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Original Article

### Influence of Child Screening on the Execution of Inclusive Education: A Case of Public Pre-Primary Schools in Belgut Sub-County, Kenya

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*Influence,  
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Screening.*

This study sought to establish the influence of school factors influencing the execution of Inclusive education in public pre-primary schools in Belgut Sub-County, Kenya. The objective of the study was to examine the influence of child screening on the execution of Inclusive education in public pre-primary schools in Belgut Sub-County. The study was guided by the Social Model of Disability Theory. The study also utilised a descriptive survey research design. In addition, the study used stratified sampling and random sampling techniques to sample 113 out of 160 pre-primary school teachers and 56 out of 78 head teachers teaching in pre-primary and primary schools in Belgut Sub-County. The reliability of research instruments was achieved through the use of a half-split reliability test and piloting of the research instruments. Data for the study was collected using an observation checklist, pre-primary school teachers' questionnaire and head teachers' questionnaire. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and the findings were indicated in percentages and frequencies and displayed in distribution tables. The study found that a significant number of preschool teachers do not screen learners when joining preschool. In addition, the study found that pre-primary school teachers do not have children's screening records. Hence, the study concluded that screening of pre-primary school children has a negative influence on the execution of Inclusive education in pre-primary schools in Belgut Sub-County.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Inclusive education is a current global agenda in education which requires regular schools to admit, welcome, and facilitate all children from the neighbourhood to learn and take part in all the activities undertaken in school (Sudhakar, 2018). Inclusive education also recognises the fact that children have different abilities in terms of intellectual, physical, and social abilities among others (UNESCO, 1994). It also seeks to provide quality education to all learners irrespective of the disabilities or special needs that some of them might have (OECD, 2019).

Inclusive education prepares children with special needs to develop friendship and social skills necessary for national cohesion (Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision, 2012). It brings together children with and without special needs in the regular learning institutions thereby enabling them to develop friendship and social skills necessary for peace and working together in an inclusive society. Screening children when joining preschool is necessary for effective inclusion of children in preschool for it enables preschool teachers to identify children's abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and needs which will inform the provision of appropriate support (The African-American Institute, 2015)

In June 1994, the delegates from 92 governments and 25 international organisations held a World Conference on special needs education in Salamanca, Spain, to deliberate on education for children with special needs. They came up with Salamanca Declaration and Framework for Action on special needs education which affirmed that learners with special needs should be educated in inclusive schools (UNESCO, 1994). Later in 2006, representatives of state parties congregated in New York, where they came up

with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities [UNCRP] (United Nations, 2006). Article 7 of UNCRP states that children with disabilities are entitled to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children. UNESCO is at the forefront of encouraging the creation of Inclusive education policies (UNESCO, 2019). In response to UNCRPD (2006), almost all the countries have formulated inclusive education programmes for learners with special needs (UNESCO, 2019). In addition, Sustainable Development Goal No 4, article 5 obligates nations to provide an inclusive quality education that promotes lifelong learning for all persons by 2030 (UNESCO, 2019).

However, inclusive education has not been actualised globally. For example, research studies reveal that Inclusive education for learners with special needs has not yet been fully realised (Muna, 2014; Lee et al., 2015; Underwood, 2013). Inclusive education for pre-schoolers with disabilities experiences challenges in Europe (Cologon, 2013), United States of America (USA Department of Education, 2015), New Zealand (Government of New Zealand, 2012), Ireland (Maloney & McCarthy, 2010), Turkey (Sucuoglu et al., 2015), India (Madan, & Sharma, 2013) and Thailand (Klibthong, 2013).

Similarly, Inclusive education in Africa as a whole has not been actualised (Wanjoh, 2014). A lot of parents still educate their children living with disabilities in special schools, as is the case in Malawi (Chimwaza, 2015), Swaziland (Government of Swaziland, 2016) and Ghana (Asamoah (2018); Mawunyo (2013). Similarly, Inclusive education for children living with disabilities is yet to be fully achieved in South Africa (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Dalton et al., 2011), Zimbabwe (Chimwaza, 2015). New

Guinea (Wakia, 2019) and Ethiopia (Mitiku et al., 2014).

In East Africa, Inclusive education has not also been fully achieved. It is experiencing challenges in Rwanda (UNICEF- Rwanda, 2011). In Tanzania, the Inclusive education project is underway in the Coastal Region and is yet to be rolled out in the rest of the country (Kiama, 2015). According to Mwaura (2009, Inclusive education was started recently in Sudan, whereas few children with disabilities go to school in Uganda (Nangosi, 2016),

In Kenya, the Constitution of Kenya (Republic of Kenya [RoK], 2010), the Sessional Paper No.10 of 2012 (Ministry of State for Planning and National Development [MOSPND], 2012), the Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012 (RoK, 2012) and Disability Mainstreaming Policy (2012) reveals the government's commitment to effecting Inclusive education. The UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 4, Target 5 articulates that by 2030 all persons including those with disabilities should have access to equal quality education (UNESCO, 2019). According to the Ministry of Education (2018), the Department of Early Learning and Basic Education is responsible for making education in Kenya more Inclusive.

Research studies reveal that inclusive quality education is the interplay of several factors which include policies, practices, physical and human resources acting simultaneously (European Network on Inclusive Education and Disability (2015). One of the practices that play a major role in the provision of inclusive education in preschools is child screening. Screening preschool children is a way of identifying the children who may need special education services in the areas of vision, hearing, motor skills, pre-academic learning concepts, communication, social development, and self-help development. Hence, teachers should be knowledgeable in assessment procedures regarding learners' characteristics, attainments, and learning styles (UNESCO, 2018).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Child Screening

Screening is the starting point for Inclusive education (Drabble, 2013). This is because early identification of health and developmental problems facilitates the provision of appropriate educational services that will enable children with special abilities to develop to their full potential (Rohwerder, 2017). Children who display deviations from normal development or have health problems from birth are usually screened by health professionals who also provide appropriate interventions.

Hayes and Bulat (2017) observe that low-and-medium income states (LMI) lack proper mechanisms for identifying children with special abilities in early childhood and education programmes. Ideally, simple screenings of children should be conducted in the classrooms. However, the researchers found that hearing and vision screenings are not conducted in schools. They recommend referral systems where learners who have been identified can be provided with assistive devices. This suggests that inclusive schools do not provide for the requirements of learners with severe hearing and visual impairments. This impacts the capacities of schools to handle all learners effectively in the schools. This also implies that screening for visual and hearing disabilities is a challenge facing Inclusive education in most African countries (Alhassan, 2014). European Commission (2010) concurs with the European Commission (2013) that persons with disabilities should be identified early to enhance the provision of support.

According to California Childcare Health Program (2006) and Travers et al. (2010), many learners join preschool with disabilities that have not yet been diagnosed because some of the developmental delays and disabilities only show up as learners develop and some are even hard to identify. There is also no evidence that learners living with disabilities are identified at the preschool level (European Commission, 2013). However, Moodie et al. (2014) observe that

screening does not establish the nature and extent of a disability among learners.

Travers et al. (2010), in a study in Ireland, observed that preschool teachers have challenges regarding the assessment of children. Similarly, Parekh et al. (2011) maintain that children who are not correctly identified miss out on support services that enable them to succeed in school. The authors argue that although the identification of learners with special abilities leads to the provision of support services that improve children's school performance, some undesirable outcomes, such as labelling and segregating children with low academic outcomes, may increase dropout rates. The study further argues that wrongful identification of learners with special abilities may lead to increased dropout rates leaving them with low chances of accessing higher education and consequently living with economic challenges in adulthood.

Moodie et al. (2014) acknowledge that teachers should use screening tools that are reliable, simple to operate and give accurate results for effective identification of various health and developmental problems that young children may have. Effective screening and assessment of learners are necessary if Inclusive education is to be accomplished. As much as preschool teachers should be the first people to screen children on entry to preschool, several research studies reveal that preschool teachers do not do it, necessitating other professionals or bodies to do it first.

According to Alhassan (2014), in a study on Inclusive education in Ghana, preschool teachers had insufficient knowledge on the assessment of learners with special abilities in the mainstream institutions. Special abilities pupils whose Individualised Education Plans have been prepared should be continually assessed to establish their progress towards achieving the set objectives. Similarly, a screening exercise was conducted nationwide in preschools in Ghana in 2019 to determine the eligibility of children for enrolment in preschool by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

(UNICEF) in cooperation with the Millennium Promise Alliance (Government of Ghana, 2019).

According to a study in Kenya by Nyunya (2018), it is important for teachers to screen children who show some signs of developmental delays as they start preschool education. The study further states that it is important to also prepare screening reports and keep them for referral purposes. Mwangi (2013) also posit that the identification of children with special abilities should be made at an early age for the purpose of obtaining data to guide in placement so that corrective measures can be instituted to stop further impairment. RoK (2015) also stipulates that every institution should keep records of all the learners, which show every learner's name, age, date of birth, name of guardian or parent, medical history, and special abilities. This is important because it enables teachers, parents or guardians, and the Ministry of Education to follow up on the progress and development of children found to be having special ability cases.

Adoyo and Odeny (2015), in a study done in Kenya to investigate the challenges facing Inclusive education, observe that young learners living with disabilities do not get access to quality inclusive preschool services as early as possible. They attributed this to the fact that preschool teachers do not conduct assessments to establish their health and developmental status. According to RoK (2015) and MOEST (2013), the expertise of teachers in screening practice in Kenya is wanting. RoK (2012) in "*Sessional paper, No. 14*", indicates that there are insufficient tools and skills for assessing and identifying students with special abilities.

Similarly, Odhiambo (2014) in his study on the challenges facing the implementation of Inclusive education policy found that the assessment of learners with special needs is not done properly in Kenya. Preschool teachers ought to be familiar with normative development and modern assessment tools in early childhood. They should also have knowledge of identification procedures in order to adequately address screening issues (Muga, 2003). Preschool teachers will not notice

deviations in the normal child development that require assessment without sufficient knowledge of normative development in early childhood.

No research study has been conducted to examine the influence of child screening on the execution of Inclusive education. Child screening is key to the effective execution of Inclusive education. Hence, this study sought to examine the influence of child screening on the execution of Inclusive education in public preschools in Belgut Sub-County, Kenya.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study was anchored on the Social Model of Disability Theory which was advanced by the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS) in Britain in 1975 (UPIAS, 1975). The Social Model of Disability Theory postulates that disability is not located in an individual but in society, which creates barriers in the environment that disable people with disabilities. Children with disabilities have social environments, which include school and home environments. The school environment consists of physical facilities, learning resources, and teachers, among others which can disable preschool learners with special needs. For example, a lack of teachers' screening skills can result in inaccurate screening results, which can disable learners with special needs through the provision of support services that do not match their special needs. Hence, preschools which do not conduct child screening are one way in which society creates barriers that disable learners with special needs. Child screening prevents learners with special needs from accessing learning areas and the learning materials

The concept of society creating barriers which disable learners with special needs is applicable to this study. Among the practices that may disable learners with special needs is a lack of screening children or not caring out screening practices effectively in preschools. Such practices become barriers to effective inclusion as they discourage learners with special needs from participating on an equal basis with learners without special needs.

In this case, for the successful inclusion of special needs learners in preschools, the proper screening of learners suspected to be having special needs should be carried out by teachers in preschools.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

Research designs refer to specific procedures undertaken in the research process, which include data collection, data presentation, and report writing (Cresswell, 2012). This study used a descriptive research design. The design is concerned with describing, recording, analysing, and interpreting conditions that exist or existed (Kothari, 2008). The design was chosen for this study because it allows for the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The design would also enable the researcher to establish the frequency of screening children in public preschools (McCombes, 2019). This allowed the researcher to triangulate data obtained from preschool teachers' and the head teachers' questionnaires and the observation checklist to verify information as the use of just one method would not have been sufficient to give conclusive results to the study. Therefore, the descriptive design helped the researcher to establish the school factors that influence the implementation of inclusive education in preschools in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County to a greater depth.

### **Study Locale**

The study was conducted in pre-primary schools in Belgut Sub-County, Kenya.

### **Study Population and Sample Size**

A population is a group of individuals, objects, or events that have characteristics to which researchers intend to generalise the results (Zungu, 2014). The target population of the study was 238 out of which 160 were preschool teachers, and 78 were primary school head teachers. The study population was stratified and Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table was used to compute a sample size of 113 preschool teachers and 65 primary school head teachers in Belgut



Sub County. According to Oso and Onen (2009), a sample refers to a part of the accessible population that has been procedurally selected to represent it. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table was chosen to sample the study respondents for this study because the table is standardised and hence gives a good sample size for the study. However, out of 113 questionnaires issued to preschool teachers, 102 (90.3%) were filled and were returned. Similarly, out of 56 questionnaires issued to primary school head teachers, 49 (71.8%) were filled and returned. The response rate of preschool teachers was 102, while that of the head teachers was 49. According to Fincham (2008), the response rate of 60% is considered satisfactory for surveys

### **Background Information of the Respondents**

This section provides information on the ages, gender, highest professional grades, and lengths of teaching experience of preschool teachers and the head teachers who participated in the study.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection refers to a process of gathering certain information for the purpose of proving or refuting some facts (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The research instruments used to collect data for this study were preschool teachers' questionnaires, primary school head teachers' questionnaires, and the observation checklist. The use of these instruments enabled the researcher to gather detailed and accurate data for the study as they complemented each other. Questionnaires were chosen for this study because the respondents would respond to the items independently without being manipulated by the researcher. Questionnaires can also be administered to a large sample, generate a large amount of information within a short time and are cost-effective (Orodho, 2003).

This study adopted a parallel mixed method approach whereby qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed simultaneously and thereafter integrated to explain the study problems (Ponce & Maldonado, 2014). According

to Bowen et al. (2017), the mixed methods approach enables the researcher to integrate the findings and to draw inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Axinn and Pearce (2006) argue that the mixed methods approach strengthens the weaknesses of other methods and presents an extensive empirical record.

This method was chosen for this study because it allowed the researcher to triangulate findings from preschool teachers' questionnaires, primary school head teachers' questionnaires, and the observation checklist, thereby giving a detailed report on the screening of children. In addition, the use of an observation checklist enabled the researcher to get in-depth information that enabled the researcher to better understand the influence of inclusive education in preschools in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County.

### **Data Analysis**

Kothari (2008) explains data analysis as the exercise of extracting useful information from raw data. Data analysis was done with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 17 software using descriptive statistics in the form of frequency distribution tables and percentages.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Screening of Learners on the Execution of Inclusive Education**

The first objective of the study sought to examine the influence of screening learners when joining preschool on the execution of Inclusive education in pre-primary schools in Belgut Sub-County. The views of preschool teachers concerning the screening of learners in pre-primary schools were also sought. Preschool teachers were requested to respond to the statement, 'Pre-primary school teachers screen learners when joining preschool to identify those with disabilities and tick the best option. The responses were based on a four Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly

agree, which represented their views. On screening learners when joining preschool.

On the other hand, the head teachers were also requested to give their views concerning the head

teachers checking of screening records of preschool children regularly. *Table 1* below summarises the findings.

**Table 1: Respondents' Views on Screening of Learners in Pre-Primary Schools**

Responses	Preschool Teachers		Head Teachers	
	f	%	f	%
Strongly Agree	18	17.6	11	22.4
Agree	30	29.4	25	51.0
Disagree	28	27.5	4	8.2
Strongly Disagree	26	25.5	9	18.4
Total	102	100	49	100

The result in *Table 1* above shows that the majority (30, 29.4%) of the preschool teachers agreed, 18 (17.6%) strongly agreed, 28 (27.5%) disagreed, and 26 (25.5%) strongly disagreed that they screened learners when joining the pre-primary school. The results revealed that the majority (54, 53.0%) of preschool teachers did not screen learners when joining the pre-primary school. This showed that less than half (4, (47%) of preschool teachers screened learners when joining preschool. The implication of the findings of this study is that screening preschool children is wanting and compromises the execution of Inclusive education. This could also have been occasioned by a lack of proper mechanisms for identifying children with special abilities in preschool (Hayes & Bulat, 2017) and a lack of teachers' training in screening procedures (Parekh et al., 2011). The findings of the study were similar to those of Adoyo and Odeny (2015), who found that preschool teachers do not screen children to establish their health and physical status. The findings also correspond to those of Odhiambo (2014) who found that screening children are one of the challenges facing Inclusive education. In addition, the study findings disagree with the finding of Hayes and Bulat (2017) who observed that the ECD programme lack mechanism for identifying children with special abilities.

The results in *Table 1* further show that majority of the head teachers (25, 51.1%) agreed, 11 (22.

4%) strongly agreed, 9 (18.4%) strongly disagreed, and 4 (8.2%) disagreed agreed that pre-primary school teachers screen learners when joining the pre-primary school. Hence, majority 37 (73.0%) of the head teachers were of the opinion that preschool teachers screen learners when joining the pre-primary school. This shows that more head teachers than pre-primary school head teachers were of the opinion that preschool teachers screen learners when joining pre-primary schools. Pre-primary school teachers are the ones who are tasked with the responsibility of screening children. The variance in the results on the extent to which screening of learners when joining the pre-primary school is conducted could have been occasioned by the fact that by disagreeing with the statement, the head teachers were revealing their inadequacy in their monitoring and supervisory roles of pre-primary school education programmes.

The findings from the head teachers' questionnaire are in agreement with RoK (2012) that preschool teachers should screen learners to identify those with special abilities. According to (Parekh et al. (2011), when children with special needs are not identified early, they will not access support services that are crucial for enabling them to succeed in school. Children with special needs who fail to access support services are more at risk of dropout of school and have fewer chances of accessing higher education. Consequently, such children will experience economic challenges in

adulthood. Hence, the study findings supported Nyunya (2018) that teachers should screen all learners who show some developmental delays as they start preschool education, prepare their screening reports, and keep them for referral purposes.

### Availability of Screening Records

The researcher also requested the head teachers to provide the screening records of children with special abilities in their schools for observation. The results are shown in *Table 2* below.

**Table 2: Researcher's Observation Findings on the Availability of Screening Records**

Response	Freq	%
Available	0	0.0%
Not Available	49	100%
Total	49	100

The findings from *Table 2* above revealed that 49 (100%) of the head teachers did not have screening records of children with special abilities in preschool. This implies that screening learners when joining pre-primary is not done. The study findings on preschool teachers in the screening of learners are in line with those of Eksteen et al. (2019), who observed that there were very few teachers who were trained in screening preschool children in South Africa. In addition, the findings from preschool teachers' questionnaire correspond to those of the European Commission (2013) that there is no evidence to show that preschool teachers screen children in preschool. Early identification of learners' needs enables teachers to provide appropriate educational services that enable children with special needs to develop to their full potential (Rohwerder, 2017).

Preschool teachers should also compile screening reports to aid in determining the kind of intervention and support services to be rendered to learners who have been identified with special abilities. In addition, European Commission (2013) observed that screening reports are used for accessing special education services that support children with special needs. Therefore, preschool teachers should furnish the head teachers' offices with screening reports for onward transmission to the County Government as per National Pre-Primary Education Policy (RoK, 2017). According to RoK (2015), preschool teachers should keep records pertaining to dates of birth, ages, names of parents or guardians and medical histories and other abilities

of all children. They should provide learners' records including those of screening, to the head teacher's office.

Screening records are necessary for the execution of Inclusive education as they are used in monitoring, evaluating, and subsequent improvement of preschool education. (Nyunya, 2018; RoK, 2015; RoK, 2017). Adequate expertise in screening children is necessary if Inclusive education for special- needs children is to be fully realised in preschools. Inadequacy of teachers' expertise in screening could lead to special abilities in children not being correctly identified, resulting in indiscriminate placement into special schools (Mutai et al., 2015). Hence, preschool teachers should be oriented on screening techniques to enable them to overcome the challenge of inadequate expertise in screening learners. In addition, preschool teachers should scale up the screening of children when joining preschool in order to identify those with special abilities, for it is only when their needs have been established that they can be provided with the appropriate interventions in the general inclusive classrooms.

### CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the study was intended to examine the influence of screening children on the execution of Inclusive education in the public preschools in Belgut Sub-County. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that screening children when joining preschools is still



wanting, hence, influencing the execution of Inclusive education negatively

### Recommendations

In view of the study findings, it makes the following recommendations:

- The County Director of Education should conduct in-service courses and workshops to enhance preschool teachers' screening competency.
- The County Director of Education should also insist on preschool teachers and the head teachers of primary schools keeping screening records of children with special needs in pre-primary school.

### Contribution of the Study

This study's findings contribute to new knowledge in the area of Inclusive education and enhance inclusive practice in pre-primary schools. It also contributes to policy. No study has investigated the influence of child screening on the execution of Inclusive education in Kenyan pre-primary schools.

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