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## **A critical analysis of the schools' mainstreaming capacity in enhancing pedagogy of learners with special needs in Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

As much as the government of Kenya is putting its best effort to realize the goals of EFA where basic education is concerned, it is marred with vey many challenges relating to access, equity as well as quality as points out the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST, 2005), World Bank (2012) and UNESCO (2012) in their periodicals. These challenges include overstretched institutional facilities, school overpopulation, soaring teacher-learner rations (PTRS) in areas with a high population density. In addition, there is the escalating cost of learning equipment and other facilities that would make learning for special needs children worthwhile. The purpose of the study was critical analysis of the schools' mainstreaming capacity in enhancing pedagogy of learners with special needs in Kenya. The researchers formulated research objectives to critically analyze the teachers' skills and training capacity, preparedness level of school infrastructure, preparedness of the content, preparedness of the instructional resources and the extent of policy implementation for provision of pedagogy for learners with special needs in the mainstream in Kenya. The study was guided by Vygotsky's theories of inclusion which intervene for children with special needs. The study was carried out using qualitative method. This was valid method to obtain the necessary information and facts for the purpose of the study. The study adopted qualitative research design that was valid in studying critical analysis. The study made critique literature review and formulated research findings. The study made conclusion on the concept of mainstreaming guided by research objectives. The study made recommendations to help the policy makers, the teachers, the parents, the leaners, the school and the government at large to facilitate learning of learners with special needs in all the schools in Kenya

**Keywords:** Mainstreaming, pedagogy, UNESCO, EFA, integration, special needs

### **1. Introduction**

According to UNESCO (2001), One of the points of agenda of Education for All (EFA) is to have an all-inclusive system of Education where institutions make the environment an enabling one for learners with needs that make them special. Inclusivity encompasses on focusing on those learners whose plight in as far as education has been neglected or excluded. These children whose predicament is being brought on board include those with disabilities as well as those with special needs such as gifted and talented.

The term mainstreaming or integration reflects on the attempts to place learners with special needs in the mainstream or regular education system. The focus remains on disability. The three main forms of mainstreaming are functional mainstreaming, locational or physical mainstreaming and social mainstreaming. The terms integration and mainstreaming are used interchangeably. Unfortunately the situation reflected on the ground where there are learners with special needs is different. There is little done to ensure the comfort of these learners in the mainstreaming more over lack of information and negative attitude towards the latter has taken the day at the expense of these innocent learners. This study basically spells out low accommodation of learners with special needs in the mainstream. The study focused on the schools' mainstreaming capacity in enhancing pedagogy of leaners with special needs in Kenya

### **2. Problem Statement**

As much as the government of Kenya is putting its best effort to realize the goals of EFA where basic education is concerned, it is marred with vey many challenges relating to access, equity as well as quality as points out the Ministry of Education Science and Technology

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(MOEST, 2005), World Bank (2012) and UNESCO (2012) in their periodicals. These challenges include overstretched institutional facilities, school overpopulation, soaring teacher-learner ratios (PTRS) in areas with a high population density. In addition, there is the escalating cost of learning equipment and other facilities that would make learning for special needs children worthwhile.

According to a report generated by EFA Global Monitoring and Evaluation, (2005 and 2012), the value of education has a lot to be desired especially in most of the countries in the sub-Sahara Africa with Kenya being no exceptional. Pupils in these regions perform dismally in particular those in basic levels. Therefore policy intervention is paramount to help determine internal efficiency in as far as implementation of mainstream education of learners with special needs is concerned as pointed out the Republic of Kenya (2010a and 2012a). The study notes that most schools have not been in a position to adjust to accommodating learners with diverse learning needs owing to the barriers in Kenyan Educational system as well as social and political lack of good will. In addition economic ailments serve as the main barrier to achieving the goals of mainstream education.

The barriers noted to hinder progressive education for all learners in Kenya include; lack of appropriate national policies and legislations, unfriendly environment, classroom factors, delayed identification and intervention, learner factor (severity, onset and diversity of the learners needs, negative attitude of the teachers, lack of specialized training, poor community involvement, teacher and school management, inadequate parental involvement, curriculum barriers, communication between the teacher and a learner, rigid education approaches and insufficient or lack of material resources.

Timely intervention needs to be put in place to facilitate accommodation in the mainstream education of children whose learning needs make them special in Kenyan schools. This sustained the researchers' curiosity in conducting a critical analysis on the schools' mainstreaming capacity in enhancing pedagogy of learners with special needs in Kenya.

### 3. The Study Purpose

The study purpose was to critically analyze the schools' mainstreaming capacity in enhancing pedagogy of learners with special needs in Kenya.

### 4. Research Objectives

1. To critically analyze the teachers' skills and training capacity in mainstreaming in the provision of pedagogy for learners with special needs in the mainstream education system in Kenya
2. To critically Analyze the schools' mainstreaming capacity levels of physical infrastructure in catering for the needs of learners with special learning needs in mainstream education system in Kenya.
3. To critically analyze the schools' mainstreaming capacity on the content for the teaching and learning of children whose needs are special in the mainstream education system in Kenya?
4. To critically analyze the schools' mainstreaming capacity of the instructional resources to help in meeting the needs of children with special needs in the mainstream education system in Kenya.
5. To critically analyze schools' mainstreaming capacity of the policies regarding teaching and learning of

learners with special needs in the mainstream education system in Kenya.

### 5. Research Questions

1. What is the teachers' skills and training capacity in mainstreaming in the provision of pedagogy for learners with special needs in the mainstream education system in Kenya?
2. To what extent has the mainstream capacity of the physical infrastructure been adapted to cater for learners with special needs in the mainstream education system in Kenya?
3. How has the schools' mainstreaming capacity adapted the content for teaching and learning of learners with special needs in the mainstream education system in Kenya?
4. What is the schools' mainstreaming capacity of the instructional resources for helping in meeting the needs of learners with special needs in the mainstream education system in Kenya?
5. To what extent has the schools' mainstreaming capacity implemented policies regarding teaching and learning of learners with special needs in the mainstream education system in Kenya?

### 6. Significance of the Study

This study may benefits the learners with special needs in their learning in the mainstream. This is because the environment, content and instructional materials facilitates learning if well adapted. Also the study may help the teachers in handling learners with special needs to focus on the needs of specific learners in the class. When teachers are equipped with the necessary skills, there is improvement in their way of delivery of the content to suit learners with special needs in the mainstream. The study may help the school administration and the community at large to accommodate learners with special needs in regular schools since it enhances awareness of such learners in the school community.

The parents of learners with special needs may also benefit in that their children will get the right attention in the mainstream. The parents also find the need of supporting learning of the children through parental involvement. The study may help the society to accommodate learners with special needs. This is because it helps in creating awareness in all the stakeholders including the leaders in local levels. This helps them to appreciate these learners in the wider society. The study may also be important to the policy makers and the school administrators. This is because it helps them to implement the policy regarding instructional model of children with special needs in the mainstream. This may enhance education quality in regard to integration of children whose learning needs are special in the mainstream system of education in Kenya.

### 7. Literature Review

#### 7.1 Critical analysis of the teachers' skills and training capacity in mainstreaming in the provision of pedagogy for learners with special needs in Kenya.

The main question to ask ourselves here is; how many teachers have been trained in special needs education in our schools? What is the teacher pupil ratio in our schools? How many learners whose needs are different can handle in mainstream education system? What remuneration is accorded to the teacher in the main stream as opposed to the

one in a special school, special unit and the like? Worth noting is that most of our questions may not be answered satisfactorily to the expectation of the policy of mainstreaming in our schools. Much is expected for the implementation of this policy if it will meet the expected standards.

Teachers who have received special education in Kenya are limited in numbers and have been posted to very few schools in Kenya while in most schools there is barely any teacher equipped with knowledge skills and attitudes to cater for learners with special needs. As opposed to this there are quite a high number of learners with special needs in our schools. They range from those whose traits are observable such as the physically handicapped, visually impaired, hearing impaired and the like. Worth noting is the large number of learners with special needs who may go unnoticed by untrained teacher? These include the emotionally and behaviorally disturbed, the gifted and talented, the specific learning difficulties and the like mostly these learners are ill-treated due to misinterpretation of their behavior by the untrained personnel.

The teachers' ratio in most of our schools is wanting. Coupled with this problem the teacher trained in special needs may not have the capacity to cater fully for those special needs learners in the class. Moreover most of the teachers are overloaded with curriculum content from huge work load notwithstanding the peanut pay from the employer. There is a discrepancy on the ratio of teacher-learner in special schools and units as opposed to the mainstream. Whereas the numbers in the former are stipulated, the situation in the latter remains unlimited. The teacher in the mainstream is expected to handle voluminous workload for the regular learner in addition to handling special learners in the same class. It should be noted here that the learning process of the two groups is quite different whereby the special learner mostly depends on skill training for lifelong education such as the social living skills. The regular learner learns through regular curriculum for schools.

There is also a challenge on the preparedness of the regular teacher in the mainstream. This implies that the teacher may not be ready to accommodate the learners with special needs. Since in the mainstream we have regular and special education needs educators, there is a need to have programmers to sensitize even the regular teachers on the needs of learners with special needs. This is because they will handle them in one way or the other. The issue of special allowance may make most special teachers be unwilling to work in the mainstream. This is because despite the workload for both regular and special needs learners, the teachers receive the same remuneration with the teacher in a regular class.

### **7.1.1 Effectiveness of mainstreaming on pedagogy of learners with special needs in Kenya.**

The main question to ask ourselves here is; how are the learners with SNE viewed by the community, parents and educators? Majority of communities in Africa interpret disability as a punishment rendered to them by their deities for having wronged their ancestors in one way or another. Moreover, children with disabilities were viewed as a bad omen not only to their families but also to the greater community. Any child with disabilities is considered a curse or possessed with spirits and therefore is not fit as a member

of the community. Superstitions of that nature lead to such children being kept undercover by their parents to avoid being jeered or condemned by the same society to which they belong.

Therefore it's no big deal for such children to miss school. Additional negative attitudes by the society include stereotypic beliefs. Education is seen in terms of good job and an investment hence academic excellence is a must. Lack of good will and moral support from stakeholders due to ignorance, misinformation and priorities leaves these children unattended.

### **7.2 Critical analysis of the schools' mainstreaming capacity levels of physical infrastructure in catering for the needs of learners with special learning needs in mainstream education system in Kenya.**

A friendly learning environment is crucial for teaching and learning of learners with special needs worth noting is the wanting conditions in most of our schools where learners are integrated. A few areas highlighted below help us understand the situation on the background. Majority of classrooms in Kenya are deficient in organization in terms of instructional learning centers which are commonly referred to as nature corners as well as project areas. Needless to say, this results from overcrowded classrooms in our schools. Moreover, the sanitation facilities in our integrated schools are no better. There is a cause for worry. The toilets and latrines are neither adapted nor adopted in catering for special needs learners. Great concern here is of learners who are physically handicapped learners (P.H) who are to bear with the intolerable condition.

There is also lack of adaptation in our schools as far as public and private buildings are concerned. For instance, how are the doors adapted to allow for movement of a learner on a wheel chair? How are the office doors adapted to meet the same? Worth noting is the problem of right of entry and mobility relating to special needs learners' in so far as mainstream schools. The walkways in the mainstream schools may not be wide enough paths in school are not wide enough for persons with disabilities to move with ease. There are no ramps where we have stairs and movement of these learners is again a problem. How is the lighting in our classroom? A good number of our classrooms are not fitted with electricity as such learning of learners with sight problems is affected especially early in the morning or wet days characterized by mist and fog.

There is lack of walking bars in most of our schools which would have otherwise acted as support for learners with disabilities. There is also limited ventilation in most of our classrooms and this is unbearable bearing in mind that most learners with special needs suffer from multiple infections such as chest problems, asthma and the like. There are unlockable doors and windows in most of our classrooms. This poses problems in two broad areas for learners with special needs. During harsh weather conditions it becomes extremely cold and this affects the health of the learner with special needs in the mainstream. Secondly the learner may be forced to always carry learning materials such as text books while going home. This may be uncomfortable for learners with special needs such as the physically handicapped as it increased burden to them.

Moreover the problem of physical environment in the school is another challenge. There are holes, pits and unlevelled ground in our schools. Besides being a challenge to regular

learners, it impacts more on learners with special needs whose motor skills may have been impaired causing clumsiness, walking problems coordination and the like. This causes many accidents in the mainstream. Our play fields and play areas are no better. They have not either been adapted or adopted to cater for learners whose needs are exceptional. Learners are expected to participate in the same games and compete with regular learners. This may cause lack of achievements since they don't have the same ability. Constant failure to win or achieve in their play as they compete may cause frustrations and this may affect learning of learners with special needs.

### **7.2.1 Critical analysis of Society Preparation on pedagogy of learners with special needs in mainstream set up in Kenya**

Support from the community for integration may be lacking especially in the construction of physical infrastructure that may enhance the learning of children with disabilities alongside those with learning difficulties. Provision of construction materials such as stones, bricks, sand and labor is their prerogative and as such failure to meet these requisites may be in bad taste for mainstreaming process. The communities, in addition, fail to make mandatory enrolment of children with special needs as well as generation of ideas meant to positively identify with mainstreaming programs. It may fail to support monitoring of discipline of pupils in and outside the school. It may also fail to establish and sustain the school as a social service.

### **7.3 Critical analysis the schools mainstreaming capacity on the content for the teaching and learning of children whose needs are special in the mainstream education system in Kenya.**

An apt or relevant curriculum is paramount in an integrated system of education if meaningful education is to be achieved for special needs children in the mainstream schools. As espoused in the Koech Report of 1999, the curriculum used in Kenyan schools is so inappropriate in handling issues related to exceptional children needs owing to the factors discussed herein

([www.ijhssnet.com/journals/vol3no9may2013](http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/vol3no9may2013)).

There are insufficient facilities, equipment as well as provision of services such as Medicare care and assessment tools for learners with special needs that would help in placement regular mainstream education. Moreover, there are pitiful prepared staffs that resort in using very unyielding instructional methods which may not be of benefit to a learner who is exceptional provisions for exceptional learners such as the gifted and talented is nonexistent. The curriculum has not been overhauled to help reduce the load on the content and adapt to the needs of learners with special needs. assessment of learners is another are that compromises the needs of such learners in the sense that it does not fully take into consideration their exceptionality.

Another problem is failure to consider subjects that would be of help to such learners in terms of lifelong survival skills. Moreover there is limited flexibility of the curriculum since learners are exposed to the same curriculum and also expected to do and pass the same examination. Some learners cannot cope with the extensive content thus their special needs are never met. Curriculum is too rigid that is not flexible for specific needs of learners coupled with

assessment or evaluation a criteria which is too much exam oriented. This is to the detriment of learners with special needs. Time allocation for the subject content coverage and also examinations is the same for all learners. This disadvantages learners with special needs since time allocation has not been adapted to meet their various needs.

### **7.3.1 Negative attitude emanating from ignorance and fear of the unknown.**

Parents may prioritize having their normal children in school completely disregarding those with special needs. More often than not the learners whose needs are special are only considered when funds remains after other needs are met. Low expectations from the learners with special needs makes these learners have a very low self-regard that may not help them achieve much. Parents who are financially apt have always set goals and expectations from their children and encourage them to soar to greater heights in life and as such failure in school is not entertained or accepted. They believe children should be like their parents or better than them. It is quite natural for parents to be over protective of their children with any form of disability and would therefore not subject their children to everyday activities such as schooling. A child's chance to develop to their full potential regardless of their status is therefore hampered by the parents' egocentric attitude.

### **7.4 Critical analysis of the schools' mainstreaming capacity of the instructional resources to help in meeting the wants of children with special needs the mainstream education set ups in Kenya.**

It has been the prerogative of the government to take the responsibility of all the public primary schools since the inception of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003. In this regard, it has taken over the whole responsibility of providing instructional materials and developing school facilities. Despite all that schools are experiencing difficulties in debts in terms of salaries to workers unpaid bills and deteriorating school infrastructure. There is also lack of equipment like assistive devices such as the hearing aids which are expensive hence parents cannot afford to buy them. There are limited trained personnel for example a high number of teachers are untrained in special needs education, peripatetic teachers and so on. There is inadequate and inappropriate resources both assistive and compensatory devices. There is limited supervision of schools due to insufficient human resources.

Moreover, it should be taken into account that up and until provisions for special needs learners are fully brought on board it may not be possible for them to benefit from mainstreaming. Integrated system of education does not mean less resource for special needs, but efficiency and equity in the use of available resources among those with special needs in the school. Worth noting is that instructional materials meant for learners with special learning needs are not accessible to all the learners who are in dire need of them. the scenario can be improved if their numbers are improved to adequately reach all the special needs fraternity Moreover teachers do not share teaching resources with colleagues and the locked up resources end up being waste as they age while they would have benefited more learners.

A lot of community resources lie idle for most periods while they could facilitate integrated education activities. For

example mosques and church building are used only a few days in a week, while schools around them are overcrowded. It is worth noting that it is the responsibility of the Kenyan government to make adjustment in the education system to help encompass the needs of all the learners regardless of their orientation as asserts UNESCO (1997) [6]. In a not shell the current trends in the world call for a new role for special education facilities to open the doors to regular schools. The special, human and material resources will benefit more learners with increased co-operation and collaboration between the special and regular schools in Kenya.

#### **7.4.1 The learners' factor/diversity of learners.**

These refer to the factors in the learner that may affect his/her learning and development. The learners' needs may fall in four categories namely mild, moderate, severe and profound. The four categories of learners may call for different treatment. For example unlike mild and moderate conditions of special needs that may be integrated in the mainstream, those learners with severe and profound conditions may not be integrated but have to be placed in special schools.

Worth noting is that most learners with special needs have multiple health problems. This may cause the learner to be out of school now and then to seek medical attention. This may in turn affect his or her performance. Age of onset of disability or difficulties in academic operations will also impact his or her potentials. This is due to impact on his or her learning. For example is the difficulty congenital (inborn) or acquired later in life? The nature of the special need may also affect his or her learning development. This will depend on whether the problem is general, mental disability or specific learning difficulty.

#### **7.5 Critical analysis of the schools' mainstreaming capacity of the policies regarding teaching and learning of learners with special needs in the mainstream in Kenya**

There are various government policy guidelines concerning special education needs but implementation is not clear. For example teachers posted to work with children with special needs in integrated schools are not paid the special allowance that their colleagues in special schools are paid. This demotivates them. There is also a policy on the provision of learning resources to children in integrated programmes which should be made clearer. If done the teachers will feel encouraged.

There is also a problem of the learners' ratio. This is because the ratio of learners with special needs and disabilities to regular learners in an integrated class is not stipulated by the Ministry of Education. There is also no clear guidelines or adequate preparation to minimize suspicion between parents and schools for example in free primary education there is confusion as it seems it is a crime for school heads to ask parents to contribute towards management of some urgent school activities like repairs or provision of furniture.

Most of the available legislation that support special needs such as the disability act, children's Act and others are not specific about integrated education practices required of all players. There should be a policy to determine which category of learning should be integrated and which category of learners should remain in special schools.

#### **8. Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by Vygotsky's theory of inclusion (1924). According to social-cultural theory of vygotsky's and inclusion, inclusion can provide improvement for the quality of education and social life for children with special needs. The theory addresses how to intervene for learners with special needs in inclusive education system. It address children's particular strengths while minimizing secondary social effects of children's lives.

#### **9. Research Methodology**

The study was critical analysis of the schools' mainstreaming capacity in enhancing pedagogy of learners with special needs in Kenya. The Study was carried out using qualitative method. This was valid method to obtain the necessary information and facts for the purpose of the study. The study was carried out in natural settings and therefore the research findings were accurate for the study. Qualitative research is suitable for critical analysis.

#### **10. Conclusions**

There is need for all the stakeholders to come on board to facilitate accommodation of learners with special needs in the mainstream. This may be done through; enhancing training of teachers to equip them with skills and knowledge for teaching learners with special needs, preparing the school infrastructure to accommodate learners with special needs in the mainstream, adapting the content to meet needs of different learners in the mainstream, enhancing instructional resources to fit the needs of learners with special needs in the mainstream and implementing policies regarding mainstreaming in Kenya.

The concept of mainstream system of education is the way to go since it embraces the needs of those learners who have different learning styles owing to their disabilities. Besides being a social and an academic platform for learners with special needs it also creates a forum for positive co-existence between learners who are normal and those that are not as advocates Farrell (2000). Moreover the set up creates a high awareness levels in relation to disabilities of such learners to the society at large as well as the teaching fraternity hence demystifying disability and all the negative connotations associated with it. Pedagogical skills are also enhanced to help have room for all the learners and their different learning styles.

#### **11. Recommendations**

The study made the following recommendations to help facilitate learning of learners with special needs in the mainstream.

1. The government should embark on a program to train more teachers in Special Needs Education in order to help them cope with those needs attributed to special needs learners in a mainstream system.
2. Physical infrastructure in the schools should be adapted to accommodate the needs of learners whose needs are special in mainstream system of education.
3. Content relevant to teaching in learners incorporated in the mainstream system of education should be adapted or adopted to cater for learners whose needs are different from others. Parents, teachers, nongovernmental organizations and community at large should support integrated education in the mainstream for easy access to all school going children in Kenya.

4. Policy makers should make policies to ensure effective learning of all learners in the mainstream and ensure they are implemented by providing necessary materials and ensuring there is a follow up.

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