



BUILDING AND SUSTAINING GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: TRANSFORMING EDUCATION THROUGH INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

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Abstract:

This paper reviews literature on inclusive learning with a view to making recommendations on the strategies that teachers and stakeholders in education should employ to ensure that their learning institutions are aligned to globally accepted education standards. The paper will specifically focus on teaching strategies that enhance inclusiveness in classroom learning. Inclusive classrooms are critical if learning institutions are to adequately nurture learners with the skills and competences needed in the 21st century industry such as critical thinking, problem-solving and innovation. It is hoped that this review will shed light to education practitioners on the critical factors that contribute to individual learner's enjoyment of their right to quality education as they go through the teaching-learning process. The paper recommends that an empirical research be carried out in universities in Kenya to determine whether they embrace the principles of inclusive learning in classroom discourse and the inculcation of the appropriate skills.

Keywords: inclusive learning; inclusive classroom; effective quality learning environments; Kenya

1. Introduction

The concept of inclusion was conceived in 1948 with the declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly on the "International Bill of Rights" which recognizes that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The fundamental role of human rights education is expressed in international and regional instruments and documents

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dealing with human rights education including treaties, covenants, conventions and protocols; charters; declarations; recommendations; decisions; resolutions; principles; guidelines; rules; commitments; joint communiqués of intergovernmental meetings, congresses and conferences.

The instruments and documents recommend that a learning process should encompass various dimensions such as knowledge and skills that learners can put into practice in daily life; values and attitudes -developing values and reinforcing attitudes which uphold human rights; and behaviour, action which entails encouraging, defending and promoting human rights (United Nations Human Rights, Part I. United Nations Instruments and Documents on Human Rights Education (2014)] www.ohchr.org/.../Education). This holistic approach to education tends to be compromised at virtually all levels of learning in Kenya's 8-4-4 system of education due to the high premium placed on examinations and certification. The situation has influenced a narrow approach to education whose focus is on the cognitive dimension of education at the expense of the others namely normative, creative and dialogical dimensions. It is critical that education in Kenya is aligned to the recommendation in the instruments and documents in order to produce competent graduates who can adequately compete for international jobs.

2. The Concept of Inclusive Education

Rodriguez-Falcon, Evans, Allam, Barrett & Forrest (2010) argue that inclusive education is a commitment to educate each child to the maximum extent appropriate to his/her potential. It entails developing and designing schools, classrooms, programs and activities in a way that all students learn and participate together. This requires setting suitable learning challenges for all learners, responding to their diverse learning needs, listening to every child no matter who they are and where they are from; and promoting cohesive co-existence of different cultures. It is the acceptance of all people regardless of their differences, appreciating people for who they are and their competences and allowing them to value the differences in each other by appreciating that individual are unique in their own creativity (EENET, www.eenet.org.uk/what_is_ie.php). Inclusion requires that the child will benefit from being in the class rather than having to keep up with the other students (Wisconsin Education Association Council, 2001 in [www.faculty.uml.edu/darcus/01.505/NASET social inclusion](http://www.faculty.uml.edu/darcus/01.505/NASET_social_inclusion)).

Inclusion also entails creating an enabling environment that provides for the acceptance of children to play and interact without any prejudices. To this end, United Nations International laws require governments of all its signatories (Kenya is a signatory) to exercise fairness and justice to its citizens and build an inclusive society

where all citizens have equal opportunities to education without discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnic origin, language, religion, nationality, social origin, economic condition and ability. According citizens equal right to education is critical because, education is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights. It promotes individual freedom and empowerment and yields important development benefits (UNESCO. www.unesco.org/new/right2education). This leads to the question of whether learning institutions in Kenya are aligned with the laws in their pursuit for education. In particular, to what extent do universities embrace the laws in their education agenda?

To effectively implement the international laws at the classroom level, teachers need to understand the varied differences among learners and treat them fairly as unique individuals in order to optimize their achievements in education. This is important because each learner is different in many aspects. For instance, in a standard classroom, learners differ in physical, intellectual, emotional and psychological attributes. They also present themselves in varied abilities academic-above average, average and below average (Kiruhi, Githua and Mboroki, 2009). Differences in learner abilities demand that teachers creatively select varied engaging teaching approaches, learning activities and assessments to ensure that all learners benefit from the teaching-learning experiences without discrimination.

Inclusive education is however not an exclusive task for teachers. It rather demands that all stakeholders including students, families, educators and community members work together to create schools and other social institutions with a culture of acceptance, belonging and community. Such a culture establishes collaboration, supportive and nurturing environment for learners and gives them services and the accommodation they need to learn and also mentors them in respecting and learning from each other's individual differences. Are institutions of learning in Kenya inclusive to this extent?

Recent incidences of ethnic violence in County universities raise doubts on the question of inclusivity in learning institutions in Kenya. The incidences include Maasai Mara University dispute over a football match between two ethnic groups (Sayagi, Dec 1, 2015. <http://nairobi.news.nation.co.ke/news/shame-as-university-is-shut-over-ethnic-chaos-among-students/>) cases of politicians leading villagers to attack learning institutions including Kabianga, Karatina and Eldoret universities (www.standardmedia.co.ke Feb 19, 2015); ethnic animosity in University of Eldoret (www.nation.co.ke/counties/lecturers-call...-/index.html Daily Nation Feb 20, 2015) where locals demanded that a person from their locality heads the institution; and the latest protest of a section of North Rift leaders over appointment of Moi University acting Vice-Chancellor on the reason that they preferred a local candidate from the County for the appointment (newsdesk@ke.nationmedia.com. Wednesday, September

21, 2016). The incidences indicate that public institutions in Kenya are ethnicized, a fact confirmed by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) report on ethnicization in Public Higher Institutions of learning (newsdesk@ke.nationmedia.com. Wednesday, September 21, 2016). In part, the report indicates that over 80% of public institutions have breached the law of appointment with regard to representation of different ethnic groups in Kenya. To this end, the chairman of NCIC lamented that the negative ethnic issues in the report contravened devolution spirit.

Negative ethnicity breeds threats to security that have dire negative implications to learning as both learners and teachers need a secure and cohesive environment where all individuals have a feeling of belonging. The incidences above suggest that County Universities could influence regionalism in education which may lead to the dilution of the universal attribute of a university where learners from all regions (locally, nationally and internationally) are expected to converge in pursuit of truth. Religious radicalization is also currently working negatively on inclusivity as schools may be reluctant to admit learners affiliated to different religions due to fear of escalation of violence and related insecurity. To effectively nurture respect of different religions, ethnic groups, races, culture and abilities, learning institutions should embrace the principles of inclusion. This is one way of enhancing achievement of unity among students and staff that can serve as a platform to equip learners with values and attitudes that will enable them fit well in the modern interconnected society with people of diverse backgrounds and creeds.

Inclusion aligns with the principles of education for sustainable development (ESD) which considers culture as an essential additional and underlying dimension to the three pillars of sustainable development namely society, environment and economy. Embracing these elements in a holistic and integrated manner, ESD enables all individuals to fully develop the knowledge, perspectives, values and skills necessary to take part in decisions to improve the quality of life both locally and globally on terms which are most relevant to their daily lives (Bhawani Venkataraman, 2009). Kenya's sixth and seventh national goals of education envisage an inclusive nation. The goals respectively seek to promote national unity; respect for and development of Kenya's rich and varied cultures; and to foster international consciousness to nurture positive attitudes towards other nations as Kenya is part of the complicated and interdependent network of the interconnected world (Policies/ National Goals Of Education www.kenya.elimu.net/.../Education (Dec. 2007).

Values are critical to the delivery of quality education and sustainable development. To this end, Kenya's education policy documents emphasize the need to inculcate and equip learners with desirable values such as patriotism, equality, honesty, humility, mutual respect, and high moral standards (Government of Kenya, 2012:12). Teachers have an obligation to nurture these values as they interact with learners in and

out of the classroom. If learners are to acquire the needed life skills that equip them to successfully cope with life in the inclusive local, national and global society, it is imperative that institutions of learning integrate values in education. However, contrary to this, research shows that teachers in primary and secondary schools in Kenya do not consider inculcation of values to learners a priority (Wamahiu, 2015). Rather, the schools are concerned about transmitting knowledge to learners and preparing them to pass national examinations with high scores. Is the situation in universities different? Are values integrated in the university curricula and supported by school structures? To answer these questions satisfactorily, this paper recommends that an empirical study is carried out in universities.

Kenya's education policy documents including the Kenya Constitution 2010 and Education Act, 2013 have clear policies that uphold inclusion of all learners and the need to integrate values in education. However, despite the policies, Wamahiu (2015) asserts that some school practices, policies and rules are exclusionary, targeting learners from minority groups or those who are different from others. In addition, most schools do not comply with the government policy on inclusive schools. For instance, infrastructure and facilities for learners with disabilities are missing, sometimes due to lack of understanding of what equity, equality and inclusion, and non-discrimination concepts entail (Wamahiu, 2015).

It is critical that teachers, education partners and stakeholders are informed and sensitized on the significant role of inclusive education in achieving quality and transformative education as well as sustainable development. This is paramount because any form of exclusion of learners from classroom processes and school activities (Physical, psychological, emotional or social) impacts negatively on education as the learners are denied their right to quality and holistic education.

However, despite the benefits of inclusive education brought out in this paper, the subject of inclusion is relatively controversial for many parents and educators, particularly in the area of including children with disabilities in standard classrooms. Those against it argue that integrating disabled learners slows down the pace of learning resulting to wasting time for normal learners (Salend, 2001). This controversy notwithstanding, there is need for education partners to explore the subject with a view to tapping its numerous benefits and employing them in learning institutions for the purpose of improving education delivery to learners. Effective inclusion is known to improve the educational system for all students regardless of their learning ability, race, linguistic ability, economic status, gender, learning style, ethnicity, cultural background, religion, family structure and sexual orientation (Salend 2001 in www.faculty.uml.edu/darcus/01.505/NASET_social_inclusion.pdf). Educators should tap from such benefits in order to quality in education.

The following section discusses the principles of inclusive learning namely diversity, acceptance of individual needs and differences, effective and high-quality learning environments, gender- sensitivity, collaboration and reflection.

2.1 Diversity

Merriam-Webster (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diversity) defines diversity as the condition of having or being composed of differing elements such as the inclusion of people of different races or cultures in a group or organization. In a school, diversity might be in form of learning ability, race, linguistic ability, economic status, gender, learning style, ethnicity, cultural background and religion, family structure and sexual orientation (Salend, 2001). Inclusion demands that teachers embrace diversity by nurturing learners with democratic principles, intercultural understanding, respect and peace at all levels of society and other values that enhance human relationships.

Teaching learners about cultures and religions for instance influences them to appreciate differences among cultures and religions and to also acquire religious tolerance. Inclusion entails that schools welcome, acknowledge, affirm and celebrate all learners, educate them in high quality appropriate classrooms, respond to individual learner needs, provide learners with opportunities to learn and play together and participate in educational, social and recreational activities. It also demands that schools establish practices that promote acceptance, equity, collaboration and responsiveness to learners' individual needs, treating them as individuals and protecting them from prejudices (Salend, 2001, p. 6).

To what extent have learning institutions in Kenya embraced the principles of diversity? Notably, schools in Kenya present themselves in different categories that mirror the social layers of the society namely high, middle and low class. For instance, secondary schools are categorized into public, private, national, provincial and county schools and each category is endowed differently in terms of infrastructure and resources with Private and National schools enjoying better facilities than the Provincial and County schools. In addition, public schools and public universities have huge classes that do not render themselves to employment of interactive teaching approaches compared to private schools which deliberately restrict the number of students per class with a view to enhancing individualized learning. This entails that student in private and national schools have opportunities to perform better in national examinations and this opens to them opportunities for degree programmes of their choice while those in provincial and county schools struggle with meagre resources.

Embracing diversity further demands providing learners with opportunities to locate and discover other people and experience of shared purposes in life, development of knowledge and understanding of self and others, appreciation of the

diversity of the human race, and creating awareness of the similarities between, and the interdependence of, all humans (Wisconsin Education Council).

This entails that a school does not exclude, discriminate, or stereotype learners on the basis of difference. It rather respects diversity, ensures equality of learning for all learners without discrimination, and provides free and compulsory education that is affordable and accessible, especially to families and children at risk. The school is expected to respond to diversity by meeting the differing circumstances and needs of children based on gender, social class, ethnicity, and ability level as well as teaching them to appreciate diversity and to value and learn from each other's similarities and differences. (Salend, 2001 & Nanzhao, www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/.../PillarsLearning).

Notably, education in Kenya is still not affordable to the low cadre of the society, despite the government's offer of free primary education and partially free secondary education. Many parents are unable to pay for basic items like uniform and other personal needs including soap, tooth paste and sanitary towels for the upkeep of the learner. Girls from deprived families continue to miss school for about a week every month due to lack of sanitary towels, not to mention that they are also bogged up with too much of domestic chores compared to boys.

However, the government has made interventions in some areas in an attempt to enhance equity and access to education. For instance, in an attempt to enhance equity, the government has an affirmative action on university admission of the disabled and the girl child with a lower mark than that of the disabled and boy child respectively. Girls are also admitted to courses dominated by men such as engineering and architecture with a lower mark than boys in order to motivate them.

In addition, embracing diversity entails empathy and cooperative social behavior in caring and sharing; respect for other people, their cultures and value systems; capability of encountering others and resolving conflicts through dialogue and competency in working towards common objectives (Nanzhao, www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/.../PillarsLearning). Learning institutions can nurture values of diversity through strategies such as use of learning resources that reflect accurate images of diverse peoples without stereotypes (such as biased articles, illustrations and photos); establishing practices that promote acceptance, equity, collaboration and responsiveness to learners' individual needs; and treating learners as individuals and protecting them from prejudices. If a learning institution is to enhance a feeling of worthiness, belongingness and confidence, it is imperative that bias and stereotypes are avoided. This is critical because equality and equity in education is all about fairness to all human beings regardless of gender, race and religion. (Wisconsin Education Council).

Learning institutions in Kenya and other African countries are yet to achieve the aspects of inclusive education described above. For instance, institutions are still

grappling with issues such as gender equity; appreciation of different ethnic groups and religions. In addition, textbooks at various levels of learning are still engendered, depicting the male child as superior. Furthermore, cultural practices in many ethnic groups still view a female as the weak gender while some force girls to marry at a tender age or require them to undergo female genital mutilation and this leads them to dropping out of school (Kibera and Kimokoti, 2007). These and other challenges play against inclusion and in effect, right to education for all.

2.2 Acceptance of Individual Needs and Differences

Effective inclusion involves sensitivity to and acceptance of individual needs and differences. To achieve this, educators must take into account the factors that shape learners into unique individuals and also affect their academic performance and socialization (such as economic status, gender, cultural backgrounds and disability). They must value all learners as individuals who are capable of learning and contributing to society. Inclusive classrooms demand that teachers select learning activities that are within the abilities and interests of individual learners; involve learners in planning the lesson, writing lesson objectives, selecting learning activities and in lesson reflection and encourage them to initiate ideas and creatively come up with solutions to problems through transfer of knowledge gained in school experience (Salend, 2001 & Wisconsin Education Council).

This principle resonates with modern pedagogical practices which place learners at the centre of learning and embrace the gifts they bring to class. With their different strengths, learners in an inclusive classroom are enabled to create a community of learners in a school. Nurturing a community in the classroom is beneficial because variety is a reminder of the interdependence of human beings if they are to live cohesively as a society. In addition, classroom community enhances collaborative learning which helps learners to acquire soft skills and competences beyond the prescribed curriculum such as leadership, teamwork, communication, negotiation, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, initiative, curiosity, life and career skills, ability to navigate the environment, lifelong learning, self- efficacy, citizenship, problem solving and innovation, respect and cohesive living (Wisconsin Education Council, P21, Partnership for 21st Century Learning. www.p21.org, Scott, 2015)). These are the skills the 21st century industry is looking for in graduates over and above their academic qualifications. Learning institutions should ensure that they equip learners well for the demands of the modern dynamic world.

Despite the strengths associated with collaborative teaching and learning approaches recommended for inclusive classrooms, teachers may not opt for them due to factors beyond their control. When the syllabuses are too broad, teachers opt to transmit information to learners in order to cover the content within the prescribed

time. The choice of teaching approaches is also influenced by restricted time allocations for subjects, curriculum content, spatial arrangements and the expectations of learners, parents and staff (Weimer, 2002).

In Kenya for instance, the high premium given to examination and certification has subjected teachers to pressure for high achievement from learners, parents and the school management (Njui, 2010). If education in Kenya is to shift from the emphases of teaching learners **to learn** to teach them **how to learn**, reforms in education must replace the Western model of education with a model that is relevant to Kenya's context. This paradigm shift is critical if education is to equip learners with the skills and competences that will enable them to cope with the pace of change dictated by the 21st century to avoid what Toffler (1999) refers to as "the future shock". Scott (2015) recommends a model of learning for the 21st century based on motivation, specific competences and skills needed to function effectively in the 21st century. She maintains that formal education must be transformed to enable the new forms of learning needed to tackle the complex global challenges ahead, but she warns that there is no single prescribed approach to educating learners in the 21st century. She proposes a multiple approach in context noting that there are growing concerns about potential economic and global crisis ahead which lead to questions whether today's learners possess the needed skills such as Communication, Collaboration, Critical thinking, Creativity, Personal skills (initiative, resilience, responsibility, risk-taking); Social skills (team-work, networking, empathy and compassion) among others, necessary to tackle the unexpected developments they will face. This demands that learning institutions align their education to the needs of the modern dynamic world for to ensure that they are producing relevant graduates for the 21st industry and beyond. Universities should spearhead such reforms in education.

2.3 Effective and High-Quality Learning Environment

Nanzhao (2009) describes an effective learning environment as one which offers individualized instruction employing active, cooperative, and democratic teaching approaches with structured content and quality learning resources. This entails that learners are meaningfully engaged in learning activities by teachers who are empowered and motivated to offer them quality education. Such an environment is created by teaching that meets learners' needs. Effective learning environments demands that schools have well trained teachers and enhances teacher capacity (through regular in-service training), morale, commitment, status, income and recognition of child rights. It also promotes quality learning outcomes-defining and helping learners learn what they need to learn and teaching them how to learn. The environment further adapts and integrates classroom teaching appropriately to accommodate learner contexts; taking cognizance of the hidden curriculum and its

influence to learning and creates a school culture and a learning environment in which individual learners thrive and unleash their potential (UNESCO, 2009; Nanzhao, www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/Competencies/PillarsLearningZhou.pdf & Akoto, 2009).

Improving teachers' training, conditions of service and deployment; and offering teachers ample professional development opportunities is critical because Education 2030 Sustainable Development Goal includes a target on teachers as a key means of its implementation (UNESCO and UNICEF 2013a, p. 5) cited by Scott (2015). What is the status of training of teachers in learning institutions? Are teachers regularly enhanced with capacity building and motivated? Are the teaching methods used by teachers capable of nurturing the 21st century skills? Are classrooms in our institutions inclusive? These questions can only be answered through an empirical study of learning institutions. It is hoped that this paper will be followed by an empirical study intended to establish whether the teaching strategies employed in universities in Kenyan are inclusive.

Effective learning environments require teachers to develop learners holistically; provide them with interesting learning opportunities; enhance their motivation and confidence; provide those incentives and networks as well as adequate resources and technology. The environment should be healthy, hygienic, safe, inclusive and free (with adequate water and sanitation facilities and healthy classrooms, healthy policies, practices, health services; and life skills-based health education). Further, the environment promote the physical and the psycho-socio-emotional health of teachers and learners. The environment defends and protects learners from abuse and harm as well as provides them with positive experiences. It uses flexible curricula, assessments and examinations. It also uses varied learning modalities to appeal to different learning styles- visual, auditory and kinesthetic. It groups learners with mixed abilities; accommodates those with disabilities (visual and physical) and diversifies the educational experience of all students (UNESCO, 2009; Nanzhao, www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/Competencies/PillarsLearningZhou.pdf & Akoto, 2009).

However, providing effective and high quality learning environments is a challenge in most learning institutions in Kenya (including universities) due to lack of teacher capacity. This is influenced by poor teacher training programmes, lack of in-service courses for teacher and lack of basic learning resources including textbooks (Bishop, 1985 cited by Njui, 2010). The government should invest in teacher education to enhance teacher capacity in both pre-service and in-service training to enable them to adequately provide effective learning environments for learners. Teacher motivational incentives should also be facilitated to enhance their morale and commitment.

Other ways of enhancing effective learning environment include proving learner academic support in order to help individuals access the full curriculum (by putting in place ramps, escape points in case of fire and assistive technology such as braille);

providing behavioural support (positive learning environment that embraces value-based education); having manageable student-teacher ratios; enhancing flexible pacing and grouping (appropriate standards and objectives across curriculum) and making interventions for vulnerable learners such as providing work study, scholarship and bursary as needs arise (UNESCO, 2009; Nanzhao, www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/Competencies/PillarsLearningZhou.pdf & Akoto, 2009).

There are numerous benefits in providing effective and high quality environments described above. Research shows that learners are more likely to stay in school and succeed academically when teachers actively engage them in the learning process and when they present them with interesting learning opportunities. In addition, the active learner participation in learning demanded by an inclusive environment reflects not only a child-centered approach to pedagogy; but also the principle of democratic participation. This prepares learners for what is expected of them in a democratic society. As Nanzhao (2009) observes, the classroom process should not be one in which children are passive recipients of knowledge dispensed by the teacher. It should rather be an interactive process in which children actively participate in varied learning activities

It is worth noting that many public institutions in Kenya face major challenges in providing effective and high quality learning environments due to unmanageable huge classes with overstretched facilities as witnessed in Public Universities. The institutions also lack sufficient infrastructure, basic learning resources like textbooks and sufficient numbers of qualified staff in virtually all disciplines. This is compounded by knowledge gaps among teachers and faculty in their disciplines of specialization.

2.4 Gender-sensitivity

Inclusive learning institutions promote gender equality in enrolment and achievement; guarantee girl-friendly facilities; eliminate gender stereotypes in curricula, textbooks, and teaching learning processes; socialize girls and boys in a non-violent environment and encourage respect for others' rights, dignity, and equality (UNICEF, 2009). Achievement of these ideals is a major task due to cultural barriers. For instance, some cultural practices among some African communities including forced early marriages and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) impede gender equity in education as they influence girls to be married at a very tender age, meaning that they either drop out of school or fail to enroll in the next higher level.

However, the government has put in place some intervention measures such as building boarding schools in the affected areas to salvage girls from the negative cultural practices and advocacy to sensitize the communities on the negative implications of FGM and forced marriages. Enforcement of policies and penalties

against child abuse through such and other negative cultural practices is imperative if girls are to enjoy equal rights to education with the boys.

2.5 Collaboration

Effective inclusion involves collaboration among educators, other professionals, students, families, and community agencies to ensure that learners realize their rights to education. They all work cooperatively and reflectively, sharing resources, responsibilities, skills, decisions, and advocacy with the welfare of the child at the center. An inclusive school promotes learner participation in all aspects of school life. It strengthens families as the child's primary caregivers and educators and helps children, parents, and teachers establish harmonious relationships. It also provides support, training, time and resources to help the partners work collaboratively to address learners' needs (Salend, 2001, p.7). An attempt of collaboration among teachers, parents and learners in primary and secondary schools is observable through parent teacher associations where parents partner with teachers and students to improve the welfare of students. However, parents in most public schools, particularly in rural and informal settlement areas (referred to as slums) do not visualize the significance of the collaborations. In addition, most public learning institutions in Kenya, particularly universities have scarce resources to enhance cooperative learning. The available few are overstretched by huge numbers of students per class.

United Nations International Children Fund (UNICEF) proposes a prototype of an inclusive school noting that an inclusive classroom environment adapts UNICEF's characteristics of a Child-Friendly School (CFS). A CFS views children as natural learners whose capacity to learn can be undermined and sometimes destroyed. The school recognizes, encourages and supports children's capacities as learners by providing a school culture, teaching behaviours and child-centered curriculum content. It also develops a conducive learning environment that enhances learner motivation to learn and ensures that staff members are friendly and welcoming to children (Akoto, 2009). Although the characteristics of a CFS outlined above are with reference to young children, they can be adapted by universities and other levels of learning in context to enhance effective learning and to ensure that individual learner's right to quality education is not jeopardized.

2.6 Reflection

To reflect is to think deeply or carefully about something or to give careful consideration to something. Effective inclusion requires teachers to constantly reflect on their teaching and routinely examine their own practices for self-improvement and to ensure that all learners' needs are met. This helps them to modify their attitudes as they think critically about their values and beliefs, modify teaching and classroom

management practices, and curricula to accommodate individual needs. It also helps them to become flexible, responsive, and aware of learners' needs (Wisconsin Education Council, Salend, 2001). Teachers should guide learners to reflect on what they learn through journaling and relating what they learn to real life experiences. This enables them to internalize what they learn and to also apply the knowledge learned to solve problems.

While reflection is a sure way of improving teaching practice by continuously informing teachers on the direction to take for better results in education, it may not serve its purpose in most public institutions in Kenya, particularly public universities where classes are too huge, facilities overstretched and resources too meagre. There is an urgent need to align the student-faculty ratio with the Commission for University Education, Kenya, Standard Guidelines for resources (2014) if education at this level is to embrace this and other principles of inclusive learning.

3. Learning in Inclusive Classrooms

In an inclusive classroom, learners are involved in creating their classroom rules and they are expected to meet expectations of the same. Teachers involve them in planning curricula activities, taking cognizance of their different learning styles (Rodriguez, Evans, Allam, Barrett & Forrest, 2010). Involving learners in curriculum decisions is particularly critical in universities because at this level of education, they are familiar with the content in their specific disciplines. Hence, they can make sensible suggestions with appropriate guidance by the faculty. Learners' views could enrich curriculum by either removing content overlaps across various programmes or beefing up some areas that may be shallow.

Involving learners in decisions concerning their education resonates with modern pedagogical practices which require them to take full responsibility of their learning in order to get the full benefit of education. In addition, taking cognizance of the differences in learning styles ensures that learning is conveyed in a way that best suits each learner. Lessons are also adapted and integrated in the learner context to make learning understandable and meaningful (www.abilitypath.org/.../learning.../learning...styles/.../childrens-learning-s....).

Inclusive education requires schools to take cognizance of the hidden curriculum and its influence on learning. This requires them to create a school culture and a conducive learning environment in which learners thrive as they alleviate potential barriers to learning and assessment (Wisconsin Education Council). To enhance a positive influence of the hidden curriculum, it is imperative that learning institutions embrace total quality management style to ensure that every department meets and

exceeds customer expectations (Teklemariam, 2009, p. 49). This is a sure way of making a learning environment conducive. CONT

Inclusion also demands that teachers employ varied teaching approaches such as group discussions, role play and projects in order to address learners' different learning styles; personalize attention to meet learners' individual needs and individualize education for all learners in assessment, curriculum accessibility, technology and physical design adaptations on the basis of their needs and abilities. Such approaches entail that learning takes place in small groups with peers helping and supporting each other with meaningful learner interactions which are focused on curricular expectations (www.abilitypath.org/.../learning.../learning...styles/.../childrens-learning-s....).

The approaches align with the 21st century view of the learner which has shifted from seeing one as a young person who goes to school to receive learning, pass examinations, and receive grades and graduate. Rather, the learner is viewed in a new context which entails maintaining their interest by helping them to see how what they are learning prepares them for life in the real world; instilling curiosity for learning (a fundamental factor in enhancing lifelong learning); offering teaching in a flexible manner and exciting them to become resourceful so that they will continue to learn outside the formal school and classroom environments (P21, Partnership for 21st Century Learning. www.p21.org). Teachers should also personalize teaching as learners differ physically, emotionally, cognitively and in personality. This ensures fairness to all students and also enables them to individually unleash their potential as they go through the teaching-learning process.

However, while individualization of learning is critical in inclusive learning and an ideal road map to learner transformation, numerous factors impede its implementation in developing countries. In Kenya for instance, basic resources that enhance curriculum delivery are meagre. Research indicates that teachers are forced to dictate notes to learners in some schools due to lack of textbooks (Njui, 2010). In addition, teachers in public schools and universities deal with huge classes that do not render themselves to individualized learning due to very high teacher: student ratios. Employment of interactive teaching approaches is also a major challenge because teachers have to wrestle with the prescribed curriculum which appears generally overloaded in all subjects. As a result, they opt for transmission teaching approaches (including lecture, note dictation and drill) to help them cover the scope of content within the stipulated time (Njui, 2010) to ensure that they prepare learners adequately for national examinations. Also, most teachers do not integrate technology in teaching as they do not have the skills needed to operationalize it. This is compounded by the fact that most schools, particularly in rural areas have not yet installed technology.

Research by Uwezo, Kenya (2011) indicates that the above challenges have significantly compromised quality in education to an extent that learners have major

gaps in literacy, numeracy and life skills at various stages of education in Kenya. It is little wonder that the debate on lack of employability skills by university graduates is still alive. A solution to this problem requires radical reforms in teacher education to ensure that teachers are adequately trained and facilitated with regular capacity building programmes in order to enhance their effectiveness in curriculum delivery. Effectiveness also requires teachers to create a classroom culture that is conducive to quality learning. The following section briefly discusses different types of classroom culture and the implication of each to learning.

3.1 Class Culture and Implications to Effective Quality Learning

Jacobsen, Eggen & Kauchak (1993, p.269) identify three types of classroom social organization used by teachers namely competitive, cooperative and individualistic. Each influences the class culture in a certain direction. The Competitive pattern of organization stresses individual excellence and achievement that urges learners to do better than their peers, to reach higher for a better position on the academic ladder. In this pattern, the teacher is the initiator and director of the learning tasks and sets the pace of the class based on the average or slightly above average ability level in the class. This culture implies that low achievers suffer neglect and exclusion, thus, their right to education is jeopardized as the class pace does not incorporate them.

On the other hand, cooperative pattern of organization stresses learners working together on problems where all members of a group are considered important and capable of making unique contributions regardless of their ability levels. Learners are encouraged to set group goals and tasks, to divide and assign work equitably, to listen to all view points and to weigh alternative solutions. They are also expected to participate in various tasks which call for creativity, initiative, and application of previous knowledge to the present situation, organization and evaluation. In this pattern, the teacher assumes the role of a facilitator who asks for, listens to, and uses learners' ideas in planning instructional activities. Research in cooperative social organization indicates increased learner achievement and improved relationships between learners of different ethnic backgrounds, sexes and academic abilities (Slavin, 1990) cited by Jacobsen, Eggen & Kauchak (1993, p.270). Thus, the pattern is inclusive. Teachers should explore this pattern in order to assist individual learners to achieve their right to education.

Individualistic pattern involves learners working at their own levels and paces to achieve cognitive tasks. They are expected to follow directions, accept repetitive practice (drill), and interpret self-evaluations. In this pattern, the teacher is the director, diagnosing and placing learners at their correct levels, evaluating and encouraging progress, and serving as a source of information. Learners work alone at individual tasks which may be different from that of their peers. The objective of this pattern is

mastery of cognitive material, with steady progress. Exclusive use of this pattern confines learning to the cognitive dimension and influences learners to solely depend on the teacher to transmit knowledge to them through lecture. Thus, the individualistic pattern influences a narrow approach to education. This poses a major concern because education is a multi-dimensional activity that cannot be confined to one dimension. Njoroge and Bennaars (2000) argue that if an activity is to qualify to be called education, it must fulfill four dimensions namely the cognitive, the normative, the creative and the dialogical dimensions. This holistic view of education should be pursued at all levels of learning if education is to offer transformation to the learner.

Jacobsen, Eggen & Kauchak (1993) observe that real classrooms use a combination of the three patterns above. The decision on choice of pattern like other considerations in teaching depends on factors like teacher's style and curriculum goals. This paper recommends an integration of the three patterns with a bias on cooperative pattern because of its ability to engage learners meaningfully in collaborative activities that enhance inclusion of all learners in the teaching-learning process.

The following section discusses the four pillars of learning outlined by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) namely learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together (NanZhao, www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/Competencies/PillarsLearningZhou). It also attempts to show how each pillar relates to inclusive learning.

Learning to know entails providing the cognitive tools required to better comprehend the world and its complexities, and to provide an appropriate and adequate foundation for future learning. This differs from acquiring knowledge through the traditional mode of knowledge transmission to passive learners who reproduce the knowledge gained through memorization. It emphasizes the development of the faculties of memory, imagination, reasoning, problem-solving, and the ability to think in a coherent and critical way through discovery learning. This provides learners an opportunity to experience the pleasure of knowing, discovering and understanding new knowledge. Learning to know also enables individual learners to understand various subjects including nature, humankind and its history, human environment and society at large (NanZhao, www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/Competencies/PillarsLearningZhou).

Discovery learning has the advantage of involving learners actively in what they learn. It also helps them to explore what they learn at their pace through the guidance of the teacher. This enhances individualization of learning, ensuring that all learners gain from the teaching learning experience. Discovery learning does not only nurture learners with skills and competencies beyond the stipulated curriculum (including problem solving, organization, observation, creativity and critical thinking), it also enhances inclusion as learners are facilitated to learn at their individual pace. If learning

institutions in Kenya are to offer globally competitive education for sustainable development and also achieve the aspirations of an industrialized society envisaged by Kenya's Vision 2030, it is imperative that the transmission mode of curriculum delivery is replaced with learning modes that involve learners through the learning process and provide opportunities for them to discover new knowledge.

Learning to do demands that individuals are provided with the skills that would enable them to effectively participate in the global economy and society. The skills include vocational, technical, work and others which are beyond defined skills development in the curriculum. It entails nurturing learners with skills such as ability to communicate effectively with others, team work, interpersonal relations, adaptability to change in the world of work and in social life, competency in transforming knowledge into innovations and job-creation, and a readiness to take risks and resolve or manage conflicts (NanZhao, www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/Competencies/PillarsLearningZhou). The skills resonate well with the current global industry competency demands outlined in the 21st Century Skills Framework (Howland, Johassen & Marra, 2012, p. 12-13). Adequate preparation of learners for the 21st century industry demands a paradigm shift from the Western transmission model of education to one that engages learners in cooperative and collaborative learning activities that yield quality and transformative education.

Learning to be entails providing individual learners with self-analytical and social skills to enable them develop an all-round complete person physically, psychologically, socially and emotionally to their fullest individual potential. This broad development of learners demands that a curriculum should cultivate qualities of imagination and creativity; acquire universally shared human values; develop aspects of a person's potential (memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical capacity and communication skills); develop critical thinking and exercise independent judgment; and develop personal commitment and responsibility (NanZhao, www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/Competencies/PillarsLearningZhou). The need for holistic quality education provided for by this pillar cannot be overemphasized because education is a multidimensional activity as explained above. Reforms in education are imperative if learning institutions are to help individual learners to realize their right to quality education for their transformation.

Learning to live together demands that individuals are exposed to the values that enable them and societies live in peace and harmony. The values include human rights, democratic principles, intercultural understanding and respect, and peace at all levels of society and human relationships. Learning to live together also implies that education provides learners with opportunities to locate and discover other people and experience of shared purposes in life. This entails the development of knowledge and understanding of self and others; appreciation of the diversity of the human race and an

awareness of the similarities between, and the interdependence of, all humans; empathy and cooperative social behavior in caring and sharing; respect of other people and their cultures and value systems; capability of encountering others and resolving conflicts through dialogue; and competency in working towards common objectives (NanZhao, www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/Competencies/PillarsLearningZhou).

This pillar highlights the desirable values that education should develop in learners in order to equip them with the tools they need for survival in an interconnected world as they interact with people of different races and religions. However, cohesive living is not confined to the global context. It is also critical at other levels where different people live and work together including classrooms, schools, local communities, towns and cities. Living together cohesively for the different ethnic groups in Kenya has been a major challenge. Since the 2007 contested presidential polls in Kenya, there has been prevalence of negative ethnicity that has significantly escalated to higher institutions of learning where the local communities have continued to demand that the management of a County University should be led by one of their own. This implies that County Universities are yet to embrace diversity. If inclusivity is to be achieved in learning institutions in Kenya, it is imperative that curricula integrate and deliberately nurture the values of an inclusive society at all levels of learning. The diagram below represents the author's visualization of inclusive learning which she refers to as constructs of inclusive learning.

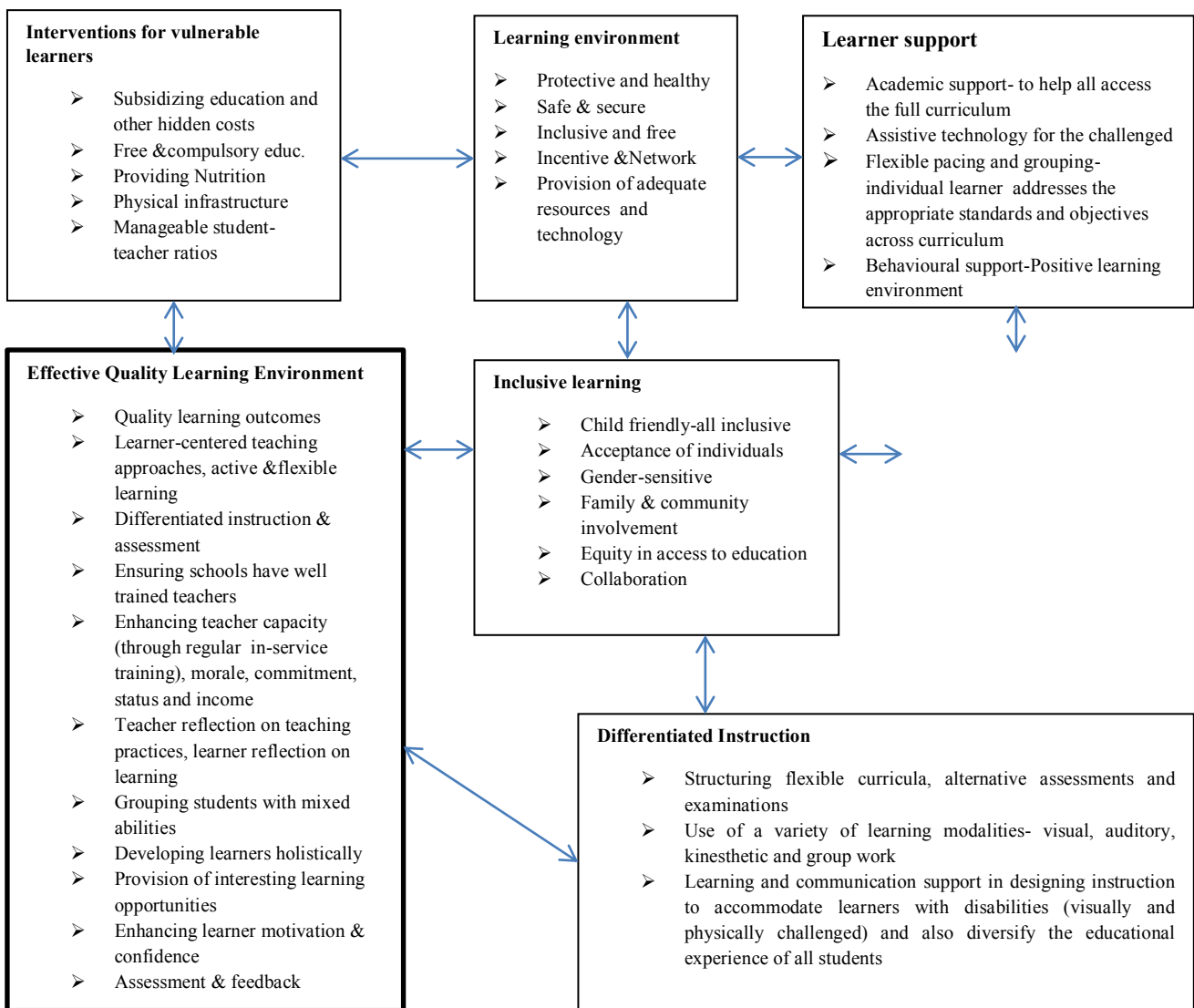


Diagram 1: Visualization of inclusive learning

4. Conclusion

If learning institutions in Kenya are to prepare graduates with globally competitive skills which are also needed for the industrialized society envisioned by Kenya’s Vision 2030, it is imperative that they embrace inclusive classrooms and also nurture learners with the values of inclusive education. This is critical because, an inclusive education has the advantage of nurturing learners with skills beyond the curriculum prescription. The skills are effectively nurtured through inclusive classrooms. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all is critical in achieving education for sustainable development (Sustainable Development Goals, 2016). Involving learners in all the institutional activities and nurturing values such as responsibility, ownership, belonging and community is not an option if universities are to enhance the achievement of Education for Sustainable Development

(ESD) goals. In addition there is need to orient teaching from knowledge transmission use of engaging teaching approaches to ensure that all learners benefit from the teaching-learning experiences they undergo. Engaging university students in collaborative action research where the community is involved is also critical in achieving the ESD goals. There is also need for universities to build networks with the industry, professionals and other higher institutions of learning at national and international levels for benchmarking purposes to ensure they remain at the top in offering quality education. Development of faculty capacities through in-service training and staff development programmes is necessary in order to equip them with the current global trends to enable them to effectively deliver quality education for sustainable development.

5. Recommendations

To build and sustain globally competitive education, institutions of learning institutions should:

A. Nurture Effective High Quality Learning Environments

This entails providing learners with conducive learning environments; influence democratic learning environment and cultivate rapport with learners; ensuring that curriculum delivery takes cognizance of the learner context; adopting faculty: student ratios that are commensurate to learner-centered pedagogical practices; ascertaining that learning resources and facilities are adequate and at no cost overstretched; building a culture of respect; acceptance and co-existence of different races, ethnic groups and religions among learners and members of the school community to prepares learners to live in an integrated manner in the society in future; and ensuring that learners are physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabled.

B. Employ Learner-Centered Teaching Approaches and Assessment

This entails that educators employ interactive and collaborative teaching approaches in order to enhance permanent learning as opposed to traditional lecture and drill approaches that transmit knowledge to passive learners leading to surface learning. Teaching and assessment should be individualized in order to adapt to the abilities and context of individual learners to help them learn at their own pace. This is particularly critical in practical subjects like Music where learners' entry levels to a class differ in instrumental performance and other skills.

C. Ensure Learner Health and Protection

To promote the physical and the psycho-socio-emotional health of teachers and learners in learning institution, it is critical that the policy on healthy, hygienic, and safe learning school environment (with adequate water and sanitation facilities) is enforced. This could also help to defend and protect learners from abuse and harm as well as provide

them with positive school experiences. Building boarding facilities/hostels should be encouraged in order to secure learners as different forms of insecurity including kidnapping, drugging and terrorism continue to emerge.

D. Build Teacher Capacity

Learning institutions should have clear policies on staff development and capacity building programmes that are actualized. Such opportunities enhance teachers' refreshment and improvement of pedagogical and academic skills. Through regular in-service training for instance, teachers are able to keep abreast with current research developments in education as well as trends in technology integration in education; this improves their teaching practice.

E. Collaborate and Network with Education Partners and Stakeholder

Learning institution should promote participation and collaboration with all learners, teachers, parents, community, education partners and stakeholders. This makes the parties involved to offer support to learners, have a sense of belongingness and ownership of the school as well as its improvement. For universities in Kenya to remain relevant and globally competitive, they should network and partner with other like-minded institutions, stakeholders and industry locally, nationally and internationally. They should also create opportunities for students exchange programmes in order to nurture internationalism. Benchmarking with reputable universities nationally and internationally is also critical if they are to remain relevant and competitive; they should also seek collaboration with multi-national companies for funding; and also joint consultancies and researches among themselves locally on the basis of a university's strength, rather than compete amongst themselves.

F. Integrate ICT in Classroom Learning

This is critical at all levels of learning if institutions of learning have to produce graduates for the automated industry of an interconnected world. Integration is however beset by many challenges in developing countries such as lack of skills in technology by teachers, lack of infrastructure to establish it, particularly in the rural and informal settlement areas and among others. Learning institutions should address the challenges to ensure that they integrate technology with learning

G. Enhance Equity in Access to Information and Academic Facilities

Learning institutions should align with UNESCO's manifesto which requires that all persons have equal access to information. To this end, they should put in place the essential academic facilities learners need to access information. For instance, special facilities like ramps should be fixed to support learners on wheel chair to access school facilities so as to give them equal opportunities with those without disability as they go through school life. In addition, necessary structures should be put in place to ensure that visually impaired learner's access information available in the library with ease through assistive technology and braille. Hearing impaired learners should also be

facilitated with hearing devices through assistive technology to enable them get the benefit of quality education.

H. Enhance Gender Equality

Education stakeholders should collaboratively establish creative ways of formulating and enforcing a policy on gender equality in enrolment and achievement applicable to different levels of learning. For instance, girls should be encouraged to enroll for the male dominated degree programmes. Gender stereotypes in curricula, textbooks, and teaching-learning processes should be eliminated to make learning girl-friendly. To this end, continuous revision of curricula and textbook illustrations is imperative if gender fairness is to be enhanced.

I. Build a Community

This entails that learning institutions aspire to build a community among students and staff from diverse cultures, races and religions, guided by the spirit of tolerance and acceptance of individuals regardless of whom they are and where they come from. They should nurture a non-violent and inclusive school culture where learners and staff live together in harmony. The institutions should also promote respect for human rights, dignity, and equality among students, teachers and other members in order to enhance belongingness and ownership of the institution. The massive destruction that has been witnessed in schools and universities in Kenya, including the recent wave of burning of secondary schools and student riots in universities with all their disturbances and destruction of property worth millions of shillings indicate there is need nurture communities in learning institutions to alleviate the incidences.

J. Require Teachers to Reflect on Curriculum and Teaching Practice

Continuous reflection on curriculum and teaching practice is imperative if teachers are to enhance improvement in learning. They should reflect on what they teach and how they do it in order to determine the teaching approaches and resources that work best on learners in specific disciplines. They should also reflect on the curriculum objectives and the evaluation procedures they employ with a view to improving weaknesses in order to enhance the quality of education delivery. In addition, teachers should encourage learners to reflect on what they learn in order to internalize knowledge gained as well as apply it critically and creatively in problem-solving and innovation.

K. Embrace Curricula Reforms

Curricula reforms should be carried out in all learning institutions on regular basis to make them responsive to the emerging issues such as the rapid technological changes. This has influenced the critical need to integrate technology in learning in order to equip learners with skills for the automated industry of the modern world. Responses to emerging issues demand that teachers are regularly empowered through in-service training and other forms of staff development to enhance their effectiveness.

L. Align teaching with Education for Sustainable Development Goals

ESD goal number four envisions an inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong education opportunities for all (Sustainable Development Agenda, 2015). This requires teachers to employ modern pedagogical practices to help individual learners unleash their potential and thereby help each to participate in the development of the society in their own individual abilities and capacity. For this to become a reality, teachers should believe in the educability of all learners and ability by all to contribute positively to the society. It is critical that learners are encouraged to pursue subjects of their strengths and interest to help them excel and achieve their best for their fulfillment and career development.

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