



# Strategies of Promoting Positive Attitude towards Learners with Hearing Impairment by Regular Primary Schools in Kenya (A Case study for Kakamega County)

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## ABSTRACT

Information from nine District Educational Assessment and Resource Centers (2010) in Kakamega County indicates that the number of learners with Hearing Impairment (HI) in regular primary schools increased since the inception of Free Primary Education, (FPE). For example in 2003 were 51 learners with HI, 2004 (65), 2005 (73), 2006 (90), 2007 (102), 2008 (133), 2009 (161), and 206 learners with HI in 2010. There were 121 learners with HI in class three and four. The schools faced a number of challenges among them; communication barrier, negative attitude towards learners with HI by hearing learners and teachers. The purpose of this study was to establish strategies of promoting positive attitude towards learners with hearing impairment by the regular schools with HI learners. Objectives of the study were to; find out strategies employed by schools to promote positive attitudes towards learners with HI and the extent to which the strategies are employed. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The study population consisted of 121 learners with HI, 1440 hearing learners, 36 teachers and 18 head teachers. Simple random sampling was used to select 480 hearing learners while saturated sampling was used to select 109 learners with HI, 32 class teachers and 16 head teachers. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used for data collection. A pilot study was conducted on ten percent of population to determine reliability of instruments. Face validity of the instruments was ascertained by experts from both Special Needs Education and Educational Psychology departments of Maseno University. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and mean were used to analyze quantitative data. Qualitative data was transcribed, put into various categories and reported in an ongoing process as themes and sub-themes emerged. Findings showed that most schools used strategies to promote Positive attitude towards learners with HI; these included: creation of awareness about HI; HI and hearing learners shared teaching-learning resources and experiences. In conclusion, key strategies used included: both hearing and HI learners shared teaching-learning resources, sensitization/awareness was created to general school community. Recommendations of the study are; positive attitude be promoted towards learners with HI through creation of awareness and sharing of teaching-learning resources and experiences.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background to the Study

Education of learners with Hearing Impairment (HI) in regular primary schools has its origin in international documents, which support inclusion of all learners in regular schools. Such documents include: 1948- United Nations Human Rights to Education, 1989- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1993-UN Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities(UNESCO, 2006), (1994)-the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education and 2000-World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (Save the Children, 2002).

In Pakistan, regular schools dealt with negative attitudes by building collaboration between regular and special needs teachers, inservicing teachers in SNE and creating awareness about HI by demystifying negative attitudes of regular learners towards disability (Heider, 2008). In a similar study in Singapore, MOEST (2010) highlighted a case study where learners with HI were educated in regular primary schools together with hearing learners. Teachers treated learners with HI equally as others; both hearing and HI learners were educated together at the same pace, sat for same exams, played together, shared same desk and ate together during meal time. In a similar study, Charema (2002) suggested that in Zimbabwe, seminars were held to sensitize school community stakeholders about HI, schools with HI had weekly programmes where both HI and hearing learners met and shared personal problems. Regular teachers developed positive attitude towards learners with HI after intensive in-service training. Positive attitudes had been enhanced through: willingness and ability of teachers to make accommodations for individuals with special needs; experienced teachers had undergone grounded on-job training on how to teach HI learners than newly employed regular teachers. Thus, experienced teachers had positive attitudes than newly employed teachers.

Itinerant Connection (2010), suggested the following strategies of promoting positive attitude by the teacher in classroom; teachers had to promote self-advocacy and activities that foster inclusion, HI learner had to be helped to understand his or her hearing loss and provide opportunity for the learners to share information about HI with the hearing learners in class, and teachers were to provide opportunities for learners with HI to meet with other HI learners on regular basis such as field-trips, internet, pen pal. All this was aimed at creating awareness about HI. In a similar study in Canada, Sharilyn (2011) suggested that teachers ought to encourage self-advocacy skills to learners with HI in inclusive schools. Such included; learners with HI had to identify optimal learning conditions, utilizing communication repair strategies and knowing who to speak to or ask for help. Another strategy was to pair younger children with older learners with HI or adult deaf

role-models for additional support and sharing of their own personal learning strategies.

In Zambia and Lesotho, hearing learners in regular schools were actively involved in challenging negative attitudes in their communities towards learners with HI by creating awareness about hearing impairment, identifying learners with HI who had been excluded from school, writing notes for Deaf children in class, tutoring learners with HI in their homes, and holding joint group discussion with their HI colleagues (Save the Children, 2006).

Adoyo (2007), in his study educating deaf children in an inclusive setting in Kenya, recommended that awareness on inclusive education be created and benefits of inclusion be articulated to all stakeholders in Kenya. He further suggested that specialist teacher of the HI was to be prepared to disseminate information on psychology and culture of deaf people to the regular teachers and pupils. The information so provided could promote understanding and create positive attitudes to other hearing and deaf students. Social mobilization and development of communication strategies/ materials to support and create awareness for inclusion of deaf people in communication should be put in place.

Studies by Heider (2008), Itinerant Connection (2010), Adoyo (2007), and Sharilyn (2011) focused on creation of awareness as a strategy of promoting positive attitude towards learners with HI. In their studies, they didn't address how positive attitude could be promoted through sharing different learning experiences and resources, and how hearing learners were promoting positive attitude of school stakeholders towards learners with HI was unknown. Studies by Save the Children (2006), focused on how hearing learners demystified negative attitude in community towards learners with HI. However, the study didn't focus on how negative attitude was demystified in schools. Therefore, these studies sought to find out strategies of promoting positive attitude towards learners with HI in regular primary schools in Kakamega County.

In Singapore, MOEST (2010) highlighted a case study where learners with HI were educated in regular primary school together with hearing learners. The teachers treated the learner with HI equally as others, both hearing learners and learners with HI were educated together at the same pace, and sat for the same tests and exams as the regular pupils, including Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), played together, shared same desk and ate together during meal time. From such integration the HI learner was provided with opportunities to interact purposefully with their mainstream peers, foster better social integration and enhanced the learning experiences for children from both types of schools, individual conversation, academic remediation or other forms of support such as extra support lessons for HI learner. All these learning strategies were aimed at making the HI learners cope better in regular primary school (MOEST, 2010).

In England, Holdsworth (2000) observed that

teachers needed to develop positive attitude towards learners with HI by learning to listen, being consistent, patient, and respect learners' individual learning styles. Teachers rewarded learners with HI in class and co-curricular activities. He further observed that teachers had to accept learners learnt at different rates, and in different ways, and so plan lessons with diversity and difference in mind, plan activities not according to the learning taking place, rather according to a fixed interpretation of the curriculum; co-operate with families and community members to ensure that girls and boys were in school and their learning was optimized; respond flexibly and creatively both to the individual needs of particular children, and to the needs of all children in the classroom; be aware that a proportion of all children in all classes will experience some difficulties in learning.

Halloran (2002) suggested the following strategies with regard to enhancing positive attitude towards learners with HI: behavioral standards and consequences must be the same for both hearing and HI learners in the class, use every opportunity to make hearing learners and learners with HI aware of their similarities and differences. This could be done in a positive and factual way, hearing learners be encouraged to share same teaching-learning activities, and finally opportunities be taken to publicly recognize individual learners' strengths in front of their peers. This was aimed at making learners with HI develop positive self-esteem and hearing learners develop positive attitude towards learners with HI. Nevertheless, he suggested all hearing learners were encouraged to communicate with HI learners directly, and to view them as just being different and having different needs rather than deviant, special or remedial.

Charema (2002) suggested the following strategies with regard to promoting positive attitude: seminars were held to sensitize school community stakeholders about hearing impairment that it was not contagious and HI learner had a right to education as any other learner, schools with HI had weekly programmes where both HI and hearing learners met and shared their personal problems in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, in Nigeria public enlightenment of members of the public has been made so as to change their negative attitude towards special needs child (Fuandai, 2005).

Studies by Holdsworth (2000) focused on attributes possessed by teachers in promoting positive attitude towards learners with HI; Charema (2002) emphasized on sensitization of school general stakeholders about HI. However, these studies did not come out with teaching-learning approaches enhancing positive attitude towards learners with HI. The purpose of this study was to find out teaching-learning experiences enhancing positive attitude towards learners with HI.

Study carried out by McLane and Myers (2001), was on peer interaction goals for students with disabilities in the USA. The study focused on measures regular teachers in inclusive settings had to put in place

for better social interaction for students with disabilities, such included; students with disabilities IEP be reviewed for their goal on social interaction, teacher had to ensure the learner with disability participated in the activities, not just their presence in the general classroom which created peer interaction.

In a similar study Osborn (2009), in his study "social interactions on the Hearing Impaired in mainstream schools" suggested the following strategies of coping with HI; counseling teachers needed to guide child with HI to accept their disability and adjust to negative attitudes held by some communication partners such as hearing learners, learners with HI be advised to participate in extracurricular activities in which they had opportunities to participate, learners with HI were to be encouraged to participate in activities together with hearing learners.

Clare et al. (2000) carried a study on classroom and playground interaction of students with and without disabilities in integrated classroom in Canada. The study involved 95 students with mild disabilities and 95 students without disabilities, the age and sex matched, and enrolled in same classes. The purpose of the study was to find out whether behavior of the students was same. Findings of the study revealed that the behavior of the students during interaction were similar in many ways.

In a similar study, Blood and Blood (2009) carried out a study entitled "impact of speech and spoken language on HI learners social interaction", which involved two HI learners, who were interviewed. One of the learners, who had been identified and intervened early, had more friends than the later. It was concluded that early identification and intervention was used as a strategy of promoting social interaction between HI and the hearing learners because the HI learner who had been identified and intervened early communicated with hearing learners more effectively through multi-modal communication than the later hence had good social interaction.

While in two case studies, Colella and Varma (2001), and Wilkens and Hehir (2008), both agreed on the following strategies of promoting social interaction towards the HI; teachers, hearing learners and other regular school stakeholders had to address social grievances facing learner with HI in the school so as to promote positive attitude towards them, assign learners with HI in positions of leadership to boost their self-esteem, and encourage learners with HI to build social relationships with hearing learners.

Study by McLane and Myers (2001) focused on measures to ensure better social interaction in inclusive settings; studies by Blood and Blood (2009) focused on impact of speech and language on social interaction; findings by Clare et al. (2000) focused on social behaviours patterns of learners with disabilities in integrated classroom, the study did not focus on strategies of coping with learners with disabilities in regular schools; while studies by above authors, stressed on strategies used to promote positive attitude

towards learners with HI in different settings. However, how regular primary schools were coping up with challenges related to negative attitude towards learners with HI in regular primary school was unknown. This study aimed at finding out strategies employed by regular primary schools in promoting social interaction among learners with HI in Kakamega County.

Education of learners with HI in regular primary schools in Kenya has faced a number of challenges since inception of Free Primary Education (FPE). Information from Kakamega County (2010) indicated that the number of learners with HI in regular primary schools was on the increase since inception of Free Primary Education (FPE).

The number of learners with HI was on the increase since inception of Free Primary Education (FPE). For example, data for the last three years indicated there were 133 learners with HI in 2008, 2009 (161), and 2010 (206). There were 121 learners with HI in regular primary schools in class three and four and these schools with HI learners faced a number of problems both in class and in co-curricular activities. The main challenge was negative attitude from hearing learners and teachers, which resulted to discrimination, and exclusion from activities being done by hearing learners.

Reports from the nine District Education Assessment and Resource Centres (EARC, 2010) indicated the existence of negative attitude towards learners with HI in class and co-curricular activities. A learner with HI in an inclusive class was neglected and disregarded by peers and teachers in class and co-curricular activities; teachers and hearing learners in regular schools had negative attitudes towards learners with HI and learning KSL. This resulted in incompetence in the medium of instruction and once placed in a regular classroom, found it difficult to convey the curriculum content effectively; Negative attitudes of hearing parents', hearing learners and teachers towards learners with HI was evident in most schools. This led to discrimination of learners with HI and some dropped out of school. The purpose of this study therefore was to

establish strategies of promoting positive attitude towards learners with HI by regular primary schools with HI learners in Kakamega County.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study was conducted in Kakamega County, Kenya. The study population comprised of 1440 hearing learners, 121 learners with hearing impairment, 36 teachers, and 18 head teachers. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 480 hearing pupils, while saturated sampling was used to select 109 learners with HI, 32 class teachers and 16 head teachers. A questionnaire and interview schedules were used to collect data on strategies of promoting positive attitude towards learners with hearing impairment in regular primary schools. The researcher scored the items on strategies of promoting positive attitude towards learners with HI in regular schools on a 5-points Likert type scale. A criterion based on the responses obtained from the 5-points Likert type scale was developed. In scoring the positively stated items, Strongly Agree (SA) earned 5 points, Agree (A) 4 points, Uncertain (U) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point. The scoring was reversed for negative statements. The questionnaire was validated by experts from the Department of Special Needs Education and Educational Psychology, Maseno University. Reliability of the research instruments was ascertained through a pilot study of 10% of the study population. The responses from the respondents from the questionnaire were analysed using mean, while responses from interview schedule were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The perspectives on classroom communication process were categorized as most stated, neutral and least stated. A perspective of 3.0 and below was taken to be least (negative perception), 3.0 was neutral and that of 3.0 and above was most stated (positive perception).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 2: Strategies to Promote Positive Attitude towards Learners with HI According to Hearing and HI Learners (HL, n=480) and (HLI, n=109)**

	Strategy	Mean HL	Rating LHI
1	Both hearing and HI learners shared a desk in classroom	3.84	4.18
2	Both hearing and HI learners shared same table when eating their meals	3.89	4.03
3	Hearing and HI learners played together in the field	3.95	4.15
4	Both HI and hearing learners participated in joint group discussion	3.83	4.04
5	Both HI and hearing learners played together	3.95	3.91
6	Teachers sensitized school community about HI presence in school	*	3.76
7	Both hearing and HI learners learnt KSL on weekly basis	2.29	3.03

Table 2 Continues

8	On assembly learners with HI were given a chance to give announcement	2.51	2.79
9	Both HI and hearing learners sat for same exams	3.57	3.49
10	Hearing learners sensitized the school community about presence of learners with HI in school	3.62	3.49
11	Hearing and HI learners shared text book	3.99	3.62
12	Learners with HI were rewarded by teacher whenever they answered questions correctly	*	3.64
13	Hearing learners listened to grievances of HI learners	3.30	3.44

**Key:** n-number of hearing and HI learners respectively, **Minimum possible score-** 1 point, **maximum possible score-** 5 points, **HL-** Hearing Learners, **LHI-** Learners with Hearing Impairment, \*- Not Applicable.

Table 2 shows various strategies of promoting positive attitude towards learners with HI according to hearing and HI learners. Findings of this study according to hearing learners revealed that most used strategies included: both learners shared text books in class (3.99), followed by both HI and hearing learners played together in the field (3.95), followed by both learners shared same table while eating (3.89), both learners shared same desk in class (3.84), joint group discussion (3.83), sensitization of school community by hearing learners about presence of HI learners (3.62), hearing learners listened to grievances of HI learners (3.62), hearing learners were allowed to coach HI in different subjects (3.57), both learners sat for same examinations (3.57), learners with HI were given chance to give announcements (3.57), hearing learners listened to grievances of learners with HI (3.30) and least used strategy was both learners learnt KSL on weekly basis (2.29).

Learners with HI stated the most used strategies included: both HI and hearing learners shared a desk in classroom (4.18); followed by both learners played together in the field (4.15), followed by both learners participated in joint group discussion (4.04), sharing same table during meal time (4.03), both learners played football together (3.91), teachers sensitized school community about presence of learners with HI (3.91), followed by learners with HI were rewarded whenever they answered question correctly in class (3.76), both learners shared text book (3.62), hearing learners sensitized school community about presence of learners with HI (3.49), followed by hearing learners who listened to grievances of learners with HI (3.44), followed by both learners learnt KSL on weekly basis (3.03), and least used strategy was learners with HI were allowed to give announcement (2.79). According to these findings, the most used strategy in promoting positive attitude was both HI and hearing learners shared same desk, while the least used strategy was that learners with HI were allowed to give announcement.

Findings of this study concur with Ministry Of Education Science and Technology (MOEST, 2010) findings of Singapore which observed that the importance of allowing both HI and hearing learners to share same desk, food, and ensuring joint group discussion while in class to promote free interaction as learners with HI were provided with opportunities for them to interact purposefully with hearing learners, fostering better social integration and enhanced the learning experiences of both hearing learners and learners with HI. Therefore, it can be deduced that through sharing different learning and social experiences both learners developed positive attitude towards each other.

Furthermore, findings of this study concur with previous researchers who observed that teachers and hearing learners had to address social grievances facing learners with HI in school so as to promote positive attitude towards them. In this study, hearing learners listened to grievances of learners with HI as was stated by most (3.30) hearing learners and most (3.44) learners with HI. Maybe, by listening to grievances of learners with HI helps to promote positive attitude towards learners with HI.

Hearing learners helped in sensitizing the general school community about learners with HI presence in school according to hearing learners (3.62) and learners with HI (3.49). This indicated most respondents stated the use of the strategy. Findings of this study concur with findings by previous researchers who observed that regular schools dealt with negative attitude by creating awareness about learners with HI by demystifying negative attitude of regular school stakeholders (Heider, 2008; Halloran, 2002; Charema, 2002; Itinerant Connection, 2010; Sharilyn, 2011; Adoyo, 2007; Fuandai, 2005). Therefore, it can be concluded that sensitization of general school community helped to demystify negative attitude held by school stakeholders towards learners with HI, and helps the general school stakeholders understand and accept learners with HI.

**Table 3: Strategies by Regular Primary Schools to Promote Positive Attitude towards Learners with HI according to Teachers (N-32)**

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Teachers sensitized school community regularly about presence of learners with HI	3.87
2	Teachers were patient with HI learners when gesturing/signing	3.81
3	Teachers ensured hearing and HI learners shared a desk in class	4.03
4	Learners with HI were encouraged to share their problems freely with hearing learners and teachers	3.97
5	Teachers rewarded learners with HI whenever they performed well in class and co-curricular activities	3.97
6	School had mentorship program for both hearing and HI learners	3.50
7	Teachers ensured both HI and hearing learners shared the same table during meal time	4.00
8	Teachers ensured both HI and hearing learners shared text books in class	4.19
9	Teachers ensured learners with HI and hearing learners held group discussions together in assignments given out	4.13
10	School had weekly programme where both HI and hearing learners met and shared their personal problems	2.87

**Key:** n-number of hearing learners, **Minimum Possible score**-1 Point, **Maximum possible score**-5 points.

From table 3, various strategies were analyzed. According to teachers' ratings on strategies employed by regular primary schools to promote positive attitude towards learners with HI in descending order included: both HI and hearing learners shared text books in class (4.19), both learners held joint group discussion in assignments given out (4.13), teachers ensured both HI and hearing learners shared same desk (4.03), teachers ensured both learners shared same table during meal time (4.00), learners with HI were allowed to share freely their problems with hearing learners and teachers (3.97), teachers rewarded learners with HI whenever they performed well in class and co-curricular activities (3.97), teachers sensitized school community regularly about presence of HI (3.87), teachers were patient with HI learners when gesturing and signing (3.81), followed by schools had mentorship program for both HI and hearing learners (3.50), and least used strategy was schools with HI had weekly programme where they met and shared their personal problem (2.87). According to these findings, most used strategy was both HI and hearing learners shared text books in class, while least used strategy was schools with HI learners had weekly programme where they met and shared their personal problems.

Findings of this study indicated most teachers were in agreement with the use of these strategies in regular primary schools; sharing same desk, table while eating, joint group discussion, same text book enabled both learners to have social interaction while in class, in the process they develop positive attitude towards each other. Findings of this study concur with findings by Ministry Of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST, 2010) of Singapore and Halloran (2002), who

noted the importance of allowing both HI and hearing learners to share same desk, food, books while in class was to promote free interaction as learners with HI were provided with opportunities for them to interact purposefully with hearing learners, fostered better social integration and enhanced the learning experiences of both hearing and learners with HI.

Teachers sensitized school community regularly about presence of HI learners (3.87). This indicated a positive attitude towards the use of the strategy. Findings of this study concur with findings by Charema (2002); Heider (2008); Itinerant Connection (2010) and Adoyo (2007), which suggested that seminars be held to sensitize school community stakeholders about hearing impairment that it was not contagious and learners with HI had a right to education as any other learner. Maybe, sensitization of school about learners' with HI presence creates awareness about HI, in the process demystifying negative attitude towards learners with HI.

Teachers were patient with HI when gesturing and signing (3.81). This indicated a positive attitude of respondents towards use of the strategy. Findings of this study concur with Holdsworth (2000), who suggested that teachers need to develop positive attitude towards learners with HI by learning to listen, being consistent, patient, and respect individual learning styles. Maybe, by being patient when learners with HI were gesturing and signing helps the teacher to develop positive attitude towards learners with HI.

From the interview schedule, most head teachers (n-16) indicated they promoted positive attitude towards learners with HI by ensuring both HI and hearing learners: played together 11 (68.8%), shared same desk in class 13 (81.3%), shared same table while

eating 8 (50.0%), ensured both HI and hearing learners participated in same group discussion 12 (75.0%), created awareness about HI 13 (81.3%). Nevertheless, most head teachers indicated they promoted positive attitude of teachers towards HI by; encouraging and allowing permission for teachers to undergo in-service teacher training in SNE 11 (68.8%), created awareness to teachers about HI 13 (81.3%), advised teachers to allow extra time for learners with HI to participate in class activities 6 (37.5%).

## CONCLUSIONS

The study found out that key strategies employed by regular primary schools with HI learners in promoting positive attitude towards learners with HI includes; both hearing and HI learners share same learning-teaching resources and experiences such as desk, textbooks, same table while eating; both hearing and learners with HI sat for same exams; participated in joint group discussion; Played together in the field; teachers and hearing learners sensitized school community about HI learner's presence; hearing learners coached learners with HI in different subjects; hearing learners listened to grievances of HI learners; schools had mentorship programs for both HI and hearing learners; teachers and hearing learners rewarded and applauded HI learners whenever they performed well in class and co-curricular activities. Most respondents stated a mean score above 3 to teach of the above strategies. This indicated the strategies were used in regular schools in promoting positive attitude towards learners with HI. Least used strategies included; learners with HI were given a chance to give announcement; and schools had weekly program where both HI and hearing learners shared personal problems.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To promote positive attitude towards HI learners, study's findings recommend that: schools should formulate and implement policy of promoting positive attitude such as; both hearing and learners with HI should learn Kenya Sign Language on weekly basis; regular primary schools with HI learners should develop programmes in schools where both HI and hearing learners meet and share personal problems with each other on weekly basis; learners with HI should be given a chance to give announcement on assembly and in public forums in order to promote their self-esteem. There is need to carry out sensitization/ creation of awareness of the general school community about learners with HI in regular schools in order for them to be accepted by general school community. The school administration should ensure both hearing and learners with HI share teaching-learning resources and experiences in order to promote positive attitude towards each other.

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