

Understanding Inclusion in the Global South: Debating Teachers' Perspectives and Concerns: The Case of Kenya, Tanzania, India

Atida Obeid Mbingamno¹, Krishna Prasad Gogoi²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Dibrugarh University

²Professor, Department of education, Dibrugarh University

Abstract

All people have the right to get education. However, some do not get access to education due to various reasons, such as socio-cultural factors as well as disabilities they have. Inclusive education aims to provide learning chances for all people within the conventional school system, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disabilities, and caste. This study examined the perceptions and concerns of educators about inclusive education. Specifically, the study sought to examine teachers' perspectives towards inclusive education (IE) in the global south and find out the challenges facing the execution of inclusion in secondary schools. This paper used qualitative methodology in reflecting the arguments. The content abstraction technique was employed to compile the data in this paper. The review of literature was done by looking at relevant articles, books, conference presentations, publications, and other papers on inclusive education that could be found on the internet. The findings show that teachers have low perceptions on inclusive education. Furthermore, the findings reveal the significant challenges facing inclusive education, which include the negative attitude (low perception) of teachers and the surrounding community towards people with disabilities. Poor school set-up, lack of skilled personnel, expensive teaching and learning capitals, as well as insufficient amenities and equipment, lead to the difficult implementation of the programmes in regular classes. Therefore, this study recommends that developing countries' governments should put more effort towards improving learning infrastructures, provide teachers' training to ensure that they possess the essential skills needed to assist students with different educational requirements, and finally educate society to accept social diversity. Furthermore, carefully allocating funds to the precise implementation of the necessary activities is the best way to improve inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Students with disabilities, Teachers' perspectives and secondary schools

Introduction

Over the past two decades, there has been a growing consensus that inclusive education is essential to securing everyone's right to a quality education. Children whose needs are not being addressed were first brought to light at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, when the necessity for more inclusive approaches to education was also emphasised (Peters, 2004). Since then, all United Nations (UN) Member States have been compelled by the UN's Standard Rules on the Equalisation of

Opportunities for Persons with Impairments (1993) to make mainstream classrooms accessible to students with disabilities. In 1994, the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, approved by 92 regimes, reaffirmed and strengthened these provisions with an unambiguous call for inclusiveness in education and an clear principle that regular schools ought to accommodate all learners irrespective of their emotional, intellectual, physical, linguistic, or any other needs. Segregation in schools is a problem that the 'Committee on Children's Rights' has called attention to. It recommended that all affiliate states re-evaluate and change legislation that discriminates against children with disabilities and does not follow the principles and articles of the agreement on child rights.

For children with incapacities, as well as other marginalised groups, inclusion is seen as the most effective method for advancing their right to schooling. The promise of 'Education for All' is to guarantee that every child can get a good and quality education, but "inclusion" can be thought of as more than just a means to end segregation. Rather, it is a dedication to building inclusive classrooms where all students are valued and their differences are celebrated (UNICEF, 2012). The primary goal is to better align the education agenda with the comprehensive concept of the right to education articulated in civil rights instruments. This paper attempts to link inclusion, teachers' perspectives, and the education right for learners with infirmities. It also attempts to analyse the challenges teachers and learners with infirmities face in the regular school system.

Inclusion and Disability Concepts in Education

Inclusion and disability concepts revolves around enabling underprivileged and vulnerable students to be responsible and contributing citizens. Inclusiveness also underlines the role and responsibilities of imparting self-confidence to such students. Inclusion aims at cultivating the right attitudes among other mainline students and peers. As well, inclusion promotes non-discrimination, preventing the rejection of children with disabilities for any reason, including ability, gender, language, disability, colour, religion, or ethnic origin (UNICEF, 2013). In any case, the process aims to capitalise on the participation of all children in a particular socioeconomic group. UNESCO (2020) asserts that inclusion in education is a process, not a result. Inclusive education is a process that aims to make learners with diverse needs at the core of a regular school system. Based on Ali et al.'s (2006) postulation, learners with special needs may be partially or fully deaf, have visual problems, have a physical impairment, or have a disability that prevents them from learning. These students suffer from physical and sensory deficiencies and learning disabilities.

According to UNESCO (2009), inclusive education entails considering and meeting the assorted needs of learners. With the belief that the government must edify all children, this process involves changes and shifts in methods, organisational frameworks, and instructional practices. To provide equal access to high-quality education and foster more accepting communities, inclusive education must be treated as a primary concern. The Salamanca Statement defines inclusive education as the movement towards "schools for all" that welcome all students, value diversity, and tailor instruction to each individual's needs.

A child has the right to an inclusive education, not just a special privilege. The goal of inclusion is to ensure that all children, irrespective of their background or ability to pay, have admittance to a quality education. Learners with disabilities have a right to equal enlightening opportunities as those without infirmities, and this realisation has sparked the idea of inclusiveness in education (UNESCO, 2009). Inclusive education is an approach to adapting classrooms and other learning environments to accommodate learners with diverse capabilities (UNESCO, 2005). The term "inclusion" denotes the

promotion of opportunities for the full and equal participation of persons with incapacities (bodily, emotional, and social) in regular education settings whenever possible, while still leaving chance for individual choices and options for supplementary support and accommodations for those who require them and wish to use them (Rasmitadila & Tambunan, 2018).

Of course, different societies and cultures have vastly varied perspectives on what disability means. Individuals with long-term intellectual, mental, physical, or sensory damages that may, in interaction with several barricades, deter their full and active involvement in communities in a similar manner with others are defined as individuals with disabilities (Sharma et al., 2009). People with disabilities make up a disproportionately large part of the world's uneducated population in emerging nations, and yet they are routinely denied access to an adequate education because of their condition. Here, learners with incapacities are shown to be a UNICEF precedence cluster in the region because they face such high rates of prejudice, isolation, and exclusion (left out of all parts of social life).

According to UNESCO (2020), regular schools with an inclusive focus give most children a good education and make the whole education system more efficient and cost-effective. They also fight biased attitudes, create hospitable societies, build a comprehensive society, and attain education for all. This indicates that educational, social, and economic reasons can all be used to support efforts to create more welcoming and accepting school environments for all students. Since schools must teach all children together, inclusive education is crucial because it forces educators/teachers to find new ways to accommodate students with varying learning styles. It is likely less expensive to develop and retain schools that edify all learners collectively than to establish a multifaceted arrangement of diverse schools focusing in particular clusters of learners (UNESCO, 2020). All learners, nevertheless of their background or identity, are welcomed and educated together in inclusive schools.

Inclusion in schools usually faces challenges emanating much from cultural and traditional practices in the communities, particularly the teaching and learning environment, resources required for special needs students, and skilled human resources. That is, the unfriendly infrastructure to accommodate people with disabilities, the community's negative attitude towards people with disabilities, the lack of skilled human capital, and the shortage of teaching and learning resources or aids to assist persons with different needs. Various international instruments and organisations, in collaboration with state governments, have made efforts to establish multiple policies to guard and enhance the rights of individuals with incapacities. For instance, in India, the Kothari Commission, convened in 1966, advocated for inclusive education for persons with infirmities rather than their segregation from their peers (Education Commission, 1966). The perceptions and concerns of secondary school educators regarding inclusion are of great concern, as they are crucial in the execution of inclusion in the field. However, UNESCO (2021) identifies facilities, teachers' abilities, and parents' perceptions as the three important elements critical for policy implementation in inclusive education.

It is imperative to note that inclusion offers more options for children to learn by structuring the school community and changing their mindset towards people with disabilities. Individuals with special needs can contribute to a society where a supportive academic environment exists. Hence, having a friendly learning environment creates room for more people with diverse needs to join regular schools.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives serve as the basis for this paper:

1. To examine the teacher's perspectives and concerns towards inclusive education in the global south.

2. To examine the challenges facing the execution of inclusive education in regular secondary schools.

Materials and Methods

A qualitative method was employed to write this paper. The information was gathered from reviews of previously published works. The data was gathered using the content abstraction technique. Data was sought through keywords such as inclusive education, inclusion, teachers' perspectives of inclusion, challenges to inclusive education, and others. The evaluation of relevant conference papers, theses, articles, and other papers on inclusion that could be found online were looked at to get secondary data. As part of the search process, the researcher prioritised the relevance of materials in terms of their significant contribution to inclusive education and, as a result, did not restrict the date range of the articles.

Discussion and Findings

The findings are organised into six themes. Two of the themes were chosen because they are the study's concerns and objectives. This includes educators' perspectives and concerns as far as inclusion is concerned and, the challenges of executing inclusive education in emerging countries. India, Tanzania, and Kenya found the remaining four themes to be visible additions to inclusive education discourse.

Educators' Perception and Concerns Towards Inclusive Education

As an ultimate goal of attaining education for everyone, including students with disabilities, all children deserve a quality education. It was noted that most teachers in the developing world are not professionally trained to assist students with exceptional educational requirements. (Sam and Ho, 2015). This, in turn, led to varied teachers' perspectives on inclusive education. According to several educational studies, the level and type of assistance teachers receive is one of the most influential elements in shaping their attitudes. Clough and Lindsay (1991) assume this to be the case and propose that differences in teacher attitudes within emerging nations may be a reflection of the level and history of support provided by responsible local or national authorities. Teachers' perspectives are likely to change because of the resources they are provided with in schools, whether that be through direct staffing and capitation or supplementary services (Avramidis et al., 2000).

Furthermore, it is believed that teachers' commitment and confidence during teaching and learning depend greatly on the professional development programmes they attend in their field of specialisation. This also helps to raise the teacher's self-esteem and understanding of how to cope with the challenges they face, change their perceptions, and develop their frame of mind. Additionally, the focus is placed on children with disabilities and how we can assist them (Ibid.).

In some cases, inclusion enhances teachers' self-efficacy. Burrello and Wright (1993) propose that well-planned professional development activities will enhance teachers' self-efficacy and change their perspectives. Accordingly, this will emphasise cooperative teaching-learning process, more inclusive teaching strategies, and encompassing teaching skills that will address the needs of all students. It is imperative to note that there have been few studies that have demonstrated the effectiveness of professional development programmes in changing teachers' behaviour, attitude, and commitment to their work, particularly in Chinese schools (Sam & HO, 2011). Various research shows that a teacher's perspective has significant value for student achievement, especially for those with disabilities or learning problems (Parsuram, 2006; Forlin et al., 2008). The above argument is in line with Jahnukainen and

Korhonen (2003), who state that teachers' attitudes towards children with learning difficulties are necessary for a child's educational well-being in school.

It is often challenging to handle students with disabilities as analysed by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) who discovered that assisting children with behavioural difficulties in class is complicated because innovative approaches are needed. While Sam and Ho (2015) believe that learners with disabilities in a conventional classroom add more work for teachers, this may require a maximum attention and concern among teachers. Graduate teachers, in-service teachers, and experienced teachers are sceptical about their capability to accommodate and support students with unique needs. Probable explanations for these are insufficient skills and knowledge for teachers and other responsible stakeholders, handling and assisting students with special needs, an unsupportive school environment, as well as a lack of commitment.

Additionally, it is alleged that teachers do not usually devote their time to assisting learners with infirmities. There is an assumption that people with special needs contribute minimally to the community. In line with this, Al-Zyoudi (2006) proposes that a variety of variables, such as the nature and severity of the incapacity, teaching experience, training or knowledge about children with exceptional educational needs, and gender, among others, may affect teachers' attitudes. It is, therefore, necessary to educate teachers, students, the community, and educational stakeholders about the importance of inclusion in educational institutions.

The importance of teachers' commitment and their ability to implement what they have learned during the teaching and learning process cannot be overstated. Hence, information and strategies are required for educators to maintain their commitment (Grant and Gillette, 2006). However, there are a number of factors that can affect a teacher's commitment, including the working environment, their knowledge and skills, and their motivations.

Strategies and Key Elements of Inclusion

Various strategies can be used to enhance inclusive learning in schools. Sam et al. (2015) highlighted key approaches to underpin learning for learners with exceptional requirements in inclusive schools. These include interdisciplinary teaching, joint teaching, a cooperative and collaborative learning milieu, training teachers, and imparting social skills to students. Thousands et al. (1997) state that very few studies have examined the contribution of professional development programmes to teachers' attitudes and perspectives towards inclusion. What is missing from the literature is how to deal with inclusion issues in educational institutions.

Most countries are making considerable efforts to implement inclusion in their schools in the global south. Zigler (2015) explains that educational policies in developing countries such as Kenya and Tanzania explicitly describe how to promote inclusion. For instance, in Kenya, different policies have been put forward to create a favourable learning environment for people with disabilities to achieve and access quality education. Nevertheless, there is a possibility that, in implementing the established educational policies, teachers lack expertise and knowledge. Furthermore, resources are not in place to assist the execution of inclusion in enlightening institutions, in this case, secondary schools.

The significant aspects of inclusion need to be considered. Zigler (2015) and Kurumei (2012) identified some key elements of inclusion, such as perspectives and attitudes to joint teaching, support for persons with diverse needs, attitudes on inclusion, curriculum execution, and training of educators in special requirements. Studies by Zigler (2015) and Possi & Milinga (2017) show that developing countries put more effort into ensuring inclusive education is implemented. However, this may be accomplished through collaboration among educational stakeholders, educational officers, teachers, and others to buttress the

effective execution of all-encompassing education in schools. However, there are some encounters, such as a lack of resources, a lack of special needs knowledge among teachers, and large class sizes.

Right to Education for All Children

Globally, every child has the fundamental right to education. It should be noted, however, that this does not imply inclusion. It has been noted that the majority of children who are not in schools include those with disabilities; therefore, there is a need to identify and register children with exceptional requirements in schools and provide them with quality education (UNICEF, 2014). The National Special Needs Inclusive Education Policy (Kenya), 2009, cited in Zigler (2015), states that inclusion is a strategy in which students with debilities and exceptional requirements, irrespective of their disability and age, have access to an appropriate education within regular schools. The critical issue here is that inclusion takes place in traditional schools (Possi & Milinga, 2017). Mainstreaming people with special needs face several difficulties, such as a lack of infrastructure, insufficient facilities, and equipment, which leads to difficulty in implementing programmes in regular classes. Further, the limited number of skilled teachers and the cost of instructional materials are among the challenges that face inclusive education (Kurumei, 2012). Lack of government support is another issue traditional schools in the global south face when it comes to inclusion because educational policies still lag in the execution of inclusion in both elementary and higher learning educational institutions. The Agreement on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2012) stresses that people with incapacities should be involved in all aspects of life, including having a say in all decisions that affect them (Karumei, 2012; UNESCO, 2005). Almost all education policies in developing countries address the right to education for people with exceptional needs. However, some guidelines do not explicitly explain how and to what extent the government supports inclusive education, specifically in infrastructural facilities, human resources, and teaching and learning materials. Although all policies in developing countries put forward the right to schooling for people with infirmities, in Kenya, for example, Act 2003 article 18 explains that no one has the right to exclude people with impairments from their programmes, and all schools must accommodate students with disabilities. The developing countries' governments have done little to ensure that the infrastructure, facilities, human resources, and equipment needed for people with disabilities are sufficient. Additionally, educational institutions are not providing adequate support to learners with incapacities, to the extent that individuals with special needs lack assistance when in need. Based on the similarities in culture and languages between Kenya and Tanzania and the locations of the countries, the Kenyan scenario is similar to the Tanzanian experience.

Inclusive Education in Kenya

Findings from several studies indicate that the number of students with infirmities registered in schools from 1999 to 2008 increased in Kenya. However, the number of students enrolled in schools, is not proportional to the total number of persons with incapacities in the population. This shows that many children with learning problems are still not accessing education in Kenya, as far as the population of people with disabilities is concerned (Zigler, 2015). This calls for the Kenyan government to see the need to put more effort into inclusive education. Kenya faces undesirable attitudes to inclusion, poor schools' infrastructure, an unproportioned number of educators to the number of students enrolled in schools, and a lack of trained teachers. Thus, NGOs, educational stakeholders, and religious-based organisations must take drastic initiatives to support the central government in sensitising communities about inclusion. Findings show that in most schools, leaders were not able to provide the statistics and categories of

students with disability in education institutions; as a result, it led to difficulties in planning how to execute inclusiveness in schools.

Inclusive Education in Tanzania

Kenya differs slightly from Tanzania in several aspects. Like other developing countries, Tanzania complies with all instruments or organisations that aim to defend the rights of people with infirmities. Zigler (2015) conducted a study in three regions of Tanzania (Tabora, Shinyanga, and Tanga), where it was observed that there was a high enrolment of children with exceptional needs in schools and decreased stigmatisation among society members. However, some challenges were identified facing inclusive education: a high enrollment rate in schools, a dearth of qualified educators in special needs education, unsupportive infrastructure, and a shortage of teaching and learning resources (Possi, 2009). The study also explains the support these schools got from NGOs and religious-based organisations to ensure inclusion implementation. The findings show that few educators need to be assigned to support classrooms with students with incapacities. Teachers' attitudes, misapprehensions, concerns, and discernments need to be addressed for inclusive education to be completely executed in secondary schools and other educational institutions.

Tanzania's National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2012 aims to achieve universal and equitable access, teacher training, and educating the community at large about inclusive education. It emphasises that all children eligible to be enrolled in schools, youth, and adults in Tanzania have equal chance to access quality education in inclusive environment (Possi & Milinga, 2017). However, the implementation of this national strategy is not explicitly elucidated, so it sometimes leads to difficulties in the admission of students with infirmities to conventional schools.

Inclusive Education in India

Zigler (2015) has said a lot about inclusive education in Tanzania and Kenya; what remains is juxtaposing the East African experience with other regions. In India, inclusive education is emphasised and stressed by establishing various policies directed at mainstreaming people with disabilities. This is done by ensuring that students get a quality education. Indian education policy focuses on providing, accessing, and retaining schooling for children and others with exceptional requirements as its chief policy aim. Singh (2016) addresses how the Indian government is putting efforts into implementing inclusive education to provide more services for education to individuals with infirmities or special needs. Following the education for all agenda, the Government of India has established several programmes and arrangements that address the education of underprivileged groups within the scopes of gender, poverty, caste, incapacity, place, and belief (Singal 2008). In India, for instance, the United Nations (2012) outlines a notable improvement in the school enrollment rate from 2000 to 2008. From 83.5% to 98.2%, the enrollment rate has increased. However, UNICEF (2011) reports that 8 million kids still lack access to school.

When the Kothari Commission was established in 1966, it promoted inclusive education for learners with disabilities as opposed to isolating them from other kids. (Education Commission, 1966). Subsequent legislation, such as 1974's '*Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC)*' and 1987's '*Project for Integrated Education of the Disabled (PIED)*', was enacted to further mainstream students with slight to average disabilities into conventional classrooms. The National Education Policy of 1986 emphasised inclusion as a means of integrating learners with infirmities into society at all levels, preparing them for normal growth, and preparing them for life to succeed (Education Commission, 1966).

Singh (2016) identifies supporters of inclusion and the benefits obtained from inclusion living behind the whole implementation process. School systems are increasingly concerned about inclusive education; however, their infrastructural facilities do not support learners with disabilities. Inclusive education is a better way of making students with exceptional requirements succeed; however, this usually hinge on various aspects, including the presence of supportive infrastructure and the training of teachers for particular needs.

Challenges of Executing Inclusive Education in Emerging Countries

Globally, inclusion has numerous obstacles and difficulties. But in developed countries, where policies and practises that separate and exclude children that are seen as difficult or unusual may be the main problems, people may have a different idea of what the problems are. In developing nations, the main challenges are limited resources to assist students with incapacities, outdated/ unresponsive infrastructures, and the scarcity of trained educators in the special needs' education arena. The advancement of all-encompassing ideas in both countries, however, can be facilitated by a common practice of inclusive knowledge, culture, and values (UNESCO, 2003).

In emerging countries, the challenges to inclusion can be viewed from economic, social, and cultural perspectives. Singh (2016) asserts that many people with disabilities have complex problems, such as limited resources and social attitudes. India, for example, is a religiously, culturally, and linguistically diverse country. Being stratified on a social, economic, and caste basis makes implementing inclusiveness more difficult. The more challenging issue is accommodating students with different backgrounds and abilities in the same school. Other challenges identified include teachers' negative attitudes and the attitudes of the surrounding community towards people with disabilities. This concurs with Zigler (2015) and Parsuram (2006), who postulated that a lack of supportive infrastructure, a scarcity of qualified teachers, and a dearth of teaching and learning resources are among the challenges in the execution of inclusive education.

The governments of emerging nations', through various policies to persons with unique requirements, have been pushing to enforce the inclusion of persons with infirmities in the regular school system. Nevertheless, implementing inclusive education has been very difficult. Studies indicate that the number of learners with exceptional needs dropping out of school is increasing since the majority are from low-income families. More effort is required to guarantee that all children with disabilities attend school, especially those from low-income households.

Excluding people with special needs from equal access to regular classrooms is a more serious challenge facing people with disabilities. The majority of teachers working in an inclusive setting had likely neither professionally developed through special education training nor had any knowledge to assist learners with special needs (Das et al., 2013). Similarly, Myreddi and Narayan (2000) suggested that most teachers' development programmes in India and other developing countries do not cover people with disabilities in their training programmes. It seems possible that this explanation might be because the governments were not fully prepared for inclusion, specifically human resources and infrastructure needed for people with disabilities.

Like other developing countries, the Indian government has also put more effort into the establishment of policies that protect the rights of individuals with infirmities. According to Singh (2016), about 94% of learners with infirmities have no access to education services in India. Implementing inclusive education

in India is usually tricky because of the aforementioned challenges. It is difficult in India to universalize primary education without considering children with physical and mental difficulties.

Various reports address the right to education for people with infirmities, mainly how to implement and engage them in regular education settings. Reports examined the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, which outlines that the right to education directly relates to inclusive education. Inclusive education is the most accepted and appropriate modality that guarantees universal education for all. It is a non-discriminatory right to equal and quality education. Inclusive implies changing the school system and ensuring interactions among individual students. It also allows full participation and the application of innovative teaching methods and strategies to develop the full learning potential of every person. Participation, equality, non-discrimination, enjoying diversity, and sharing positive practices are critical values of inclusive education (Das et al., 2013). Therefore, inclusion should be fundamental to the attainment of a good education for every child and the establishment of an all-encompassing community.

Recommendations

The literature examined showed that most teachers assist learners with learning difficulties, regardless of the unsupportive teaching and learning environment for people with special needs. Forlin et al. (2008) posit that the insufficient provision of teaching and learning capitals in schools for assisting students with exceptional education requirements is one of the challenges facing inclusion. Further, studies reveal that very few teachers had special needs education backgrounds or attended training on assisting students with learning difficulties in developing countries. This is a gap that needs to be addressed. More teachers in the emerging countries ought to attend professional development programmes to acquire the necessary skills for teaching children with incapacities. This calls for educational stakeholders and NGOs to support teachers' training programmes for special needs education to develop the essential skills needed in inclusive settings.

Conclusion

Inclusion is more than a method of educating learners with incapacities. Irrespective of the intensity of their ailments, children are respected members of the community. They deserve an equal opportunity to participate in social activities. By being fully inclusive, learners can contribute equally to all classroom activities. Accordingly, the literature review showed that teachers' negative perspectives and concerns towards inclusive education are possibly attributed to many factors, such as a lack of training on inclusion, an unsupportive teaching and learning environment for persons with disabilities, a large class size, a dearth of teaching and learning capitals, absence of collaboration among educators themselves, and a lack of professional development between teachers, among others. Teachers are crucial in inclusive education. Thus, it is suggested that emerging countries' governments should put more effort on improving school infrastructures, updating teachers through training to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge needed in inclusive settings, and finally educate society to accept social diversity. Carefully allocating funds to the precise implementation of the necessary activities is among the best way to improve inclusive education. Knowledgeable execution of these initiatives is also crucial. Furthermore, the responsible ministry needs to keep itself apprised of the gist of inclusive education reforms and student achievement. When there is consensus within the Ministry of Education, it becomes much simpler to influence community opinion.

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