Assessment of the Management Strategies by Schools to Meet the Diversity of Learners with Special Needs in Kakamega East Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract: The national education system has been characterized by inadequate educational management practices and facilities that do not respond well to the challenges faced by Learners with Special Needs (LWSNs). These learners are gradually and deliberately pushed out of the school system because schools are not sensitive to their learning styles and background. The purpose of this study was therefore to assess the implementation of inclusive education management practices in public primary schools in Kakamega East Sub-county. The study objectives were; to assess the management strategies put in place by schools to meet the diversity of LWSNs, The study was based on the theory of Normalization and it made use of the descriptive survey research design. The target population was 90 head teachers, 999 teachers and one Educational Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC) coordinator. The schools were stratified according to zones and simple random sampling was used to select, 18 head teachers and 200 teachers, while the EARC coordinator was selected by the purposive sampling technique. Instruments for data collection were the questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. Content validity was used to determine the validity of the research instruments while the test-re-test method was used to test reliability using the Pearson Product moment of correlation coefficient (r) value. Data was then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics and the results were presented in form of frequency tables. The research findings revealed that inclusive education and its management practices have not been effectively implemented in public primary schools in Kakamega East Sub-county; whereby LWSNs are rarely involved in student leadership activities, and the local administration rarely works in liaison with the school to make the community responsive to LWSNs. The results also indicated that teachers lack relevant skills to meet the academic needs of LWSNs and they rarely address learners' needs through the individualised education programmes (IEP). The findings also revealed that the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education was negative whereby most teachers believed that inclusion of LWSNs is quite demanding and it results to poor syllabus coverage, lack of curriculum and examination adaptation and modification to suit individual needs of LWSNs are key barriers to inclusion and that the school infrastructure is not modified and adapted so as to meet the needs of LWSNs thus making these learners find it difficult to fit into the school environment. The researcher recommended that regular inspections should be carried out in schools as a follow up measure of ensuring that inclusive education and its management practices are implemented to the latter. Teachers who are not trained in special needs education (SNE) should be given an opportunity to undergo training so as to equip them with the necessary skills and attitudes towards LWSNs. There is need for further infrastructural, social adaptations and modifications so as to curb barriers to inclusion.
Keywords: Educational Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC), LWSNs.

Background of study

Okumbe [1] defined management as the process of designing, developing and effecting organisational objectives so as to achieve the predetermined organisational goals. Therefore inclusive education management strategies revolve around managing attitudes, teaching and learning resources and barriers so as to address the diverse needs of learners in an inclusive setting. This is paramount because disabled learners do academically better when in an inclusive setting [2].

According to a study by the New Brunswick Association of community living (2011), creating an inclusive school requires a proactive school management and leadership as an indicator of success in creating an inclusive school. On the other hand, Mokgaphame noted that, school leadership is the crucial management link in the bigger chain of the management processes and therefore schools require effective leaders and managers if they are to provide the best possible education for their learners [12].

Swart *et al.* [13] noted that there is overwhelming evidence that educators are the key force in determining the quality of inclusion therefore they play a crucial role in transforming schools or without support they can bring no change at all. Managing diversity does not mean controlling or containing diversity, it means enabling every member to perform to his or her potential [3] and therefore the need to modify school management strategies so as to carter for each and every individual's needs in an inclusive setting.

Fletcher [4] noted that meaningful learner involvement in the management process of any learning institution encompasses the process of engaging learners in every facet of the educational process for the purpose of strengthening their commitment to education, the community and democracy. Therefore, LWSNs should be given an opportunity to take part in student leadership activities in the school, be involved in the formulation of the school rules, andbe guided and counselled so as to enable them accept their conditions and therefore cope up with life. This is in tandem with Huddleston [5], assertion that learners should be involved in all areas of school life.

School administration and the entire school management committee ought to be empowered so as to create inclusive cultures, policies and manage the evolving inclusive practices as efficiently as possible [14]. Elements of evolving inclusive education management practices include, regular staff briefing sessions which are aimed at addressing and notifying teachers on the needs of LWSNs and also involvement of parents and guardians of LWSNs in decision making on matters concerning the welfare of their children.

There is a complex relationship between the school staff and the school climate, and thus there is need to put emphasis on the importance of the principal's awareness of the role of the staff in implementing inclusion successfully [6]. Therefore, teachers should be empowered by the school administration so as to make decisions or handle challenges faced by LWSNs.

Some educators feel that they are not provided with adequate instructional, physical and human resources, time and training to implement inclusive education programmes successfully[14]. Therefore the school should network with other specialised service providers to assist LWSNs, school resources and budgetary allocations should be directed towards special needs and inclusion, the school should form sub-committees of parents and teachers which meet to address the needs of LWSNs and also the school should work in liaison with the local administration so as to make the community responsive to LWSNs.

Winter [15] stated that a growing number of authors are calling for professional preparation approaches that better prepare principals and teachers for the diversity of today's classrooms. This is so because; today's classrooms are full of learners with diverse educational needs and yet the existing educational management strategies don't respond well to the needs of these learners. Hence, the EARC should organize for seminars and workshops for teachers who handle LWSNs and have learners undergo proper educational assessment for proper placement

A study by Salisbury & McGregor [7] on Principals of inclusive schools indicated that the school principals have an essential role in improving the school environment and in implementing educational policies. Therefore, if inclusion is to be comprehensively and efficiently implemented, school principals and teachers' views and knowledge regarding emerging inclusive practices should be established and developed.

Salisbury & McGregor [7] further noted that, when teachers share in an open dynamic discussion group regarding their beliefs, difficulties, different aspects of teaching and ways of coping with dilemmas as far as addressing learners' needs is concerned, this encourages them to find better coping solutions and support in their difficulties with the inclusion process.

One leadership function for inclusion is the managing of conflict and other disturbances from both inside and outside the learning ecological influences of the school. This is necessary because inclusive education is rarely a settled and agreed upon policy in any school and therefore, overt and covert resistance has to be managed [8].

To enhance proper management of inclusive education, McGregor [16] noted that, inclusive education sub-committees of parents and teachers' sub-committees should be formed, so as to enhance the training of teachers on resource material development, child-to-child approaches, inclusive education pedagogy and advocate for disability mainstreaming with an aim of broadening one's perspective on a wide range of issues relating to disabilities and inclusion.

Problem of study

In as much as Kenya is embracing the philosophy of inclusion and even gone further and formulated a national policy framework on SNE, the national education system has been characterised by inadequate educational management structures and facilities that do not respond well to the challenges faced by LWSNs [9]. In Kakamega East Sub-county, out of the total enrolment of 47,754 learners in public primary schools, 4720 are LWSNs (Education Office - Kakamega East Sub-county, 2014). This is in

conformity with the WHO assertion that 10% of a given population comprises PWDs. In Kakamega East Sub-county, cases of dropouts, repetition, sexual harassment and molestation involving LWSNs in public primary schools are rampant (Kakamega East Sub-county EARC office, 2014). The rights of these learners to acquire basic education and progress further academically are violated since they are gradually and deliberately pushed out of the school system. Therefore, this necessitated the researcher to carry out an assessment of the implementation of inclusive education management practices in public primary schools in Kakamega East Sub-county.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to carry out an assessment of the implementation of inclusive education management practices in public primary schools in Kakamega East Sub-county.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study objectives were to;

Assess the management strategies put in place by schools to meet the diversity of LWSNs in public primary schools in Kakamega East Sub-county.

Research Methodology

The study used descriptive survey research design. The target population was 90 head teachers, 999 teachers and one Educational Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC) coordinator. The schools were stratified according to zones and simple random sampling was used to select, 18 head teachers and 200 teachers, while the EARC coordinator was selected by the purposive sampling technique. Instruments for data collection were the questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. Content validity was used to determine the validity of the research instruments while the test-re-test method was used to test reliability using the Pearson Product moment of correlation coefficient (r) value. Data was then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics and the results were presented in form of frequency tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To assess the implementation of inclusive education management practices, a correlation was carried out to find out the factors that contribute to effective implementation of inclusive education and its management practices. The response items of the four scales were combined to form the dependent variable making the reason for the research while the four objectives remained independent but continuous, to be used for assessment. Correlation between the dependent and independent variables was first assessed to find out which factors were highly related to and contributed largely towards the effectiveness of management practices. Table 1 below displays the correlation results.

Table 1: Correlation Between Inclusive Education Management Practices and Attitude, Barriers, Management strategies and Teaching/learning Strategies

Variables for inclusion	Pearson correlation	Inclusive Education Management practices	Mean Attitude of teachers	Barriers to Inclusion	Management strategies	Teaching / Learning strategies
-Implementation of inclusive education	Pearson Correlation	1	.394[**]	.065	.755[**]	.816[**]
-Mean Attitude of the teachers	Pearson Correlation		1	.365[**]	-.234[**]	-.010
-Barriers to Inclusion	Pearson Correlation			1	-.315[**]	-.373[**]
-Effects of management strategies	Pearson Correlation				1	.790[**]
-Teaching/learning strategies	Pearson Correlation					1
Significance	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

The results in table 4.6 indicate a very high positive significant correlation between teaching/learning strategies and implementation of inclusive education management practices (r=.816, p<0.01) implying that the more effective teaching and learning strategies are used the better the implementation of the inclusive education and its management practices. This is in agreement with Ngugi [10] findings that inadequate educational facilities, poor and rigid teaching approaches, overloaded and expensive curriculum, rigid assessment procedures based on mean score competition which does not consider LWSNs are poor teaching and learning strategies that impact negatively on effective implementation of inclusive education and its management practices.

Management strategies were second in order. The scale of management strategies correlated with the dependent variable positively and significant (r=.755, p<.01). This means that if management strategies are modified and well affected then there will be effective implementation of inclusive education management practices. This is in tandem with the New Brunswick Association of community living (2011) findings on creating an inclusive school which identified a proactive school management and leadership as an indicator of success in creating an inclusive school.

Attitude had a low but positive and significant correlation as well i.e. (r=.394, p<.01), meaning that there were other factors that affected the attitude other than its influence on implementation of inclusive education, even though it affected the implementation to an extent. Its effect as a management area entailed gender, specialisation and years of experience; which are demographic factors. This is in tandem with Harding & Darling (2003) findings that teachers' views, attitudes and knowledge are important in making any

change in their classroom practices and therefore, the knowledge teachers acquire about inclusive education may affect their ability to adapt, as well as their classroom performance.

Barriers to inclusion had mixed reactions from the respondents as well. It had a very small though significant correlation with the effective implementation of inclusive education management practices (r=.065, p<.01). However small though significant correlation, there is need to make our learning institutions adopt basic values of participation and friendship since inclusion exceeds the meagre idea of just physical placement of LWSNs [11]. Each objective was then assessed independently to find its effect as a direct or indirect management strategy on implementation of inclusive education management strategies.

The regression model in table 2 represents the results of how much each of the variables included in the model contributed to the management practices.

Table 2: Multiple regression coefficients table for independent variables.

Model		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.	Correlations		
		Beta		Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)		1.000			
	Mean Attitude of the teachers	.438	.000	.394	1.000	.372
	Barriers to inclusion	.258	.000	.065	1.000	.219
	Management strategies	.571	.000	.755	1.000	.323
	Teaching and learning strategies	.465	.000	.816	1.000	.257

Dependent Variable: Inclusive education management practices

Management Strategies

In order to assess the management strategies put in place by schools to meet the diversity of LWSNs in public primary schools, teachers and head teachers were asked to respond to some of the questions indicating aspects of management. The results were tabulated in frequencies and presented in frequency counts and percentages in table 3.

The results in table 3 indicate that majority, 84(42.0%) of the respondents viewed that LWSNs are rarely given an opportunity to take part in student leadership activities in the school. In addition there are no regular staff briefing sessions aimed at addressing teachers on the needs of LWSNs as supported stated by 72(36.0%) of the teachers.

Corbett & Slee [6] found a complex relationship between the school staff and the importance of the school principals' awareness of the

role of the staff in implementing inclusion successfully. The results also indicate that the school rarely forms sub-committees of parents and teachers to meet and address the needs of LWSNs as proposed by 96(48.0%) of the teachers. The overall mean was 2.40 and standard deviation 1.30 indicating that, generally the management efforts put in place were not effective.

From the results of multiple regression in table 2, management strategies scale contributed the largest unique contribution towards the effectiveness of the management strategies, (β=.571, p<.05). This means that this variable makes the strongest unique contribution to explaining the effectiveness of the management strategies when the variance explained by all other variables in the model is controlled for.

Thus the mean change in the effectiveness of management strategies for one unit change in the management strategies scale was 0.465, when all other

predictors, which included attitude, teaching strategies, and barriers to inclusion, were controlled.

According to Swart *et al.* [13] there is overwhelming evidence that educators are the key force in determining the quality of inclusion therefore it is without doubt that they can, if given support. They play a crucial role in transforming schools or without support they can bring no change at all.

Table 3: Management Strategies

Management strategies	Not at all f (%)	Rarely f (%)	Often f (%)	Very often f (%)	Always f (%)	Mean	Std
LWSNs are given an opportunity to take part in student leadership activities in the school	84(42.0)	48(24.0)	40(20.0)	16(8.0)	12(6.0)	2.12	1.26
LWSNs are involved in formulation of the school rules	64(32.0)	44(22.0)	44(22.0)	28(14.0)	20(10.0)	2.48	1.38
There are regular staff briefing sessions aimed at addressing the needs of LWSNs	72(36.0)	60(30.0)	40(20.0)	16(8.0)	12(6.0)	2.18	1.38
The needs of LWSNs are considered when making school management policies	71(35.5)	48(24.0)	44(22.0)	20(10.0)	17(8.5)	2.32	1.42
Parents/guardians of LWSNs are always involved in decision making	79(39.5)	44(22.0)	40(20.0)	24(12.0)	13(6.5)	2.24	1.24
LWSNs are guided and counselled to enable them accept their condition(s) and cope up with life.	88(44.0)	44(22.0)	36(18.0)	20(10.0)	12(6.0)	2.12	1.35
Teachers are empowered to make decisions or handle challenges faced by LWSNs.	88(44.0)	64(32.0)	20(10.0)	16(8.0)	12(6.0)	2	1.35
The school networks with other specialised service providers to assist LWSNs	60(30.0)	40(20.0)	36(18.0)	32(16.0)	32(16.0)	2.68	1.39
School resources and budgetary allocations are directed towards special needs and inclusion	40(20.0)	76(38.0)	36(18.0)	40(20.0)	8(4.0)	2.5	1.14
LWSNs are taught social skills as a way of empowering them to cope up with social life	60(30.0)	44(22.0)	40(20.0)	32(16.0)	24(12.0)	2.58	1.41
The school forms sub-committees of parents and teachers who meet to address the needs of LWSNs	96(48.0)	36(18.0)	16(8.0)	20(10.0)	32(16.0)	2.28	1.3
The Sub-county EARC organizes for seminars and workshops for teachers who handle LWSNs	36(18.0)	52(26.0)	56(28.0)	24(12.0)	32(16.0)	2.82	1.31
LWSNs undergo educational assessment for proper placement	52(26.0)	48(24.0)	32(16.0)	48(24.0)	20(10.0)	2.68	1.35
Local administration works in liaison with the school so as to make the community responsive to LWSNs.	48(24.0)	52(26.0)	48(24.0)	32(16.0)	20(10.0)	2.62	1.16
Overall mean and standard deviation						**2.40**	**1.30**

Head teachers views were also selected using split file in order to compare their views on management with those of the teachers. A mean of 4.03, was obtained meaning that head teachers were aware of good management strategies. The head

teacher's views scale also supported the management efforts put in place a result that is strongly advocated for as a strong indicator of management.

An interview conducted with the EARC coordinator revealed similar situation in schools. The EARC coordinator noted that, our office has a lot of strategies intended to help LWSNs and enhance the implementation of inclusive education and its management strategies but they are not always functioning, for instance, seminars for parents, teachers and other stakeholders to address matters affecting LWSNs are rare due to lack of funding and cooperation from other stakeholders. The results are strongly supported by a recent study by Salisbury and McGregor [16] who suggested that the school principals have an essential role in improving the school environment and in implementing educational policies.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Conclusions
The study's research findings indicated that inclusive education management practices have not been effectively implemented in public primary schools in Kakamega East Sub-county. Based on the findings of this study it is evident that the management strategies put in place were not fully observed. Parents should be involved in decision making of the school activities. Besides, learners with special needs should not be sidelined in decision making.

Inclusive practice requires significant changes to be made to the content, delivery and organisation of mainstream programmes and is a whole school endeavour which aims to accommodate the learning needs of all learners. Better management practices advocating for inclusive education should also give an opportunity for PWDs to participate fully in all of the educational, employment, consumer, recreational, community, and domestic activities that typify everyday society.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on findings of study, the study recommends that the ministry of education should initiate policy changes that will enhance regular inspections in schools as a follow up measure of ensuring that inclusive education and its management practices are being implemented to the latter.

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