

Tangible First Steps: Inclusion Committees as a Strategy to Create Inclusive Schools in Western Kenya

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This paper provides one example of forming an inclusion committee in Kenya toward the vision of creating inclusive primary school campuses. We suggest the development of inclusion committees as a potential innovative strategy and a critical element of community reform toward disability awareness, and to increase access to primary school education for students with disabilities. The formation of the inclusion committee followed a member-driven process for identifying barriers to educational access for students with disabilities, prioritizing the needs within their local context, determining a plan of action to address these needs within existing community resources, and gaining access to new resources. Recognizing access to equitable education as a universal human right supported by local and international legislation, this paper works within the tensions that exist between Western constructs of education and how they are applied in post-colonial countries in the global South. Our findings suggest that establishing diverse participation among stakeholders led to even more inclusive representation; that inclusion committee actions led to local and national level involvement with the initiative; and that community-driven progress toward inclusive education presented both strengths and challenges in terms of sustainability. Finally, we discuss implications for under-resourced schools, including those in the global North.

Keywords: Inclusive education; inclusion committee; Kenya; global South; critical disability studies; United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Introduction

This paper provides one example of forming an inclusion committee in Kenya toward the vision of creating inclusive rural primary school campuses. We suggest the development of localized inclusion committees as a potential innovative strategy and a critical element of community reform toward disability awareness, and to increase access to primary school

education for students with disabilities. The formation of the inclusion committee followed a member-driven process for identifying barriers to educational access for students with disabilities, prioritizing the needs within their local context, and determining a plan of action to address these needs by drawing on existing community resources and gaining access to new resources.

This project is an extension of a larger research project on inclusive teacher trainings in western Kenyan primary schools (Elder, Damiani and Oswago 2015). Specifically, teachers engaged in the use of inclusive instructional and community building strategies as a means of meeting the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms. Many of the 13 teachers representing eight regional primary and special schools that participated in the inclusive teacher trainings also volunteered to participate as teacher members of the inclusion committee. Other members of the inclusion committee included: representatives from the local and national Ministries of Education, teachers and administrators in primary and special schools, community members with and without disabilities, and parents of children with and without disabilities.

Our intended audience includes scholars and teacher educators working on inclusive education, special needs education (SNE) teachers, school teachers at all levels, and other interested stakeholders in education who might find this work relevant in their local context. This article and the development of an inclusion committee are in no way intended to be prescriptive. The goal of this work is to clearly articulate our steps for others that might wish to engage in a similar process and to support steps toward inclusive education that increase the number of students with disabilities accessing primary school classrooms. Our objectives for introducing the inclusion committee strategy were aligned with our concurrent research on capacity building. Within the inclusion committee approach, the following research questions guided our inquiry:

- How does the formation of an inclusion committee impact students with disabilities accessing primary school education?
- How do community-based participatory approaches impact how disability is constructed and supported in western Kenyan communities?

This paper is organized into supporting sections that address our positionality, the educational context, theoretical framework, methods and procedures, results and discussion and concludes with implications for practice.

Positionality

The three authors of this work were among members of the formed inclusion committee. Authors 1 and 2 were the initial committee facilitators; Author 3 is a primary school teacher in the region, who later assumed a leadership role within the inclusion committee. The three

of us believe international collaboration is important so that colonized populations have informed allies outside of their communities (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2008).

The positionalities of Authors 1 and 2 are inherently tied to Western perspectives on disability and education, so acknowledging locations of both authors is critical. Authors 1 and 2 are white, Western educators and are aware of the many unearned privileges they have in relation to this work. We both hope that our Kenyan colleagues view us as allied others in the pursuit for global educational equity within local communities (Smith, 1999). Throughout this project, we tried to continually understand the tensions inherent in this development work and on our efforts to increase access to education in Kenya.

Author 3 asserts a stance that is fully based on African experiences and perspectives. I am an indigenous Kenyan citizen and educator who is ready to interact with other views on disability and education purposefully for the sake of embracing globalization. I strongly believe that this will inculcate a trend that would assure us of sustainability and peace and also enforce the best educational practices geared towards promoting an inclusive education.

We also acknowledge the contextually driven nature of this work and the difficulties involved in applying Western concepts of inclusion to a location like western Kenya. We used the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as a legal impetus to move practice considerations in our work beyond debates about who belongs in education and how, and instead focused on education as a universal human right. While we understand that development work is inherently neocolonial (Bishop, 1998; Sandoval, 2000; Espinosa-Dulando, 2004; Owuor, 2007), we believe that denying people with disabilities access to education can be as oppressive as the structures of Western imperialism.

Similarly, we recognize that the term ‘inclusion’ is a Western construct and carries with it colonizing connotations. In this article, we utilize a working definition of inclusion provided by inclusion committee members within the local context. In written correspondence, Author 3 offered the following definition of inclusion that he uses in practice:

Inclusion means providing *all* students (disabled or not) with equal learning opportunities through using varied and appropriate teaching pedagogy, learning facilities, equipments [sic], and materials within the same learning institution (school). It encompasses society building in a learning institution. The School Management Board should be reflective of *all* (that is, inclusive of people with disability). (emphasis and parenthesis in original)

Educational Context

Within the international mandates of the UNCRPD (2006), transnational collaborations are

expected of ratifying countries (Article 32). Given Kenya's decision to sign and ratify the UNCRPD, we can anticipate that these local level collaborations are aligned with Kenya's governmental directions and national policies aimed at increasing access to education for all students in Kenya. The UNCRPD also implicates State Parties to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels of education, including primary and secondary education (Article 24). According to the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) (2011), 67% of students in Kenya with disabilities access primary education, 19% go on to secondary education, and only 2% access higher education.

As we have acknowledged in a previous article (Elder, Damiani & Oswago 2015), these statistics make clear that access to education is compromised as students progress to higher levels of education. Therefore, it is imperative that access to inclusive education begins early. Currently, those students with disabilities who are accessing education are overwhelmingly placed in segregated special schools by specific disability categories (e.g. schools for the blind, schools for the deaf, schools for the physically challenged, and schools for the mentally handicapped). Aseka and Kanter (2014) report that this government-supported medical approach to education is currently operational in all Kenyan schools.

From our conversations with Kenyan educators and members of the Ministry of Education, we learned that isolated examples of primary and special schools becoming more inclusive are emerging throughout Kenya by government and NGO collaborations. At present, certain educational communities recognize the historical basis of disability and exclusion and the need for inclusive education in Kenya. However, Kenyan educators from the original teacher training project indicated that adequate training and specific strategies to support students with disabilities remain elusive (Elder, Damiani & Oswago 2015). In an attempt to address this gap and to continue developing the small body of literature around this topic, our work offers the use of inclusion committees as an innovative and integrated community-driven strategy to facilitate the development of more inclusive schools.

Theoretical Framework

Recognizing access to equitable education as a universal human right supported by local and international legislation, this paper works within the tensions that exist between Western constructs of education and how they are applied in post-colonial countries in the global South. All aspects of the project were informed by a critical disability studies (CDS) framework and decolonizing methodologies to minimize the replication of colonial oppressions.

Within this work, we recognize the associations between disability, poverty, and exclusion from education, and the consequences of such intersections (e.g. overcrowded and

inaccessible schools, negative perceptions of disability, lack of trained teachers) (Grech, 2008). By acknowledging the educational barriers created by these intersections, we also must recognize and target the historical, political, and social factors that have systematically kept children with disabilities from accessing primary education (e.g. neoliberal education) (Singal, 2006). Students who do not meet the capitalistic expectations of the productive able-bodied worker in schools are forced into special education classrooms and systems where they receive a separate and unequal education (Lipsky and Gartner, 1996; Erevelles, 2000).

As a field, CDS originated in part out of the limitations and over-generalizations of traditional disability studies approaches. Grech and Soldatic (2014:1) note that ‘those promoting with force the mainstreaming of disability are hardly questioning the implications of ‘development’ for disabled people’. They go on to question the fact that disability theory remains grounded in the global North while its ideas are too often exported to the global South with ‘minimal attention paid to cultures, context, and histories, and rarely responsive or even acknowledging Southern voices, perspectives and theories that have been developing as a counter discourse’ (1). The need for more critical perspectives within disability studies has led scholars like Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009:50) to critique disability studies and to re-examine ‘the struggle for social justice and diversity...’ and expand it into ‘one that is not simply social, economic and political, but also psychological, cultural, discursive and carnal.’ Put simply, we need to find nuanced ways of applying the social model of disability to transnational and multicultural contexts. Within this lens, all invested stakeholders must recognize the need to engage with communities of disabled people living in the global South on issues and concepts that are significant to disability.

With over 80% of the world’s disabled population living in the global South (World Health Organization, 2003), it would seem appropriate that most of the CDS scholarship come from countries within the global South. However, a majority of the academic knowledge, in particular traditional disability studies literature, comes from the global North, or what scholars sometimes refer to as the metropole (Connell, 2011). The metropole, when seen through a CDS perspective represents a colonizing and unidirectional dissemination of knowledge from the global North to global South. The metropole represents one-sixth of the global population, but controls almost all knowledge creation (ibid, 2011).

Challenging this epistemological dominance of Western perspectives on disability, requires what Said (2004:22) called ‘participatory citizenship.’ Participatory citizenship, in this case, necessitates engagement of people with disabilities from countries within the global South in disability development work, and grounding it in community-based practice. In alignment with CDS perspectives, this development work seeks to engage local communities and educators in Kenya in an effort to increase the disability-based knowledge production from the global South to global North, and to decenter Western ways of practicing inclusive education that have assumed global authority. By ‘decentering’ Western knowledge, we

acknowledge that some Western approaches to education have the potential to further marginalize historically oppressed populations. However, by drawing on CDS and decolonizing methodologies in this work, we hope to push back against such practices and find new, mutually developed ways of existing inclusively in an increasingly globalized world.

When the global South is understood as more of a concept than a location, and framed also by the concept of social capital (McConkey and Mariga, 2010), the implications of this work have transformative potential for many under-resourced schools specifically in the global North. In terms of referencing the global South as a concept rather than strictly a location, Erevelles (2011) offers a poignant account of the conditions surrounding Hurricane Katrina in the United States. Her work provides a means for understanding how intersections of disability, poverty, and race are not isolated to a particular location, but instead recognizes that conditions typically associated with the global South can in fact be found within and throughout the global North.

Additionally, processes for building social capital ‘have been less emphasized in more affluent countries, where greater reliance has been placed on financial capital to fund additional resources within schools and educational systems’ (McConkey and Mariga, 2010:12). McConkey and Mariga (2010) urge that as financially based approaches become unsustainable, more attention should be given to social capital as an avenue for realizing inclusive schooling goals. Specifically, the authors describe bridging, linking, and bonding as the three processes required for building social capital among a diverse group of community based stakeholders.

In our review of existing literature, the only other example that specifically discusses inclusive education committees in the African context, comes from the work of McConkey and Mariga (2010) based in Zanzibar¹. Our experiences aligned with research conducted by McConkey and Mariga (2010) which uses a social capital framework to discuss the results achieved through an international partnership that established diverse inclusion committees in 20 schools. Their findings implore more affluent countries to consider inclusive practices that are made possible when social capital and community connectedness are understood as ways to move closer to achieving inclusive education and inclusive societal goals.

Literature also emphasizes that community-based reform in the global South should include the perspectives and participation of the population of people of whom the project is intended to benefit (Israel et al., 1998; Stanton, 2014). Accordingly, methods for community-based participatory research (Greenwood and Levin, 1998; Wulforth et al., 2008) influenced the formation and facilitation of the inclusion committee. Further, the committee’s goals and actions were driven by a range of participants from the local community, including educators from seven regional schools.

Methods and Procedures

All inclusion committee project activities were developed as an additional aspect of a larger research project on inclusive teacher trainings in western Kenyan primary schools. That research, including the inclusion committee component, had institutional review board (IRB) approval, informed consent agreements with participants, as well as research clearance from the Kenyan government through the National Council for Science and Technology.

Data was collected from two inclusion committee meetings over a two week period in the form of daily written memos coded for inclusion committee references, quotes and comments from participants throughout the process, photos that document the actions occurring within the inclusion committee process, and subsequent e-mails with participants. We used qualitative coding procedures as a systematic way to document the steps in our process of forming and developing the inclusion committee. This allowed us to identify important committee decisions that could be useful for the replication of the inclusion committee strategy in other countries.

For the purposes of this paper, we use these data to explicate our process which we articulate in the following subsections: Project Context, Inclusion Committee Participants, Committee Roles and Responsibilities, and Committee Leadership and Sustainability. We outline our steps chronologically and explain the methods we used in implementing the inclusion committee strategy. Later in the Results and Discussion section we report on the outcomes and potential implications of these efforts and experiences.

Project Context

The need for using the inclusion committee strategy originated in 2013 when members of the community in western Kenya expressed interest in creating more inclusive schools. This region of Kenya has a history of inclusion of people with disabilities. According to a local representative of the Ministry of Education, the community's message of expectations for inclusion is shared through the church. A few church elders have disabilities themselves, so acceptance and support of people with disabilities has been a community principle shared in community forums for decades. The Ministry representative believes that these firmly rooted community messages led to the initial 2007 collaborative partnership formed when the Ministry representative was visiting inclusive schools in the United States. Here, the Ministry representative met Author 2 at the school where he was teaching. Both the Ministry representative and Author 2 agreed to do an inclusive education project at some point in the near future in western Kenya together. That project came to fruition in 2011 when the Ministry representative invited Author 2 to come observe how disability is supported in schools, to engage with the community in discussions about disability awareness, and to co-

create an inclusive plan of action with inclusive stakeholders in the district. The 2011 project expanded in 2013 when Author 1 and Author 2 were invited to facilitate inclusive education teacher trainings based on the local Kenyan context. It was through these trainings that the inclusion committee was formed.

Inclusion Committee Participants

Teacher volunteers were targeted for membership on the inclusion committee based on their participation in the larger teacher training project. Seven teachers and three head teachers (school administrators) comprised the initial base of educators for the inclusion committee. The local representative of the Educational Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC) in the Ministry of Education (referred to in the remainder of the paper as ‘EARC liaison’) helped to identify volunteer community members, including parents of children with and without disabilities and community members with and without disabilities. Committee volunteers were approached based on their known interest in developing this community-based inclusion committee strategy.

Ultimately, this western Kenya inclusion committee was attended by teachers from primary schools and special schools, head teachers and assistant head teachers from primary and special schools, representatives of the local and national Ministry of Education, parents of students with and without disabilities, and community members with and without disabilities (see Table 1). Intentionally, diverse committee membership moved the committee toward a participatory action model where those impacted by the committee’s choices were directly involved in the decision-making process (Stanton, 2014). Further, including parents is consistent with research indicating that their participation is integral when there is an aim to bridge schools with their local communities and families for mutual benefit (McConkey and Mariga, 2010).

Inclusion committee attendance records show the fluid nature of voluntary participation and the realities of project demands related to time, travel, and participant resources. In an effort to make attendance accessible, meetings were held at a central location in the early afternoon following the conclusion of the school day. One teacher in attendance had not initially volunteered to participate, but later chose to attend. Another primary school teacher, Author 3, immediately volunteered as he was interested in bringing inclusion to his school after learning about inclusion and inclusive practices for the first time. Also, at one point, one of the head teachers decided he would leave early. As this head teacher departed, a second school administrator pulled him aside and explained the importance of his presence and participation at the meeting, after which he stayed. These shifts related to committee participation suggest a growing commitment to the shared goal of creating more access points for students with disabilities in primary schools.

Table 1: Western Kenya Inclusion Committee Membership

Participant	Number
Primary school teachers (includes Author 3)	4
Special school teachers	3
Head/assistant head teachers from primary schools	1
Head/assistant head teachers from special schools	2
Local Representatives of the Ministry of Education	2
National Representatives of the Ministry of Education	1
Parents of students with and without disabilities	3
Community members with and without disabilities	2
Training facilitators from the United States (authors 1 and 2)	2
Total	N=20

*Due to fluctuating attendance, there was an average of 10 participants present at each meeting.

Committee Roles and Responsibilities

The initial facilitators (Authors 1 and 2) began the first western Kenya inclusion committee meeting by recognizing national and international inclusive education mandates and providing explicit connections about how the work of this committee may assist with translating law into practice. Toward the goal of increasing educational access for primary school students with disabilities, the committee needed to determine what was going well with inclusion in the region, and what needed more support. The facilitators asked these questions to maintain and increase inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities and reduce the existing barriers to inclusive education. See Figure 1 for the regional inclusive strengths and needs identified by committee members.

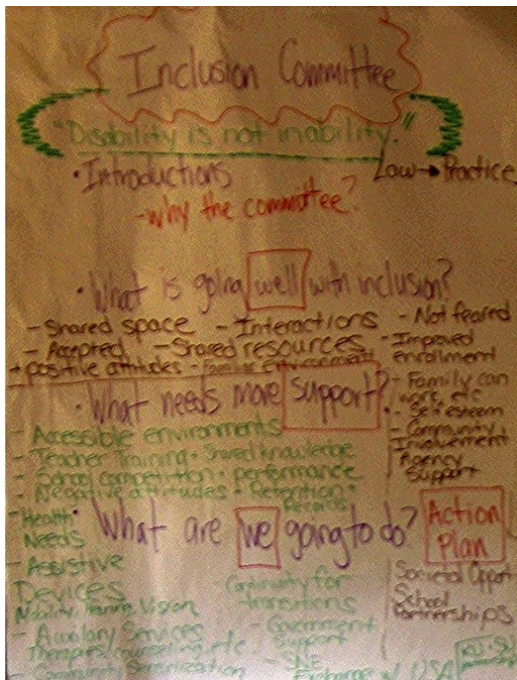


Figure 1. Committee-identified Inclusive strengths and needs.

Beginning with a whole group discussion, the committee identified the following elements of inclusion that were already in place: students with and without disabilities were sharing physical school spaces and some resources; there was a regional commitment to developing inclusive practices among professionals and community members; some students with physical disabilities were already included in primary school classrooms; committee member attitudes communicated acceptance rather than fear of disability; school enrollment of students with disabilities in primary school classes in the area was increasing. When we say special and primary schools shared a physical space, we mean that both schools existed on the same campus separated by a small physical space or a gate, as compared to the more common arrangement where special schools were located on separate campuses some distance away. The students with physical disabilities that were included in primary school classes accessed academic content without known curricular modification needs. We observed the students in these school communities engaging in inclusive actions and communicating positive attitudes toward one another (e.g. students removing rocks from the play yard, students with and without disabilities lifting each other in and out of wheelchairs and playing together in the yard). These student interactions seemed to be an everyday routine that played out in the form of natural peer supports, many of which have yet to be realized in many schools in the global North.

Aspects of inclusion that the committee identified as requiring additional support included: inaccessible school environments, a need for teacher training to facilitate a shared knowledge of disability, school competition and performance related to national testing, community sensitization to address some of the prevailing negative cultural and school attitudes toward

disability, inadequate resources to address student health needs, a need for assistive devices to support mobility, ambulation, hearing, vision and auxiliary services, therapies and counseling, government provided financial support of schools, and a transnational exchange of inclusive ideas and practices. This discussion provided a forum that proved rich in conversation where almost every committee member provided input. Perspectives on these needs varied, and disagreements arose among participants, thus highlighting the need for participants to develop shared inclusive goals. Committee members also affirmed the need for the existence of the committee, and shared overall positive attitudes towards the experience. These identified needs informed the next steps in the inclusion committee planning process.

The facilitators broke the committee up into groups of three, and small groups were asked to prioritize the three most pressing inclusive school needs. See Figure 2 for a photo of committee-identified priorities.

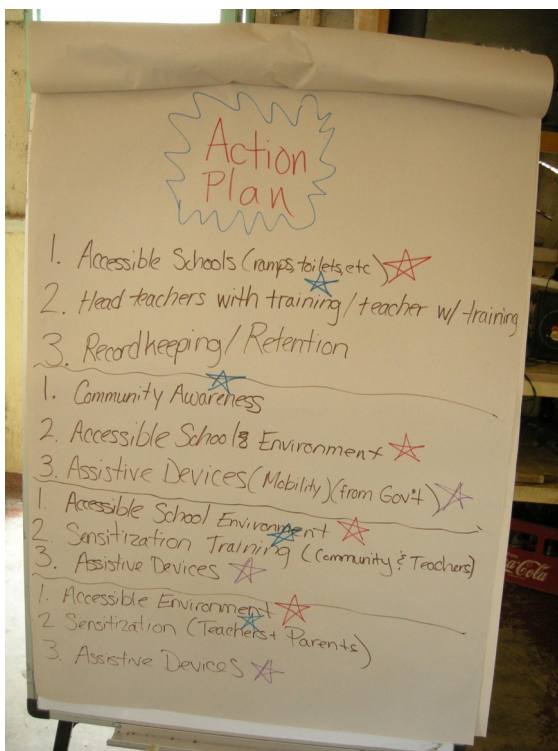


Figure 2. Action plan priorities.

Three out of four groups identified the same priorities in close order. The priorities were: 1) a need for more disability awareness for communities, teachers, and parents; 2) creating more accessible school environments; and 3) providing students with more mobility devices. Committee members also identified documenting and retaining enrollment of students with disabilities as a fourth priority and they thought that all schools in the district should have one ‘inclusion facilitator’ to be the one who briefs teachers on inclusive practices. See Figure 3

for a photo of the top three action plan plan priorities.

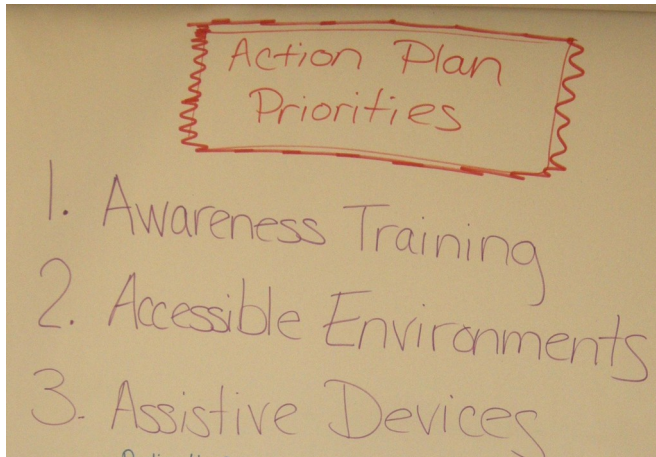
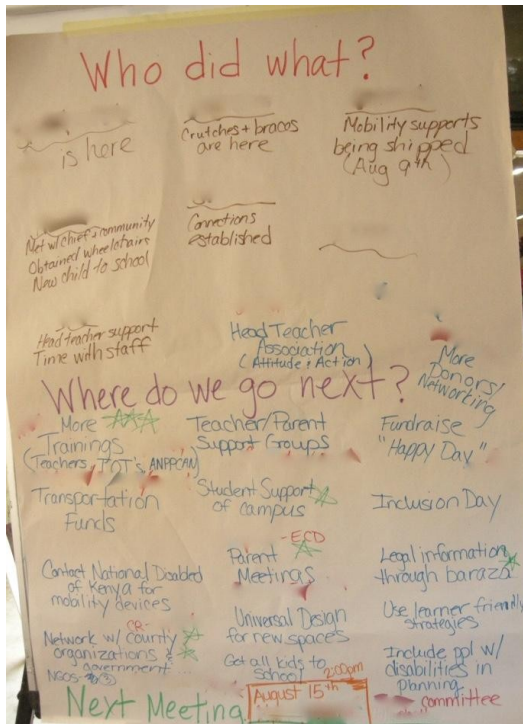


Figure 3. Top three inclusion committee action plan priorities.

After determining committee priorities, most members made a public commitment to work toward addressing a certain piece of the action plan. For teacher committee members who did not make a public commitment, they were reminded that they could still influence the inclusive stakeholder environment by making lesson plans more accessible to students with disabilities by informing students about how they can help make schools more accessible, and by speaking with parents on disability-related issues. A second inclusion committee meeting was planned before the adjournment of the first meeting.

The second meeting began with a review of the committee process, and a review of who-did-what in terms of the commitments made from the previous meeting. All participants who made short term commitments followed through in full and incremental progress was made toward long term commitments. For example, a head teacher of a special school began drafting paperwork to obtain more governmental funding for basic school needs. The remainder of the meeting focused on future committee directions. To outline next goals, committee members were again broken into groups of three and asked to brainstorm manageable and actionable steps that could promote: 1) disability awareness programs; 2) accessible school environments; and 3) access to mobility devices. Committee members then made public commitments to these manageable steps. Unlike the first committee meeting, at the end of the second meeting, *every* person on the committee made a public commitment to one of the manageable steps. Facilitators noted member names on chart paper next to the action or responsibility they selected. See Figure 4 for a photo of committee member commitments.

Figure 4. Committee member commitments



Committee Leadership and Sustainability

Prior to the conclusion of the second inclusion committee meeting, the facilitators shifted the discussion from ranking committee priorities to identifying committee leadership roles and highlighting committee activities that promote sustainability. The committee agreed to convene for a third meeting within a month of the departure of the two U.S.-based facilitators. The planning of future meetings were integral aspects for sustaining committee success. To maintain the committee’s momentum, the EARC liaison agreed to chair the committee along with Author 3, who agreed to serve as the co-chair.

It was vital to have someone in the local Ministry of Education hold a committee leadership role to ensure that the needs of various stakeholders were taken into account as inclusive practices changed and developed over time. It was equally important to have a school teacher involved in committee leadership who was directly connected by working in a school, and professionally involved in the expansion of inclusive practices at the school level. Teachers in active committee roles provided a means for continued collaboration among educators and provides a natural opportunity for expanding school, family, and community partnerships where inter-group collaboration is necessary. Local control and ownership of the maintenance and sustainability of this project was the aim from the outset. All authors felt that having a representative of the local Ministry of Education and a local primary school teacher lead the committee would allow the strongest possibility for continuation of the inclusion committee

model and progress toward on-going committee goals.

Nearing the end of second meeting, the newly elected committee co-chair (Author 3), suggested inviting students with and without disabilities to serve on the committee to ensure key perspectives of *all* stakeholders were represented. He stated, 'As it seems to me, we should have students with and without disabilities attending the inclusion committee and giving their inputs.' Author 3's suggestion was unanimously received and supported by the committee which led to a new follow-up action for committee members to do by the next inclusion meeting. Head teachers were charged with identifying potential student committee members.

Results and Discussion

First and foremost, we want to reiterate that our detailed articulation of the inclusion committee process is an important aspect of our findings. In this section, we present our results as they relate to the research questions we outlined in the introduction. Again, these questions were: 1) How does the formation of an inclusion committee impact students with disabilities accessing primary school education? 2) How do community-based participatory approaches impact how disability is constructed and supported in western Kenyan communities? Our purpose for restating these questions here is to clearly connect our objectives with our results. In the remainder of this section we provide specific data points with discussion as evidence to support our findings.

Our first finding revisits Author 3's suggestion to include students with disabilities. This recommendation was described above in the context of sustainability and in documenting the course of the inclusion committee actions. We also want to discuss this as an initial result which begins to answer both guiding questions for this project. In his earlier quote, Author 3 calls for increased representation and involvement of students with and without disabilities. Recognizing and responding to members' suggestions might promote other stakeholders to take up active roles as experts of local knowledge and maintain collaborative relationships within the committee. In addition, continued enactment of committee member ideas could promote sustainable participation of diverse local participants, including members with disabilities, who remain committed to the process and act as change agents within their local and professional communities.

The decision to include student perspectives exemplifies important opportunities for increased student participation, including students with disabilities, both in classrooms and within inclusive community initiatives. As such, this seemingly simple suggestion represents increasing access to education for students with disabilities, as well as shifting the construction and the role of disability within the larger community. The desire to include

students with disabilities is supported by disability studies literature that underscores the need for people with disabilities to be actively involved in decision-making about their lives and the lives of people with disabilities. Around the world, students with disabilities are notoriously omitted from discussions about their educational futures. ‘Nothing About Us Without Us’ was a key tenet of the disability rights movement in the United States (Charlton, 1998), and suggests that a similar approach could be useful in the burgeoning Kenyan disability rights movement. The inclusion of students with disabilities on the committee also counters the widely held Kenyan cultural belief that disability is a curse and stems from ancestor misdeeds (Ihunnah, 1984; Abosi, 2003; Mukuria, 2012).

As we have expressed throughout this paper, the inclusion committee process was the catalyst for action on the ground. We believe that these actions serve as important evidence about the efficacy of the inclusion committee as an innovative strategy and the role that inclusion committees can hold in increasing access to education and community-based reform around disability awareness. Based on action plan priorities identified by the committee (see Figure 3) including awareness training, accessible environments, and assistive technologies, Table 2 evidences the committee member actions taken following the initial inclusion committee meeting.

Table 2: Committee Member Actions

Name	Action
Head teacher	Brought committee goals to the Head Teacher’s Association
Teacher from a special school	Brought committee goals to a chief’s baraza
Teacher from a primary school	Mobilized students to remove rocks from their school campus to improve physical accessibility
Community member	Donated wrist and leg braces
EARC liaison	Facilitated the shipment of mobility devices to a local special school
Authors 1 and 2	Invited a member of the national ministry of education to observe inclusion committee meetings
Author 3	Brought committee goals to head teacher and faculty

These committee members’ actions led to the finding that even within a short period of time, a small group of inclusive stakeholders created more access points to inclusive education, and established momentum toward the creation of sustainable practices to benefit disability-related community awareness. In Table 2, there are multiple examples of members exporting

committee goals to external locations to benefit the community, thus representing exponential project outgrowth. For example, the head teacher brought inclusion committee goals to the Head Teacher's Association which represents inclusive priorities being introduced within a national teaching organization. Similarly, Authors 1 and 2 invited a member of the national Ministry of Education to observe committee meetings. Her choice to travel from Nairobi and attend this small, local level inclusion meeting speaks to the interest of the Ministry of Education in recognizing and supporting inclusive practices happening in rural Kenya. Her attendance also underscores the Ministry's desire to increase national sharing of information related to inclusion and disability. All of these actions support the most recent disability-related law, the Basic Education Act (2013), through which the Kenyan government aims to make Free Primary Education of 2003 a legal mandate for all.

Aside from the legal implications discussed above, the findings that emerged from the inclusion committee at the localized level are also compelling. Table 2 shows that a teacher from the special school took committee initiatives to the chief's baraza. Village chiefs in Kenya use 'marbaraza,' or chiefs' council, as a way to conduct community meetings and educate citizens on local issues (Naanyu et al., 2010). In this way, the targeted efforts of this teacher provided a new level of access for sharing information and influencing community awareness around disability and education. Table 2 also shows that Author 3 brought committee goals to the head teacher and faculty at his school. Author 3 documented this as his personal to-do item, however all teachers on the inclusion committee shared their desires for continued efforts to incorporate inclusive pedagogical strategies to benefit the needs of diverse primary school learners in western Kenya. The result of teachers' knowledge sharing is evidenced in an example where the head teacher also took up the use of inclusive pedagogy in his professional practices with faculty. Specifically, Author 3 writes about his observations and says:

Teachers in my school were adequately briefed about the strategies and how to apply them in class. I'm impressed by my head teacher who always uses the Loop Around strategy during the teacher's morning meetings on Mondays and Fridays. (For more information about the Loop Around strategy, see Udvari-Solnar and Kluth 2008).

Influential practices were also documented in local schools as a result of using the inclusion committee strategy. For example, one community member identified crutches and braces that were not in use in her community. She committed herself to obtaining these for immediate use at schools in need. On the day of the inclusion committee meeting, it was brought to the committee's attention that this member would not be able to attend due to a death in the family. In her absence, this community member arranged for the crutches and braces she had to be delivered to the inclusion committee. Committee members responded enthusiastically to her commitment to the process and to provide more assistive technologies for students with disabilities in schools.

As a final example from the results in Table 2, one primary school teacher mobilized students to remove rocks from their school campus so that students who use wheelchairs would have fewer barriers when navigating school grounds. Practically, this teacher's action created another opportunity for students to be involved with the inclusion committee initiative. Students responded positively, sharing that they felt it was important to help make their school grounds accessible for all students. In this way, the students' actions are consistent with the development of natural supports where students with and without disabilities become academic mentors for each other (Janney and Snell, 2006). The work of these students and the community responsibility established around making educational environments accessible helps to enact a disability studies framework in practice by locating barriers within the environment instead of within the individual with a disability (Taylor 2006; Baglieri et al., 2010).

Our findings thus far have focused on expanding inclusion committee membership and specific committee member actions that led to achieving more access to education and inclusive opportunities within the community. We recognize that the sustained work of the inclusion committee is vital to continued inclusive success. In an e-mail correspondence from a deputy head teacher (vice principal), he reports an increase in enrollment in the number of students with disabilities at his school. He goes on to say that inclusive pedagogical strategies are still in good use and that there is a need for more resources to accommodate the increasing numbers of students. He adds that:

A friend of the school sourced us sixty adapted lockers (desks). Our major challenge now is [finding funds to build] six spacious classrooms; the learners are congested and we cannot admit any more...We are still on the lookout for support.

Here, the deputy head teacher cites a lack of resources and infrastructural barriers that other Kenyan teachers have reported in literature (Elder, Damiani & Oswago 2015). More specifically, teachers indicated that schools not only need more monetary support from the government, but they also require more accessible infrastructure for all students to access schools. Kenyan primary school teachers see these infrastructural barriers as a foundational need to all students being physically present in the classroom.

Implications

Our results provide evidence that support the efficacy of using inclusion committees as a strategy to promote educational access for all students, including students with disabilities. We believe this work and expanding discussions about sharing best practices as multi-directional considerations are vital to communities realizing disability rights and improving

access to education for people with disabilities around the world, including under-resourced schools in the global North. As such, this work provides tangible first steps that other countries with resources similar to Kenya could enact to create more access to education for students with disabilities.

There are numerous under-resourced schools throughout the United States that provide examples of where and how global South conditions exist throughout the global North. One important example from literature is found in Erevelles' (2011) description of 'third world' living conditions that were continuously present in New Orleans, but were only exposed following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. According to Erevelles, Hurricane Katrina provided an opportunity to make pre-existing conditions visible and begin dialogue around the need for critical conversations about providing access to education for historically marginalized populations. We implore readers to recognize persistently under-resourced schools in their own communities. Consequently, we strongly suggest that community-based inclusive approaches should be considered in culturally relevant ways throughout the world.

This inclusion committee experience is one example of a transnational cooperative approach with transnational applications. In this case, dialogue around the construction of disability and subsequent practices occurred in a postcolonial country in the global South. However, the potential for inclusion committee models to be used elsewhere, speaks to the idea that this practice is not isolated to this particular community in the global South, nor are its implications. Further, an exchange of ideas and best practices can and should occur reciprocally around the world. Due to the negatively constructed understandings of the term 'global South' and its connotations of helplessness, Southern countries are often not considered valuable sources for best practices related to inclusive education. Applying inclusion committee models has tremendous transformative potential for the way that inclusive education is supported worldwide. For example, in the United States special education and inclusion are still organized through a medical model framework. Educational teams are required to address the needs of individual students, but a holistic, community-based approach to supporting students and sustaining inclusion is hugely lacking.

In this Kenyan community dedicated to expanding inclusive practices, the inclusion committee was a vitally important addition to furthering school efforts, teacher training, and parent and community member leadership. The inclusion committee provided a space that may not have otherwise been created for identifying needs, developing shared goals, and mobilizing resources. We believe an inclusion committee is one structural strategy that maintains the critical communicative component required for sustainable and contextually relevant inclusive education. The inclusion committee maintained a timeline by which follow-up actions were expected to occur. Accountability of actions encouraged inclusive progress and idea sharing that could easily have been lost. But most importantly, the inclusion committee required participation from community members with disabilities. As the

committee evolves to include regular participation of students with disabilities, those most affected by committee decisions will be able to serve as authorities of their own lived experiences of disability in this context, as well as add to the community precedents established around inclusion. This progressive community-driven approach is highly disparate from school-based models (pervasive in the global North) where non-disabled professionals retain control over idea generation and decision-making.

Conclusion

We hope we have captured the transformative possibilities that exist around developing best inclusive practices within transnational partnerships. We caution that the way forward to increasing the number of students with disabilities accessing education, necessitates culturally relevant and locally determined actions. Any one approach cannot be so narrow in scope that it becomes understood as a singular application. To do so would be counterproductive and juxtaposed to the tenets of CDS that challenge the limited scope of disability within traditional disability studies approaches and later its application to global contexts. However, the progress toward inclusive societal goals also should not be divorced from inclusive education responsibilities within the international community.

The contributions of this work confirm that there are applications to be learned from the global South regarding community investment, engagement and leveraging social capital. We understand that this project was situated in a specific time and place whereby this Kenyan community had already established a shared inclusive vision and responsibility. This is an example of how social capital as it relates to disability, already existed in this region. Our results support McConkey and Mariga's (2010) findings that inclusion committees are an effective strategy for utilizing social capital to benefit the development of sustainable inclusive practices.

Future directions within Kenya should be organized such that governmental funding is in place to sustain and broaden regional efforts at increasing educational access for all students. Relieving financial barriers within available resources could assist in changing attitudes and repositioning cultural ideas and practices related to disability, especially in areas where local government support is strong. Ultimately, the benefits of the government funding community-based practices in culturally appropriate spaces, will far exceed the low-cost expenditures involved. All members of the inclusion committee received 300 Kenyan shillings (KSH) (\$3USD) as a sitting allowance for their participation. It was not payment for their service, but rather a stipend provided to offset travel costs associated with attending inclusion committee meetings.

Within the scope of educational funding, the Ministry of Education should consider

supporting inclusion committee meetings in various regional locations over the course of the school year. This is especially true during the initial stages of implementation. It would be most beneficial if these committee funds could be locally available to meet the diverse needs of communities throughout Kenya and organized in cooperation with teacher training initiatives or other professional development opportunities. As we have found, neither teacher trainings nor the inclusion committee are as strong in on their own as they are when used in combination.

In this case, local communities successfully provided what they could afford to give, but this is not nearly enough to sustain the implementation in schools. Therefore, alternative sources of funding are highly recommended to ensure effective sustainability. This is a necessary bridge to fill the gap left by the government and the local community as far as sustainability and the local community are concerned. Suggested sources of funding include: donations from individuals (e.g. well-wishers²), collaboration with non-governmental organizations, working with faith-based organizations, applying for international grants, and starting up income-generating activities (e.g. bee keeping and poultry raising).

This recommendation is not to suggest over-reliance on financial resources like so many of the unsustainable and unsuccessful approaches used in more affluent areas (see McConkey and Mariga, 2010). Instead, a combination of financial and social capital investments are critical. From his years of Kenyan teaching experience, Author 3 highlights that most students with disabilities come from impoverished backgrounds, and learn in poorly maintained government primary schools. Interestingly, this occurrence is not dissimilar from the disparate educational opportunities available in countries with greater financial capital where there are strong educational divisions by class. Again, we urge readers to consider the options presented within the implications of this work as a lesson for the Western world, including countries often considered leaders of inclusive education such as the United States and Italy (see Kanter et al., 2014). Perhaps, all countries must wrestle with more equitable ways to distribute financial resources among varying regions.

We hope we have successfully articulated our process about facilitating an inclusion committee model when working toward the shared goals of this community within an international framework. Toward the goal of recognizing education as a basic human right, we see this work creating momentum and additional avenues of possibility. Without having engaged in this work, these outcomes might not have been possible. In that sense, it is necessary to foster transnational partnerships that work within the tensions of a globalized world.

In conclusion, there are conceptual and practical understandings within this work that can be utilized in schools globally. The transformative potential is not fully known. From this perspective, under-resourced schools can be reconstructed as sources of resilient approaches

to community reform. Similarly, teachers in these schools can serve as experts about how to better engage school stakeholders to maximize school resources. Teachers in the global South have been instructing diverse students with and without disabilities, with minimal resources for many years. By acknowledging this resiliency and creativity, we open up many inclusive possibilities for *all* students around the world.

Limitations

As with almost any work directed at creating social and systemic change, inclusion is not without its critics and this work is not without limitations. The reality is that even the inclusion committee strategy is resource-dependent, and this affects sustainability. While short-term committee goals were exceeded, continued achievement of long-term goals proved challenging. Additional funding, though minimal, was needed from within the community and from the Ministry of Education. This is exemplified by the fact that the inclusion committee agreed to identify potential student committee members with and without disabilities at respective school sites. Unfortunately, following identification of these students there was a lack of adequate funding to hold the next scheduled inclusion committee meeting.

We also acknowledge that this work provides one rather specific example of using the inclusion committee strategy in Kenya toward the vision of creating inclusive rural primary school campuses. Though the committee only convened twice over a two-week period, much was accomplished in that short time. Inclusive plans were formed and local leadership was established, but the committee dissolved due to a lack of resources. It is worthwhile to note that there are plans to reinstate and expand these collaborations as future funding becomes available.

However, for obvious reasons, inclusive education development in areas throughout Kenya and globally cannot rely on ground level involvement from outside facilitators. Further, financial reliance on collaborative partners with white, Western backgrounds risks reinscribing, instead of disrupting, neocolonial oppressions and the unidirectional flow of knowledge that is assumed in global South and global North relations. We expressed our positionality at the outset of this article and this work, but it would be irresponsible to overlook it as a limitation.

Notes

¹ This lack of related literature underscores the need for more work like this to be initiated and subsequently published in journals that are accessible worldwide.

² In the Kenyan context, 'well-wishers' does not necessarily mean 'charity for the disabled.' Well-wishers can be people who are optimistic to reinforce a positive change in people's lives

by donating material goods (e.g., food, building supplies, money) to a cause or organization.

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