



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# INFLUENCE OF TRAINING IN SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN LOWER GRADES PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN AWENDO MIGORIY COUNTY, KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

This study focused on the Influence of training in special needs education in implementing inclusive education in lower grades primary schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey design to gather data. The location of the study was Awendo, Migori County, Kenya. The target population was lower grades primary teachers in the mainstream schools which have special units. Respondents were 37 in number that included one education officer, nine school heads, and twenty-seven lower grades primary teachers. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed through descriptive statistics while qualitative data from interviews and checklists were analyzed thematically. Pearson's correlation was employed to test the hypothesis at a significant level of alpha .05. Findings revealed that there is only (26%) of teachers trained in special needs education and these teachers are not enough for all the schools with special units making inclusive education less operational. there is no clear policy guiding the training of teachers in special needs education. The majority of regular schools with special units do not have trained teachers at all in special needs education. There is no clear policy concerning the training and deployment of teachers in schools with a special unit. Hence it is difficult for teachers who are only trained in one area of specialization to manage the classes made of a mixture of learners with different categories of disabilities in addition to learners without disabilities. The main recommendation is that ministry of education may come up with a mass training model where trained teachers are involved in the training of their colleagues who are not trained in special needs education. This will result in enough teachers in regular schools to support learners with disabilities in special units.

### INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is the process of providing equitable and quality education to all children in their neighborhood schools in general education classes while providing quality instructions, intervention, and support (Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE), 2012; UNESCO, 2016). Yeri (2016) posited that inclusive education should involve all learners living with and without disabilities getting education together and achieving more together. Further, it is where learners living with disabilities access normal curriculum, increased concentration span, improved literacy and communication skills, and develop more friendship resulting in low rates of suspension, low rates of school drop-out hence improved academic achievement and higher rates of employment (National Dissemination Centre for Children with Disability (NDCCD), 2016). Special needs education mainly focuses on children with developmental disabilities and those who are gifted and talented. These children typically differ from those who are average in mental, sensory, communication, physical, behavioral or emotional developments. Due to their unique disabilities and characteristics, there is a need for modification of school routine, collaborative and respectful school culture for this

category of learners to become competent, develop social relationships with their age mates, and be participating members of the school community (Kirk and Gallagher, 2005). The Salamanca conference held in Spain aimed at Achieving access and quality education for all (UNESCO, 1994). Similarly, the UNESCO (2000) summit held in Dakar, Senegal with the main agenda of education for all echoed the results of the UNESCO conference achieving universal education goal for all'. The outcome of the forum formed the foundation of education inclusion. The EFA was emphasized to groups of children who are vulnerable and disadvantaged by emphasizing the need for equity of education services and practices for all without any form of discrimination. However, UNESCO (2016) revealed that inclusive schools lose teachers to special schools because the government introduced a stipend for teachers working in special schools but the financial enticement does not apply to teachers in an inclusive program. UN (2012) developed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4) which emphasizes vocational training for the vulnerable including persons with disabilities for the full realization of vision 2030. The goal was supposed to be achieved through careful upgrading of education facilities that are disability sensitive, provide a safe non-violent inclusive as well as an

effective learning environment for all. However, a study conducted in India by Reddy (2006) pointed out that teachers lacked training in SNE hence were less competent to give vocational training to learners living with a disability. UNESCO (2006) revealed that many learners with Special Needs in Education still fail to attain minimum education standards as a result of rampant dropouts from schools during the early years leading to life handicapped after failing to access quality education. Nevertheless, Rouse-hill (2009) argued that an inclusive school's environment should have modified curriculum content, teachers should be competent in identifying learners with SNE and design an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) and the content should be presented in simple terms that do not scare any learner. A researcher argued that a competent teacher can modify the content and use strategies like poems, songs, stories, and mnemonic devices to effect learning (Sailor, 1991). In Bangladesh, Mullick (2013) argued that effective inclusion education required that a teacher become confident. Similarly, Sharma, MacQueen, and McIntyre (2013) identified that the limited professional qualifications of the teachers were a major barrier for the countries from the Asia-Pacific region to implement an inclusive approach in regular schools. The researchers added that improvement in the quality and content of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs is necessary. In addition, Opertti, Brady, and Duncomb (2009) contend that teachers have a professional role to take into account their ethical and societal mission and that Teachers' education programs needed to change from that of a deviant discourse (establishing a hierarchy of cognitive skills to place each student in a rather closed system) to one of inclusion. The researcher highlighted that learners have open-learning potential that a teacher should discover and stimulate. More categorically, Sailor (1991) revealed that the use of oral questions, teaching from known to unknown, coding the text, retesting the vocabularies, taping and use of audio-visual aids as well as tactile aids, appreciating the children's attempts and augmenting writing abilities are qualities of a prepared teacher. Other methods include the learner can cycle or underline the responses, type or record answers, give time to organize his thoughts, and avoid textbook or board coping as much as possible as additional qualities of a good teacher competent in their area of specialization.

Tesemma (2011) carried out a survey and revealed that African countries still lacked laws and policy frameworks and strategies for the education of children living with disabilities about the current trends of millennium development and EFA goals in the perspective of education. Gwala (2006) revealed consistent findings as those of (Tesema, 2011) that challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education in South African primary schools were that the educators did not understand the aspect of inclusive education and were uncertain of their roles, inadequately trained in SNE. In Zimbabwe, a study was carried out by Phinias, Jerishanos & Kudakwashe (2013) to investigate the challenges facing children with severe intellectual disabilities placed in the mainstream schools, Masvingo province, Zimbabwe. The study targeted twelve pupils with severe intellectual disabilities. These were placed accordingly in these schools after having been diagnosed by the school's psychological services board. Thirty-five teachers were randomly selected from the three schools and it was established that most schools lack specialist teachers and school administrators which have greatly exacerbated the plight of the pupils with special needs

in education placed in regular schools. The Government of Kenya adopted inclusive education in all public learning and training institutions and ensure the institutions are responsive to the education of learners with special needs placed there, initiate intervention Strategies at the National Level, and roll it down to schools. Additionally, other strategies in place towards implementation of IE policies included design programs that enhance inclusive education in all institutions and restructuring Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE), and enhancing its capacity to enable it to play a role in training teachers of learners with Special Needs including tailored courses for the head-teachers and educational managers to support inclusive education (the Republic of Kenya, 2009; Government of Kenya, 2013). Republic of Kenya (2001 and 2009) pointed out that all children are entitled to equitable basic education. Similarly, the Republic of Kenya (2010); the Government of Kenya (2013) maintained that all children have the right to admission to any public school without restriction. However, even with these efforts of disability mainstreaming, reports by the Kenya Society for the Blind (KSB, 2011) revealed that SNE learners still perform poorly in their examinations. Similarly, Kimondiu (2012) revealed consistent poor performance by the special schools in KCPE over the years. Onywany, Odongo, and Makori (2014) similarly conducted a study on challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education in Homabay and revealed that teachers were untrained in special needs education and had negative attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education.

According to MoE and KISE (2018), the education system in Kenya is still ill-equipped to support learners with disabilities and special needs. The report points out glaring inadequacies in teachers trained to handle special needs education in assessment centers and schools in Kenya. The majority of headteachers in primary integrated schools and special units (78.28 percent) do not have any training in special needs education for instance. Only 2.24 percent of teachers have a master's degree in special needs education (SNE). Similarly, Muthoni (2013) conducted a study in the Mathioya district in Kenya. The findings established that regular teachers were not properly prepared to teach learners with special needs in education placed in the mainstream schools. The study further revealed that the then curriculum did not cater to the educational needs of learners with special needs in regular schools. Additionally, there were inadequate materials for learning for this category of learners.

Eunice and Ordo (2014) conducted a study on the Effective Provision of Inclusive Education in Rongo, Migori County Kenya. The study revealed that secondary schools that had embraced inclusive education and implemented the policy were experiencing untold interrelated constraints of unqualified teachers to handle inclusive education. The study conducted in Homabay County by Onywany et al. (2014) pointed out that teachers lack basic training in special needs education to enable them to cope with differentiated education. The study also revealed that redesigning the curriculum of teacher training institutions is necessary for effective teacher training. Teachers should demonstrate an ability to cope with the challenges of meeting the needs of learners with special needs within the inclusive setting. More categorically, on top of the training, there should be some well-structured and coordinated ongoing pieces of training through in-service to enable teachers to keep abreast with new developments in education (Wanderi, 2015).

**Summary of the Literature**

Inclusive education in the lower grade primary schools has not yet been achieved with consideration to learners with disability and with special needs. In respect to the area of focus of this study, ‘training in SNE’, a gap in respect to knowledge was established. None of the studies reviewed focused on training lower grade teachers in special needs education to implement inclusive education in lower grade primary schools.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study used a descriptive survey design to collect data. It was located in Awendo, Migori County, Kenya. The study targeted all lower-grade primary teachers in the mainstream schools with special units. A multi-case sampling technique was used to come up with nine (30%) of 30 targeted schools. The study had 37 respondents comprising an education officer, school heads, and lower grades primary teachers. The study employed stratified, simple random sampling and Purposive sampling techniques to sample the respondents. Primary data was collected using questionnaires for teachers and headteachers; interview schedules for headteachers and educational officers; and observation checklists. The instruments attained validity after test re-test. The researcher conducted a pilot study in two primary schools and later they did not comprise the actual study size. The data was prepared and organized for analysis by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to analyze data. Quantitative data was collected using closed-ended questionnaires of a four-point Likert scale. The researcher collected qualitative data using interview guides, observation checklists, and open-ended questionnaires. The researcher cleaned the data, tallied the responses first as sub-themes, and used a coding frame to code the data. The researcher presented qualitative data in form of narratives and direct quotes linking them to objectives. The researcher tested the hypothesis using Pearson’s correlation Coefficient at a significant level of alpha 0.05.

**FINDINGS**

Table 1.1 presents demographic information. The demographic information which was sought was whether age and gender participation influence the implementation of IE in the mainstream schools which the table presents. Table 1.1

**Table 1.1. Respondent Age Distribution**

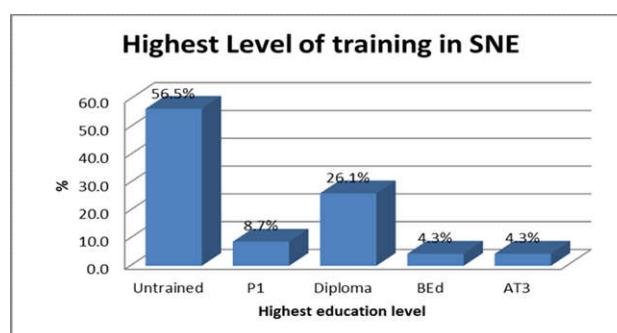
Age (Years) Distribution	Teachers N=27	%
30-34	8	29.6
35-39	6	26.0
40-44	4	14.8
45-49	2	11.1
50-54	1	7.4
55-59	1	7.4
60-64	1	3.7
Males	4	17
Females	19	83
Total	23	100

Indicates that the majority of the teachers of lower grades primary were female teachers (83%) while male teachers were only (17%). These findings imply that even though female teachers dominate teaching lower grades primary, the male teachers are also represented.

The presence of both genders is very important for holistic development in young children. From the research, it was revealed that the age of the teachers varied from 30- 64 years with the majority of the teachers having a range of 30-34 years (29.6%). The number reduces consistently with the teachers who have taught for long (60-64) recording the lowest (7.4%) hence participation inversely reduces with the higher the experience. These findings are consistent with findings by UNESCO (2016). The reason for consistency would be the report also reveals losing of teachers to special schools from the IE program because the government introduced a stipend for teachers working in special schools but the financial enticement does not apply to teachers in an inclusive program. This has led to loosing of teachers who further their studies and instead move to those segregated special schools to enjoy the offer. These findings imply that the implementation of inclusive education faces inadequacy of staffing.

**Highest Level of Training in Special Needs Education**

Figure 1.1 shows that the highest training which was sought was whether a teacher implementing inclusive education were trained in special needs. A total of 25 teachers participated in filling out questionnaires. Figure 1.1 indicates that the majority of the teachers (56.5%) which correspond to 14 teachers are O-level (Untrained teachers), 26.1% which corresponds to 6 teachers are diploma holders in special needs education, (4.3%) which corresponds to 1 teacher degree holders in special needs education and workshops/seminars in special needs education at (4.3%) which correspond to between 1 to 2 teachers. The figure also indicates that 8.7(%) trained P1 teachers but not in SNE are also slotted to teach the inclusive classes. These findings imply that special needs in education regular schools are still faced with inadequately trained teachers because up to (56.5%) are secondary school leavers employed by a board of management and (8.7%) are P1 teachers and are incompetent. These findings are consistent with findings by Muthoni (2013); Unice and Orodho (2014); Onywany et al. (2013). The reason for consistency would be their research revealed that teachers are not trained in SNE which hinders the effective implementation of inclusive education. These findings indicate that inadequate training of teachers in SNE characterizes the teachers’ unpreparedness to implement IE



**Figure 4.1. Highest Level of Training in SNE**

Figure 1.2 presents findings on the highest training in SNE. The highest training in SNE which was sought was a distribution of trained teachers in SNE with knowledge of individual needs of a learner in the regular schools. Figure 1.2 shows that out of the nine schools sampled, four schools (44.4%) have at least a teacher trained in SNE.

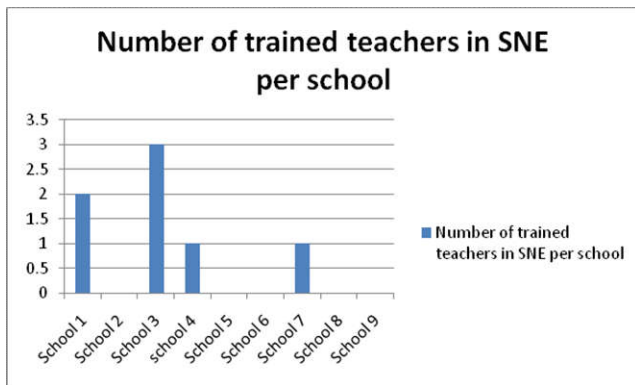


Figure 1.2. Distribution of Trained Teachers in Special Needs Education in Regular Schools

Two schools have one teacher respectively, one school has three trained teachers while one school has two trained teachers. The data also reveal that the majority of schools (five schools) do not have even a single teacher trained in special needs education. These findings imply that most schools use untrained teachers in SNE TO implement IE.

It also implies that the ministry has failed to put up a way of identifying the teachers who have further training in SNE and post them in the schools that implement inclusive education. These findings are consistent with the findings by MOE and KISE (2018) which revealed that the Kenyan schools are still ill-equipped to support learners with special needs and with disabilities.

Table 4.3. Rate of Improvement

Rate of Improvement	Teachers N=25	Percent
Below average(39 and below)	1	16.7
Average(40-50)	4	66.6
Above average(51 onwards)	1	16.7
Total	6	100.0

Data from the interview had the following. ‘This program challenges us because teachers were not even given time to train in special needs education since the program came so fast, the ministry did not consider the facilities and resources that would be used and we also lack a clear syllabus that we should use in the same, said one of the teachers interviewed. Another teacher pointed out, there is even transferring of those teachers trained in SNE to other schools without the inclusion program like we had a madam here who was transferred last year to another school without the program and now we have no single teacher trained in special needs. These statements imply that the implementation of inclusive education faces the challenge of inadequate teachers trained in SNE. In addition, it implies that there is no clear policy on training, posting, and transferring of the teacher with regards to special units. Figure 1.3 presents the level of training. The level of training which was sought was whether teachers attend capacity-building causes through seminars and workshops in SNE. Figure 1.3 shows that (60%) of the teachers attended an SNE seminar/workshop sponsored by the school administration, (20%) attended a seminar sponsored by EARC, and (20%) attended a workshop/seminar sponsored by SNE grant. All who happened to attend the in-service training indicated that the level of training improve their teaching skills as shown in table 4.4. These findings indicate that at least teachers have the urge to improve their skills towards supporting learners with special needs.

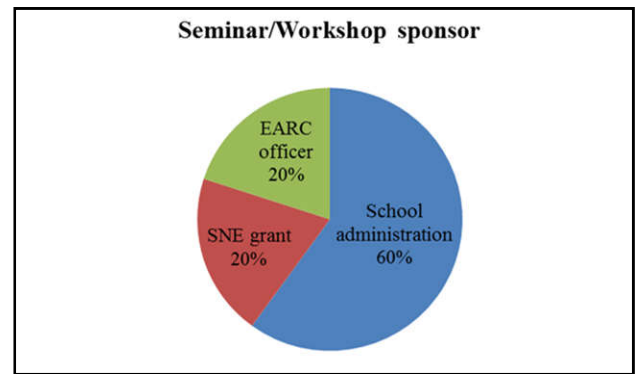


Figure 1.3: Seminar/Workshop attendance

These findings are inconsistent with findings by Unice and Orodho (2014). The reason for inconsistency would be their research pointed out that stakeholders have left the constraints of implementation of inclusive education to the government alone instead of being everyone’s concern. In addition, when teachers are supported to attend training in special needs they effectively implement inclusion education. Table 1.2 presents the level of improvement in implementing SNE. The improvement which was sought was whether capacity-building pieces of training through seminars and workshops in SNE improved teachers’ implementation of inclusive education. Table 1.2 indicates that attendance of the seminar/workshop improved the teacher’s skills of teaching the SNEL as follows: (16.7%) below average, (66.6%) average, and (16.7%) above average. The teachers who underwent these pieces of training indicated that they were able to apply some specific methods to make learning effective in their class as shown in figure 4.3. These findings imply that training of teachers improves their inclusive skills and only when trained, the teacher applies specific methods to serve learner with special needs. These findings are consistent with findings by Onywany et al. (2014); Wanderi (2015) which maintain that teachers implementing inclusive education should demonstrate an ability to cope with challenges of meeting the needs of learners with special needs within the inclusive setting and categorically on top of the training there should be some well-structured and coordinated ongoing pieces of training through in-service enabling teachers to keep abreast with new developments in education. According to data from the interview, whenever a seminar or workshop is organized, normally the number of teachers who should attend per school is limited. The teachers maintained that all teachers in the schools with inclusive programs should be allowed to attend because all of them are affected by the presence of the SNEL in their schools. These findings imply that inclusive program in regular schools is have not had the opportunity to attend the SNE seminars and workshops due to the limitation of numbers attending by the schools’ administrations. These findings are consistent with findings by Onywany et al. (2014); Wanderi (2015) who maintain that teachers implementing inclusive education only demonstrate the ability to cope with challenges of meeting the needs of learners with special needs within the inclusive setting when they categorically attend some well-structured and coordinated ongoing training through workshops/seminars.

**Application of Specific Method of Teaching:** Figure 1.4 shows that the application of specific methods of teaching which was sought was to establish whether teachers who underwent training in SNE can use different methodologies in implementing inclusive education which the figure presents.

**Table 1.3: Appropriateness of Methods Applied in Inclusive Class**

Appropriateness	Pairing		Grouping		IEP		Adaptation	
	Teachers N=25	%	Teachers N=25	%	Teachers N=25	%	Teachers N=25	%
Always	1	10.0	4	30.8	2	36.4	3	50.0
Sometimes	8	90.0	7	69.2	5	63.6	2	50.0
Total	9	100.0	11	100.0	7	100.0	5	100.0

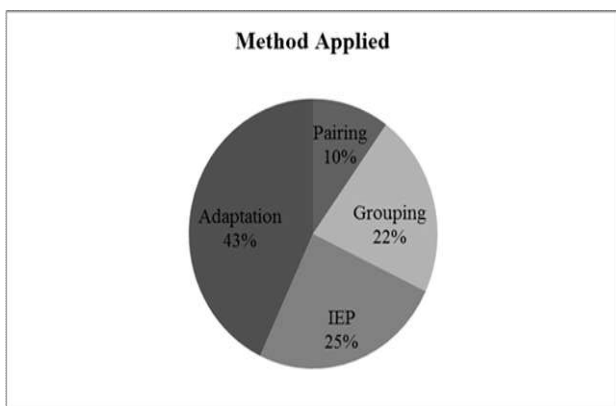
**Table 1.4. Influence of Teaching Learning Materials**

Influence of training on the use of materials	Teachers N=27	Percent
Support use of materials	8	44.4
Do not support the use of materials	10	55.6
Total	18	100.0

**Table 4.6. Hypothesis Test on Teacher’s Training in SNE**

Respondents		Application of specific teaching methods in SNE	Attendance of training in SNE	Highest level of training in SNE
Application of specific methods of teaching in SNE	r-value	1	.158	. <sup>a</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.531	
Attendance of in service training in SNE	r-value	.158	1	. <sup>a</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.531		
	Sig. (2 tailed)		.000	
	Sig. (2 tailed)		.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
Highest level of training in SNE	r-value	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)			

\*\* Correlation is significant at .05 level (2-tailed)



**Figure 1.4. Methodology Applied in Inclusive Class**

Figure 1.4 shows that (43%) would adapt lesson, (25%) use individualized education program IEP (10%) and pairing (22%) grouping. These findings imply that when teachers are trained in SNE they can apply specific methods of teaching in implementing inclusive education while untrained teachers are unable. These findings are consistent with findings by Rousehill (2009); Sailor (1991). The reason for consistency would be the researchers also maintained that a competent teacher makes proper preparation before the lesson and use materials and apply the different methodology to deliver content to make sure that the individual learner benefit. Table 1.3 presents findings on the application of a specific method of teaching. The application of the specific method of teaching which the table sought to establish was whether teachers implementing inclusive education found it appropriate to use ‘specific methodology’. Table 1.3 indicates the appropriateness of adopting specific methods to teach the inclusive class include: making groups (22%) and peer paring of learners (10%).

The teachers who use pairing agreed that the method sometimes works with only (10%) pointed out that the method work always. Teachers who use the grouping method pointed out that the method sometimes works and only (30.8%) maintain that the method is always appropriate. The majority (63.6%) pointed out that the use of the IEP method is sometimes appropriate while (36.4%) revealed that the method is appropriate always. Both the groups tied at (50%) that the adapting a program sometimes/always appropriate respectively. These findings imply that when trained in SNE, teachers become competent and are skilled to apply the most appropriate methodology that suits the category of the learner. These findings are consistent with findings by (Mullick, 2013). The reason for consistency would be the researcher revealed that teachers attain confidence through training and become competent to teach learners with special needs. Table 1.4 presents findings on the application of specific methods of teaching. The application of specific methods of teaching which was sought to establish whether teachers trained in SNE used materials in implementing inclusive education which the table presents. Table 1.4 shows that (44.4%) of the teachers pointed out that the use of materials in inclusive class is necessary and (55.6%) revealed that it has no influence. These findings imply that the level of training does not influence the use of materials in inclusive classes and materials used are less important in inclusive classes. These findings disagree with the findings by Rouse-hill (2009); Sailor (1991). The reason for disagreement is that their findings maintained that competent teachers use materials and apply different methods in teaching. Data from the interview revealed majority of the teachers (91.7%) would advise parents against allowing their children to get admitted in inclusive schools because there are no trained teachers to serve learners, facilities and resources to be used by teachers and learners are lacking when compared to special schools. One of the teachers

interviewed said, 'You know teachers are not even motivated by supporting them to go for the special training'. The findings imply that training in special needs education is still an issue that needs to be considered if the implementation of IE should be successful. Table 1.5 presents the findings of the hypothesis test. The hypothesis tested sought to establish whether there is a relationship between teachers' training in special needs and the implementation of inclusive education.

The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's correlation at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ :  $H_0$ : There is no relationship between the teacher's training in SNE and the implementation of inclusive education in the lower primary. Table 1.5 reveal a significant relationship between the training in SNE and the implementation of inclusive education. According to training in SNE attended ( $r=1.000$ ,  $P=0.000$ ). Correlation analysis further shows that there was a significant correlation at the .05 level (2-tailed). This implied that training in SNE determined the preparation to implement inclusive education in lower grade primary schools. As a result of the analysis, it is established that training in SNE affects the implementation of inclusive education in lower grade primary schools. This led to the statistical hypothesis being rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted which stated: "there is a relationship between the training in SNE and the implementation of inclusive education in the lower grade primary". This means the objective is achieved.

## Conclusion

Fewer teachers are trained in special needs education. The number of trained teachers in SNE is lower compared to the number of schools with special units. All including those who are not trained in SNE teach the learners with special needs. About (65.2%) of teachers in regular primary schools are untrained in special needs education. The data also revealed that untrained teachers in SNE were the majority and lack the knowledge to include SNE learners and also had issues with the use of teaching aids. All teachers teaching in regular schools with special units were not allowed to attend training in SNE. The number of teachers attending seminars and workshops in special needs has been limited per school and as a result only a few teachers mostly those who are already trained in special needs attend such forums and not the untrained teachers to gain experience. The trained teachers are still randomly transferred to other schools without considering their special training and their services in the special units. Teachers who are trained in special needs education can support the learners with special needs through the application of different teaching methods appropriate to individual needs and use different materials to support the learners with special needs. The teachers who are trained in special needs education faced difficulty controlling classes of mixtures of learners with diverse categories of special needs because they received training only in one area of specialization yet many had specialization only in one area of special needs and equally faced challenges in teaching a class mad of a mixture of pupils with different categories of disability in addition to those without disability. The schools where there were no trained teachers at all faced myriads of challenges as the teachers have inadequate knowledge in SNE and were hence unaware of the various means of supporting these learners with special needs. The ministry of education has failed to put strategies for identifying the teachers who further their training in SNE for deployment into schools with special units.

Equally, there are no clear strategies for posting and transferring of teachers who further their training in SNE in support of the inclusive programs and special units.

## Recommendations

A mass training can be conducted to get enough teachers for all the schools with special units. A capacity training can be conducted to the teachers who are trained in SNE so that they also train other teachers without special training in SNE in their schools. Trained teachers in SNE posted in schools with special units, should not be slotted extra lessons since IE implementation is very involving. The government should constitute an assessment team in every division to screen children joining primary schools in those divisions. There is a need to come up with a policy that would guide the qualification of heads of primary schools hosting special units and their transfer as well as posting and transferring of teachers trained in special needs education.

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