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Teachers' lived experiences of implementing inclusive education under the Competency-Based Curriculum in Murang'a County: A qualitative study

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Abstract

Inclusive education is a critical pathway toward equitable and quality learning in Kenya and beyond, particularly for learners from diverse and marginalized backgrounds. It is central to achieving equitable access to quality learning opportunities for all learners. In Kenya, the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum reflects a national commitment to learner-centred, participatory, and inclusive pedagogy. However, gaps persist in translating this commitment into classroom practice. This paper presents a qualitative analysis of open-ended responses to two questions on challenges and recommendations drawn from the same study whose quantitative phase was published as Part 1. The qualitative paper explores pedagogical and policy strategies that can strengthen inclusivity in Kenyan primary and junior secondary schools, with a focus on Murang'a County. Specifically, the study examines how differentiated instruction can address diverse learner needs, how institutional policies and learner engagement strategies can foster equitable outcomes, and the factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of inclusive education at the school level. Qualitative data were collected through open-ended questionnaire responses from teachers and analysed thematically. The findings reveal that teachers recognize the importance of differentiated instruction, learner engagement, supportive leadership, parental involvement, and adequate resource provision in promoting inclusive education. However, implementation is hindered by inadequate teaching and learning resources, insufficient teacher training, overcrowded classrooms, limited assistive technology, poor parental involvement, poverty, and challenging home backgrounds. The paper concludes that although inclusive education

enjoys strong policy support in Kenya, its effective implementation requires practical investment in teaching and learning resources, teacher retooling, supportive school leadership, community participation, and curriculum adaptation. Strengthening these areas can enhance the realization of inclusive education within the Competency-Based Curriculum framework.

Key terms: Inclusive education, Competency Based Curriculum, Teacher Lived experiences, Differentiated Instructions Teacher retooling Murang'a County,Kenya

1.0 Introduction

Globally, inclusive education is recognized as a critical pathway to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 on equitable, inclusive, and quality education for all learners (UNESCO, 2020). The ideal situation envisaged is one where mainstream classroom accommodate learners with diverse needs, abilities, and backgrounds through learner-centered and differentiated pedagogy, ensuring that no learner is left behind. In Europe, this ideal is strongly supported through frameworks emphasizing whole-school approaches, teacher collaboration, and early interventions, yet implementation varies widely across countries (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Similarly, in North America, Canada presents a progressive model through provincial policies on inclusion and Universal Design for Learning (Whitley & Hollweck, 2020). This is exemplified by the Ontario Ministry of Education's guidelines which mandate authentic, relevant materials alongside explicit, formula-based resource frameworks—such as Specialized Equipment Allocations from the Special Education Fund—to ensure exceptional pupils structurally access the core curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2025). However, studies show that even in these developed contexts, teachers continue to grapple with workload demands, a lack of professional development, and systemic strain (Katz, 2013; Whitley & Hollweck, 2020). These global experiences demonstrate that while the policy ideal for inclusive education is well-established, its transition into effective classroom practice remains uneven and highly dependent on teacher capacity and contextual support systems.

Across Africa, the move towards inclusive education is gaining momentum, though implementation trajectories differ significantly by region. South Africa has established a progressive policy framework, but studies continue to report that inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and negative attitudes act as severe barriers to classroom implementation (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Engelbrecht et al., 2016). In North Africa, countries like Egypt have expanded physical access, but inclusive practice remains constrained by large classes, insufficient specialist support, and limited assistive technologies (Alkhateeb et al., 2023; El-Sayed & Al-Attar, 2020). Elsewhere, West African nations such as Nigeria and Ghana have adopted inclusive education policies, but research indicates that teachers lack preparedness for differentiated instruction and that infrastructural inadequacies hinder effective inclusion (Agbenyega, 2007; Opoku et al., 2021). Within East Africa, Uganda and Tanzania have also adopted inclusive policies, but evidence points to overcrowded classrooms, scarcity of learning materials, and a persistent mismatch between teacher training and classroom needs as major operational challenges (Komba & Mwandanji, 2015; Muwonge et al., 2022).

In Kenya, this continental challenge is mirrored despite the robust policy environment provided by the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) framework (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, 2019). It is worth noting that while the nature of these challenges appears universal, their intensity and character are disproportionate; teachers in developing contexts like Africa contend with first-order foundational barriers like an acute scarcity of basic teaching and learning resources and dilapidated facilities (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Komba & Mwandanji, 2015). Conversely, developed contexts like Ontario, Canada,

operate with specialized structural supports, such as dedicated Special Education Funds, allowing them to focus on secondary-level or systemic challenges like sophisticated teaching aids rather than battling basic resource scarcity (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2025).The current study aimed at investigating the teachers lived experiences to find out what teachers in Muranga county are grappling with.

A critical gap exists in how macro-level policies translate into micro-level classroom practice during recent curriculum changes. Most regional and global studies remain limited by their specific context, location, and methodology. Globally, extensive literature covers inclusive education frameworks (UNESCO, 2020), with a similarly robust regional focus across Africa (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Opoku et al., 2021; Tungaraza, 2014). Furthermore, Kenya has established a progressive framework through its Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) and related sector policies (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, 2019). Despite these advancements, empirical evidence reveals persistent implementation challenges in regular primary schools (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2022; Oduor, 2021). Crucially, this existing research fails to capture teachers' actual lived experiences during the CBC transition.

Geographically and contextually, previous research has overwhelmingly focused either on developed Western educational systems or broad, historical evaluations of pre-existing classroom structures across Sub-Saharan Africa (Agbenyega, 2007; Engelbrecht et al., 2016). Methodologically, most existing studies in Kenya and other African contexts have predominantly adopted quantitative approaches focusing strictly on teachers' attitudes, generic preparedness, and macro resource-related barriers to establish the mere extent of implementation gaps (Opoku et al., 2021; Ticha, 2026). These quantitative mapping strategies miss the deeper instructional nuances, subjective realities, and fluid dynamics of daily classroom practice.

Consequently, there is a distinct lack of current qualitative or phenomenological evidence reflecting the actual lived experiences, unique daily realities, and structural challenges faced by frontline educators during the specific transition phases of the Kenyan CBC, particularly into Junior Secondary School from 2022 onwards (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2022). It is this specific contextual, empirical, and methodological gap that the present study seeks to address. By capturing the authentic, qualitative voices, open narratives, and specific recommendations of frontline teachers navigating first-order foundational resource constraints and pedagogical shifts on the ground in Murang'a County, Kenya, this study moves beyond abstract statistical mapping to illuminate the lived reality of inclusive curriculum implementation.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Ideally, inclusive education in Kenya is structured so that mainstream primary and junior secondary educators face an environment entirely free from operational challenges, resource vulnerabilities, or instructional shortcomings. Within this ideal framework, the translation of macro-level policy into practice is seamless, ensuring teachers do not encounter the typical challenges of unmanageable workloads, training deficits, or institutional isolation (UNESCO, 2020). Frontline educators are envisioned as empowered, fully resourced facilitators who are spared from the severe challenges of severe overcrowding, dilapidated facilities, or a lack of assistive technologies (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, 2019). Because the curriculum is fluidly supported from the top down, teachers face no systemic challenges or structural friction when executing curriculum adaptations, managing diverse classroom profiles, or utilizing specialized teaching aids to eliminate learning barriers. Under these ideal conditions, inclusive education operates without placing a heavy, isolated survival burden on the teacher, allowing pedagogical scaffolding and multi-dimensional instruction to unfold fully backed by the entire Education governance

However, the actual situation on the ground reveals a stark divergence from this policy ideal, characterized by severe implementation strain, foundational bottlenecks, and structural resource disparities. Empirical evidence demonstrates that inclusive education practices in regular Kenyan primary schools remain deeply uneven and constrained (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2022; Oduor, 2021). While developed Western educational contexts operate with specialized structural supports—such as Ontario's Specialized Equipment Allocations from the Special Education Fund—allowing them to focus on advanced systemic challenges (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2025),educators in developing contexts across Africa must battle immediate, first-order foundational barriers). Frontline teachers contend with an acute scarcity of basic teaching and learning resources, severely overcrowded classrooms, a lack of assistive technology, and dilapidated physical facilities (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Komba & Mwandanji, 2015). Furthermore, a baseline quantitative study of 37 teachers in Murang'a County (Ticha, 2026) statistically confirmed the alarming extent of these implementation gaps, capturing a pervasive deficit in generic teacher preparedness, heavy workload stress, and a profound lack of institutional support systems.A critical gap exists in how these macro-level policies translate into micro-level classroom practice during recent curriculum changes. Most regional and global studies remain limited by their specific context, geographical location, and methodology (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Opoku et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2020). Previous research has overwhelmingly focused either on developed Western educational systems or broad, historical evaluations of pre-existing classroom structures across Sub-Saharan Africa (Agbenyega, 2007; Engelbrecht et al., 2016). Methodologically, most existing studies in Kenya and other African contexts have predominantly adopted quantitative approaches, focusing strictly on teachers' attitudes, generic preparedness, and macro resource-related barriers to establish the mere statistical extent of implementation gaps (Opoku et al., 2021; Ticha, 2026). These quantitative mapping strategies completely miss the deeper instructional nuances, subjective realities, and fluid dynamics of daily classroom practice.

Consequently, there is a distinct lack of current qualitative or phenomenological evidence reflecting the actual lived experiences, unique daily realities, and structural challenges faced by frontline educators during the specific transition phases of the Kenyan CBC, particularly into Junior Secondary School from 2022 onwards (KICD, 2022). Crucially, existing research fails to capture teachers' actual lived experiences during the CBC transition. It is this specific contextual, empirical, and methodological gap that the present study addressed. By capturing the authentic, qualitative voices, open narratives, and specific recommendations of frontline teachers navigating first-order foundational resource constraints and pedagogical shifts on the ground in Murang'a County, Kenya, this study moves beyond abstract statistical mapping to illuminate and resolve the lived reality of inclusive curriculum implementation.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

To explore the operational challenges experienced by primary and junior secondary school teachers implementing inclusive education under the Competency-Based Curriculum framework in Murang'a County.

To illuminate the context-specific adaptive practices voiced by teachers to enhance instructional and structural inclusion under the Competency-Based Curriculum framework.

1.3 Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

What are the specific operational challenges experienced by primary and junior secondary school

teachers when implementing inclusive education under the CBC framework in Murang'a County?

What context-specific adaptive practices are voiced by teachers to enhance instructional and structural inclusion under the CBC framework?

2.0 Literature Review

This study was grounded in a symmetrical, integrated theoretical framework that bridges three contemporary theories of policy, curriculum, and inclusion with three classical theories of learning and pedagogy. The contemporary theories consists of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (Meyer et al., 2014), the Inclusive Pedagogy Model (IPM) (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011), and Lipsky's (2010) Policy Implementation Theory (PIP)of Street-Level Bureaucracy These modern, structural frameworks are directly operationalized and evaluated on the ground through the lenses of three classical pedagogical models: Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), Scaffolding Theory (Bruner, 1966), and the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1993). Together, this three-by-three configuration captures the complex continuum of inclusive education by mapping the interconnected dimensions from macro-level curriculum formulation and policy frameworks to the micro-level instructional realities and practical experiences of frontline classrooms.

To prevent superficial analytical dilution, the study explicitly elevated two Primary Anchoring Frameworks to guide the investigation. The primary frameworks are Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014) and The Inclusive Pedagogy Model (IPM) (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011) .The classical UDL posits that curriculum and instruction must be proactively designed from the outset to accommodate inherent learner variability by offering multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, It moves away from treating disability as an individual deficit and places the burden of accessibility on the structural design of the learning environment. . The Inclusive Pedagogy Model (IPM) (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011) complements UDL by insisting that instructional diversity should be treated as the baseline norm rather than the exception It explicitly challenges traditional "special education" models that pull students out of regular environments, advocating instead for the creation of a rich, common classroom repertoire that supports all learners within the same space without marginalization or social stratification. UDL targets the top of the educational hierarchy, challenging macro-level curriculum stakeholders and national developers to proactively design flexible learning resources, diverse assessments, and accessible frameworks that accommodate inherent learner variability from the outset

While UDL (Meyer et al., 2014) and the Inclusive Pedagogy Model (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011) offer robust philosophical foundations for educational equity, they exhibit major, documented structural vulnerabilities when applied in isolation within developing educational contexts: The Resource-Abundance Bias: UDL was developed within technologically and materially affluent Western educational ecosystems. It takes for granted the availability of digital infrastructure, adaptive software, and stable funding frameworks. In a low-resource environment, UDL fails to provide a blueprint for how teachers can design multiple means of representation when they lack basic textbooks, electricity, or physical space. IPM targets the bottom of the educational hierarchy, guiding the frontline teacher to create a rich, common classroom repertoire that treats diversity as the baseline norm, ensuring all learners participate together without social marginalization or stigma.

Both UDL and IPM provide the macro-level philosophy of what an inclusive classroom should look like, but they fail to detail the micro-level cognitive mechanics of how content mastery actually occurs during a curriculum shift. They do not address how a child with diverse cognitive needs processes information, builds skills sequentially, or interacts socially with peers in an overcrowded classroom.

Therefore, to overcome these limitations and bridge the gap between abstract policy ideals and resource-

constrained realities, this study anchored its analysis in Lipsky's (2010) Policy Implementation Theory and three targeted classical learning models.

Lipsky (2010) posits that frontline public service workers—such as teachers—ultimately become the actual policymakers on the ground because they must constantly interpret, modify, and adapt rigid national directives to survive massive resource deficits and overcrowded workloads. This theory directly shapes Objective 1 by providing the analytical lens needed to uncover why macro-level CBC policy ideals break down at the micro-level, framing the daily struggles of Murang'a County teachers not as personal failures, but as predictable structural reactions of street-level bureaucrats working under severe systemic strain.

Crucially, Lipsky reveals that first-order structural fractures do not exist in a vacuum; they directly sabotage and weaponize the classroom environment against the classical learning models. When teachers report an acute scarcity of learning materials and severe time constraints, they are documenting the physical disruption of Bruner's (1966) Scaffolding Theory and Gardner's (1993) Theory of Multiple Intelligences.

Scaffolding requires localized observation to provide targeted, gradual cognitive support, which becomes logistically impossible when a teacher is structurally starved of individual assessment time in an overcrowded room. Similarly, material poverty restricts teachers from deploying tactile, spatial, or kinesthetic resources, forcing them to rely on pure verbal lecturing. Resource scarcity therefore directly suppresses the expression of multiple intelligences, blocking educators from accommodating cognitive variability on the ground.

Once Lipsky diagnoses the structural necessity for these adaptations, The Inclusive Pedagogy Model (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011) and the supporting learning theories step in to categorize the precise qualitative shapes these teacher-voiced solutions take. Because teachers are structurally blocked from delivering individualistic, technology-dependent UDL accommodations, they rely on social and localized innovations to ensure curriculum access. Hence underpinning objective 2:

Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and Scaffolding Theory (Bruner, 1966) interpret qualitative data where teachers voice possible adaptations like peer-to-peer tutoring, collaborative group seating layouts, and tailor-made, simplified content modifications. By leveraging peer interaction, teachers use social collaboration as a localized survival strategy to manage large class sizes, expanding each student's Zone of Proximal Development within a single shared workspace.

Gardner's model of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1993) directly underpins and validates the teachers' explicit suggestions for alternative, non-written assessment pathways, localized project designs, and hands-on learning resources.

In summary, this three and three framework distributes systemic accountability across all tiers, proving that true inclusion is a shared duty rather than a solitary classroom burden At the macro-level, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) establishes that national policy stakeholders and KICD developers bear the foundational duty to engineer an equitable curriculum backed by state capitation and technological infrastructure—directly validating teachers' explicit demands for computer laboratories and digital resources. When this top-down funding fails, Lipsky's (2010) framework of Street-Level Bureaucracy bridges the macro-micro divide to underpin Objective 1, framing severe classroom challenges as systemic policy contradictions that actively disrupt the instructional mechanics of Bruner's (1966) Scaffolding and Gardner's (1993) Multiple Intelligences. Rather than abdicating their roles under this resource starvation, frontline educators act as adaptive policy interpreters Guided by the Inclusive Pedagogy Model (IPM) to underpin Objective 2, they voice and execute context-specific remedies—deploying Vygotsky's (1978) peer-to-peer collaboration, Bruner's (1966) modified lessons, and Gardner's (1993) localized within an

underfunded curriculum transition

2.1 Empirical Studies

2.1.1 Challenges Faced by Teachers Implementing Inclusive Education Under CBC

From the perspective of frontline educators, translating inclusive education from a macro-policy priority into a localized reality is heavily constrained by structural fractures, operational shortcomings, and deep institutional vulnerabilities. While Sustainable Development Goal 4 mandates full participation and equitable outcomes for all, global policy evaluations demonstrate that the ideal implementation of differentiated instruction suffers from critical systemic shortcomings on the ground (UNESCO, 2020). International scholarship indicates that even in resource-affluent Western educational contexts, frontline educators face severe operational challenges, including unmanageable workload demands, structural vulnerabilities in school-level support, and persistent training shortcomings that compromise classroom inclusion (Ainscow, 2020; Hehir et al., 2016). Furthermore, contemporary inclusion frameworks face intense critique when transplanted directly into developing educational contexts without adaptation. Quantitative research trend reviews reveal that Universal Design for Learning (UDL) exhibits a major resource-abundance shortcoming by assuming the availability of technological infrastructure and stable funding streams that do not exist in low-income schools (Rao et al., 2017). Similarly, a critical vulnerability of the Inclusive Pedagogy Model (IPM) is that its practice is nearly impossible for frontline educators to sustain when trapped within the structural challenges of large, severely under-resourced, and overcrowded classrooms (Florian, 2015). These international debates highlight that when macro-level curriculum formatting is decoupled from local economic realities, severe policy-practice gaps and operational shortcomings inevitably emerge.

Executing inclusive admission policies, flexible learning pathways, guidance and counseling services, parental engagement, and regular teacher retooling presents a relentless series of institutional challenges rather than accessible support systems for the practicing teacher (Ainscow, 2020; Lipsky, 2010). Operating on the ground, educators across Sub-Saharan Africa must personally absorb severe structural shortcomings, finding themselves trapped between the high aspirations of inclusive education and the gritty realities of acute resource scarcity, unmanageable class sizes, and inadequate training (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). In South Africa, conceptual policy reviews illustrate a widening policy-practice gap, revealing deep systemic vulnerabilities where progressive educational frameworks exist on paper but implementation remains severely fractured due to funding deficits and capacity constraints (Walton, 2018). In Uganda, while descriptive evaluations show that rural schools deploy low-cost adaptations to survive, a persistent vulnerability remains in teacher confidence and training shortcomings (Mugume, 2020). Furthermore, Tanzanian mixed-methods assessments document an alarming mismatch and structural shortcoming between the theoretical training educators receive in colleges and the raw, overcrowded classroom challenges they encounter in practice (Komba & Mwandanji, 2015). These regional experiences suggest that inclusive curriculum implementation succeeds or fails largely at the school level, acting as a massive operational gamble that depends entirely on teacher preparedness, leadership strain, resource availability, and community resistance (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011; Walton, 2018).

In Kenya, this continental crisis is explicitly mirrored on the ground as the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) encounters foundational operational bottlenecks that turn policy ideals into severe teacher liabilities. While macro-level policy reorientations have improved enrollment, descriptive data and policy reviews confirm that the micro-level classroom reality remains intensely compromised by inadequate physical infrastructure, restricted learning materials, and institutional resistance (Sifuna & Obonyo, 2019;

Wanjohi, 2020). Crucially, correlational and quantitative survey research demonstrates that school leadership emerges not as an abstract administrative tier, but as a major, high-stakes mediating factor that dictates the severity of the operational challenges educators face (Njeru & Mwangi, 2022). Rather than serving as an independent or alien variable, unsupportive governance practices directly control the extent to which inclusive principles ever reach the classroom floor (Njeru & Mwangi, 2022). For the frontline teacher, a non-collaborative administration acts as a severe institutional challenge that actively blocks resource allocation, cuts off teacher professional development, and suffocates peer collaboration—effectively paralyzing the teacher's capacity to practice inclusive instruction (Njeru & Mwangi, 2022). Consequently, teachers are left to navigate an array of interconnected barriers, which quantitative attitude and concern scales map out as limited funding, an insufficient supply of teaching and learning materials, a total lack of assistive technology, and severely overcrowded classrooms (Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Sifuna & Obonyo, 2019). This classroom strain is further exacerbated by the students' home backgrounds, which profoundly influence school participation and achievement, especially in contexts marked by systemic poverty, limited parental education, and inadequate home support systems (Ainscow, 2020).

Consequently, while this extensive body of global, continental, and national literature is robust, a critical methodological and empirical gap remains unresolved. The stark reality is that despite these extensive studies and heavily documented findings, the exact same challenges and operational shortcomings continue to persist unabated on the ground. Most of these existing evaluations rely almost exclusively on quantitative mapping strategies and structured instruments designed to establish the statistical extent of resource deficits or to evaluate generic teacher attitudes toward inclusion (Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Opoku et al., 2021; Ticha, 2026). These statistical metrics are highly valuable for identifying systemic trends, yet they completely miss the deeper instructional nuances, fluid daily dynamics, and subjective realities of classroom practice. They repeatedly document how much the system falls short, but they fail to capture the qualitative, phenomenological voices of the educators who must survive these unchanging conditions. Specifically, there is an absolute lack of current qualitative evidence reflecting how frontline educators experience and actively navigate these persistent structural challenges during the critical, ongoing transition phases of the Kenyan CBC into Junior Secondary School from 2022 onwards (KICD, 2022). This study directly addresses this empirical, contextual, and methodological gap; by shifting away from repetitive statistical counts and attitude-mapping, it illuminates the raw, unfiltered reality of curriculum implementation through the qualitative text responses of the educators navigating these bottlenecks on the ground in Murang'a County.

2.1.2 Context-Specific Adaptive Practices Voiced by Teachers to Enhance Instructional and Structural Inclusion Under the CBC Framework

Globally, the execution of successful educational inclusion is treated as a major conceptual pathway for enhancing equitable development, requiring explicit, practice-based adjustments from frontline educators (UNESCO, 2020). International scholarship indicates that analyzing the specific adaptive practices voiced and enacted by classroom teachers is critical to understanding how inclusion functions under curriculum stress (Ainscow, 2020). Rather than relying on rigid, top-down instruction, empirical models demonstrate that schools must actively restructure their environments to provide multiple entry points for diverse learners. For example, in Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Education’s guidelines specify that educators require authentic, relevant materials to ensure all students see themselves structurally reflected in the curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2025). Rather than abdicating this duty and leaving frontline teachers to source these complex adaptations independently, explicit state-level funding mechanisms, such as the Special Education Fund, are placed directly into the school system to enforce explicit,

formula-based resource claims—such as Specialized Equipment Allocations—to ensure that exceptional pupils possess the structural access required to master the core curriculum on equal footing with their peers (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2025).

Furthermore, descriptive policy reviews from the Toronto District School Board (2025) indicate that a critical, micro-level operational component of classroom inclusion involves actively removing systemic barriers through equitable employment, hiring, and promotion practices, thereby ensuring that the school workforce diversely and authentically reflects the student body it serves. Within this mature framework, the systematic, regular retooling of teachers is highly prioritized and implemented continuously, alongside robust models of parental involvement where guardians are transitioned away from being passive receptors into active, powerful players in different decision-making capacities regarding the education of their children. Similarly, contemporary classroom frameworks track the specific tactical adjustments educators execute to manage student diversity under pressure. The Ietails how teachers systematically adapt their instructional practice by dividing lessons into social-emotional community building, multi-dimensional instructional scaffolding, and flexible assignment formats (Katz, 2013). These modern models emphasize that adaptive instruction is an active, professional process that requires intentional teacher collaboration and regular, continuous retooling to remain effective.

When forced into highly resource-constrained environments, the qualitative text voiced by educators reveals how these pedagogical adaptations are frequently reframed as raw classroom survival strategies. In qualitative interview assessments examining inclusive classrooms in Ghana, frontline educators explicitly highlighted that instructional adaptation cannot occur in a material vacuum, using localized vocational analogies to voice their resource requirements: "You cannot work on your farm without a farming tool... different farming activities require different tools and appropriate expertise" (Agbenyega, 2007). This teacher-voiced perspective demonstrates that when educators are denied specialized materials, their capacity to adjust lessons to different student needs is severely compromised. Under such constraints, teachers voice intense frustration that including diverse learners under rigid academic timelines prevents them from completing their work, noting that inclusive mandates frequently result in falling far behind in completing syllabuses for the term (Agbenyega, 2007). Furthermore, international frameworks for teacher professional learning emphasize that competence in inclusion is not a static trait; it is a fluid practice driven by a teacher's ability to constantly modify their pacing, leverage peer-to-peer student support networks, and actively involve parents as co-educators within the school community to bypass structural overcrowding (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022).

While these global and regional evaluations provide vital insights into the mechanics of classroom adaptation, a major empirical gap persists within local Kenyan literature. The vast majority of existing studies were conducted during earlier, historical waves of curriculum formatting, completely missing the unique operational challenges of the Junior Secondary School transition from 2022 onwards (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2022; Momanyi & Rop, 2020). Existing local evaluations rely heavily on quantitative metrics and macro-level surveys to measure general teacher preparedness or basic assessment limitations (Oduor, 2021). Consequently, there is an absolute scarcity of localized qualitative evidence showing the precise shapes of the adaptive practices voiced by Kenyan teachers on the ground (Momanyi & Rop, 2020; Oduor, 2021). This study directly resolves that empirical and methodological void by generating current qualitative text data capturing the exact instructional adaptations and resource solutions voiced by practicing teachers navigating the CBC transition in Murang’a County.

3.0 Methodology

Data was obtained from open-ended responses to two questions in same Google Forms questionnaire administered to 37 teachers from beginning. No separate interviews were conducted. Same 37 teachers

from 7 sub-counties of Murang'a County. Qualitative analysis followed Braun and Clarke thematic analysis if cited by author, retaining author's original method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed qualitative research design to deeply explore the lived experiences of educators. The paper focuses exclusively on teachers' open-ended narratives regarding the implementation of inclusive education in primary and junior secondary schools. A qualitative approach was chosen from the outset because it prioritizes the authentic voices of teachers, allowing them to articulate their unique challenges, daily realities, and recommendations in their own words. This methodology is uniquely suited for this investigation, as it centers on understanding the nuanced meanings, personal experiences, and complex contextual realities that shape inclusive classrooms.

Qualitative inquiry is useful where the researcher seeks to understand meanings, experiences, and contextual realities from participants' perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Teachers are focal points in curriculum implementation, and giving them an opportunity for confidential openness was considered important in understanding the current situation on the ground.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling

The study focused on teachers in primary and junior secondary schools in Murang'a County. The initially targeted sub-counties included Gatanga, Maragua, Kiharu, and Kangema. However, because the questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms, emails, and WhatsApp platforms, the study attracted responses beyond the original geographical scope.

This online process naturally led to snowballing, as teachers forwarded the questionnaire to other teachers in different sub-counties and counties. Snowballing can be useful in reaching participants through existing networks, particularly where access to respondents depends on professional social connections (Guest et al., 2006).

3.3 Research Instrument

The researcher used an online questionnaire. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended items, but this paper focuses only on the open-ended qualitative responses. The open-ended questions asked teachers to describe the challenges they face in implementing inclusive education and to make recommendations on how learning in their schools can become more inclusive.

The open-ended questions were important because they allowed teachers to provide personal, practical, and school-based experiences that could not be fully captured through closed-ended items.

3.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from the open-ended questions were analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis involved organizing teacher responses into themes, editing the data for clarity of presentation, and drawing conclusions from the responses.

The process was guided by Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach. The researcher first familiarized herself with the open-ended answers, then identified initial codes from repeated ideas in the responses. These codes were grouped into broader themes and reviewed to ensure that the themes reflected the data. The themes were then refined, named, and presented in relation to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This qualitative phase analyzed open-ended responses to two questions (What challenges do you face?

What recommendations do you give?) from the same Google Forms questionnaire administered to the same 37 teachers in Murang'a County. Quantitative phase published as Ticha, H (2026) DOI 10.68147/35d137bd same dataset, no new data collection, no separate interviews were conducted.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The participants were assured that their participation was voluntary. Their identities were kept confidential to maintain anonymity. The schools were also not identified in order to prevent deductive disclosure. This was important because qualitative responses can sometimes reveal contextual details that may identify participants or institutions. Protecting participant anonymity and institutional confidentiality is particularly important in qualitative studies where detailed narrative responses may expose participants indirectly (Kaiser, 2009; Sieber, 1992; Tolich, 2004).

Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process, and the information collected was used only for research purposes.

4.0 Results/Findings

4.1 Overview of Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings show that teachers value inclusive education and recognize the importance of key aspects of inclusive curriculum like differentiated instruction, learner engagement, institutional support, and parental involvement. However, their ability to implement inclusive education is strongly affected by contextual realities.

4.2 Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Inclusive Education

Teachers were asked: “What challenges do you face as a teacher in the implementation of inclusive education to all learners?”

Their responses were grouped into themes as follows:

4.2 .1 Theme One: Inadequate Teaching and Learning Resources

The most dominant theme was lack of resources. Teachers repeatedly mentioned “lack of resources,” “inadequate resources,” “not enough resources,” and “insufficient teaching resources.” This shows that resource scarcity is a central barrier to inclusive education implementation.

Resources mentioned included learning materials, teaching aids, infrastructure, assistive technology, water, internet connectivity, and funding. Teachers noted that inclusive education requires materials that can respond to different learner needs, but such materials are often unavailable or unaffordable.

One teacher stated that “some materials needed are not affordable to all learners.” Another observed that “resources are scarce” and that the capitation received was not enough even to support basic school needs.

This finding supports previous studies showing that lack of resources, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient support materials hinder inclusive education implementation in Kenya and other Sub-Saharan African contexts (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011; Sifuna & Obonyo, 2019; Walton, 2018).

4.2 .2 Insufficient Teacher Training and Retooling

Another major theme was inadequate teacher training. Teachers reported that they lacked sufficient preparation to handle learners with diverse needs. Some responses included “inadequate training,” “lack

of resources, no training," "insufficient training," and "proper induction."

Teachers also noted that some are assigned subjects or responsibilities for which they were not adequately trained. One teacher mentioned "workload and teaching subjects not trained." Another pointed to the "lack of enough trained teachers to handle the situation."

This theme shows that inclusive education requires continuous teacher development. Teachers need retooling in differentiated instruction, assistive technology, learner assessment, classroom management, and handling learners with disabilities. The finding agrees with Forlin and Chambers (2011), who argue that teacher preparation is central to inclusive education, and with Oduor (2021), who found that many teachers in Kenya do not feel adequately prepared to implement CBC inclusively.

4.2 .3 Theme Three: Overcrowded Classrooms and Time Constraints

Teachers also identified overcrowded classrooms and lack of time as barriers. Inclusive education requires individual attention, flexible assessment, and adaptation to learner needs. However, teachers reported that overcrowded classes make it difficult to reach every learner.

One teacher stated that "insufficient resources and overcrowded classes" make it difficult to get to every learner's level of understanding. Another noted the "lack of enough time to do proper individual assessment." Teachers also mentioned "time to cater to all learners faced with challenges."

This theme suggests that inclusive pedagogy requires manageable class sizes and adequate time for individualized support. Similar challenges have been reported in African inclusive education contexts where large classes and limited teacher capacity weaken classroom-level inclusion (Komba & Mwandanji, 2015; Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011).

4.2 .4 Theme Four: Limited Assistive Technology and Infrastructure

Teachers raised concerns about inadequate infrastructure and lack of assistive technology. One teacher specifically mentioned "lack of assistive technology for learners with disabilities." Others referred to "minimum infrastructure," "inadequate facilities," and lack of internet connection.

These responses show that learners with disabilities may be excluded when schools lack assistive devices, adapted materials, accessible classrooms, and support staff. The statement that "usually students with disabilities are left out" strongly reflects this concern.

This finding aligns with the principles of Universal Design for Learning, which emphasize the need for flexible materials, accessible learning environments, and multiple means of participation (Meyer et al., 2014). It also supports literature showing that learners with disabilities continue to face major barriers in accessing and completing education in Kenya (KNBS, 2021).

4.2 .5 Theme Five: Weak Parental and Community Involvement

Parental involvement emerged as another important issue. Teachers mentioned that parents and guardians do not always participate actively. Some parents were described as unsupportive, while others were affected by poverty and unable to provide needed materials.

Teachers stated that "parents/guardians don't participate actively." Another mentioned "negative attitude of parents." Teachers also connected parental involvement with wider home background challenges, including poverty and poor educational background.

This theme indicates that inclusive education cannot be implemented by teachers alone. It requires active involvement of parents, guardians, and the wider community. This is consistent with sociocultural

perspectives on learning, which emphasize that education is shaped by social relationships, community support, and cultural contexts (Vygotsky, 1978).

4.2 .6 Theme Six: Poverty and Home Background Challenges

Teachers linked learner challenges to poverty, hunger, lack of water, and poor educational background at home. One response mentioned “hungry learners,” “insufficient water,” and “poor parents.” Another stated that “parents are poor.”

These responses show that inclusive education is affected by socio-economic realities beyond the classroom. Learners who come to school hungry, lack basic resources, or receive limited educational support at home may experience barriers to participation and achievement.

This finding agrees with broader inclusive education literature showing that equity in education requires attention to social, economic, and family-related barriers, not only classroom instruction (Ainscow, 2020; UNESCO, 2020).

4.2 .7 Theme Seven: Curriculum and Language-Related Challenges

Some teachers identified curriculum and language as challenges. One teacher mentioned “media of instruction,” while another referred to the challenge of handling different learner personalities. These responses suggest that inclusive education must also consider language, learner identity, and curriculum flexibility.

Where the curriculum is too demanding or not well adapted to learner diversity, teachers may struggle to meet the needs of all learners. This concern is consistent with Universal Design for Learning, which argues that curriculum should be proactively designed to respond to learner variability (Meyer et al., 2014), and with CBC’s goal of promoting learner-centered and competency-based education (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, 2019).

4..2.8 Theme Eight: Institutional and Leadership Challenges

Teachers also pointed to school leadership and institutional support. One teacher noted that the “head of institution is not collaborating with junior high school teachers.” This shows that inclusive education requires collaboration between school leaders and head teachers, especially in the transition to junior secondary school under CBC.

Institutional support includes leadership, teacher collaboration, resource allocation, professional development, and stakeholder engagement. Previous studies have shown that school leadership plays a mediating role in CBC implementation and inclusive education practice (Njeru & Mwangi, 2022). Policy implementation theory also suggests that school-level actors determine how national reforms are translated into everyday practice (Lipsky, 2010).

4.3 Context-Specific Adaptive Practices Voiced by Teachers to Enhance Instructional and Structural Inclusion Under the CBC Framework

Teachers were asked: “What recommendations can you make to make learning in your school inclusive?”

Their responses including the following were grouped under the following themes

4.3.1 Provision of Resources

Teachers strongly recommended provision of resources. These included learning materials, books,

classrooms, resource centres, functional digital devices, computer labs, internet connectivity, and assistive technology.

The repeated recommendation for resources directly reflects the challenge identified earlier. Teachers believe that inclusive education can be enhanced if schools are adequately equipped. This recommendation aligns with Universal Design for Learning, which emphasizes accessible learning materials and varied ways of engaging learners (Meyer et al., 2014).

The recommendation is also relevant to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence, which argues that learners differ in how they understand and express knowledge (Gardner, 1983). Adequate resources such as visual materials, digital tools, manipulatives, books, assistive devices, and practical learning equipment help teachers address different learner strengths, including linguistic, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and logical-mathematical intelligences

4.3.2 Increased Government Funding and Capitation

They connected funding to construction of resource centers, provision of learning materials, payment of basic school services, and support for low-enrolment schools.

This shows that inclusive education requires sustained financial investment. Without adequate funding, schools struggle to provide basic conditions necessary for inclusion. This finding agrees with regional studies showing that inclusive education policies are difficult to implement where funding and infrastructure are inadequate (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011; Walton, 2018).

It also supports Bruner's scaffolding theory, since effective scaffolding requires structures and tools that help learners move from what they can do independently to what they can achieve with support (Bruner, 1966). Government funding makes it possible to provide instructional aids, trained personnel, assistive technology, and classroom support systems that allow teachers to scaffold learning effectively.

4.3.3 Teacher Staffing

Teachers recommended recruitment of more teachers, especially in junior secondary school and different learning areas. They also recommended fewer students per class to allow individual attention.

This theme shows that teacher workload directly affects the ability to implement differentiated instruction and inclusive assessment. Differentiated instruction and inclusive pedagogy require time, attention, and teacher capacity to adapt learning to individual needs (Florian, 2015; Hehir et al., 2016).

It also relates to Bruner's scaffolding theory, as scaffolding requires close teacher-learner interaction. When classes are too large, teachers may not be able to break tasks down, provide individual feedback, or gradually withdraw support. More teachers and smaller classes would make scaffolding more practical and effective.

The recommendation is also supported by Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Recognizing and responding to different learner strengths requires teachers to use varied teaching methods and assessments. Reduced workload allows teachers to plan lessons that include group activities, practical tasks, visual resources, discussions, projects, and individualized support.

4.3.4 Teacher Training and Retooling

Teachers recommended regular capacity building, retooling, curriculum exposure, and training in inclusive education. They emphasized that both primary and junior secondary teachers need support.

One teacher recommended "retooling for the primary level teachers," while another stated that the

"government should train enough teachers to handle inclusive education." This indicates that teachers are willing to implement inclusive education but need professional preparation.

The recommendation supports previous findings that teacher preparedness is essential for inclusive practice (Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Oduor, 2021, and Momanyi, J. M., & Rop, P. K. (2020)). It also aligns with Bruner's scaffolding theory, since teachers themselves require structured support in order to support learners effectively (Bruner, 1966).

In relation to Piaget's constructivism, teacher training helps teachers understand learners' developmental stages and cognitive readiness (Piaget, 1972). This is especially important in inclusive education because learners may differ in maturity, learning pace, and ability to handle abstract concepts. Teachers therefore need skills to design age-appropriate and developmentally suitable learning experiences.

4.3.5 Curriculum Adaptation

Teachers recommended tailoring CBC content, especially at the primary level, because they considered it bulky. They also recommended better exposure to the curriculum and constant upgrading.

This aligns with the principles of Universal Design for Learning, which emphasize designing curriculum content in ways that cater for learner variability (Meyer et al., 2014). It also supports Piaget's constructivist view that learning should be developmentally appropriate and connected to learners' readiness levels (Piaget, 1972).

Kolb's experiential learning cycle is also relevant because curriculum adaptation should create opportunities for learners to learn through experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application (Kolb, 1984). A curriculum that is too content-heavy may limit practical engagement. Tailoring CBC content would allow more time for projects, observation, experiments, field activities, and real-life problem-solving.

4.3.6 Learner Welfare Support

Some teachers recommended feeding programs, water supply, and meals for learners. This reflects their awareness that learner welfare affects participation and learning.

Inclusive education therefore requires not only instructional support but also attention to learner welfare, especially in contexts affected by poverty. This recommendation is consistent with UNESCO's view that inclusive and equitable education requires addressing broader barriers that prevent learners from participating fully in education (UNESCO, 2020).

This recommendation can be linked to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which views learning as shaped by the learner's social and environmental context (Vygotsky, 1978). Hunger, poor health, lack of water, and poverty affect learners' ability to interact, participate, and benefit from classroom instruction. Feeding programs and access to water create a supportive environment where learners can engage socially and academically.

4.3.7 Stronger Policy Framework and Monitoring

Teachers recommended a strong policy framework, monitoring and evaluation by the Ministry of Education, proper sensitization, and engagement of all stakeholders. This shows the need for policy implementation to move beyond documentation to active school-level support.

Policy implementation theory supports this recommendation by showing that policies become meaningful only when school-level actors are supported to interpret and implement them effectively (Lipsky, 2010).

It also relates to Bruner's scaffolding theory, as schools require institutional scaffolding from the Ministry of Education and other agencies. Teachers need guidelines, mentorship, supervision, resources, and feedback in order to implement inclusive education effectively. A strong policy framework provides the structure within which teachers can support learners.

4.3.8 Stakeholder and Parental Involvement

Teachers recommended stronger involvement of parents, learners, communities, and other stakeholders. Inclusive education was therefore viewed as a collective responsibility involving schools, homes, communities, and government.

This recommendation is consistent with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes learning as a socially mediated process shaped by interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1978). It also supports inclusive education literature that views inclusion as a whole-school and whole-community process (Ainscow, 2020).

This recommendation is consistent with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes learning as a socially mediated process shaped by interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Parents, teachers, peers, and community members all contribute to the learner's development. When stakeholders collaborate, learners receive consistent support both at home and at school.

The recommendation also supports inclusive education literature that views inclusion as a whole-school and whole-community process (Ainscow, 2020). Inclusion is more effective when parents are sensitized, communities are supportive, and learners are accepted regardless of ability, background, or need

4.4 Discussion

The qualitative findings show that teachers are aware of inclusive education principles and recognize their responsibility in supporting diverse learners. However, their ability to implement inclusive education is strongly affected by contextual realities.

The findings align with Universal Design for Learning because teachers recommended curriculum adaptation, diverse learning materials, digital resources, and flexible approaches that meet learners' varied needs. Tailoring CBC content, especially at the primary level, supports proactive curriculum design for all learners (Meyer et al., 2014).

The findings also align with the Inclusive Pedagogy model. Teachers recommended more classrooms, resource centers, teacher training, and stakeholder involvement. These recommendations reflect the need to create inclusive learning environments where diversity is treated as normal and all learners are supported (Florian, 2015; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). This is also supported by Momanyi, J. M., & Rop, P. K. (2020)

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is also reflected in teachers' emphasis on collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and supportive learning environments. Inclusive education requires interaction among teachers, learners, parents, school leaders, and communities (Vygotsky, 1978). While Bruner's scaffolding theory is evident in need for structured support for learners and teachers. Teachers need resources, training, and curriculum guidance so that they can support learners effectively (Bruner, 1966).

On the other hand, Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences is reflected in recommendations for diverse teaching and learning strategies, the provision of varied learning resources, the use of digital devices, and real-world applications. Inclusive education should recognize and accommodate learners' different intelligences, abilities, and learning strengths by providing multiple opportunities to understand, demonstrate, and apply knowledge (Gardner, 1983).

Overall, the findings show that inclusive education cannot be achieved by policy alone. It requires practical school-level implementation supported by adequate funding, teacher development, resources, leadership, parental involvement, and community participation. This agrees with policy implementation theory, which emphasizes that national policy reforms depend on how frontline implementers interpret and apply them in practice (Lipsky, 2010).

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study shows that inclusive education in Kenyan primary and junior secondary schools has strong potential, especially within the Competency-Based Curriculum framework. Teachers are making efforts to respond to learner diversity through differentiated instruction and learner engagement strategies. However, several barriers continue to hinder full implementation.

The most prominent challenges include inadequate resources, insufficient teacher training, overcrowded classrooms, limited assistive technology, poor parental involvement, poverty, and home background difficulties. Teachers also raised concerns about curriculum bulk, inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, and weak institutional support.

Despite these challenges, the findings reveal hope for enhancing education inclusivity in Kenyan schools. Teachers appear open to learning and professional development. If they are provided with frequent training, adequate resources, supportive leadership, and strong stakeholder involvement, inclusive education can be strengthened. This supports the broader goals of SDG 4 and Kenya's CBC reform agenda, both of which emphasize equitable, inclusive, and quality education for all learners (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, 2019; UNESCO, 2020).

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the qualitative findings, this study recommends the following;

Schools should be provided with adequate teaching and learning resources to support inclusive education.

The government should increase capitation and funding for schools, especially those with low enrolment and limited resources.

Teachers should receive regular retooling and training on evidence-based inclusive education practices.

Schools should be equipped with assistive technology and adapted materials for learners with disabilities.

More teachers should be employed, especially in junior secondary schools and specialized learning areas.

More classrooms should be constructed to reduce overcrowding and allow individual attention.

CBC content should be reviewed and adapted where it is too bulky, especially at the primary level.

Parents and guardians should be more actively involved in the education of their children.

Schools should strengthen guidance and counselling, learner support, and stakeholder engagement.

The Ministry of Education should strengthen monitoring and evaluation of inclusive education implementation.

Learner welfare programs, including feeding programs and water provision, should be supported, especially in vulnerable school contexts.

School heads and administrators should be trained on inclusive leadership and collaboration with teachers.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The study suggests the following areas for further research:

A similar qualitative study can be repeated in other counties to establish the uptake of inclusive education practices.

A follow-up study can be done in Murang'a County to track implementation of the findings.

A study can be conducted on teacher training in inclusive education among teacher training colleges.

Research can be conducted to develop and validate indicators for measuring inclusive education in Kenyan primary and junior secondary schools.

A similar study can be done in senior schools to verify readiness for CBC pathways.

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