Analysis of the Impediments influencing the Management of Special Needs Education in Inclusive Settings in Primary Schools in Embu County, Kenya.

Dr. Enock Gongera [1*] Wanjiru J. J. Mugai [2] Oddillia Nabwire Okoth [3]

1.   Dean Post Graduate Studies, Mount Kenya University, P.O. BOX 342-00100 Thika Main Campus, Kenya

2.   Mount Kenya University, P.O. BOX 342-00100 Thika Main Campus, Kenya

3.   School of Business and Public Management, Mount Kenya University
P.O. BOX 42702-80100 Mombasa Coast Center, Kenya

*gongerageorge@gmail.com

Abstract

In recent times there has been a growing support of inclusive education worldwide, formation of numerous commissions, change of policies and education systems, support from NGO's and group activists all advocating for better lives for persons with special needs, (PWSN) however it has been observed that the PWSN still face stigmatization, exclusion/seclusion from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political and cultural lives of their communities. This study sought to analyze the impediments influencing the management of special needs education in inclusive settings in primary schools and to make an assessment of the situation on the ground with a view to making suggestions and recommendations on how to overcome the reasons for effective and efficient management of inclusion so that the persons with special needs can access all the essentials of life and so live a meaningful life. The study adopted a survey design. This study was conducted in Upper Embu County which is made up of three districts, Embu West, East and Embu North. The target population was a total of 180 respondents from 60 schools practicing inclusion. The study collected both primary and secondary data. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analysis of data and for descriptive analysis, percentage and frequency distributions were used. The study concluded that inclusive education is available. Disagreement on whether to practice inclusion or not featured as factors. Causes of retardation for effective management of special needs education in inclusive settings in primary schools of Embu County were diverse, covering all the aspects of learning from labeling, cultural factors, policy issues, curriculum, staffing, learning and teaching resources, the children themselves, attitudes, professional and parental disagreement among others. The study also concluded that although the schools in Embu County have physical and human resources, the resources do not respond and match to the needs of special needs education. The MOEST to come up with a national policy on implementation of IE which will address all the noted difficulties.

Keywords: Special Needs Education, Inclusion, Management.

1.   Introduction

The development of Special Needs Education (SNE) has evolved over the years, (Ndurumo, 1993). It ran from the first period which was known as the "Neglect period in the 17th century. Others are the Seclusion and private period followed by the Private period then "Institutionalization period. Normalization started in 1960s and later "Integration/mainstreaming were introduced. Currently special needs education is expected to be provided in inclusive settings. Despite the introduction and support of inclusion, worldwide and in Kenya in particular, formation of numerous commissions, change of policies and education systems, support from NGOs and group activists all advocating for better lives for persons with special needs, it has been observed that PWSN still face stigmatization, exclusion from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political and cultural lives of their communities. Yet inclusive education was recommended to be practiced in all schools so that issues such as seclusion, stigmatization, and easy accessibility to school could be attained.

1.1 Special Needs Education (SNE)

This is a type of education which provides appropriate modification in curricula, teaching methods, educational strategies, educational methods, medium of communication and the learning environment, KISE (2007). The modifications are meant to meet the special educational needs of individuals. SNE is learner –centered.

1.2 Inclusive Setting

This is a situation where all learners including those with special needs and disabilities participate are managed together in all activities in a community or any formal or in formal setting. These learners are recognized and their needs addressed as much as possible. They attend the nearest school in the neighborhood. An inclusive setting is a place such as a school, college, university or institution of learning where children of all abilities learn together. The practice of adjusting everything in the environment so that everybody can participate in all social activities is known as inclusion.

1.3 Principles for Successful Inclusive Schools

There are 12 principles that are vital to the success of all inclusive schools. These are; a school vision, leadership and management, high standards, sense of community, array of services, flexible learning environment to meet student needs, research-based strategies, collaboration and cooperation, changing roles and responsibility, access and partnership with parents, (KISE, 2009). For the success of inclusive schools the twelve principles must be used as the guiding tools.

1.4 Implementation of Inclusion for Better Management

While inclusion may have positive effects for teachers, parents and all children, it must be done effectively. If it is to achieve its objective and if it is to be implemented in a truly responsible manner, then the skills of management and leadership need to be exercised. Some of these skills are; planning, controlling, directing, staffing, delegating, motivating, organizing of the content, teaching and learning aids and preparation among others are paramount. This predation must include all members of the educational community. Here, training must include preparation, knowledge of specific disabilities, encouragement of appropriate attitudes, legal and ethical issues, collaboration and methods of friendship development, specific preparation and training is also necessary for teachers and administrators in assessment, advanced collaboration skills, effective practices for direct instruction and service delivery, transition, and the evaluation of educational outcomes, Ogot (2004). In this way, the goals for inclusion and their management will be realized. Parents must never be left behind. There has to be coordination and collaboration/networking of all stakeholders who assist in the running of inclusive schools, CWSN, Lombard (1994). Effective implementation of special needs education is based on a number of recommendations and in various education Commission reports, National Development Plans and Government sessional papers such as the Ominde report of 1964, the Gachathi report of 1976, Kamunge report of 1988, National development papers among others.

2. Overview of Inclusion and Special Needs Education

According to Ngugi and Kimanthi (2007), Inclusion is a philosophy which focuses on process of adjusting the home, the school and society so that all individuals regardless of their differences can have the opportunity to interact, play, learn, work , experience the feeling of belonging and develop in accordance with their potentials.

Inclusion period was thought of after the international year of the disabled in 1981. One reason was because of dissatisfaction of parents and the persons with disabilities themselves over, mistreatment, segregation and mismanagement in special schools and small homes as mentioned earlier on. Inclusion also means recognizing individual differences, thereby enabling those individuals obtain a good quality of life in their natural environment, EENT, (2004 Atlas 2006).   Inclusion in education is referred to as *Inclusive Education (IE)* and it is offered in places or environments called inclusive settings.

 According to UNESCO (1997), IE is the process of addressing the learner's needs within the mainstream of education using all available resources, thus creating opportunities for learning and preparing them for life. Any discussion about the explanation and management of IE needs to use the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, as a reference point, UNESCO (2009). The statement re-affirms the rights to education of every individual as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and renew the pledge made by the world community at the 1990 World Conference on Education for *All (EFA),* to ensure the right for all, regardless of individual differences.

Schools are therefore inclusive when they are working towards full participation, community involvement and equality through, respect for differences, respect for different learning styles and variations in methods, open and flexible curricular and welcoming each and every child. Today IE is a popular concept in educational discourse and disability movement. Embu County started special needs education in inclusive settings in 2003 and today there are about 60 schools practising inclusion with 400 learners with special needs enrolled in those schools. Majority of those enrolled are those with visual, hearing impairments, leaning disabilities, physical handicaps, gifted and talented and health problems. The mentally challenged and others with neurological disorders are still in special schools or special units undergoing integration programmes. To enhance full

participation of IE the government gave support grants to all special programmes and event to regular primary schools for the improvement special needs education. Later an additional grant of KSh. 2000 per child was given to support CWSN in regular schools and those enrolled in special schools and units. In 2005, another grant was released to all primary schools in Kenya to make school environment disability friendly.

The Ministry of Education reports that the policy of inclusion and integration is still being worked out for proper implementation so as to reach the children with special needs estimated to be 750,000 of school going age. Even though, the population of CWSN is not high, out of this figure of 750,000 children identified by 2001, it is only an estimated number of 90,000 who have been assessed, and out of this, only 26,000 are currently enrolled in special education programmes. This implies that over 70 percent of CWD are at home, (MoEST 2004). Most children with special needs go to school when they are over 8 years and they become adults before they complete school. A special policy consideration is required to cater for the schooling needs of CWSD, such as the entry age, the type of examination procedures, the acceleration methods, and the trainings to offer to the teachers who would teach the gifted and talented learners among others.

2.1 Persons with Special Needs

Persons with special needs (PWSD) are those children who are vulnerable to discrimination, marginalization, rejection, isolation, abuse and exclusion to education, economic gains, social activities, Mwaura and Wanyera (2007). They are children with some form of differences or difficulties either mentally, physically, emotionally or health related problems and the vulnerable groups or those living under especially difficult circumstances. In another way of saying it, is "all children who are experiencing barriers to learning and are directly or indirectly excluded from or denied the chance to optimally participate in the learning activities which take place in a formal, non-formal or informal setting".

2.2 Management / Leadership in an Inclusive Setting

 Management is defined by Nyongesa, (2007), as the utilization of physical and human resources through co-operative efforts. Management is a complex and demanding activity. It is also viewed as an art of getting things done through other people to accomplish set goals, KCA (2010). The headteacher who is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has to utilize, organize, plan, command, control, motivate and forecast all the resources at his disposal in order to manage the school. This study views management as a process of guiding, caring, teaching, training, mentoring, planning, controlling, monitoring and evaluating among many other activities and roles performed by school managers while managing special needs education in an inclusive setting. **Leadership** on the other hand is the process of directing the behaviour of another person or persons towards the accomplishment of some objective. Management, administration and leadership have a lot of relationship although at times there is a very thin line in terms of their differences.
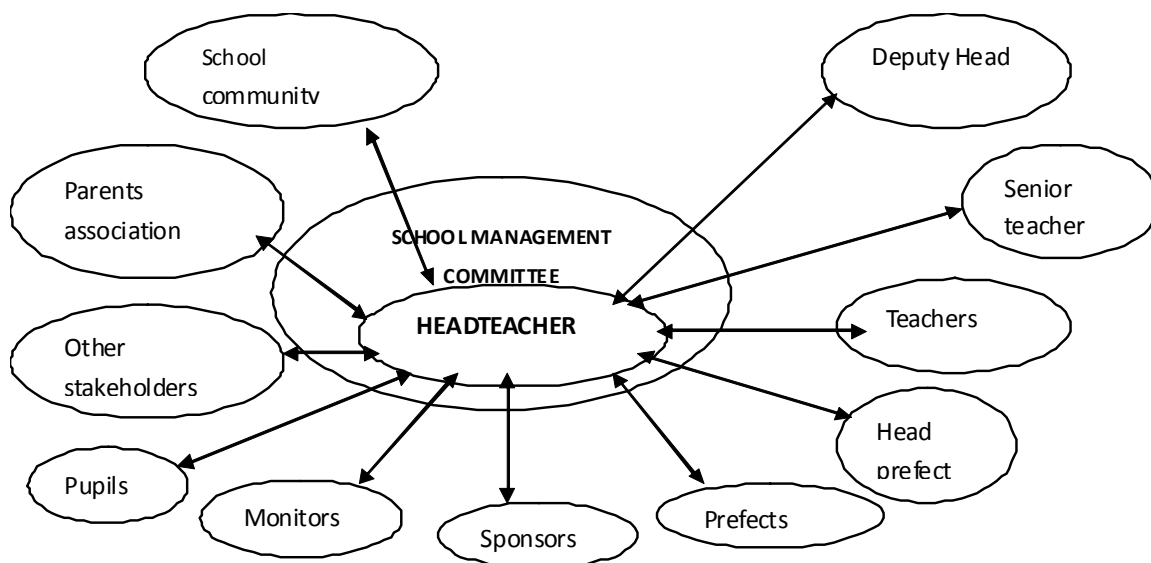
2.2.1 The Headteacher and School Managers

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a school is the principal or the headteacher. The success or failure of any school depends on how effective the Headteacher (HT) is, as an administrator / manager leader. Mbiti (1984) asserts that many teachers have and will be given headship without any formal preparation for it and this is the beginning of problems. The H/Ts office is the center nerve of the whole school   and the community surrounding the school.

 When a HT is picked to head a school he/ she finds him / herself in a different, world altogether with new responsibilities, new commitments, new problems, and in most cases, less free time. He must realize that his major task is to make the school purpose clear to everyone, to see that the necessary equipment and monetary resources are available for school use, and to motivate his staff, the pupils and the parents to produce a lively school spirit as well as excellence in work. . He / she has to be clear or familiar with the philosophy of inclusion, special needs education, and management of special needs education, their goals, and therefore use the best styles of leadership in order to achieve the goals of inclusion.

 For the headteacher to succeed in management and for a school to exist and remain functional, several key players (stakeholders) must play their roles in their different capacities.

Figure 2.1. Summary of School Managers

Each of the stake holders has a particular role to play and the head teacher has to coordinate, supervise, delegate, control, motivate, plan alongside others for the success of the management of inclusion.

2.2.2 School Management of Special Needs Education and the Community

In school management, existence of smooth relationship with the community is important since the school must serve the needs of the community within which it is located. It has to be sensitive to the culture and ethics of the community.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The study reviewed some theories on child's growth and development in relation to environment in which she / he is brought up in, and how it can influence the child. These are medical model and social model of disability, summarized and compared a number of these as follows: Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) medical model, social constructionist version (US), social model version (UK).

2.3.1'Social Model'

The Social Model redefines perceptions of disabled people by reframing disabilities as outcomes of interaction - as a grouped entity (Barnes et al, 1999). It considers disability as intrinsically connected to people and their life choices. To contemplate disability is to consider disabled people not their condition as the primary concern.

2.3.2 The Social Constructionist View on Special Needs

The 'Social constructionist Model' draws its base from Uries work (1992) which is one of the most recent theories. He argued that the child is not the problem, but the environment which needs to be adjusted, give equal opportunities to all children, in order not to frustrate the child with diversities. Frustrated children may have behaviour problems and this can influence management of inclusive education.

2.4 Theories of Administration, Leadership and Management

Different leadership styles posit differed effects on the group. Whereas autocratic leadership style is a source of hostility as members get degraded; the participatory style creates an involvement where every member of the school is able to participate effectively in goal achievement. The authoritative (autocratic) leadership has all authority centered on the leader and decisions are enforced by use of rewards and fear of punishment. This type of management is very authoritative and actively exploits subordinates using fear and threats. The democratic leader is a contrast of the autocratic leadership style and the leader takes into consideration the wishes and suggestions of members as well as those of the leader. For effective management of special, needs education in inclusive settings, the leader would therefore seek opinions of the teachers, parents, students, and the community, well-wishers and

other friends. Laisser- faire leadership is still a departure from autocratic leadership as it simply means 'let them do'. Here the leader exercises very little control or influence over the group and may even fail to give direction.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

This was a descriptive study using a survey design which looked at describing behaviours, attitudes, views, opinions, school functions or activities of inclusive schools.

3.2   Research sample and Sampling design

This study was conducted in Embu County which is made up of three districts. 60 schools practicing inclusive education were considered. This brought a total of 180 respondents from 60 schools practising inclusion. This study adopted purposive sampling technique. Simple random sampling was used to select three schools to be used for pilot study.

3.3   Data processing and analysis

This study employed two types of tools; these were questionnaires and naturalistic observation for the three groups of subjects. Collected data were analyzed using SPSS, 17.0 as the main statistical package that helped to draw conclusions using inferential statistics and measures of dispersion.

3.4 Validity

Instrument (questionnaire) used for the study were examined by the study supervisor who is an expert and an authority in the area of research. The study conducted a pilot study.   The pilot study comprised of 10 schools practicing inclusion.

3.5 Reliability

To ensure reliability of the instruments, the study considered the consistency with which the questions generated responses. This was established at the pilot testing level, where the flow of questions was analyzed.

3.6   Ethical Considerations

Respondents should not be harmed mentally, psychologically, physically, emotionally, or morally. They have right to privacy should be respected and protected. Researcher's integrity and honesty is paramount. There should be no deception.

4.   Findings

The study target population was 180 respondents from 180 schools practicing inclusion. The gender of the respondents was 57.8% (77) were males while 42.1% (56) were female. According to findings the majority of the respondents were aged over 38 years of which only 21% were trained in Special Needs Education while the majority 79% is not. The first objective of the study was to establish how the curriculum implementation in terms of, its content, teaching strategies, examination methods, teaching techniques, resources, and school environmental factors affect the management of special education in primary schools. From these study findings although the headteachers and contact teachers were relatively well trained in special needs, they were too few to make an impact in the management of special needs education in inclusive settings in primary schools in Embu County. From these study findings the headteachers were not qualified in educational administration and management. The study finds out that while there is no correlation between the genders of the school headteacher and management of special needs education there is however evidence to suggest that the best contact teachers were female.

The second one was to analyze how the government policies and legislation affect the management of special needs education in inclusive settings in primary schools. To find out how the social cultural factors, attitudes, parental and community involvement affect the management of Inclusive Education. These findings indicate that the level of support for inclusion in Embu County is very low and that the school environmental factors affect the management of special needs education in inclusive settings in primary schools. There is no clear government policy on the administration and management of special needs education in inclusive settings in Embu County. The findings indicate that there is lack of support especially through funding and from the education officials on the ground.

Third objective was to identify the problems faced by school managers in the management of special needs education in inclusive settings in primary schools in Embu County. This study, while analyzing the data found out that the most serious causes of poor management in inclusive settings were lack of support followed by parent's ignorance of inclusive philosophy, disagreement of parents and professionals. Lack of resources was

also ranked highly followed by funding and training. The least variables as causes of poor management were curriculum issues poor facilities, and lack of policy. From these study findings the main causes of poor management are lack of support, parent's ignorance, lack of resources, funding and training of teachers.

The fourth objective was to provide solutions. Based on the research findings the following solutions were provided; Government to provide comprehensive administrative policy on the management of special needs education in inclusive settings in Embu County primary schools. Stakeholders to develop attitude change toward special needs individuals and the concept of inclusion and to have value of the CWSN and their education. Sponsors (both government and private) to factor in funding for inclusion. Civic education to be provided to dispel misunderstandings about special needs education and the philosophy of inclusion.

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the findings, it is concluded that Inclusion is available but is a challenge in Embu County. Inclusion is diverse covering all the aspects of learning from curriculum, staffing learning and teaching resources assessment and evaluation procedures. The study concludes that although the schools in Embu County have physical and human resources, the resources do not respond and match up to the needs of special needs individuals so as to provide Inclusive education. Even the teachers who are not trained in special needs education are expected to provide for SNE. Generally the schools lack capacity in offering skills that are needed by learners with special needs. Despite the presence of some trained teachers, the institutions lack capacity due to the nature of school environment which is not disability friendly and inadequate staff. In this study, while analyzing the data it was found that the most serious challenge was lack of support, followed by parent's ignorance of inclusion, Lack of resources was also ranked highly followed by funding, training in management of headteachers and staffing, next key variable as a cause of retardation was curriculum management, negative attitudes, and poor facilities. The least ranked challenge was policy issues.

5.2 Recommendations

From the foregoing, it can be said that Inclusion is being implemented in primary schools in Embu County while assisted by donors or sponsors government and the parents of given schools. However, it has been noted that it is greatly affected by lack of policy framework, inadequate and outdated structures, lack of cooperation and collaboration between sponsor and the school. Misunderstanding of the philosophy of inclusion, disagreement of parents needs of their children and those of helping professionals. The issue of cultural factors has appeared quietly in this. Embu County may have lost its culture. Because government has a training policy and a training institute (KISE), there is need for the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Science and Technology to come up with a national policy on implementation of IE. Since all teachers are employed by the government. All Teacher training Colleges (TTCs) should incorporate more special needs education in their curriculum at present it is only one or two introductory units and especially on inclusive education.

The study also recommends that the school management committees, Board of governors and principals invest more in new facilities and equipment,(for instance talking computers for those with blindness) which meet the needs of learners with special needs especially the design of school buildings and general school environment. Staff should be developed through provision of regular in-service training in order to keep abreast with trends in Inclusive education.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Study

Following the findings of the study, recommendations for further studies have been deemed necessary. The areas for further study are as follows:

Further study may be extended to other levels of training other than the primary school level. This could be in the secondary schools and the higher level of learning such as Tertiary institutions and Universities since they are also inclusive settings.

A similar study can be conducted in other counties in the country in order to establish if the findings can be generalized. This will also reveal if the causes retarding the management of special needs education are localized within Embu County or are general.

Due to numerous reasons that have emerged from the present study, a study should be conducted to investigate the causes that may be causing poor management of special needs education in Embu County.

A further study to be conducted on what can be done so as to harmonize the needs and desires of parents and those of different professionals who assist CWSN so as to come up with unified system of helping the children with special needs in inclusive settings.

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