with autism needed to be extra-motivated to concentrate in class. Lastly, the study brought into limelight the need for the ministry of education through the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) to adapt the curriculum for learners living with autism. In support of this interpretation, a participant affirmed:

Teaching autistic learners in an inclusive education is not easy at all. The curriculum needs to be modified in order to accommodate these learners. The provision of suitable instructional aids for these learners will help them to concentrate in class. (Teacher 10, Interview, September 7, 2017)

4.4 Discussion of the Findings

In implementing the inclusive education curriculum in the selected primary school, teachers encounter a lot of challenges. Among them were broad curriculum, lack or inadequate educational resources, rigid assessment and problems of low concentration span of learners. Some of these challenges especially, the curriculum and educational resources were consistent with the study of Matasio (2011). The study recommended that the government should pay specific attention to these challenges in order to meet the needs of the learners.

Despite the fact that learners with disabilities are capable to learn the inclusive education curriculum (King-Sears, 2008), there is need for us to consider the content because of the low concentration span of these learners with autism. Learners with autism need not to be subjected to the whole content of the inclusive education curriculum. The important topics that will help them to develop their communication skills and social integration need to be explored.

Dedicated, loving and caring teachers who are up-to-date with regard to the skills of inclusive education curriculum implementation is the best option with regard to the human resources required in the school of study. This is because, not every teacher is able to take care of every learner in an inclusive class. This is because it takes a lot of patience to work with learners living with autism. Also, the use of varied instructional materials

helps these learners to retain their visual motivation. It is only a skilled teacher with regard to inclusive education curriculum that is able to sustain this.

Matasio, Wanjiru, Entende and Mukhwana (2014) in explaining curriculum as one of the challenges faced by teachers in the academic assessments of learners living with autism expressed that there is lack of assessment guidelines for learners with autism and in examinations; an extra hour is added to them. This actually contradicts the findings of the current study that looks at assessment as rigid. Reason being that since there is no assessment guideline and an extra hour is usually given to the learners with autism during assessment, it simply implies that the assessors are flexible enough. However, their study agrees with the current study that the examination content was too much for learners living with autism. In essence, the inclusive education curriculum is too hard for them. With this, it is justifiable to conclude that the academic performance of learners living with autism always lowers the mean grade of the school. This is actually a big challenge since most schools in Kenya look for high grades in order to attract recognition, respect, and high enrolment rate.

Practically, the study proposed the modification of the curriculum, provision of material resources, employment of more teachers, and in-service training for teachers as the solution to these challenges. Learners with autism who have communication and behavioural difficulties, do they really need to be subjected to the curriculum used by learners living without autism? Albeit promoting inclusive education curriculum for all learners, the current study revealed that there is need to modify this curriculum for learners living with autism.

Curriculum modification involves change to a range of educational components in a curriculum; such as content knowledge, the method of instruction, and student's learning outcomes, through the alteration of materials and programmes (Okumbe & Tsheko, n.d.). According to the current study, the inclusive education curriculum is a big challenge to these learners due to its scope. The question is; what is the way forward? It is of paramount importance to meet the needs of these learners and the best way to meet their needs is by being with them in their level as we teach them. This can be practically done by exploring different teaching learning strategies, simplifying concepts or reading levels. Also, by teaching different sets of knowledge and skills they need, and setting up specific objectives and examples of modifications to instructional methods, including reducing distractions, altering the pace of lessons, presenting smaller amounts of work, clarifying directions, and changing input and response modes. With this, they will feel more at home to learn and benefit from the inclusive education curriculum in which they are subjected to. In support of this assertion, Okumbe and Tsheko (n.d.) concluded that curriculum modification is necessary for learners with special needs even when an inclusive curriculum is being followed.

Material resources that could enhance the full implementation of the inclusive education curriculum for learners living with autism cannot be over-stressed. The availability of spacious and well ventilated and furnished classrooms, varieties of instructional materials, good library and Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) laboratory, just to mention a few would increase the motivation of learners with autism and their teachers. The employment of more able and dedicated teachers would also benefit the effective implementation of the curriculum.

Some studies have acknowledged that the rapid expansion of schools through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and the constant exit of teachers from the teaching profession for greener pastures have led to the shortage of teachers (MoEST, 2005). Despite this, in order to fulfil the goals of Education for All (EFA), employment of more teachers by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) to cater for the needs of learners especially those with special needs calls for an urgent attention. Murunga, Kilaha and Wanyonyi (2013) agreed with this by emphasizing that it is worthwhile to note that one of the challenges in the implementation of EFA in Kenya is shortage of teachers. Therefore, more teachers will help in the work of giving maximum attention to learners living with autism and this would increase their learning effectiveness.

Lastly, it is quite unfortunate that in our today's educational sector, some teachers remain with the old skills they acquired in college or during their studies. Many a time, they find it difficult to update to new knowledge and skills with regard to teaching and learning. Worst still is in this era of inclusive education curriculum whereby the challenged and the non-challenged learners study in the same class. This actually calls for more in-service training for teachers in order to acquire the technical know-how on their *modus operandi* in the classroom. It is always a challenge when for example a learner with autism is not well catered for by his or her teacher; simply because the teacher does not know what to do in that difficult situation.

In-service training is the answer to this challenge because it would enable the teacher to be abreast with the new ways of working with all learners in his or her classroom. Factoran (2009) affirmed this idea by stating that some of the values of in-service training to teachers in the school system are to promote the continuous improvement of the total professional staff of the school system. Others are; to eliminate deficiencies in the background preparation of teachers, and to keep the teacher abreast of new knowledge and to release creative activities. Deducing from the current study, teachers in inclusive education curriculum would be more effective if given the opportunity for in-service training on how to handle both learners with and without autism.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Education is the bedrock of development in any nation and sustainable educational development is the foundation and building blocks for sustainable socioeconomic development (Osuji, 2011). With regard to this statement therefore, the current study concludes that implementing the inclusive education curriculum for learners with autism is the key to sustaining their freedom of association and pursuit of happiness in life. This is due to the fact that children have the right to be with other children of their own age. Their togetherness creates the opportunity to understand each other and realise how unique and complementary each person is.

The major finding of this study indicates that teachers have a herculean task in implementing the inclusive education curriculum. This is because of the special needs of the learners living with autism. Based on this, the study therefore makes the following recommendations:

1. The government should pump in more money in educational resources for effective implementation of EFA in all primary schools in Kenya that promote inclusive education.
2. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should review the curriculum of inclusive education so as to meet the needs of learners living with disability especially autistic learners.
3. Teachers need to avail themselves for in-service training in order to meet with the demands of inclusive education. Teacher trainees should endeavour to look into the areas of special needs education and inclusive education in order to develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills of giving a loving and tender touch to learners living with autism.

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