

## **Influence of Teacher Attitude on Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy in Public Primary Schools in Kitale Town, Kenya**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The intent of this study was to find out the influence of teacher attitude on effective implementation of inclusive education policy in public primary schools in Kitale Town, Kenya. The study found teacher attitude had a significant influence on the effective implementation of inclusive education policy. Inclusive education is a form of education wherein all students including special needs (SN) learners attend and are received by their neighbourhood schools in age-appropriate regular classes and are supported to learn to participate and contribute in all views of life at school. Neighbourhood public schools being at the heart of our communities are essential for the quality inclusive education system. The research design used for the study was descriptive. Interview schedules, questionnaires, and observation checklists were employed in data collection. The target population was 36 headteachers in the public primary schools in the town and 50 special needs teachers. The sample size was 76 respondents who were selected using purposive and simple random sampling. The validity of data collection tools was determined through pilot study and assistance from supervisors. Reliability was tested using the test-retest method, whereby a value of .92 was obtained. Hypotheses were examined using regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The study recommends that the TSC consider teachers handling special needs learners in inclusive scopes for special duty allowances that are being given to their counterparts working in special schools and the curriculum to be assessed to enhance effective implementation of inclusive education.

**Key Terms:** Teacher attitudes, inclusive education, implementation, public primary schools.

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## Introduction

Inclusive education touches on the removal of all barriers to learning. It seeks to enhance the participation of all learners who are vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation to all school activities. It is a strategy designed to facilitate learning success for all children. Inclusive education deals with the common goals of overcoming and decreasing all forms of exclusion to education, at least at the elementary stage, and enhancing participation, access, and learning success in quality basic education for all. Education for people with special needs has been on the minds of teachers, educators, philosophers and leaders in the society from time immemorial. Throughout the years, various forms of provision of education for people with special needs have evolved. Before the 17th century, people with disabilities all over the world were considered socially and physically less capable (Randiki, 2002).

In many countries around the world, Inclusive Education has been supported to prohibit discrimination in education under the human rights law (Gallagher, 2003). In the United State of America, about 96 per cent of children with disabilities are currently educated within conventional schools, and almost half spend most of their school day in general inclusive classrooms instead of being withdrawn for segregated lessons (United States Department of Education, 2007). This picture shows a continuous increase in the number of children with Special Educational Needs being admitted in mainstream settings over the past twenty years.□

It is a matter of heavy concern that children with disabilities on the African continent face roadblocks in the education system for a multitude of reasons. In Africa, inclusive education is still not keeping up with rapid world changes in the area of special education. Scanty literature exists on special education services in developing countries (Kiarie,

2006; Mutua & Dimitrov, 2001). Nigeria, the most heavily populated country in Africa, with a population of over 140 million of which 10% are disabled people, has only hundred and thirty facilities to take care of learners with special needs (UNESCO, 1991). However, despite this remarkable effort to address the challenges of children with special needs, numerous school-based factors including poor organisation, poor financing and little emphasis on rural education.

In the context of South Africa, this has led to a massive exclusion of disabled children from education (Department of Education, 2011). In spite of the development of an inclusive education policy to address this exclusion, one of the issues that hinder progress is the lack of teacher skills in adjusting the curriculum to meet a variety of learning needs (Chataika, Mckenzie, Swart & Lyner-Cleophas, 2012). In regards to the Republic of South Africa Act (1996), it is said that everyone has a right to basic education. The state may also not discriminate against anyone on one or more grounds, including disability.□

Uganda works in line with the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which advocates for governments to recognise the rights of People with Disabilities (PWDs) to provide education without discrimination (UNESCO, 2003). In Uganda, the Universal Primary Education (UPE) provides basic education to all learners and sees to it that education is affordable to all Ugandan children since 1997 (Mwaura, 2002).

Inclusive schools respond and identify to the diverse needs of learners with special needs and accommodates instructional procedures ensures quality education to all learners through; organisational arrangements, appropriate curricula, teaching strategies, resource use and establishing partnerships with communities. Inclusive

schools adopt the belief that wherever possible, all children should learn together regardless of differences; that all children can achieve and learn their potential; and that the continuum of students' needs should be matched by a continuum of programs, support and services. All students, regardless of their ability or disability, benefit from schools adopting inclusive practices (GoK, 2003).

Sessional Paper 1 (2005) on Policy Framework for Education Training and Research advocates for universal access to basic education as prescribed in the UN Millennium Development Goals and the EFA initiatives. It also recognises education as key to the protection and development of human rights and democratic institutions. The PWDs have a right to all the stated policies, and thus, there is no reason as to why they should learn in special institutions when they can gain from the public primary schools. However, those severe cases that require special attention should be considered for special schools as public schools may not be of much help.¶

In Kitale Town, there is at least a trained teacher in every public primary school with skills to handle learners with disabilities in an inclusive setting. Furthermore, a few schools have more than one teacher as by the Educational Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC) office in the town (EARC, 2014). However, on monitoring the program in public primary schools in Kitale Town, the EARC officers have found out that inclusive education in public schools is absent or inactive (EARC, 2014). This observation raised questions as to whether there is effective implementation of Inclusive Education Policy in public primary schools in Kitale Town. The study tried to find out any challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education as well as the level of interaction of learners in public primary schools in Kitale Town.

Education is a critical component of a country's development process. In this regard, the Kenyan government has invested heavily and has come up with various policies on Free Primary Education. Among the policies, the government has come with is the inclusive policy. Inclusive schools adopt the belief that wherever possible, all children should learn together regardless of differences; that all children can learn and achieve their potential; and that the continuum of students' needs should be matched by a continuum of programs, support and services. This enables learners to be included in all aspects of school life. With inclusion, a child's right to participation and the school's role is to accept the child as it is. Despite numerous efforts being put forth for the successful execution of inclusive education in public primary schools in Trans Nzoia County, there are still numerous learners in and out of school with special needs. Many learners with learning disabilities find it hard to fit into the normal school environment; therefore, making the learning process even more difficult. Consequently, many learners end up wasting from the school system due to the numerous barriers. This study sought to assess the selected factors affecting the effective implementation of inclusive education policy in public primary schools in Kitale Town, Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Influence of Teacher Attitude on Inclusive Education

Norma et al. (2011) carried out a study on a comparative perspective on teacher attitude-constructs that affect inclusive education in South Africa and Sweden. Findings related to Specialised Support, construct one, showed that respondents expressed a need for specialised support and perceived IE policy on specialised support to be restrictive or ineffective. Further, respondents in both countries furthermore reflected a negative attitude towards IE Policy Implementation, which represented construct two.

Studies carried by Leatherman, & Niemeyer, (2005) suggested that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion appear to be determined by their former experiences in inclusive classrooms and that the teachers acted on inclusive exercises by involving all children in classroom programs, including those with disabilities. The study further indicated that while, the teachers did implement inclusive practices, and they indicated that appropriate pre-service training, support from administrators, and support from resource personnel are important to provide a successful inclusive environment.

Inclusive education was incorporated into the Nigerian education system in 2008. It grew out as an offshoot of Millennium Development Goals (MOGS) and Education for All (EFA). In an effort to achieve EFA goals, Nigeria, in 2000, established the Universal Basic Education (UBE). In 2004, the National Assembly passed it into law. In 2006, the Federal Republic of Nigeria established the National Action Plan (NAP) to back UBE and alleviate the achievement of EFA by 2015. This move was to make sure that all children in Nigeria are given equal access to education and the empowerment and privilege associated with it.☐

The study of teacher attitudes and their beliefs is pertinent for determining and understanding the successes and failures of educational innovations. Teachers' attitudes are deeply associated with the strategies that they use to promote teaching and learning (OECD, 2009). "They shape students' learning environments and influence student motivation and achievement" (OECD, 2009). There is a negative correlation between learners' academic ability and their level of disability, such as autism or dyslexia (Slavin, 2011). However, from a comparative study in separate and inclusive settings, the Canadian Council on learning (2009) found that there was a favourable academic outcome for learners with special education needs educated in inclusive settings.☐

Previous research on teachers' attitudes toward inclusion centred individually on either in-service or pre-service teachers. Research shows that in-service teachers reflect more positive attitudes toward inclusion when early childhood programs provided (a) hands-on activities for working with students who have disabilities and training and knowledge about children with disabilities (Dinnebeil et al., 2008), (b) support personnel in the classroom (Rose & Smith, 2003), and (c) administrative support (Odom & McEvoy, 2010). For preservice teachers, the kind of coursework (especially specific strategies for working with children who have disabilities) and practical (direct experiences with children who have disabilities) are important in forming positive attitudes toward inclusion (Miller & Stayton, 2006; Proctor & Niemeyer, 2011).

Triandis (1971), states that attitudes are ideas or thoughts that reflect feelings and influence behaviours related to a particular object, and are made up of three major components: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The cognitive component relates to knowledge and thoughts about the causes of the behaviour of children with disabilities in an inclusive setting. The affective component is grounded on the cognitive understanding of a disability, which can prompt individuals to get involved in working with a child who has a disability or develop feelings that could induce them to leave out the child with a disability from typical activities. The behavioural component deals with an inclination to respond or behave in a particular way when in touch with children who have disabilities (for example, move further away from the child). All three of these components, affective, cognitive, and behavioural, are interactive and influence the manner in which a person perceives the world (Stoneman, 2013). This hints that teachers form attitudes toward children with disabilities, and finally toward inclusion, based on a child's characteristics, their previous experiences and the factors



in the classroom. Consequently, the teacher's attitudes are reflected in their behaviour in the classroom and in their interactions with the children.□

According to Stafford and Green (2016), the attitude of the personnel involved in implementing and planning an inclusive program is critical to its success. Therefore, the teacher's attitude is an important element in the success of the inclusive classroom. Therefore, it is vital to examine those factors in in-service and pre-service programs that facilitate a teacher's development of positive attitudes toward inclusion.

Ross-Hill (2009) agreed with the same view after examining the different attitudes of secondary and elementary school teachers on inclusion, and how best to come up with an inclusive environment based on these attitudes. The results showed that most teachers either supported inclusion practices in regular classrooms or did not have strong views on inclusive education. Croll and Moses (2000) investigated teachers' views on inclusive education and found that nine out of ten teachers thought that the regular classroom was the right place for children with disabilities. They suggested that pre-existing teacher attitudes and views are fundamental to their resulting implementation and experiences of inclusive education (Slavin 2011).

It is vital to examine the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education as their perceptions influenced their behaviour towards the acceptance of such students (Hammond & Ingall, 2003). If teachers held negative perceptions towards the inclusion of students with disabilities within their classes, then inclusion was at risk (Horne, 1983; Van-Reusen et al., 2001).□

Researchers noted that teachers resisted inclusive practices on account of inadequate training (Gickling,

2001). Teachers felt unprepared for inclusive education because they lacked appropriate training in this area (Bender, Vail & Scott, 1995). It was further noted that inadequate training in inclusive education resulted in lowered teacher confidence (Schumm et al., 1994). Teachers not trained in SNE exhibited a negative attitude towards inclusion, states Van Reusen et al. (2001). He further argued that increased training led to positive attitudes towards inclusion, while Kuester (2000) and Powers (2002) felt that training enhanced understanding and improved attitudes towards inclusive education.

Age and experience also proved to be another factor leading to teacher attitudes according to some studies. Young teachers appeared more accepting than their more experienced counterparts, (Cornoldi et al., 1998; Harvey, (1985); Whiting & Young, (1995) were of the view that older, more experienced teachers were uncomfortable with inclusive practices because they faced an intrusion into their rooms by support personnel whom they perceived as observers rather than an additional support. A teacher's level of educational qualification cannot significantly influence their attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classes (Heiman, 2001, Kuester, 2000). The study by Stoler (1992) showed that teachers with high levels of education had less positive attitudes towards inclusion than those with low levels.

Van-Reusen et al. (2001) insisted that larger classes hampered the teacher from attending to all learners due to lack of time, while Cornoldi et al. (1998) stated that class size should not exceed twenty (20) if there was a learner with disability. Large classes made the teacher uncomfortable since they could not handle all learners effectively within the stipulated time, thus affecting the successful implementation of inclusive education in public schools (Agran, Alper & Wehmeyer, 2002).

Lack of proficiency in modifying the regular education curriculum to suit learners with disabilities led to the teacher's lack of confidence (Sigafoos and Elkins, 1994). Inadequate knowledge regarding instructional techniques and curricular adaptations which contributed to decreased confidence were factors influencing teachers' attitude towards inclusive education (Janney et al., 1995; Lesar et al., 1999).

According to Avissar (2000) and Harvey (1985), previous experience in handling SNE learners allowed teachers to feel more comfortable within the inclusive classroom. Direct experience of including students with disabilities into mainstream settings appeared to be an essential factor in shaping teachers view toward inclusive settings (Arramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000). Teachers' attitude was also shaped by the type and degree of the disability of the student concerned (Agran et al., 2002). Sigafoos and Elkins (1994) stated that teachers' views to include learners with multiple disabilities were impractical while Arramidis et al. (2000) argued that learners with emotional and behavioural disorders attracted the least positive attitudes from teachers within the inclusive class.

Another factor was administrative support, as the teacher felt reaffirmed if the headteacher fostered a positive learning environment for both teachers and learners (Idol, 1994; Larrivee & Cook, 1979). Headteachers needed to accept ownership of all students and support inclusive placement in order to inspire these feelings among other school personnel (Idol, 1994). Clayton (1996) noted that administrative staff lacks sufficient understanding as well as being expensive regarding the delivery of services to students with disability.

Cultural and or gender issues affected the attitude of teachers towards learners with disabilities in an inclusive classroom as female teachers were seen to be more

accommodative to these learners than their male counterparts. Mushoriwa (2001) found that females were supportive of and exhibited significantly more positive attitudes towards teaching students with disabilities than males.

Teachers were called upon to be sensitive to the variety of modern classrooms and to be able to rise to the challenge by adapting their teaching styles in accordance with the multiplicity of learning styles they faced (Peterson & Belon, 1992). They were further required to be psychologically and practically prepared to take on the dynamic role of inclusive teacher (Mullen, 2001), while being aware that making physical provision for students with disabilities was not as important as making attitudinal changes resulting in the removal of barriers to physical and educational access (Beattie, Anderson, & Antonak, 1997).

Firtz and Miller (1995) found that inclusion was an impossible obstacle for some teachers. However, others saw it as a chance for personal and professional growth while contributing to the dynamic field of education. Teacher's attitudes are multi-dimensional and complex. Positive attitudes were considered to encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms; negative attitudes supported the low achievement of students with disabilities into mainstream settings.

The success of inclusion will depend on the perceptions teachers hold. Cade and Baker-Krozynski (2002) established that negative teachers' perceptions impeded effective inclusion of learners with disabilities in public primary schools in China. Teachers are seen to be integral to the execution of inclusive education (Mittler, 2004). It is important to examine teachers' perceptions of the inclusion of pupils with disabilities in regular classrooms.

Agbenyega (2006) found out that many regular teachers feel unprepared and fear to work with learners with disabilities in regular classes. Furthermore, teachers believed that learners with disabilities would affect the academic performance of learners without disabilities. According to KISE, (2009), if the teachers have negative perceptions towards special needs learners and inclusion, this may block any chances of learning in a regular class. Negative teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in the study area might be one of the school factors hindering the implementation. This informed this study.□

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey research design. The study was undertaken in Kitale Town of Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya. This research study was carried out in Trans Nzoia West Sub County because it has a high population of schools that perform poorly in the Kenya National Examination Council in the last five years. The survey included thirty-six public primary schools in the study area. The target population was made up of 36 headteachers and 50 SNE teachers in the public primary schools in the town. The study utilised simple and purposive random sampling according to school category. The school categories were integrated schools, special units, and special schools. The data collection instruments that were used were questionnaires and interview schedules. A pilot

study was done to evaluate the soundness of the items in the instruments, the questionnaires, and to estimate the time scheduled to tackle the items. Minor adjustments were made to the research instruments with relevant consultations. To demonstrate the reliability of the research instruments, the test-retest method was used. Data collected from this study was changed into numerical codes (each code represented a response category) and transferred manually to a code sheet. □

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### Teacher Attitudes and effective implementation of inclusive education policy

The second objective sought to find out whether teachers' attitude could be influencing effective implementation of inclusive education policy. To accomplish this objective, the following null hypothesis was formulated:□

**Ho<sub>2</sub>: Teachers' attitudes have no statistically significant influence on the effective implementation of inclusive education policy in Kitale Town, Kenya.**□

The hypothesis presumed that teachers' attitude had no statistically significant influence on the effective implementation of inclusive education policy. To ascertain the truth of the assumption, Pearson's correlation coefficient was computed, and the results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Pearson's correlation coefficient between Teacher Attitudes and Inclusive Education Policy**

Model	r	r Square	Adjusted r Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.490 <sup>a</sup>	.240	.139	.5866	.240	23.1802	1	42	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), effective implementation of inclusive education policy

From Table 1, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was found to be significant ( $r = .490, p = .000$ ). This means that teacher attitudes and inclusive education policy are not

independent. The  $r_2$  value was found to be .240, which implied that 24% of the variability in inclusive education

policy could be explained by curriculum factors, and 76% can be explained by other factors.□

Table 2 presents the results of a simple regression analysis of the influence of teacher attitudes on inclusive education policy.

**Table 2: Simple regression analysis of teacher attitudes on inclusive education policy**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.974	1	7.974	23.1802	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	14.453	42	.344		
	Total	22.427	43			
a. Dependent Variable: effective implementation of inclusive education policy						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher attitudes						

From Table 2, the F- value was found to be significant ( $F(1,42) = 23.18, p = .000$ ). This means that teacher attitudes significantly influence the implementation of the inclusive education policy. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that teacher attitudes have no statistically significant influence

on effective implementation of inclusive education policy is rejected at .05 level of significance. Therefore, teacher attitudes can be used to predict the effective implementation of the inclusive education policy.□

**Table 3: Coefficients of Regression for Teacher Attitudes**

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.447	.127		11.393	.000
	Teacher attitudes	.365	.054	.490	6.759	.000
a. Dependent Variable: effective implementation of inclusive education policy						

Table 3 presents the values of the regression coefficients based on the influence of teacher attitudes on the implementation of inclusive education policy. The following regression equation was obtained;□

$$Y = 1.447 + 0.365 X_2$$

Where;

Y = Effective implementation of inclusive education policy

$X_2$  = Teacher attitudes

The study differs with studies by Gigling, (2001), who noted that teachers resisted inclusive practices on account of inadequate training. The study too differs with studies by Bender, Vall and Scott, (1995) who argued that teachers felt unprepared for inclusive education because they lacked appropriate training in this area. However, the study correlates with the findings of Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon and Rothlein (1994), who found out that inadequate training in inclusive education resulted in low teacher



confidence. They argued that teachers who are not trained in SNE exhibited a negative attitude towards inclusion. Van Reusen et al. (2001) further argued that increased training led to positive attitudes towards inclusion while Kuester (2000) and Powers (2002) felt that training enhanced understanding and improved attitudes towards inclusive education.□

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective sought to find out whether teacher attitudes could be influencing effective implementation of inclusive education policy. There was a positive correlation between teacher attitudes and effective implementation of inclusive education policy. 24% of the variability, ineffective implementation of inclusive education policy was explained by teacher attitudes. Teacher attitudes had a substantial

influence on the effective implementation of inclusive education policy. The null hypothesis of  $H_{02}$  was rejected. The study established that the effective implementation of inclusive education policy was dependent on teacher attitudes. It can, therefore, be concluded that a positive improvement in teacher attitudes will a long way in enhancing the effective implementation of inclusive education policy.

## Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are put forth. Teachers should be equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge that help them identify different types of special education needs learners in an inclusive class in order to handle each case of special need learners without ignoring the challenges of the learners.

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