Classroom Environment for Children with Disabilities in Kenyan Preschools

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Background
- Only 2% of children with disabilities attend school (UNESCO 2004)
  - Significantly less likely to be enrolled in school than children without disabilities (Filmer, 2008).
- In many countries, only children with physical disabilities included (Wapling 2016)

Integration v. Inclusion
- Integration: children with disabilities adapt to the current classroom
- Inclusion: the classroom changes to better adapt to the needs of children with disabilities
Inclusive Education in Kenya

Policies

- Inclusive education:
  - Mandated in Kenya in 2003
  - A special needs education policy in 2009 aimed to give learners with disabilities equal access to quality education

Impact

- Only 67% of children with disabilities accessing mainstream primary schools (UN OCHR 2011)
- Special education enrollment represents 30% of the expected number of learners with disabilities (Kett, Deluca, and Carew 2018).
Purpose of the Study

To examine the interactions between pre-primary teachers and the children with disabilities in their classrooms

Research questions

1. What types of interactions occur between these students and their teachers?
2. What types of interactions occur between these students and their peers?
3. How were teacher attitudes towards children with disabilities reflective of their interactions with these children?
Methods

Sample selection
- Coaches identified classrooms that may have children with disabilities
  - 33 pre-primary 2 classrooms identified
  - 5 classrooms chosen based on coach descriptions

Classroom Observations
- Two researchers took data on:
  - How teachers organized classrooms
  - What types of interactions occurred (teacher and peer)
  - If the teacher was adapting instruction for children with disabilities

Teacher Interview
- Interviewed teachers about their instruction, attitudes and what resources they needed to teach children with disabilities
Interaction Type

- Type of interaction coded as:
  - Instructional support: Teachers provide modifications or individualization to instruction
  - General classroom routine: Teachers performing everyday tasks
  - Behavior management: Teachers prevent and redirect misbehavior

Emotional Tone

- Emotional tone of each interaction coded as:
  - Positive emotional tone: teacher displayed warmth and enthusiasm
  - Negative emotional tone: teacher expressed anger or hostility
  - Neutral emotional tone: neither positive nor negative
Results: Type of Interaction

- 100 interactions observed between teachers and students with disabilities

- The majority of interactions were for **instructional support**
  - Shows teachers prioritized learning needs of children with disabilities
  - When teachers asked how they supported children with disabilities, all five shared examples of instructional support

- 1/3 of interactions were for **behavior management**
  - Contradicts assumption that interactions would focus on behavior management (Obeng 2012)

- The rest were **general classroom routine**
Results: Emotional Tone

Emotional Tone of Classroom Interactions

- Neutral Tone
- Negative Tone
- Positive Tone

Behavior Mgmt
Gen. Classroom Routine
Instruct. Support
Total
Peer Interactions

▪ 17 interactions with peers were observed; only 1 was negative
▪ Peers accepted children with disabilities as members of class and attempted to support them within classroom activities
  – Ex: peer in Classroom 3 attempted to help child with disabilities find the correct page in her workbook

Teacher Interviews

▪ All five teachers observed attempting to differentiate instruction
▪ Teachers said:
  – They arranged classroom to better serve child with disabilities
  – Teaching children with disabilities had some challenges
  – They would benefit from additional training to help them better support children with disabilities
Conclusion

Summary
▪ The inclusion we observed:
  – was meaningful (more inclusion than integration)
  – was primarily focused on instructional support
▪ Teachers were motivated to differentiate instruction

Next Steps
▪ More research with larger samples
▪ More training to help teachers differentiate more effectively
▪ Research into effectiveness of teacher training
Thank You!

Contact me with any questions:
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