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Original Article

A Phenomenological Reflection on the Concept of Inclusion as Employed in the Kenyan Education Landscape: Anecdotal Accounts of Inclusionary Exclusion

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ABSTRACT

The role of education in any given society cannot be overemphasized enough. Granted, evaluation of such roles is based on the assumption that all citizens will access and participate in specific educational experiences as provided for by the said societies. This implies inclusion, a concept that remains protracted owing to its subjective interpretation by various actors. Indeed, this paper views the problem partly as a conceptual issue which can be resolved upon unequivocal clarification of the concept, followed by deliberate sensitization of the relevant stakeholders. So what is inclusion, and to what extent do education stakeholders share in the understanding? According to the disability theory, inclusion majorly involves special needs learners. This conception drifts focus from what should actually be the case: schools for all. The current paper critiques such conceptions, providing illustrations of how they eventually mislead teachers into exclusionary practices albeit subconsciously. In this perspective article, teachers' and learners' views on inclusion were mined through the sentiment analysis method where the views were gathered from social media, specifically from a popular Facebook page, and synthesized accordingly. In the final analysis, it emerged that education access was mistaken for participation, leading to situations where teachers inadvertently excluded normal learners at various levels, imagining that their being in school alone was testimony of inclusion. The resulting situation is herein referred to operationally as inclusionary exclusion. This paper recommends, as a first step, the inclusion of knowledge and skills on both inclusive and exclusive practices in teacher education programmes so that education practitioners act consciously. It is instructive that no goal of education is achieved in the absence of inclusive practices, hence, there is a need for a review of how education practitioners and policymakers conceptualize inclusion.

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INTRODUCTION

The government of Kenya, through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), has articulated eight main goals of education. Among them is one that touches on the development of a skilled human resource for national development. Education is therefore tasked with, among other responsibilities, the preparation of individuals for their eventual role in the economic and social development of the country. This informed the government's establishment of a policy christened 'A Hundred Per cent Transition' which aims at ensuring all pupils graduating from primary schools transit to secondary level regardless of their graded scores, so that they fully partake of basic education. This policy is not without foundation. It is instructive that the United Nations, under its policy of Education for All (EFA), recognizes education as an empowerment tool for every person (UNESCO, 2005). Consequently, the Kenyan Constitution provides for education as one of the rights of every child (RoK, 2010), setting the stage for the elimination of any barriers that may obstruct access to education. All this is in recognition of the role of education as a catalyst for various forms of development. To this end, the current paper argues that such a role can only be established once it is evident that as many individuals as possible have been made to access and fully participate in the education process.

Locally, the term 'access' has generally been employed to refer to enrolment into a learning institution. According to the Oxford English Dictionary**,** access refers to the opportunity or right to use something. One may therefore talk of access to water, for example, in reference to one's proximity to the source as in the case of tap water. It should not be lost on anyone, however, that certain circumstances can bar an individual from consuming some good or service despite their access to it. Such is the case with education. It is against this backdrop that a more meaningful term – inclusion – comes into play. Whereas the government can facilitate easy access to education (read enrolment), and even establish mechanisms of fostering learning, it largely remains the job of the teacher to actualize inclusion once the learner is in school. However, a problem emerges when some teachers resort to creating further barricades in the way of the learner, effectively denying the latter full participation in the learning activities. For then, education falls from the list of variables as far as the development of human resource among individuals is concerned.

Objective and Significance of the Paper

This paper is drawn from a larger study which seeks to establish the role of education in developing skilled human resource in Kenya. Specifically, it addresses an objective that sought to establish the potential of Kenya's education in realizing a skilled human resource. The significance of the study lies in its potential to inform education practitioners on their role as far as the achievement of the goals of education, specifically the development of skilled human resource, is concerned. The paper recognizes that it is not enough to judge the role of a given education system without being certain that all learners have fully participated in the learning experience.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper employs both the Outcomes-based theory of education by William Spaddy (Spaddy, 1994) and the disability theory. According to Spaddy, curriculum activities are supposed to be organized to

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reflect the outcomes which students are supposed to exhibit at the end of their course. Logically, this makes an assumption that students ought to be allowed access to such activities so that they can be appraised based on their experience. The second theory – disability theory – comes in to explain the possible reason why some teachers exclude learners from actual participation once they access the learning environment. Accordingly, the said teachers easily recognize exclusion when it involves students who are abled differently, in contradistinction with those considered normal. The subtlety that attends exclusion of normal learners makes the teachers fail to discover their own contribution towards exclusion.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

The study, being a philosophical undertaking, employed two philosophical methods. First was the logical method, also known as conceptual analysis, which facilitated the understanding of key concepts such as education and inclusion. For instance, the idea of inclusion was analysed so that it elicited another concept – exclusion – and further linked to the disability theory which always takes centre stage when issues of inclusion arise. Further conceptual analysis brought forth another concept – access – which, upon clarification, was found to be often mistaken with inclusion. The latter error of commission would make it difficult for education practitioners, who are actually teachers, to discover their own exclusionary practices especially when dealing with normal students.

The second method was philosophical reflection, also known as phenomenological analysis. This sought to understand the personal experiences of both teachers and students as far as education practice was concerned. The researcher mined narrative data from social media, specifically Facebook, whereupon the informants expressed their feelings and sentiments within their various groups. Purposeful sampling was employed since it enabled the researcher to easily access the participants. In this case, the informants were readily-available on the said Facebook page which predominantly features teachers' discussions on their encounters in the line of their duty. The narrative data was interpreted, analysed logically and reflected upon, culminating in a synthesis that depicted students' woes in school, as well as the teachers' unconscious exclusionary practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers versus Learners' Voices on Inclusion

It is not possible to fully achieve inclusion, even among learners without special needs. This is informed by the reality that some learners can originate self-inflicted challenges which militate against their full participation in the learning experience, effectively undermining efforts made to foster inclusion. Such may include truancy and other forms of indiscipline. That said, it is of interest for one to establish how the learners feel about the issue of inclusion. To this end, the current paper employed a qualitative approach, specifically sentimental analysis of data mined from social media, notably Facebook. The latter page was picked on since it readily provided a forum which featured issues related to teaching and learning, hence, provided a sample that purposefully fitted the research. The choice was appropriate since the method was instrumental in answering the author's research question: the teachers' and learners' views towards inclusion.

Whereas the evidence was anecdotal, it reflected the views that the participants provided willingly as their responses on the issue posted on Facebook. The article refers to them as 'implicit' since the researcher never originated the 'interview' questions. On the contrary, the 'questions' originated from Facebook accounts: one from a common Facebook group 'Mwalimu dot com', where a member of the group complained of schools that imposed so many requirements as a condition for admission; and another from a former student who posted a question on his timeline, seeking to know what students hated most about their schools. The responses were open, unguarded and instant – an indication of their probable genuineness.

The question raised on the 'MWALIMU DOT COM' Facebook group was simple and straight: 'Why do some schools list so many requirements before enrolling a learner? Ntk! (sic)' The question elicited mixed feelings. Another classic example involved a member who complained of the countless

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requirements that schools imposed upon parents, especially during admission, despite the fact that public primary and secondary education was free of charge (https://www.facebook.com/groups/mwalimpoa/permalink/3050096828350544/?app=fbl). Whereas a few members of the group (teachers, supposedly) condemned the practice, terming it as opportunistic and extortionist, the majority membership trolled the mover of the motion, depicting her as an alarmist. The latter faction argued that everyone had freedom of choice in the 'small' matter of where to take their children for studies. For them, whoever felt aggrieved by a particular school's modus operandi was at liberty to go elsewhere. Whereas the concept of 'freedom' seemed distorted, it was evident that those opposed to the motion had little apprehension of the issue of inclusion. Similarly, those who condemned the practice did so from an economic perspective; they mostly considered the expenses they were to incur, giving little thought to the bigger picture – the exclusion of their children. Whichever the case, one thing stood out: teachers had missed an opportunity to appreciate their role in inclusive education.

As earlier intimated, this paper equally considered a conversation that ensued on some students' Facebook timelines concerning what students hated most about their schools. The question, as it appeared, was casually posed with the intention of whiling the moment away. However, the responses culminated in a serious discourse. Almost all respondents registered their disaffection with teachers who displayed intolerance to their unique circumstances. Overall, they held a feeling that teachers whom they termed as understanding and accommodating made their lives at school easier and better, enabling them to complete their studies. Top on their list of dislikes were those teachers who frequently insulted them. According to them, such insults killed their self-esteem, making them feel empty, valueless and lesser beings. In the end, they felt that they were not part of the rest. This paper considers such a case as pure exclusion. Going forward, it is important that teachers reflect on the consequences of their actions with regard to inclusion.

Access and Inclusion: The Teacher's Role

Documented literature is replete with factors that hinder a child's access to education: economic status, cultural beliefs and practices, religious orientations, physical and mental disabilities, geographical issues, and political instability, among many others. Most of these factors have been addressed to some appreciable levels. Whereas physical and mental disabilities are listed as barriers to access, they are usually mentioned in relation to inclusion. This is informed by the fact that individuals with such disabilities – deafness, dumbness, visual impairment and lameness (note that mental disabilities have not been featured here) – may be assisted to access learning environments but fail to fully participate in learning activities. The term 'inclusion' therefore tends to be employed in a narrow sense that seems to exclude learners considered to be normal, effectively insinuating that they are by default catered for. According to Mulhern (2006), the meaning attached to the concept of 'inclusion' goes a long way in determining how teachers grapple with the dilemmas, tensions and contradictions that classroom practice presents when dealing with pupil diversity. If narrowly understood, a teacher may end up perpetuating exclusion in a bid to achieve inclusivity. It is in this sense that the paper coined the term *inclusionary exclusion* to refer to this unique situation where learners are made to look included, only to be excluded systemically.

Tyagi (2016) observes that the concept of inclusivity has long shifted from focusing on physical and cognitive disabilities only, so that it currently encompasses other human diversities such as language, gender, age, and culture, among many other differences. If this view holds, then the so-called normal learners are to a relative extent vulnerable to exclusion. As implementers of the curriculum, teachers ought to be made aware of this truth lest they unconsciously become perpetrators of non-inclusive practices. Rouse (2008) observes that a majority of teachers believe it is the role of the government to address the issue of inclusion. Granted, they do not place themselves anywhere as far as inclusive practices are concerned; their role is limited to teaching learners as and where they are.

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Many a time, teachers have portrayed themselves as aloof from the learners' welfare. Sentiment analyses from social media such as Facebook tell interesting stories. For instance, Facebook groups such as 'Mwalimu dot com' and 'Teachers Online', whose members are predominantly teachers, often host posts that carry mixed feelings regarding teachers' perceptions towards their duties. Whenever an issue arose, for example, a teacher being accused of punishing and consequently hurting a learner, some teachers came up not to rebuke the offending party but to wonder why such a teacher got involved with student discipline in the first place. To such teachers, their work was limited to teaching. For them, all that the learner needed to do was to appear in class, be subjected to the curriculum experience (regardless of its suitability to them) and wait for evaluation. In any case, the examination would place each student in their rightful category, dividing the true from the untrue. In a nutshell, all students were considered equal before the curriculum; the teacher being an indifferent mediator.

Ideally, the teacher is viewed as a central factor in the provision of education – at least among developing countries. It is no surprise that in some areas, the teacher is all that there is; textbooks and other learning resources being a luxury. Accordingly, the role of education is thereupon defined by the role of the teacher. In the unfortunate circumstance that the teacher engages in practices which militate against inclusion, education acquires a new face – that of discrimination. This marks the beginning of endless challenges in the provision of education as the majority of stakeholders concentrate on mainstreaming inclusive structures, hardly viewing the teacher as a factor that can militate against their efforts. A recent example is the case where Kenya shifted from what she termed as content-based education to a competency-based one. The main reason was that the former system of education was falling short of imparting desirable competencies to learners. Whereas this may have been the case, there was no evidence that all the incompetent products had fully participated in the education process and still turned out half-baked. Further, there may be no guarantee that the new system will achieve the desired outcomes, given that all possible reasons for the failure of the old system were not explored. This paper holds systemic exclusion as a contributing factor to an insufficient grasp of competencies.

Whereas inclusion is a larger concept that presupposes access, it is not limited to it. Whatever happens after access counts much more, and reflects true inclusion. It is pointless for learners to access opportunities created by inclusion policies, only to be excluded again by virtue of not being able to navigate around further obstacles created within learning environments. It is even more troubling when teachers are the creators of such barriers. For instance, there abound cases where teachers apply unreasonably stringent requirements before enrolling students in their respective schools. Marete (2019), for instance, wrote to complain about endless fees charged by schools, which were outside the guidelines of the MOEST. Schools charged extra fees for field trips and teacher motivation, with disregard to the already overburdened parents and vulnerable children that are sponsored by well-wishers. Further, Wamochie (2019) observed in the local dailies that some schools sent students home even after they had paid the government-stipulated fees, despite the Education Cabinet Secretary's warning against it. Students were required to pay for teacher motivation (an arbitrary charge), and construction of perimeter walls, dormitories, latrines and water tanks, besides the normal fees. Students who would not raise the funds would be kept home for as long as they remained defaulters. Another report was published by Wainaina et al. (2020), whereupon they complained of school heads who defied directives from the education ministry, ending up charging illegal fees.

Other exclusionary practices included an insistence on full payment of tuition fees; purchase of particular shades and quantity of uniform – all from particular dealers; compulsory purchase of sports gear such as hockey sticks among other unclear demands. To ensure compliance, members of staff are placed at strategic points of clearance to ensure that the new students are only admitted after fulfilling the specified requirements. Further, some schools (read teachers) will insist on a specific date of registration of new students, such that anyone missing the appointed date automatically forfeits

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their opportunity. Whereas some minimum set of standards are required for order and smooth operation, such may become a hindrance to access, let alone inclusion, if applied unreasonably.

In lieu of the above, it becomes defeatist to advocate inclusive practices within learning environments before being certain that the issue of access has been addressed. On the same thread, it is of utmost importance to establish the extent to which teachers know their role as far as access to and participation in education is concerned. This brings us to the manner in which teachers are prepared for their roles, specifically those that relate to access and inclusion.

Teacher Preparedness for Inclusive Practices

The premium accorded to the role of the teacher in any civilization cannot be gainsaid. In retrospect, the teacher is so by virtue of preparation. Accordingly, society is obligated to prepare the teacher properly if it wishes to achieve its vision. This paper argues that a deficient teacher is as good as no teacher and that the teacher is so not just by virtue of education and training but by virtue of their excellent practice. Granted, there lies a world of difference between mere practice and excellent practice. Aristotle, in his *Nichomachean Ethics*, is of the opinion that every being aims at excellence as their purpose (Crisp, 2000). He further states in his *Eudemian Ethics* that the excellence of a thing defines its function. He provides an example of a shoemaker, who to him has the sole purpose of consistently producing nothing but excellent shoes. Similarly, teachers should be prepared well so that they discharge their duties in a manner that appeals to the diverse conditions of learners. An inclusive school curriculum, for example, is meaningless if the teacher has not been prepared to appreciate his/her role in inclusion. Consequently, the role of education will be rendered nugatory.

Pursuant to the above argument, it may easily be said of a teacher that his/her purpose finds a place in his/her excellence. Just like Aristotle's shoemaker, the teacher has a sole role of not only executing his/her roles but doing so excellently and consistently. This paper adds that this role is not just limited to *teaching*. It should be remembered that some teachers have previously made claims that their duty is to *teach*, and nothing more. Circumstances of such statements, nevertheless, are not in the province of this paper. In as much as one may not be certain of what the term *teaching* means, at least in this context, it is clear that the object of this *teaching* is the learner. These learners can only be taught if they are available. It will therefore be a contradiction for the teacher to come to school with an intention of teaching, and at the same time participate in the institutionalization of barriers to access. Such barriers, whenever met, must be fought in all their forms so as to pave the way for inclusive practices. Accordingly, there are no better agents to be recruited for this war than teachers.

This paper has made a case for excellence, equating it to the purpose of every being. Thus one is either an excellent teacher or something else (there are no intermediates). Instructively, such excellence is not achieved passively. It is evidently a function of deliberate and organized efforts that go into teacher preparation. If a teacher is capable of learning and perfecting the practice of obstructing access, for example, there is a high possibility that the same teacher can learn inclusive practices. At this point, one needs to ask themselves one pertinent question: Under what circumstances did this teacher learn the malpractice of hindering access? Who is responsible for such lessons? Rouse (2008) holds that teachers are never prepared well to handle issues of inclusion. This paper adds that the teacher is equally never prepared on how to avoid practices that exclude learners from school (access) and from learning, once in school (participation).

Aristotle once said that nature abhors a vacuum (*horror vacui*). Accordingly, failure by colleges to sufficiently prepare prospective teachers has effectively led to other players filling in. This implies that those teacher education institutions which sleep on their job risk exposing their students to other 'teachers' who act on their behalf. The problem, however, will not be about the lessons omitted by the colleges but the inappropriate lessons that trickle from outside of college, occasioned by the vacuum. Such lessons may include lethargy, wherein the resultant teacher will be doing nothing else but teach; self-aggrandizement, which will be

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expressed by engaging in profit-making activities while at school; violence, which may be expressed verbally or physically hence scaring students from school; and many other wrong lessons. And since teacher educators neither offer lessons that would counter these vices, nor attempt to make student teachers wary of them, opportunistic 'teachers' take over and practise unabated.

The above exposition leads to several questions: What is the content of teacher education in Kenya? How is this content taught, and by who? The question of content is very important since teacher education programmes seem to predominantly address the socalled *teaching subjects* and a few professional courses such as educational foundations and management. Whereas the education courses stand a better chance of addressing issues that concern access and inclusion, there is a possibility that they are not taken seriously by student teachers. The latter tend to put more premium on their respective *teaching subjects* such as Sciences and Arts, at the expense of professional courses like Educational Psychology, Philosophy of Education or Sociology of Education which they are unlikely to teach.

In as much as the professional disciplines do not handle all issues that are related to access and inclusion, they equip the prospective teachers with basic knowledge and skills if well handled. For instance, educational psychology ably addresses issues to do with individual differences and special needs. Similarly, Sociology of Education addresses how social structures such as family, religion, health and economy, among others, affect access to school and subsequent learning. A teacher who is conversant with such knowledge, and believes in it, will be hesitant to institutionalize barriers to access and participation.

In as much as student teachers may be blamed for not giving professional courses the seriousness they deserve, a more productive step will be to inquire about the reason behind such. As a matter of conjecture, there is a possibility that teachers of such disciplines may not have found it necessary to emphasize the place of such knowledge and skills in the practice of education. This brings us to the question of how the teaching is done. For instance, a tutor who appears in class for two out of ten sessions and gives students notes in the form of print-outs, or one who only comes to dictate notes, all miss the opportunity of impressing upon learners the essence of their respective courses. The student teachers will eventually strive to memorize the notes for examination purposes, and thereafter discard them. Can the resultant teachers be relied upon to practise effectively? To what extent should such teachers be blamed when they imagine that fostering aspects such as access and inclusion is not part of their duty? Seemingly, the teacher is simply exercising higher order exclusion after initially being subjected to similar conditions while at college. Having been excluded from the concept of access and inclusive education during their preparation, the teachers consequently respond (consciously or unconsciously) by either ignoring inclusive practices or indulging in those practices that hinder access and inclusion.

The effectiveness of policies that are geared towards entrenching access and inclusion is clearly in doubt. It has already been argued that the 'One Hundred Per Cent Transition' policy might after all be wishful thinking unless the key players – teachers – are brought on board. Similarly, it may be of interest that research be done to establish the percentage of exclusion in the population of normal students against that of the handicapped ones. This is informed by the reality that oftentimes exclusion is attributed to the nature of the learner – their cognitive or physical dispositions. Further, the handicapped ones seem to quickly capture the attention of policymakers owing to their distinct nature, as evidenced by the disability theory. Be that as it may, normal students tend to suffer unimaginable injustice.

First, their supposed normal condition does not raise any suspicion to the effect that they may be undergoing some challenges – whether social, economic or psychological. Second, their large numbers may scare anyone into thinking of how to cater for their individual needs. Yes, they far outnumber the cognitively and physically challenged ones. And herein lies the problem: any form of exclusion visited upon this group has an astronomical effect, given their huge number. Does

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this then imply that the other group be neglected? The answer is an emphatic NO. As structures are put in place to mitigate the vagaries of the evidently marginalized and handicapped groups, teachers must be wary of the subtle challenges and vulnerability of the seemingly normal students. If this is taken into account, inclusion will truly be achieved.

Facets of Exclusion

Human languages have negation as one of their properties. At times, and often times, one is tempted to consider the other side of a word so as to contextualize it properly. Accordingly, this paper explores 'exclusion' as the negation of 'inclusion' so as to foreground the topic at hand. It has been argued herein that an ideal teacher is the face of education. That a teacher presupposes a student, and the two possess an organic relationship centred on education. Granted, the teacher can bring down an education system since they preside over the enrolment, teaching and learning process. Like a single button that returns a gadget's functionalities to factory settings, the teacher can prove detrimental to the education process if not well prepared. This is to say that the teacher is a double-edged sword: they are capable of production and destruction in equal measure; inclusion and exclusion being exemplars. So just how does a teacher engage in activities that exclude learners?

Acts of exclusion may be physical or psychological. Of the two, the former are fairly well known and manifest themselves in various ways. Concerning physical exclusion, a teacher may create a situation which forces learners, once enrolled in school, to optout. For instance, he/she may decide that all learners must appear in a particular way, such as shaving their heads clean. In this case, any learner flouting the directive is sent home until they comply. Alternatively, he/she may schedule an excursion that has financial implications so that any learner failing to raise the required amount is left out. Other scenarios observed by this author included assigning students outdoor duties during lessons; sending troublesome learners out of the classroom during lesson time; constantly missing classes and thus failing to cover the required content; and giving instruction that is way above the level of learners; among many other malpractices.

Another form of physical exclusion arose when some educational institutions strove to be different through various strategies. For example, teachers in a certain school resolved that all students must score a particular grade so as to be accommodated in the school. Here, ranking was highly valued and those who attained a lower mark were either forced to repeat or source for another school. Further, those who are retained are profiled according to their cognitive abilities and attended to on that basis. Sadly, society has come to accept such schools and their idiosyncrasies, oblivious to the harm that they cause. Whereas ranking is not entirely bad, the data obtained from the exercise must be used to neither undermine inclusion nor promote exclusion. It is common knowledge that such outlandish practices are rife, and vary from school to school – each striving to appear superior and outstanding. Surprisingly, some teachers from these schools feel proud of being associated with such practices, seemingly unaware of their threat to inclusion. For them, inclusion only arises in the case of children with learning needs. And such, they reckon, is not an issue since they belong to special schools and therefore out of their province.

Psychological exclusion is least known, or if known, rarely talked about. This may be the worst type of exclusion given its subtle nature. It presents a paradox since the learners are present and absent at the same time: physically, they are in school courtesy of interventions that foster access; psychologically, they are withdrawn. Ideally, there are many factors that can cause normal learners to block their attention to learning activities. These may be both physiological and mental, originating within or without the learner. Here, the paper explores those psychological factors that are specifically attributed to the teacher. Consider a teacher, for example, who handles learners ruthlessly; or one who openly shows them contempt. It follows that learners will develop a negative attitude towards him or her. However resourceful such a teacher may be, most learners will automatically switch off the moment he or she steps into the classroom. In such a case, the lesson at hand is not for *all* learners; it is for those who feel wanted, loved and accepted. The rest are practically excluded by the teacher, albeit implicitly.

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Teachers further contribute to psychological exclusion by small the acts that they perform while in class. For instance, the author of this paper recalls a moment when a teacher entered their class and gave a tongue-lashing speech. Seemingly, he had been pissed off by a section of the class who were not keen on their studies. As he wound up his diatribe, he made an interesting declaration: 'May students remain in class and cows go to the cow shed!' This statement shook the class to the core. While the teacher embarked on his duty of *teaching*, the learners' minds spun into confusion. Some became enraged by the remark and switched off altogether; others engaged their minds in analyzing the teacher's discourse. Eventually, the teacher *taught* but no one learned. Seemingly, all the learners were excluded. Whereas they were physically present, their minds had wandered off – probably into the said cow shed.

The bottom line of exclusion is that the learner is in some way barred from learning, whether by the teacher or any other factor, physically or psychologically. The tragedy is that the concerned authorities only focus on ensuring that the teacher reports to school and attends to their classes. And when they choose to reflect upon exclusion, the last culprit on their minds is the teacher. This paper has deliberately focused on teacher-initiated practices that renege upon inclusion. It has narrowed down to those perpetrated against normal learners, who ordinarily are never thought of as potential victims whenever the discourse on inclusion ensues. Further, it has reflected on the extent to which the teacher views inclusive practices as his/her responsibility. Granted, the said teacher is either ignorant of his/her role concerning inclusion or does not consider it as part of his/her duty.

The 'Sustainable Development' Mumbo Jumbo

The United Nations (UNDP, 2015) lists quality education as position four under its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is premised on the understanding that education is instrumental for human, economic and social development. Considering that much of this education is provided in schools, the latter must be well established and manned by properly prepared personnel. Further, proactive policies ought to be instituted to the effect that all children receive adequate and relevant education to enable them to fully participate in the development of their societies. Instructively, there is no point in investing massively in education while ignoring loopholes that can hinder access and inclusion. When policies are therefore put in place, such as those that relate to teacher education and inclusion, nations stand better chances of sustaining their development through education. Granted, education initiates the young into their respective adult roles. Such education, when done right, consequently guarantees continuity in terms of national development – socially, politically and economically. It will therefore be meaningless to talk about 'sustainable development' without first addressing the catalyst to development *per se*.

So which way? This paper contends that sustainable development can be actualized if the primary agent of development – the human resource – is developed. In any society, there are different forms and levels of human resource. For instance, there are personnel in various professions, trades, and other occupations. For optimum and sustainable development, all these categories must be brought on board. Whereas all cannot achieve the same level of education, each must be afforded full participation at their level of choice and providence. In any case, all these categories have a role to play – right from the top managers, policy and decision-makers, technocrats, technicians, artisans and casual workers. Whenever any of them is excluded at their respective level – whether at basic, tertiary or higher education – there results in incompetence in particular sections. Given, that incompetence is antithetical to any form of development. It is no wonder that employers decry what they term as half-baked graduates. Such partial 'baking' may partly be attributed to the exclusive practices within learning environments**.**

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

It has been noted that the conception of a term can go a long way in determining the actions attendant to it. As it were, the term 'inclusive education' has been accorded various interpretations by both policymakers and education practitioners. Unfortunately, the predominant conception is one that refers to measures put in place to accommodate children with learning needs, and those who have

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been marginalized. As a consequence, it hardly occurs to education stakeholders – more so teachers – that normal learners, who happen to be the majority, are vulnerable to exclusionary practices arising from systemic conceptions. For them, access and inclusion in education stop at the enrolment stage. Thereafter, those who cannot be retained as a result of failing to measure up to some stringent demands by the very teachers are often jettisoned. To those teachers, such situations are considered normal and inevitable – the victims being termed 'drop-outs'.

The genesis of teachers' involvement in exclusive practices is partly traced to the way they are developed. Generally, teacher education institutes run programmes that do not lay emphasis on inclusive practices. And when they attempt, student teachers do not take them seriously. Rouse (2008) observes that there is a huge gap between what teachers know and what they practise on the ground. This explains why teachers exclude themselves from the inclusion agenda and consequently calls for continuous teacher development courses that will serve to remind them of their roles. Mittler (2000) observes that teachers' attitudes and perceptions render them great obstacles to inclusion. Whereas the government through MOEST has on several occasions resolved to retool the teachers (RoK, 2015; RoK, 2016), very little has been done to demonstrate commitment.

It is necessary that teachers be made to appreciate the truth that they are potential threats to inclusion so that they work towards avoiding such scenarios. Further, education policymakers have to review the local conception of inclusion so that it does not necessarily confine itself to learners with special needs. In any case, there exist special institutions (however limited) with specially-trained teachers who handle learners with special needs. There is equally a possibility that these teachers, whereas specifically meant for special schools, can also engage in exclusive practices if not well prepared. Accordingly, if any meaningful progress is to be realized, the government ought to move beyond its routine pronouncements and recommendations so that it establishes effective strategies that will lead to inclusion proper. This will ensure that as many children as possible acquire an education so that they get prepared to participate in the development of the nation; for national development cannot be sustained by few individuals. Yet education, as an activity, cannot stand judgment as concerns its role or otherwise in society unless one is certain that the activity is done right.

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