

Effect of head teachers' partnerships collaboration on inclusive education implementation

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Abstract

The study investigated effect of head teachers' partnerships collaboration on inclusive education implementation. Bartalanffy (1969) open systems advocates for head teachers to coordinate partnerships to address the lack of support systems for inclusive education. Descriptive survey was applied, and Chi-square tested the null hypothesis. Questionnaires were administered to 71 head teachers and 297 teachers, supplemented by document analysis. Interview was used on eight Quality Assurance Standards Officers (QASOs) and four Education Assessment Resource Centre Officers (EARCs). Quantitative data was coded and analysed using descriptive statistics, and presented in frequency tables and bar graphs. Qualitative data was coded, transcribed and presented in narrative form. Quantitative and qualitative data findings were discussed in juxtaposition with confirming or refuting the research evidence, and reinforcing the interpretation. The study established that majority of schools lacked well- structured coordinated partnerships. This implied that there was low partnership participation in schools' programs as referenced by head teachers and teachers on provision for specialized teaching and learning resources, 63.4% and 63.3%; assessment of learners, 64.8% and 70.4%; funds outsourcing, 69% and 69.7%. It was recommended that head teachers should increase capacities in partnerships collaboration, and institute well-structured coordinated framework for partnerships engagement for effective inclusive education implementation.

Key words: partnerships collaboration, inclusive education, implementation

Introduction

Leithwood, Karen and Wahlstrom (2014) argue that head teachers' collaboration with

the community is crucial for implementing inclusive education. Gold (2002) opines that head teachers perceive policy initiatives differently but working with stakeholders enables interpretation of policy initiatives for implementing inclusive education. However, it is argued that parents of learners with special needs and teachers often express dissatisfaction working with school personnel and other professionals (National Council for Special Education, 2010). Thus, it was evident that disconnect exist in head teachers' collaborative initiatives with partners that this study sought to address.

Background to the study

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability advocates for Member States to put in place measures including collaboration with stakeholders, accommodation and effective support services to ensure that learners with special needs access inclusive education (CRPD, 2006). Contrastingly, 36% of the member states have not allocated adequate finances for provision of resources, 48% do not have policies and 53% have not initiated programs for the resources and services (UNESCO, 2015). Non-governmental organizations do not have the financial means and capacity to develop country- wide sustainable service delivery systems (WHO, 2011). This demonstrates the mismatches between the policies that advocate for partnership collaboration and the inadequacies in delivery of services, that this study sought to address.

Even though the national governments have the primary responsibility to financing resources for inclusive education, all other related stakeholders including schools, communities, parents and service providers need to consider acquisition, and capacity to manage the resources (World Health Organization, 2010). Barton (2003) postulates that schools work collaboratively with the community to provide for learners' social needs, support services and educational resources. However, the current major hindrances to learners with special needs access to education are the lack of recognition

of specialized resources in national and institutional plans/policies, and weak stakeholder/partnership coordination in utilizing the resources (Layton, 2015). It is argued that parents of learners with special needs often express dissatisfaction working with school personnel and other professionals (National Council for Special Education, 2010). Thus, the need for this study to re-examine how head teachers coordinate partnerships with their schools to implement inclusive education.

In Kenya, the National Education Sector Plan [NESP] (Republic of Kenya, 2014a) provides for head teachers to work collaboratively with partnerships in implementing inclusive education. The government policy option of reducing gaps in financing of education is partnerships such as NGOs, which finance only 0.73% of education budget; nevertheless, collaboration with parents, school-communities is highly under-exploited (Ministry of Education, 2003). Gatumbi, Ayot, Kimemia and Ondigi (2015) study reveal that 70.7% of respondents were concerned that schools do not collaborate with the community and other agencies to support learners with special needs in schools. According to Education Sector Report (Republic of Kenya, 2016), 105,727 learners with special needs enrolled in primary schools against the national enrolment of 8,831,263 million pupils. It is indicated that resource allocation for SNE was 948 million compared to 18,627 million for FPE; nonetheless, lack of specialized training of teachers and specialized teaching and learning resources hampered learners with special needs access to schools. It is imperative that the study evaluates how head teachers utilized partnerships provisions of resources for implementing inclusive education in their schools.

In Nairobi City County out of 468,754 pupils who enrolled in primary schools only 1880 were special needs against the backdrop of 105,727 (Nairobi County Taskforce Education Report, 2015). The Department for International Development

(2015) report, and National Special Needs Education (SNE) Survey Report (Republic of Kenya, 2014b) revealed that learners with special needs are denied access in primary schools due to lack of resources and specialized teachers. The Handicap International (2013) report indicates that head teachers have great influence on teachers and community, and need to collaborate with partnerships to provide educational resources and support services for implementing inclusive education. This demonstrates that head teachers and partnerships were not doing all that they were expected to do to implement inclusive education, which is the onus of this study.

Statement to the problem

Developing countries including Kenya look upon NGOs to take the lead in implementing inclusive education policy by use of resources and projects. These projects do not sufficiently address inclusive education for learners with special needs, and not much is known about the effects of NGOs-schools' partnerships on the implementation of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2009). Disappointingly, the role of governments seems to be limited to formulation or changing of education policies; whereas, NGOs act as pressure groups for policy change, service delivery, community awareness and mapping resources (Meenakshi, Anke & Sip Jan Piji, 2013). For instance, parents under the auspices of Nairobi Family Support Services (NFSS), resorted to joint advocacy for educational rights of their children, in the case of very few learners with special needs who enrolled in primary schools in Nairobi City County (Nairobi County Taskforce Education Report, 2015). There was need for collaborative partnerships to find out what works in practice for inclusive education (Department for International Development, 2015). Therefore, it was prudent to re-examine how head teachers initiate partnerships collaboration to provide educational resources and support services for implementing inclusive education.

Summary of related literature review

The development of partnerships among stakeholders supports government efforts, collaboration, and prevents duplication (WHO, 2011). In Qatar, a public private partnership with schools provides specialized resources and services as well as research for inclusive education. In Sweden, the government supports a special initiative to promote the development of specialized resources through exhibitions, and touring for learners with special needs in Europe and Asia (UNESCO, 2015). The Government of India has adopted a scheme that makes specialized resources available free of charge to low earners and subsidies to average income earners (Government of India, 2014).

Coordinated partnerships between schools and partnerships lead to improved learning outcomes for learners with special needs (Stoner et al., 2005). However, Hayes and Bulat (2018) argue that head teachers ought to identify programs that will engage stakeholders including parents to support educational needs for learners with special needs and teachers training for successful implementation of inclusive education. In Lesotho, partnership between schools, NGOs and CBOs resulted in successful implementation of inclusive education with 75% enrolment of learners between ages 5-14 years (Mariga, McConkey & Myezwa, 2014).

In Kenya, the Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities advocates for collaboration among parents, developmental partners, FBOs, agencies such as school heads and other stakeholders for effective service delivery (Republic of Kenya, 2018a). However, the SNE Policy Review Data Collection Report (Ministry of Education, 2016) established duplication of services arising from weak coordination mechanisms, low capacity of Ministry of Education (MoE) officials to coordinate education providers. Irungu (2014) study revealed weak coordination between schools and Education Assessment Resource Centre (EARC) officers in providing support

services. It is argued that Quality Assurance and Standards (QASOs) officers support head teachers in improving teaching and learning but have limited capacity to support head teachers to implement inclusive education. According to the Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities (Republic of Kenya, 2018a), learners with special needs are denied access to inclusive education due to inability of regular schools to meet their social and educational needs, and the fact that EARCs have inadequate specialized equipment and resource persons to discharge their services effectively in schools.

The Republic of Kenya (2014b; 2016) cited the lack of data on learners with special needs, policy operational framework, and stakeholders' engagement structures in management of specialized resources as a hindrance to implementation of inclusive education in Kenya. Estimating children's educational needs and mapping available specialized resources are a prerequisite for planning equitable services. In the absence of available data, 3–5 per cent of children in any population can be used as a baseline to calculate the number of learners who need the specialized resources and services (Borg, 2013; WHO, 2011).

A number of partnerships collaboration have been initiated in schools in Kenya, though not in well-structured and coordinated way. For instance, Leonard Cheshire Disability Organization has partnered with regular schools in Western Kenya to promote inclusive education in areas such as professional development, teaching and learning resources, technical and life skills (Adoyo & Odeny, 2015). In Nairobi City County, NGOs such as Mellon Educate provide financial aid to schools to enhance inclusive education, yet head teachers do not acquire adequate resources for teaching and learning (Nairobi County Taskforce Education Report, 2015). According to Sessional Paper of 2018 on Reforming Education and Training for Sustainable

Development (Republic of Kenya, 2018b), coordination of partnerships is not only important for effective management of schools' resources but also for accountability and transparency. Therefore, it was prudent to re-examine how head teachers coordinated partnerships for provision of educational needs and support services for diverse learners.

Methodology and design

A descriptive survey design was employed in this study. Through this design a researcher is able to evaluate policy issues and programs, using questionnaires and interviews, and statistically analyze data to test research hypotheses. The target population had 4546 constituents from 203 public primary schools in Nairobi City County. The sample size was 514 respondents comprising of the nine QASOs and four EARCs officers, 102 head teachers and 400 teachers, selected using consensus and simple random, respectively. This is based on Gay, Mills and Ariasian (2006, 2009) sample size derivation of 50 per cent for smaller population below 500 for head teachers, and 400 sample size if the population is around/beyond 5000 for teachers.

Two sets of questionnaires were designed for head teachers and teachers, interview guides were used on QASO and EARC officers to collect data. Document analysis guides were used to cross-check the documents. The instruments return rates were 71(69.6%) and 297(74.3%) for head teachers and teachers'; eight (88.9%) and four (100%) for QASO and EARC officers, respectively. Babbie (1989) in Best and Kahn (2006) suggest that a 50% response rate is adequate, while 60% and 70% are good and very good, respectively.

Face validity was enhanced by consulting the supervisors and peers in the School of Education to review the tools on appearance, appropriateness of wording, content, and format of items. Pilot test was conducted on the instruments involving five

percent of the sample size. Baker (1994) generally recommends between 10-20% of the sample size. However, Billingham, Whitehead and Julious (2013) argue that a formal sample size for pilot studies may not be necessary. Cronbach (1970) alpha was employed to test the reliability of the instruments. The following reliability indexes were met: head teachers' questionnaires, 0.876 and 0.926; teachers' questionnaires, 0.900 and 0.934; QASOs and EARCs interview guides, 1.00 and 1.000; document analysis guide, 0.945 and 0.960. Quantitative data was coded, analyzed using descriptive statistics, and presented in frequency tables and graphs. Qualitative data was coded, analyzed in themes, and presented in narrative form. Both quantitative and qualitative data findings were discussed in juxtaposition with confirming or refuting the research evidence, and reinforcing the interpretation.

Findings and discussion

Head teachers' partnerships collaboration for implementing inclusive education in schools

Sheldon and Hutchins (2011) and Hayes and Bulat (2018) argue that head teachers ought to identify programs that will engage stakeholders including parents to support educational needs for learners with special needs and teachers training for successful implementation of inclusive education. The Ministry of Education Strategic Plan (Republic of Kenya, 2006) opines that parents and community's roles should not be restricted to resource mobilization and decision-making, but also to contributing in many other ways towards the education of the children, the participation of the government notwithstanding. The responses of head teachers and teachers on head teachers' partnerships collaboration to implement inclusive are presented in Figure 1.

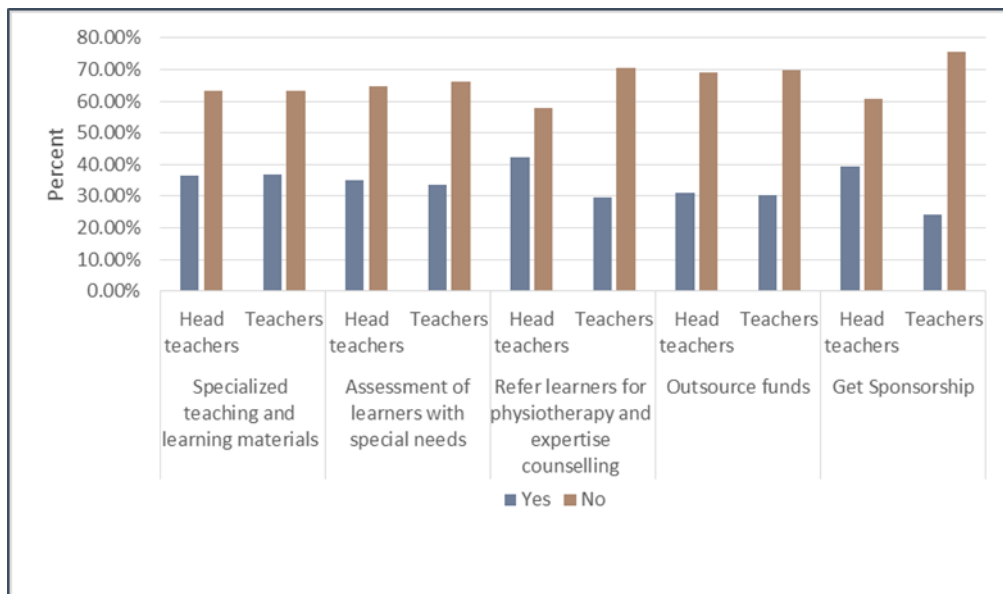


Figure 1. Responses on head teachers' partnerships collaboration for implementing inclusive education
 Legend. $N = 71; 297$ percentage (%) =percentage of head teachers and teachers' responses on head teachers' partnerships collaboration for implementing inclusive education

Findings in Figure 1 revealed that there were high negative scores across the following programs of school and partnerships collaboration: provision of specialized teaching and learning materials 63.4% and 63.3%; assessment of learners with special needs, 64.8% and 66.3%; sending learners for referred physiotherapy and expertise counselling, 57.7% and 70.4%; outsourcing funds for infrastructure development, 69% and 69.7%'; sponsorship to support school programs, 60.6% and 75.8%. This implies that there were very little, weak and unstructured collaborative efforts between the schools and the partnerships resulting in very low participation in school programs and learning outcomes for diverse learners, which dragged implementation of inclusive education. Several researches indicate that both educationists and policy makers single out the challenges in collaborating schools and stakeholders in school programs, despite the crucial role they play in implementing inclusive education (Duhaney & Spenser 2000; Epstein, 2001). QASO 5 was forthright:

There is no structured collaboration with partnerships. NGOs such as Ujamaa Africa, Association of Physical Disability in Kenya (APDK), and Korea

International Co-operation Agency (KOICA) support infrastructure, teaching and learning resources to integrated and special schools. They come to my office to ask for directions to a school they want to visit and I direct them.

In retrospect to the findings in Figure 1, Gatumbi, Ayot, Kimemia and Ondigi (2015) study on teachers and administrators' preparedness in handling learners with special needs in inclusive education in Kenya, revealed that 70.7% of respondents were concerned that schools do not collaborate with the community and other agencies to support learners with special needs in schools. In addition, Irungu study (2014) indicated that less than half of the head teachers, 40%, indicated having covered the content area of parent collaboration in inclusive educational settings. It is indicated that 44% of these respondents had given priority to parent collaboration. Thus, this study established that head teachers' commitment to gain experience with partnerships collaboration, could translate into positive support systems and services for implement inclusive education in schools.

Further analysis of the study findings on schools-partnerships collaboration in Figure 1 showed that the provision of specialized teaching and learning materials was assented by 36.6% and 36.7% head teachers and teachers. On the other hand, higher negative scores, 63.4% and 63.3% of the same respondents dissented it. The implication is that majority of the respondents were dissatisfied with the low collaborative efforts between schools and partnerships in provision of specialized teaching and learning materials for learners with special needs. The ramification of these findings is that there was low participation of partnerships in the provision of specialized teaching materials to schools. The document analysis of records on schools and partnerships collaboration is portrayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Records on schools' partnerships collaboration for support services.

<i>*School partnerships collaboration</i>	<i>Evidence of records</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Available</i>	<i>Unavailable</i>	

<i>for support services</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Specialized teaching and learning materials	20	28.2	51	71.8	71	100
Assessment of learners with Special needs	25	35.2	46	64.8	71	100
Outsource funds for infrastructure and school programs	19	26.8	52	73.2	71	100

Note. N = 71; f = frequency of responses; % = percentage of responses; records available on schools' partnerships collaboration for support services

Findings on the document analysis of the sampled schools in Table 1, revealed that only 28.2% of schools had records on specialized teaching and learning materials received from partners. Majority of the schools accounting for 71.8% did not keep any records to show such partnerships participation in the education of diverse learners. According to Sessional Paper of 2018 (Republic of Kenya, 2018^b), some partnerships work directly with schools without the approval by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology leading to duplication, conflict of interests and lack of accountability. EARC 4 revealed:

Some NGOs have interest in visiting schools where they find it necessary to provide assistive devices and support services; for example, Ear Drop Foundation, Deaf Aid and APDK. I can say that we do not have much say on what goes on between the NGOs and head teachers, especially when it comes to the issue of funds. I have not seen any record on funding from sponsors.

The findings in Table 1 on document analysis and the EARC 4 verbatim resonate with a study conducted by Kovač, Pavlović, and Jovanović (2014) which revealed that 60% of schools rarely initiated collaboration with the partnerships despite the partnerships willingness to provide support for teacher competencies in IEP and IE programmes. Buhere and Ochieng (2013) study reveal that only 37.5% (3) teachers agreed that head teachers collaborate with partners to acquire assistive devices and

wheel chairs. Irungu study (2014) found out that only 22.4% of the resource centres were contacted by schools to provide assistive technology to learners who needed them. It is stipulated by the Ministry of Education (2011), that head teachers should guide parents to form school committees to facilitate every child's access to school without discrimination and mobilize resources for teaching and learning in school. It was needful that head teachers re-engaged well-structured collaboration with stakeholders and partnerships for provision of specialized teaching and learning materials to improve access and participation in education for diverse learners.

The findings from Figure 1 on assessment of learners with special needs indicate that 35.2% and 33.7% of head teachers and teachers consent that their schools made arrangements for learners' identification and assessment; however, majority representing 64.8% and 66.3% held a contrary view. This contradiction suggests that majority of the schools did not conduct identification and assessment of learners with special needs prior to admission, except for few integrated and special schools. The implication is that learners with special needs were denied access to regular schooling due to lack of expertise skills to identify and assess the learners, and inadequate facilities. Similarly, Hayes and Bulat (2017) study reveal that most low and middle-income countries do not have systems in place to identify learners with special needs as they rarely administer vision and hearing assessments in primary schools. In Kenya half of learners in special units and fifth in special schools' country wide were not assessed prior to admission (KISE, 2018). Juma and Malasi (2018) study revealed that 63% of successful placement of learners with special needs in schools depend on comprehensive multidisciplinary assessment. However, it is ironical that at the minimum 11 to six learners with special needs are yet to be assessed and placed in

special and integrated schools; notwithstanding, that there are no statistics provided for regular schools. EARC 4 admitted:

In very rare cases or not at all do head teachers send learners to resource centres or EARC centres for assessment and placement in special units or special schools. It is us who make arrangements to visit schools, mostly integrated and special schools. Some head teachers are co-operative, others are not cooperative.

The ensuing discussion shows that very little effort was made to assess learners in regular schools. Irungu (2014) study consolidates these findings in that 81.6% of head teachers indicated that they relied on EARCs in the assessment of learners with special needs. However, EARCs are not adequate to conduct assessment in all schools. It is evidenced that EARC officers, parents and partners are crucial in assessment and placement; however, EARC lack equipment, capacity in terms of training and inadequate personnel (KISE, 2018).

In the same breath, the capacity to assess and quality assurance standards in inclusive education are inadequate at all levels. For instance, according to survey findings, most Quality Assurance Standards Officers (QASOs) were not assessing special schools and units (MoE, 2016); thus, Teachers Service Commission deploys Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs) to oversee the policy implementation (Republic of Kenya, 2018^a). Nevertheless, it is revealed that 36% of head teachers confided that the EARCs provided in-service training on identification and assessment of learners with special needs. Interestingly, the in-service training of teachers does not translate in assessment and placement of their learners in schools. Muuya (2002) argues that special teachers, regular teachers, therapists, audiologists and nutritionists must be involved in the assessment of learners. Therefore, it is incumbent upon head teachers to formulate

well-structured collaborative partnership participation including teachers, parents and experts in assessment and placement of learners in their schools. QASO 5 concurred:

In a way head teacher collaborate with EARC officers who visit schools to assess learners for referrals to special schools or units and also physiotherapy. EARC officers have specialized skills to identify and assess learners but we (QASOs) do not have. EARC officers can also train teachers if invited, though they are few.

The findings in Figure 1 on referral of learners for physiotherapy and expertise counselling reveal that average score of 42.3% for head teachers, and lower score of 29.6% for teachers consented to it. On the other hand, quite high negative scores of 57.7% for head teachers and very high scores of 70.4% for teachers contended against it. These findings show converging views from the respondents that very few learners were referred for specialized services by head teachers, with very little or without the knowledge of the teachers in school. This implies that assessments and referrals of learners were not well-structured, documented and followed-up.

The findings of document analysis in Table 1 on referral records for learners in the sampled schools show that only 35.2% of schools kept referral and assessment records for learners with special needs. Majority of the schools represented by 64.8% did not keep the records. This implies that majority of the schools did not keep up to date referral records or documents that ought to be used collaboratively by the school administration, teachers, parents and support service providers in monitoring the assessment, placement, special needs and medical conditions of learners in schools. These findings are supported by Irungu (2014) study which indicated that only 14.4% of respondents cited the role of EARCs in making referrals to regular, integrated and special schools. According to Republic of Kenya (2018^a), nationally, there are only

eight EARC county workshops, which are inadequate to provide services for learners with special needs.

The findings on referral of learners are adduced to Juma and Malasi (2018) study that indicate that less than half of referral and assessment centres in Kenya involve audiologists, speech therapists and nutritionists, but vision therapists and regular teachers are rarely involved in the referral and assessment. It is revealed that 76% of referral centres use obsolete equipment, a situation that has culminated in 72% of regular schools admitting learners with special needs without proper assessment and treatment. According to Talley and Brintnell (2015), admitting these learners without an expert referral is an act of education exclusion.

Schools collaborate with health care workers in screening learners for possible health conditions, referral for medical help and enrolment. For instance, congenital disabilities such as down syndrome can be prevented through early intervention before and when enrolled in school to enable them hear and communicate verbally (Mariga, McConkey & Myezwa, 2014). It was prudent that head teachers initiate collaborative structures with teachers, parents, referral and assessment centres, and service providers to provide physiotherapy, expertise counselling and other support services for learners with special needs.

The findings on outsourcing of funds for infrastructural provisions for learners with special needs from Figure 1 showed that this item elicited lower positive scores of 31% and 30.3% from head teachers and teachers; however, the same respondents registered higher negative scores accounting for 69% and 69.7% respectively. The findings of document analysis on outsourcing of funds in Table 1 revealed that only 26.8% of the schools had up to date records showing allocation of funds to the school. A higher negative score of 73.2% of the schools did not have up to date records on the

same. These findings suggest that majority of schools failed to initiate collaboration with partnerships to outsource additional funds. The few schools that received some funds, did not have proper documentation. QASO 6 was embarrassed to explain:

Due to lack of reliable statistics for special learners, some schools inflate numbers. A case of a head teacher picking learners from regular classes to get additional funding. Learners who've transferred are still in enrolment and schools continue getting funds from donors. I personally, I have not seen any record on the money received from donors by the head teachers. They keep it as a secret.

The ramification of the findings in Figure 1 on outsourcing of funds is that majority of the schools had very minimal funding channels for infrastructure development; thus, failure to improving on infrastructure. In addition, the outsourced funds were not fully accounted for in terms of channelling it for the intended purpose, and auditing how it was spent. The findings on outsourcing of funds are in semblance to Irungu (2014) study that show majority, 87.5% of respondents cited insufficient funding streams and levels as a challenge facing head teachers, with the majority of them, 97.6%, asking for additional funds.

The government funding in 2017/2018 was KShs. 1,420/= capitation per learner with special needs and KShs. 2,300/= for teaching and learning materials, which is too far inadequate (Republic of Kenya, 2018^a). Thus, there was need for head teachers to initiate collaborative partnerships to outsource additional funds for infrastructure development and improvement. Lack of coordination among partnerships hinders the infrastructural provisions for learners with special needs. For instance, a number of schools receive funds from multiple sources such as government, parents, donors and well-wishers as well as funds for EARC operations channelled through Constituency Development Fund; thus, posing accountability challenges (Ministry of Education,

2016; Republic of Kenya, 2018^a). In addition, there is inaccurate data to inform on computation and allocation of resources to learners (Republic of Kenya, 2018^a).

DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003) opine that head teachers, teachers and local education officers conduct periodic needs assessments to identify areas for school improvement, and coordinate budgets to ensure that education needs for diverse learners are addressed in schools. National Council for Special Education (2010) postulate that school's collaboration with partnerships enable it to acquire adequate funding, resources and support services for effective implementation of inclusive education.

The findings on sponsorship to support school programmes such as open day and outreach for diverse learners from Figure 1 showed that 39.4% and 24.2% of head teachers and teachers consented to it. However, a bigger proportion of the same respondents accounting for 60.6% and 75.8% were contended. This implies that teachers were less aware of the sponsorship for open day and outreach programmes partly because there was no well-structured collaboration initiative for partnership participation in schools. In seconding these findings, Irungu (2014) study found out that only 20.8% of the study participants indicated that EARCs were involved in organizing awareness programmes on the education of learners with special needs. The implication was that teachers, parents and other stakeholders were left out of the uncoordinated sponsorship initiative which resulted into very minimal participation and outcomes in the majority of schools.

Janney, Snell, Beers, and Raynes (1995) argue that head teachers need to work with education officials in their localities and other stakeholders to ensure that learners with special needs have access to buses, buildings, classrooms and extracurricular activities. Sanders and Harvey (2002) opine that community partners provide funds for school activities including transport and fees for the learners. Some communities in

Kenya, NGOs and CBOs assisted in payment of school fees, provided assistive devices and general care of learners with special needs, and hired aides at a cost of KShs. 5000 per parent; thus, enabling school enrolment and attendance (Republic of Kenya, 2014b). Therefore, it was evident that collaborative partnerships were unutilized opportunities that head teachers needed to have fully exploited to effectively implement inclusive education in schools.

Effectiveness of head teachers’ partnerships collaboration for implementing inclusive education

Tinde, Olja and Dragica (2016) study indicate that schools and partnership expert teams for inclusive education sustained stakeholders including parents’ participation in improving the overall school environment, learning and providing support services that teachers needed in handling learners with special needs. However, Hayes and Bulat (2018) research indicate that lack of partnerships between schools and stakeholders such as parents in inclusive education, results in failure of inclusive education. Head teachers and teachers’ responses on the effect of head teachers’ collaboration with partnerships on inclusive education implementation are displayed in Figure 2.

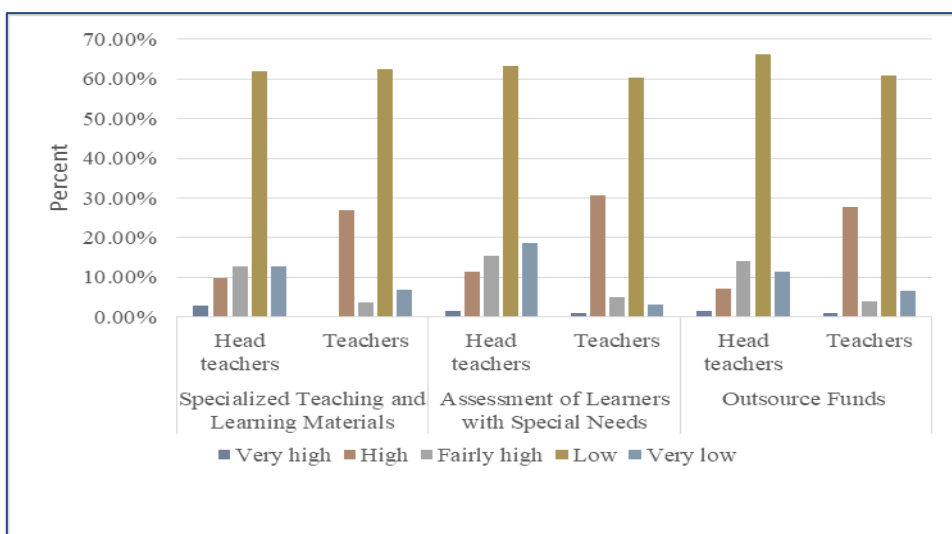


Figure 2. Responses on the effect of head teachers’ partnerships on level of participation in school programs
 Legend. N = 71;297 percentage (%) =percentage of head teachers and teachers’ responses on effect of head teachers’ partnerships collaboration on level of participation in school programs

From the findings in Figure 2, majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the low level of participation of partnerships in the provision of support services in their schools illustrated as follows: provision of specialized teaching and learning materials, 62% and 62.6% for head teachers and teachers; assessment of learners with special needs, 63.4% and 60.3%; while, outsourcing of funds had 66.2% and 60.9%. This trend suggests that majority of the schools lacked well-structured coordinated partnerships for the provision of key support service for diverse learners; thus, impeding on inclusive education implementation. EARC 4 observed:

In very rare cases or not all do schools collaborate with stakeholders or partners. Some NGOs visit schools when they have interest, but lack of coordination limits collaboration. Some well-established schools have a number of their programs sponsored by donors, in areas such as textbooks, assistive devices, hiring aides, and infrastructure.

Further analysis of the findings on the effect of collaboration of partnerships in provision of specialized teaching and learning materials from Figure 2 indicated that only 12.7% and 26.9% of head teachers and teachers were contented with the participation of partners on this initiative. Contrastingly, 62% and 62.6% of the same respondents were contented with the low participation of partners on the initiative. This implies that there was low partnership participation on this program; thus, effecting on low access and participation of diverse learners in learning.

According to the National Association of Schools Psychologists (2005), well-coordinated collaborative partnerships in schools are significant for learners, teachers and the families in terms of higher academic achievements, improved behavior, higher participation in school programs, improved school attendance with fewer referrals to special education. For instance, partnerships between Syracuse University's School of Education from USA, Kenyatta University and Thika School of the Blind saw to it that

learners were assessed, trained on the use of assistive technology such as Ipads and keyboards; as a result, learners were able to access learning materials without the assistance of readers (United Nations, 2015).

The findings on the effect of collaboration of partnerships in assessment of learners with special needs in Figure 2 revealed that lower scores of 15.4% and 30.6% of head teachers and teachers felt that at least there was participation of partners in the assessment. However, majority, 63.4% and 60.3% of the same respondents strongly felt that the participation was low. This suggests that very few integrated and special schools represented by 15.4% and 30.6% had their learners assessed and placed in their schools through some partnership collaborative efforts. However, majority of the schools, particularly regular schools failed to initiate and coordinate collaborative partnerships to assess and place learners with special needs in their schools. The implication of these findings is that there was very low and uncoordinated participation of partnership in assessment and placement of learners with special needs in majority of the schools; hence, denying them access and participation in learning.

Heckman and Masteroy (2005) opine that early identification and intervention leads to positive outcomes such as high academic performance. However, in both high-income and low-income countries, identification of learners with severe special needs is done prior to reaching school age, while those with less or mild special needs such as low vision, hearing impairment, learning disability and moderate autism are identified after joining pre-primary or primary school (Wirz, Edwards, Flower & Yousafzi, 2005).

In Lesotho coordinated collaborative partnership between schools, NGOs and CBOs resulted in successful implementation of inclusive education with 75% of diverse learners between ages 5-15 years assessed and placed (Mariga, McConkey & Myezwa, 2014). In addition, Villa et al. (2003) study on school-community partnerships in

Vietnam, saw to it that teachers were trained to cooperative learning, assessment and placement of learners with special needs in regular classrooms. The effect of these collaborative initiatives was that the access and participation in learning of learners with special needs increased from 30% to 86%.

On the contrary, in Kenya, similar findings to this study are revealed in a study by Irungu (2014) that found out that 97.5% of the class teachers reported insufficient support from parents as one of the challenges the head teachers faced in implementing inclusive education. The same respondents accounting for 56.3% felt that their head teachers received inadequate support from teachers to promote inclusive education. Merita and Terina (2017) espouse that identification and assessment of learners with special needs is carried out in collaboration with the school and stakeholders such as parents and local education authorities; whereby, learners are placed in school where their information is recorded in a database system which is updated regularly to check on their retention rate.

The findings on outsourcing of funds for infrastructural provisions and sponsoring school programs from Figure 2 showed that lower positive scores of 14.1% and 27.6% of head teachers and teachers felt that there was little participation on this initiative. Ironically, higher negative scores of 66.2% and 60.9% of the same respondents strongly felt that there was very low participation of partners on this initiative. These findings are suggestive that majority of the head teachers lacked common understanding with teachers and other stakeholders on the initiative to outsource funds for their schools. The implication is that majority of the stakeholders and partners lowly participated not only on the initiative of outsourcing funds for the school's programs but also were discouraged from participating in providing support services and educational needs of diverse learners in the schools. This is partly

attributed to personal initiatives by head teachers and school committees to outsource funds for their schools' programs of interest to themselves, without proper coordination with other stakeholders including teachers, parents, sponsors, and partnerships. EARC officer 6 submitted:

They rarely speak about donors or money they get from them. As a matter of concern, they divert money for inclusive education and even the one meant for infrastructure to other areas of the school. There are no records to show how much funding they received from sponsors for learners with special needs in special units in regular primary schools.

The revelation by EARC officer 6 point to financial impropriety in schools that need immediate remedy from internal and external monitoring systems in order to secure and re-channel funds meant for inclusive education. In support to these findings, in addition, Buhere and Ochieng (2013) findings indicate that even though 53% (16) of head teachers were satisfied with improved government funding for school infrastructure, special teachers felt that increased funding was essential and that mechanism be put in place to avoid diversion of funds meant for learners with special needs to other areas. It was revealed that 62.5% of the teachers were dissatisfied with infrastructure including toilets which were not appropriate because they were not modified due to lack of consultation with technical experts. QASO 5 confirmed:

They get some financial support to improve on infrastructure but they rarely speak about it. Most schools rely on government funding for infrastructure and instructional materials, but it is still too small to use it on infrastructure, special equipment, cater for special diet and services.

Deng and Holdsworth (2007) study found out that head teachers coordinated with parents, special teachers and service providers and had them participate in school programmes such gathering and maintaining data on learners with special needs,

formulating school policy and school development or infrastructure plans, and sponsoring training in specialized and instructional skills to handle the learners. The effect was that the enrolment of learners with special needs increased from 30% to 60%. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the head teachers to coordinate collaborative partnerships in identified school programs in order to participate in providing educational resources and support services for implementing inclusive education.

Association between head teachers’ partnerships collaboration with implementation of inclusive education

The null hypothesis tested was: ‘there is no significant difference between head teachers’ partnerships collaboration with implementation of inclusive education.’ The independent variable was factored in head teachers’ partnerships collaboration; while the dependent variable was indicated in participation rates. The tests are presented in chi-square statistical Table 2.

Table 2. Chi- square results*specialized teaching/learning materials *vis-à-vis* participation for learners with special needs

Chi-square test			
	Value	df	Asymp.sig
Pearson Chi-square	4.722 ^a	4	.317
Likelihood Ratio	5.296	4	.258
Linear-by-linear Association	.761	1	.383
N of valid cases	71		

a. 7 cells (70.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .72.

The chi-square results findings reveal that there was significant association between head teachers’ partnerships collaboration with implementation of inclusive education. Therefore, the study established that head teachers’ partnerships collaboration effect on implementation of inclusive education.

Conclusions

The study established that majority of schools had weak, uncoordinated and unstructured partnership collaboration that yielded low level of partnership participation in the provision of support services in their schools; consequently, hindering access and participation of diverse learners in education. This was attributed to head teachers' self-willed initiatives and lack of partnership networking skills for their schools. The chi-square analysis confirmed that there was statistically significant association between head teachers' partnerships collaboration with the implementation of inclusive education. Thus, head teachers' partnerships collaboration effect on implementation of inclusive education in schools.

Recommendations

- i.) The Board of Management, School Committee and head teachers should broaden their partnerships engagements. First, they should increase their capacity through expertise training in partnership collaboration, formulate institutional strategic plans for inclusive education, and network or benchmark with likeminded institutions to gain experience with partnerships for inclusive education.

- ii.) A well-structured coordinated framework for partnerships engagement and participation should be redesigned from the national level cascading to the schools with focus on inclusive education. The programs of partnerships such as provision of specialized teaching and learning materials, assessment of learners, and outsourcing of funds amongst others should serve as impetus for deliberate consultative planning for provision of educational needs and support services for inclusive education implementation.

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