



Analysis of Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities within Learning Institutions of Bungoma County, Kenya

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Abstract

Disability as a concept has been evolving mainly driven by results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers, a perspective that has received some level of consensus anchored around the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRP). Whereas the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030; emphasis being on inclusion and equity as a basis for laying foundations for quality education and learning, this remains a mirage in most developing economies, Kenya included. The UN encouragement of Countries to provide infrastructure which guarantee inclusion and equity in and through education systems and programs is yet to be empirically demonstrated and documented. Scanty empirical studies exist on this aspect hence the need for the study on disability inclusion within learning institutions of Bungoma County, Kenya. The study utilized a conceptual Framework as designed by the UN: international normative frameworks relevant for the achievement of SDG 4 for persons with disabilities. The study utilized the cross sectional survey design, where the researcher investigated the population of learners by selecting samples from learning institutions to discover and analyze level of inclusivity. The study area comprised basic education sector and higher education sector within Bungoma County. The study found that in spite of an upsurge in enrolment of teachers training in special needs education, those available in the education sector are still too few hence continued neglect on inclusivity of PLWD in learning institutions in the study area, which could be true across the country Kenya. Further, in both the basic education schools and the university set up, emotional and behavioural disabilities were ranked numbers one and two respectively in terms of being a challenge and limited strategies of inclusivity for this cadre of PLWD within education ecosystem. There is serious need for deliberate effort to marshal resources and strategies to address this type of disability across the education learning continuum.

Key words: Disability, Inclusion, Learning Institutions, Bungoma.

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I. Introduction

While disability as a concept has been evolving mainly driven by results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers, there seems to be some level of consensus anchored around the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRP). Persons with disabilities are those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full participation in society on an equal basis with others (ADA, 2015; UN 2011; UNESCO, 2021). According to UN (2011), Persons with disabilities make up an estimated 15 per cent of the world's population, with over one billion or 80% of who live in developing countries. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4 is very specific on education and it would be empirically important to put the progress being attained with regard to disability inclusion in Kenya generally and specifically in Bungoma County as a study area.

According to UNESCO (2017), the SDG 4 on education calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030; emphasis being on inclusion and equity as a basis for laying foundations for quality education and learning. In this vein, countries are encouraged to provide infrastructure which guarantee inclusion and equity in and through education systems and programs. The life

paradox has been that even where the need for social protection programmes tends to be higher among persons living with disabilities (PLWD) compared to the general population, this is not always matched by higher enrolment of the affected vulnerable populations (UN, 2019). The same low uptake could be applicable in education much as it's free primary and day secondary in Kenya. Scanty empirical studies exist on this aspect hence the need for the study on Disability Inclusion within Learning Institutions of Bungoma County, Kenya. Studies (UN, 2019) have further demonstrated that 'out-of-school' rates of children with disabilities are 65% as high as those of children without disabilities in developing countries where Kenya lies. This suggests that all factors remaining the same, in these developing countries, children with disabilities are twice as likely to be out of school as children without disabilities. A similar study particularly in Bungoma County corroborates this narrative. A study by Wekesa (2017) which focused on how PLWD performed in their MSEs found that education had a bearing on their performance; a majority of those studied (94%) indicated that they only had primary education, citing limited opportunities for inclusion in the education system. A study by Wamala (2019) on the other hand looked at determinants of the implementation of inclusive education in Public Secondary Schools in Bungoma County, Kenya, but did not bring out the actual status of inclusivity in schools leaving an empirical lacuna should one wish to find out the general extend to which PLWD are being integrated in schools. The study sought to fill this gap by seeking to establish the status of disability inclusion within learning institutions in Kenya, using a case reference of Bungoma County. The study utilized a conceptual Framework as designed by the UN: international normative frameworks relevant for the achievement of SDG 4 for persons with disabilities (UN, 2019)

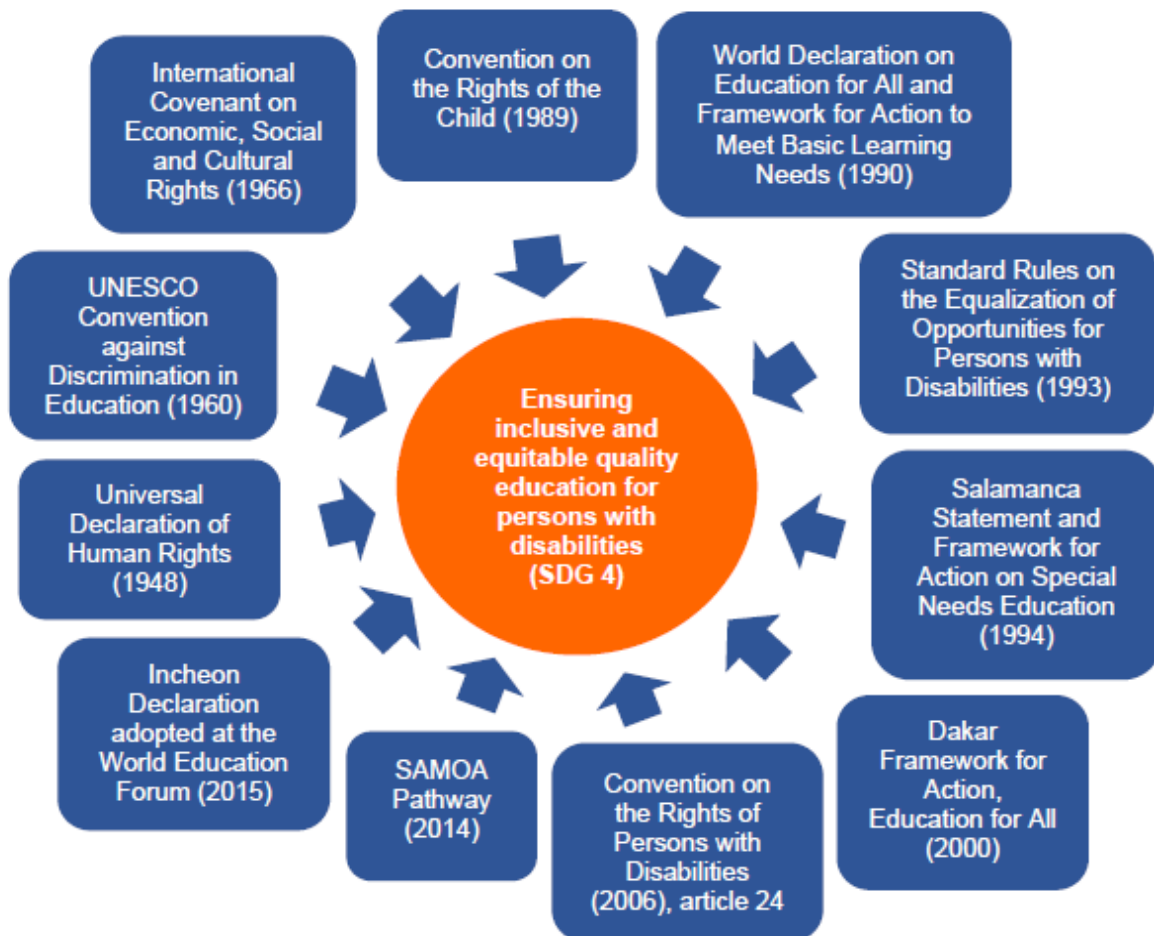


Figure1. Conceptual Framework-(Adopted from International normative frameworks relevant for the achievement of SDG 4 for persons with disabilities; UN, 2019 pp75)

II. Methodology

The study utilized cross sectional survey design, where the researcher investigated the population of learners by selecting samples from learning institutions to discover and analyze level of inclusivity. The study area comprised basic education sector and higher education sector within Bungoma County, Kenya. Practical considerations dictated the choice of the study area and schools with special units were purposefully sampled while the University within the County was also sampled. The sample is unique because it reflects a hybrid of learning environments within the same geographical setting yet with different layers of education ecosystem. This enhances its replication in other regions in terms of disability inclusion within learning institutions.

The instruments employed in the primary data collection were questionnaires, structured interviews, document analyses and direct observations. The questionnaire was employed as the principal instrument for primary data collection. Special needs teachers at basic education level were targeted as principal respondents from whom the following primary data was sought: socio-demographic characteristics, types of disabilities, challenges faced, type of interventions available- physical, psychosocial, and coping strategies to enhance inclusivity. At university level, students taking bachelor of education with special needs as an elective unit were targeted as principal respondents to the same primary data sets. Qualitative content analysis was incorporated in the researcher's interpretations on the basis of reviewed literature and field experiences. These have been captured subjectively in comments and recommendations made on the subject of study by the researcher.

Table 1.1 Study Unit of Analysis and Sampling methods

Study Unit of Analysis	Sampling Method	Sample Size
Special needs Teachers	Purposive	36
B.Educ. Students taking Special Needs Unit	Purposive	110

Source: Researcher, 2022

III. Results and Discussion

Whereas it's true that Kenya is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, inclusive education remains in its nascent stage in Kenya, a decade later (UN,2011; ADA, 2015). The scenario remains bleak even after the declaration of the period 2010 – 2019 as the extended African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, and subsequently adopted a Continental Plan of Action (CPoA) to govern the implementation of the Decade (ADA, 2015). As Kenya's development agenda, inclusive education continues to receive legal and regulatory support as evidenced by various disability mainstreaming initiatives including introduction of special needs education in Universities and other levels of teacher training (Wamala, 2019). The study sought to establish level of inclusion of special education needs in a sampled University and general experience of those in service teaching special needs education and therefore closely interacting with inclusive education in learning institutions. Tables 1.2 and 1.3 capture responses from the study. While there is provision for learning special needs education, very few students pursue it. With regard to those in service, teachers with over 15 years were higher than those with less than 15 years of service while there was none for those with less than five years in service. This could be indicative of the general passion for this area of specialization.

Table 1.2 Distribution of Respondents taking Special Needs Education Units by Year of Study Within the University

Year of Education	Total	%
First Year of Study	83	75
Second Year of Study	3	3
Third Year of Study	15	14
Fourth Year of Study	9	8
Sub-Total	110	100

Source: Field Data, 2022; N= 110

Table 1.3 Distribution of Respondents Teaching Special Needs Education by Gender and Experience within Service

Year of Service	Gender		Total	%
	Male	Female		
Over 15 Years	3	17	20	56
5 To 15 Years	1	15	16	44
Below 5 Years	0	0	0	0
Sub-Total	4	32	36	100

Source: Field Data, 2022; N= 36

The researcher was keen on establishing the types of disabilities in the sampled schools and within the university set up and the frequency with which respondents encountered them. Tables 1.4 and 1.5 report their responses. In both the basic education schools and the university set up, emotional and behavioural disabilities, and difficulty circumstances disabilities were ranked numbers one and two respectively. However, mental disabilities were ranked three under basic education schools while visual disabilities was ranked three under university setting.

Table 1.4 Types of Disabilities and Frequency of Encounter by Respondents within Basic Education Schools

Types of Disabilities	Frequency of Encounter					Total	Rank
	Never	Sometimes	Not Sure	Often	Very often		
Visual disabilities	8(22)	16(45)	0(0)	4(11)	8(22)	36(100)	4
Hearing disabilities	8(22)	13(36)	11(31)	4(11)	0(0)	36(100)	7
Mental disabilities	8(22)	12(33)	3(8)	9(25)	4(11)	36(100)	3
Emotional and Behavioural disabilities	4(11)	4(11)	0(0)	24(67)	4(11)	36(100)	1
Difficulty Circumstances disabilities	8(22)	8(22)	0(0)	8(22)	12(33)	36(100)	2
Physical/Orthopaedic disabilities	8(22)	16(45)	4(11)	4(11)	4(11)	36(100)	6
Multiple Disabilities	4(11)	12(33)	4(11)	12(33)	4(11)	36(100)	5

Source: Field Data, 2022; N= 36

Table 1.5 Types of Disabilities and Frequency of Encounter by Respondents within the University

Types of Disabilities	Frequency of Encounter					Total	Rank
	Never	Sometimes	Not Sure	Often	Very often		
Visual disabilities	21(19)	48(44)	12(11)	22(20)	7(6)	110(100)	3
Hearing disabilities	46(42)	31(28)	24(23)	7(6)	2(1)	110(100)	7
Mental disabilities	58(53)	21(19)	21(19)	7(6)	3(3)	110(100)	6
Emotional and Behavioural disabilities	15(14)	39(35)	17(15)	23(21)	16(15)	110(100)	1
Difficulty Circumstances disabilities	17(15)	36(33)	22(20)	21(19)	14(13)	110(100)	2
Physical/Orthopaedic disabilities	33(30)	33(30)	17(15)	16(15)	11(10)	110(100)	4
Multiple Disabilities	59(54)	19(17)	20(18)	8(7)	4(4)	110(100)	5

Source: Field Data, 2022; N= 110

The researcher was keen on establishing how respondents viewed listed challenges as a really problem or not in their schools or university during their interactions with PLWD. Tables 1.6 and 1.7 report their responses. From Table 1.6, lifts, classroom modification and sanitation facilities were ranked top three serious challenges by respondents within University setting at 40%; 36% and 35% respectively. On the hand, for basic learning institutions, what were ranked top three serious challenges were lifts at 67%, classroom modification at 44% and parking at 33%.

Table 1.6 Rating of Listed Challenges Perceived to be a problem for PLWD by Respondents Within the University

Listed Challenges faced by PLWD	Severity of the Challenge to PLWD					Total	Rank
	Not a problem at all	A Minor Problem	Not Sure	A Serious Problem	A Very Serious Problem		
Parking	45(41)	29(26)	15(14)	15(14)	6(5)	110(100)	7
Ramps	47(43)	25(23)	21(19)	12(11)	5(4)	110(100)	6
Lifts	35(32)	18(16)	13(12)	21(19)	23(21)	110(100)	1
Sanitation Facilities	39(35)	24(22)	9(8)	24(22)	14(13)	110(100)	3
Classroom Modification	39(35)	25(23)	7(6)	25(23)	14(13)	110(100)	2
Teaching Adaptation	39(35)	29(26)	11(10)	21(19)	10(9)	110(100)	5
Curriculum Modification	44(40)	20(18)	14(13)	18(16)	14(13)	110(100)	4

Source: Field Data, 2022; N= 110

Table 1.7 Rating of Listed Challenges Perceived to be a problem for PLWD by Respondents Within Basic Education Schools

Listed Challenges faced by PLWD	Severity of the Challenge to PLWD					Total	Rank
	Not a problem at all	A Minor Problem	Not Sure	A Serious Problem	A Very Serious Problem		
Parking	8(22)	12(33)	2(11)	0(0)	12(33)	36(100)	3
Ramps	20(56)	4(11)	4(11)	4(11)	4(11)	36(100)	4
Lifts	4(11)	0(0)	8(22)	0(0)	24(67)	36(100)	1
Sanitation Facilities	4(11)	4(11)	12(33)	12(33)	4(11)	36(100)	2
Classroom Modification	4(11)	8(22)	8(22)	12(33)	4(11)	36(100)	2
Teaching Adaptation	8(22)	16(45)	8(22)	0(0)	4(11)	36(100)	5
Curriculum Modification	4(11)	20(56)	8(22)	0(0)	4(11)	36(100)	6

Source: Field Data, 2022; N= 36

An emotional and behavioural disability is one of the most challenging and controversial case of PLWD going by global statistics (Carl *et al.*, 2011). The researcher sought to know how this type of disability is handled in basic education schools. The respondents were asked to rate how effective the listed psychosocial support interventions were where they exist in addition to stating whether in their view as teachers of special needs they also exist. Their feedback was as reported in Table 1.8

Table 1.8 Efficacy of Psychosocial Support Interventions Applied in addressing the Mental Health Issues of Emotionally and Behaviorally Challenged Populations within Basic Education Schools

Listed Psychosocial Support Interventions	Efficacy of Psychosocial Support Interventions					Total	Rank
	Most effective	Very effective	Effective	Not available	Not effective		
Rehabilitation programs	0(0)	0(0)	2(6)	26(72)	8(22)	36(100)	7
Strengthening of community and family support	0(0)	8(22)	20(56)	0(0)	8(22)	36(100)	2
Psychosocial counselling and occupational therapy.	0(0)	0(0)	6(17)	30(83)	0(0)	36(100)	5
Case management (mental health)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	36(100)	0(0)	36(100)	9
Community awareness about coping with distress	0(0)	0(0)	31(86)	0(0)	5(14)	36(100)	1
Mental health care training in Psychological First aid and basic psychosocial skills	0(0)	6(17)	0(0)	30(83)	0(0)	36(100)	5
Providing psychological support through help lines	0(0)	0(0)	2(6)	34(94)	0(0)	36(100)	7
Access to clinical services provided in healthcare facilities	0(0)	0(0)	20(56)	0(0)	16(44)	36(100)	3
Identification of safe spaces	0(0)	0(0)	15(42)	20(55)	1(3)	36(100)	4
Supporting the inclusion of social/ psychological considerations in protection, health services, or water and sanitation	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	36(100)	0(0)	36(100)	9

Psychosocial support in education	0(0)	0(0)	30(83)	6(17)	0(0)	36(100)	9
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Source: Field Data, 2022; N= 36

From the Table 1.8, it can be observed that six critical psychosocial interventions that could address the mental health issues of emotionally and behaviorally challenged populations within basic education schools were recorded as not available. These were; Rehabilitation programs at 72%, psychosocial counselling and occupational therapy at 83%, Case management (mental health) at 100%, mental health care training in Psychological First aid and basic psychosocial skills at 83%, providing psychological support through help lines at 94% while supporting the inclusion of social/ psychological considerations in protection, health services, or water and sanitation rated at 100% not available. This finding is corroborated with studies Gable (2004) and Carl *et al.*, (2011) on the account that one of the major challenges facing children with emotional and behavior disabilities is a ‘non-existent standards driven education setting’ where students with emotional and behavior disabilities (EBD) are hardly given a second chance for assistance. The education and societal system is generally quick at condemning them out of public space because of irritating mannerisms.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study found out that in spite of an upsurge in the enrolment of teachers training in special needs education, those available in the education sector are still too few hence continued neglect with regard to inclusivity of PLWD in learning institutions in the study area which could be true across the Country, Kenya. Further, in both the basic education schools and the university set up, emotional and behavioral disabilities were ranked numbers one and two respectively in terms of being a challenge and critical psychosocial interventions that could address the mental health issues of emotionally and behaviorally challenged populations within basic education schools were recorded as not available. The study recommends that deliberate effort to marshal resources and strategies to address various disabilities be undertaken and that disability mainstreaming as provided for in SDG 4 be accelerated across the education learning continuum in line with the vision 2030 targets.

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