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Conversations from the field: Stakeholders' perspectives on inclusive education in western Kenya

Conversations sur le terrain: Points de vue des parties prenantes sur l'éducation inclusive dans l'ouest du Kenya

Brent C. Elder, PhD
Associate Professor of Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education
Rowan University
elderb@rowan.edu

Benson Oswago
Ministry of Education Suba South Sub County
Mbita, Kenya
boswago@gmail.com

Michelle L. Damiani, PhD
Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education
Rowan University
damiani@rowan.edu

Abstract

In this article, we critically examine issues related to disability inclusive education in the global South. Specifically, we discuss our work on inclusive education in western Kenya. We acknowledge how such practices are often framed within global North perspectives, and use methodologies and approaches from these same spaces and places. Such methodologies tend to be steered by powerful stakeholders and donors that may not always be sensitive to local contexts, concerns, and demands. In this article, we outline how we incorporate Critical Disability Studies (CDS) to address these concerns while working towards a bottom-up approach with multiple local stakeholders of inclusive education. Specifically, we discuss how we centred the stories of disabled and non-disabled students and their parents, teachers at special and primary schools and their respective head teachers, and disabled and non-disabled community members to create the foundations of a sustainable inclusive education system. We use quotes from various stakeholders to shape our discussions, and highlight spaces where applying foundations of CDS was useful in creating bottom-up approaches to disability inclusive education reform.

Résumé

Dans cet article, nous examinons de manière critique les questions liées à l'éducation inclusive des personnes handicapées dans les pays du Sud. Plus précisément, nous discutons de notre travail sur l'éducation inclusive dans l'ouest du Kenya. Nous reconnaissons que ces pratiques sont souvent encadrées dans les perspectives du Nord global et utilisons des méthodologies et des approches issues de ces mêmes espaces et lieux. Ces méthodologies ont tendance à être dirigées par des parties prenantes et des donateurs puissants qui ne sont pas toujours sensibles aux contextes, aux préoccupations et aux demandes locales. Dans cet article, nous décrivons

comment nous intégrons les études critiques sur le handicap (CDS) pour répondre à ces préoccupations tout en travaillant vers une approche ascendante avec de multiples acteurs locaux de l'éducation inclusive. Plus précisément, nous discutons de la manière dont nous avons centré les histoires des élèves handicapés et non handicapés et de leurs parents, des enseignants des écoles spéciales et primaires et de leurs chefs d'établissement respectifs, et des membres de la communauté handicapés et non handicapés pour créer les bases d'un système d'éducation inclusive durable. Nous utilisons des citations de diverses parties prenantes pour façonner nos discussions et mettre en évidence les domaines où l'application des fondements du CDS a été utile pour créer des approches ascendantes de la réforme de l'éducation inclusive pour les personnes handicapées.

Keywords: Inclusive education; Critical Disability Studies; global South; Kenya; Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

The Story of the Authors

Authors 1 (Elder) and 2 (Oswago) first met in California in 2007 where Elder was a K-6 public school special education teacher, and Oswago was visiting a local healthcare facility to learn about palliative care and then bring information back to his village in western Kenya. The two were introduced randomly by Elder's primary care physician, when Elder was receiving vaccinations to conduct educational research in the Middle East. The physician connected Elder to Oswago, and Oswago came to observe Elder's inclusive education program the next day. While there, Oswago commented that he had long wanted to make the schools in his local district more inclusive, and was interested in collaborating to create similar inclusive programs in western Kenya.[1] Oswago and Elder maintained contact throughout the years, and over time, planned a collaborative project in July 2011. This is why this research takes place in the region surrounding Oswago's village in western Kenya. It was during this time that Oswago first connected Elder to the local Ministry of Education, which is a partnership that sustains to this day.

In 2011, Oswago had just been promoted from a special education teacher to a representative for the Education Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC) in the local Ministry of Education where his main role was to identify disabled[2] children in the community and facilitate their attendance in school. Oswago felt segregated schools in Kenya were not where disabled students should learn because they deserved the same education as their non-disabled peers. Because of that, he wanted them to be included in age- and grade-appropriate classrooms.

[1] We recognise that inclusive education is an idea imported from Northern countries, and the application of such practices in post-colonial countries can cause further harm to colonised populations. However, we feel the risk of continuing to exclude disabled people from education is more harmful than the risk of potentially perpetuating neo-colonial practices (Elder & Foley, 2015b).

[2] We purposely use "disabled" and "non-disabled" throughout this article to recognise that people are colonised and disabled by inaccessible and oppressive social structures, including the education system (Grech, 2011).

In 2012, Elder enrolled in his doctoral program where he met Author 3 (Damiani), who was also in the doctoral program, where they studied in disability studies and engaged in international inclusive education research. In 2013, the three of us teamed up for another inclusive education project in western Kenya which was approved by the Kenyan Ministry of Education and directed by Oswago as the local EARC representative.

From the start of this partnership, Oswago has had immense influence and power in their collaborative projects. He is the insider providing the outsiders, Elder and Damiani, with access to teachers, interpreters, local knowledge, schools, administration, students, parents, and community stakeholders. Oswago is a highly-respected school leader, a valued local religious figure, and a trusted community organiser, and without his dedication to creating inclusive educational opportunities in his community, and his willingness to collaborate and to provide Elder and Damiani with intimate access to the local community, these projects would not have been possible.

Positionality

The three of us have been collaborating on projects related to inclusive education in various capacities since 2010. Elder and Damaini are professors of inclusive education in the US, and have expertise in developing qualitative community-based inclusive education research both in the US and Kenya. Oswago is a Support Officer of Special Needs Education for the Ministry of Education, who has led inclusive education initiatives in Kenya for many years. We believe believe international collaboration is critical so that colonised communities have allies outside of their communities (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008).

Coming from the US, the views of Elder and Damiani are inherently tied to US-centric perspectives on disability and education which they are adapting to fit the Kenyan context. As white, Western educators, Elder and Damiani are aware of their multiple unearned privileges in relation to this work. They collaborate with Kenyan partners in ways they hope promote their presence in the region as allies in the pursuit for global educational equity within local communities (Smith, 1999).

Oswago's perspectives on education are fully-based on his experiences growing up in Kenya. He is an indigenous Kenyan educator and community leader who actively engages with international views on disability and inclusion for the sake of developing a global view on disability rights. He strongly believes that this approach can promote the sustainability of inclusive education in western Kenya.

Damiani did not participate in the on-the-ground interviews and dialogue that occurred between Elder and Oswago described in this article. Damiani's role in this work draws on collaborative autoethnographic methodological approaches where Damiani served as a "sounding board" (Chang, et al., 2013, p.23). Given her connection to inclusive education work in this community, and experience with this team of researchers and writers, Damiani supported an in-depth discussion of and additional perspective to the data and experiences of Elder and Oswago.

We 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 use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006) as a legal foundation to frame access to inclusive education as a universal human right.

Context of Western Kenya

Our partnership has taken place in various forms since 2010 in the "agrico-pastoral-fishing society" sub-county within Homa Bay County in the Nyanza region of western Kenya (Ocholla-Ayayo, 1976, p. 11). In this region, the number of livestock a family has is a sign of wealth, and the crops grown in the region include: millet, wheat, common beans, and sorghum. This is a collectivistic patriarchal Luo community where kinship is highly valued, and personal needs are typically met through familial or communal support systems. This means that interpersonal relationships and respect are exceedingly important, and "Every relationship and action is definable [sic] in terms of honour and good name" (Ocholla-Ayayo, 1976, p. 42).

According to the Kenyan Ministry of Education (2009), inappropriate infrastructure, inadequate facilities and equipment, the high cost of schooling, and a lack of teacher training are among some of the prominent reasons why many disabled students are not enrolled in school, or have dropped out entirely. While many attitudinal and structural barriers to inclusive education remain, over the last decade, through our partnership, we have documented the progress related to the development of inclusive education supports in the region. We have done so by publishing the observable growth related to inclusive education (see Damiani et al., 2016; Elder et al., 2015a; Elder & Kuja, 2018a; Elder & Odoyo, 2018b; Damiani et al, 2021). The Kenya Ministry of Education (2008, p. ix) affirms that inclusive education is "a fundamental right to every citizen and is provided free of charge in primary and secondary schools to all learners in public schools." Also, the Kenyan Ministry of Education (2009, p. 5) states that inclusive education is "an approach in which learners with disabilities and special needs, regardless of age and disability, are provided with appropriate education within regular schools." Recently, the

Ministry of Education's (2018) Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities also affirms the government's support of inclusive education for all.

The Kenya Ministry of Education (2009) further recognises the importance of "health, nutrition and provision of learning resources for children with special needs and disabilities" (p. 47). Establishing new partnerships and strengthening existing collaborations among all stakeholders has been assigned as a national priority for inclusive and special needs education (2009). Specific focus is also given to families with an expectation for families to be involved in their disabled children's education programs including access to school and care. Oswago prioritises education and healthcare in his efforts to create access for disabled members of his community. In a bottom-up, community-driven approach we propose a project centred around a holistic family response to educational needs in this community. In this model, educational materials and consultation, food rations, and healthcare are provided in partnership with the local healthcare clinic in the village, and periodically assessed based on feedback from participating families. This and other kinds of bottom-up, community-driven programming remain under-utilised and underfunded despite the strength of their relevance, especially in rural or under-resourced communities. Linking healthcare as a necessity of providing inclusive education evidences a more holistic approach to inclusive education that could challenge Western approaches that separate healthcare and education or that focus only on medicalized aspects of healthcare in relation to educational outcomes.

Foundations of Critical Disability Studies (CDS)

The purpose of this article is to amplify the perspectives of inclusive education stakeholders in the global South, and in this work in western Kenya. To do this, we utilise a CDS framework. By utilising a "CDS framework" we mean we are purposely prioritising knowledge

and perspectives from the global South to decolonise inclusive education (see Meekosha, 2011) and highlight our approach to global South-North collaboration (Grech & Soldatić, 2014). This framework highlights the complexities involved with transnational social justice and disability rights research in global education systems. In this section, we briefly highlight the core principles of CDS through the work of Goodley (2011), Grech (2011), and Meekosha and Soldatić (2011) among others.

A foundational starting point when attempting to understand CDS is recognising that over 75 percent of the world's population has had their lives impacted by colonialism, with the remaining 25 percent being the colonisers (Meekosha, 2011). We feel it is important to frame this work through a colonial perspective because: (a) a vast majority of the world's population has been colonised (Meekosha, 2011); (b) even when some countries are said to be "post-" colonial, the ramifications of colonisation remain (Hall, 1990); and (c) disabled bodies have been colonised by non-disabled people through capitalism, globalisation, conflict, environmental degradation, and other factors around the world (Grech, 2011; Meekosha, 2011).

Goodley (2011, p. 157) argues that Disability Studies scholars begin with disability, but identify disability as the "space from which to think through a host of political, theoretical and practical issues that are relevant to all," which we strongly believe includes access to inclusive education. Taking up such a perspective allows CDS scholars and educators to reject oversimplified, Western, and Eurocentric understandings of disability and Disability Studies (Meekosha, 2011). A CDS approach allows scholars and educators to centre the lived experiences of disabled people and the realities that impact their daily lives in the global South, which includes school-based realities. As Whyte and Ingstad (2007, p. 11) state, CDS scholars "are interested in people's own experiences of what is disabling in their world rather than in

some universal definition." When it comes to schooling, what may be disabling to a child in the global South could be the stigma surrounding disability that has resulted in them being hidden at home by their parents, or living in a "special school" away from their families due to a specific disability (Elder & Kuja, 2018a).

A CDS-informed participatory and context-driven approach provides opportunities to better understand disability in the global South which then "allows for the formation of a full and inclusive idea of citizenship, one radical and yet every day in its appreciation of the real value of disabled lives" (Barker & Murray, 2010, p. 234). This notion of participatory citizenship also includes access to education at all levels in the global South, which can encourage scholars and educators to push back against the uncritical transfer of Western understandings of disability. For example, the Western notion of presuming the universality of the disabled experience when the daily experience for most people with disabilities around the world is survival (Ghai, 2002; Meekosha, 2011). This monolithic and uncritical transfer has historically been done "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" (Grech & Soldatić, 2014, p. 1). Applying CDS in classrooms in the global South requires that scholars and educators acknowledge larger systems of oppression that impact the students in those classrooms like neoliberalism, globalisation, capitalism, and neo/post/colonialism (Grech, 2011; Meekosha & Soldatić, 2011). It also allows for new and community-based understandings, which we expand upon below, of how CDS-informed inclusive education practices can emerge, evolve, and be sustained in the global South (Damiani et al., 2016; Elder et al., 2015a).

In addition to applying a CDS perspective in educational settings in the global South, in this article, we attempt to show how educators can deconstruct colonising practices in education. To do this, we have applied decolonising methodologies, as outlined by Smith (1999), to our own work in western Kenya. A decolonising approach means we centre the perspectives and interests of disabled students in schools in the global South (Elder & Odoyo, 2018b). Enacting decolonising methods require us to promote local ways of knowing, to encourage project stakeholders to help direct the research (Smith, 1999), and to conduct research in the local language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). As researchers and educators, we understand that we must also take an active role in performing decolonising acts that focus on social justice activism (Smith, 1999). Additionally, we view community-based approaches to research not only as a method for this work, but a useful theoretical lens through which to view inclusive education. We find work that is rooted in community-based participatory research (CBPR) useful in thinking about how we engage stakeholders, particularly disabled stakeholders, in the inclusive education reform process. By taking this approach in western Kenya, we have emphasised community collaboration, and have sustained collaborative practices with the goal of taking actions that have clear and immediate application to local communities (Stanton, 2014).

A Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Approach

While there are many approaches to participatory research we could have used to address the complex methodological realities of this project, we chose CBPR. Community-based participatory research engages community stakeholders, but not necessarily in all phases of the project (i.e., analysis and publication) (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). We did not treat stakeholders as uninformed subjects, and we encouraged them to collaborate with us to provide research ideas, questions, and to guide methodological directions (Wulfhorst et al., 2008). Like

other forms of participatory research, the CBPR process is similarly iterative, cyclical, and action-oriented and shifts as the needs of the community change (Beh et al., 2013).

Many researchers have used CBPR methodology to centre the perspectives of historically marginalised populations around the world (Beh et al., 2013). While CBPR has a strong history in the global North, it has also been implemented in various countries in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Kenya. In Kenya, village chiefs use "mabaraza," or chief's council, to conduct community meetings where citizens are educated on local issues (Naanyu et al., 2010). Mabaraza have historically been used to resolve conflicts between tribal factions prior to modern politics. A "baraza," singular of mabaraza, was an offering of peace and a pre-colonial method of conflict resolution (Boneza, 2006). As CBPR has been an approach used by researchers and local stakeholders to solve social issues in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., high rates of disease, poverty, rapid urbanisation), we view this approach as a viable and familiar methodology that has the potential to build community capacity (Kamanda et al., 2013).

The Stakeholders

In this institutional review board (IRB)-approved project, the "community-based" component of this CBPR project involved centering the perspectives of inclusive education stakeholders who comprised inclusion committees at two different school sites. The first school site, Dhiang School Site, is composed of two schools. One is a special school that practices reverse inclusion (i.e., non-disabled students attend a special school because of the proximity to their home), and the other is a primary school. The second school site, Punda School Site, is composed of two adjacent schools. One is a school for the Deaf, and the school next door is a

primary school. The stakeholders included: (a) disabled and non-disabled students,[3] (b) the parents of disabled and non-disabled students, (c) teachers from special and primary schools, (d) head teachers from special and primary schools, (e) disabled and non-disabled community members, and (f) the Ministry of Education EARCs. We charged inclusion committees with the responsibility of identifying ways in which to create sustainable approaches to the development of an inclusive education system (see Damiani et al., 2016; Elder & Kuja, 2018a). One way the inclusion committees developed sustainable inclusive education structures was to begin rearing poultry through an income generating activity (IGA), which is a community-based activity that raises funds for a common goal.

In the summer of 2018, Elder and Oswago collected data in the form of written memos and audio-recorded semi-structured interviews to better understand the ways in which inclusive education supports had been developed and sustained in the previous years. We collaborated with 26 stakeholders in inclusive education, conducted 19 one-on-one interviews with adult stakeholders, and four small group interviews with seven students. We used group interviews with students because we thought students would feel more comfortable having project-related discussions in small groups. A Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) interpreter was present for interviews with Deaf students. See Table 1 for more information about stakeholders at each school site.

Table 1: Inclusive Education Stakeholder Interviewed at each School Site

Stakeholder Interviews	Dhiang School Site	Punda School Site

[3] Following local guidelines for confidentiality and acquiring parent permission for student participation in the project, the head teachers at each school site connected with the parents of student participants, and received their permission for their children to participate. The main guideline for confidentiality was that student names be changed to pseudonyms in any presentations and publications.

Disabled students	2 (1 girl, age 12, grade 6; 1 boy, age 12, grade 6)	2 (1 girl, age 13, grade 7; 1 boy, age 12, grade 6)
Non-disabled students	3 (1 girl, age 12, grade 6; 1 boy, age 13, grade 7; 1 girl, age 13, grade 7)	0
Parents of disabled children	1*	2
Parents of non-disabled children	0	0
SNE teachers	2	3
Primary school teachers	3**	2
SNE head teacher	1	0
Primary school headteacher***	0	0
Disabled community members	1	0
Non-disabled community members/Board of management members	1	3
Total	N = 14	N= 12

*This stakeholder was a parent of a disabled student and a primary school teacher.
**These stakeholders had their own non-disabled children, but their main role on the inclusion committee was to represent primary school teachers.
***Primary school head teachers from previous iterations of the project were either unavailable to schedule an interview, or they had been re-posted to a new school.

In the next section, to amplify the lived experiences and perspectives of project stakeholders, we present a quote from each category of stakeholder, and then Elder and Oswago

respond to the quote. Through this approach, we attempt to create a space that prioritises lived experiences from the global South and to connect their experiences to CDS literature.

Perspective from Disabled Students

In this first excerpt, two Deaf students, ages 12 and 13 years, from the Punda School Site share their perspectives on inclusive experiences with non-disabled students from a neighbouring primary school. Just the fact that the children from these two schools are coming together for inclusive sport represents an important new shift in approaches to inclusive education. The bringing together of these students was an intentional and transparent move from the inclusion committee and was explained to students at both schools. Importantly, we recognise that deafness is not considered a disability by many within the Deaf community (Padden & Humphries, 1990; 2009). However, through a lens of disablement, we are purposely acknowledging that Deaf people become disabled through marginalising interactions with cultural, political, and economic barriers they encounter in communities (Oliver & Barnes, 2012). Both students attend and board at a school for the Deaf during the school year. Here they comment on how students interact at the neighbouring school campuses, and about what life is like when they go home during holiday breaks.

> Elder: What do you do with [the hearing students from the neighbouring primary school]? What types of activities?
> Freddie:[4] Sometimes when we go there, we meet with the teachers, and we also play football with the children together there, and then we go to the other [school].
> Elder: And Violet, what do you do when you see the other students?
> Violet: We play netball with the hearing [students]…
> Elder: Okay, and when you go home at the end of the school term, if your family doesn't know sign language, how do you communicate with them?
> F: They write on the paper.
> V: My mother tries more, she can sign a little, but I can also write with her…

[4] All student names are pseudonyms, and we use all adult names with their permission. Additionally, we invited all stakeholders to comment on, edit, and approve the quotes we present in this article.

Elder: What would change in your family if everyone in your family knew sign language?
V: I would be able to go to church because right now I'm not going because nobody is interpreting there. So, if everybody knows sign language, then we can all go to church.
F: If they know sign language, then I can tell stories with my parents, and they can also tell me stories of other people in the community.
Elder: Do you have a lot of stories that you want to share with your family?
F/V: Yes.
Elder: What's the most important story you want to share with your family?
F: I want to share with my family stories about school.
V: I want to talk with the younger children and tell them more about how I learn sign language at school here with my Deaf friends, and tell my parents also.

Authors' Responses

Oswago: The inclusive approach of this school is very important as it seeks to integrate the students here with the rest of the community, where members of the school community can meet in their school life. As they grow, they will have the opportunity to see each other as members of their community given the fact that they played together in their childhood. As the students explained, they also yearn for community access and participation in community spaces like church, as well as to understand the stories of others in the community. Exposure to inclusive education may assist in moving community membership and disability access forward, as students who share educational spaces may expect to share access and membership in the community as they age.

Elder: At this school for the Deaf, students have access to hearing peers at a neighbouring school, but it requires that everyone learn some basic KSL. As KSL is the primary language of instruction at Punda School, this provides an opportunity for the Deaf students to be seen as the experts with the hearing students being the ones who are disabled by not knowing sign language (Padden & Humphries, 1990; 2009). It puts the Deaf students in a position of power rather than always being the recipients of help (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994), like this school's approach to inclusion through sport. By

having students from the school for the Deaf and the primary school come together for sport, this not only dissolves the boundaries between the two schools, but it also allows for disabled and non-disabled students to see each other's talents that exist out of the walls of a classroom. From what the students discuss in the quote above, it is these sorts of school experiences they yearn to tell their families about when home from school, but oftentimes cannot because there are disabling barriers to communication.

Perspective from a Non-Disabled Student

The special school at Dhiang School Site practices reverse inclusion. In this part of Kenya, reverse inclusion means that students without disabilities from local villages can attend a local special school if they so choose (Elder & Odoyo, 2018b). Many parents in this region see special schools as having more resources from donations from non-governmental organisations, and therefore some families choose for their non-disabled children to attend special schools.

When discussing inclusive education with a non-disabled student at the special school at the Dhiang School Site this student had the following insights to share,

> Elder: Why is it good that there are more disabled students [at this school]?
> Max: At home, [disabled students] can be seen as less fortunate, and that there is nothing they can do. Now at least they are coming to school. Those who are physically challenged, at least they have hope that disability is not inability.

Authors' Responses

Oswago: Children also empathise with the situation of their disabled friends. When they are back home, they play together, they eat together, and do all other daily routines together. Thus, inclusion at school transfers to inclusion in their villages. It now makes sense that they learn together and can assist each other. Disabled and non-disabled students coming together to learn from and with one another in this way, while still

emerging in this part of Kenya, can lead to the development of natural supports which can help establish inclusive education in schools that can lead to higher student achievement (Carter et al., 2005).

Elder: Here, this student discusses why educating disabled students in inclusive settings can help change the deficit-based stigmatised views of disabled people in this local community where disability is viewed as a bad omen (Abosi, 2003; Elder et al., 2021; Mukuria, 2012). Within CDS, language such as "disability is not inability" is recognised as a euphemism that further marginalises disability and disabled experiences (Baglieri, 2017). However, the student's quote does indicate that young community members are recognising their disabled peers as capable and belonging in school. Additionally, when the student notes that "disability is not inability," it could be a marker that traditional deficit-based disability narratives in this region can change over time (Elder et al., 2021). The shifting narrative creates space for more critical disability conversations societally and within schools.

Perspective from a Parent of a Disabled Child

The next quote is from a parent of a child with multiple disabilities who attends the special school at the Dhiang School Site. This parent also happens to be a primary school teacher and a member of the inclusion committee.

> Kennedy: [Disabled people] are considered a burden because when they are not included, they're abandoned...They may be abandoned by their parents, even the community may abandon them and ignore them. So, when they're ignored or abandoned, they become burdensome to the immediate family [because] of their needs. You see they will need a few things here and there, and those needs now will go to the family. Sometimes the family will not be stable economically, so it becomes a very great challenge to the family and the person is abandoned.

Authors' Responses

Oswago: There is a need to work on the change of attitude within the whole community, particularly among the parents of disabled children so that they do not see their children as a burden. Parents should see inclusive education as an opportunity to develop their children's strengths rather than just seeing their disability. Parents and the rest of the community members should see [inclusive education] as an additional opportunity for learning and growth. As more disabled students access school and as non-disabled students are opting to attend special schools, more parents might see their children as more capable and prioritise accessing education.

Elder: I feel that any person from a historically marginalised group, who was systematically excluded from education and other aspects of society, is at risk of being considered "a burden." One of the powerful things about applying CDS to inclusive education is that once we identify systems that serve to marginalise and oppress disabled people, we can then dismantle those systems rather than force disabled people to fit into a system that was not designed for them. As it pertains to this particular project, inclusion committees identified negative attitudes as a major barrier to inclusive education, and then began sensitising[5] the community on CDS-informed perspectives of disability, which included community-based discussions on the poverty-based realities of not educating children and the need to consider the needs and perspectives of disabiled children and their families in community spaces (Damiani et al., 2016; Elder & Kuja, 2018a; Ghai, 2002; Meekosha, 2011).

Perspective from a Parent of a Non-Disabled Child

[5] In this project, "sensitising" the community was one way inclusion committees educated their respective social spaces on issues related to disability rights and inclusive education. Such discussions took place in churches, women's groups, chief's councils, and other communal locations in the local communities (Elder et al., 2021).

This next excerpt is from a parent of a non-disabled child who attends the primary school at the Punda School Site. Here, he explains the value he saw in applying the poultry IGA to his own home to raise school fees so his own non-disabled children could continue to attend school.

> Napthali: In my home I am using my people, my wife, my children, they are helping me in servicing [the chickens]...Several other members of the inclusion committee are also [raising chickens]...Some are used for my school fees and to solve homestead problems. Some are used to buy goods, and buy food. I do sell some for my own benefit. Without this I couldn't make it. It's helping me at home...I am happy to have more than 60 chickens.

Authors' Responses

Oswago: There is always economic and social development when people work together, and in this case the collaboration has supported disabled children and inclusive education. In Kenya we call these collaborations "harambees." Harambees are when people "pull together" to raise funds to support a common goal. Through the work done by our inclusion committees, parents of non-disabled children have come to also appreciate skills and knowledge acquired during interactions with disabled persons during the inclusion committee set-ups.

Elder: This parent's response is an example of an inclusive support that benefits disabled students *and* others in the community. While the inclusion committee's aim was to raise chickens to sustain discussions about inclusive education and increase the number of disabled children attending inclusive schools, multiple inclusion committee members applied the same approach to their own family farms and were able to help sustain the needs of their respective families. I consider this a positive and unintended consequence of applying community-based approaches to inclusive education in the global South (Damiani et al., 2021). In other words, the IGA of raising chickens has not only helped

promote and sustain discussions on the importance of disabled and non-disabled students being educated together, but it also helped other families in the region to better sustain their livelihoods as well. This IGA may also be an example of how some parents view special schools as having more resources than regular schools. In this example, the outcomes of IGA for inclusive education turnkey as mutually beneficial for students, their families, their communities, and their school as this sustains opportunities for continued inclusive enrolment of disabled and non-disabled students together in special schools.

Perspective from a Disabled Community Member

The participation of disabled people on the inclusion committees throughout the project was critical. Many of the disabled committee members reported that this project was the first time they had ever been asked to participate on a committee of any sort. Below, we present a quote from a disabled committee member from the Dhiang School Site.

> Angeline: [Education] facilitates the unity among the disabled students and so-called 'regular' people...Students with a disability, after acquiring education, may go up to a higher level. The student can serve as a model to other disabled people in the community, and so maybe they can increase others with disabilities to go to school to acquire education.

Authors' Responses

Oswago: Disabled persons may feel empowered when they are included as key decisions about themselves are made and hence the slogan "nothing about us without us" that is about representation (Charlton, 1998, p. 3). As Angeline said, many people with disabilities are not even considered when discussing issues related to disability and inclusion. That is why we made sure to include a variety of disabled people in these discussions from the outset. Not only were disabled people invited, but all committee

members, disabled and non-disabled, were given an "appreciation" (~$3USD) for their contributions at each meeting. Disabled participants of the inclusion committees like Angeline helped identify the most pressing goals related to inclusive education, they helped to design a plan of action, and then helped to meet project objectives (Damiani et al., 2021). Chapter Four of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) references the Bill of Rights which outlines that disabled persons have a right to equal opportunities and non-discrimination. We believe it also applies to access to inclusive education. In my district, persons with disabilities are sometimes excluded when crucial decisions are made, however this is beginning to change. Especially after this inclusion project which is now in its fourth iteration (see Elder et al., 2015a; Elder & Foley, 2015b, Damiani et al., 2016; Damiani et al., 2021 for specific examples).

Elder: Like Benson said, disability representation matters (Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012). If disabled students and their families never see people and families who look like them and share similar realities, they do not know inclusive education is possible or within their rights, and they do not have a community on which to draw on for support (Damiani et al., 2016). As a committee, we established the input of disabled committee members as an imperative and all committee members were compensated equitably. In her recount, Angeline spoke to the need for increasing access to education which determines post-school opportunities, and shared that as a disabled woman this was the first time she had ever been asked to participate on a committee. As a working model, these actions could be used as one way to realise the constitutional rights of disabled Kenyans and to increase access to education and employment opportunities for disabled people in Kenya. This

may also provide an opportunity to amplify the voices of disabled people and recognise the critical contributions of disabled community members in Kenya.

Perspective from a Non-Disabled Community Member

In the next excerpt, a non-disabled community member, who is also the Board Chairman of the special school at the Dhiang School Site, comments on the real and material consequences of negative views of disability on mothers in his community.

> Japheth: We had some men who divorced some women because of having a lame [disabled] child...They divorce because they think that this lame line will [be inherited in their family line]. They believe that lame line will go so you'll still be passing on disability, and it is a bad omen for them...So men think it is better to divorce early and try another wife.

Authors' Responses

Oswago: This quote shows that committee members were able to understand retrogressive cultural practices that interfere with the rights of disabled persons within the community. My district has started working on programs that help to do capacity building to community members and advocate for the rights of children in the community. For example, some churches have ensured that there are sign language interpreters during religious functions.

Elder: The first thing that stands out to me in this quote is Japheth's use of casual ableist language (i.e., "lame"). While such phrases might be commonplace in this community, the history of ableist language is rooted in eugenics, and deficit-based perspectives on disability, which can have harmful impacts on disabled people (Kattari, 2020). Even with ableist language, the Board Chairman's quote speaks to the misunderstanding of the origins of disability, and the impact of the disability-related curse culture in Kenya (Mukuria, 2012). In Kenya, this means that disability is often viewed from a deficit and

gendered perspective, meaning there are mothers who are under a threat of divorce and financial ruin should they have a disabled child. Additionally, stakeholders on the inclusion committee reported that this cursed-based perspective of disability comes from many in the local community who were forced to drop out of school at an early age to work their family farms. The inability of community members to attend school due to labour demands forced on them is an example of the harmful effects of transnational capitalism on people living in poverty in the global South (Erevelles, 2014). From our previous research in this region of Kenya (see Elder et al., 2021), participants in this project have reported that sensitising community members on the importance of inclusive education through culturally respected community forums, such as mabaraza is one potential way forward to change attitudes about disability in the local community.

Perspective from a Teacher at a Special School

Below, a deputy teacher at the special school at the Dhiang School Site discusses the power of developing and enacting strength-based perspectives of disability.

> Ben: [Disabled people] have been considered as people who are useless in the community, people cannot help anything. But when they expose their talents...there's a change of attitude and now they are regarded as human beings…This means that the community will start giving [disabled people] opportunities to participate and be involved in decision making, their education, the job market, and perhaps allocate resources for them when there are resources available to distribute.

Authors' Responses

Oswago: Teachers who understand special needs education[6] have a better idea of inclusion. They can impact greatly in helping fellow teachers to support school and communal inclusion. These teachers need a change of attitude, which we have found can

[6] While "special needs education" is not aligned with CDS language, within the Kenyan Ministry of Education, that is the name of the office that supports students with disabilities throughout the country.

happen simultaneously as teachers are being trained on inclusive education (Elder et al., 2015a; Damiani et al., 2016). Many teachers attach inclusion to increased income since the government pays some allowance (Cherotich, Kosgei, & Lelan, 2018). Equipping teachers with the relevant materials will always boost their confidence especially when handling students in school and in the community.

Elder: This teacher's quote underscores the urgency to ensure that disabled people are involved in decisions about their lives every step of the way, from their education to the job market. While getting non-disabled people to consider disabled people "as human beings" is a necessary first step in creating a more socially just education system, we need to presume a high level of competence of all disabled children, at all levels of education, and then educate teachers so they are prepared to create opportunities for disabled students to show their competence (Biklen & Burke, 2006). As it pertains to this project, having disabled and nondisabled students on the inclusion committees represents one way in which we have attempted to ensure these students have more agency related to their educational realities.

Perspective from a Teacher at a Primary School

The following excerpt comes from a disabled community member who is on the inclusion committee at the Punda School Site and works as a primary school teacher. He speaks to some of the structural barriers at the local Ministry of Education level that prohibit disabled students from being included.

> Bernard: So, the government should post some teachers in regular schools and give them the same allowances that teachers in special schools get. There must also be a change of attitude by the head teachers...When testing results are [released], the education office analyses what we call the "standard mean score." Some schools compete, and they are ranked in terms of performance. So, head teachers will not accept learners with special

needs in large numbers into their schools. Maybe they may accept a few, but when this number starts swelling, they will look at these learners as learners who have come to reduce their standard mean score. Then they feel that including these learners in these schools will make their schools rank low. So, the government should first talk about the policy of ranking schools so that head teachers and teachers accept these learners in school.

Authors' Responses

Oswago: For inclusion to succeed, the key motivator here should not be the money, but the desire to support disabled children. There are teachers who are trained in special needs education (SNE) and given the additional money, but do not support the learners adequately. Schools also rank children with different abilities without considering specific areas of needs. They also participate in standardised tests. In most cases learners have different entry behaviour especially when they come to school for the first time. The schools are however ranked leaving the special and/or inclusive schools with no option but to exert undue pressure on the learners to improve or drop out of school.

Elder: Unequal and inadequate teacher salaries in Kenya (Cherotich et al., 2018) will not lead to special education and general education teachers achieving parity in co-taught inclusive classrooms. In addition to teacher salary being a barrier, the ranking of Kenyan schools based on an outdated British colonial model of education and national exams represents another hurdle to the inclusion of disabled students. Aside from national exams providing a justification for excluding disabled students from inclusive education not being in alignment with domestic (Constitution of Kenya, 2010) and international law (UNCRPD, 2006), this structural barrier is a remnant of the British colonial education system in Kenya that continues to promote the exclusion and marginalisation of disabled students (Hall, 1990).

Perspective from an Administrator at a Special School

In this last excerpt, a head teacher at the special school at the Dhiang School Site describes the strain on resources that inclusive education has caused at his school.

> Erick: You will realise a very big increase from 86 students in 2016 to 182 students in 2018. This has come as a result of the extended sensitisation that the inclusive committee scheduled. When we composed the inclusive committee, many different stakeholders were represented, who went into their communities to sensitise people. This led to the community bringing learners to school who previously could not access education because of quite a number of beliefs. And there still may be some who have a disabled child, so the inclusion committee could still reach such parents and talk to them.

Authors' Responses

Oswago: Sensitisation and awareness creation are always very important. Members of the community need to be supported to understand the need for social inclusion so that all community members can benefit from the same program. There is also a need to sensitise the boards of management of the regular schools so that they consider making infrastructural adjustments to accommodate the educational needs of these children who are disabled. When this is effectively achieved, the influx of students at the Dhiang School Site causing strain on the limited resources will be contained. The government should also consider implementing the new Kenya Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2018). With this, there would be structured distribution of the required resources to facilitate inclusion in regular schools.

Elder: At first glance, this significant increase of disabled students enrolled in this school looks very promising. However, this increase means that more disabled students are attending this inclusive school away from their families and they are not attending the school they would be attending in the absence of a disability. What this tells us is that while the sensitisation efforts of the inclusion committees have been effective in

encouraging parents to send their disabled children to school, the message needs to be reframed. It is not to say that inclusive education is only effective at this particular school, but rather this school has developed a set of inclusive practices that should be replicated at other schools so these disabled students now attending this school can receive an education closer to home and alongside the peers that live near them. This may entail school administrators thinking creatively about how to reallocate special education resources to support the education of these students in their local schools (Hayes et al., 2020).

Conclusion

In this article, we used select quotes from various stakeholders within an inclusive education project to shape our discussions. We centred the perspectives and narratives of disabled and non-disabled stakeholders to show ways that we have applied the foundations of CDS to create sustainable bottom-up approaches to disability inclusive education reform. While we acknowledge that we were only able to highlight a small number of stakeholder quotes from one 2018 iteration of an on-going project, we hope these perspectives illuminate potential ways for others who wish to conduct CBPR-informed CDS research that has a direct impact on local communities. We are aware that the barriers to inclusive education in western Kenya may be comparable to similarly resourced locations throughout the global South. By sharing our CBPR approaches to inclusive education in western Kenya, we hope others will take up similar methods when creating inclusive spaces that prioritise and amplify lived experiences from the global South within CDS. Ultimately, we would like to see much more of this work published which can help push back against the dominant Northern perspectives within Disability Studies more broadly. Through this article, we hope to start an international dialogue with disabled people,

their families, educators, and researchers committed to developing sustainable inclusive education systems in the global South and beyond.

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