
Neurodiversity and Inclusive Education in Primary Schools: A Longitudinal, Comparative Study of Screening, Support, and Stigma in Kenya and South Africa, 2004

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| Abstract

Background: There is a lack of comparative, longitudinal research within African studies on the implementation of inclusive education policies for neurodiverse pupils in primary schools. This study examines the realities of screening procedures, support mechanisms, and associated stigma in Kenya and South Africa during the 2004 academic year. **Purpose and objectives:** The study aimed to document and compare the operational practices and challenges related to neurodiversity in primary education in the two countries throughout 2004. Its objectives were to analyse the existing screening and support frameworks, assess the nature and impact of stigma, and identify key areas for policy and scholarly attention. **Methodology:** A longitudinal, comparative mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data were collected from educators, administrators, and parents in selected primary schools in both countries over the course of the 2004 academic year. **Findings:** Findings from 2004 revealed significant structural constraints, including inconsistent screening pathways and limited specialist resources, in both contexts. Stigma towards neurodiverse pupils was prevalent, though manifested differently. Concurrently, the study documented emerging, locally devised innovations in classroom practice and community engagement aimed at mitigating these challenges. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that during the 2004 period, inclusive education for

neurodiverse pupils in both Kenya and South Africa was characterised by a tension between systemic limitations and grassroots adaptation. It underscores the necessity for context-specific approaches informed by robust local evidence. Recommendations: Policymakers and educational stakeholders should prioritise the development of inclusive strategies grounded in local realities. Efforts should focus on strengthening teacher training, formalising community-based support, and improving the transparency and coordination of pupil data. Key words: neurodiversity, inclusive education, screening, support, stigma, primary schools, Kenya, South Africa, longitudinal study, comparative study Contribution statement: This study provides a longitudinal, comparative evidence base from 2004 on the implementation of inclusive education for neurodiverse pupils in Kenya and South Africa, highlighting contextual barriers and adaptive practices to inform future policy and research.
