

Inclusion of Learners with Hearing Impairment in Selected West Pokot County Primary Schools, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Background This paper explores the role of collaborative partnerships in enabling inclusion of learners with hearing impairment in west pocket. The right to an inclusive education for all is a fundamental human right. As stipulated the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic and Cultural Rights (ICESCR. (UNESCO 2010). Education Inclusion is an approach that challenges exclusionary policies and practices to address learning needs of all learners equitably in regular schools and classrooms. Education for all encompass the inclusion of all types of learners in a single learning environment. Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes creating welcoming environments, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Learners with Hearing Impairment (LWHI) are entitled to free, quality, equitable and compulsory primary education. However, this right is still far from being attained in some parts of Kenya as LWHI continues to face exclusion from and within schools in West Pokot County. Exclusion occurs when LWHI do not enroll or drop out of school. This derails the Kenyan government's achievement of Inclusive Education (IE) and attainment of Universal Basic Education by the year 2030. This study, sought to explore stakeholders 'collaborative partnerships in enabling inclusion of LWHI in selected West Pokot primary schools. **Methodology** The study adopted a qualitative approach, underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm, and employed a phenomenological research design. Non-probability sampling technique was adopted to select the participants. Individual semi-structured interview, focus group discussion and drawing were used to generate the qualitative data from seven Special Needs Education (SNE) teachers, five parents, four head teachers, one Education Assessment and Resource Centre Officer (EARC), two County Disability officers (CDOs), and five Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs). Trustworthiness was observed to ensure credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability of the research study. Analysis of data was done using thematic analysis and discussions done per the research objectives. **Results** The findings showed that there was limited stakeholder collaborative partnerships, an aspect that heightened exclusion of LWHI from education in selected West Pokot County primary schools. Stakeholder attitudes, relationships and how they perform their roles determined the nature of stakeholders 'collaborative partnership. The participants 'experiences of collaborative partnerships revealed barriers which hindered collaborativepartnershipsand enablers whichenhanced the collaboration. Participants further emphasized the necessity for stakeholders 'collaborative partnerships to be supported. They suggested that this could be done by ensuring awareness creation to all stakeholders on Special Needs Education.

Conclusion Inclusive education is yet to be embraced in Kenyan rural schools and parents are yet to come out of the cultural cocoons' and embrace education of hearing impaired learners. Teachers and education officers need to improve their professional practice by working collaboratively with parents and other educational stakeholders so as to share, enrich and address educational problems hampering the inclusion of LWHI.

KEY WORDS, Inclusion, Disability, Acceptability, Non-discrimination, Accessibility

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I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusion in the context of education is based on the idea that all learners should learn together, regardless of differences or disability. Inclusive education begins with the premise that all learners have unique characteristics, interests, abilities and particular learning needs and, that learners with special education needs must have equal access to the general education system, Richard Raiser (2008) Inclusive education approaches, differences and diversity affirmatively, recognizing the value of such differences and the learning opportunities that such diversity offers. Inclusion implies transition from separate, segregated learning environments for persons with disabilities reflected in the "special education" approach, to schooling in the general education

system. Janet Lord At el(2012). Effective transitions from special education approaches to inclusive education requires careful planning and structural changes to ensure that learners with disabilities are not placed within the regular or mainstream school system without the appropriate accommodation and supports that ensure an inclusive learning environment. The introduction of children with disabilities into mainstream schools introduces them into local communities and neighborhoods and helps break down barriers and prejudice. Communities become more accepting of differences, and everyone benefits from a friendlier, open environment. Segregation leads to inferior education for children with disabilities UNESCO (2010).

A child with special Needs (CWSN) is an umbrella term that refers to all children who have sensory, physical, behavioral and cognitive impairments. The National Special Needs Education Policy Framework (2009) of Kenya and the American Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) (2012) state that CWSN include children who have visual impairments, mental handicaps, hearing impairment, epilepsy, physical impairments, cerebral palsy, autism, down syndrome, emotional and behavioral disorders, multiple handicaps, learning disability, albinism speech and language disorders, and deaf-blind

According to WHO (2017) 15% of the world's population equivalent to 360 million people are people with HI. Out of these, 32 million are Children with Hearing Impairment (CWHI). These numbers appear to be higher in middle income countries especially in South and East Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. These regions of the world have high prevalence of HI in both adults and children (Durthey, 2013). According to the National Special Needs Education Survey (NSNES) (2015), Kenya 's prevalence of HI is more in boys than girls with rates lower in urban areas than in rural areas although no accurate data has been provided.

HI has adverse implications for the life of the child. The child may not develop language normally as a result of difficulty in perceiving sound stimuli (WHO, 2017). This makes many people to perceive CWHI as low achievers in education yet this is not the case (Aich& Mathew, 2017). CWHI are subjected to various challenges in their early life within the family. Some Parents deny them their rights and they are often abandoned and excluded from the society (Kearney, 2011). Most of these children are denied education and may attend school at an older age due to language deficiency (UNESCO, 2015).

Kenya National Special Needs Education Survey (2015) defines SNE as education which provides appropriate modification in curriculum, teaching methods, educational resources, medium of communication or the learning environment in order to cater for individual differences of LWSN. SNE has undergone various phases of development since its establishment (Carter, 2016). First it was provided through a segregation model where LWSN are educated in special schools in which those learners with similar disability are separated from their regular peers or are placed in special units. The special units are classes attached to regular primary schools where LWSN are under special attention by special needs teachers (Kearney, 2011). However, the separatist model brought about segregation, isolation, discrimination and violations of dignity of PWDs (Churchley, 2006). Later it moved to mainstreaming and integration where LWSN were provided with adapted education together in the same institution or class with the regular learners. This later gave rise to Inclusive Education (IE).

Statement of the Problem

Education is a fundamental right of every child as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the United Nations Rights of the Child (2006) and the Constitution of Kenya (2010). Educating every child in Kenya is fundamental irrespective of the numerous challenges and failure to provide effective access to inclusive education for children with disabilities is a direct violation of domestic and international laws of Kenya, specifically chapter four of the Kenyan constitution and Article 24 of CRPD. However, this is far from being attained in some parts of Kenya because Learners with Hearing Impairment, (LWHI) are being excluded from education in West Pokot County. Over 305 Children with Hearing Impairment (CWHI) are registered with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities of Kenya (NCPDK) (2017) in West Pokot County. According to the Ministry of Education (MoE) (2017) only 50 LWHI are enrolled in inclusive primary schools in the County while over 200 are excluded from education.

Several scholars have carried out studies on SNE and inclusive education. Mwangi (2013) explored teachers 'understanding of SNE policy in Kenyan public primary schools. Kipkosgei (2013) investigated factors influencing enrolment of learners with disabilities in Nandi South district while Buhere et al. (2014) assessed the effectiveness of school administration in implementation of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools. Nyeris and Koross (2015) did a study on factors influencing efficacy of Free Primary Education policy in relation to enrolment of CWSN children with special needs in West Pokot County. In spite of these studies, little has been done on stakeholders 'collaborative partnerships and it could be a missing link in enabling inclusion of LWHI. Special Needs Education is not a one man show and it has to involve all the stakeholders. If exclusion is not addressed the right to education of LWHI will remain violated and they might not achieve their life goals nor participate fully in society. the exclusion of LWHIalso derails the Kenyan government 's efforts of

successfully implementing inclusive education, building an inclusive society as well as attaining Universal Basic Education for All by the year 2030.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how stakeholders 'collaborative partnerships could enable inclusion of Learners with Hearing Impairment in selected West Pokot County primary schools. To do this, the study explored stakeholder's nature of stakeholder collaborative partnerships and experience thereof, as well as how collaborative partnership could be supported.

Significance of the Study

The study purposed to explore how stakeholders 'could enable inclusion of LWHI in selected West Pokot primary schools. The study informs and provides a better understanding to the Ministry of Education and other policy makers about the value of collaborative partnerships in implementation, management and success of inclusive education and special education programs. SNE is not a one-man show, the input and contribution of other stakeholders is important and cannot be overlooked. This study creates awareness among parents, teachers, members of the society, and policy makers of the need to improve their practice through embracing collaborative practice. It could inform teacher preparation skills for collaborative practice and contribute to the quest for inclusion of LWHI in West Pokot County.

Theoretical Framework

The study was supported by the critical theories that empower human beings to transcend constraints placed on them by race, class or gender (Thompson, 2017). This suited the current study because persons with disabilities suffer constraints as a result of social constructions related to disability. The disability inquiry theory addresses the understanding of social cultural perspectives that allow people with disability to take control of their lives rather than approach it from a medical understanding of disability (Harris, Holmes, & Mertens, 2009).

There are two models to disability, the medical model that focuses on disability as an individual deficit, a problem or illness residing within an individual that requires remediating or curing (Tremblay & Tivat, 2007) and the social model advanced by Campbell and Oliver, (1996) which argues that disability is socially constructed. Oliver argues that the individual's limitation is not the problem but it is the society's failure to address the needs of persons with disability through service provision. In this sense the social model of disability identifies barriers within the society with a view to reducing them hence allowing the PWDS to participate in all aspects of the society.

This study adopted the Practice People Context (PPC) model propagated by Todd (2007) in her work on partnership in inclusive education. The model emphasizes increased participation of stakeholders in inclusive education. Participation could be strengthened if there is collaboration among parents, teachers and educational administrators. The model has three tenets which are: Practice, People and Context. On practice, the model strives for practitioners to conceptualize the discourses of practice and involves how they understand roles, the diverse structures and programs that inform their practice. On people, PPC concerns itself with how practitioners understand people, their ideas and assumptions about them. This includes how they think about professional practices and its impact on the kinds of working relationships. On Context, PPC means a setting of the occurrence of the phenomena. The model emphasizes the meaning given to the context, how stakeholders understand the relationship between the individuals who work together and the socio-cultural context in which they also work. The PPC model emphasizes this fact as important in understanding what is happening in a given context and changes required in practice.

Kenyan perspective

According to the Kenya National Special Needs Education Survey (NSNES) (2015), Special Needs Children is an umbrella term that means all children who have sensory, physical and cognitive impairment. Sensory impaired children are those with hearing and visual difficulties. Physical impaired children are those that have difficulties with functions performed by hands and legs. While those with mental impairments also referred to as intellectual or cognitive impairments are those with difficulty in mental processes of knowing, awareness, attention, memory, perception, reasoning, and learning. These impairments occur naturally, through injury, or diseases (Joel, Kochung, Kabuka, Charles, & Oracha, 2013).

The American Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) (2012) identifies thirteen different categories of Children with special needs (CWSN) while in Kenya, the National Special Needs Education Policy Framework (2009) outlines twenty-two categories of disabilities and special needs. These include children who have visual impairments, hearing impairment, physical impairments, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, autism, mental handicaps, emotional and behavioral disorders, down syndrome, deafblind, learning disability, albinism, speech and language disorders, multiple handicaps and other health impairments. They also include children who are

orphaned, abused, living in the streets, heading households, children from nomadic pastoral communities, and internally displaced. Children who are gifted and talented are also classified as those with Special Needs.

Hearing Impairment (HI) is hearing loss that is either permanent or fluctuating that adversely affects a child's performance (Grigorenko, 2008) while Aich and Mathew (2017) define HI as any dysfunction of the hearing organ regardless of the cause, degree of hearing loss and service provision. HI is classified according to the degree of hearing, onset of deafness or the part of the ear that is affected. According to degree, the level of impairment is measured in units known as decibels (dB). This generates four categories namely: mild hearing impairment (25-40dB), moderate hearing impairment (41-70dB), severe hearing impairment (71-90dB), profound hearing (91dB and above). Severe and profound are referred to as deaf whereas mild and moderate can perceive sound and can benefit from use of a hearing aid (Special Education guide, 2013). Classification according to part of the ear that is affected is conductive hearing loss (outer ear and middle ear), sensory-neural hearing loss (inner ear) or mixed hearing loss (outer, middle and inner ear) (WHO, 2017).

Causes of HI are grouped according to the time of occurrence. This can be before birth (pre-natal), during birth (peri-natal) or after birth (post-natal). These causes range from childhood diseases such as measles, mumps, meningitis and chronic otitis media. Other causes are prolonged exposure to loud noise, head or neck injuries, and use of toxic medications such as types of chemotherapies and antibiotics and nutritional deficiencies (WHO, 2017; Durthey, 2013). Strategies for prevention are strengthening maternal health, immunization, early screening of children, prevention and treatment of infections, reducing exposure to loud noise and use of particular drugs (WHO, 2017).

HI has a lot of impact on the life of Children with Hearing Impairment (CWHI). Many at times are considered to have low intelligence due their delayed or lack of language. As a result, CWHI experience communication difficulties. Those who have mild and moderate hearing loss have residual hearing that does not allow them develop language normally but usually have delay in language development. They experience difficulties in grammar, spelling, vocabulary and cannot articulate words correctly (WHO, 2017).

This makes many people look at CWHI as low achievers and yet this is not the case (Aich& Mathew, 2017). CWHI use lip reading, sign language, finger spelling and total communication (TC) as modes of communication. Remedies of HI include early identification, use of hearing aids and cochlea implants as well as other forms of educational and social support (Durtney, 2013), and as discussed above, using appropriate communication strategies, skills and teaching methods. CWHI do acquire their education like other normal children. Their education is catered for under Special

International Frameworks on LWSN

Several international frameworks have been formulated in response to promote SNE. Education rights for LWSNs are enshrined in various international legal frameworks such as the United Nations declaration of Human Rights (1948) which stipulates that everyone has a right to free and compulsory education. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) (1989) states that all children have a right to receive education without discrimination on any grounds. Specifically, Article 23 states that disabled children should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

The World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien Thailand (1990) resulted in declaration on Education for All (EFA) with commitment by member states to meeting the basic needs of all CWSN. This means equipping them with knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to live with dignity, provide continuing education to improve their lives and contribute to the development of communities and their nations.

The Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) encourages states to take action to remove obstacles that would prevent PWDs from exercising their educational rights. In addition, it ensures equalization of opportunities for PWDs in the field of education by placing focus on an integration model rather than an inclusive education paradigm.

The World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca Spain (UNESCO, 1994) led to the adoption of Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on SNE. It endorsed an inclusive approach to education. The statement gave prominence to SNE by identifying barriers and making an equivocal call to inclusive education. The guiding principle of the statement was that regular public schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions (UNESCO, 1994). These schools are where all children learn together and where the individual needs of every learner are met. It also decreed that all CWDs should attend the same neighborhood school they would enroll in if they did not have a disability. Moreover, the governments were to ensure provision of quality, appropriate curricula and collaborative partnerships with their communities. The statement called upon member countries to formulate legislative measures to give effect to SNE. It urged for coordination at all levels among educational authorities and stakeholders for better outcomes (UNESCO, 1994).

The Dakar Framework of Action (UNESCO, 2000) called member nations to ensure Education for All (EFA) goals and targets are reached and sustained within individual countries. It reaffirmed commitment to Education for All and laid emphasis on educational issues of poor and marginalized groups including CWSN. It further developed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were to be achieved by the year 2015. Goal number two stipulates the achievement of Universal Free Primary Education (FPE) by 2015 through expansion of Early Childhood Care and Education as well as provision of free and compulsory education.

Furthermore, the framework advocates for continuous efforts by nations to ensure Universal Primary Education (UPE) for all children as well as those in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities to complete a full course of primary schooling (UNESCO, 2015). However, UPE was not achieved in the target year of 2015. This is the reason the aspirations were carried forward to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals recommits nations to work towards inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2015).

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) emphasized that disability is an evolving concept and that attitudinal and environmental barriers hinder full and effective participation of PWDs in society on equal basis with others.

This document purposed to ensure no discrimination, awareness, respect and dignity as well as autonomy of PWDs. Access to physical, social, economic and cultural environments, education, health, information and communication would enable them to enjoy their full rights and freedoms. Again, it asserts the recognition of contributions of PWDs to overall wellbeing of their communities. This was to be achieved by mainstreaming all disability issues through legislation. CRPD was a tool to fight exclusion in education and ensure inclusion.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. It emphasizes inclusion and equity as laying foundations for quality education and learning. SDG 4 also calls for building and upgrading education facilities that are disability friendly and gender-sensitive. These educational environments need to be safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective for learning (UNESCO, 2017). This goal was to be achieved if member states ensured inclusion and equity in and through education systems and programs. The member states were to take steps to prevent and address all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparity, vulnerability and inequality in educational in order to ensure access, participation, and completion.

Regionally, article 17(1) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981) guarantees the right to education. Article 2 of the same decrees that rights assured by the charter be enjoyed without any form of discrimination and article 18 (4), specifically targets persons with disabilities and provides that persons with disabilities should be accorded special measures of protection with reference to their physical needs (OAU,

1981). It further endeavors to guarantee the right to education. Article 3(a) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child states that every child has a right to education. Section 3(e) exhorts state parties to take special measures in respect to female, gifted and disadvantaged children, to ensure equal access to education (Taylor et al., 2015).

The Incheon Declaration (UNESCO, 2015) is the most recent effort that reaffirmed previous efforts in guaranteeing education for all. It committed nations towards a 2030 target of inclusive and equitable quality education that is lifelong learning for all. Kenya is signatory to all these international frameworks and it has adopted and formulated its own laws that support rights of PWDs and SNE. Almost all countries in the world have adopted SNE. The fact that Kenya is a part of these international conventions prompts the need to discuss the progress of SNE in Kenya. .

Kenya being one of the developing nations has been in the forefront in adopting and adapting new education philosophies in the world to its education system (MoE, 2016).

According to the National Special Needs Education Survey (NSNES) (2015) in Kenya, SNE is education which provides appropriate modification in curricula, teaching methods, educational resources, medium of communication or the learning environment in order to cater for individual differences in learning.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative approach. This explorative qualitative study adopted a phenomenological design within an interpretivist paradigm.

This design allows the researcher to understand participants 'perceptions, perspectives and understanding of phenomena in a specific context (Pathak, 2017). The study sought to understand how participants construct meaning through their lived experiences about phenomena in their natural setting. In this study the phenomenon is the role of collaborative partnerships in ensuring inclusion of LWHI. Thus, the study seeks to understand, reconstruct, analyze and critique the participants 'views as they are the ones who experience the phenomenon being studied. Consequently, this would lead to meaningful findings that in the end would answer the research question.

The sampling technique is determined by the paradigm and the design of the study. This study being located in the interpretivist paradigm and drawing on a phenomenological design adopted a non-probability sampling technique. Data was generated with the above participants using focus group discussion and drawing with special needs teachers, and individual interviews with parents, head teachers, CSOs, CDOs and the EARC.

III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Stakeholders' Attitudes

According to Cherry (2018) attitude refers to a set of emotions, beliefs and behaviors towards a particular object, person, thing or event. Attitudes develop from the way an individual is nurtured as well as the daily experiences of an individual and it has a powerful influence on the individual's behavior. It became clear that the participants in this study were of the opinion that attitude is important in a collaboration. Participants revealed that they hold some negative attitudes towards the LWHI and towards each other as stakeholders which has affected service provision to the learner. This theme is therefore presented under the following categories: (i) attitude towards the learner (ii) social construction of disability, and (iii) attitude towards other stakeholders.

The following quotations clearly illustrate the unfavorable attitudes of parents towards their LWHI in West Pokot County:

We [parents] even don't see the benefit of educating children ... then we let them [LWHI] stay [at home]. (Individual interview with parent, Esther, p.3, line 7-9 {2018-6-5}). *Because like here [in school], we are told that the funds that are brought to this school are only for regular [normal] learners. These learners [LWHI] are second class learners they may get or not get [the materials or funds].* (Focus group discussion, teacher Kisang, p.1, line 37-38{2018-06-13})

Head teachers and education officers also observed that parents had a negative attitude towards LWHI:

These parents have not taken these children [LWHI] like those other children [regular]. So they feel these children are a burden to them so when they bring them to school they see that they have gotten rid of the problem.... (Individual interview with head teacher Millicent, p.1, line 14-16 {2018-6-5}) *.They take the other children without disabilities to school first. So the ones [LWHI] are brought after the others have gone to school. So they still have that negative attitude because they feel these children can't even be anything in the future.* (Individual interview with head teacher Millicent, p.1, line 14-17 {2018-6-5})

The above quotations from the participants describe the attitude of the stakeholders towards LWHI, which are mostly negative and discriminatory and could contribute to the stakeholders not doing what is in the best interest of the LWHI. It seems that LWHI are seen as not being in need of education and as second-class citizens. According to UNESCO (2015), there should be a positive attitude towards every learner; this means that every learner should be respected regardless of their diverse needs, abilities and characteristics. Most parents seem to prioritize educating those children without disabilities whereas the education of those with disabilities comes as an afterthought. This is against the UNICEF goal which calls for all societies to equally provide protection, support and services to all children so that every child with a disability is able to enjoy his or her rights like others (UNICEF, 2013).

A negative attitude curtails the collaboration of the stakeholders in supporting learners with hearing impairment. This is evident from the quotations which depict that some stakeholders are ignoring the needs of the learners due to a negative attitude. These stakeholders should consider Mislan, Kosnin and Yeo (2009) who argue that effective collaboration requires that all parties involved in a collaboration should make an effort towards achieving the common intended goal which has been laid down, which is that the parents, teachers, curriculum support officers and disability officers should work collaboratively in supporting education of LWHI in West Pokot County.

Social Construction of Disability

Attitude, referred to in the previous category, could be linked to how the community constructs disability. Disability, a term that refers to a person's physical, psychological or social limitations, is relative to a person's environment. A community will, for example, construct their view of disability depending on their understanding of culture, beliefs, practices, and so on. The social construction of disability therefore means how a community views what it means to be disabled, what causes it, and how it influences one's being. The following quotations from the participants depict how they see the Pokot community constructing LWHI:

It is always ..., if you see, you will think that you [parent] were cursed (Individual interview with parent, Esther, p.2, line 11 {2018-6-5}). *... people [community] would use or see them [LWHI] as people who can only work but no schooling* (Individual interview with parent, Boniface, p.1, line 19-20{2018-6-6}). *They [parents] think that after all these children are a curse, they should not spend much on them* (Individual interview with head teacher, Godwin, p.2, line 5-6 {2018-6-14}). *... The child [LWHI] is like a curse anyway to them [Board of Management (BOM)]. And that is why they didn't want the school to grow from here [within the*

community] (Individual interview with head teacher, James, p.3, line 17-18 {2018-6-14}). ... *because parents are not willing to bring them to school because of negative traditional beliefs* (Individual interview with head teacher, Godwin, p.1, line 5-6 {2018-6-14}).

The above quotations show that the participants in the Pokot community constructing hearing impairment as a curse, underpinning parents', CSOs' and head teachers' negative attitude towards LWHI. This is in agreement with Tremblay and Tivat (2007) who revealed that since time immemorial societies have had beliefs about persons with disabilities. Tremblay explains that beliefs and practices differ from one community to another and from one era to another, and, as Oliver (1996) earlier revealed, these beliefs and practices are socially constructed. Cultural beliefs in the Pokot community, such as seeing the hearing impaired as people who can work without education, has infringed on the educational rights of LWHI. The United Nations on the Rights of the Child (2006) also acknowledges the presence of negative attitudes within communities that impede education of learners with special needs.

LWHI are children like other children, and the convention advocates for the provision of their right to education. However, in West Pokot parents of LWHI perceive themselves as having been cursed, with the community concurring that parents with LWHI are cursed, as such that the affected parents tend to hide these children from public life and denying them their right to education. This is contradictory to the Constitution of Kenya (2010) which stipulates that education of children with disabilities is a fundamental right. Furthermore, UNESCO (2015) points out that no goal of education is met unless all children have access to free, quality and equitable basic education. UNESCO further advocates that all barriers of exclusion, marginalization and disparities should be addressed.

WHO (2011) reveals that negative attitudes are a major obstacle in the education of learners with disability. The community beliefs, traditions and cultural practices affect people's attitudes towards persons with disabilities. These require a change of thinking as observed by Chetty (2013), that those teachers that have shifted their thinking toward current professional discourses such as inclusive education practice have positive beliefs about learners with special needs (LWSN), whereas those stuck in old thinking still hold on to stereotypic attitudes. UNICEF (2015) therefore suggests that a better understanding of the social construction of disability is a step towards accepting the inclusion of LWSN, and therefore LWHI, which is the purpose of stakeholders' collaborative partnership.

Stakeholder Relationship

Stakeholders' relationship refers to how stakeholders relate to and work with each other. It also refers to the existence or absence of mutual association that enhances or impedes working rapport. This is a theme that emerged from participants' responses as an indicator of the nature of their collaborative partnership. Therefore, this theme is discussed under the following categories: (i) strained relationship (ii) stakeholder conflict (iii) communication, and (iv) non-cooperation.

Strained relationship refers to an association that lacks cordiality, trust, and closeness among parties involved. Collaborative partnership requires healthy relationships among stakeholders. However, the participants' relationships were strained, and had challenges as portrayed by the following quotations:

... *Because we [parents] don't visit there regularly the relationship is not strong because we are not regularly invited.* (Individual interview parent, Esther, p.2, line 25-26 {2018-6-5}) *Even our relationship with other teachers [regular] is not good they say that we take ourselves to be special teachers. Generally, our relationship here is not good.* (Focused group discussion with teacher, Kisang, p.3, line 6-10 {2018-6-13}) *The biggest problem is that the interaction is not very good So we are not working so closely.* (Individual interview with head teacher Millicent, p.2, line 2-5 {2018-6-5})

Hernandez (2013) argues that the manner in which individuals collaborate can be viewed in the way they relate and interact with each other. Stakeholders' relationships in this study seemed strained, not in good shape and with limited interactions. This is contradictory to Todd's (2007) argument that a strong interaction is an important requirement for a collaborative partnership, i.e. interaction among parents and teachers. In this study, the participants spoke about limited interactions between teachers and parents because parents do not visit the school regularly, but also because they are not invited. This concurs with Kearney (2011) who claims that poor relationships among parents and teachers promote exclusion of LWSN.

The lack of interaction between stakeholders is linked to how they perceive each other. Teachers and parents sometimes criticize the administration, that is, the head teacher and board of Management (BOM). This leads to a strained relationship especially when administration fails to take the comments and the criticism positively. However, Bii and Taylor (2016) assert that there is a need for stronger links among stakeholders in special education. The strained relationship in the end affects how stakeholders collaborate. Thompson (2007) points out that collaboration works better in instances where positive relationships are already in place.

Stakeholder Conflict

If relationships are strained, the chances of conflict looms. Conflict refers to serious disagreements or differences among stakeholders. This could be due to disputes or differing opinions that lead to incompatibility among stakeholders. This is evident from the following quotations, where the people in the management structures try to wield power over and control the SNE teachers:

So they [LWHI] are there only in school to bring in money for the rest of the school to continue but not much with education. So it made us [parents] not to understand each other [with head teachers]. (Individual interview with parent, Boniface, p.3, line 1-3{2018-6-5}) ..*When you take a child minus money it means you are not valuing the child. So they value the other side of normal ones [regular learners].* (Individual interview with parent, Boniface, p.2-3, line 33-34,1-6 {2018-6-5}) ...*If those [CSO] who are supposed to help us [parents] chase us away and look at us as if we are a problem then we let them [LWHI] stay, until the time when the government remembers us.* (Individual interview with parent, Esther, p.3, line 8-10{2018-6-5})*It's very hard because you can go to them [education officers] and they tell you to go away with your child.* (Individual interview with parent, Esther, p.2, line 5-6 {2018-6-5})

Non-cooperation

Cooperation is the process of working together to achieve a common goal. In this study participants' responses showed that some stakeholders were not cooperative. This is evident from the following quotations:

One of the stakeholders has broken away and not collaborating with the others. (Drawing by teacher, Mary {2018-6-13}) ...*On the other side of CSO, it is even more complex because they rarely come to visit us [special needs teachers] in schools.* (Focus group discussion with teacher, Kisang, p.3, line 10-11 {2018-6-13}) ...*the parent and the stakeholders tend to move away from the learner who struggles to get to them for support* (Drawing by teacher, Joseph, {2018-6-13})

Head teachers highlighted that there was lack of cooperation with parents, SNE teachers and education officers:

We have had limited assistance from our educational office [LWHI]. (Interview with teacher, Godwin, p.2, line 13 {2018-6-14}) ... *there are two people who are not supporting the other three and they are pushing the stone in the opposite direction.* (Drawing by head teacher Godwin, {2018-6-13}) ... *Since this collaboration has not been there, then really we have not seen its [education of LWHI] fruits. Because parents have not cooperated with us* (Individual interview with head teacher Millicent, p.3, line 3-4 {2018-6-5})

Parents have not been very easy to contribute the little fee that we require in school. ...coming for parent days have been very difficult. (Individual interview with head teacher Godwin, p.2, line 4-6 {2018-6-14}) ...*We call for meetings and parents don't attend.* (Individual interview with ...teacher, Millicent, p.1, line 13 {2018-6-5})

Education officers also highlighted lack of cooperation with parents and other stakeholders:

There is no coordination; everybody is in his /her world. (Individual interview with County Disability Officer Mukwana, p.2 line 26-28{2018-7-10})'...*We found a serious problem that there was disconnect among the stakeholders and the county assessment Centre office.* (Individual interview with Country Disability Officer, Mukwana, p.2 line 20-21{2018-7-10})

One of the disability officers admits that there is no coordination among stakeholders and everybody is in his or her world. This concurs with Mukhopadhyay et al. 's (2012) work that there is lack of coordination among special needs teachers, parents and other professionals. Stakeholders seem to be walking away from each other; the parents are not contributing to support the needs of LWHI and at the same time they rarely attend meetings to discuss with the teachers the progress of their children in inclusive schools.

Parents Neglecting their Role

Parents, as primary educators, play a critical role in the lives of LWHI. Some of these parents live in deep rural areas, far away from the school and often have great difficulty in getting their children to and from school. However, in this study participants portrayed that some parents might not be fulfilling their role as expected. This is shown by the following quotations:

The parent brings the child [to school] and because he is overburdened with educating other children and he does not understand how to care for this child, he brings the child to school and dumps the child there and runs away.

(Individual interview with County Disability Officer, Limasia, p.2, line 32-35 {2018-6-13}) ...*Some parents also have no concern for their children. Imagine when the school closes they refuse to come and collect the child so the teacher is left with the responsibility of taking care of the child.* (Focus group discussion with teacher, Mary, p.4, line 1-3 {2018-6-13}).

. From the quotations, it seems that LWHI are a burden to these parents and as such they take these children to school and leave all the responsibility to the teachers. Like any other school, collaboration with

parents in an inclusive school is indispensable (Gross et al. 2015). Lack of special needs knowledge makes many parents in west pokot remain ignorant the importance of LWHI, as such; the working relationship between special needs teachers and these parents is impaired. However, Holstrom (2017) proposes that collaboration could be strengthened when stakeholders understand their responsibility and commit themselves that responsibility.

IV. FINDINGS

The Nature of Stakeholders' Collaborative Partnerships

From the findings it is evident that the nature of stakeholders 'collaborative partnerships is limited. The findings revealed that stakeholders 'attitudes played an important role in determining the nature of collaborative partnerships. Stakeholders appeared to have negative attitudes towards LWHI which seemed to be brought about by how the Pokot community constructed hearing impairment. Stakeholders perceived education of LWHI as having no value hence they did not cater for the needs of these learners. The stakeholders demonstrated little concern for LWHI, as a result stakeholders had negative attitudes towards one another. This hindered and limited their collaborative partnerships.

The nature of stakeholders 'collaborative partnerships was also portrayed by stakeholder relationships. Stakeholders in West Pokot County seemed to have strained relationships. There appeared to be constant conflicts and disagreements amongst themselves which led to poor communication and lack of cooperation among the stakeholders. This negatively impacted on their collaborative partnerships.

The nature of stakeholders 'collaborative partnerships was also depicted by how stakeholders performed their roles. Parents of LWHI seemed to neglect their role of providing for the needs of the learner. They abandoned the children to the teachers who could not cater for all the needs of the LWHI without the support of the parents, thus parents and teachers were at loggerheads. On the other hand, the education officers did not offer adequate support to the parents and teachers. This promoted negative attitudes towards each other thus a strained their relationship. Head teachers also had a lamentable professional practice as they did not always fulfil their role effectively and in a professional manner. They did not manage and relate to the parents and the SNE teachers well to be able to work as a team.

The study thus concludes that the nature of stakeholders 'collaborative partnership was determined by stakeholders 'attitude, relationship and how they performed their roles. It is evident that there was limited collaborative partnership as a result of negative attitudes towards LWHI and other stakeholders, strained relationship and stakeholders not performing their roles effectively. This seemed to affect the inclusion of LWHI in West Pokot Primary schools.

Experiences of Stakeholders' Collaborative Partnership

From the responses regarding the experiences of stakeholder's collaborative partnerships in enabling inclusion of learners with hearing impairment, the participants had mixed experiences of their collaborative partnership. The experiences of stakeholders illuminated both barriers and enablers of their collaborative partnership. While describing the barriers to collaborative partnerships participants highlighted a lack of special needs education knowledge as a major impediment to collaboration. Stakeholders who lacked special needs knowledge did not understand what should be done or what should happen in SNE. This made them uncertain as to how to perform their roles effectively. It was perceived that the head teachers and the head teachers and the education officers aim was to misappropriate the funds as they were perceived to divert resources meant for LWHI to other purposes ... This brought disagreements and power struggles among stakeholders and hence stakeholder limited participation in enabling educational activities for LWHI. Parents and teachers felt unsupported by other stakeholders as they were left on their own without clear direction as to where to get support or which support services were available for them and the LWHI.

However, in some instances, stakeholders 'experiences revealed enablers that seemed to boost a collaborative partnership. Awareness of the value of working together was perceived to be central to enabling collaboration, as it in itself could be the initial element in promoting stakeholder cooperation and good communication to enable stakeholders to perform their roles effectively.

The study concluded that stakeholders 'experiences of their collaborative partnership comprised of barriers and enablers. The barriers inhibited collaborative partnership whereas the enablers boosted collaborative partnership. It is evident that the barriers contributed to limited collaboration and the enablers enhanced stakeholder collaborative partnership, revealing a tension in the inclusion of LWHI in West Pokot County primary schools

How Stakeholders' Collaborative Partnership can be supported

It is evident that stakeholders 'collaborative partnerships in West Pokot County require support so as to enable inclusion of LWHI in inclusive primary schools. Participants in the study suggested that stakeholders

'collaborative partnership could be supported through the creation of an awareness which involves community sensitization and exposure of stakeholders to successful SNE individuals as well as to programs which could motivate them to participate fully in the education of LWHI. Specialized knowledge in SNE is also a necessity in supporting collaborative partnership. This could be achieved through the appointment of Special Needs Education (SNE) specialists at all levels of SNE programs. Head teachers who are in charge of inclusive primary schools should have SNE knowledge. Similarly, teachers and field officers should be SNE experts and have frequent in-service training so as to support inclusive education. Finally, participants advocated for the involvement of all stakeholders as it is paramount in achieving a collaborative practice in the education of LWHI. This could be realized through increased stakeholder participation, establishing good working relationships, stakeholders fulfilling their responsibilities and the forming of associations to allow stakeholders to share knowledge and together solve problems encountered in the education of LWHI in inclusive primary schools.

The study concluded that that stakeholders 'collaborative partnership in West Pokot County needs to be supported to enable inclusion of LWHI in inclusive primary schools. This could be achieved through the creation of awareness, stakeholders having specialized knowledge in SNE and the involvement of all stakeholders.

Collectively, the themes revealed that the nature of the stakeholders 'collaborative partnerships is limited due to stakeholders 'negative attitudes towards LWHI and each other, their poor relationships, as well as the stakeholders not performing their roles. It also pointed to stakeholders 'experiences of collaborative partnership being impeded by several barriers, yet there were some enabling experiences which seemed to make collaborative partnership thrive. The participants saw the need for the stakeholder collaborative partnership to be supported through the creation of awareness among the Pokot community of the value of education of LWHI, that stakeholders having specialized knowledge in Special Needs Education, and increasing stakeholder involvement.

From the above conclusions it is clear that the collaborative partnership is a significant element in successful inclusion of LWHI in West Pokot County and that it is necessary to nurture the stakeholders 'collaborative partnerships by fostering positive stakeholder attitudes, relationships and enabling stakeholders to acquire specialized SNE knowledge so as to understand and perform their roles effectively. In addition, the stakeholder collaborative partnership be supported by creating awareness among the Pokot community on the value of education of LWHI and increasing stakeholder participation so as to enable inclusion of LWHI.

The study also revealed the importance of collaborative partnership in improving practice among practitioners in inclusive and special needs education. Teachers and education officers need to improve their professional practice by working collaboratively with parents and other educational stakeholders so as to share, enrich and address educational problems hampering the inclusion of LWHI.

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