# Challenges Facing Inclusive Education in Regular Primary Schools in Kenya

## By Anthony Wanjohi

## 1.0 Introduction

"Disability is not Inability" these are words of encouragement for those who perceive that people with physical challenges are helpless and cannot do what others do without the challenges. The debate of including them into society without being stigmatized has been discussed internationally by the UDHR (1949), UNGAC (1959) and the UNCRC (1989) all acknowledged education as a human right and enacted some of the articles to include them in every social sector.

This paper explores the challenges facing inclusive education in regular schools. The paper is organized into the following sections: Background to the study, which has two parts, namely the rationale for inclusive education and types of inclusive education. This section is followed by challenges facing inclusive education. These challenges are each discussed briefly.

## 2.0 Background Information

Inclusion in the context of education is the practice, in which students with special educational needs spend most or all of their time with non-disabled students. UNESCO, 2001 developed a language of inclusion for the disabled into the system of education by stating the following:

Inclusive education starts from the belief that the right to education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society.

Inclusive education takes the Education for All (EFA) agenda forward by finding was of enabling schools to serve all children in their communities as part of an inclusive education system.

Inclusive education is concerned with all learners, with a focus on those who have traditionally been excluded from educational opportunities – such as learners with special needs and disabilities, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities

Inclusion is about the child's right to participate and the school's duty to accept the child and to rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities from students without disabilities. A premium is placed upon full participation by students with disabilities and upon respect for their social, civil, and educational rights.

Inclusive schools no longer distinguish between "general education" and "special education" programs; instead, the school is restructured so that all students learn together.(Scheyes et al,1996).

All students can learn and benefit from education and schools should adapt to the needs of students, rather than students adapting to the needs of the school. Individual differences between students are a source of richness and diversity, and not a problem. The diversity of needs and pace of development of students are addressed through a wide and flexible range of responses (so long as those responses do not include removing a student with a disability from a general education classroom).

Inclusive education is a process of removing barriers and enabling all students, including previously excluded groups, to learn and participate effectively within general school systems.

## 2.1 Rationale for inclusion

The 1983 World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons states under Article 120 that all Member States agree that education for persons with disabilities should be carried out, as far as possible, within the general school system. A few years later, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of                                  the Child acknowledged                                  the special needs of children with disabilities, and stated that these children must            be guaranteed "effective access to education in a manner conducive to the child achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development..." Such notion was further asserted        by        the        1990        World        Declaration        on        Education        for All, by the 1993 Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for   Persons   with Disabilities, and by the 1994 UNESCO meeting (Piccione, 2000). A second key argument is that everybody benefits from inclusion. Advocates say that there are many children and young people who don't fit in (or feel as though they don't), and that a school that fully includes all disabled students feels welcoming to all. Moreover, at least one author has studied the impact a

diversified student body has on the general education population and has concluded that students with mental retardation who spend time among their peers show an increase in social skills and academic proficiency (Trainer,1991)

## 2.2 Types of inclusive Education

Inclusive education is divided into two:  Regular inclusion or partial inclusion and Full inclusion.

*Regular or partial inclusion:* Students with special needs are educated in regular classes for nearly all of the day, or at least for more than half of the day. Whenever possible, the students receive any additional help or special instruction in the general classroom. Most specialized services are provided outside a regular classroom, particularly if these services require special equipment or might be disruptive to the rest of the class (such as speech therapy), and students are pulled out for these services. The student occasionally leaves the regular classroom to attend smaller, more intensive instructional sessions in a resource room, or to receive other related services, such as speech and language therapy, occupational and/or physical therapy, and social work. This approach can be very similar to many mainstreaming practices. (Bowe, 2005)

*Full inclusion:* 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. (Bowe, 2005) Related services are provided via "push in," meaning that professionals enter the classroom and deliver assistance there

Schools that practice full inclusion for all students have no separate special education classes. However, full inclusion of all students, regardless of their particular needs, is a controversial practice, and it is not widely applied (Hastings,2003). It is more common for local educational agencies to provide a variety of settings, from special classrooms to mainstreaming to inclusion, and to assign students to the system that seems most likely to help the student achieve his or her individual educational goals.

## 3.0 Statement of the Problem

Today, the debate about inclusive education has been lessened and the society is trying to digest into the system the involvement of the physically challenged students the normal system of education. They are also trying to fight to stigmatization in order to create an opportunity for all in education. Despite all these efforts there are still some challenges that affect inclusive education in our society from international level to local level. This paper briefly examines these challenges and highlights strategies that can be undertaken to resolve these issues.

**4.0 Challenges facing Inclusive Education**

Efforts involved in implementation of Inclusive Education have got challenges that are facing them. These challenges are divided into various parts and they include;

**4.1 Beliefs / Attitude**

These are perceptions of the people in our environment. Responses to this inhuman treatment often elicited a charitable or protective response which sometimes led to improvements in the material circumstances of disabled people. Disabled people were objects of charity or asylum and subjected to patronizing attitudes based on the non-disabled person's view of them as not fully human or as incapable of living ordinary lives

They can further be classified as:

a) Society

It was believed that disabled people brought bad luck because they had been cursed or had had a spell placed upon them by witchcraft. They were often viewed as not fully human or possessed by evil spirits. This made it easy to make fun of or ridicule them. They became the butt of jokes and symbols for all the ills of the world. Clowns, court jesters and 'freak shows' are illustrations of this.

There are many cultural and literary manifestations of this thinking which are still being reinforced in myths, legend or literature. Even modern films, comics and television programmes draw upon and reinforce these negative stereotypes. Stereotypes are bundles of negative and untrue perceptions which often precondition how people treat and respond to disabled people.

b) Economically

Financing and support of educational services for students with special needs is a primary concern for all countries, regardless of available resources. Yet a growing body of research asserts that inclusive education is not only cost efficient, but also cost effective, and that equity is the way to excellence. The research seems to promise increased achievement and performance for all learners. Within education, countries are increasingly realizing the inefficiency of multiple systems of administration, organizational structures and services, and that special schools are a financially unrealistic option. For example (OECD, 1994) report estimates that the average cost of putting students with special educational needs in segregated placements is seven to nine times higher than educating them in general classrooms.

c) Teachers

According to Agbenyega (2006), many regular education teachers who feel unprepared and fearful to work with learners with disabilities in regular classes display frustration, anger and negative attitude toward inclusive education because they believe it could lead to lower academic standards (Gary, 1997; Tiegerman-Farber, 1998). Additionally, access to resources and specialist support affects teacher confidence and attitudes toward inclusive education (Bennett, 1997; Katzenmeyer, 1997). The teachers' beliefs about inclusion suggest that they do not regard students with disabilities, particularly those with sensory impairments as belonging in regular classes and would rather prefer them being educated in existing special schools, Teachers also believed that including students with disabilities limits the amount of teaching work they could do thereby resulting in incompletion of the syllabuses, teachers also believed that if students with disabilities were included in regular classes it would affect the academic performance of their peers without disabilities, Teachers perceived that their professional knowledge and skills were inadequate to effectively teach students with disabilities in regular schools. Further, the teachers expressed fear and concern, that because they do not have the required knowledge and expertise to teach students with disabilities who are included in their regular classes; it is contributing to a reduction in the academic success of their schools.

**4.2 Inadequate resources**

Apart from teachers' negative beliefs about inclusion and concern for their professional competency to practice inclusive education, resource issues also drew much concern for both

teacher groups. Resource issues addressed physical aspects such as inaccessible classrooms to students in a wheel chair, overcrowded classrooms; materials such as Braille and large prints: Further, teachers expressed concern about the lack of support from professionals with expertise such as peripatetic teachers or those with expertise in sign language and Braille as well as general special education experts: Teachers overwhelmingly believe that inclusive education is impossible without addressing their needs for specialist resources. Overall belief is that without sufficient resources and support inclusive education was not possible and doomed.

## 4.3 Inadequate Training

Qualified teachers know that classroom needs must be approached "from a

Curricular standpoint", in which difficulties are defined depending on each specific

task and activity, and on classroom conditions. Most teachers are not qualified to handle the students with physical challenges

## 4.4 Learner Based Challenges

Ordinary learners and challenged learners are different modes of understanding thus making one ahead of the other. The challenged students are not fast learners thus need more attention when handling them.

Inaccessible environment, lack of support from teachers and school make most of the learners repeat or drop out of school thus not boosting their morale.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Even though we still have a long way to go, Inclusive Education is POSSIBLE. When all particip ants, Governments, NGOs, teachers, students, parents and communities take action and join their efforts, the goal of achieving equality of access and opportunities for children/youth with vis ual impairment can start to become a reality.

## References

Agbenyega, J. (2006). *Examining Teachers' Concerns and Attitudes to Inclusive Education in Ghana.*

Bowe, F.(2005). *Making Inclusion Work. Merrill Education/Prentice Hall.*

Hastings. R.P. & Oakford, S. (2003). *Student teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of children with special needs. Educational Psychology*, page 23, 87-95

Kavale, K.A. (2002). *Mainstreaming to full inclusion: From orthogenesis to pathogenesis of an idea.* International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education, page 49, 201-214.

Praisner, C. L. (2003). *Attitudes of elementary school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. Exceptional Children*, page 69, 135-145.

Scheyer et al. (1996). *The Inclusive Classroom Teacher. Created Materials, Inc.*

Trainer, M. (1991). *Differences in common: Straight talk on mental retardation, Down syndrome, and life*. Rockville, MD" Woodbine house.Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949)

UNESCO (1994). *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action*.

UN (1989). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

---

**Suggested Citation in APA**

Wanjohi, A.M. (2010). *Challenges Facing Inclusive Education in Regular Primary Schools in Kenya.* KENPROPublications. Available online at
http://www.kenpro.org/papers/challenges-facing-inclusive-education-in-kenya.htm
**Access PDF**

Click to Access Printer Friendly copy in PDF Format