

**HEAD TEACHER-PARENT COLLABORATION RESOURCES FOR THE
IMPROVEMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN REGULAR PUBLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN MERU COUNTY, KENYA**

By

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Abstract

Through adequate head teacher-parent collaboration resources, inclusive education (IE) is improved. The purpose of the study was to analyse head teacher-parent collaboration resources for the improvement of inclusive education in regular public primary schools, in Meru County, Kenya. The objective of the study was to examine head teacher-parent collaboration resources for the improvement of inclusive education. The significance of the study was to inform education policy makers, who need the study results to evaluate the current policies on inclusion and formulate appropriate ones for promoting head teacher-parent collaboration resources to improve the status of inclusive education for all learners. The study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory and Peters' input-process-outcome-context framework of Inclusive Education. Qualitative research approach method was predominantly used. The target population was 101,612. Through purposive sampling, 24 participants were selected. The study instruments used included; open-ended questionnaires, interview schedules, focus group discussion guide, observations and documents' analysis schedules. Qualitative data analysis was done with the help of computer package, ATLAS. ti. The study findings were presented using narratives within themes generated from the collected data. It was found that, most of the schools lacked adequate resources, particularly human resources and funds to support the head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of inclusive education.

It was recommended that; the government and all education stakeholders should provide more resources to improve the effectiveness of head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of inclusive education.

Key words: Collaboration, resources, head teacher-parent, inclusive education, Meru County.

1. Introduction

Resources enhance education processes. There are various resources that support head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of inclusive education. These include both financial and human resources. Head teacher-parent collaboration may succeed if there are resources to facilitate their joint activities, such as training learners with visual impairments on orientation and mobility in inclusive schools.

Financial support is critical in the process of implementing inclusive education. Countries are encouraged to mobilize and appropriately use resources which already exist. The most important thing is that the existing funding should be directed towards establishing an inclusive school system. It has been proven that it is cheaper to operate one, inclusive education system than a dual system of regular and special settings (UNESCO, 2001). Inclusive education system is cost effective. It is far more expensive to operate a dual system of regular and special education than it is to operate a single inclusive education system. If funds are not allocated in line with an explicit inclusion policy, inclusive education is unlikely to succeed in practice (UNESCO, 2003). Little research has been carried out to explore the effectiveness of the head teacher-parent collaboration resources for the improvement of Inclusive Education (IE). Thus, the study explored the effectiveness of the head teacher-parent collaboration resources for the improvement of IE.

2. Statement of the Problem

Adequate head teacher-parent collaboration resources improve inclusive education. In Meru County, Kenya, there appeared to have been inadequate head teacher-parent collaboration resources, which was linked to poor status of inclusive education. There seemed to be inadequate head teacher-parent collaboration resources that resulted in poor status of inclusive education in public primary schools in Meru County. Head teacher-parent collaboration resources, is what this study sought to analyse to address the low improvement in inclusive education. Addressing low improvement in inclusive education through head teacher-parent collaboration resources may result in all learners having opportunities to develop socially and economically, making it easy to achieve the sustainable development goals. It was for this reason that the researcher decided to carry out a study on “Head teacher-parent collaboration resources for the improvement of inclusive education in public primary schools in Meru County, Kenya”.

3. Significance of the Study

The study findings are of great use to education policy makers, who need the study results to evaluate the current policies on inclusion and formulate appropriate ones for expanding head teacher-parent collaboration resources to improve the status of inclusive education for all learners. The study findings give crucial information to leaders and managers of inclusive schools on the need to have adequate head teacher-parent collaboration resources for the improvement of inclusive education.

4. Methodology

The study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory and Peters' input-process-outcome-context framework of Inclusive Education. Qualitative research approach method was predominantly used. The target population was 101,612 (772 head teachers, 6,840 teachers and 94,000 parents). Out of the target population, there was a unique population of 218 (77 head teachers, 68 teachers and 73 parents) who were actively involved in inclusive education in 77 inclusive public primary schools in Meru County (Meru County Director of Education Office, 2016). Through purposive sampling, a number of eight (8) regular public primary schools and a sample size of 24 participants were selected from the population. Creswell (2009), suggest for sample size in the range of 5-25 as being adequate for collecting qualitative data. The researcher adopted the Creswell (2009) recommendation to select the 24 participants.

The study instruments used included; questionnaires, interview schedules, focus group discussion guide, observations and documents' analysis schedules. The tools were piloted for reliability and validity in Isiolo County, Kenya. Data was collected by the researcher through meeting with the participants face-to-face, which ensured whole response return rates. Qualitative data analysis was done with the help of computer package, ATLAS.ti. The study findings were presented using narratives and matrices within themes generated from the collected data.

5. Findings: Resources

The head teachers indicated that, resources had facilitated their collaboration with the parents. For example, they said that, financial resources enabled team building and benchmarking trips, for school stakeholders that improved teamwork and thus enhanced the collaboration for the improvement of IE. However, the three categories of participants' focus group discussions revealed that, head teacher-parent collaboration had made minor enhancements in improving inclusive education due to inadequate resources for the collaboration.

Resources facilitated establishment and sustainability of feeding programmes, which encouraged parents to continue working together with the head teachers. This created a feeling that, the schools were co-parenting the learners with their families. Resources had also facilitated modification of the school environment to be disability friendly, making learners to be comfortable. This made the parents happy about their children's inclusive education and motivated them to collaborate with the head teachers for the improvement of IE. However, the head teachers, during focus group discussion, strongly indicated that, the resources were inadequate. This may have contributed to the minimal gains made by the head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of IE. This implies that, if IE has to improve through head teacher-parent collaboration, enough resources have to be provided.

Majority of parent-participants were in agreement with the head teachers that, school resources had facilitated head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of IE. They appreciated the government's effort in the provision of Free Primary Education (FPE). Human resources, such as, the parents and teachers, were cited as promoting the head teacher-parent collaboration for the

improvement of IE. During all the focus group discussions, participants indicated that, though the resources promoted the head teacher-parent collaboration, the promotion was low and that contributed to minor enhancements in improving inclusive education.

Majority of the teachers reported that, the school resources had facilitated head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of inclusive education. However, they shared that the collaboration could be better if adequate resources were availed to all schools. One of the teacher-participant lamented that, inclusive education was not adequately funded, understood and valued. He further felt that, there was a lot of work undone due to the inadequate financing of education. The participant observed:

The government is not fully supporting the head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of inclusive education due to insufficient funds. Some categories of special needs such as the blind require expensive teaching and learning resources like the braille machines which the school management and parents are not able to afford, hence, frustration of their collaboration efforts for the improvement of inclusive education.

Many teachers felt that, resources including teachers, had promoted head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of inclusive education. One of the teachers gave an example of himself, as an inclusive education teacher, having supported head teacher-parent collaboration by being available to the parents and the head teacher to give them technical advice whenever needs arose. He also pointed out that; resources had impact on head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of inclusive education because the learners with special needs in regular classes were not treated in any special way. They were treated as any other “normal” learners.

Many teacher-participants noted that Special Needs Education (SNE) teachers advise on Individualized Education Programmes, IEPs, for planning and implementation by many stakeholders, including the head teachers and parents. However, they shared that the SNE teachers were inadequate.

Many teacher-participants reported that, there were donors who supported some schools with feeding programmes to feed learners with special needs; and that brought the parents close to the schools. They pointed out that, the children were comfortable and hence, their parents too were contented. They noted that, the parents were pleased with external support, which they attributed to the head teacher who had sourced for the donors, remarking that the satisfaction makes parents closer to the head teacher, for the collaboration and improvement of inclusive education. The participants felt that there was still a lot of work that the head teachers needed to plan and do in collaboration with the parents if there were sufficient funds. One teacher-participant shared, “There is a lot that they can do together, such as modifying our school environment to be disability friendly. The school compound, door entrances and toilets need modification.”

The head teachers, parents and teachers’ focus group discussions indicated that, the resources were inadequate and that most of the human resources were negative about head teacher-parent

collaboration for the improvement of IE. This had contributed to minor enhancements in improving inclusive education.

The study findings established that, resources determine the nature of head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of inclusive education. Human resource was an important component of the resources which were discussed by the participants. The attitude of the stakeholders, human resource, determined the effectiveness of their support towards successful head teacher-parent collaboration. This finding is supported by Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) who argue that, positive attitude of stakeholders, human resource towards inclusion of children with special needs is known to determine the nature of head teacher-parent collaboration and the success of the inclusion.

Apart from the participants' descriptions, the indicators of the head teacher-parent collaboration resources were revealed through the school observations, which corroborated and enriched the expressions of the participants. School observations were carried out on: school general buildings facilities, toilet facilities, safety/security; water supply, facilities for co-curricular activities, electricity/electronics, reading facilities, disability friendly environment and assistive devices; as indicated in the following matrices A - I;

Matrix A: School general buildings facilities

S	Perm- nent class- rooms	Tem- pora- ry class- rooms	Open- air areas that serve as class- rooms	Walls' Condit- -ion	Windows' condition	Roofing Condit- -ion	Condit- -on of the Floor	Space- ample space for pupils to work/cla ssrooms are crowded
A	15	0	0	Good	Wire mesh	Good	Flat	Ample
B	17	0	0	Good	Wire mesh	Good	Flat	Ample
C	13	1	0	Good	Wire mesh	Good	Flat	Ample
D	20	0	0	Good	Glass in place	Good	Flat	Ample
E	12	1	0	Good	Wire mesh	Good	Flat	Ample
F	12	0	0	Good	Wire mesh	Good	Flat	Ample
G	8	5	0	Good	Wire mesh	Good	Flat	Ample
H	13	0	0	Good	Wire mesh	Good	Flat	Ample

Matrix B: Toilet facilities

School	Type of toilets	TEACHERS				PUPILS			
		Male		Female		Male		Female	
		+F	-F	+F	-F	+F	-F	+F	-F
A	pit latrines	1	0	1	0	9	0	12	0
B	pit latrines	1	0	2	0	12	0	16	0
C	pit latrines	1	0	1	0	11	0	13	0
D	pit latrines	1	0	1	0	8	0	8	0
E	pit latrines	1	0	1	0	10	0	8	0
F	pit latrines	1	0	1	0	5	0	8	0
G	pit latrines	1	0	1	0	6	0	8	0
H	pit latrines	1	0	1	0	2	2	3	1

Note: +F refer to functional toilet and -F refer to none functional toilet

Matrix C: School safety/security

School	Boundary- wall/fence
A	Fence and permanent gate
B	Fence and permanent gate
C	Fence and temporary gate
D	Fence and permanent gate
E	Fence and permanent gate
F	Fence and permanent gate
G	Fence and permanent gate
H	Fence and temporary gate

Matrix D: School water supply

School	School water- adequate/all times/sometimes	Do pupils bring water to school?	Is water safe for drinking?
A	Adequate all times	No	No, not treated
B	Adequate sometimes	Yes	No, not treated
C	Adequate sometimes	Yes	No, not treated
D	Adequate all times	No	Yes, treated
E	Adequate all times	No	No, not treated
F	Adequate all times, borrowed from a neighbouring dispensary	No	Yes, treated
G	Adequate sometimes	Yes	No, not treated
H	Adequate all times	No	No, not treated

Matrix E: Facilities for co-curricular activities

School	Co-curricular facilities (adequate/inadequate)	Comments
A	Adequate	Some were improvised
B	Adequate	Some were improvised
C	Inadequate	Depended on being lent to by other institutions
D	Adequate	Supported by National and Meru County Government
E	Adequate	Some were improvised
F	Adequate	Some were improvised
G	Adequate	Some were improvised
H	Inadequate	Depended on borrowing

Matrix F: Electricity/electronics

School	Electricity supply	Telephone	School radio(s)	Television	Others
A	Installed	0	1	0	0
B	Installed	0	1	0	0
C	Installed	0	3	0	0
D	Installed	0	2	0	12 computers
E	Installed	0	0	0	0
F	Installed	0	1	0	0
G	Installed	0	2	0	0
H	Installed	0	1	0	0

Matrix G: Reading facilities

School	Library	Workshops	Laboratory	School hall	Others
A	0	0	0	0	0
B	0	0	0	0	0
C	1	0	0	0	0
D	1	0	0	0	0
E	0	0	0	0	0
F	0	0	0	0	0
G	0	0	0	0	0
H	0	0	0	0	0

Matrix H: Disability friendly environment

School	Ramps	Wide doors	Adapted toilets	Sound proof classrooms	others
A	None	0	0	0	0
B	None	0	0	0	0
C	none	0	0	0	0
D	none	0	0	0	0
E	At 3 doors' entrances	3	0	0	0
F	none	0	0	0	0
G	none	0	0	0	0
H	At 5 doors' entrances	5	0	0	0

Matrix I: Assistive devices

School	Hearing aids	White canes	wheelchairs	Crutches	Others
A	0	0	0	0	0
B	0	0	1	2	0
C	1	1	0	1	1 magnifier
D	0	0	1	0	2 magnifiers
E	0	0	1	0	0
F	0	0	0	0	0
G	1	0	0	0	0
H	0	0	2	0	0

The observations revealed that, most of the schools had permanent classrooms with good walls, roofing, floor and ample space for pupils to work. All the schools had pit latrines. The latrines in most of the schools were working. There was only one school which had some toilets not working.

The observation findings revealed that, all the schools were secured with fenced boundaries and gates. Most (6 out of 8) of the schools had permanent gates. Only 2 out of the 8 schools had temporary gates. This implies that, security in the schools was well addressed.

Observation results indicated that, most of the schools had adequate water all the times. Some schools, sometimes, had adequate water, which was brought to the school by the pupils. Most of the schools' water was not safe for drinking since it was not treated.

The observations indicated that most of the schools had adequate facilities for co-curricular activities. Most of the schools had improvised the facilities for the adequacy, except one which had

support from both the National and County governments. The few schools with inadequate facilities for co-curricular activities depended on being lent to, by other institutions.

The study findings revealed that, all the schools had installed electricity, in readiness for the Kenya's National government's Laptop Project, also referred to as Ipad project, implementation. All the schools had at least a radio, except one, school E, which did not have any. The findings also revealed that, only one school D, which had twelve computers.

The findings revealed that, most of the schools lacked reading facilities. Few, (25%) of the schools had a library. There were no schools with any workshop, laboratory, hall or others. This implies that, reading facilities were not taken seriously by the school leaders.

The results indicated that, few schools had responded to the policies to have disability friendly environments. Few schools had some ramps and wide doors. There was no single school with adapted toilets despite the admissions of learners with physical challenges in some schools

The observations indicated that, most of the schools had at least one assistive device. The findings revealed that, most of the schools lacked adequate school environmental modifications for disability friendly schools. This implied that, despite the head teacher-parent collaboration resources having improved inclusive education, there was still a lot to be done to make the inclusion more realistic and achievable. Similarly, the open-ended questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions' results indicated that head teacher-parent collaboration resources had superficially improved inclusive education. This observation is similar to Mwanza (2010), who stated that, inclusive education will continue to be superficial unless professionals learn to collaborate with parents. The issue is also, whether the Quality Assurance and Standards Department adequately evaluates and monitors whether school resources meet the needs of all learners.

6. Conclusion

Head teacher-parent collaboration resources were inadequate and thus there was only slight improvement of inclusive education. Schools lacked adequate resources, particularly human resources and funds to support the head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of inclusive education.

7. Recommendations

The government and all education stakeholders should provide more resources to improve the effectiveness of head teacher-parent collaboration for the improvement of inclusive education.

8. REFERENCES

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