

# Attitudes of Teachers Towards Integrating Pupils With Special Needs in an Inclusive Setting in Public Primary Schools in Tindiret, Nandi County, Kenya

Stephen Kipsang Kirui

Egerton University, Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Management

**Abstract:** *The debate about inclusive education has been lessened and the society is trying to digest into the education system in Kenya, the integration of pupils with special needs. Despite all these efforts there are still some challenges that affect inclusive education in our society from international level to local level. This paper sought to investigate the attitudes of school administration towards integration of pupils with special needs in an inclusive setting. The research adopted a descriptive survey research design to carry out the study since it involves the study of various entities.*

**Keywords:** Attitude, Integrating, Inclusive, Special Needs

## 1. Introduction

A child with special educational needs include those with Learning disability, a condition that affects the academic performance. Children develop more slowly than other children of the same age. This is due to the difficulty with the basic processes that are applied in understanding or using spoken and written languages, reading and listening, comprehension, basic reading skills and mathematical reasoning/calculation [1]. Another category are those with mental disability, those who have significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behaviour and manifested during developmental period [2].

Integration of disability it is the complete integration of the student with a special need into the general education classroom. The student receives all special services in the same general education classroom as all other students. This is very common with students whose needs are easily met in a classroom, such as a modification that allows the student more time to complete written assignments. Here the students classified as disabled remain in general classrooms virtually all the time [3]. (Bowe, 2005) Related services are provided via "push in," meaning that professionals enter the classroom and deliver assistance there.

In recent times, there has been a growing realization in Africa that the greatest problems faced by children with disabilities are prejudice, social isolation and discrimination in society. The study Educating Children in Difficult Circumstances estimates that only eight per cent of children with disabilities in Bangladesh are currently enrolled in various educational institutions [4]. Of these, 48 per cent were seeking formal education, 23 per cent were in integrated schools, 15 per cent were in special education, and five per cent were in inclusive education. Among the enrolled children with mild and moderate disabilities, 79 per cent were enrolled in formal educational settings. Of those with severe and profound disabilities, 83 percent were enrolled in special education [4].

It should be noted that educational opportunities for learners with special needs and disabilities have been a major challenge to the education sector whereby majority of learners with Special Needs and Disabilities in Kenya have not been accessing educational services. However, this scenario has changed especially after the launch of the National SNE policy on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2010 at KIE. For instance, in 1999 there were only 22,000 learners with special needs and disabilities enrolled in special schools, units and integrated programs. This number rose to 26,885 in 2003 and 45,000 in 2008, to more than 60,000 in 2011. With an increase in learners with disabilities, various inclusive schools have been struggling to provide quality education. This paper sought to assess the effects of teachers' attitudes on integration of special needs pupils.

## 2. Methodology

The research design employed a descriptive survey study. Since the study of several entities in depth in order to gain insight into those entities and it also describes as it explains rather predicts. The study was conducted in Tindiret Sub-county. Tindiret is the north eastern region of the Nandi County. The paper covered a target population of 324 respondents. The sub-county has 20 public primary schools. The population was composed of 240 teachers, 40 PTA representatives (chairman and treasurer). Stratified random sampling technique was used as schools were categorized into two zones; Tindiret with nine public schools and Mbogo Vale with eleven schools. The study used half of teachers from each school which was perceived to be an adequate sample size. Teachers were selected using simple random sampling technique while PTA Chairmen were purposely selected. As a result, a total of 120 teachers and 20 PTA representatives were used. Data was collected using a questionnaire and an interview schedule.

## 3. Presentation of Results

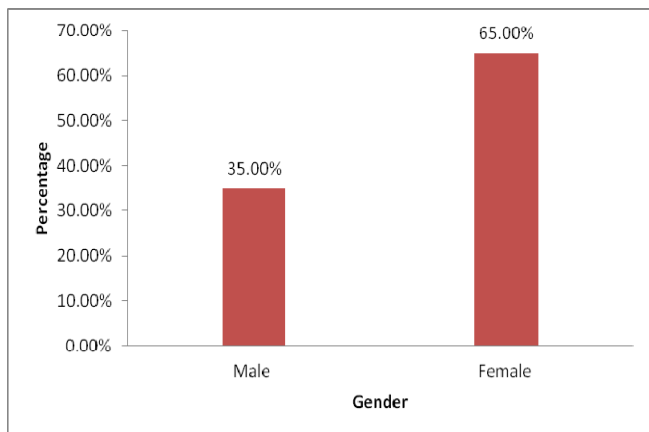
This section presents the background information of the teachers as well as the effects of teachers' attitudes on the

integration of pupils with special needs in an inclusive setting.

**3.1 Background Information**

**3.1.1 Gender of the Respondents**

The study sought find out gender of the teachers. Majority 78(65%) indicated female while 42(35%) indicated male as shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents**

The findings from this study imply that most of the teachers were female. Unlike in the past in Kenya where there used to be more male teachers, the findings indicate that more female teachers have ventured into teaching profession.

**3.1.2 Age of the Respondents**

The study sought to find the age of the teachers in years. Majority 42(35%) of the teachers indicated 31-35 years, 38(32%) 26-30 years, 15 (13%) 21-25years while 5(4%) indicated below 20 years as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Age of the Respondents**

| Age Bracket    | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Below 20 years | 5         | 4%         |
| 21-25 years    | 15        | 13%        |
| 26-30 years    | 38        | 32%        |
| 31-35 years    | 42        | 35%        |
| Total          | 120       | 100%       |

This indicated that most of the teachers were aged 31-35 years. The study further established that the average age of the respondents was 31 years. This therefore indicates that most respondents are mature enough and going by the years, then it is believed that they have accumulated enough skills and experience in relation to factors influencing integration of children with special needs.

**3.1.3 Duration in the Teaching Profession**

The study sought to find the duration the respondents have been in the teaching profession. Majority 35(38%) of the teachers indicated 11-15 years, 30(25%) 16-20 years, 25(21%) 6-10 years, 20(17%) 0-5 years while 10(8%) over 20 years as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Duration in the Teaching Profession**

| Duration   | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| 0-5 years  | 20        | 17%        |
| 6-10 years | 25        | 21%        |

|               |            |             |
|---------------|------------|-------------|
| 11-15 years   | 35         | 30%         |
| 16-20 years   | 30         | 25%         |
| Over 20 years | 10         | 8%          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>120</b> | <b>100%</b> |

The findings imply that most of the teachers have been teaching for 11-15 years. This therefore show how much experience they have had particularly with integration of children with special needs and therefore were the right people for the study as information given was reliable. In addition, the long teaching profession also implied that teachers are aware of the challenges facing integration as well as how they feel about integration.

**3.1.4 Teachers' Highest Professional Qualifications**

The study sought to find the highest professional qualification of the teachers. Majority 70(58%) of the teachers indicated DIP in (ED), 35(30%) indicated P1, 10(8%) indicated P2 while 5(4%) indicated MED as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Teacher's Highest Professional Qualifications**

| Professional Qualifications | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| P1                          | 35        | 30%        |
| P2                          | 10        | 8%         |
| DIP (ED)                    | 70        | 58%        |
| MED                         | 5         | 4%         |
| Total                       | 120       | 100%       |

This implies that most teachers had DIP (Ed) as their highest professional qualification. Results showed that most teachers have been trained above the required training for primary teachers (P1 or P2 certificate) with majority have diplomas and few others having master degree in education. Thus, most of the teachers are very qualified in providing education.

**3.2 Effect of Teachers' Attitudes on Integration of Pupils with Special**

In relation to how teachers' attitudes affect integration of learners in an inclusive setting, a Likert scale format with seven variables was used for answering. Table 4 has a summary of the findings.

**Table 4: Effect of Teachers' Attitudes on Integration of Pupils with Special**

| Statements   | SA  | A   | NS | D   | SD  |
|--|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|
| I feel that learners with special needs cannot learn effectively                           | 54% | 29% | 0% | 13% | 4%  |
| I feel that learners with special needs require special equipment                          | 46% | 29% | 0% | 8%  | 18% |
| I feel that learners with special needs cannot interact with others                        | 38% | 21% | 8% | 17% | 17% |
| I feel that learners with special needs have difficulties in attending to school regularly | 8%  | 4%  | 5% | 29% | 54% |
| I feel that learners with special needs require special teachers                           | 67% | 21% | 4% | 4%  | 4%  |
| I feel that learners with special needs require special education environment              | 63% | 25% | 4% | 4%  | 4%  |
| I feel that learners with special needs have problems with communication                   | 25% | 33% | 8% | 13% | 21% |

In relation to the teachers feelings that learners with special needs cannot learn effectively, the study found that majority, 65(54%) of the teachers strongly agreed, 35(29%) agreed, 15(13%) disagreed while 5(4%) strongly disagreed as shown in Table 10. This shows that a child who has a special need affects teachers teaching.

In relation to the teachers feelings that learners with special needs required special equipment, the study found that majority 55(46%) strongly agreed, 35(29%) agreed, 10(8%) disagreed while 10(8%) strongly agreed as shown in Table 10. This shows that a child needing special equipment is an attitude affecting teachers' teaching.

In relation to the teachers feelings that learners with special needs have difficulties interacting with others, it was established that majority 45(38%) of the teachers strongly agreed, 25(21%) agreed, 20(17%) disagreed, 20(17%) strongly disagreed while 10(8%) were undecided as shown in Table 10. This implies that learners cannot interact with others is an attitude affecting teachers' teaching.

In relation to the teachers feelings that learners with special needs having difficulties in attending schools regularly, it was established that majority 65(54%) of the teachers strongly disagreed, 35(29%) disagreed, 10(8%) strongly agreed, 5(4%) agreed as shown in Table 10. This implies that learners cannot go to school is not an attitude which affects their teaching.

In relation to the teachers feelings that learners with special needs require special teachers, the study found that majority 80(67%) of the teachers strongly agreed, 25(21%) agreed, 10(8%) strongly disagreed while 5(4%) disagreed as shown in Table 10. This implies that learners need special teachers is an attitude which affects their teaching.

In relation to the teachers feelings that learners with special needs require special environment, the study found that majority 75(63%) of the teachers strongly agreed, 30(25%) agreed, 5(4%) disagreed, 5(4%) strongly disagreed while 5(4%) were undecided as shown in table 10. This implies that learner's need special environment is an attitude which affects their teaching.

In relation to the teachers feelings that learners with special needs have problems with communication, the study established that majority 40(33%) of the teachers agreed, 30(25%) strongly agreed, 25(21%) strongly disagreed, 15(13%) disagreed while 10(8%) were undecided as shown in Table 10. This shows that learners' difficulty in communication is an attitude which affects their teaching.

When PTA representatives were interviewed indicated that most teacher have a negative attitude towards pupils with special needs. The further said that the major reason is lack of appropriate training as well as facilities. "...how can you be happy teaching a pupil with poor eyesight for example without visual aid, or learners with hearing problems without hearing aids? It is problematic" according to the information obtained from the interview schedule, it showed that most teachers have negative attitudes due to not only external factors like lack of training and lack of physical

facilities but also internal like lack of skills and knowledgeability for handling learners with special needs.

Research has found that the nature and type of the disability can influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion (Ryan, 2009). Avramidis et al. (2000) explain, "Multiple interpretations of labels occur when teachers attribute different characteristics to a label based on their experience which could be positive or negative". It was discovered that the nature and severity of the disabilities in the study and the perceived stress that would be put on the teacher significantly influenced the educators' opinions toward including the students with special needs in the classroom. According to Lopes et al. (2004), students with special needs "present serious challenges to teachers because they are difficult, time-consuming, and frustrating". Children with autism and emotional behavioral disorders generally exhibit different behaviours in the classroom than their typically developing peers and require individualized attention from professionals.

#### 4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that teachers have varying feelings (attitudes) to learners with special needs. Some have positive perception while others have negative perception towards integration of learners with special needs. It is worth noting that these varied attitudes affect integration either positively or negatively.

#### References

- [1] Russel-Fox, J. (2001). *Together is Better: Specific tips on How to Include Children with Various Types of Disabilities*. Annual Editions, Educating Exceptional Children, 01-02, 337-39.
- [2] Rhodes, R. L., Ochoa, S. H., & Ortiz, S. O. (2005). *Assessing culturally and linguistically diverse students: A practical guide. The Guilford practical intervention in the schools series*. New York: Guilford Press.
- [3] Bowe, F. (2005). *Making Inclusion Work*. Merrill Education/Prentice Hall.
- [4] Directorate of Primary Education (2002). *Guaranteeing Rights to Education: Educating Children in Difficult Circumstances-Children with Disabilities*. Directorate of Primary Education, Dhaka.

#### Author Profile

**Stephen Kipsang Kirui** is currently student at Egerton University, Kenya, pursuing a master degree in education management. He is also a primary school teacher as well as a researcher.